

## Executive Summary

The Human Rights Program of BFD shows that human rights concepts and principles can be popularized through grassroots groups selected by their communities. Through the knowledge of their human rights, the people themselves will act to uphold, promote and defend their rights. Indeed, the Human Rights Program brought many positive changes into the communities specially the reduction of conflicts using combinations of traditional methods and human rights-based processes of conflict resolution. The women were given enough courage to complain about their plight especially from abusive and wife beating husbands. Empowerment evolves as knowledge of human rights, laws and traditional customary rights are deepened and grasped by the poor and the marginalized.

The above points show that the HR Program is appropriate to the situation of the 2 remote provinces where there are greater conflicts and problems due to the influx of people coming from the borders and settling down into frontier areas, due to ideological differences among the people (KR and non-KR) and due to the sheer lack of social services and economic opportunities.

The program strategy are replicable and can be developed and tailored based on the particular situation of the target areas. The organized groups (Peace and Development Volunteers or PDV, Committee to Prevent and Manage Human Rights Violations or CPMHRV and Human Rights Watchdogs or HRW) working for the promotion and defense of human rights in their communities can evolve into grassroots human rights and community-based institutions. These community-based groups can gradually be the seed for a human rights movement in these far flung provinces.

The potentials are great for institutionalizing human rights and conflict resolution based on Buddhist precepts, principles and spirituality. Buddhism for Development (BFD) can indeed be proud of its unique contribution to development work, promotion of human rights and propagation of conflict mediation using Buddhism, its principles and precepts as foundation while deepening these principles as BFD gains more knowledge, skills and expertise.

It is also very clear that all the people interviewed in the two provincial project sites (Banteay Meanchey and Oddor Meanchey) would immediately say that BFD works to promote human rights and reduce conflict and disputes through Buddhist principles and methods in the villages. **There is a definite equation and recall between BFD and its work about human rights and conflict mediation at the community levels. This is the evolving niche which is worth exploring, strengthening and claiming by BFD. Similarly, people would always say that BFD works in very remote, far flung villages. This is another niche that BFD should develop and continue – an NGO that does pioneering work in frontier areas.**

## I. INTRODUCTION

The Human Rights Program of BFD was implemented since 2000 to 2003 with funding support from The Asia Foundation (TAF) and in 2003, Canada Civil Society

Governance Fund (CCSGF) provided additional funding support for 102 Peace and Development Volunteers component of the program. The support from CCSGF is to fill-in the gap and extends the reach of the program.

The external evaluation was commissioned by BFD with funding support from The Asia Foundation in order to draw lessons on program management and assessing program impact, which will be used as basis for future interventions. And with the unexpected changes in the USAID/TAF program strategies in August 2003, The Asia Foundation can no longer provide the necessary fund support for the Human Rights Program of BFD. In this regard, BFD believes that the result of the evaluation will provide insights and lessons on the direction of its Human Rights program.

The external evaluation was undertaken by a two-person team (a Filipino expatriate consultant and a Cambodian national) from 01 October to 07 November 2003. The external evaluation covered the two provinces where the program was implemented in Banteay Meanchey and Oddor Meanchey. Almost all the players and stakeholders involved in the program were interviewed and their feedbacks taken. The stakeholders were the BFD Management, Program Managers of the two provinces, staff and Program Adviser, Peace and Development Volunteers (PDV), Members of the Committee to Prevent and Manage Human Rights Violations (CPMHRV), Human Rights Watchdogs (HRW), District Authorities, Commune Councils, Provincial Departments of Women and Veterans Affairs, Judge of the Provincial Court in Banteay Meanchey, Media (Rasmei Kampuchea Daily) in Banteay Meanchey and the NGOs (ADHOC, LICADHO). One NGO (ZOA) with which BFD Oddor Meanchey was closely working with was not interviewed, as they were busy handling a workshop. The Asia foundation (TAF), the principal funding donor was also interviewed to get their view and opinion on how the program was handled and implemented by BFD.

The external evaluation team also visited a village in Banteay Meanchey doing castor oil production under the supervision of BFD. The visit was included to give the external evaluation team a comprehensive overview of all the programs of BFD. But the team did not delve into the other program called Community Information Center (CIC) that was also funded by The Asia Foundation (TAF).

The Team was able to interview the target groups of the program in their villages and communes traveling through rough, bumpy and dusty roads. The target groups welcomed the evaluation with openness and enthusiasm. The BFD staff and management were very cooperative and transparent. The evaluation team was able to do their work smoothly and with ease due to the cooperation and support of all, specially the staff of BFD in Oddor Meanchey and Banteay Meanchey.

## **II. OBJECTIVES OF THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION**

1. To assess the program implementation using the program objectives as baseline data (input/output indicators).

2. To identify impact indicators as result of the program, and
3. To formulate recommendations for future interventions.

### **III. METHODOLOGY USED IN THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION**

The Team used Guide Questions to do their work as they discussed with the stakeholders and visited them in the villages, communes and districts. The evaluation used the following methods and process:

1. Review and analysis of documents and related materials
2. Key Informant Interviews (KII)
3. Focus Group Discussions (FGD)
4. Direct Observations

The details of the work can be found in the evaluation plan. (Appendix A – Evaluation Plan, Calendar of Activities and the Guide Questions from Annex 1 to 12). Appendix B is the Organizational Charts.

### **IV. BACKGROUND OF THE BFD HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAM**

Buddhism for Development planned for a Human Rights Program at the end of 1999 when the Cambodian refugees from the borders of Thailand were still coming back. The bulk of the refugees came back in 1998 and continued up to 1999. The refugees settled in the villages of Oddor Meanchey and Banteay Meanchey which they found convenient to settle into. The resettlement areas had no amenities and services, no roads, no cleared lands and full of land mines. There were no jobs and poverty was pervasive. The refugees were provided with some materials for temporary houses and a small allowance to start off. There were refugees, former Khmer Rouge soldiers and their families and Cambodian families who have decided to stay put during the war all settling down in these newly opened communities. This is the backdrop with which the BFD planned for a Human Rights Program.

The key persons in BFD, majority of whom were monks, saw the need to bring together these divergent groups to set aside their differences and work together. There was much work to be done – physically improve the land, construct roads and pathways, build the schools, construct the houses, construct water facilities and drinking wells and improve the living conditions. BFD saw the need to unify the people, help in the alleviation and reduction of poverty through community development work, reduce the conflicts among the people and empower them through human rights education and literacy.

Buddhism for Development is the pioneering NGO in Oddor Meanchey and Banteay Meanchey as being the first to reach these very remote areas. Their staffs were very committed to help the poor specially those in the far-flung areas where there were no government and NGO services at all. The risk to lives and limbs were great, security was bad, peace and order situation were unstable and the roads were terrible. But

these did not deter the BFD staff. They went to these areas, stayed and lived with the people and started small activities like rice banks and livelihood trainings.

Inspired by BFD's efforts and determination, other NGOs followed suit. Now, several NGOs are working in these two provinces and providing many services and assistance. Thanks to the pioneering efforts of BFD. The outstanding strength of BFD as an organization is its courage to be the first to go to these reintegration areas and help the people (regardless of creed, religion, ideology and political affiliation) through various programs in order to ease their poverty and bring unity, cooperation and peace.

## V. BFD and its HUMAN RIGHTS PROGRAM

The Human Rights Program of BFD from 2000 to 2003 went through three stages as stipulated in three proposals submitted to The Asia Foundation.

Year	Program Title	Program Objectives
2000 To 2001	"Project to Promote Human Rights, Democracy and Local Governance in Former Khmer Rouge Territories in Sway Chek District, Banteay Meanchey"	"To provide opportunities for the two polarized groups to remove barriers of integration, to jointly build a society of harmony, peace and development"
2001 To 2002	"Project to Harmonize Reintegration of the Former Khmer Rouge and To Promote Human Rights, Democracy, civil Society and Local Governance in Former Khmer Rouge Territories in Banteay Meanchey and Oddor Meanchey Provinces"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. "To respond to the physical urgent needs of the people to make them feel that they are not lonely in solving the problems.</li> <li>b. To encourage the villagers to catch up with the world through education... see the importance of reintegration, civil society concepts, human rights, democracy and local governance in their daily life and for the development of their communities.</li> <li>c. To help the villagers build various grassroots institutions which will enable them to carry out the activities in long term even if BFD no longer operate in the areas.</li> <li>d. To link the grassroots institutions to other NGOs and international NGOs for further development."</li> </ul>
2002 to 2003	"Program to Prevent Human Rights violations and to Take Appropriate Actions Against Human Rights Abuses at the Local Level in the Reintegration Areas of Banteay Meanchey and Oddor Meanchey"	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. "To provide the knowledge of Human Rights through training, teaching and sessions to villagers in 20 Communes in Banteay Meanchey and 9 Communes in Oddor Meanchey (263 villages)</li> <li>b. To prevent the problems of human rights violations not to happen and to manage the problems at local level in 20 communes in Banteay Meanchey and 9 communes in Oddor Meanchey (5 districts)</li> </ul>

While the donor and BFD saw the need for Human Rights Program to be implemented they felt that because the people were so poor and desolate that any discussions on human rights would not be effective if there was hunger and poverty. As a result, it has integrated socio-economic activities such as rice banks, water ponds and literacy classes into the Human Rights program (Human Rights Education, Monitoring and Conflict Resolution) in order to help the people get some relief from hunger and for the staff to get the trust of the people. In 2002-2003 such

kind of socio-economic activities were no longer continued implemented in the areas by TAF but by some other sources.

This evaluation is based on the 2002 – 2003 project proposal entitled "**Program to Prevent Human Rights Violations and to Take Appropriate Actions Against Human Rights Abuses at Local Level in the Reintegration Areas of Banteay Meanchey and Oddor Meanchey**".

<b>Provinces</b>	<b># Of Districts</b>	<b># Of Communes</b>	<b># Of Villages</b>
Banteay Meanchey	3	20	188
Otdor Meanchey	2	9	75
Total	5	29	263

### **A. The Program Strategy and Approaches**

The basic strategy of the program is as follows:

#### **A. Preparation Stage**

1. The BFD conducts preparatory activities like data gathering to determine the population, villages with the most number of widows or female headed households, villages with the most number of disabled, with the most number of conflicts and disputes, etc.
2. Then, BFD determines and selects the villages it has to work in.
3. BFD gets permission from the District Authorities, Commune Councils and village leaders.
4. The BFD staff stays in the villages, conducts house to house visits and discussions, explaining the program to the people.

#### **B. Recruitment and Training**

1. BFD calls for a community meeting to elect the Peace and Development Volunteer (PDV) for each village
2. All the PDVs in one commune are gathered together and given a five days training.

3. The training covers the following topics:

Topic	Speaker
General Orientation (the HR Program of BFD, role and responsibilities of PDV, HRW and CPMHRV)	Heng Monychenda, Director
Human Rights Concepts and Principles	ADHOC or LICADHO
Gender, Women's Rights and Children's Rights	Provincial Dept. of Women and Veterans Affairs
Laws, Land Law and the Court Procedures	Judge of the Provincial Court
Conflict Mediation and Management	Ven. Su Soeum
Media and How to Provide Information	A journalist from Rasmei Kampuchea Daily

### C. Activities and Follow-up

1. After the training, the PDVs go back to their villages and conduct house to house discussions about human rights concepts and principles, conflict resolutions, etc. Their primary duties are to disseminate human rights knowledge and mediate conflicts in the village. They report directly to BFD and are under the authority of BFD.
2. The BFD staff follows up the work of the PDVs once a month or once in two months.
3. The PDV determines the topics that are needed to be discussed in the village so that the community can understand about human rights principles and concepts, gender and women's rights, etc.
4. The PDVs collaborate with BFD staff for the session with Mobile Civic Education

The same procedure is followed to form and organize the Committee to Prevent and Manage Human Rights Violations (CPMHRV), except that this time the group is formed on the commune level and its authority is directly under the Commune Council. Its work covers the entire commune and is considered a higher level than the PDV. They are given a five days training, similar to the topics given to the PDVs. But this time there is emphasis on conflict management and conflict resolution and the Commune Laws.

Likewise, the HRWs are also elected in each commune. They are also given the same training similar to those given to the PDVs and CPMHRVs. Yet their work is limited to providing information on HR abuses committed by state agents – government officials, local authorities, police and the military. Their work is directly under the supervision of BFD and with close collaboration with the media for proper actions.

The Mobile Civic Education Team (MCET) go to the village and provide video showing from 7-10 PM. The topics shown are based on the information given by the PDV on the topics that are needed to be shown. The video documentary films are produced and bought from other groups/NGOs. Human rights videos mostly produced by Women Media Center and health issues and HIV/Aids were from health NGOs. All of these education materials were gathered from other NGOs.

BFD submit reports regularly to the Provincial Departments and District Authorities on the work and activities of the program.

### **B. Objectives and Targets of the Human Rights Program(2002 to 2003)**

The Goal of the program is ***"to build local grassroots human rights institution in the village and commune levels that will actively engage in the issue of human rights violations by taking action in the understanding of human rights, the prevention of human rights abuses and mobilizing appropriate actions when abuses occur in their communities."***

There were two objectives set for this program:

**Objective 1** ***To provide the knowledge of human rights through training, teaching and sessions to villagers in 20 communes in Banteay Meanchey and 9 communes in Oddor Meanchey Provinces***

**Activity 1:** To provide training of trainer on human rights, the prevention of human rights violation, and the resolution of the problems to Peace and Development Volunteers (PDV), Literacy Teachers, and rice bank and water pond committees in 20 Communes in Banteay Meanchey and 9 communes in Odor Meanchey Province so that they can use the knowledge and skills to promote human rights in their communities.

**Activity 2:** To teach human rights through adult literacy class in 45 villages to approximate 1,600 villagers so that they know to protect their rights and not to violate human rights to others

**Activity 3:** To conduct sessions and discussion on human rights to villagers through Peace and Development Volunteers that has been established in 65 villages in Banteay Meanchey and Odor Meanchey.

**Activity 4:** To conduct sessions of human rights to villagers through Mobile Civic Education to furnish the knowledge and function of human rights, the prevention of human rights violation, and the resolution of the problems to the villagers by using audio-visual aids in villages during nighttime from 7:00 to 10:00PM in villages.

**Objective 2** *To prevent the problems of human rights violations not to happen and to manage the problems at the local levels in 20 communes in Banteay Meanchey and 9 communes in Oddor Meanchey.*

**Activity 1:** To establish Committee to Committee to Prevent and Manage Human Rights Violation (CPMHV) in which members are from Commune Council Member, PDV, literacy teacher, and other civilians to take responsible in preventing human rights violation and take proper measures to settle the problems at local level in 20 communes of Banteay Meanchey and 9 communes of Odor Meanchey.

**Activity 2:** To organize Human Rights Watchdog (HRW) in each commune with members from PDV, school teachers, monks, and other independent persons to observe the human rights violation and to report the case to PDV and CPMHV in 20 communes of Banteay Meanchey and 9 communes of Odor Meanchey.

**Activity 3:** To train the CPMHV on human rights (women and children rights will be emphasized), prevention of human rights violation, and steps to bring the case towards the higher level so that they can effectively and efficiently perform their role and duties.

**Activity 4:** To train the Human Rights Watchdog on how to watch human rights case and how to report the case to other relating groups.

**Activity 5:** To link CPMHV and HRW with other NGOs and institutions that work for the same purposes so that they can work together to improve the human rights conditions in the communes.

### Target Population

Province	District	Commune	Total Population	Women
Banteay Meanchey	3	20	160,824	81,372
Otdor Meanchey	2	9	56,128	38,033
<b>Total</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>216,952</b>	<b>119,405</b>

## VI. Program Accomplishments, Outcome and Impact

### A. Accomplishments

Based on the interviews, results of FGDs and upon study of all the available documents of the program, the following data are generated:

#### Strategy and Approach

The strategy of forming grassroots groups to conduct HR education, disseminate knowledge on laws, rule of law, court procedures and state obligations to its citizens; and mediate and resolve conflicts/ disputes at the local levels is a workable, realistic

and effective strategy. The Program was able to popularize human rights concepts and principles in the villages, which, in turn have moved the people to trust each other and to believe in their capacity to improve their own conditions. The program has gradually empowered the people, knowing that they have rights and there are laws guaranteeing these rights.

### Expected Output:

Items	Target for Banteay Meanchey	Actual Number in Banteay Meanchey	Target for Oddor Meanchey	Actual Number in Oddor Meanchey	Total/Actual
Total Number of Districts	3	3	2	2	5
Total Number of Communes	20	20	9	9	29
Total Number of Villages	188	96	78	77	173
Total Number of PDVs Elected (persons)	188	40	78	28	173
Additional PDVs supported CCSGF starting 2003		56		49	
Total Number of CPRVs Formed (groups)	20 groups	20 groups or 104 persons	9 groups	9 groups or 52 persons	29 groups or 156 persons
Total Number of HRWs Selected	188 persons	101 persons	78 persons	46 persons	147 persons

BFD Banteay Meanchey and Oddor Meanchey were able to cover the target areas in terms of the set number of districts and commune. Ideally, but 93 villages has still to be filled up with PDVs and/or HRWs. The gap was due to financial constraints.

On the human rights education people have received, knowledge on the laws and process of conflict resolution and conflict management (given by BFD/ MCET staff through video showing, PDV and HRW through house to house visits, etc. in 2002 to 2003):

Topics	Banteay Meanchey			Oddor Meanchey		
	Total # of Participants	Women Participants	Men Participants	Total # of Participants	Women Participants	Men Participants
Human Rights Concepts and Principles	7,100	4,052	3,048	7,080	3,457	3,623
Democracy	7,282	4,104	3,178	4,061	1,904	2,157
Domestic Violence	8,256	4,306	3,950	4,293	2,415	1,878
Women/Child Trafficking	5,278	2,246	3,032	1,996	1,071	925
HIV/Aids	2,486	1,264	1,222	2,990	1,648	1,342
Community Development	7,482	3,626	3,856	4,488	2,068	2,420
Malaria, Tuberculosis, Sanitation, Health, Other Diseases	16,318			3,034	1,514	1,520
Child Spacing	1,992	1,236	756	1,237	720	517
CC duty	0	0	0	742	210	532
Grassroots Duty	0	0	0	1,624	740	884
Decentralization	0	0	0	939	477	462
Civil Society	4,030	2,066	1,964	0	0	0

**On the Number and Nature of Cases/ Conflicts Handled and Resolved by PDV and CPMHRV:**

Types	Banteay Meanchey (6 mos.)		Odor Meanchey (6 mos.)	
	Handled	Resolved	Handled	Resolved
Domestic Violence	148 cases	148 cases	19 cases	17 cases, 2 sent to CPMHRV
Conflict Between Neighbors	12 cases	12 cases		
HR Violations	81 cases	81 cases	01 case	01 case
Land Disputes	25 cases	25 cases	12	09 cases, 3 sent to CPMHRV
Rape	02 cases	02 cases	0	0
Theft and Robbery	01 case	01 case	0	0
Total	269 cases	269 cases	32 cases	27 cases resolved 5 cases sent to CPMHRV

**B. Outcomes and Impact**

Based on the interviews of the stakeholders and from the stakeholder’s point of view as well as from available reports and documents, the following are the outcomes and impact arising from program implementation:

- a. The **BFD staffs are very committed** in reaching the poorest and most vulnerable sectors that are located in very far-flung areas. Their dedication to work were shown through the hardship and dangers they had to endure to be able to reach these places, through the risks they faced in traveling with the security very unstable and ability to learn all necessary skills and knowledge needed for the work. Their efforts paved the way for other NGOs to go and provide assistance and services to these newly settling groups of people. These NGOs include ZOA, CARE, HALO Trust.
- b. When BFD started the Human Rights Program in the target villages, **people became aware of their human rights, specially the women**. People also learned the laws that should guide them in their daily lives and in solving the different problems within the community.
- c. There is a **decrease in the number of conflicts** within the community after human rights knowledge, laws and court systems, conflict mediation and conflict management had been taught and imparted to the people. Neighbors have better communications and a growing respect for each other have been noted.
- d. There is also a **reduction of wife beating, child abuse and domestic violence** within households and families. This is the result of the video showing discussing about women's rights, children's rights and gender and the follow-up made by PDV, HRW and CPMHRV.
- e. People make good choices on the PDVs that they elect. The community elects persons with integrity and capacity despite their low level of education and socio-economic position. The PDVs are able to do their work despite being volunteers and have to give their time and efforts in spreading HR concepts and settling

disputes in their villages. They have exemplified the **spirit of volunteerism**. More and more the people in the communities are recognizing their abilities to help solve conflicts and their capacity to provide correct and wise advices. They have earned the respect of the villagers including those who have higher social status and those in authority like the commune councils and the district officials.

- f. The Commune Councils (20 communes in BMC and 9 communes in OMC) are most happy with the work of the PDVs, HRWs and CPMHRVs as these groups have taken over their work in terms of conflict mediation, conflict resolution and all other problems like conflicts among neighbors, family disputes, etc. Now, they have more time to attend to other more pressing concerns in the communes. Likewise, the **District authorities have recognized the tremendous help from these groups organized by BFD**.
- g. The CPMHRVs are also well accepted by the people as they represent the local authorities and provide acceptable solutions to problems within the communities. This is so because the solutions offered are based on human rights principles and existing laws of the country. The members of the **CPMHRVs try as much as possible to find win-win solutions and answers to the conflicts and problems**.
- h. Those in authorities (police, military, government officials) are more careful in abusing the people specially the poor as the people are now aware of their human rights and have gained enough courage to complain. Though abuses still do occur but there is already a definite reduction.
- i. On the issue of reintegration of the former Khmer Rouge soldiers and their families, there are more acceptances for them after the people learned about human rights and the laws (especially rules on reintegration). There is **greater tolerance** for them and lesser conflicts arising from among KR and non-KR families in the villages
- j. There is **much respect for BFD from other stakeholders like the NGOs** in the two provinces, the judge from the provincial court of Banteay Meanchey (no provincial court in OMC), the provincial Departments of Women's and Veteran's Affairs (BMC and OMC) and District authorities of the 2 provinces. All have great admiration for the dedication and commitment of the staff and for putting in place a workable program at the grassroots level. A program which still needs some refinements but which is workable, replicable and can be developed into grassroots institutions that would generate a human rights/ conflict mediation movement in the local areas.

### **C. Program Implementation**

As had been stated earlier, the two provinces had implemented the program differently. Oddor Meanchey BFD (OMC BFD) followed the program strategy more consistently based on the original plan while Banteay Meanchey had to make adjustments due their differing social environments as well as financial constraints. Oddor Meanchey organized the PDVs in each village while Banteay Meanchey organized in selected villages (not in all villages). In both provinces, the PDVs were elected by the people or the communities where they come from.

The CPMHRVs are selected by the Commune Councils. This process of CPMHRV formation is consistent with the original program plan.

The Human Rights Watchdogs (HRW) on the other hand are elected by the people. Human Rights Watchdogs are independent bodies monitoring the compliance of government authorities to the various international human rights standards and instruments as well as the laws of the country. They must be recognized by the Commune councils, District and Provincial authorities.

### **The Peace and Development Volunteers (PDV)**

The Peace and Development Volunteer (PDV) is elected by the people in each village. The election is done after BFD staff has done preparatory work (after some explanations and community dialogues conducted by the BFD staff). The PDV is a volunteer whose primary tasks are to disseminate and teach human rights concepts, Cambodian laws and court system within the community, popularize these human rights concepts and principles and try to solve conflicts, disputes and problems happening within the community, be it within the family, among neighbors and brought into the community by outsiders.

The PDV do all these after an initial training given at the beginning of her/his term. She/he will carry on the work within the village based on how much she/he can recall the concepts, theories and knowledge learned from the 5 days training provided/organized by BFD. A monthly or once in two months follow up is done by the BFD staff who provide advise and ideas on the various issues, problems and difficulties confronted by the PDV.

Despite the numerous constraints and difficulties, the PDVs say they are confident they can carry on the workload and demands, with a confidence range of 45 to 85%. They are happy to be elected and given due recognition and respect. The respect and recognition from their community are the primary factors that have motivated them to work voluntarily. They also said their increased knowledge about human rights, the legal system, conflict management have positively changed their relationship with their families, neighbors and local authorities.

Yet, their persistent and consistent suggestion to BFD is to be given more training to enable them to rise up to the demands of the work. They all said that they are now faced with more varied and complicated issues, disputes and problems. There is a need for them to build up their capacity and capability. There is also a need to provide them with user-friendly reference manuals which they can consult as they go through their work.

Indeed, a five days training alone and intermittent follow ups by BFD staff would not suffice to prepare the PDVs for the intricacies of the work and amount of work load required from them. A systematic capacity building and development plan must be made for them so as to turn them into good and effective paralegals in their communities. This PDV development plan must develop them step-by-step within the next three years until they can carry on the work without the direct supervision of BFD staff but with timely consultations with a lawyer as the need arises. Consequently, BFD in consultation with the PDVs must think of the long-range direction towards which this grassroots group would be evolved into. In what direction should the institutionalizing efforts be geared? Would the PDVs be

developed into another organization, a peoples' organization with a human rights mandate?

BFD must be congratulated for having 60% women as PDVs. This is an indication that women are perceived to have more integrity, are more honest and more objective in rendering decisions/advice in conflicts and disputes as well as capable and having more time to do human rights work and community service.

### **The Committee to Prevent and Manage HR Violations (CPMHRVs)**

This Committee is directly responsible to and formed by the Commune Council. The scope of their work covers the entire commune. The CPMHRV usually include some PDVs, representatives of the 3 political parties, some respected elders or achars, teachers and a member of the Commune Council who is the team leader or Committee Head.

This committee is the one responsible for resolving and finding settlements to all disputes, conflicts and problems happening in the commune. Their efforts have reduced the number of cases being elevated and solved by the Commune Council. Thus, the Commune Councils said their workload was lessened with the Committee taking over this big chunk of work from them.

This manner of resolving disputes, with some quasi-government authority have reduced the number of conflicts arising from within the community. The people also said when the CPMHRVs resolve the conflicts, they do not spend large amount of money, as everyone involved in the conflict try to find win-win solutions, unlike when they bring their cases to the police or to the court. The police extract a lot of money from both sides of the conflict. Of course, the poor are always at the losing end because they cannot buy out the police to make a decision in favor of their side. People also said that the CPMHRV try to resolve the problems reasonably based on human rights and legal bases.

Upon deeper examination, BFD must try to look into the manner with which the CPMHRV resolve the cases. The CPMHRV must be able to make clear cut delineations between conflicts among the people that can be sufficiently settled through traditional and Buddhist methods, dialogues and negotiations; versus criminal cases that should be correctly elevated to and resolved in the courts with the perpetrators undergoing due process and real justice being dispensed to the victim.

BFD must conduct a workshop to unify the organization towards a common understanding of these cases, all terms and categories. A Human Rights Lexicon can be produced as standards for the terms and categories they are using in their reports and documents.

Like the PDVs, the members of the CPMHRVs must deepen their knowledge of human rights, the judicial system, laws and court procedures. They must have sufficient training and mentoring to develop them into well-rounded, competent conflict negotiators and paralegals. Their decisions must truly be based on human rights principles and correct judicial and legal foundations. This way, their decisions will bring about real justice and with, it real peace. Since they have a quasi-government entity, their interventions and decisions carry official stamp. BFD must

ensure the correctness of these decisions and interventions, not only being resolved for the sake of convenience.

### **The Human Rights Watchdogs (HRW)**

The Human Rights Watchdog (HRW) should be elected from among the respected individuals in a commune. They can either be an individual or a group of 5-6 individuals whose main function is to report human rights abuses (i.e. abuses committed by state agents like police, military, government officials against the citizens) to the PDVs and CPMHRVs for appropriate actions. If there are no immediate resolutions and redress to the victims, the HRW is the one primarily responsible in reporting these human rights violations to the media and human rights NGOs like Licadho and ADHOC. Their work revolves around reporting of and monitoring government's compliance to human rights principles and laws of the land.

It is imperative that the HRWs are independent from government as they are the ones monitoring government's actions and implementation of the different laws, rules and regulations.

Since the HRWs are the ones directly dealing with media and the human rights NGOs (Licadho and Adhoc), they should be provided with networking skills and communication facilities.

And like the PDVs and CPMHRVs, their knowledge about and grasp of human rights concepts and principles, laws and the court system, the judiciary; and conflict/dispute management must be deepened. Their capability for reporting and monitoring must also be enhanced to ensure the correctness and reliability of the reports and data they are giving to BFD, media and HR NGOs.

### **The Mobile Civic Education Team (MCET)**

The dissemination and popularization of human rights concepts and principles, women's and children's rights, gender knowledge, the laws of the land, judicial system, rules, regulations, decrees and prakas, human trafficking, HR monitoring and reporting, health, hygiene and sanitation, HIV/Aids and other topics are all done through community video showing by the Mobile Civic Education Team (MCET) of BFD. The video showing are done at night time (7 to 10 PM) as this is the most convenient time for the people to watch where they are no longer engaged in economic activities and household chores. After the film showing, some explanations follow and some question and answer exercises are conducted.

Though this type of education method and method of instructions are definitely more effective than banking/lecturing, there is much room for improvement for MCET's methods and style of work. The community video showing can provide much knowledge to many people at one time. Then after this mass education, BFD staff no longer do deepening education work and would let the PDV continue educating the village people. The PDV do their work through house-to-house visits, one on one discussion with neighbors and during religious ceremonies.

## VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

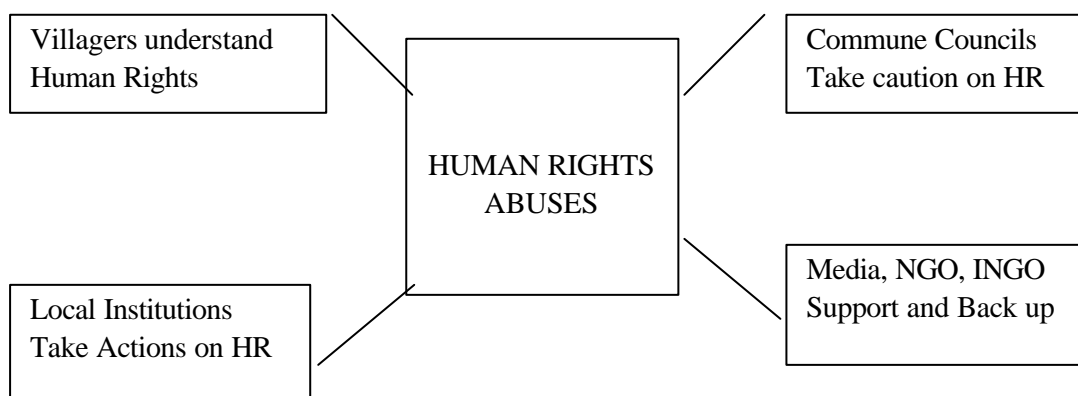
1. The Human Rights Program using the strategy of organizing PDVs, HRWs and CPMHRVs to promote and disseminate human rights principles and concepts; and to mediate and resolve conflicts and disputes at the local levels need to be continued for three (3) years more.
2. It is recommended that the next Human Rights Program be planned and its details laid in such a way that it is well integrated and volted into the Strategic Plan and based on the lessons from the first Human Rights Program.
3. The next Human Rights Program must still be implemented in the provinces of Banteay Meanchey and Oddor Meanchey and will continue in the same number of districts (5) And communes (29). This time all the gaps must be filled up, in terms of putting in place the necessary number of PDVs, HRWs and CPMHRVs. Likewise, the PDVs and HRWs must really be elected by the people, without the intervention and influence of the Commune Councils and other local authorities.
4. The first two years of this program is a consolidation phase where all the gaps will be filled up. The last year would be concentrated on the institutionalization of existing groups, developing their capacity and capability for the work, and turning over the program to the target groups.
5. Furthermore, the financial and resource mobilization efforts must be done already by BFD and the target groups. This way, the sustainability of the program is being laid down simultaneous with the strengthening of the target groups. On the last quarter of the last year, the program must be turned over to the target groups. A turning over ceremony must be incorporated in the plan.
6. BFD must ensure the building up of the capacity, knowledge and skills of the PDVs, HRWs and CPMHRVs for the particular work required from them. A capacity building and development plan must be made for them so as to ensure that they become well-rounded, capable and effective paralegals in their communities.
7. To be able to undertake the work of training and building the capacity of the PDVs, CPMHRVs and HRWs, BFD must put in place a training team that will organize the basic training and education, then the advanced training and training of trainers. The team must ensure the development of the PDVs, CPMHRVs and HRWs into competent, well-rounded and professional paralegals and conflict mediators. This training team can be the MCET, depending on the decision of BFD after careful study of its strategic plan or the training team can be one component of the HR Program.
8. As stated earlier in the Results and Findings of this External Evaluation, BFD has been equated to grassroots organizing, human rights and conflict mediation. BFD has earned a reputation of being a front liner, a pioneer in entering and opening up remote areas. These are the niches that BFD must claim, areas wherein BFD must professionalize and become famous of. In

providing flesh into its Strategic Plan, these niches are worth developing by BFD.

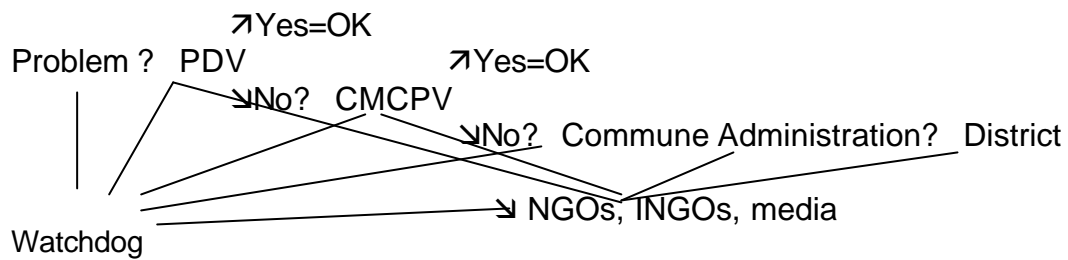
9. The Education work of the MCET needs to be improved. It must develop training modules appropriate for the different target groups. There must be standard training levels – basic, advanced and training of trainers. Then specialized and customized trainings can be developed. It can continue using the community video showing but not the sole and primary methods but must be one of several methods, likewise the community video showing can be the education method for mass level, but there should education methods that are deepening specially for persons who needs deeper understanding of these HR concepts and conflict mediation techniques.
10. BFD must develop and produce its own IEC materials (Information, Education and Communication Materials). It has lots of publications but these were not meant for mass distribution and mass consumption. To be able to become effective and professional educators, BFD should conduct a planning workshop for this particular line of work. It must develop popular forms of creative materials that can be understood by the poor and the marginalized. It must be able to document all its efforts and share the lessons and learning BFD had gained in the last 10 years of its organizational life. It must undertake researches along the niches it had been famous for – human rights and conflict mediation using the Buddhist principles, methods and processes. Lastly, it must produce its own publications (books, newsletters and handouts) for the information of the general public.

## VIII. Conclusions

The following schematic diagram shows the flow of the program strategy, which has been proven appropriate, effective and replicable. The succeeding case study shows how the strategy works and the resulting positive outcome where the impact empowers the people.



BFD strongly believes that understanding of human rights, ways to prevent human rights violation, and to solve the problems of human rights violations at local levels are the best way for local people in remote rural areas like in Banteay Meanchey and Oddor Meanchey.



### Case Study: Action-oriented Human Rights Abuse Engagement at Local Level

An armed soldier with powerful back up took a piece of land of a villager who has owned the land for a long time. The soldier threatens the villager on the danger if the villager tries to get the land back. This is considered as a human rights abuse.

Normally, the villager would go to the village leader and the matter may end with nothing. With the new approach that BFD had set up in the commune, the villager can go to inform the PDV (Peace and Development Volunteer), or/and Watchdog Group that are established and trained by BFD on the matter relating to human rights abuses.

The PDV who stays in each village will try to solve the conflict directly with the armed soldier. With skills and experience, most of the problem can be solved by the PDV. If so, the violation will be calmed down at the village level. If the matter is not solved, the PDV will bring the matter to the Committee to Prevent and Manage Human Rights Violation (CPMHV) to solve. The committee, which is composed of 5-7 members (one Commune Council Member, PDV, literacy teacher, and other civilians) and trained by BFD, will take care of the problem. If the problem is not settled and resolved, the matter will go to the Commune Administration and then can go forward to the District level.

At the same time the matter will go also to the human rights NGOs, INGOs and the media working in the area, by the Human Rights Watchdog group (HRW) which is also organized by BFD in each commune. The HRW who works closely with PDV and whose duties is to observe the human rights abuse independently is linked with the NGO, INGO, and media from outside. The pressure from outsiders will also influence the matter to be resolved at the commune level. If not the NGO, INGO, who directly work with the human rights abuse at the court level, will take care of the matter.

In conclusion, BFD must continue to undertake its Human Rights Program. It must also share its success story with other NGOs and groups that would like to go into a similar program and endeavor.