

Rehabilitated Canals in Kampong Thom Help Mitigate Effects of Climate Change.

Photo: UNDP Cambodia

KAMPONG THOM.

On a very sunny day in Pren village, Prey Kuy commune, Kampong Thom, Mr. Choen Sokhon walks along a rehabilitated canal. The canal covers more than two kilometers, lying in the heart of approximately 800 hectares of ripening rice fields.

“We can’t emphasize this enough how privileged our commune is to have received a grant for climate resilience. It drives us to think even bigger and do more with our commune’s annual allocated budget. This year, we have a longer and larger rehabilitated canal, irrigating water to the paddy fields across our four villages. No wonder the villagers have doubled their rice crops and have increased their income,” said Mr. Choen Sokhon, commune chief of Prey Kuy, Kampong Svay district.



Standing on a newly rehabilitated canal, Mr. Choen Sokhon explains how the approximately 800 hectares of farmland benefit from the canal in Prey Kuy commune.

“Not only does such a grant help us to address the increasingly intense changing climate—particularly regarding floods and droughts, but it also promotes the understanding of climate change issues among our commune councils and villagers. I want to say the project does not just simply give us the additional funding we need, but it also explains to our people why it’s important to take climate change seriously and how to mitigate the effects accordingly,” implied Mr. Sokhon.



The rehabilitated canal in Prey Kuy commune during the early rice crop harvesting.

Similarly, in another location, Mr. Hem Hai, chief of Ponro commune, Tangkork district, also discussed the benefits of the co-financed grant his commune received for canal development.

“Water is absolutely essential to our village in many respects, I must keep saying it. Most of the people in my village, if not all, are farmers, and they rely on water to do agricultural activities and earn their incomes,” stressed Mr. Hai while standing nearby a villager’s water-pumping machine on a 1,100-meter-long functioning canal.



Mr. Hem Hai describes the importance of the canal rehabilitated under the PBCR grant in Ponro commune.

“It is no use at all merely to say how hard your commune suffers in the face of drought or flood. Instead, we must show how much we can do with what we have in place to ameliorate the situation and explore, as much as we can, the possibilities of external support. It’s very fortunate that the SRL project lends a helping hand to us, without which we would not be able to rehabilitate such a longer and larger canal in our commune. We had 24 million Riels in our commune’s budget, and we received 48 million Riels from the SRL project to rehabilitate this canal,” said Mr. Hem Hai, chief of Ponro commune, Tangkork district.

The Performance-Based Climate Resilience grant, coined PBCR, provides a financial top-up to the sub-national administrations (SNAs) to co-finance the most prioritized climate change adaptation interventions, particularly building and rehabilitating resilient infrastructure schemes such as canals, dams, water gates, spillways, ponds, and the like. Awarded by the NCDDSD¹, the grant is transferred to the SNAs’ treasury accounts through the National Treasury.

¹ National Committee for Sub-National Democratic Development Secretariat

Mr. Heng Chea, commune chief from Kampong Thmor also shares his view as to how the co-financing grant from the project revive agricultural activities in his commune.



Commune chief Chea Heng on the newly rehabilitated canal in Laak village.

“Water shortages for agricultural activities, especially rice crops, has become a critical concern in our commune and others due to climate change. We depend on the water to make a living and we used to spend a lot of money to irrigate water from remote water source. Now that the SRL project provides co-financing support to rehabilitate this canal, our people are very happy as they can irrigate the water to their paddy fields in a very much cheaper cost.”



The 1,706-meter canal during the rehabilitation process in Laak village, Kampong Thmor commune.



A happy farmer Lon Lim from Laak village, Kampong Thmor commune.



Newly rehabilitated canal system in Laak village, Kampong Thmor commune

“The farmers in the commune used to argue about obtaining water for their crops. So, they experienced uneven water distribution during the dry spell. And during rainy season, their crops were severely affected by flood. Thus, sometimes in both seasons, everything was just gone. What’s even worse, some fell prey to loan payment with private creditors,” Mr. Chea Heng depicts a grim climate-induced phenomenon occurring in his community.

“Now, with this canal fully rehabilitated, they will double their rice crops. Let’s hope they can double their income this year, too! Not only has the canal been rehabilitated to irrigate the water to our paddy fields, but two accessible paths along the canal have been built also. This is killing two birds with one stone,” he implied.



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