

Weapons security project in Preah Vihear province 2004

Implementation by	EU ASAC (police equipment provision) Helen Keller International (police family assistance) TCDAI (police family assistance)
Funding by	UK (police equipment provision) EU ASAC (police family assistance)
Location	Preah Vihear province

Two components of the 2003 Weapons for Development project in Preah Vihear province were continued in 2004.

- The project retained US\$ 2,962.68 on its UK budget because no contingencies occurred. EU ASAC was requested by the British Embassy to search for activities on which to spend this money in a constructive way, in keeping with the spirit of the original project in Preah Vihear.
- The police family support project in co-operation with Helen Keller International (HKI) was a one-year project, running from September 2003 until September 2004. This project is still ongoing.

1. Provision of police equipment

1.1 Background:

EU ASAC considered its priorities: Security Sector Reform was the component that was most needed to support voluntary weapons collection. The Preah Vihear 2003 project was the only Voluntary Weapons Collection Project (VWCP) in Cambodia that received a complete police support package. Police support consists of three elements:

- Police training;
- Provision of police equipment
- Police family support.

Some provinces received only police training, while other provinces¹ also received bicycles, an element of the provision of equipment. Police family support was only provided in Preah Vihear in an innovative co-operation with Helen Keller International². This project is still ongoing.

EU ASAC had implemented the VWCP with the Japan Centre for Conflict Prevention, which realised public awareness activities, gathered weapon collection statistics and implemented the development projects. In 2002, JCCP had implemented the same project in Choan Khsant, Tbaeng Meanchey and Sangkum Thmey districts in Preah Vihear province. Police support did not form part of this project.

¹ Battambang, Pursat and the municipality of Pailin

² Paid from the EU ASAC budget

The US\$ 2,962 that was left to spend was too small an amount to carry out a successful project in these districts. Among all the options, installation of lockable weapons racks in the police stations seemed the most effective solution. These weapons racks are used to store police service weapons when those weapons were not needed for the protection of the community. The provincial police commissioner of Preah Vihear province concurred with this choice, as did a representative of the British Embassy.



Police service weapons are locked in weapons racks

The ability of the police chief to lock the weapons in the racks lays on him the responsibility for the use and abuse of those weapons. It guarantees that police officers can only use those weapons while in service and with knowledge of the police chief. This should prevent police men from taking their weapons home, or visiting bars or karaoke with his weapons.

The police commissioner requested 11 weapons racks for 24 weapons and 17 weapons racks for 12 weapons. The small weapons racks were intended for administrative police posts (in the communes); the large weapons racks for the police inspection (district police) and the provincial weapons management office.

1.2. Implementation:

Because of the approaching monsoon season, no bidding was organised nor were different quotations compared. Instead, the production and installation was assigned to the same company that installed the weapons racks in the 2003 project on condition that the price was not higher than the price in 2003. In fact, the price was slightly below the 2003 price and an additional small reduction in price was bargained to match the amount of the unspent UK budget.

The weapons racks were produced and installed in the months April and May 2004 according to the following table:

Choam Khsant district		
Police inspector of Choam Khsant district	3 racks	24 weapons
Police post of Choam Khsant commune	1 racks	12 weapons
Police post of Tuek Krohom commune	1 racks	12 weapons
Police post of Pring Thum commune	1 racks	12 weapons
Police post of Rumdaoh Srae commune	1 racks	12 weapons
Police post of Kantuat commune	1 racks	12 weapons
Police post of Yeang commune	1 racks	12 weapons

Tbaeng Meanchey district		
Police inspector of Tbaeng Meanchey district	3 racks	24 weapons
Police post of Kompong Pranak commune	1 racks	12 weapons
Police post of Pal Hal commune	1 racks	12 weapons
Police post of Chhean Mukh commune	1 racks	12 weapons
Police post of Pou commune	1 racks	12 weapons
Police post of Prame commune	1 racks	12 weapons
Police post of Preah Khleang commune	1 racks	12 weapons
Sangkum Thmey district		
Police inspector of Sangkum Thmey district	2 racks	24 weapons
Police post of Chamroeun commune	1 racks	12 weapons
Police post of Ro Ang commune	1 racks	12 weapons
Police post of Sdau commune	1 racks	12 weapons
Police post of Phnom Tbeng II commune	1 racks	12 weapons
Police post of Ronak Ser commune	1 racks	12 weapons
Provincial police		
Provincial weapons management office	3 racks	24 weapons

After paying the contractor the agreed sum of US\$ 2,962.98 there was no further outstanding balance on the funds granted by the British Embassy.

2. Police family support



Homestead gardens provide food and additional income to the communities

The police family support component of the project started in September 2003. It uses police families to train and support the whole community with a homestead food production (HFP) and nutrition education programme in the target areas to improve micronutrient status among young Cambodian children and women through improved year-round availability and consumption of micronutrient-rich foods.

The programme is implemented in three steps:

1. Training of a local NGO by HKI. Staff of the organisation TCDAI received this training in Phnom Penh.
2. Training of the police family and establishment of Village Model Gardens and Village Model Poultry Farms
3. Training and demonstration support from the VMG/VMPF for village households with provision of some inputs such as seeds or poultry birds.

The staff of TCDAI is also responsible for organising and implementing a nutrition education component in conjunction with the homestead food production activities.



Nutrition training complements the project

As VMG/VMPF owner, the police family receives various assistance from HKI and TCDAI, which includes training, seeds, chicks, ducklings, irrigation, gardening tools and technical assistance. Additional benefits include the ability of the VMG/VMPF owners to generate income from the HFP products and improved family access to vegetables, spices, herbs, fruit, eggs and poultry meat.



The VMPF in Kampot village,

Through these activities, the police families establish a strong relationship with the household gardens and household poultry producers. This relationship affects the trust of the community in the police families and opens channels of communication which were previously non-existent.

3. Effects of the project

3.1 Monitoring the effects:



Interview with the villagers

Between 8 and 12 June 2004, EU ASAC programme officer visited the province to inspect the installation of the weapons racks and to evaluate the effect of the programme on the security situation. He visited various police posts and police inspection offices in the districts of Roveang, Tbaeng Meanchey and Kulen. Other districts were inaccessible. A planned visit to Choam Khsant district had to be abandoned after the car got stuck for hours in the mud. Instead, the team paid a surprise visit to Khum Thmey commune in Kulen district.

Villagers and police families were interviewed. The programme officer also spoke to policemen, the chiefs of the police posts, police inspectors and the deputy provincial police commissioner in charge of weapons management.

3.2. Effects on security:

All interviewees agreed that security has drastically improved since the beginning of the project. No crimes by means of weapons were reported. The police inspector of Roveang attributed this to the improved capacity of the police in regard to transport and communication and better co-operation from the community³. Villagers believe that the absence of weapons is the reason for the improvement in security.

“Domestic violence still occurs, but now people don’t use weapons anymore. They rather use bamboo sticks” said the police chief of Khum Thmey, commenting on the security situation.

In the weapons racks in his police post, there were four weapons locked away, though the post has six policemen. Two policemen were on duty with forestry officials, the chief explained. Forestry officials had requested the



The police chief of Phum Thmey provided information about security

³ His district is beneficiary of the Nutrition and Homestead Food Production project with Helen Keller International.

provincial police permission to use weapons, but this permission was not granted⁴. Therefore, policemen have to accompany the forestry officials when on duty.

Illegal logging is a problem. People found carrying illegal logs are fined. They sometimes complain that logging firms or VIPs are allowed to cut trees without being fined. But most people go to the forest to collect resin from the trees. Asked if they have to pay forestry officials for collecting resin, the police chief answered: “Not often and not very much.”

3.3. Effects on Police-Community relations:

Improvement in police community relations was notably a success in the areas where the police family assistance project is being implemented. The wife of the police inspector of Roveang district, living in Kampot village and running a VMPF commented on the disease of two of her chickens: “We started vaccinating all the chickens in the village. A bottle of vaccine costs 5,000 Riel (US\$ 1.25) and is enough for 100 chickens. Before the programme I knew nothing about vaccinations, now I became the expert in the village”



Villagers participate in the cooking demonstration

All villagers agree that communication with the police families had increased. Daily they meet with their trainers and discuss not only the nutrition programme but also other concerns. The nutrition trainings are an ideal occasion for this. Between fifteen and twenty families with young children join the meeting. After training, a demonstration meal is cooked with food from the VMG or VMPF. The food is distributed to the children after the demonstration.



The village children enjoy a healthy and nutritious meal

Both the police families and the villagers expressed their will to continue after the end of the programme because “they have better food and they can earn a lot of money”. Before the programme, people did not grow their own vegetables but bought them on

⁴ According to the police chief, a new decree will allow forestry officials to carry weapons in the near future.

the market. Now they sell the surplus produce. Income gained by this varies. The lowest amounts reported were 5,000 to 10,000 (US\$ 2.50 to 5.00) Riel per month. One villager claimed to have earned 200,000 Riel (US\$ 50) in three months.

The VMG in Kampot village purchased and installed a treadle pump for the irrigation of the garden for 640,000 Riel (US\$ 160) with the profit made from selling the surplus crop. The example has inspired others: villagers who now carry the water from a nearby pond also are saving their money to install a water well.



Nutritious ingredients for the demonstration



A treadle pump was purchased from profit by selling the produce

The owners of the VMG now start to produce seed themselves, both for home growth and for selling on the market.

The project is complemented by distribution of vitamin A to the children, a spin-off of a project on a USAID grant. Villagers are encouraged to use iodised salt and this salt is used in all demonstration cooking.

4. Conclusion

- All interviewed people noticed improvement in security. This might partly reflect a general improvement throughout the country. Specific reasons are:
 - Collection of illegal weapons
 - Greater attention to security through training of the police
 - More resources are available to the police to ensure security
- Some problems still exist concerning forestry. This seems to confirm the conclusions of the study by the WGWR who claims that since the weapons collection weapons incidents have increased but weapons violence has declined⁵. Weapons are used to threaten, rather than wound or kill. Besides common criminality, most problems concern forestry, fisheries and land grabbing. In Preah Vihear province, police and fishery officials use weapons to extort money from villagers who may or may not break the law. If they

⁵ Sourn Ratha, Long Dianna and John L. Vijghen, Guns and Livelihood, Phnom Penh 2003

break the law (by logging), this is likely due to ignorance about the law. Collection of resin is not illegal.

- The police family assistance has not only increased police family income and food production, but has also affected the social standing of the police family. Although USAID has discontinued its funding for a nutrition and food production project, HKI should look for new funding for this project. In areas where weapons collections have happened, it would make sense to continue the practice of working through police families.