

# Cambodia Red Cross Society – Siem Reap Branch Youth volunteers supporting people with HIV/AIDS

**LOCATION:** Siem Reap Province (*pop.* 903,000), is located in northwestern Cambodia and the 2<sup>nd</sup> poorest province with 14 HIV/AIDS prone communities. It has about 2,590 volunteers and among them 1,908 are youth.

**THE ISSUE:**

Young people have registered as Red Cross Youth (RCY) volunteers in the branch. However, they don't have any interesting and youth friendly activities neither in the communities nor schools. The branch struggled to retain youth volunteers.

**VOLUNTEERS' ACTION:**

25 Youth volunteers (12 girls and 13 boys) created a youth empowerment Programme aimed to change the mindsets of people and empower youths to promote an AIDS free generation.

**OUTCOMES**

Siem Reap branch has become confident in retaining their young volunteers and continuing to actively involve them in activities such as :

1. HIV/AIDS Prevention campaign during December and further joining in dissemination after the event
2. Non-discrimination campaign about HIV/AIDS positive people where an initial 100 community people joined.
3. AIDS free generation campaign where 10 HIV/AIDS positive people initially joined.
4. Road safety Campaign 2016 which was initiated by the youth themselves.



**HOW DID THEY DO IT?:**

**The YABC Training and Youth led action**

The Cambodia Red Cross - Siem REAP branch, supported by IFRC, conducted a YABC Peer Educators' training for 10 male and 10 female Red Cross Youths in September 2014. After the training, the YABC peer educators started conducting activities which were interesting for them.

Fast forward December 2015! These youths remained at the branch. They are young people with changed mindset, appreciating themselves as the leaders of today and tomorrow. Recently, they made careful assessment about their communities and found one fact that the HIV/AIDS rate is higher than other provinces. They designed youth events on the occasion of the World AIDS Day targeting HIV/AIDS prone community and Angkor High school students. Their objective were clear; 1) thru community event, to address the issue of discrimination against HIV/AIDS positive people 2) thru school event, to motivate other youths to join the HIV/AIDS Free generation campaign

For preparation, they developed an action plan following an assessment, selection of village, community discussions. They gathered in Angkor High school hall and involved more youths from the school and designed events. They developed Drama scenario, composed lyrics for songs and practiced dances. The branch supported with an orientation about HIV/AIDS knowledge for youths and connected them with the community leader. After all





preparations, these young volunteers confirmed the dates for the events. They designed the banner for the events with the theme of “ Zero New HIV infection, Zero Discrimination, Zero AIDS related death, AIDS Free Generation”

The Community event took place in Samrongear Community, Pouk District, Siem REAP with around 100 community people joining the event including 10 People with HIV/AIDS as guests.

The first program was the story of **Ms. Tepsavon, HIV/AIDS lady (31 years old)**, how she got HIV/AIDS. Youth orientation about HIV/AIDS Knowledge was conducted for awareness of commune people.



The second program was a song composed by youths with the theme of Zero new infection. One of youth (YABC peer educator) has a disability since his childhood but his guitar playing talent has impressed the people from community.

The third programme was a drama "A story of Tida", a 17 year old girl living with AIDS positive mom. This drama made people cry, with a realization that stigma and discrimination drive HIV/AIDS positive people away from proper information. The program ended with a community dance together with the 10 guests and the youths.

After the event, 100 community people joined actively the campaign for non-discrimination against HIV/AIDS positive people. 10 HIV/AIDS people actively joined the commune activities.

On the 2<sup>nd</sup> day, the youths visited Angkor high school to organize another event with the same topic. At the school, young YABC peer

educators were not so confident since the topic was more about sex life and when they started the presentation, school children started laughing. But, in the middle of programme, they were getting more confident since all school children have started to engage in topic and were even shocked about the result of the HIV/AIDS discriminations and death.

After the event, most of school children joined in the HIV/AIDS Prevention campaign.

The YABC peer educators were amazed by their peers who used to be shy inside the classrooms but has shown a more confident young person

and addressed the HIV/AIDS topic in an impressive way through drama, music and dance.

After the two day events, all these students gathered and designed their future activities. They decided to go to other communities with different topics and issues and do various events. They now realized they can change their peers and their communities.

#### **A personal reflection...**

*“I have never met people living with HIV/AIDS in person. When I met them in person, I realised they are also human beings as normal as us. When they cried on the stage while telling their stories how they got HIV/AIDS and how they had to undergo miserable lives due to discrimination by people, I also got so overwhelmed and cried a lot with my friends. One HIV/AIDS mom holding her boy has cried a lot when she watched our drama. It seems to tell me that this painful tears will go on to next generation if we discriminate them. We, the youths, through YABC should end this discrimination and build an AIDS Free generation for a better world.” (Lee Fa, YABC peer educator, 20 year-old youth volunteer)*

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