



SPCR NEWS

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ADAPTATION WORKING GROUP EXAMINES CLIMATE RESILIENCE PRACTICES IN PREY VENG PROVINCE



Meeting at provincial hall to share experiences and discuss about target locations to be visited for climate change adaptation in Prey Veng province

From August 24 – 28, the Mainstreaming Climate Resilience in Development project’s Adaptation Working Group travelled to Prey Veng Province to investigate local climate change adaptation practices related to agriculture, water resources, transport and urban development. H.E. Prof. Dr. Sabo Ojano, Secretary of State of Ministry of Environment and Chair of SPCR Coordination Team, led the mission. H.E Long Thart, Deputy Provincial Governor facilitated the field work, mobilizing local government officers to participate in identifying the province’s climate change issues and adaptation solutions in Ba Phnum, Kampong Trabaek, Peam Ro, Svay Antor, Pea Reang, Kamchay Mear, Krong Prey Veng, and Preah Sdach districts.

The Adaptation Working Group¹ (AWG) mobilizes climate change focal persons from government ministries responsible for MCRDP’s key sectors along with other key agencies. The AWG participates in conducting vulnerability assessment and adaptation planning along with the project’s team of technical specialists, and supports the process of formulating policy recommendations to enhance climate resilience in each sector. For the Prey Veng field visit, the AWG’s aim was to identify examples of infrastructure and development practices in agriculture, water resources management, transport and urban development that demonstrated climate resilience, and others that were proving to be less climate resilient. The review included both traditional and modern practices.

Prey Veng Province, located 95km east of Phnom Penh, in East of Cambodia has been classified in Cambodia’s National Adaptation Plan of Action as one of the country’s most vulnerable provinces. The Mekong River and three of its tributaries flow across the 12 districts and 1 town of Prey Veng. The impact of climate change on water resources is one of the key issues facing this province affecting its agricultural economy, rural infrastructure, transport and urban development. The province’s water sources are dependent on the Mekong River system flood regime and is experiencing more intense flood and dry season as this regime becomes more irregular due to climate change and other factors. The AWG was able to observe positive examples of climate resilience as well as the challenges. Each case study will be develop in detail by November 2015 – below are a snapshot of some of the practices to be featured.

1. Ministry of Water Resources and Meterology, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Ministry of Public Works and Transport, Ministry of Rural Development, Ministry of Planning, Ministry of Women Affair, National Committee for Disaster Management and National Committee for Sub-national Democratic Development

CLIMATE RESILIENT PRACTICES

Drip irrigation for Agriculture — Mr. Gnem Chhut is a farmer in Phumi Kroach Village, Ansom Ok Commune, Peam Ro District. He has started a practice of combining drip irrigation and mulch (covering plants to enrich soil) that allows him to produce 3 crops a year despite the water shortages faced in Prey Veng. He has also built a canal surrounding his farm to store water for later use. While he has dug a groundwater well, he needs to pump water only in the driest periods.



Crop Rotation by Mrs. Pheng Ty, Cheaklang Village, Svay Antor District — Mrs. Pheng Ty is a small farmer who has increased her income by rotating her crops. On her 2 hectares of land, she uses one hectare for sugar cane and paddy rice cultivation, while another hectare is used for vegetable growing. From May to October, she cultivates paddy that allows her to earn about 5-6 million Riel (about USD1250 to USD1500) per season. On the same land, she cultivates sugar cane from November onward, and one hectare of sugar cane could generate about 30 million riel (about USD7500) a year. She supplements this income by growing vegetables throughout the year. This crop rotation practice allows her to choose which crop to cultivate depending on the water availability. With year round options, Ms. Pheng Ty is less vulnerable when floods or dry periods affect a seasons' production. As a result, her livelihood is more climate resilient.



Women's participation in infrastructure operation and maintenance -- women play an important role in contributing to climate resilient livelihoods and infrastructure. Women at Trea village in Prey Veng, many of whom are employed in the provinces' garment industry, are also active in maintaining the canal. On weekends, women organize to identify the most suitable grasses for retaining soil and have been planting these along the irrigation canals to hold the slopes in place during periods of heavy rain.

Livestock and Community Safe area of Kampong Sleng Village, Baphnom District — This village of 245 families inhabitants is flooded every year. Villagers have set aside the highland areas as a safe refuge area that allows animals and human to stay during the peak flood periods.



CHALLENGES FOR CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Groundwater Use for Agriculture—Farmers in Krang Village, They commune, Ba Phnum District, have used ground water to irrigate their paddy field. In the past five years, as water problems have intensified, farmers have started to dig water wells and use pumps to irrigate their paddy rice in the dry periods. While this practice provides a short-term solution to water shortages, the water pumping by many villagers at the same time lowers the water levels and contributes to long-term groundwater depletion. Uncontrolled pumping could permanently damage the groundwater storage areas reducing replenishment, and resulting in more severe water shortages in the future.



CALL LAUNCHED FOR CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIONS FOR CLIMATE RESILIENCE

Building civil society capacity to address climate change adaptation is a major priority for Cambodia's SPCR. The SPCR's Mainstreaming Climate Resilience into Development Planning project, launched a competitive call for civil society organizations (CSO) to apply for small grants to support innovative initiatives for community-based adaptation. Plan International is providing the technical support to implement the grant program. Plan issued a call for Expressions of Interest (EOIs) in August, reaching a wide range of agencies across the country. A total of 116 EOIs were received by the September 11th deadline, spanning a wide variety of sectors of intervention, target groups, and geographic regions of Cambodia.

- CSO expressed interest to work in a range of sectors with the majority proposing activities related to agriculture (70%), followed by water resources management (39%), and livelihoods (34%). Under-represented sectors were in urban development, health & sanitation, and transport.
- Twenty four percent of the EOIs had a conservation and natural resources management component, 23% had a group saving and lending or seed-bank component, 22% a media and advocacy component and 16% focused on youth.
- EOIs targeted women, children, vulnerable climate affected populations, indigenous people, and farmers in general. Fewer EOIs targeted urban poor populations and the elderly.
- The geographic regions the most represented were the central plains of Cambodia around the Tonle Sap lake, and the Eastern half of the country. The coastal and Western half of the national territory were less represented.

To further promote this opportunity and draw more expressions of interest for under-represented sectors and populations, the project is extending its EOI deadline to September 25th 2015.

From among the CSOs expressing interest, 35 top-rated entities will be invited to attend a first training by the project. Selections will be made based on a range of criteria that includes giving priority to projects that are gender-sensitive, participatory, innovative, sustainable, and directly benefit vulnerable populations (including women, children, elderly, people with disabilities, and minorities). After the training, the selected CSOs will submit full proposals. Grants will be subsequently awarded to the top 20-25 proposals. The winning CSOs will have funding to implement a community-based adaptation project. They will also benefit from training and mentoring aimed at enabling the organization to integrate climate change perspectives into its overall programming. Projects will be implemented over an 18-month timeframe starting in early 2016.

This program complements broader efforts by the Royal Government of Cambodia and its development partners to promote resilience to climate change and meet the goals set in the Rectangular Strategy Phase III (2013-2018), Climate Change Strategic Plan (2014-2023), and other policy aims. The Civil Society Support Mechanism was designed to ensure that CSOs are ready to effectively and meaningfully engage in national climate change adaptation strategies and processes going forward.

For further information about the project, you can contact Mr. Yun Sina, National Capacity Building Specialist, Plan International sina.yun@plan-international.org.

FARMERS SHARE THEIR PERSPECTIVE ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Cambodians are hearing more about climate change and starting to understand better what it means to them. In recent field visits to Prey Veng, most farmers defined climate change as a long-term increase in temperature that effects local weather conditions. Most of those interviewed perceived the negative impacts of climate change as it has an adverse impact on health and makes farming harder. Other perceived consequences of climate change were lower crop yields, more droughts, higher temperatures and flooding. Farmers expressed a lack of sufficient financial, human or physical resources to deal with climate change.

However, at the individual household level, some also had taken measures to respond to climate change as below:

A farmer in Chrey commune, Prey Veng, Sok Saroeun explained how he grows rice and many kinds of vegetables to feed the family. Before he could only grow in the rainy season because water was not available in the dry season before the new canal constructed along community road in front of his house. He has known about climate change for a long time through his own observations. He noted that people in his village used to have enough water



to plant crops on time. But now crops are becoming harder to grow due to insufficient rainfall. There is no alternative water source other than rainwater. Pumping water from canal in front of his house for use is a solution but this water also can be insufficient as there is a high demand across all farmers. When droughts occur, there is no choice but to wait for rain. When talking about adaptation practices to cope with climate change, he is concerned about how to better manage water so to meet the needs of farmers.

Farmer Kim Sreypheap from They commune observed that the weather is getting hotter and hotter making it harder to raise animals, grow vegetables and produce rice. In order to cope, most farmers have started to change rice varieties and switched from transplanting seedlings in irrigated fields to scattering seeds on dry land. Her neighbor, Chea Nary heard about climate change four or five years ago. She has noticed that the weather is getting hotter and storms are more frequent. Erratic rainfall is the main impact affecting cultivation, making it difficult for farmers to decide when to sow or transplant. A dry spell always occurs between late July and early August.

Farmers in the area are also pumping water onto rice fields, but the extent of this irrigation support is limited. Due to this, a Farmer Water User Committee (WUC) has been formed. The WUC helps communities or respond to climate change by supplying irrigation water during times of drought. For instance, Farmer Water User Committee of Boeung Snae Reservoir in Prey Veng was established to manage water for agriculture to serve about 34 villages with a total population of 5527 households from 6 communes. This change in water management allows them to cultivate 3 crops a year from the 80-million m³ reservoir.



Cambodia is among the most vulnerable countries due to its high dependence on agriculture and other climate sensitive sectors and its low adaptive capacity. Attitudes towards climate change are changing across Cambodian communities as women and men become more aware of its impact on their daily activities, especially agricultural production. From this awareness, Cambodian farmers are developing more interest to build their knowledge about new adaptation practices.



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