

Orphan and Vulnerable Children (OVC)

Pact's OVC program is unique to the Cambodian context in that it assists poor PLHIV families to establish living wills that ensure inheritance rights for their children. The OVC planning also integrates children affected and infected by HIV/AIDS into the community and the local school. Pact's OVC program is implemented through sub-grants to six local NGOs in five provinces in southern Cambodia. More than 345 PLHIV families now have plans for the future of their children and over 300 inheritance documents have been prepared and filed with the appropriate authorities. A common sentiment voiced by a PLHIV is:

I'm very happy to have a clear plan for my children's future and to have a legal document that guarantees my children will receive my assets.



Assisting PLHIV to prepare plans and living will inheritance documents for their children.

Key to the success of the OVC program is the presence of Children's Support Committees (CSC) which work with NGO partners to address a variety of problems encountered by OVCs such as the lack of funds for school attendance and the need for assistance to access health care. Children's Support Committees are also responsible for ensuring the Pact-supported OVC programs run smoothly in local communities and that funds generated through donation boxes placed in the pagoda are well-utilized. Children's Support Committees partner with Community Volunteer Networks of PLHIV and OVC staff to organize Children's Gathering Days which provide an opportunity for OVC and non OVC to play together.



CSC members counting funds from donation boxes

More than 200 community members regularly take part in children's gathering day events which also provide basic education on HIV/AIDS and on self-care and support activities.



OVC participating in a Children's Gathering Day

Implementing NGOs Partners

- Cambodian People Living with HIV/AIDS Network (CPN+)
- Kondal CPN+ (KDCPN+)
- Kompong Cham CPN+ (KCMCPN+)
- Takeo CPN+ (TKCPN+)
- Battambang CPN+ (BTBCPN+)
- Siem Reap CPN+ (SRCPN+)
- Kompong Thom CPN+ (KTMCPN+)
- Pursat CPN+ (PSCPN+)
- Sihanouk Ville CPN+ (SHVCPN+)
- Women Organization for Modern Economy and Nursing (WOMEN)
- Cambodian Development and Relief Center for the Poor (CDRCP)
- Association of Farmer Development (AFD)
- Rural Economic Development Association (REDA)
- Khmer Women's Cooperation for Development (KWCD)
- Phnom Srey Association for Development (PSAD).

Pact Cambodia

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Pact in Cambodia

Pact started work in Cambodia in 1991 just after the signing of the Paris Peace Accord with an initial objective of building the capacity of local organizations working with some of the neediest groups: the poor, women and war victims. An increasingly robust Cambodian civil society sector now supports a range of interests - from rural enterprise development, community leadership and women's social and economic improvement to psychosocial counseling and maternal and child health. Pact Cambodia continues to work through partnerships with local organizations, currently focusing its efforts on programs addressing HIV/AIDS, Advocacy, Anti-Corruption, Decentralization and Deconcentration, and Women's Empowerment.

Pact Cambodia's work in HIV/AIDS began in 2002 with a focus on care and support for people living with HIV (PLHIV) and their families. Since then, Pact Cambodia has played a significant role in the response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic by building the institutional capacity of Cambodian nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) and creating innovative information, education, communication/behavior change communication (IEC/BCC) materials designed by and for PLHIV. Pact Cambodia also contributes to collective efforts in Cambodia to reduce the spread of HIV and to mitigate the impact of the epidemic by providing care and support for those living with, or affected by HIV/AIDS including orphans and vulnerable children (OVC). Anecdotal evidence suggests that Pact Cambodia's HIV/AIDS projects have increased the capacity of Cambodian PLHIV and their caregivers to understand and undertake HIV/AIDS care and have strengthened the ability of partner NGOs to effectively promote community support of PLHIV throughout the nation.



HIV/AIDS situation in Cambodia

Cambodia is one of the few countries globally that has reversed the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Between 1997 and 2003, the prevalence of HIV in the adult population fell from 3.0% to 1.9%. There are now an estimated 123,100 people living with HIV in Cambodia and more than 77,000 children under 15 who have been orphaned by AIDS. Stigma and discrimination against PLHIV continue to persist in Cambodia. Community-based discrimination isolates PLHIV, forcing those most vulnerable underground with negative consequences to their physical and psychosocial health.

Pact Cambodia's HIV/AIDS Programming

Pact aims to:

- ☞ Increase participation and involvement of PLHIV in project design and implementation
- ☞ Empower PLHIV to advocate for their rights and gain support from their communities in reducing HIV/AIDS stigma and discrimination
- ☞ Increase community support to decrease social vulnerabilities and increase coping mechanisms for orphans and vulnerable children affected and infected by HIV/AIDS
- ☞ Improve the livelihood of people affected and infected by HIV/AIDS through micro-enterprises
- ☞ Support and strengthen the institutional capacity of the project's partners.



Project Achievements and Success Stories

Approaches

To achieve the project's objectives, Pact places PLHIV at the center of all activities it implements through and with NGO partners. Pact's work with PLHIV and OVC includes:

- Partnerships with six local NGO partners, eight provincial PLHIV support group networks and a trained cadre of PLHIV to organize community-based forums that target the reduction of HIV/AIDS stigma and discrimination.
- The Appreciative Participatory Approach (APA) to guide PLHIV at-risk families to develop and prepare plans for the future of their children.
- Living wills developed by PLHIV that are filed with local government to secure the inheritance rights of their children.
- Community Volunteer Networks of PLHIV and Children's Support Committees that monitor the implementation of PLHIV plans for their children and manage donations from collection boxes in Buddhist temples for the benefit of OVCs.
- Capacity building and institutional support for sustainable organizational development.
- IEC/BCC materials related to care and support for PLHIV and their caregivers.

Community Forums

In collaboration with local authorities, PLHIV organized and facilitated 20 Community Forums with more than 4,000 individuals in the five provinces of Siem Reap, Kampong Thom, Battambang, Pursat and Sihanouk Ville. The Community Forums focused on awareness raising and generating community responses to reduce HIV/AIDS stigma and discrimination. Participants at the Community Forums included home care providers, local authorities, PLHIV, monks, community members and health center staff. The forums provided an opportunity for community members to discuss attitudes and behavior reflective of stigma and discrimination against PLHIV, develop an awareness of the HIV/AIDS law and listen to PLHIV share their experiences. The forums served as a catalyst for commitments by local communities to reduce stigma and discrimination that are monitored and supported by a small group of local citizens and PLHIV.



Community Forum conducted in Takeo province



More than 200 community members attended in each community forum.

Twelve local authorities in five provinces have ensured support for PLHIV by improving access to education for children, opening access to HIV counseling and blood testing services, integrating support activities for PLHIV into local government action plans, facilitating increased home visits, and encouraging community fundraising for the benefit of PLHIV.

The commune council in Chi-Kreng district established donation boxes in commune offices, pagodas, restaurants and community gatherings to assist PLHIV with food, shelter and transportation to health centers. The average amount collected monthly for distribution in Chi-Kreng district is US \$30.



Mr. Tong Piset, was dismissed from his job as a cook when his employer discovered he had HIV. He credits his participation in a Community Forum for his new job, his ability to generate income for his family and his improved status in the community.

When I was recruited as PLHIV Empowerment Worker (PEW) I didn't know how to organize Community Forums in my community. However, after receiving capacity building, mentoring and field coaching from Pact, I felt confident and successfully organized a community forum in my village attended by more than 200 people!

Mr. Tim Madouk, the director of a church school, cites his attendance at a Community Forum as responsible for his understanding of the social and economic impact of HIV/AIDS on PLHIV. He has now recruited three PLHIV to work as cooks in his school and allows OVCs to study free of charge.



416,785 copies of IEC materials printed and 363,500 copies distributed through out the country

These approaches provide ownership to PLHIV over the process.

Chab Choch Bathay district, Kompong Cham Province



28 PLHIV families have increased their standard of living due to commitments made by community members to support PLHIV and PLHIV enterprises. The following stories describe typical changes in circumstances credited to Community Forums.

Before the Community Forum many community members refused to buy my goods, but now they have become more supportive and buy from me.