

Abandoned elderly get new home

Written by KIM Vuthy



Elderly people sit at the Cambodia Retirement Village in Prey Veng province this month. (Photo by:

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At the age of 84, Prey Veng province resident Pin Yorn has been living hand-to-mouth. He is unable to work due to his age, and three of his seven children are dead while three others moved far away after getting married.

With little support from his family, Pin Yorn says he and his wife, 82-year-old Sam In, “sometimes don’t have enough to eat” and are reliant on handouts from neighbours and from one of his daughters living nearby.

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But thanks to a new US\$9,000 project aimed at helping the elderly of Cham Bak village in Kanh Chriech district's Chong Ampil commune, he is now looking forward to a brighter future.

"I hope that I have delicious food to eat and a good place to sleep before I die," he said yesterday.

Pin Yorn and his wife, together with 10 other elderly village residents, are set to move into a new retirement home – thought to be the first of its kind in Cambodia.

Due to be inaugurated on Saturday, the centre – funded by donations from both individuals and NGOs – will provide food, shelter and medical care for elderly residents who cannot support themselves.

Kim Vuthy, project manager for Cambodia Retirement Village, said yesterday that it was the first centre in the Kingdom intended to help elderly people who had been abandoned by their children.

"I was born in this village and I saw that most old people were abandoned, without care given to them by their children," he said.

Such elderly people were forced to work hard to support themselves, he said, despite earlier hopes of being supported by their families when they grew old.

"We really hope that these 12 old people will be well treated... and live happily before they pass away. Our purpose is to reduce the difficulties of the elderly in my village, to contribute to the community development activities and to share a model for all people in society with the sense of sharing and supporting [community]," Kim Vuthy said.

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Members of the community have welcomed the scheme as a way of reducing the number of people forced to beg to survive.

Po Phal, Chong Ampil commune chief, said yesterday: "I think this is a good example for the next generation. There will no more old beggars walking along the road anymore in the future. They will have a home and they won't need to leave to ask for money or food from someone else anymore."

Project organisers hope to build additional centres in the future, but are acutely aware that expansion and up-keep are dependent on funding. Plans to create a kitchen and living room at the centre would require raising another US\$3,200 in funds. But despite monetary constraints, Kim Vuthy hopes that the government may choose to support the project in the future. "I have plans to create the same centre in another commune or province, but at this time I don't have the ability or money to do it. What I have to do right now is help this centre to be strong," he said.