A Place to Meet for Resettled Families

**July 2013** - A community centre currently under construction at the Trapeang Anh Chan relocation site, part of the Cambodia railway rehabilitation project, is already paying dividends for some of the resettled families living at the site.

Design work has brought the community together, and at least four community members have benefited from unskilled labor opportunities at the build site.

The community requested the centre in a letter to the Cambodian government’s Inter-Ministerial Resettlement Committee. “We wanted a place for the community to meet, hold trainings and have our savings group meetings,” said Chan Rithy, leader of one of the community savings groups.

Two plots of land were granted by the IRC to build the community centre, the design and construction of which has been paid for by AusAID, as part of the organization’s [complementary work to improve resettlement](#) in the project.

Following similar requests from communities in the four other railway relocation sites, AusAID hired architecture firm Collective Studio in March 2013 to design and build community centres in all five relocation sites, starting with Phnom Penh.

In April 2013, Collective Studio conducted four community meetings in Phnom Penh to consult with the community on what the centre should look like. Participatory exercises allowed the community to brainstorm ideas of what the centre would be used for, the aspects that were essential and those that were desirable. The community was able to view and comment on a 3-D model of the centre and agreed on a final layout after one month of discussions. “The process of consultation was very good because it allowed us to decide together what we wanted,” explained Pen Kimvit.

The centre will feature a large open space for community meetings, trainings and other events. The community also wanted a locked room to store documents, such as training materials or bookkeeping and other financial records kept as part of the [Expanded Income Restoration Program](#). The centre will have a disability-inclusive design so that anyone, regardless of mobility, can easily access the centre.

Construction began on 15 May 2013, after a ground-breaking ceremony and traditional Cambodian blessings. Collective Studio is responsible for the construction, and has made a concerted effort to hire local labour whenever possible. So far four relocated families have benefited from short-term unskilled construction jobs at the centre, including Ms. Kimvit’s two sons.

With construction well underway, community members have been discussing how they will manage the centre once it is completed. Collective Studio is organizing training activities around centre maintenance for the community, and families are discussing how they will divide responsibility to ensure the centre is well looked after. The community centre in Trapeang Anh Chan is expected to be
completed by August. Construction on the community centres in the other four relocation sites is expected to start in the second half of 2013.