

# PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN BATTAMBANG, BANON, EK PHNOM AND KINGS COUNTY

## PROMOTING TOURISM FOR ECONOMIC GROWTH

### 1. Overview of the project

#### 1.1. Summary

With financial support from the Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and Development of the Government of Canada (DFATD) through the Municipal Partnership for Economic Development (MPED) program, the National League of Local Councils of the Kingdom of Cambodia (NLC) and the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) are promoting the role of local governments (LGs) in local economic development (LED) in Cambodia. A key component of the MPED program is the implementation of demonstration projects through which communes/sangkats and districts/municipalities spearhead new models, new practices and new tools to advance economic development in their communities.

Battambang municipality is the second largest city in the country with a natural geographical connection to Siem Reap. This urban city borders Ek Phnom district to the north and Banan district to the south. Battambang City offers a variety of tourism attractions such as the circus, bamboo train, cultural and heritage villages, temples and pagodas, along with many excellent restaurants and hotels, and vibrant street markets that provide a local cultural experience.

The district of Ek Phnom also has strong potential to provide tourists with unique highlights of the region. These include Ek Phnom ancient temple, a floating village, UNESCO heritage Tonle Sap Lake and its unique Prek Toal bird sanctuary, agricultural sites to see and learn about local food production, and the ability to connect with local craftspeople and watch them at work.

Similarly, Banan district also has potential for tourist attractions such as a winery, the Banan ancient temple, Sampov Mountain (including its temple, the killing caves during Khmer Rouge and the mountain's bird caves), the Snoeng monument, Kamping Puoy reservoir, Kang-Hort irrigation and many other attractions.

The municipality of Battambang, Battambang province, Cambodia, supported by County of Kings, Nova Scotia, Canada, implemented one of MPED's demonstration projects in Cambodia. In the first stage (2011–2012), this partnership focused on supporting Battambang municipality to develop a local economic development (LED) strategy, which identified tourism as a main economic driver. This first phase included the development of the

strategic plan, the creation of a LED committee to advise and guide the implementation of the demonstration project and the creation of an association of local tourism operators.

In the second phase (2013–2015), the municipality of Battambang and the districts of Ek Phnom and Banan proposed the development and implementation of a regional tourism strategy, identified as the “Traditional Tourism Paths of Battambang Province” (TTPBP). The objective was to develop and promote sustainable tourism, including cultural heritage, agri-tourism, handicrafts and cultural events. These activities were encompassed in the concept of a “tourism corridor” for the three target LGs, linking the two districts (Banan and Ek Phnom) with the municipality of Battambang in a common tourism strategy and actions for the region. It would offer tourists a coherent service for a unique experience in the region.

#### 1.2. Project methodology

This project builds on the successful municipal partnership between Kings County and Battambang around waste management and sanitation. The two cities worked together on waste management issues from 2009–2012 within the context of the Municipal Partnership Program (MPP) and the first two years of MPED. The project contributed to better waste collection and community engagement and outreach. It raised the awareness of the population and city officials on the importance of keeping a clean environment. Strengthened from the achievements of this collaboration, Battambang won the award of cleanest city of Cambodia in 2015.

Community mobilization around waste collection and the pride issued from the clean city achievements led to a natural desire to continue the collaboration around a



tourism project that could both raise the profile of the city and contribute to economic growth and prosperity for the community. However, many challenges remained. City officials had low awareness of LED and lacked capacity for strategic planning that involved stakeholders such as private tourism operators, the city department and community representatives. Another challenge was the lack of coordination, communication and marketing between different tourism operators, which forced tourists to organize individual aspects of their visit based on limited available information, and often poor and uneven quality of services. The ultimate objective of this project was to create a tourism corridor, strengthening the capacity of different tourism operators active in the triangle of Battambang, Eh Phnom and Banan to offer adventurous tourists with an integrated and quality tourism experience in the region.

The first step of this project was the development of a LED strategic plan and action plan. Kings County has worked with Battambang representatives and met with various community economic development stakeholders, including government staff and elected officials, local businesses, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and educational institutions. In addition to these stakeholder meetings, a two-day strategic planning session was held with Sangkat representatives. During this activity the Kings County technical team facilitated a SWOT analysis (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) of the region and helped the group formulate a vision, mission and core values, and determine goals, objectives and action plans. While the LED strategic plan had identified a wide range of priorities, it was agreed the tourism corridor development would be the first pilot initiative.

To move the action plan forward, the LED committee was created to build collaboration and partnership among the three LGs and provincial line ministries. This committee, officially created and endorsed by Battambang's provincial governor, is chaired by a provincial deputy governor with governors from the three target LGs acting as deputy chairs. The LED committee supervises the implementation of the LED strategic plan, coordinates the efforts of relevant stakeholders, and advises on the required adjustments to the plan.



In addition to the above LED committee, each LG also established an LED working group. The groups play an important role in formulating quarterly and yearly activity plans and budgets, conducting monitoring and evaluation and seeking solutions to problems identified. The group meets every three months. Members of the team include: district/municipal councillors, board of governors, commune-sangkat councils and district/municipal line offices.

The action plans included a list of priorities to improve the tourism offer along the corridors. For example, the need to address souvenir vendors who currently sell products to tourists near the main attractions in a disorganized manner for very little profit, street food vendors who produce food without respecting basic hygiene, security issues in the cities and around tourism sites, lack of marketing material promoting the region's attractions and local hotels and restaurants, etc. The project brought together the different tourism operators to set priorities and strategies. Groups were formed, training was provided to the group members (souvenir producers, food producers, hotels and restaurant). A marketing strategy was developed for the three target localities, including elements of city branding, development of websites and brochures targeting national and international tourists.

The capacity of leaders in the three LGs, as well as commune-sangkat councils, has been enhanced through workshops and study tours inside the country and in Thailand. They successfully learned practices and observed successful experiences in promoting tourism development.

The project intervention also built the organizational and customer service capacity of established groups through participating in meetings, workshops and training related to maintaining esthetics and public order, hospitality, hygiene and food services to enhance service quality.

### 1.3. Partners and stakeholders

The lead partner in project implementation and delivery is the provincial LED committee, headed by a provincial governor and the three LG governors as deputy chairs. Members of this coordination committee include: the provincial chamber of commerce, University of Battambang, and relevant line departments, armed forces and commune-sangkat councils in the target communities. The committee, which meets once a year, plays an important role in sharing information, experiences and activities of LED project implementation and in seeking solutions to problems. This committee ensures buy-in from the higher level of authorities and legitimacy of the interventions. It is also an important communications vehicle to raise awareness among other municipalities about LED initiatives.

The second group of partners is the board of governors of Battambang, Ek Phnom and Banan. They are the ones who play a critical role leading and implementing LED project activities in their jurisdiction. They are also responsible for giving authority to establish community groups.

Another important partner is the commune-sangkat councils, which have a crucial role in mobilizing local people to participate in project activities. They disseminate information on LED projects to the community and targeted tourism operators and encourage them to participate. They solve problems in the community and report challenges.

Local coordinators also have an active role in coordinating relevant stakeholders in project activities. Local coordinators are hired by the project to coordinate the implementation of the MPED demonstration project locally. The three local coordinators have facilitated linkages between the community, the LED working groups, LED committee and the National League of Local Councils of Cambodia (NLC).

Outside of municipal and provincial officials and partner organizations such as the University of Battambang, stakeholders include local individuals and businesses delivering and producing goods and services that support the tourist industry. In the Ek Phnom district, there are 95 members, including 53 women, of food producer groups that were established under the project. Similarly, two souvenir producer groups were formed in Banan district. The first group was established in Banan temple, with 15 members, the majority of whom (13) are women and the second group was established in the Phnom Sampov tourism site with 27 members (9 women). These groups, their members and other tourism operators like hotels, restaurants, taxis, etc. are targeted beneficiaries. But they are also central stakeholders in the definition of priorities, identification of problems and coordination of efforts, and active participants in the different networks set up in the context of the project.

## 2. Project results

### 2.1. Expected versus actual results

The main expected output of the project is enhanced contribution of tourism to the local economy. Specifically, the project is intended to create opportunities for communities within the boundaries of the districts/municipality to increase regional tourism and increase local benefits from tourism, including employment and job creation.

The second output is to enhance capacities to manage the regional tourism corridor and to facilitate the

development of policies that make the region an actual tourism-designated area.

The third output is to increase capacities to develop both required human resources and maintenance of infrastructure in the tourism sector.

Through the project intervention, some significant achievements were made as outlined below.

### *Development of a Tourism Guidebook and Battambang Municipality's Webpage*

Through the project intervention, Battambang municipality developed tourist resources such as a guidebook and a website to assist in promoting the tourism sector and to encourage private investment. The tourism guidebook, entitled "*Battambang, The Land of Rice and Heritage*", was produced in two languages: Khmer for domestic tourists and English for foreign visitors. The guidebook has enabled national and international tourists to identify and locate interesting destinations and services in Battambang municipality and the districts of Ek Phnom and Banan.

The guidebook is a joint product of Battambang municipality and the districts of Ek Phnom and Banan, in cooperation with the relevant departments, offices and commune-sangkat authorities. It has been printed on quality paper and is distributed in various tourism points such as hotels, restaurants and local attractions part of the tourism network.

Battambang municipality's webpage not only includes information about regional tourism and points of interest, it also provides information about municipal services in Battambang and the districts of Ek Phnom and Banan, enhancing the municipalities' delivery of service to its citizens. The University of Battambang had been involved in the development of this webpage.

In sum, the guidebook and website are valuable tools to promote the community, as well as business and tourism opportunities and partners such as hotels, guesthouses, restaurants and transportation services. The municipality has made a commitment to assign skilled staff to maintain the web page.

### *Preservation of Traditional Houses*

Battambang municipality and Ek Phnom district invested significant efforts to encourage local residents to preserve their old houses as tourist attractions. To carry this out, the districts organized dissemination workshops to raise awareness of local residents about the value of keeping the original shape and structure of their Khmer-style houses. As a result, 820 houses in Battambang municipality and 17 in Ek Phnom have been preserved.

### ***Establishment of the Association of Tourism Operators***

The establishment of an association of tourism operators (different businesses offering services to tourists) is an ambitious key activity of the LED project to promote tourism development. Some initial steps have been initiated. However, there have been challenges to formalize this association and the modalities are still under discussion.

So far, with the project intervention, three business groups have been informally established: a remork (three-wheeled motorized vehicle, called Tuk-Tuk, used as a taxi) group, a food group, and guesthouse and hotel owners' groups. They have not been officially recognized by a decision of Battambang municipality governor. More actions are needed to establish the association.

### ***Promotion of Local Food and Products***

In Ek Phnom district, three food-producing groups were established to promote local products. The first one is Kralan (Khmer sticky rice cooked in bamboo) producing group, which has 18 members (12 female). Kralan production is a traditional business for people living in three villages in Samrong Knong commune. Around 40 households are engaged in Kralan production to support their families. The second group is nem fish (fish cooked in banana leaves) producers; the production of nem fish is the specialty of people living in two villages in Kpob commune. This group has 17 members, including 9 women.

There are many types of nems: nem chou (sour nem), nem for cooking and other varieties to satisfy local tastes. Chopped fish and other ingredients are wrapped in a banana leaf and cooked, turning the simple ingredients into a famous delicacy. Around 50 households are engaged in this business. The last group is Sambak nem (rice wraps) producers. This group has 50 members (32 female). Sambak nem is a handmade food product made from rice flour and other ingredients. It is used for wrapping spring rolls and for general eating. The production has become a traditional business for the people living on the road to Ek Phnom temple in Peam Ek village, Peam Ek commune. Around 40 households are engaged in this production.

Through the project intervention, capacity of the three established groups in Ek Phnom has also been increased in the areas of food handling, hygiene and hospitality. Since the inception of the project, a food outlet was built in Samrong Knong commune for Kralan producers so they can put the products on sale for foreign and local visitors.

Similarly, two souvenir producer groups were established in Banan district. One group was established in Banan temple, with 15 members (13 women). The second was established in Phnom Sampov tourism site with

27 members (9 women). The two groups are recognized by the district governor.

Through the project intervention, the two groups were trained in craft production. The University of Battambang was also involved in training local people how to make handicrafts by using domestic resources. In addition, members of the groups had a chance to participate in a study tour of the Siem Reap province, a world tourism destination, to learn more about handicraft production and product marketing.

Supporting these types of above-mentioned businesses helps improve people's living standards and contributes to poverty reduction through job creation.

### ***Enabling Battambang to Win Award for Cleanest City***

In 2009, FCM started to support Battambang municipality in waste management in organizing meetings and workshops to educate local citizens and businesspeople about safe waste disposal. At the same time, FCM also supported production of educational materials such as signs about proper waste disposal. The new phase of the project continued pursuing efforts to keep the city clean as an ongoing strategy to promote the city as an attractive tourism destination.

In September 2012, Battambang municipality also issued a guideline on solid waste management and separation in and around three main markets in the city. The guideline appeals to local people and relevant stakeholders to dispose, separate and recycle waste, which would contribute to maintaining hygiene, public welfare, good environment and a beautiful city. This measure helped the municipality compete in the Government's Award for a Clean City. Kings County also held local fundraising activities; the funds raised were used by Battambang municipality in education campaigns about clean environment in public schools.

The municipality has continued to use educational materials and signs, produced under FCM support, to educate local residents about waste disposal. Furthermore, Battambang municipality has taken another measure to enforce waste management, public order,



esthetics and hygiene in Sangkat Svay Por model. At the same time, the municipality had undertaken a number of economic projects, including a pub street, a sports park and a night market, which sits along Sangke River.

On 25 February 2015, Battambang municipality was declared the First Winner of the Government's Award for the Cleanest City.

## 2.2. Compatibility with program crosscutting goals

Women's participation in the project has been highly promoted in all activities. There is always women's involvement in workshops, meetings and trainings. The project systematically asked leaders to select a parity of men and women in training activities. For instance, a dissemination workshop on waste management, hygiene and public order for sellers in Battambang included 218 participants; of whom 91 were women. Moreover, 17 women, among 41 participants, attended a dissemination workshop on temple and old house preservation in Ek Phnom. Women have been active in sharing their knowledge in a number of ways: individually, in group discussions, meetings, workshops and on study visits.

In the selection of sectors supported by the project, those with the highest representation of women producers — food and souvenirs — were privileged.

The role and responsibility of women as leaders are considered in the local government structure and local community. Their presence has influenced decision making and service delivery. Through their participation in the project, women have been empowered and have gained knowledge, skills and experiences related to handicraft production, hygiene and food safety to enhance service quality. As a result, their role in generating income for the family has been promoted. They also reported increased revenues due to improved quality of their products, which in turn contributed to the quality of life of the whole household.

The environment and environmental sustainability have been taken into account at every stage of the project. With the project's support, the three LGs organized dissemination workshops to raise awareness among local people about waste management, forest preservation, hygiene and public order.

## 2.3. Success factors

There are some factors that led to the success of LED project implementation in the three target local governments. Technical and financial support from the County of Kings was important as the capacity and resources of the three target administrations are limited. Through the LED planning process, the targeted LGs

have been made aware of the concept of LED and have each undertaken activities to promote economic development to push forward the tourism corridor initiative. Without these supports, significant achievements could not have been made.

The creation of LED committees that included a range of provincial and municipal representatives has improved relationships between orders of government. Local leaders have gained support of the provincial government regarding tourism development. Provincial leaders see the importance of having the city, which is the provincial centre, as a centre of trade, tourism and administration, and regard the districts of Ek Phnom and Banan as natural and cultural tourist destinations. For this purpose, Battambang Provincial LED Committee was established.

Participation from relevant stakeholders is important. Provincial line departments, commune-sangkat councils, community groups, food vendors, motor taxi groups and hotel and restaurants were involved in LED project implementation. Without their full involvement, successes could not have been achieved.

## 2.4. Sustainability of results

The three LGs are committed to sustaining the results achieved by the LED project. First, they commit to develop and implement a clear action plan to monitor and evaluate the achievements. These plans are integrated into the local five-year development plan and the three-year rolling investment plan. Second, the LGs will work to mobilize human and financial resources to continue LED priorities and have committed to allocate funds for LED priorities. Third, the mechanism and various groups established through the project interventions will be strengthened and remain active. The LGs will continue to provide support and build capacity of the various groups established under the LED projects. Finally, Battambang municipality commits to assign a team of staff to maintain and update its webpage.

The Banan temple's souvenir producer group returns 5% from the sale of all products back to the producer group for the sustainability of the LED-financed souvenir outlet. The group currently has a budget of 380,000 riel (around US\$95) from sales to be used toward the outlet's repair and upkeep.

## 3. Sharing the experience: What did stakeholders learn from the experience that could be adapted by other municipalities?

### 3.1. Lessons

Through the LED project, there are some lessons that could be learned when the project is replicated.

First, the formation of a LED working group provides a clear role and mandate in leading and implementing specific activities to promote economic development.

Second, to successfully implement a LED project, it is important to organize local people into various groups, depending on their specialty. The obvious examples are the formation of handicraft producer groups in Banan and food producing groups in Ek Phnom. With these organized groups, it will be easier for local authorities to work with and build their capacity, as well as to identify their concerns and solve problems.

Third, the study visits were very useful within and outside the country to see first-hand tourism best practices and how to promote economic development. The leaders of the three LGs had a chance to visit Thailand. Through that visit, they learned valuable lessons about how local authorities work to promote tourism development and generate jobs for local people using existing natural and cultural resources.

### 3.2. Good Practices

Through the project implementation, some good practices have been identified.

First, organizing community people into groups provides them access to knowledge, skills and best practices of their peers, as well as information about available resources. In the case of Ek Phnom and Banan, people were organized into food producing groups and handicraft producing groups. These groups gave them access to workshops and training to enhance their skills. Food and handicraft outlets have been built for them to collect products and put them on sale.

Second, ensuring participation from relevant stakeholders is important. In the case of Battambang, Banan and Ek Phnom, without the involvement of provincial line departments (Tourism, Environment, Culture, Commerce, Religion), advancements could not have been made.

Third, information should be disseminated to the local population. Commune-sangkat councils have played a vital role in this work, providing information and motivating local people to participate in the project. The website project resulted in publishing information about municipal services on-line, increasing public access to local information.

### 3.3. Success stories

#### *Handicraft Skills Enhance Living Conditions*

Khon Sokhing, 31, lives with her three children in Banan's Katheu II commune. She stays at home, taking care of the kids and herding her cows, while her husband works

as a barber. In August 2014, she joined the LED project because she wanted to earn more income to support her family. She learned about the project at a public meeting with Katheu II commune chief. After joining the project, she participated in a full week of training at Banan district hall to learn how to make handicrafts.

Through the training and a study visit in Siem Reap province, Sokhing now knows how to produce glass, to make walking sticks from bamboo and to make bracelets. The products she makes are being sold at a LED-backed souvenir outlet at Banan temple.

Sokhing says her quality of life is much better. She can produce handicrafts and earn about 25,000 riel (around US\$6) per day. "In the past, I just stayed at home. Now I have skills and can earn more income. I can buy a school uniform and books for my son and send him to part-time English school," said Sokhing.

Vin Sam Ang, 30, joined the LED souvenir producer group in Banan temple. Vin Sam Ang, who has two children, learned to produce handicrafts such as bracelets from threads and hats from palm tree leaf. With two other colleagues, she looks after the souvenir outlet. She said she can now earn 20,000-25,000 riel (around US\$5-\$6) a day from the handicraft products she makes.

Chhit Chhayly, 53, is the head of Banan temple's souvenir producer group, which has 15 members (13 female). When members produce handicrafts, they put them on sale at the outlet. The producer group receives 5% from the sale of products. Presently, the group has a total budget of 380,000 riel (around US\$95) from the sale charges. The budget will be used for the outlet's repair. Moreover, local painters also put their paintings on sale at the outlet, said Chhayly.

### Contacts

Mr. Sokundara Pok  
National League of Local Councils (NLC)  
Senate Campus, Norodom Blvd, Chamcar Mon,  
Phnom Penh, Cambodia  
Phone: +855 23 726254

Ms. Eve Dufresne  
Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM)  
24 Clarence Street, Ottawa, Ontario, K1N 5P3  
Phone: (+1) 613-241-5221  
edufresne@fcm.ca

Ms. Emma Van Rooyen  
Municipality of the County of Kings  
PO Box 100, 87 Cornwallis Street, Kentville NS B4N 3W3  
Phone: (+1) 902-678-6141