



CAMBODIA

A DIFFICULT COUNTRY WHICH KEEPS SHOWING NEW IDEAS AND NEW WAYS

Cambodia had a big head start, because most of the things the ACCA Program promotes were already happening in a big way in many Cambodian cities: the citywide focus, the community savings, the surveys, the networks, the land-searches, the small upgrading projects, the big housing projects, the partnership with government, the negotiations for land, the city development funds. Because the soil in almost 30 cities had already been well-fertilized by all these activities, the groups in Cambodia have been able to take up the opportunities the ACCA Program offers and zoom ahead with them. All the ACCA projects in Cambodia are being implemented as a joint venture by the two key partners in all this earlier work - the national Community Savings Network of Cambodia (CSNC) and the National Community Development Foundation (NCDF - formerly UPDF), in close cooperation with municipal and provincial authorities in all of Cambodia's 24 provinces.

Times are still difficult in Cambodia, with lots of development and lots of evictions still happening across the country. But with all this experience and all these links already in place, the groups in Cambodia have been able to use the ACCA resources in much more strategic ways: to get government land in cities where projects were ready but needed finance, to negotiate for government land in "hot" cases where eviction was eminent, to show a more comprehensive demonstration of people-managed housing where no such alternative models had yet been possible, and to start activities in new cities with big problems of land, housing and eviction. ACCA has also been used to consolidate horizontal links between cities, with more exchanges, more national workshops on savings and city-wide upgrading, more mutual help and more people-to-people learning. Cambodia is also a good example of how working partnerships between poor community networks and their municipal, district and ward-level authorities can be strengthened through joint exposure visits to each other's cities, as well as through the small and big projects and land negotiations and joint exchange learning and seminars.

The ACCA projects in 28 cities are bringing new tools and new strength to community-driven alternatives to eviction, in which the communities and their local authorities work together to survey all the slums in the city, find possible pieces of empty land, and negotiate to upgrade the communities that don't need to move, and relocate those who do need to move to free land from the government. All this is being shown as something practical and possible through the ACCA projects.



ACCA in CAMBODIA :

PROJECT CITIES (total 28)

- Serey Sophoan
- Samrong
- Preah Sihanouk
- Peam Ro District
- Bavet / Svay Raing
- Khemara Phoumin
- Kampong Cham
- Pailin
- Sen Monorom
- Siem Reap
- Roessei Keo Dist, Phnom Penh
- Daun Keo
- Steung Treng
- Banlung
- Pursat
- Kep City
- Battambang
- Kratie
- Stoeng Sen
- Kampong Chhnang
- Poun Nhea Leu
- Prey Nob
- Posenchey District, Phnom Penh
- Dangkor District, Phnom Penh
- Borey Cholsar
- Krouch Chhmar
- Anlong Veng
- Preah Vihear

SMALL PROJECTS

Small projects approved : 223
 In number of cities : 28
 Total budget approved : \$370,000

BIG PROJECTS

Big projects approved : 13
 In number of cities : 13
 Total budget approved : \$530,000

SPECIAL PROJECTS

One disaster-rehabilitation project in Phnom Penh (\$5,000), 3 national surveys in 27 cities (\$24,500), and research in bamboo construction.

SAVINGS (only in 28 ACCA cities)

Savings groups : 372
 Savings members : 14,304
 Total savings : \$589,508

CITY DEVELOPMENT FUNDS

CDFs active in : 23 cities
 Total capital in 23 CDFs : \$647,474

- from ACCA \$511,500 (79%)
- from coms. \$131,674 (20%)
- from gov. \$2,300 (0.5%)
- from others \$2,000 (0.5%)

IMPLEMENTING GROUPS

All the ACCA projects are being implemented the national Community Savings Network (CSNC) and its partner the National Community Development Foundation (NCDF).

DECENTRALIZING NCDF to 23 provincial funds :



The Urban Poor Development Fund (UPDF) was set up in 1998 under an MOU between the Municipality of Phnom Penh, the network of community savings groups and ACHR. During the UPDF's early years, its loans and grants for housing, upgrading and income generation went only to poor communities within the city of Phnom Penh. But as the community process spread to other cities, the UPDF began "stretching" the MOU to reach out to this growing number of provincial cities, with support and loans. As the community movement, the reach, the needs and the capital in the UPDF all grew, and as more and more province-based and city-based community development funds (CDFs) sprung up around the country, everyone began looking for ways to turn the UPDF into a more formal institution to support this growing national community process. A range of institutional set-ups, government partnership arrangements and governance structures were studied and discussed, and some delicate negotiations commenced with various government ministries, departments and committees.

But in the particular political context of Cambodia, most of these options proved to be problematic. Finally it was decided to let the UPDF remain as a city-based fund (according to its original MOU, under the Municipality), and to set up a new national institution (the National Community Development Foundation - NCDF) to act as the NGO support partner to the national people's process. The NCDF, which has now been registered as an NGO with the Ministry of Interior, has only a small fund component, and focuses on providing technical support and coordination to the national community process in Cambodia, working closely with the province-based and city-based CDFs and with the ACCA projects.

So what happened to the US\$2 million capital in UPDF? After considerable negotiations, it was agreed that the UPDF's capital will be divided up between the 20 or so province-based and city-based CDFs that are now operating around the country (including the UPDF in Phnom Penh), which are all showing a lot of new light about how networks of poor communities and their local governments can use these local development funds as a key point of collaboration and negotiation. Since most of the UPDF's capital is circulating in loans, these assets come in the form of loan packages, not cash. There are now plans to undertake a kind of nation-wide auditing process, to polish up these provincial CDFs and prepare them to receive these UPDF funds. Then, a big national meeting will be organized, during which each province will receive its share of the UPDF assets in front of everyone, as a kind of grand hand-over ceremony.

SPREADING OUT the opportunities :

Cambodia is the country which has pushed the “spread out effect” the farthest in its implementation of ACCA. Thrift has become a custom in the way of doing things in Cambodia, where they have learned to make as much change as possible using very small funds. This is also a strategy to draw out people’s ingenuity and resourcefulness, and it has helped attract resources from other stakeholders. This thrift is being applied in the ACCA projects in several ways:

1 Spreading out the small project budgets : In most of the Cambodian cities, the groups are implementing 8 to 12 small projects, instead of only five. Their idea is to stretch that \$15,000 resource to cover as many communities as possible, since the scale of problems is never limited to just five communities. In the town of Banlung, for example, all 17 communities in the city have implemented small projects, with budgets of between \$500 and \$2,000. The amount available to each community may be very small, but even that small amount allows them to start planning and start taking action to solve their own infrastructure problems. This is a way to boost *all the communities in the city* to be actively involved in the process, so they’re not just sitting on the sidelines watching others implement projects. And many communities have been able to use those projects to attract good contributions from the city government and from their own members. It’s like buying dinner for ten, but feeding twenty! To stretch the opportunity even further, they have a rule in Cambodia that small projects which fund individual improvements (like water connections or individual toilets) are treated as revolving fund loans from the local CDF, while projects which fund collective improvements (like roads, drains or dikes) are treated as grants.

2 Spreading out the big project budgets : The Cambodian groups have adopted a few rules which also help them stretch the ACCA big project funds. The ACCA funds should cover no more than 20% of infrastructure costs in the housing projects, with the idea that the local government should provide at least 80%. Houses should be constructed as inexpensively as possible, using cost-saving materials, to make the housing affordable to the poorest community members. A ceiling of \$37,500 per city was set for housing loans (leaving a margin for other non-ACCA cities), which are given in bulk to communities (not to individuals) and are repaid monthly, in five years, at 8% annual interest (which includes 1% for the city-level welfare fund, 2% for the local CDF and network activities, and 5% which goes back into the national NSDF fund to increase its lending capital.)



Community builders training center :

A small project grant of \$10,000 from ACCA helped the growing network of community builders in Cambodia to construct their first builders training center in Phnom Penh, where community people from around the country can come stay and get hands-on training in making blocks and other alternative and cost-saving building materials and techniques. The municipality gave a half-hectare of valuable inner-city land for the project. ACHR and the Thai community builders network provided the first set of equipment for making hollow concrete blocks, and the center’s ongoing training programs are being supported by the national community savings networks and the local universities and architects. Since the ribbon cutting, the center has been very busy, and has helped popularize the cost-saving technologies of compressed earth blocks and community-manufactured hollow cement blocks, which communities are now using in many of the ACCA housing projects around the country.

All projects lead to getting **SECURE LAND** :

ACCA big project funds have unlocked free land, infrastructure and other contributions worth 20 times the original ACCA investment in the 14 + 5 projects now underway . . .

In ten of the 14 ACCA-supported housing projects (plus five spin-off projects in those cities), the communities have been able to leverage free land from the municipal or provincial government, and negotiations are now on for another 19 projects on free government land. Likewise, most of the communities doing small projects are using their improvements to their roads, drains and water supply systems to bolster their negotiations for secure tenure - and many are getting it. Getting free land from the government has become a strategic direction for the people’s movement in Cambodia - and getting it for communities across the city, not just in a few pilots. Evictions are still happening, but after five years, it’s clear that ACCA works like a bridge between the poor communities and the local authorities in a city. Before, cities invariably said no, there is no land for the poor. But after starting the first few ACCA housing projects and word getting around, municipal and provincial authorities are now providing free land for housing the poor in most cities (both ACCA and others), and this has become the norm. There have also been some big policy breakthroughs on land. Cambodia’s new National Housing Policy, which ACHR helped to draft, is closely based on the citywide community upgrading strategies and procedures that were developed by the UPDF and the CSNC. The policy provides a framework for making citywide upgrading plans for housing all the poor in the city (on-site if possible and relocation only when necessary, to land within the city the government provides for free, with full land title) in which the municipality and the local community networks survey and work out the plans together. (*more on next pages*)

The finance figures about these 14 ACCA housing projects (plus five more spin-off projects) are a revelation about what is possible when community networks play their politics with their local governments effectively to leverage support for their community-driven projects. Here are the figures for the 14 + 5 big projects that are now finished or well underway:

CONTRIBUTIONS to the 14 + 5 ACCA housing projects in Cambodia so far :

Contribution from	Form of contribution	Value (US\$)	% total
● ACCA :	These funds used mostly for housing loans	525,000	(5%)
● Government	Mostly in free land (10 projects) and infrastructure (9 projects)	8,586,465	(80%)
● Communities	This doesn’t include all the community labor; this figure will go up sharply, as people pay for their own houses by loan or savings	922,500	(9%)
● Others :	Mostly UPDF housing loans + some NGO support. This will also go up a lot, since many more housing loans are still in the pipeline.	659,145	(6%)
Total	14 + 5 big housing projects for 3,407 families	\$ 10,763,110	(100%)

So an investment of \$525,000 from ACCA has unlocked *at least* 20 times as much funds (\$ 18.8 million), mostly from the government, and these unlocked resources will probably go up to 40 or 50 times the ACCA investment by the time the projects are all completed, and will likely double again once the asset value of these newly-secure and newly-legitimate communities enter the formal world - *all assets in the hands of the poor!* And that doesn’t factor in the 3,407 poor households which got secure land tenure through these projects - one of the most important assets of all.

CAMBODIA : Free land from the government

1,688 poor families in 12 ACCA big housing projects get secure tenure - FREE!

1

Free land for 420 households in SEREY SOPHOAN : After surveying all the slums in the city, two settlements (both facing eviction) were prioritized as having the most urgent housing problems: Poun Lea Meanchey (a big riverside settlement of 387 households) and Monorom (a smaller settlement of 30 households across the river). After long negotiations, the city agreed to a land-sharing plan for the larger settlement, in which the people would get free land title in exchange for reblocking and giving back part of the land for a park. Meanwhile, the Monorom settlement, which faced flooding every year, negotiated a piece of free government land (with infrastructure) for resettlement, 1.5 kms away (purchased under the Provincial Authority's "Social Land Concession"), where they have now built their new houses, with collective title.

2

Free land for 288 households in SAMRONG : In Samrong, the government acquired a huge tract of land for settling decommissioned soldiers, at Pha Ong, on the outskirts of the city. After long negotiations, the CDF and community network persuaded the government to cut 140 hectares from this large development (under the provincial government's "Social Land Concession" program) for resettling 288 poor families evicted from slums around Samrong (identified through the network's citywide survey), with large "self-sufficiency" plots big enough for people to build houses (of compressed earth blocks), raise animals and have small gardens, fish-ponds and fruit trees. The ACCA funds are supporting the first batch of 30 housing loans.

3

Free land for 52 households in PREAH SIHANOUK : 700 poor families live in Sihanouk's largest squatter area, on public land owned partly by the National Railways and partly by the Port. Big private sector and ADB-funded projects are on to expand the port and revive the railways, and eviction has been in the air for years. In 2009, the Prime Minister announced a land-sharing compromise, in which a large portion of the land would be granted to the community to redevelop their housing, in exchange for returning part to the government for its projects. But while negotiations around this larger project continue, 52 of these families, living on land urgently needed for the project, have negotiated relocation to free land, with full infrastructure and compensation of \$400 per family. ACCA is providing small housing loans to all the 52 families.

4

Free land for 33 households in PEAM RO DISTRICT : Pro Lay Toek was a small community of 33 extremely poor households (evicted from other areas), living in thatched huts on stilts on a long strip of flood-prone land along a canal. They used support from ACCA to plan and construct a full on-site upgrading project, with land filling, infrastructure and new 2-story concrete-framed row houses. Because the land tenure was not clear, they used their planning as a bargaining chip to persuade the Commune Council authorities to give them the land free, on a collective land title. The people used a \$4,500 loan from UPDF to buy an extra 1.5m strip of land to slightly widen the individual house plots and make room for an access road.

5

Free land for 194 households in KAMPONG CHAM : The ACCA project is supporting two housing projects for very poor evictees, both on relocation sites provided free by the government, after long negotiations by the CDF and community network. Sesib Pir Knong (42 households) was the first slum in the city to negotiate a relocation agreement when the city wanted to evict them for a bridge project, and they have now built 2-story row-houses on free land 6 kms away, on the outskirts of the city. Beung Snay is another relocation site that was carved out of (and cross-subsidized by) a big commercial development in the center of town, and the network has negotiated to resettle 152 families from 4 roadside squatter settlements (identified in the citywide survey) here, with free land and full infrastructure provided by the government.

6

Free land for 37 households in SVAY RAING : The ADB-financed project to build a new national road from Phnom Penh to Ho Chi Minh City caused a lot of evictions along the way - including Svay Rieng, one of the country's poorest provinces. The big project involved 18 evicted families who were able to negotiate resettlement to a piece of government land nearby, at Akhpivat Chong Prek, where another 19 poor families were already squatting. In the deal the community network negotiated with the governor of Svay Rieng, all 37 households got 180m2 plots for free, with individual land title. Some basic infrastructure was provided by the local government, and the people used an ACCA small project grant of \$2,500 to improve the internal road. The ACCA funds will support an initial round of housing loans (\$1,000 per family) to the first 22 families.

7

Free land for 430 households in SIEM REAP : The government has long planned to evict the 2,000 poor families who live along the Siem Reap River, which winds through the city's major tourist areas, as part of a larger project to beautify this major tourism city. Two years ago, the CDF and community network helped to negotiate a collaborative solution, in which the first 430 families will get about \$400 cash compensation and relocate to free 105m2 plots, with individual title deeds, at three nearby relocation sites provided by the Provincial government, with full infrastructure (partly financed by the Korean developer who will develop the riverbanks), including roads, electricity, water supply, toilets. The ACCA funds (plus some NCDF funds) will be used to give small housing loans to the first 130 families to start building houses on the new land.

8

Free land for 186 households in KEP CITY : Almost 68% of the population of this small coastal city are squatters, many living on public land along roads and beaches, where they face the threat of eviction for tourism and development projects. After a citywide survey done in collaboration with the local authorities, the network negotiated with the Provincial government to provide 1.9 hectares of public land at O'Krosa Village (on the "Social Land Concession" scheme) and some basic infrastructure for resettling 186 families from 11 of these scattered roadside squatters. Each family will get 75m2 plots, on collective community title. The \$40,000 from ACCA will be combined with NDCF funds to provide housing loans to the first 50 families.





In November 2014, Cambodia's Minister of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction visited Thailand, on a study tour organized by ACHR and CODI, where he and other officials met their Thai counterparts and visited community upgrading projects being implemented by communities themselves, with support from the Baan Mankong Program.

Two housing **POLICY** breakthroughs :

Two policies are helping institutionalize the kind of citywide, people-driven and partnership-based slum upgrading that has been on the bubble for 18 years . . .

1 CIRCULAR NUMBER 3 is a central government policy directive that was approved in May 2010 and is closely based on the city-wide community upgrading strategies that have been developed by UPDF and the National Community Savings Network and are being strengthened and applied with ACCA. The policy focuses on improving the housing, living conditions and land security of informal settlements in Cambodian towns and cities, through a flexible, pragmatic and participatory approach. The policy calls for a full survey and mapping of all the settlements in each city, to be carried out by local communities and NGOs, in collaboration with the local authorities, to develop an accurate settlement database. The next step is to determine whether or not the land each settlement occupies is required for other genuine development purposes. The policy then suggests three possible solutions :

- **on-site upgrading** as the first redevelopment option, where no other public development purpose makes a conflict.
- **relocation within the city** to land provided free by the government, only where upgrading *in-situ* is not possible.
- **other solutions**, as appropriate, like land-sharing or alternative housing provided by private-sector developers.

Whatever the solution, the policy makes clear the necessity for extensive discussions between all the key stakeholders (the communities, their networks, local authorities, NGOs and other actors), to develop plans which ensure that the poor's land and housing needs and the city's infrastructure needs are both met. The growing number of UPDF and ACCA supported housing projects (both on-site upgrading and relocation to free government land), are supplying a fast-expanding repertoire of demonstrations of how this new collaborative and city-wide upgrading policy can actually be put into practice, how the projects can be financed, how the land can be acquired, and how the communities and their cities can become development partners in finding secure housing solutions that are truly city-wide.

2 NATIONAL HOUSING POLICY and HOUSING DEPARTMENT : Then, three years ago, in March 2011, ACHR was asked to prepare a concept note for the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction, with suggestions about how to scale up and institutionalize the people-driven upgrading that was already happening under the "Circular 3" policy into a national housing program. The draft concept note from ACHR, which has been under discussion since that time, followed very closely the kind of citywide, community-driven and partnership-based concepts we have been implementing in the ACCA Program, with the added element of community development funds to be set up or strengthened in each city, and the establishment of a national institution to support housing development around the country. In this draft policy, which builds on the strength of the community processes and the community-city partnerships which already exist in many Cambodian cities, the role of the central government is small, and a big space is opened for municipal governments to work with the urban poor communities in their cities to work out citywide solutions to their problems of land and housing and basic infrastructure.

After some time, the government is now ready to set up the country's first housing department, and has asked for ACHR's continued collaboration and support. In January 2014, a team from ACHR and the National Community Development Fund Foundation (NDCF) met with Mr. Im Chhun Lim, the Minister of Land Management, to discuss this. It was agreed that ACHR would continue to assist in the "capacity building" of the Ministry and staff in several ways, including facilitating ministerial and staff study visits to community upgrading projects in Thailand, organizing training workshops in people-driven citywide slum upgrading for government officers, supporting the Ministry to develop a five-year housing plan and developing some pilot projects in collaboration with all four organizations. To seal the deal, an MOU will be signed between the Ministry, CDF Foundation, UN-Habitat and ACHR in December 2014.

This collaboration with the Ministry of Land Management is an important step in boosting the status of the NDCF and the national community savings network as key organizations involved in developing and implementing solutions to the country's big urban poor housing problems and helping these people-driven solutions to be accepted by the larger system in Cambodia.

CAN-CAM: a new technical support system for Cambodia's poor communities

With all these housing projects happening around the country - with and without ACCA support - the need for architects to work with communities and help them develop their housing and settlement upgrading plans has mushroomed. Since 2010, the Community Architects Network in Cambodia (CAN-CAM) has been taking on this role. Besides helping communities to design their housing and upgrading projects, CAN-CAM has linked with universities and technical institutes and organized seminars to draw idealistic young people (both students and professionals) into the country's community development movement.



▲ In November 2011, CAN-CAM held a four-day training workshop in Kep City, which focused on surveying and citywide upgrading as a new direction in Cambodia's community-driven process. This coastal city, just south of Phnom Penh, was a new member of the national urban network. Besides local architects and community leaders, community architects and community builders from Lao PDR, Vietnam and Thailand joined the workshop.



▲ In December 2011, an assessment workshop was organized in Kampong Cham, at the ACCA housing project at Sesib Pir Krong, where the 2-story concrete row-houses, built on land provided free by the provincial government, were now finished. This large gathering of community architects, community leaders, NGO staff and local officials was a chance to reflect on all cost, management, design and social aspects of this important breakthrough project, which was designed and built entirely by community people, with good support from CAN-CAM and the local authorities.