



Summary Report

**AN INTRODUCTORY VISIT IN  
CAMBODIA**

July 2006

Andrea Hagn for MISEREOR

# Contents

- 3 **Notes on UPDF**  
Getting to know the Urban Poor Development Fund
- 5 **The Threat of Evictions**  
Current issues and activities
- 7 **Meeting Vice-Governor Mann Chhoeurn**  
Notes from a meeting with the UPDF chairman
- 9 **Notes on evicted communities**  
and those who might be evicted
- 11 **Impressions from Community Visits**

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# Notes on UPDF

## Getting to know the Urban Poor Development Fund

### The Team

*Mr Sok Visal* – formerly working with the Urban Resource Centre (URC) as an architect; now working on documentation, research, newsletters and more

*Ms Sreymeach* – accountant; working in UPDF's administration (follow-up of credits)

*Mr Sopheak* – economist; working in UPDF's upgrading programmes

*Mr Sophanna Roth* – architect; upgrading programmes team leader

*Mr Choronay* – lawyer; savings and credit activities

**and many community leaders**

### ACHR Supporters

*Mr Somsak Phonphakdee* – ACHR national coordinator for Cambodia, managing UPDF together with Sok Visal, more than 20ys-experience with poor communities in Thailand

*Mr Woottipan* – used to work with UCDO (now: CODI), founding member of ACHR; part time assistant of Somsak, every ten days in Cambodia for ten days

### UPDF management

It has been – and still is – a difficult task to identify a manager capable of dealing with Cambodian leaders of society and authorities as well as with the grassroots. Currently UPDF is managed by Somsak Phonphakdee and Sok Visal.

### List of UPDF activities

#### **Community Organizing**

Networking, Exchange activities

#### **Savings and credits**

*Engaging communities beyond finances: "savings collect money, knowledge and people"*

Loans, Follow-up of repayments, Accounting, Deposits  
Welfare

#### **Upgrading**

*Mobilizing people by improving physical infrastructure*

Reaching land security by using pro-active means, for example land sharing

Infrastructure

Greenery and Cleaning-Up

Housing Design

#### **Information**

Documentation and Booklets

Research

Mapping

#### **Administration**

Communication and Reporting, Office

Accounting and Finances

Guests

Board Meetings



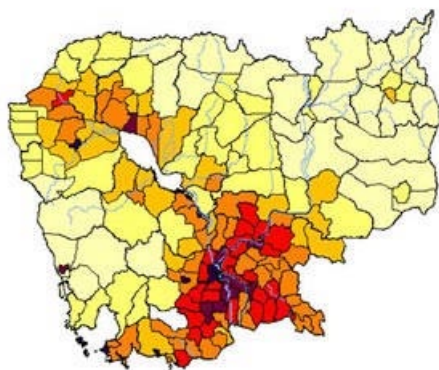
*Gregor Meerpohl discussing with Woottipan. Gary Lee and others listening.*



*Somsak (left), Sophanna and Gary. Gregor Meerpohl at the UPDF office.*



WHICH OTHER CITIES? WHAT KIND OF NETWORK?  
HOW MANY FAMILIES?



Map of Cambodia indicating the population density in the country. Taken from the website of the Municipality of Phnom Penh. As well as map below, indicating the population density in the Municipality of Phnom Penh (in 1998).



To apply for a **loan**, ten families must form a group and cannot exceed 500 US\$ per family for housing improvement. To apply for a loan families are required to participate in savings schemes and must deposit 10% as a security.

### Sangkat Mechanisms

### UPDF in the Provinces

UPDF is working in 14 cities in Cambodia bringing together 79 communities from other cities than Phnom Penh with 1000 families which plan to formalize their own funds and to upgrade their settlements. They currently form three regional networks within a national network.

To these cities belong:

- *Sisophon* – community network and fund (established in 2006)
- *Oddar Meanchey* – community network
- *Poipet city* – community network
- *Siem Reap city* – community network
- *Preah Vihear* – community network

### General Information on Phnom Penh communities

A survey in 2003 showed that there are 569 informal settlements in 76 *Sangkats* (communes) in seven *Khans* (districts) within the Municipality of Phnom Penh.

So far 96 communities in 34 Sankats have been supported to upgrade their settlements by UPDF – this equals a total of 10'851 families or 34'200 people. A further 30 settlements might have profited by other schemes (such as the PUPR).

Involved were:

- 220'821 US\$ - the total grant for infrastructure
- 761'321 US\$ - the total loan volume
- 21'618 US\$ - people's contribution in savings
- 1'225 people involved in construction

### Types of UPDF loans

- **Housing loans** have two main sources: the original UPDF loan fund along with the Prime Minister's monthly contribution of 5 million Riel since 2000 and funds from the Cambodian Red Cross
- **Transportation loans** for vehicles to set up transport systems for relocated poor families usually have low interest rates
- **Income generation loans** to start small-scale business activities, especially in resettlements

So far **33 Sangkat Mechanisms** have been formed in **seven Khans** to identify the people's real needs and take democratic decisions at the lowest formal or administrative level, which is called *Sangkat*. A *Sangkat Mechanism* a description for a community network at the *Sangkat*-level which enables community groups to take decisions on their settlements (for example on upgrading or credit issues) without running a high risk of dominant leaders directing development according to their interests.

# The threat of Evictions

## Current issues and activities

Even three years after the World-Habitat-Day-2003 promise of **Prime Minister Hun Sen** to upgrade **100 settlements per year** (or 500 within five years) and despite intense upgrading (about 120 settlements have been upgraded) and other initiatives such as *land sharing*, evictions have not stopped. Evictions thus still cause many discussions and worries.

Among the many reasons for evictions are strong business interests (Phnom Penh is a city celebrating and suffering Globalization), lack of civil society influence on city development and lack of transparency in city development, as well as lack of transparency on responsibilities for state actions such as evictions.

In other words, while **UPDF** together with **ACHR** is working hard on establishing a sustainable working relationship with the City of Phnom Penh to **prevent forced evictions**, it remains difficult to work with responsible authorities which are not within "hierarchical reach" of the Municipality of Phnom Penh. So despite an established working relationship with **Vice Governor Mann Chhoeurn** who is chairman of UPDF, it remains difficult to truly engage national government.

Currently a group of UPDF members is surveying conditions in the resettlement camps **Tropeing Angchan** and **Phum Andoung**. While *Tropeing Angchan* was planned and houses former 'structure owners' of the *Samok Chab* area in *Basaac* after receiving some infrastructure and planning, *Phum Andoung* was a last-minute action to house 'renters' of the *Samok Chab* area in *Basaac*. Due to ad-hoc action, the area did not receive any planning or infrastructure. Major problems are flooding, lack of toilets, lack of food (especially rice) and lack of safe water along with lack of jobs and affordable transportation to the city.

Due to ad-hoc and violent evictions, formerly established savings schemes got scattered – people will need time to reform and access their savings from their previous savings schemes while establishing new savings groups in their new locations.

Due to evictions people generally feel very insecure. It is very important for them to share experiences and look for proactive ways to **avoid forced evictions** in the near future – such as *land sharing* and *upgrading* which can demonstrate the power of poor people – **without fighting the government**.

The pilot land sharing project **Borei Keila** demonstrates that *land sharing* is a viable alternative to evictions. Other communities visit the site and community to learn, along with other developers and officials. Around ten to twenty people visit *Borei Keila* every day.



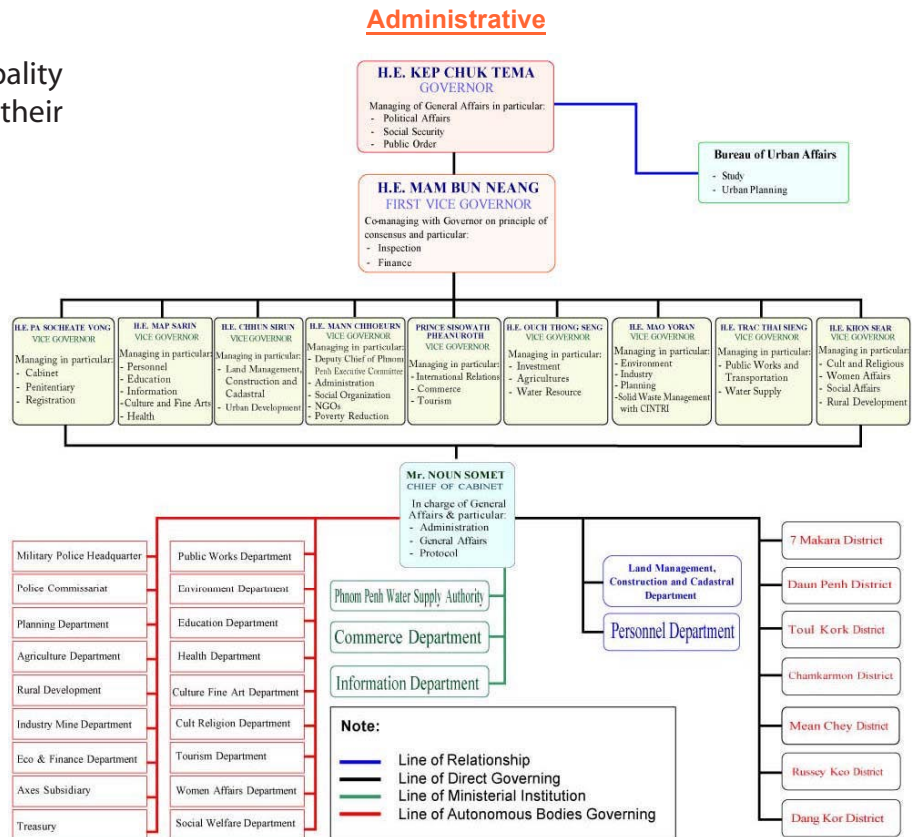
*Houses in Tropeing Angchan (top) and Phum Andoung*



*Visiting Borei Keila*



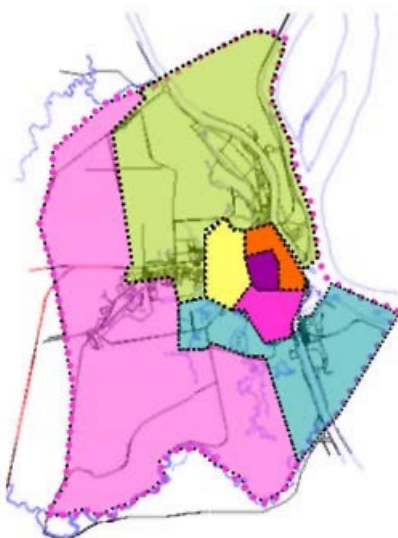
Organisation Chart of the Municipality of Phnom Penh as taken from their website.



### A Housing Policy for Phnom Penh

The Municipality claims on its website for a Housing Policy: "Following the rapid growth of about 10.000 families per year, so the city need to:

- 1-To promote the investment on housing development esp. for the poor.
- 2-To improve roads and other infrastructure system in the suburb area that could absorb 90% of urban growth.
- 3-To implement the land reform and social land concession, land sharing and relocation with private partners.
- 4-To encourage the development of dwellings for lease.
- 5-To encourage the poor communities to rehabilitate their old settlements with the low rate loan and banking system reform."



This is a map of the Municipality of Phnom Penh, taken from their website <http://www.phnompenh.gov.kh/>

Phnom Penh in figures:

|                          |                             |
|--------------------------|-----------------------------|
| Total area               | 375 Km <sup>2</sup>         |
| Inhabitants              | 1'300'300                   |
| Yearly population growth | 4% or about 10'000 families |

Administrative Divisions:  
 7 Districts - *Khans*  
 76 Communes - *Sangkats*  
 637 Villages

# Meeting Vice-Governor Mann Chhoeurn

## Notes from a meeting with the UPDF chairman

Vice-Governor Mr Mann Chhoeurn is one of eight Vice-Governors at the Municipality of Phnom Penh (MPP). His *current* responsibilities are the Poor, (international-)NGOs and water supply. The Governor of the MPP is Mr Kep Chuk Tema.

Nationally there are 24 Governors (each responsible for one province) – hierarchically they are tied to the Ministry of Interior.

The Municipality of Phnom Penh has organised its administration in *Khans* (districts), *Sangkats* (communes) and villages. Within the MPP there are seven *Khans* and 76 *Sangkats*. Leaders on the Khan-level are appointed.

Since 2002 there are elections in the 76 *Sangkats* of the MPP. Villages and communities (administrative sub-units below village-level) are organised informally.

The Minister of Interior has requested to give informal, resettled communities the administrative status of villages. *Community action plans* will be transferred to the village-level and from there to the Sangkat-level for approval (city development strategy).

The new *Land Law* requires that a families receive individual land titles after having spent five years in their resettlement site – now *Khan chiefs* are requested to survey all resettled communities within the MPP.

On the World Habitat Day in October 2006 in Phnom Penh, the Prime Minister Hun Sen is requested to cut the ribbon of the pilot land sharing project *Borei Keila*. For the same event, a list of upgraded settlements (which have been there for more than five years) is being prepared by UPDF to request land titles for these families, too.

The *Ministry for Land Management and Housing* is supported by the German GTZ with a project on land management (the so-called 'L-Project'). The Minister for Land Management is Mr Imchhun Lim. His Secretary of State is the former Governor of Phnom Penh, Mr Chea Sophara who signed the original Memorandum of Understanding between the Municipality, the Urban Poor Development Fund and the Asian Coalition of Housing Rights.



Somsak P., G. Meerpohl, Mann Chhoeurn, A. Hagn and Somsook B. of ACHR

## EVENTS at the World Habitat Day 2006

Somsok Phonphakdee (left) and Vice-Governor Mr Mann Chhoeurn (right)



## **Evictions and Relocations**

We were discussing the location of resettlements with Mr Mann Chhoeurn. So far resettled families are moved far from their previous location and jobs. There is no public transport available and often no schools or other social infrastructure.

*Why can't poor communities be allowed to stay closer to the city?* – Mr Mann Chhoeurn explained the future extension of the city limits. By 2020 the MPP area will cover 700 km<sup>2</sup> instead of today's 375 km<sup>2</sup>. Communities won't be that far outside very soon. Besides, the MPP is not autonomous. For example to buy land for resettlements, Prime Minister Hun Sen must agree and order the Ministry of Finance to issue the required money.

### ***Monivong AB Eviction***

When asked about the forced eviction in *Monivong AB* and why the MPP could not stop it, Mr Mann Chhoeurn explained that in this case the land belongs to the Ministry of Interior – which is hierarchically unreachable from the MPP – thus there was no action against it possible from his desk.

### ***Samok Chab / Basaac Evictions***

Concerning the latest evictions in Basaac, Mr Mann Chhoeurn said about 1'352 families used to live in their own houses, as 'structure owners' in the *Samok Chab* area in Basaac. When the land was bought by a private sector company – which wanted to get rid off the people – the usual procedure would have been a court case consuming time and creating tensions. So it was a joint decision of Khan chiefs and municipality to request the private sector company to purchase land and service it (with roads, drainage, water, etc.) for the affected families to create a *win-win* situation for all.

### ***Tropeing Angchan Resettlement***

Of the 1'352 families, around 1'200 agreed to move to the new and serviced relocation site in *Tropeing Angchan* which is 24 kilometres from the former habitat in Basaac. In *Tropeing Angchan* each family received plots of 5x12 metres. Then outside-communities saw their chance to access land, having nothing to loose: within two nights, 1'600 families invaded the old site and claimed to be former renters thus eligible for secure land as well. In a new survey 364 families were identified as former renters of the Basaac area. They were relocated to *Phum Andoung* which is 15 kilometres from their previous settlement. They received plots of 4x6 metres on an unserviced piece of land as there was no time to prepare anything.

### ***Phum Andoung Resettlement***



# Notes on evicted communities

and those who might be evicted

The absence of jobs and lack of adequate, affordable transportation to the city centre represent major obstacles to resettled families: One of the first positive examples for relocations, *Borai Sithipheap* documents the challenge for families to cope with long distances consuming up to 2.50 US\$ per way; as an average, a factory worker in Phnom Penh earns about 35 US\$ per month.

There are incidents of local businessmen buying off plots in resettlement sites and selling them – while the entitled family moves back to the city centre. The future land title which will be handed over after five years of permanent stay in the resettlement is attractive.

UPDF communities around the lake *Boeung Kak* in the city centre are afraid of possible evictions and feel uninformed by the authorities. To prevent evictions, they started to mobilize people around *land sharing* and *in-situ upgrading*. Thus groups from *Boeung Kak* are learning how to practice land sharing, looking at the current land sharing pilot projects such as *Borei Keila* which is seen as very attractive by local communities.

The *Sangkat authority* provides for their transportation.

To prevent eviction, they also started to upgrade their houses and settlements by using UPDF loans. On the World Habitat Day 2006, UPDF plans to present a list of upgraded communities to request Prime Minister Hun Sen to provide for land titles five years after successful upgrading.

According to UPDF there are **96 communities** which have been supported by UPDF to upgrade their settlements since 2003. These settlements are situated in seven different types of locations:

- 28 along rivers (with 855 families saving)
- 7 along railways (with 320 families saving)
- 6 along roads (with 823 families saving)
- 2 at lake sides (with 245 families saving)
- 2 on public land (with 505 families saving)
- 28 in old villages (with 883 families saving)
- 10 resettled (with 413 families saving)

The main fear of communities in *Khan Russey Keo* is that a company might buy their land and evict them despite living on old village land. As all land titles are not formally registered yet (in Cambodia), poor communities in the city centre suspect they are the first to be evicted when a private investor claims to own a plot or have bought the plot.

In regard to Phnom Penh's Governor Kep Chuk Tema's letter to Misereor dating June 2006 where he says that "for private

## *Jobs and Transportation*

*Borai Sithipheap*: a resettlement of the former *Dey Krahom* slum which evolved of one of the first proposals of UPDF for land sharing in 2003. According to ACHR, about 20% of the former population of *Dey Krahom* refuse resettling "to far away site" while most people were happy with their new houses after seeing them, accepting the difficult job and transport situation feeling "better off than before".

## **People's Alternatives to Eviction: Land Sharing and Upgrading**

### ***World Habitat Day 2006: Advocacy for Upgrading as a way to secure land titles***

### ***Locations of upgraded communities which were supported by UPDF***

Fear of eviction due to business interests: importance of securing land tenure for old villages

Need to formalize village land in an inclusive pro-poor city development p

land or private state land the authority has [the] obligation to protect [the] legal rights of the owner" I recommend to quickly work towards applying this rule on village land, too and establish secure land tenure for old settlements. The city of Mumbai for example has formalized informally grown fishing villages and includes them as special zones in the city development plan.

### Special Situation: Roof Top Slums

Members of communities living on roof tops in *Khan Prampi Magara* are afraid of evictions, too. They have no secure tenure but started to think about land sharing as an option to negotiate with owners.

The photograph below documents the desperate situation of families who moved to **Phum Andoung** - hoping to access a plot and secure tenure. News of resettling renters lead to roughly 2'000 families occupy the unserviced area. A rough survey counts 1'610 families.

**Phum Andoung** did not receive any infrastructure as the municipality did not plan to resettle any renters from the *Samok Chab* area in Basaac. Just shortly before eviction began, 364 'real renters' were identified and supposed to receive a plot of 4x6 metres each. The whole area offers space for 777 plots.



## Impressions from community visits

### In-Situ Upgrading >>>

#### >>> Rous Reay Community

##### Basic Informations:

- 116 families: 332 adults (150 males, 182 females)
- 84 houses
- Occupations: greengrocers, construction workers, sewing clothes and shoes (at home), government officers, police men and drivers
- Average income: 1-3 US\$ per day

##### Savings scheme:

- The savings started in 1999, 81 families are saving
- The total amount saved is around 8'500'000 Riel (213 US\$)

In Rous Reay, the total investment for infrastructure in 2003 was 10'000 US\$ - they were spent on 290 metres of road and 360 metres of drainage, house paint, a community fence of 130 metres and 120 trees. All work was done by the community people.

A total number of 35 families took a housing loan, all of which came up to 14'950 US\$.

These first investments of 10'000 US\$ initiated the widespread of community development also in its neighbourhood. Thus it was very effective, not only because community people construct far cheaper than contractors.

There are daily, weekly and monthly savings. Savings are the first condition for UPDF (housing) loan applications. Savings are used in moments of crisis. There are emergency / crisis funds lending money without interest. There are loans for income generation with an interest of 12 % per year.

Rous Reay does not yet have title deeds or any other land tenure – the community is living on public land.



Andrea Hagn for MISEREOR - August 2006

## Resettlements >>>

### visited in July:

>>> **Tropeing Angchan:** pages 5 and 8

>>> **Phum Andoung:** pages 5, 8 and 10

*More Information on the Sambok Chab evictions and resettlements can be found:*

*10'000 US\$ of infrastructure investments and 35 housing loans*



*Savings*

*Land tenure*



## In-Situ Upgrading >>>

### >>> Nesat 10 community

This community of fishermen, moto drivers, garment and construction workers in *Khan Russey Keo* is situated along the river Tonle Sap. It seems to have been in this location since 1979.

There are 140 families in *Nesat 10* – in addition about 80 boat houses with families of Vietnamese origin. These families seem not to be allowed to settle on land.

Which raises a question: how can **housing rights of 'boat people'** be claimed and clarified? Boat people seem to play a big role in Cambodia, so it should be an important aspect of a future master plan or housing policy for Phnom Penh.

Savings scheme:

- 60 families are members of the savings scheme. They saved so far, according to their statements in July:
- 6'000'000 Riel in an UPDF account
- 4'000'000 Riel in a 'federation account' (which seems to be at the Khan Russey Keo level)

There are 88 communities organised in *Khan Russey Keo* today – a survey in 2003 showed 79 settlements. In *Khan Russey Keo* there are 12 *Sangkats* with their own *Sangkat Mechanism*.

A team of federation members and the local *Sangkat* authority *Chraing Cham Resh II* develop ideas how to improve the area of *Nesat 10* together. This local *Sangkat Mechanism* needs to approve of all plans inside the group first - a tool to take decisions in a democratic, decentralised way.

After decisions are taken by the community, they present their concepts and ideas or applications to the *Khan Unit*.

They started to upgrade their settlement in two stages from inside – first by constructing a 2 meter wide and 280 meter long concrete lane and drainage parallel to the river. Then by developing houses in four groups by using UPDF housing loans.



Boat houses in Nesat 10

*Community Organisation in Khan Russey Keo: the Khan Unit responds to decisions taken by Khan Russey Keo's 12 Sangkat Mechanisms*

*Upgrading from Inside - 2 Steps:  
Road+Drainage & Housing Loans*



## **Land Sharing >>>**

>>> Borei Keilah

This is the land sharing pilot project in Phnom Penh  
7'000'000 US\$ will be spend for ten buildings housing 1774 families on two hectares – this is a whole village and will be organised as one Sangkat

The community used to live on land belonging to the Ministry of Education and were offered 4.6 ha of the total plot size of 10 ha (?) as social land concession (?)

Of their 4.6 ha they gave 2.6 ha to a private investor in exchange with these ten building to be delivered to them free of charge

see ACHR website (Maurice's web story!)

