Cambodia

Organization: HEKS Cambodia
Location: Preah Vihear, Kampong Thom and Battambang Provinces, Cambodia
Solution: Empowers smallholder farmers, particularly women, by scaling up the use of cover crops to improve soil health, increase farm profits, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions
Factsheet Period: First round of UNDP AFCIA funding (16 months)

raining session for small farmers on using cover crops to enhance soil health @ HEKS Cambodia

Unfettered climate change could lower Cambodia's GDP by 3-9% by 2050, affecting key crops such as rice, maize, cassava and cashew (World Bank, 2023). These adverse impacts will disproportionately impact smallholders, as well as women and individuals with disabilities who have less access to adaptation solutions. HEKS Cambodia is introducing a regenerative agriculture initiative, aiming to scale the use of cover crops for vital staple crops, increasing farmer profits, enhancing cropping system resilience, reducing food production emissions, and building supply chains for agroecological products. Key outcomes include training 1,000 farmers and improving access to cheaper, high-quality farming inputs, which will enable long-term, self-sustaining efforts for locally-led climate adaptation.

Key achievements

- Trained 1,083 farmers (71% female) in cover crops and agroecology
- 204 farmers adopted new practices
- Established 331.83 hectares under regenerative agriculture
- Produced and sold 59 tons of cover crop seeds

Social impact

- Empowers women, youth, people with disabilities, and Indigenous farmers with sustainable and profitable agriculture practices. These boost their farming yields, expand market access and improve their food security in the longer-term

Adaptation benefits

- Enhances water retention and boosts resilience against droughts and floods
- Captures carbon in the soil, mitigating agricultural contributions to climate change
- Improves soil fertility, reducing the need for costly inputs while boosting agricultural productivity

Funding snapshot

- UNDP AFCIA Grant: US$125,000 (initial grant)
- Co-financing by project implementing partner, SmartAgro: US$48,920

Replication potential

- Focusing on using easily accessible cover crops and customised seed mixes, making it adaptable to different types of farming systems.
- Training programs and behaviour change initiatives developed can be replicated and adapted in other regions.
- Market development strategy is a model for integrating regenerative agriculture into existing supply chains.

Innovation

- Silvopastoral systems are new to Belize, replacing traditional cattle-ranching
- Increases capacity of pastures to produce more feed without deforestation
- Bottom-up training approach: farmer-to-farmer model improves local practices

Investability	
Sustaining criteria	Projected 20% rice yield increase, saving $45 per hectare through use of cover crops instead of chemical fertilisers. Solution focuses on farmers' behavioural change will last beyond the duration of the grant, as this directly benefits farmers' income and climate resilience. The strengthened market system for cover crops will boost greater competition and economic interest in this sector. Attempting financial sustainability through the implementing partner, SmartAgro, an organization that seeks to develop and implement a sustainable business model for cover crop seed production with farmer networks, development of agroecological input and no-till machinery.
Financial innovation	Connects farmers to markets for cover crops and agroecological products, promoting long-term economic viability. Reduces production costs through lower agrochemical use.

ADAPTATION FUND Climate Innovation Accelerator

ADAPTATION FUND

To learn more, visit UNDP-AFCIA

To contact the initiative, visit HEKS Cambodia