



# Carpets for Communities

EMPOWERING FAMILIES TO BREAK THE CYCLE OF POVERTY

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## Carpets for Communities Expansion Underway!



New participant Chhorn Leout is a natural hand-hooker. She finished nearly a quarter of a 2.4 x 1.7 m area rug in her first week. Four of Leout's children are now back in school since she joined CfC.

Carpets for Communities has more than doubled in

size in the past month, expanding to 16 women who support the education of their combined 53 kids at seven primary and secondary schools.

Participant recruitment begins on the Thai-Cambodian border where CfC staff locate vulnerable children who are working to support their families. If the children are willing, they take CfC staff to their homes where their parents are interviewed. Families who meet CfC target group criteria are prioritized based on a wide range of considerations, including the number of children out of school, number of children working to support the family, mother's current work, land ownership, debts, geo-

graphical location, etc.

As CfC carpet demand grows, so does the opportunity to bring these families into the program. New women are provided carpet-making training in their own homes. Their eyes are tested and they are fitted with reading glasses, generously provided by the Lions Club. Children are enrolled in the nearest public school and are fitted with uniforms. CfC social workers visit new families on a daily basis, providing encouragement to the women hand-hooking carpets and assisting with the children's transition from the streets of Poi Pet to school.

### Recent Achievements:

- COMPLETED 500 BASELINE SURVEY INTERVIEWS OF POI PET COMMUNE HOUSEHOLDS
- INTERVIEWED OVER 50 WOMEN WITH CHILDREN WORKING ON THE THAI-CAMBODIAN BORDER AS AN INITIAL STEP TOWARD PROJECT EXPANSION

### CfC Children Get Back-to-School Kits

Even though public education in Cambodia is free, many families don't send their children to school simply because they cannot afford the cost of school supplies. CfC families are no exception. Thanks to the generous support of the Bangkok Caring Group, 42 children from CfC families are sporting new uniforms, flip-flops, and school bags full of notebooks, pens, pencils, and pencil sharpeners. The back-to-school kits are designed to speed the kids' transition from the streets of Poi Pet to the classroom.

## Family Feature: Ban La's success story

Meet Bun La. She, her husband, and seven of their eight children live in a small hut nestled among the rice fields of An Dong Thmar Meas village. Bun La used to be a day laborer, working on local construction projects and collecting recyclables. The work was irregular and her income variable. Her children were forced to stay home from school, some to help collect recyclables and others to watch the house and their

baby sister.

Bun La joined CfC in August 2005. Her life has changed since. She likes being able to work from home, where she can watch over her 2-year-old and newborn baby. And, now, she can send her older children to school.

When asked what she wants to do when she grows up, Bun La's daughter, 10-year-old Sokly, exclaimed "niet-crew," a teacher!

Now that she's attending school, she's on her way to fulfilling her dreams.



Bun La and her family in their home. L to R: Sokly, Kimheang, Den, Soklin, Kimhean, husband Sot Keat, Bun La, and Chanry.



Four children in back to school kits. Before joining CfC, Veasnar (far left) and Veasnit (centre left) worked for \$1.25 per day to support their family.



Carpets for Communities  
c/o MWPF  
5A Nai Lert Tower  
2/4 Wireless Road  
Pratumwan  
Bangkok 10330 Thailand

Phone: +66 (0) 1 448 9464  
Fax: +66 (0) 2 655 0382  
E-mail: [carpets@wyps.org](mailto:carpets@wyps.org)

**We're on the Web!**  
<http://carpets.wyps.org>

## Life in Poi Pet

Land mines from Cambodia's decades of war continue to wreak havoc on the country, particularly in areas along the Thai border, like Poi Pet. The signs are evident even at the border, where limbless men work for their daily food pushing or hand-cranking carts of goods back and forth across the border. Drive five kilometers past the border on Highway 5, and the signs are even more apparent. Thankfully, they're signs of relief on the way. Since January, the Cambodia Mines Action Centre (CMAC), a demining unit created by the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC), has been hard at work locating mines and roping off dangerous areas with red "Danger Mines!" signs. In some places, it's a sea of red.

Andrea Messmer, Cfc Project Manager, used to teach English to primary school students in the rural village of An Dong Thmar Meas in her free time. "My classes used to be interrupted by mine explosions. I never knew if they were indications of CMAC at work, or if another victim had been claimed."



Mined areas along Highway 5 in Poi Pet are being roped off by CMAC forces.

*Carpets for Communities (Cfc) is an innovative income-generation project in*

*Poi Pet Commune, Cambodia that empowers needy women to send their children to school.*

*Through Cfc, women receive carpet-making training, materials and access to sales channels that guarantee them living wages. Carpets for Communities is a joint-project between the Millennium World Peace Foundation (MWPF) and the Cambodian Hope Organization (CHO).*

*Both are not-for-profit organizations.*

## New Faces Join the Cfc Team

Carpets for Communities welcomed three new faces to its team in December, all of whom are now contributing members of the Cambodian Hope Organization (CHO) staff.

**Seng Mongheng** joined CHO from the Royal University of Law and Economics where he recently completed a bachelor's degree in Development. Through his internship at The Lutheran World Federation, Mongheng also brings solid field experience to the team.

**Moun Saohim** spent the last 3 years as a youth advo-

cate at CARE, promoting HIV/AIDS awareness to children throughout Poi Pet Commune. Saohim's experience with at-risk kids and



Khun Vanny, Moun Saohim, and Seng Mongheng take a break in front of the CHO office.

her familiarity with the unique challenges faced in Cfc's target community make her a valuable asset to Cfc.

**Khun Vanny**, a dedicated mother of two, joined the Cfc team from CHO's Food Preparation and Hygiene program where she taught at-risk young adults to cook. Vanny also has experience with handicrafts and brings a contagious enthusiasm to the team.

Mongheng, Saohim, and Vanny are on the frontlines in Poi Pet Commune, empowering families to break the cycle of poverty.

## Cfc Participants Proudly Complete First Area Rugs

There's no doubt, hand-hooking a 2.4 x 1.7 m area rug can be a daunting task. It entails cutting up to 400,000 pieces of wool and silk material and hand-hooking 111,701 stitches. It's a job that takes anywhere from 1-2 months. But, Cfc women are proving their perseverance. They finished hand-hooking the first Cfc area rugs in December. Before, women worked independently on 0.3 x 1.7 m pieces of carpet that were later sewn together at the factory of

Inter Krai Co, Ltd, a Cfc project partner, in Kohn Kaen, Thailand. The recent production process change ensures uniformity across carpets. Women continue to be compensated regularly – usually on a weekly basis – and they have an even greater sense of pride when they complete a "bruom tom-tom," or big carpet.

Cfc area rugs are available for purchase through Inter Krai. Inquiries can be directed to Ning Duankaew at [ning@carpetmaker.co.th](mailto:ning@carpetmaker.co.th).



Ok Chon and her son, Pao, show off Carpets for Communities' first wool-felt area rug.