

Beneficiary Story No. 3 (NCDM Project)

## The Story of Noch Saroeun – Safe and Cheap Drinking Water, Harder and Harder to Find in Drought-Prone Areas



Saroeun with his wife Sin Ip and two of his three children

Noch Saroeun, 48 years, lives with his family (his wife and 3 boys) in Bantey Meas Khang Kaeut commune, Bantey Meas district, Kampot province. He works as a construction worker providing building services in his commune. Whereas beforehand, he was a rice paddy farmer. But he abandoned the farm due to climatic conditions that made it so unprofitable and risky that he decided to engage in other income opportunities. Others in his village have even migrated to Thailand to find work as wage laborers in the construction sector or in factories.

Saroeun benefits from sales of cheap and safe drinking water by a community-run water station. In addition, training on hygiene and sanitation practices were held in his village.

Interviewer: Saroeun, where did you get your drinking water from before project? How much water do you use in average? And how has the situation changed due to the project?

S: I used to buy it at the local market, a jar (25 liters) for about 3500 Riel. We use around 8 to 10 jars per month. Nowadays, I buy from the station, for 1500 Riel a 20 liter-jar. The months during which the station did not function though, I had to go back and buy at the market. I prefer the water by the station, I know the people that produce it and I trust them. That is not the case at the market. We have remarkedly less often cholera cases and other diarrheal diseases among the family members since we drink the water from the station.

I: Where do get your non-drinking water for the household from?

S: I pump it from a communal pond with my own old pump. (additional info: this is actually against the rules of the commune, but it is somehow accepted as Saroeun's family belongs to the poorest households in the village).

I: What do you do with the savings per month, about 20000 Riel?

S: It is not much after all. I spend it on food and school fees. I had more savings so that I have invested in extending our small house, including roof corrugated iron sheets for the roof.

I: Beyond the water purchase, have you benefited in other ways from the project?

S: Yes, my wife Sin Ip has joined the sensitization sessions for hygiene by the project. In addition to drinking safer water now, our behavior has changed as well. We do not drink directly from the pond anymore, as we used to do when we were thirsty and did not have other water available. Now, we only drink the safe water. Our skin has improved. Some neighbors drink rain water, but I do not trust it anymore. I learnt in a training by the project that this water is dirty.

I: Have you lived here all your life? Have you experienced any changes in weather?



Saroeun drinking from a water jar sold by the community-run water station

S: No, I have moved here from a neighboring province. But my wife lived here all her life. We have observed that temperatures have increased over time. When it rains, it always comes stronger than before. Drought is more severe, as a result I have stopped rice farming. I have dropped out and went to work in construction. Some people have migrated to Thailand after dropping-out from agriculture. They work there as factory or construction workers. We want to stay here; I do not want to leave my wife and children behind. Other people have reported that life in Thailand is not easy. However, the migrants are better off there. But we will stay here.

Saroeun benefitted from support provided by the 'Living with Disaster Risk and Climate Change Impacts in Coastal Area' Project by the National Committee for Disaster Management, funded by the Cambodia Climate Change Alliance. Please find more information on the project [here](#).