

Action for Environment and Communities (AEC)



**Annual Report
July 2009 to June 2010**

AEC

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Introduction

Action for Environment and Communities (AEC) is a Cambodian NGO that was established in 1998 and registered with the Ministry of Interior in 2005.

Vision: A Cambodian society that is just and humane, with gender equality, where the people's collective action is geared towards empowerment and self-determined development.

Mission: AEC will help socio-economically disadvantaged rural communities improve their life situations through support for advocacy, capacity building of community-based organizations, and short and medium range livelihood development, in partnership with local communities, relevant government institutions, local and international NGOs and other voluntary organizations.

Our work is based on an in-depth understanding of communities and working with them as partners. Our aim is to help communities implement projects themselves, rather than implementing projects on behalf of communities. We also work with the most vulnerable groups within communities. Women and youth are a special focus.

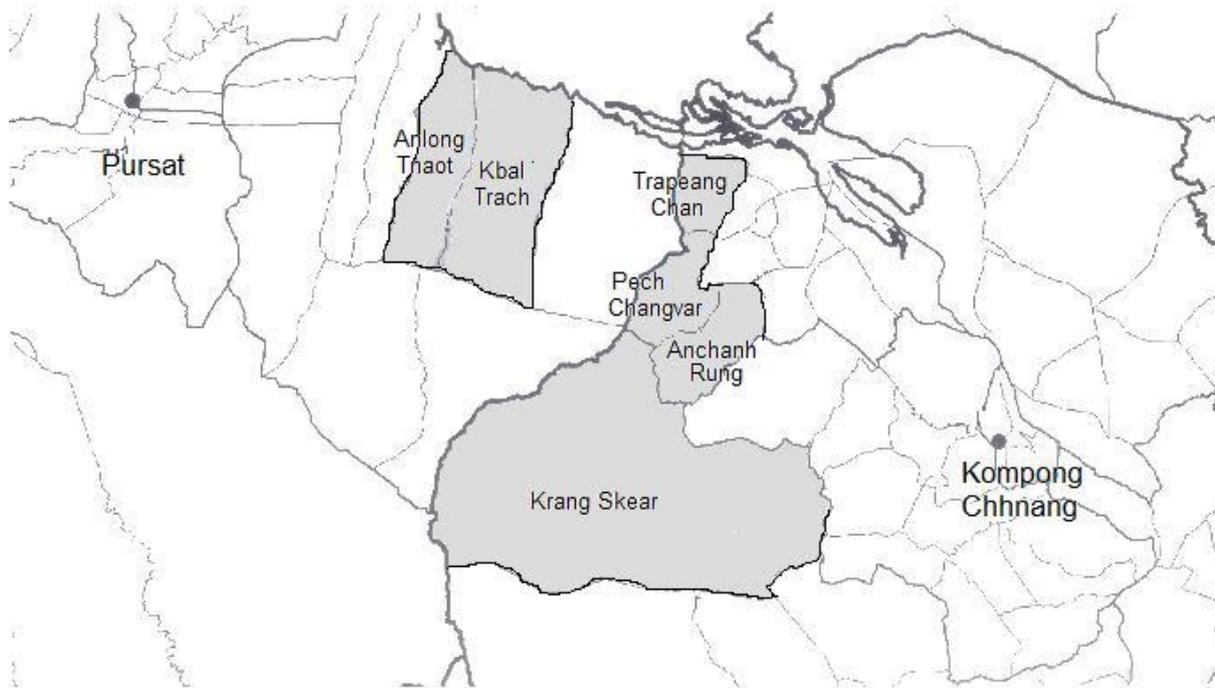
This year, we have undertaken a number of activities to help us grow as an organization, including an external evaluation and strategic plan. They helped us to learn from our past experiences and find ways to improve our work.

Program Area

AEC's programs focus on six communes in Kompong Chhnang and Pursat provinces. The communes are:

- Anchanh Rung, Pech Changva, and Trapeang Chan communes in Boribor district, Kompong Chhnang
- Krang Skear commune in Teuk Phos district, Kompong Chhnang
- Kbal Trach and Anlong Tnaot communes in Krakor district, Pursat.

The program area is shown in the map below.



AEC's Program Areas

Programs

This year, we reorganized our programs into these five programs:

1. Women's empowerment
2. Organizing youth
3. Community development
4. Environment
5. Livelihoods development

Each program is described below.

Women's empowerment

Since AEC was established we have been working to empower women. This has focused on helping individual women suffering from domestic violence and helping women become community leaders. More recently, we have provided training to women.

This year, we organized women's groups in eight villages and provided training on various topics, such as analytical skills. Members of women's groups include women who are facing problems of domestic violence and women who are interested in working together to address their problems and those of their communities. Staff have helped the women develop short- and long-term goals. Women's groups have

been able to help members solve problems, especially domestic violence. They have helped women facing food shortages and helped each other build houses. Women are becoming more confident in speaking out, play a leading role in bringing people together to address community problems, and participate actively in helping their communities solve problems. The women's groups are helping to promote the participation of other groups, such as youth. Women understand their rights better now and are able to ask local authorities to intervene when necessary.

Ms. Voeun is a member of the women's group in Anchanh Rung village. She says that before she joined the group, her husband used to beat her often but she never dared to speak out because she feared it would only make the problem worse. Now she dares to talk about it to others, including her husband, about the problem of domestic violence. Her situation has improved considerably, and her husband no longer beats her.

Organizing youth

Since 2004, we have helped provide scholarships to students to enable them to continue on in school. We have seen this both as a way to help individual families as well as to groom future leaders.

AEC continues to facilitate the scholarship students, and we try to help them get them involved in community activities. Because students have limited time to spend with their communities, this year we have begun also to organize youth who have dropped out of school. In the past, it has been these youth who have caused a lot of problems for their communities – in particular, they get involved in fights whenever there are parties. AEC has now organized eight youth groups in eight villages. By organizing youth groups in different villages, training them, and helping them get to know each other, fighting has reduced considerably. Youth are also involved in a lot of community activities and helping to solve community problems.

We have also worked with local authorities to keep students from dropping out of school, or get them to go back to school.

Community development

An important aspect of our work is to build the capacities of communities to develop themselves. This involves building up community groups that can bring people together to plan and implement activities. In the past, our focus has been on self help groups.

This year, in addition to organizing women's and youth groups, we've also organized village networks, made up of active community members who interested in developing their communities. We have facilitated these networks to analyze

community problems and plan activities to address them. In the future, we expect these networks to formalize and expand, eventually becoming full-fledged community organizations.

Over the years, we have helped communities in different villages get to know each other better, share experiences, and help each other. This year, communities have continued to work together and share experiences on organizing groups and solving community problems. We have also tried to help communities take greater ownership of the networking so that they are in control of it.

We have helped communities build up funds (in rice or cash) that they can use to address community problems. Community members can also borrow to get through hard times or for other needs. This year we have helped communities improve their management of these funds, and some are doing very well.

Environment

From the beginning, environment has been an important focus of AEC’s work, especially protection of forests. For the past five years, we have helped communities through the steps required for registration of community forests, a formal mechanism for communities to participate in forest protection.

This year we helped communities continue this process and submit applications for recognition; four applications have reached the Ministry of Agriculture. Communities are still waiting for a response.



Local communities earn income from forest products

AEC has supported communities in carrying out patrols to stop illegal logging and land-clearing. Communities have become more active in patrolling, but illegal activities continue.

Livelihoods development

In 2008, AEC began to organize savings groups as a way to help families access loans. Each group has between 15 and 28 members. We have also organized women into groups to make crafts using rattan from the local forests, as a way to help them increase their incomes sustainably.

This year, we helped the savings groups improve their management and helped the crafts groups expand and produce new products. The groups are now exploring markets in Phnom Penh for their crafts. New members have asked to join the groups. In addition to providing income, the groups provide an opportunity for community members to meet together and help each other.

Ms. Lon Mak, a member of one of the crafts groups, says that she can earn between 5,000 and 10,000 riels per day from selling crafts. Before joining the group, she didn't make crafts on a regular basis, didn't have a ready market for her products, and earned much less income.

**Balance sheet
as of June 30, 2010**

	2010 USD
ASSETS	
Current assets	
Cash on hand	1,765
Cash in bank	8,135
Cash advance	-
	<u>9,900</u>
Non current assets	
Deposit	40
	<u>40</u>
LIABILITIES	
Current liabilities	
Accounts payable	8,247
	<u>8,247</u>
NET ASSETS	<u><u>1,693</u></u>
FINANCED BY	
Beginning balance	10,256
Excess of income over expenditure	<u>(8,563)</u>
FUND BALANCE, END	<u><u>1,693</u></u>

Income statement

	TOTAL 2010 USD
INCOME	
Fund/grant received	83,075
Interest earned	64
Other income	1,364
	<hr/>
	84,503
EXPENSES	
Personnel cost	26,163
Staff insurance	974
Per diem, allowance	14,858
Travel cost	6,866
Project activities cost	33,117
Equipment and supplies	251
Office expenses	10,836
	<hr/>
	93,065
EXCESS OF EXPENSES OVER INCOME	(8,563)
Fund Balance, Beginning	10,256
Fund Balance Returned	<hr/>
Fund Balance, End	1,693