Development and Partnership in Action (DPA) in collaboration with partner organizations and donors organized a meeting on September 22, 2008 on Extractive Industry Social and Environmental Impacts (EISEI) at La Parranda Hotel in Phnom Penh with 69 international and national participants, supported by Trocaire.

According to Mr. Mam Sambath, DPA Executive Director, and also a speaker at the meeting, "This is the fourth meeting of its series. The purpose of today’s meeting is to finalize the Terms of Reference (TOR) in order to set up the national level Network on EISEI in Cambodia with active participation from CSOs which are varied in their nature and approaches to advocacy, and to exchange information from member organizations on their Extractive Industry Network."

The last meeting with participation from the community representatives, civil society organizations and donors is to provide experiences and broader information by sharing the mineral exploration and extraction issue in Cambodia amongst Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) who have shared common concerns about extractive industry impacts, to build momentum for developing a national network-working group on mining in Cambodia, and to identify the next steps for how civil society will work together.

In his presentation, Mr. Kim Sereikith, DPA Advocacy Officer, said, "After... More on page 4

Villagers from Kamphun village, Kamphun commune, Sesan district of Stung Treng province are expressing their delight to Development and Partnership in Action (DPA) and the European Union (EU) with the water filter support activity which has so far improved the health standard of the villagers.

Twenty of the poorest households, identified by the local authority and the Kamphun village development committee, were selected to receive one filter each from the DPA Integrated Community Development (ICD) program in Stung Treng in 2008. Each selected household had to contribute 10,000 Riel to own the filter.

Not only was the contribution not criticised, it was warmly welcomed by the selected households who saw it not as a business but as a good and kind way to claim their ownership over the filter.

"It is a good way of ownership. With the money... More on page 4
Farmer Association Bring New Hopes

By Lim Pharoeun

Thanks to the support and guidance from Development and Partnership in Action (DPA), the Farmer’s Association (FA) in Doung village, Chum Kiri district of Kampot province, which is composed of 50 rice farmer households, has been functioning progressively well and had some very recognisable achievements.

Established in January 2007, the FA started with funds amounting to 1,840,000 Riel as contributions from its members, following the seminar organised by DPA Integrated Community Development program in Kampot (ICD-KP) to introduce the concept of the FA and to present the successes and experiences of various FAs across the country. Other village meeting for farmers from three different saving groups (SHG) in Doung village were held before the joint decision to form an FA was made.

“The objectives of our FA are to strengthen solidarity within the village, to quantify available jobs, and to stabilise the prices of the agricultural products by stopping price fluctuations that are a result of external merchants’ intervention. Our FA also aims to make the association as well as its members capable of effectively using the capital within the village,” said Khieu Ann, 70, head of the FA and a respected elder in the village.

“Within one and a half years we have made some important progress as a result of our own effort as well as DPA’s. They helped build our capacity and enabled as to run the association smoothly,” added Ann.

At the last harvest the FA made a profit of 161,000 Riel. They first bought 2,739 kilograms of rice from farmer members within the village at 1,894,000 Riel. Within only one or two months they were able to sell the rice at 2,055,000 Riel.

“The profit was kept within the FA, and members from the association could borrow it for use at a low interest rate,” Keat Chanthou, 28, the FA accountant said.

“It’s a way to increase revenue for the association and also a way to help individual members of the association. They don’t have to borrow the money elsewhere. The money in the association is used for the good of its members. They just have to pay a very low interest rate because we have trust in one another,” added Chanthou.

All the FA members have been trained by DPA to develop skills to make compost fertilizers, to use the System of Rice Intensification, to grow crops and vegetables effectively, to raise poultry and fish, and even to manage the association.

“DPA has been helping a lot. They also provided fingerlings and bean seeds to the association. We are grateful to them and will continue to strengthen the association, especially by using the capital responsibly to win trust from all the members” said Ann, adding that the association would still be functioning well in the next three years when DPA phases out.
Recognising the potential and the fast depletion of the natural resources in Mondulkiri, Development and Partnership in Action (DPA) and ADHOC had organised a workshop on the use of natural resources on May 2, 2008 in Sen Monorom, Mondulkiri province, under the chairmanship of the deputy governor, Lach Sim Oun.

The aim of the workshop was to disseminate information concerning the benefits of the natural resources in order to ensure the improved and effective use of the resources, and to build the capacity of different communities to guard the natural resources to ensure sustainability. Villagers, some representatives from concerned governmental departments and staff of community-based organisations were invited to the workshop.

Mondulkiri is very rich in natural resources. Forest land covers one hectare of the province, and hard minerals such as gold and gems exist in all five districts of the province. Both the state and the individuals benefit from this resource abundance.

“All these resources are very advantageous to the development of our country such as building infrastructure and other constructions,” said deputy governor Lach Sim Oun from a state authority’s point of view.

On the other hand, Nhanh Sareth, 34, a Gati villager and a mother of three children, pointed that her family depended solely on the resource. “We take fruits, vegetables, and wood from the forest, and fish from the pond in the forest. Our food, our shelters, and our income are all from the forest,” said Sareth.

The current alarming problem is the speedy depletion of the resources. Some nomadic agriculture, as historically practiced in the land, has turned into an opportunity to clear more and more forest land for sales. Multi-national mining companies have been mushrooming in the past ten years. There are now 17 registered private companies in the province that are seeking licenses to start taking resources from the land.

“The problem for my family now is the fact that while the Chinese company is exploring, at the same time they destroy the forest where I used to collect my food,” said Sareth, adding that the workshop had helped her understand the importance of forming a committee to protect her community’s common resources against the invasion of the private company.

Kol Midi, 24, an ADHOC staff member, felt optimistic that the workshop would help change the attitude of those who use and depend on the natural resources for their livelihood. "I hope after this workshop they would be more responsible for the natural resources and would disseminate the knowledge to the other villagers,” said Midi.
many discussions and meeting, our objective or goal is to cooperatively work at the national level. Today, we want to create a committee and make sure that we are all, the representatives of civil society organizations as well as communities at provinces, willing and aiming to join this network. All 25 organizations listed in the ToR have been listed in the group since the previous meeting on May 30th, 2008; however, today we would also like to reconfirm whether they are still to be part of the network."

The objective of this network is to benefit communities and encourage them to express their concerns, problems, social and economic impacts from extractive industry activities. When national network is strong enough, it will be possible to consider collaborating with extractive industry on social and economic impacts networking.

"Mineral extraction is becoming the most important concern of all stakeholders and especially the communities. However, setting up a national level network is another crucial step to be taken, so that we can work together and find ways of responding to concerns of people in remote areas and to reduce the social and economic impacts from extractive industry," said Sambath.

"We paid 10,000 Riel and we can now keep healthy for the whole year. In contrast, if we pay the same amount for medicine, our health might only be better for a short while,“ added Yuth.

Yuth is the head of an eight-member family. The family is not only poor, but Yuth, the head, was blind from measles since he was seven years old. They live in a ragged house and have no rice field, no farmland, and no cattle.

Yuth spent 30 years of his life as a military musician in Stung Treng town before moving back into his home village, Kamphun. In town he had suffered worse living conditions which he did not want to recall.

Now, though still living in poor living conditions, Yuth is at least able to keep his family together in the home village. The filter that they received from the ICD program has at least brought new smiles to the family.

"We produce filtered water from that filter every day and keep it for drinking. I did not believe it at first, but I still just followed what DPA staff had instructed me to do when I first received the filter. After a while my family and I like the filtrated water because the water is very clean after being filtered. Even the previously dirty water can become so clean," said Yuth.

"My children especially really love the water as it is odorless and resembles pure water and now there is less diarrhoea,” he added, beaming.