Success Case of Meeting between Local Residents and Commune Councilors

Nine Children with HIV Positive Parents Receive Support After COMFREL Organized a Meeting in Kampong Speu

Nine children (seven girls) with HIV-positive parents got support from a charity organization in Kampong Speu province's Chamkar Moan town five months after their difficulty was raised during a meeting between the commune council and citizens held by COMFREL's local forum group in Roeung Poeng village, Skhos commune, Samrong Toang district on 19 July 2010.

Among all, nine children (seven girls) whose difficulty was raised in a COMFREL-organized meeting received sponsorship from Sao Sary Organization

With the organization's sponsorship, the nine children each get a dozen notebooks, two school uniforms and a pair of shoes every year. Those who stay at the organization can also receive money from 300 to 3,500 riel per week for primary students and 6,000 riel per week for secondary students. In the organization, they have two meals per day, and they can learn English and computer free of charge. Some of the nine children also received a bike from this organization for riding to school.

It should be remembered that in the meeting there were 16 participants, including one commune councilor and four village chiefs. The participants raised a few issues that their commune had encountered in order to seek solutions from the invited commune councilors. Among all, the issue of finding sponsorships for orphans whose parents died of AIDS or children with HIV/AIDS positive parents was the most prioritized issue that the invited councilors and village chiefs promised to solve. Mr. Roath Yoeum, representative of Shkos commune councilors who was invited to the meeting, said, "*On behalf of a local resident guardian, I am very delighted to help children in crisis whose parents died of AIDS, and other poor children in the commune.*"

After the meeting, the commune assigned all 21 village chiefs in the commune to identify children with HIV-infected parents or parents who died of HIV/AIDS and children with extremely poor parents. The village chiefs were also asked to report more information about those children's residence. They found nine children (seven girls) in three villages, Prey Trach, Prey Rongeang and Tonloab, whose parents died of AIDS or whose parents had been infected with HIV/AIDS.

Having received the reports from the village chiefs, the commune made a plan to seek a charity to sponsor the children. The plan consisted of three parts: announcement of the search for a charity from inside and outside the commune, asking permission from abbots across the commune to put a charity box in their respective pagoda, and asking local residents in all 21 villages to contribute 100 riel per month to help the children. Nonetheless, only the first two parts of the plan were successfully implemented.

After implementing the plan, the commune found one charity organization named Sao Sary Organization from outside the commune to help those children. Further, the commune also gathered a total budget of 29,000 riel from one of three pagodas where the commune had put three charity boxes. The money gathered from local residents' contribution was then given to those children.