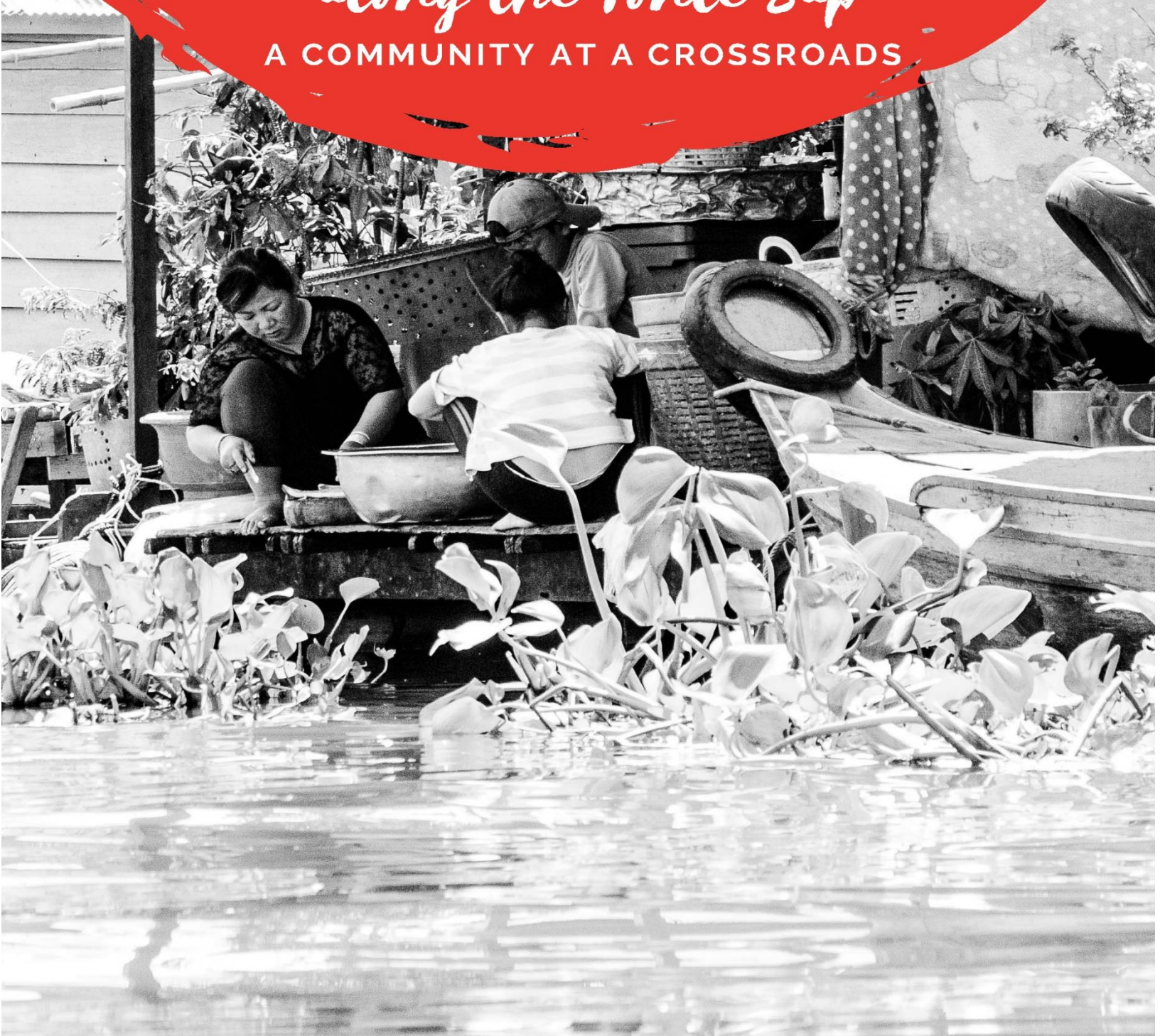


Listening

*to the ethnic Vietnamese living
along the Tonle Sap*

A COMMUNITY AT A CROSSROADS



A REPORT BY WOMEN PEACE MAKERS



Listening to the ethnic Vietnamese living along the Tonle Sap: A community at a crossroads

This report is a public document for key stakeholders working on relevant issues. It recounts findings from a year-long inquiry process carried out by a team from Women Peace Makers (WPM).

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and

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Most importantly, none of this could have happened without the ongoing support and commitment of the residents of the Kampong Chhnang floating village community who engaged in conversations, shared their stories and perspectives, and opened their hearts to us.

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Cover photo credit:
Photo taken by a resident of Kampong Chhnang
floating village community.



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PREFACE

This report consists of findings from a year of inquiry and information gathering by a team of community researchers in Cambodia in 2019. Although the findings are now somewhat dated, they provide important documentation of a diverse community that lived throughout the Tonle Sap waterway and along the riverbanks over generations. The report was initially shared among stakeholders privately due to the sensitivity of the material and the social and political context during the period of data gathering, analysis, and writing. This edition of the report has been reviewed and revised to protect the identity of those who participated and provide this brief update on the situation today.

Today the same community has overwhelmingly vanished from the waterway. Most residents were relocated to land while those who stayed had to move their boats and floating homes in different areas to avoid being dismantled by local authorities. There is much to learn from this community that has been largely displaced. Despite being seen by others in Cambodia as foreigners, illegal, or unlawfully residing on national territory, the fact is that residents of this community called the area their home over multiple generations. Their stories are woven from their lives on the water along with those that their ancestors passed on to them.

This work provides an in depth look into how those living in precarious legal identity or at risk of statelessness continue to go about their lives in the face of structural challenges that they are conditioned to confront day after day. The residents of this community in focus do not necessarily view themselves as lacking legal identity or stateless. Those terms are taken up in legal contexts often by others observing the situation from the periphery. They are, however, acutely aware that they do not live with the same benefits of others nearby and continue to live on the margins of society, often invisibly, as they go about their daily lives.

Publishing this report now is primarily with the intention to tell the story of a community and present the voices of its residents directly - through the sharing of participatory research that was carried out during a pivotal moment in the community's trajectory. Even to this day, floating village communities of ethnic Vietnamese residents are being dismantled, with some choosing to move to land while others find their way to Vietnam to start a new life. Women Peace Makers (WPM) is working with others to continue to understand and document these communities in the current context and will be publishing future work on this specific community along with others.

INTRODUCTION

Understanding ‘Us’ to know ‘Them’ is a regional initiative that transcends borders by using minority groups as “connectors”. In this pilot phase, much emphasis was put on the ethnic Khmer and migrant populations outside of Cambodia, namely living in Thailand and Vietnam, and the ethnic Vietnamese minority population inside Cambodia. The rationale for such an approach is two-fold: Firstly, the sensitivities of working with certain minority groups can prove challenging, particularly in a public context where borders and nationalities may be seen as a major divider in grouping humans. Secondly, outreach to minority groups located in areas with large mainstream populations around them, but in some reach to other ethnic groups that they relate to across borders, provides a “parallel life” effect. Simply based on which side of a border one is on determines whether she or he is considered minority or majority. These groups may find connections among each other, and even observe parallel lives of being a minority on either side of a border.

This report explores the specific case of an ethnic Vietnamese community living along the Tonle Sap River in central Cambodia. It is an initial draft that will become a chapter in a future publication exploring different minority groups across Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam. This particular group is in a unique and sensitive situation. The ethnic Vietnamese community living in Cambodia generally faces high levels of discrimination and mistrust among the Cambodian public. The community in Kampong Chhnang lives largely isolated from the rest of the country. Born and raised in floating villages, they identify themselves as people of the river, living and making their living solely as they float from one place to another. A large relocation initiative led by Cambodian authorities to move all river dwellers from water to land is threatening this community’s existence. Therefore, along with the dynamics of being a minority group lies a real “sense of place” and the likeliness that this community, as we know it now, will no longer exist within a year’s time.

This report captures a pivotal moment in this minority community’s journey. The information collected for this work comes directly from community members of the ethnic Vietnamese minority living along the Tonle Sap River. It should not be considered a piece for advocacy or mobilisation, but rather provides the context and space for the reader to consider ‘the Other’ and explore any possibility to see herself or himself in the community at hand.

APPROACH AND METHODOLOGY

Facilitative Listening Design (FLD), a grassroots information-gathering and conflict transformation approach developed by Women Peace Makers in Cambodia, was adapted for this regional initiative across Cambodia, Vietnam, and Thailand, including specifically for the Kampong Chhnang component. The typical nine FLD steps remained the same as previous FLD projects. One of the key differences in this initiative was the inclusion of a media and documentary initiative as well as a community art component into the 'Listening' design.

Participants, known as 'Listeners', followed up with their target communities after FLD activities with a filming project. After being trained in Human-Centred Storytelling, a filmmaking methodology where mindfulness, peaceful dialogue and design thinking are essential parts of the process, they went out to film a story that could explore the uniqueness and beauty of being a minority group across the region.

An art workshop concluding the FLD work was also carried out specifically in the ethnic Vietnamese minority community in Kampong Chhnang to experiment with art as an expressive form for sense of place, belonging, and community. It was an opportunity to bring community members, the FLD team, and WPM staff together by using creative processes and art. Villagers shared their stories of the community through photos, learning the art of photography and going out into their community to capture unique and beautiful shots of everyday scenes from their lives. Through storytelling and hands-on sessions, together with an international peacebuilding artist, they also contributed to the painting of a work using a boat as a canvas. The boat covered in their stories conveys their community, memories, and visions for the future.

Recruitment

Due to the marginalisation and the particular complexity of the target community in Kampong Chhnang, initial recruitment proved to be difficult. In early scoping trips, it became clear that community members were not willing to be Listeners themselves. Fear, distrust, time availability, and issues of self-confidence all contributed to the hesitation among community members to take direct roles in the FLD implementation. Subsequently, it was decided to recruit ethnic Vietnamese Cambodians from outside the community who could engage in fieldwork. Two Listeners joined the team, both residing in Phnom Penh. Both spoke Vietnamese fluently and committed to travelling to the community over the duration of the project.

A LISTENER'S TAKE ON THE COMMUNITY AND HERSELF



Pisey, one of the Listeners, a mixed-race Khmer-Vietnamese Cambodian, has been doing FLD projects for years in different ethnic Vietnamese communities across the country. This project was somewhat different for her, however. She was asked to go into a new unfamiliar community and get to know residents living on the river. She had to arrange homestays and meals with different families and spent considerably more time simply getting to know the residents of the floating village.

“As an outsider, at the beginning I was worried when I went into the community because people always asked me if I was a reporter whenever I started to talk about relocation or citizenship issues,” she said.

I felt nervous with my FLD partner, especially when people looked at us like strangers. Some thought we were tourists.”

Pisey was also concerned about what her family would think of this work, especially since her parents have always been against her working on any issues involving the Vietnamese community in Cambodia because of deep-rooted public discrimination.

“They usually don’t let me even speak Vietnamese in public,” she shared.

The Listeners tried to get to know the community in Kampong Chhnang better, and build personal relationships with everyone through speaking the same language and eating together. Pisey said that staying in the community was sometimes challenging, especially sleeping in a floating house which was completely new for her. Over time, however, she grew more and more accustomed to life on the river and developed strong friendships with many residents. She grew more confident in her own skills, both in project implementation and in communication.

“This particular FLD assignment has taught me a lot. I know how to better manage budgets and how to really prepare and plan for fieldwork. Since I got to know more people and networks in this isolated community, I learnt a lot about their issues and what they have faced,” she shares with enthusiasm.

Pisey also reflected on her own identity and says that when she worked in the community, she considered herself Vietnamese and felt comfortable to speak and interact as a Vietnamese person with them. In spite of seeing herself as Khmer and Cambodian, she doesn’t think that the Vietnamese part of her identity needs to conflict with that.

“I always let them know that I am mixed Vietnamese because my grandma is Vietnamese. I still have a good relationship with everyone and they even share their experience with me and often give me great life advice!” she reflects.

As with other initiatives using this approach, FLD continues to push participants to begin their work by deeply listening to others around them and focus on their Sharers, most often in their communities. They start with training on bias and how to record what they hear without putting their own thoughts and beliefs into the data they collect. However, more emphasis is now being put on also providing the space for Listeners to later reflect and listen to themselves after having listened so much to others. Their reflections and voices are becoming just as important as those of the Sharers they engage with.

Pisey thinks it is very important that people have a chance to visit and experience life in the floating village to really see and understand the residents there. She wants others to know that in her opinion, “these are not ‘illegal immigrants’, they were born here and have been living here for generations. Their ancestors come from here. This is their home too.”

Tool customisation

FLD recording tools were generally kept in the same format, provided in Khmer language, which was the language the Listeners felt most comfortable completing written documentation in. Nearly all conversations were in Vietnamese, and Listeners often wrote quotes from Sharers in Vietnamese language on the forms provided. It was decided that verbal, rather than written, consent would be asked for so that Listeners could work with the community without paperwork that might intimidate Sharers. Conversation inquiries, providing general guiding questions to help facilitate conversations when needed, were developed together as a group during the Coaching and Training Lab with the full regional team. These questions were only used to help structure conversations and not for strict interviewing.

Conversation inquiry guiding questions

I. Background and identity

- a. When did you come here? How and why?
- b. What's your job?
- c. What's your identity and ethnicity?

II. Culture and community life

- a. What's your religion? What are your traditions?
- b. How is your relationship with Khmer?
- c. Tell me about your daily life (business, clothes, food...)

III. Perspectives

- a. Have you heard about any issues at the Cambodia-Vietnam border?
- b. How do you think others from outside might think about you or see you?
- c. Do you experience any discrimination?

Coaching and training lab

The first gathering of the team provided an opportunity for everyone in the full regional initiative to meet and learn more about the project and the concept behind *Understanding 'Us' to know 'Them'*. The lab took place in Phu Quoc/Koh Tral, a disputed island claimed by both Vietnam and Cambodia. The group spent three days at a resort where they were able to swim, relax, and build relationships together as they trained and planned for fieldwork. Standard FLD coaching and training activities were used to prepare the Listeners. They also carried out trial conversations together and practised to perfect the steps in using FLD to engage with everyday community members.

LISTENING THROUGH A LENS

USING FILM AND MEDIA TO HEAR AND TELL STORIES



For the first time in an FLD initiative, the full regional team of *Understanding 'Us' to know 'Them'* used film and media as another way to better listen to their communities in Cambodia, Thailand, and Vietnam. Following their intensive FLD fieldwork to engage in conversations and record what they heard, Listeners returned to their communities armed with cameras and video equipment. Their task was to capture one story that might help to better humanise all the data and information they had collected through their FLD work.

Listeners were trained in Human-Centred Storytelling (HCS) by the School of Slow Media. HCS is a process in which the focus is put on the common space between storytelling, the audience, and the people who are filmed. Listeners produced a short documentary on the everyday life of a person while they visited Phnom Penh. They then went back and each pair worked on developing a storyline and shot and filmed a member of their community.

The Listeners who had spent the prior months working in the Kampong Chhnang floating village community decided to produce a short film on one of the Sharers they had got to know quite well. Moug, a resident who raises fish under her boat and also sells ice cream around the community, was born and raised in the area. She knows nearly everyone and has found joy in selling her treats from her small boat. Moug helps us to see real life in the community and humanises the residents and the situation in the floating village.

The team has screened its short film in the Kampong Chhnang floating village, Phnom Penh, Thailand, and Vietnam, reaching audiences through documentary and dialogue. Using film and media to better listen to community members and share their voices in a unique way has greatly contributed to the evolution of FLD and the opportunities in expanding listening tools through the scope of the FLD approach.



I have been here and making a living for over 50 years now.

Conversations in the field

Immediately following the Coaching and Training Lab, Listeners went back to their communities and initiated conversations with a range of Sharers, aiming to reach the demographic targets they developed earlier. In Kampong Chhnang, the pair of Listeners chose to visit the community nearly every week-end. Organising homestays, they lived and ate with the community members and grew close to them over the two-month period. They were often accompanied by a project member with expertise and experience in FLD.

Info-space lab

This initiative had a relatively longer-than-usual timeframe for Listeners to conduct their fieldwork. After two months in the field, Listeners and the FLD team first reconnected regionally in Buriram, Thailand, a historical homeland for the Northern Khmer ethnic minority group. Due to the unique context of the Kampong Chhnang community, as well as the political sensitivity of the issue of relocation, a separate Info-Space Lab was held solely for the team working with the ethnic Vietnamese in Cambodia a few weeks later in Phnom Penh. The pair of Listeners presented their key themes that they had heard directly from the communities. They decided on the frequency they heard the themes in their fieldwork, leading to the structured list that is presented as the FLD findings in this report.

Information verification and snapshot analysis

The analysis of conversations was a one-month process conducted by the Cambodia component project lead. The detailed notes of the Info-Space Lab along with the Listener-developed key theme list from the community were used as an initial baseline. Posters made by the Listeners to present their themes and notes going back to questions from the conversation inquiries were also incorporated. Most importantly, all recorded information from the conversations, including daily journals and conversation logs, were read and coded by the Khmer-speaking lead. Key details from these tools were coded principally under the themes that had been identified by the Listeners during the Info-Space Lab. Other information was also highlighted and additional details were categorised.

A BOAT AS A CANVAS, PHOTOGRAPHY LESSONS, AND A COMMUNITY'S IDEA OF "HOME"



Particular to this FLD initiative, a community art activity was developed following the FLD Listening phase in Kampong Chhnang. Since community was an underlying theme that was felt by Listeners during their time in the floating village, the FLD team tailored a creativity-based intervention with the primary goal to explore a sense of place.

Community members learnt how to use cameras and take photos. They went in boats throughout the floating village and took shots of places and people they considered familiar and "home". Coming back together, they projected their digital photography on screens and began sharing stories and memories of the images they took, both as photographers and as long-time community members.

As the community told their stories and shared memories, both from far back and more recently, an international artist was there to listen and interpret what was being said visually onto a boat. The boat was provided by a fisherman who had used it for a decade of fishing. It now served as a canvas for the conceptual art process. At one point, brushes in hand, community members began adding colour to the boat - and unsurprisingly - fish became the subject of the painting.

Today, the photographs represent a moment in time of a physical community that will likely cease to exist in the years to come. The work of art across the former fishing boat symbolises a cross-cultural dialogue of storytelling and memory sharing.



CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Due to the rich natural resources and abundance of fish in the Tonle Sap waterway, thousands of ethnic Vietnamese have migrated to Cambodia's Kampong Chhnang region since the 19th Century. Much of the larger scale migration of the Vietnamese population to Cambodia took place during the French colonial period from the 1880s.¹ By the 1930s, the population of settled ethnic Vietnamese in Cambodia was about 200,000.² In Kampong Chhnang, it is likely that many original Vietnamese migrants did not initially settle in the floating villages but rather were on land further away. Areas that are now home to Khmer communities, such as Bralai Meas commune, were once the home for significant Vietnamese populations. This shifted during the expulsion of ethnic Vietnamese decades later.³

It is estimated that about 20,000 ethnic Vietnamese were killed during the purge of the Khmer Rouge regime that took power in Cambodia from 1975-1979.⁴ Another 150,000 to 170,000 ethnic Vietnamese and other members of the Vietnamese minority in Cambodia were expelled or escaped to Vietnam between April and October 1975.⁵ After the Khmer Rouge's power was deposed, ethnic Vietnamese families, who had previously lived in Cambodia, began returning. Many of these returnees started a new post-war life along the Tonle Sap Lake and the attached river flowing through Kampong Chhnang province. Even today, those who returned have generally been regarded as immigrants or foreign residents from Vietnam. Authorities do not see them as Cambodian citizens no matter how many generations of their descendants were in Cambodia. Residents in this situation often find themselves in precarious status without legal citizenship to either Cambodia or Vietnam due to lack of documents and proof of long-term residence anywhere.⁶

One community in Kampong Chhnang province that has been relatively known for its floating villages is located across from Chong Koh village, just a few kilometres from the provincial capital. Along the bank of the Tonle Sap River, this floating village has been home to thousands of ethnic Vietnamese river dwellers over several generations. According to a provincial administration report, in 2019, there were approximately 4,563 families living in floating houses in the area including Khmer, Cham or Khmer Islam, and ethnic Vietnamese residents. This includes as many as 2,480 ethnic Vietnamese families

¹ Corfield, Justin (2009). *The History of Cambodia*. ABC-CLIO, p.28.

² Schliesinger, Joachim (2015). *Ethnic Groups of Cambodia Vol 2: Profile of Austro-Asiatic-Speaking Peoples*. Booksmango, p.259.

³ Kdei Karuna, (2014). [Life before Expulsion: Community History from Vietnamese Minorities in Kampong Chhnang](#).

⁴ See *The Diplomat*, 19 September 2015, Evidence Mounts Over Khmer Rouge Genocide of Muslims and Vietnamese: <https://thediplomat.com/2015/09/evidence-mounts-over-khmer-rouge-genocide-of-muslims-and-vietnamese/>

⁵ Chandler, David (1993). *History of Cambodia*, pgs 204-205.

⁶ Kirchener, Laura Marcia (2015). [Living on the margins: On the Status and Standing of Minorities and Indigenous Peoples in Cambodia](#). Phnom Penh: Heinrich Böll Stiftung.

consisting of 10,311 individuals.⁷ This community lives in relative isolation from mainstream Cambodian culture. Many of them depend on fish farming or small businesses on their boats. Residents predominantly speak Vietnamese. Younger children mostly do not speak Khmer but older residents do, often because of relationships developed with nearby Khmer populations and business that has taken them to the land.⁸

According to many of these ethnic Vietnamese residents who live and work on the river, they have been in Cambodia over generations. However, since 2017, pressure put on tracking migration in the country has led to many residents unable to obtain proper documentation or prove legal residence. Many have put the blame on the civil war and the exile of ethnic Vietnamese Cambodians forced to leave the country during the conflict. Upon returning, the lack of bureaucratic systems or proper procedures for them meant that these issues have only surfaced more recently as changes come into effect.⁹ According to the United Nations, most of the residents from this particular group are stateless, without access to citizenship from Cambodia or Vietnam. This leaves them in precarious status with specific barriers related to accessing education, health care, formal employment, banking, freedom of movement, and property ownership.¹⁰

Since 2017, there has been much attention put on a relocation process led by provincial authorities in Kampong Chhnang province. However, talk of relocating river dwellers is not recent. Provincial authorities have made attempts to dismantle the floating villages for over two decades.¹¹ Most residents in the floating village across from Chong Koh and other communities have been informed of the pending move and their requirement to leave the river at some point. Authorities have cited environmental concerns as the rationale behind the relocation order to restore the water quality of the Tonle Sap.¹² With the relocation plan focused on moving all floating villages to dry land, policy is moving towards entirely banning any permanent settlement on the river.¹³ By the beginning of 2019, over two-thirds of the ethnic Vietnamese floating village residents in the Tonle Sap had been moved from their houseboats to land. The community across from Chong Koh village, along with several other floating villages, is designated to relocate to a 40 hectare settlement site in Rolea B'ier district, about 1km from the river. 700 families continue to

⁷ See *The Phnom Penh Post*, 12 December 2019, Land allotted for Kampong Chhnang boat people must be rented: <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/land-allotted-kampong-chhnang-boat-people-must-be-rented>

⁸ This was observed by the FLD Listeners who worked in the community over two months having conversations with residents.

⁹ See *The Phnom Penh Post*, 28 November 2017, 'I have no feeling for Vietnam. I only live in Cambodia': <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national-post-depth/ethnic-vietnamese-some-living-cambodia-generations-see-documents-revoked>

¹⁰ See *Reuters*, 26 June 2019, No room on water, no home on land for Cambodia's ethnic Vietnamese: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-cambodia-landrights-refugees/no-room-on-water-no-home-on-land-for-cambodias-ethnic-vietnamese-idUSKCN1TS03L>

¹¹ See *The Phnom Penh Post*, 5 January 2001, Floating villages protest eviction order: <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/floating-villagers-protest-eviction-order>

¹² See *The Phnom Penh Post*, 2 October 2018, Local gov't to move 2,000 families from Tonle Sap: <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/local-govt-move-2000-families-tonle-sap>

¹³ See *Bangkok Post*, 24 March 2017, Cambodia to remove floating river villages: <https://www.bangkokpost.com/world/1220568/cambodia-to-remove-floating-river-villages>

delay the move due to having fish pens under their homes, and are being given more time in order to reduce the impact on their fish farming activities.¹⁴

Two major issues directly affecting community members have resulted from relocation efforts that have been under the spotlight in both national, and even international, news. Firstly, infrastructure challenges on the designated settlement site have become key criticisms against the provincially-led process. In May 2019, The United Nations Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Cambodia visited the site and expressed great concern for the lack of water, sanitation, electricity, transport infrastructure, and access to appropriate livelihood opportunities for the river dwellers.¹⁵ The situation in the settlement site had already been attributed to nearly 30% of the ethnic Vietnamese residents returning to their former community on the river.¹⁶ This has consequently led to more fear and resistance among current residents to follow through with the relocation plan. Secondly, the attention brought to relocation efforts has again put the spotlight on the residence and citizenship status of the ethnic Vietnamese population in Cambodia, particularly in terms of this group who are being relocated from water to land. A strong public backlash against the minority group manifested as rumours spread that the ethnic Vietnamese members of the relocation efforts would be receiving titles for land. This information stoked long held fears of Khmer and mainstream Cambodians that this process could contribute to losing land to Vietnamese. In the midst of it, the government of Vietnam intervened asking Cambodia to naturalise ethnic Vietnamese residents in Cambodia without the required legal documents, which was rejected by the Cambodian government.¹⁷ The provincial government in Kampong Chhnang went further to confirm publicly that unlike Cambodian citizens, including ethnic Khmer and Cham or Khmer Islam floating villagers, no Vietnamese relocated residents had any right to own land, and would instead only be permitted to rent the site they were moved to.¹⁸

¹⁴ See *Radio Free Asia*, 4 January 2019, More Than Two-Thirds of Ethnic Vietnamese Evicted From Cambodia's Tonle Sap 'Floating Village': <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/cambodia/eviction-01042019150151.html>

¹⁵ See *Khmer Times*, 10 May 2019, Rhona Smith "deeply concerned" with Kampong Chhnang relocation sites: <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/50602858/rhona-smith-not-happy-with-relocation-sites>

¹⁶ See *Radio Free Asia*, 25 January 2019, Vietnamese Evicted From Cambodia's Tonle Sap Begin to Return: <https://www.rfa.org/english/news/cambodia/return-01252019152315.html>

¹⁷ See *Khmer Times*, 31 August 2019, Kingdom rejects Vietnam's request to provide citizenship to its nationals

¹⁸ See *The Phnom Penh Post*, 12 December 2019, Land allotted for Kampong Chhnang boat people must be rented: <https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/land-allotted-kampong-chhnang-boat-people-must-be-rented>

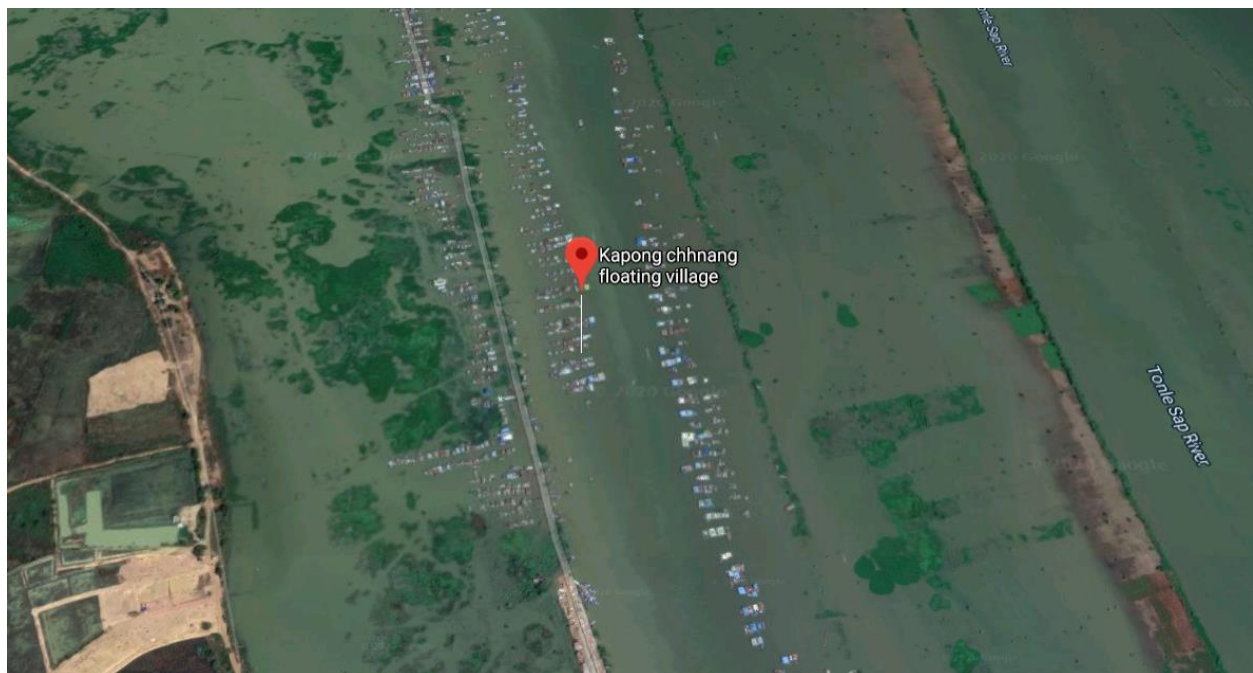
COMMUNITY PROFILE AND DEMOGRAPHICS

Location



Kampong Chhnang is located in central Cambodia, 91km northeast from the capital city of Phnom Penh. A Cambodian province known for fine clay pottery, it is also home to floating villages along the Tonle Sap River that flows to and from the great Tonle Sap Lake. Floating villages along the river make up the homes for many families of Khmer, Cham and Khmer Islam, and of ethnic Vietnamese

descent. The majority of floating village families are ethnic Vietnamese and are concentrated along the river not far from the provincial capital city in Kampong Chhnang.



The target area for FLD activities in this initiative centred in a floating community across from Chong Koh village. A large sprawling community of houseboats, this floating village is home to thousands of families who have lived on the river over generations. Nearly all residents work in some way connected to the fishing industry. They either fish and harvest

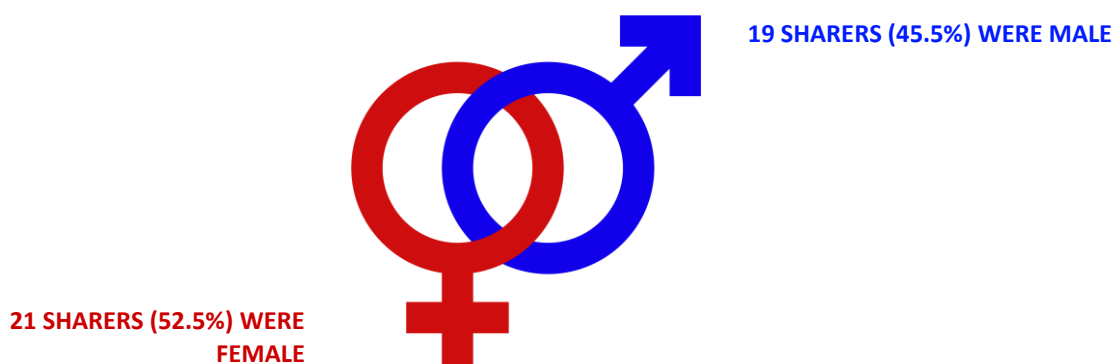
wild fish or they raise fish of their own, often beneath their floating homes in fish pens. Many have small businesses providing services in the community or selling goods, both from the water and from land, to residents living on the river. Tourism is also a small but growing industry as people from outside the community, particularly foreigners, wish to see life in a floating village and explore the area by boat. Some local residents take such tourists out sightseeing and touring around the village to earn extra income.

Listeners and sharer demographics

Two Listeners were recruited specifically for conducting FLD in the floating community. Both were under 25 years old, one was female and one was male. One was mixed-race, half ethnic Vietnamese and half Khmer, originally from a border community in Kandal province but based in Phnom Penh. The other was an ethnic Vietnamese Cambodian citizen from Phnom Penh. Both Listeners were fully fluent in Khmer and Vietnamese. The recruitment process was done precisely in accordance with the situation of the community.

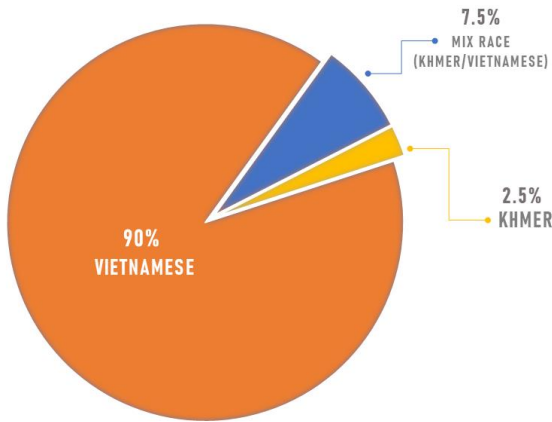
Listeners conducted 40 conversations with 40 individual residents of the Kampong Chhnang floating village over a two-month period. Most Sharers were contacted through growing networks inside the village or by chance as Listeners travelled around the community. All conversations were in Vietnamese and were later recorded in Khmer by the Listeners, though some quotations were shared in original Vietnamese language for accuracy.

Sharers came from diverse demographic groups in terms of gender, ethnicity, age, religion, and occupations.

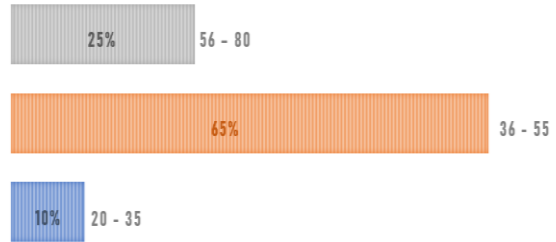


ETHNIC BACKGROUND

Of the 40 Sharers, 36 self-identified as ethnic Vietnamese. Three were 3 mixed-race, generally half Vietnamese and half Khmer. One Sharer identified himself as ethnically Khmer, who was married to an ethnic Vietnamese resident and integrated into the community.



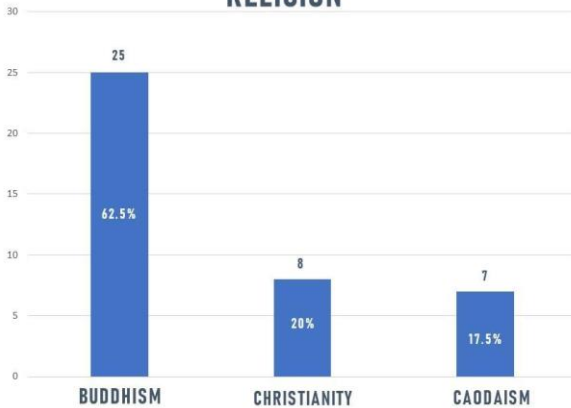
AGE



AGE

Sharers ages ranged all the way from 20 to 80 years old.

RELIGION

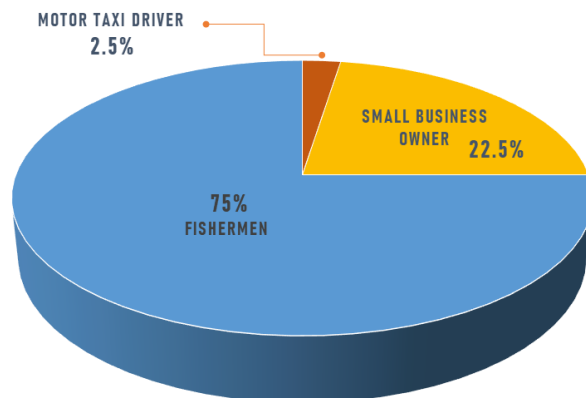


RELIGION

All Sharers claimed some kind of religious association with 25 Buddhists, three Christians, and seven following the practices of Caodaism.

OCCUPATION

Unsurprisingly, the vast majority of Sharers claimed that fishing was their full-time work with 30 of the 40 identified as part of that industry. Nine of them owned and managed some type of small business, such as small floating shops, mobile stalls, or food sellers along the riverbank. One of the Sharers was a motorcycle taxi driver on shore.



KHMER COORDINATOR EXPLORES PARALLEL LIVES BEYOND BORDERS AND NATIONALITY



“My role in this work has grown bigger and bigger over the last few years,” says Lyhour, the lead for the Cambodian component of the project and a coordinator for the full regional project.

Lyhour is a Khmer university graduate from Phnom Penh and has been focusing much of his career on exploring negative sentiment between different groups, particularly between Khmer and ethnic Vietnamese in Cambodia. In fact, much of the project concept for *Understanding ‘Us’ to know ‘Them’* was conceived through Lyhour’s initial desire to take this work across borders and learn more about ethnic Khmer minorities in Thailand and Vietnam.

“It’s really remarkable,” he says. “When you look at our ethnic Khmer participants from Vietnam, who we in Cambodia call the ‘Khmer Krom’, and then you look at our ethnic Vietnamese participants from Cambodia, they almost appear to be living parallel lives.”

Both groups are working in their own communities. Both groups respectively call themselves Vietnamese and Cambodian nationals, but ethnic Khmer and Vietnamese minorities.

“They seem to understand each other so well. They are all multilingual, have unique cultural traditions in their regions, and see themselves as part of two groups - they just happen to be on different sides of a border that make them a minority group in their country,” he articulates.

Lyhour has spent a year leading his ethnic Vietnamese-Cambodian team to carry out FLD in Kampong Chhnang, film and produce mini-documentaries across the region, and live, eat, and sleep with the floating village community as an outsider.

“I’ve been welcomed into Kampong Chhnang so openly,” he reflects. “There is so much controversy about this group, whether they are citizens or not, whether they are immigrants or nationals, whether they should be able to own land and go to school or not.”

Lyhour has some straight-forward advice backed up with a lot of experience and insight.

“Before making up your mind about anything, put your own perceptions to the challenge. Go inside the community you see as an outsider group. Spend time together, eat together, talk together, and learn from each other. Home isn’t just about which side of a border you belong - it’s about your own sense of place, your community, and where you have spent your life building up your experiences that make you who you are. I challenge you to go beyond borders and any ethnic sense of belonging.”

VOICES FROM THE COMMUNITY

According to a provincial administration report, 4,563 Khmer, Cambodian-Muslim and Vietnamese families live in floating houses on the Tonle Sap Lake in Kampong Chhnang. 2,480 of those families are ethnic Vietnamese.¹⁹ The 40 Sharers that participated in this initiative by engaging in conversations with the FLD Listeners focused on two main issues affecting their lives at this time. First of all, many residents in the floating community across from Chong Koh village said they have no idea about their status living in Cambodia as their documents were taken away during a period of document re-issuing by the authorities. The second issue that dominated most conversations was the relocation process aimed at moving the floating village residents to a designated area of land which they claimed was a few kilometres away from their current homes. Nearly all residents expressed the external pressure they have been experiencing to leave the river. This context has greatly manifested into nearly all parts of their lives, and played a part in most other aspects of the conversations.

MOST HEARD THEMES

The following themes were developed by the Listeners who worked in the Kampong Chhnang community gathering information from floating village residents. The themes directly represent what was shared with them by those they had conversations with.

1. Every year there is more pressure for us to leave the river and relocate to land due to environmental concerns coming from outside the community.
2. Fishing is the lifeline of our community because we have spent our entire lives on boats.
3. Our concern is that we do not have the necessary skills to live on land.
4. Our children are not able to be well educated because they do not have any documents.
5. We want a place to call home and live in harmony.
6. Life in our community is getting harder and harder as fish numbers dwindle.
7. Most of us wish to live in this community rather than going to Vietnam or elsewhere.
8. We live peacefully beside our Cambodian and Khmer neighbours, supporting and leaning on each other.
9. We see ourselves as ethnic Vietnamese who are born in Cambodia.

¹⁹See *Thmey Thmey*, 12 December 2019, Cambodia says relocated Vietnamese families cannot own land: <https://cambodianess.com/article/cambodia-says-relocated-vietnamese-families-cannot-own-land>

Relocation notice by local authorities

Before, I was living in the upper part of the river, but then I was evicted to the lower part. I heard that in June of this year there will be another expulsion of us living on the river and they plan to move us to land about 3-4 kilometres from shore. They say there is no electricity or drainage system there.

- A 41-year-old man born in the community

Relocation news has been a burning issue among the residents of floating villages along the Tonle Sap in Kampong Chhnang province. Ethnic Vietnamese residents who were born and have lived over generations in the community had less concern in the years prior to talk about relocation efforts by outside actors from 2018 onward. In general, there is much confusion about the details of relocation. Residents get their information from visiting authorities and by word-of-mouth from other locals living both on the water and along the riverbank. Most Sharers are uncertain about when they must leave their homes, where they will go, and what support is being provided.

Some Sharers talked about their experiences receiving announcements from local authorities who have approached them over the last few years saying that the community would be relocated to live in a designated area on land. Most residents understood this to be driven from the Cambodian government's plan to address environmental pollution in the river caused by floating houses and the activities of river dwellers.

Other Sharers also mentioned that authorities have frequently come to the community to check on the floating houses. They said that houseboats with large built-in fish pens for raising fish would be allowed to remain on the river to continue fish farming, but that the roofs needed to be removed and that one or two people would be permitted to take care of their fish. They suspected that the rationale of taking the roofs off their homes might be able to satisfy those on land that these were no longer housing units, but solely structures for fish farming.

In addition to their concerns about moving, several shared that one of the big challenges so far from different phases of relocation is that most of their floating houses, fish pens, and boats have been damaged in the move. Some Sharers noted that although many families have already been relocated to temporarily live on the riverbank in front of the floating village, some are still resisting the move. Those that struggle to stay on their houseboats are living in fear and are deeply concerned to leave the river as they believe that their allotted community lacks basic infrastructure, particularly no planned clean water supply or electricity.

Fishing is everything

One of the uncles in his 50s we had a conversation with told us he was born here in the Kampong Chhnang floating village. He shared his story about his parents and ancestors who fished, processed the fish, and manufactured the fishing nets in the community. The children in his family also began processing fish from about 7-8 years of age. He then goes out by boat to sell his fish or sometimes people come to his house to buy it. He told us that "fishing is not an easy job, but there are no choices here." The community's world revolves entirely around fish.

-A Listener reflects on his conversation with a Sharer in Kampong Chhnang

Nearly all Sharers work, or have worked at some point in their lives, in the fishing sector in Kampong Chhnang. Most residents raise and harvest their own fish, often penned beneath their houseboats. Depending entirely upon moving around in boats, ethnic Vietnamese living in the community have spent their lifetimes fishing along the river and in the Tonle Sap Lake. Many learnt to fish from their parents and grandparents, and believe that fishing is a tradition passed on from their ancestors over many generations.

Some Sharers said that fishing brought them joy and happiness and provided them with sustainable livelihoods to care for their families. Along with deep reflection on the meaningfulness of fishing in their lives, they also openly shared some of the challenges that such a lifestyle entailed. One of the Sharers complained that he sometimes fished all day only to come home with nothing. To support family, some Sharers talked about how they earned extra income by working at a fish market as fish cutters or shrimp peelers.

One of the Listeners who conducted FLD fieldwork in the community shared that even during his own experience in the village, he was able to see how busy the Tonle Sap waterway was. He said that he noticed residents were always moving along to follow the fish and that everyone was very focused on getting a large catch, especially fishermen who often went out for a few days on fishing trips. They noticed big challenges, such as the frequent storms, large waves, and sometimes lack of fish when the fishermen returned. The Listeners observed that luck and hard work were major factors in the success of such fishing expeditions.

Fear of being unable to adapt on land

I know nothing except fishing. If I move to land, I don't know what I'd do and how I'd survive. I have no land or money. If something happens, my family and I will have to go to Vietnam to work as labourers.

-A 44-year-old ethnic Vietnamese man

Given that a majority of residents rely solely on fishing and have spent their entire lives living on the river, many Sharers expressed deep concerns regarding what their lives would look like after being relocated to land. Some shared that they did not have any skills to succeed on land, emphasised in the example of one man who said he did not even know how to ride a bicycle. Another Sharer talked about his nephew who had been fishing all his life and had been supporting his family through his very successful talent to fish. As he had recently been trying to start earning income on land, he got involved in construction work which had been challenging without common land-based skills and ended up only being able to do simple jobs like lifting bricks or carrying things for the other workers.

Although many families conveyed their struggles living on water, they overwhelmingly felt that life there was far better than if they were living on land. For example, some said that they could raise their own fish under their floating homes. The fish farmers who talked about being required to leave their fish pens and move to land said they would be less likely to continue fishing or raising fish since they needed to be there full-time to do the work. Some shared that renting land on shore seemed like an impossible challenge without resources. A few felt that working in construction or in a fish market might be the only possible options after relocation. Others felt like they might only be able to seek opportunity if they went to Vietnam.

Many Sharers expressed grave concern about moving to land simply in the scope of adapting to life on land versus floating on water. For them, a lack of basic skills needed to live on land were felt by many in the community. For example, many were highly proficient in driving boats and watercraft, but unable to drive a motorcycle or vehicle on land. Others conveyed that they had no experience in growing food crops on land or even how to build a house, despite knowing how to build boats and other watercraft and floating structures.

Precarious status and unofficial education for children

Children here have learnt very little because there are only a few private schools. They usually pay 500 Cambodian riels per day to go. Some kids only ever finish third or fourth grade because of their family conditions. Some people have money, so they send them to public school because they might have a birth certificate, but these are very few families. Life here is not easy.

-A 38-year-old man

Most Sharers felt insecure and unsure about their own status in Cambodia. Although many said that they had been born and raised in the country, problems with documentation had been a consistent difficulty throughout their lives. One Sharer explained that many of their documents had been taken away in 2017 during a nationwide move led by the General Department of Immigration that was piloted in Kampong Chhnang province. Some Sharers expressed their ongoing desire to establish citizenship. However, many discussed their unsuccessful experiences dealing with officials trying to obtain documents or proving their status. The lack of clear status had affected their lives in many ways.

Nearly all Shares in the community were not clear about their own documents or what is necessary at this time. They said that authorities usually come to the community to reissue documents (such as immigrant letters) for them twice a year which costs them 250,000KHR (USD\$62.50) each time. Most said that they go along with the process, but some mentioned that they have never received the documents. They understand, according to what they have been told by the authorities, that they will be permitted to apply for citizenship after having applied for the immigrant letter three times. However, many are wondering how they can live on land without these necessary documents.

The lack of a birth certificate can be a great barrier for children to attend school. Sharers said that most of their children do not have the opportunity to study in a public school or go onto higher education primarily because they do not have a birth certificate or any other documents that schools will accept. They also cited the cost of higher education as a barrier for most of the youth to consider going to university or vocational schools, except for residents who have higher incomes or more secure status in the country. Several Sharers conversed about two informal schools in the community. One Sharer, who is an informal teacher for children in the floating village, expressed his concern for the lack of education for young residents in the community. Although he is not well educated himself, he established the school to share the knowledge he has with those children whose families cannot afford or cannot legally send them to school.

In spite of informal schools setting up in the floating community, many of them were frequently closed or fully dependent upon the schedules of the teachers. Most Sharers expressed disappointment and felt unhappy about the situation for their children but believed they were helpless to change it. Sharers who had children themselves were often not educated themselves, and some of them did not know how to read or write. For them, having their children learn to read and write was often enough. During the FLD implementation, two informal schools were where most of the children would go to learn

Vietnamese, Khmer, and English. Sharers said that most children had very little chance to study because eventually they had to help their families in the homes and to fish or contribute to family income generation.

For the few children of Sharers who did have the chance to attend public school on land, many complained that they studied in fear. They said that their children were constantly bullied and often could not speak enough Khmer to integrate. For those that had started school but decided to leave, some of them continued at a Christian school set up for the community on the riverbank in Chong Koh.



We would not resist relocation if there was a reasonable option

If we must live on the land permanently, we can do our best. But we are being forced over-and-over to move far from here without any water supply or roads. We won't agree to go. Our homes are all on the river so if we must move to land, we need to live near the river so we can still take care of them.

-A 30-year-old woman born and living in Cambodia

Although much resistance was conveyed towards the idea of being relocated from the floating village to land, some Sharers expressed that it would not be such an ordeal if they felt secure about where they would go and what life would look like. For some, the last few years had been difficult in such uncertainty, with people frequently coming to the community and forcing residents to leave their floating homes. Many felt that wherever they ended up after relocation, they deeply hoped for a place that they could call home and live peacefully in their community.

A few felt that living ashore would be all right if appropriate and legal land rights were given to ensure that those who willingly left their floating homes would not be uprooted once again once they settled on land. Many expressed that they did not have the funds to buy property if everything they owned was being taken away from them. Some also expressed not having the proper identification documents to buy land, and even if they had the money, they felt that setting up a residence on a property that they may never legally own might be even more precarious than living in their floating river dwellings.

For many, rumours about being eventually relocated to a community far from the river without any infrastructure was terrifying. For those who had been told they might be able to keep their fish pens going without any accommodation structures, they struggled to see how they could live anywhere but in close proximity to the river. Others who did not even have that same opportunity still felt that living close to the river was essential as they had no idea how else they could sustain their lives after having only experienced life in a floating village on the water.

There was even sentimental attachment connected to the geographical location of the floating village as some felt that they did not have the option to move far away, or even to go to Vietnam in the worst case scenario. For them, this was their community and their home. Many had ancestors buried along the river and considered these places sacred to continue to honour and worship their deceased family members.

Dwindling fish numbers make life harder

I just went out twice on the Tonle Sap Lake. Both times, I ended up losing 30,000 or 40,000 riels because of the decline in fish numbers and I even had to spend money on food to get there as well!

-A 41-year-old ethnic Vietnamese woman who fishes for a living

For the most part, residents living on the Tonle Sap have seen a significant decrease in wild fish stocks. Given that Kampong Chhnang is known in Cambodia for exporting fresh fish from the Tonle Sap Lake, unsurprisingly, many ethnic Vietnamese living in the floating community were deeply concerned about depleting stocks. They shared stories from the past, talking about times of plenty of fish. Some said that the Tonle Sap was once called the “river of fish”.

Sharers who had been fishing their entire lives on the Tonle Sap had different opinions and theories about the decline in fish stocks. Climate change, the increase in population of residents living on the river, and even bigger waves observed on waterway were all mentioned as possible reasons that fish numbers might be dwindling.

Many shared examples and stories about the direct impact the fish decline has had on their own lives. They frequently said that there was no longer enough fish to support their families. Some said that the profits they made nowadays could only cover their day-to-day lives. Those making fishing trips to the Tonle Sap Lake often complained that they usually lost profit, making their lives harder. Some mentioned that they travelled further up the river than before, but were hesitant to go out too far. Several also shared that the banning of fishing by the authorities and the tax being collected to give permission to fish on certain areas of the river was deeply impacting their ability to survive. For those who raised fish under their homes, many also mentioned that lower waters were affecting their ability to sustain their stocks. As they were being moved to more shallow waters, their fish were dying. Most people working in any area of the fish industry felt that fish numbers have dramatically declined over the years.



No desire to leave for Vietnam or elsewhere

It's funny because I can kind of relate to the residents in Kampong Chhnang's floating village. I'm half Khmer, half Vietnamese, so I see both parts of my ethnicity. But Cambodia is my home, it always has been. Sometimes people think we can just go "back" to Vietnam when things are hard, or we don't belong here because we're "Vietnamese". Yes, we are "Vietnamese", but many of us aren't "from" Vietnam. Some of the Sharers I talked to in Kampong Chhnang get confused when others have the idea they can go to Vietnam. For some of them, Vietnam is even seen as a really foreign place. Most of the people who have lived on the river their whole lives see this special place as their home.

Whether you think they should be able to stay, move to land, or leave Cambodia, you have to realise for them, this is where they are from. This is where their roots are. This is what they call their home.

-One of the Listeners from the project who worked in the community

Most Sharers specified that they were born and have lived in the community for generations. Many talked about their ancestors who were also from the area and had tombs along the shore. For older residents, many had gone to Vietnam during the Khmer Rouge regime years, coming back to Cambodia at different times during the post-war period. Some continued to go back and forth, others remained. For younger Sharers, Kampong Chhnang was all they knew. Some had never even been to Vietnam or knew anything about the country. Many of them did not even know much about life on the shore nearby.

Nearly all Sharers conveyed a sense of being from the area and accustomed to living on the river. In both the FLD fieldwork and the community art initiative, a deep sense of place in the community was shared by those who participated. Several expressed that though they have encountered great challenges and difficulties in the community, particularly in the context of relocation and decreasing fish numbers, they would prefer not going to another place, including the designated area on shore, or to Vietnam. The concept of community and sense of place was strong for many Sharers with some saying that their only wish was to live in happiness. The fear of precarity and moving around was great among Sharers, and the sense of a loss of community and the development that generations of residents had contributed to the floating village was shared by many.

LIFE ON THE MOVE

A SHARER'S PERSPECTIVE ON LEAVING HOME

One 50-year-old Sharer who has spent her life in Kampong Chhnang and says her ancestors were from the community shared her story about moving, instability, and fears of relocation. Listeners talked with her a few times over the period they spent in the community. This is her story told by those who listened.



I have four children. Just like everyone else around here, every day I survive by fishing. We live by the seasons and we often have troubles earning enough. Now I just live with my husband and my youngest child.

My husband is actually not from here but came to the community to live and be with me after we met. We started working together and began raising our family.

Some years ago, the authorities began coming here and tried to get us to move to land. We had to start moving around from then on, and it has been so hard. Every time we leave our spot, it is so expensive. We became poorer and poorer, and I became so anxious. I reached a point when I nearly suffered a heart attack from my nerves.

My brothers from here left to go to Vietnam. I grew up with them and we used to count on each other for everything but now it is so hard to be apart. They have asked me to go to Vietnam.

Would I ever move to Vietnam? I went there before during the war in Cambodia. But how can I go there now? All my ancestors were buried here. I have to take care of their tombs and remember them.

I have no idea how I would survive anywhere else. This is my home and this is all I really know. They are talking about moving us to a place on land. All we can really hope for is that the place they want to move us to is okay.

We appreciate our Khmer neighbours

I also have many Khmer friends. We do business together and have a close friendship. There are no problems at all. Nowadays, I sell fish to the local Khmer people at the fish market and we have good business relations. We are like brothers and sisters.

-A 48-year-old woman

I have made a lot of connections with Khmer people because we have been working together for many years since the Pol Pot regime. Ah Vuth and Ah Ven are my friends for life!

-A 39-year-old man

The Listeners who stayed in the community during the FLD fieldwork observed that ethnic Vietnamese residents often had relationships and friendships with Khmer living on land or even other Khmer residents in floating villages. They said that during their conversations, many Sharers mentioned connections with Khmer through doing business together and living nearby as neighbours. Business relations were by far the most talked about factor that brought the ethnic Vietnamese together with Khmer. For example, fish delivery to the Khmer customers on the shore and selling in the nearby markets in Kampong Chhnang were common connecting activities. Interaction at the community level also happened through introducing each other to their respective communities among friends and acquaintances. According to some Sharers, their experiences with Khmer people living nearby also showed them that those in contact with the ethnic Vietnamese community often expressed empathy and compassion for the floating villagers, particularly in the context of relocation and hardships they faced. One Sharer said that some of the Khmer sellers she bought from were very unhappy about the relocation situation and were losing long-time customers from the floating village.

Many Sharers had deep connections to Khmer communities through interaction as well as marriage or family. Although the youngest of the younger generation had little to no connection to Khmer communities if they were not attending school, older residents often had long-standing and deep connections. One 50-year-old female Sharer talked about her Khmer stepmother who married her father later in life. After her father passed away, the Sharer continued seeing her stepmother and has a close relationship even today. These cross-cultural bonds developed through marriage and family sometimes contributed to bridging the isolated community to other surrounding communities and throughout Cambodia.

We are ethnically and culturally Vietnamese, but born in Cambodia

In everyday life I don't think of myself as a 'Khmer person', but I'm a Vietnamese person from Cambodia.

-A 36-year-old ethnic Vietnamese man born in Cambodia

Most Sharers said they were born and raised in Cambodia, mainly on the river in the floating village of Kampong Chhnang. Many older residents acknowledged relocating to Vietnam during the Khmer Rouge civil war years at some point in 1975. For many, the move was temporary due to the domestic situation and the targeting of ethnic Vietnamese during the genocide period. For some of the Sharers, in spite of their ethnic Vietnamese origins, the country of Vietnam remained a distant place in their minds. Some had more experience visiting Vietnam or maintained family connections there, others had little to no connection at all and saw it as a foreign country. Interestingly, when Sharers spoke of their ancestors, they usually referred to ancestors in Cambodia, ethnic Vietnamese from generations past, often from the area they lived in. In many of the Sharers' homes visited by the Listeners, photos of ancestors were seen in dedicated places to worship their memories. According to Sharers, these ancestors were of previous generations born and raised in the same area on the Tonle Sap.

There was no doubt in the community that residents saw themselves as different from mainstream Cambodians that mainly lived on land around them. Listeners noted that most Sharers speak Vietnamese at home in their community and some speak Khmer when they go out and interact with other Cambodians for business. Many of the children, all born in Cambodia but who had not attended school, could not speak any Khmer since they had only ever been exposed to Vietnamese language. Young adults and the older generation could mostly speak Khmer at varying levels, and some that had left the community at some point for work and lived on land had often integrated into Khmer and mainstream Cambodian culture. According to the Listeners, who are both as much culturally Cambodian as they are Vietnamese, life in the ethnic Vietnamese community in the floating village on the Tonle Sap is culturally Vietnamese with far less elements of Khmer influence than other Vietnamese communities in Cambodia based on land.

Citizenship and identity were far more complex issues for Sharers to articulate. Given that status has been precarious, particularly over the last several years as documentation requirements have changed and have not been consistently implemented, ethnic Vietnamese residents, many who were born and raised in Cambodia, are wondering whether they are indeed citizens. Although many Sharers openly admitted that they did not feel deeply connected to the mainstream Cambodian population (the Khmer majority) or necessarily saw themselves culturally "Cambodian", several did convey a belief that they should be afforded the right to stay in the country having been born and raised there. They saw a path to clear citizenship status as fundamentally owing to a community who has been residing in Kampong Chhnang over several generations.

RESOURCES

The resources provided in this section are by no means exhaustive. They include a compilation of books, reports, and a timeline of news articles that supported those involved with this initiative to navigate with some external context and analysis.

BOOKS AND REPORTS

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NEWS TIMELINE

keywords: Kampong Chhnang, ethnic Vietnamese, floating village, Tonle Sap, relocation

-----Prior to 2017-----

- 1998-06-19 **Ethnic Vietnamese face discrimination during registration**
<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/ethnic-vietnamese-face-discrimination-during-registration>
The Phnom Penh Post
- 1999-12-24 **Vietnam: The view from Cambodia
Hereditary Enemies or Future Friends?**
<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/vietnam-view-cambodia-3>
The Phnom Penh Post
- 2000-02-04 **Vietnam: The view from Cambodia
Vietnamese in Cambodia: their story**
<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/vietnam-view-cambodia-2>
The Phnom Penh Post
- 2000-03-03 **Vietnam: The view from Cambodia**
<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/vietnam-view-cambodia>
The Phnom Penh Post
- 2001-01-05 **Floating villagers protest eviction order**
<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/floating-villagers-protest- eviction-order>
The Phnom Penh Post
- 2015-09-17 **Evidence Mounts Over Khmer Rouge Genocide of Muslims and
Vietnamese** <https://thediplomat.com/2015/09/evidence-mounts-over-khmer-rouge-genocide-of-muslims-and-vietnamese/>
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-----2017-----

- 2017-03-04 **Cambodia to remove floating river villages**
<https://www.bangkokpost.com/world/1220568/cambodia-to-remove-floating-river-villages>
Bangkok Post
- 2017-04-04 **Cambodia to Relocate 5 Floating Villages Along Tonle Sap River to
Curb Pollution**
<https://saigoneer.com/saigon-environment/9711-cambodia-to-relocate-5-floating-villages-along-tonle-sap-river-to-curb-pollution>
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- 2017-10-12 **Vietnam asks ‘migrants’ rights be respected**
<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/vietnam-asks-migrants-rights-be-respected>
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- 2017-11-28 **‘I have no feeling for Vietnam. I only live in Cambodia’**
<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national-post-depth/ethnic-vietnamese-some-living-cambodia-generations-see-documents-revoked>
 The Phnom Penh Post
- 2017-11-29 **Document purge targeting ethnic Vietnamese to continue**
<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/document-purge-targeting-ethnic-vietnamese-continue>
 The Phnom Penh Post
- 2017-12-06 **More than 1,700 ethnic Vietnamese families’ documents taken**
<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/more-1700-ethnic-vietnamese-families-documents-taken>
 The Phnom Penh Post

-----2018-----

- 2018-06-12 **Why has the Cambodian government made tens of thousands of ethnic Vietnamese people stateless ?**
<https://www.equaltimes.org/why-has-the-cambodian-government>
 Equal Times
- 2018-10-02 **Local gov’t to move 2,000 families from Tonle Sap**
<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/local-govt-move-2000-families-tonle-sap>
 The Phnom Penh Post
- 2018-10-02 **Authorities start moving families living on Tonle Sap**
<https://www.khmertimeskh.com/538413/authorities-start-moving-families-living-on-tonle-sap/>
 Khmer Times
- 2018-10-03 **Tonle Sap Vietnamese ‘reluctant’ to move**
<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/tonle-sap-vietnamese-reluctant-move>
 The Phnom Penh Post
- 2018-11-09 **Smith calls for fairness in evicting VN families**
<https://www.phnompenhpost.com/national/smith-calls-fairness-evicting-vn-families>
 The Phnom Penh Post
- 2018-11-09 **River dwellers’ way of life under threat**
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Along the Tonle Sap River in Cambodia, ethnic Vietnamese residents have been living in floating villages for generations. Despite the fact that most were born in the area and can recall even up to four previous generations there, they have largely been excluded from mainstream Cambodian society for a myriad of social and legal reasons.

In 2019, community researchers went into the floating villages using a conversational inquiry approach known as Facilitative Listening Design (FLD). They gathered information from 40 residents who opened up about living on the margins of society during a time that their communities were being dismantled and they were finding themselves being ordered to relocate.

This report shares a snapshot in time of a community that has largely vanished from the waterway. Today, few residents continue to live aboard their boats. The information provides important dimensions of life for those with precarious legal identity or at risk of statelessness. It shares the struggles as well as the hopes and dreams of those who find themselves in the situation of living as the perpetual "other" in a society in which they may be considered foreign, but continues to be "home."

