STORIES FROM A CLIMATE CHANGE HERO

Strengthening Climate Information and Early Warning Systems in Cambodia

Mr. Ly Hon, part of Cambodia's Department of Meteorology Systems Support team, is responsible for operation and maintenance of the departments various systems. His role supports forecasters to access the right information to provide the country's weather updates.



"We're going out to the provinces of Takeo, Kampong Cham and Kandal today to go check on the stations," Mr. Ly Hon said. A crucial part of his role, Mr. Hon and his team at the Department of Meteorology need to ensure the department's 24 Automatic Weather Stations, constructed as part of a <u>UNDP partnership</u>, are providing accurate data. Mr Hon explained how it works: "We receive the data from the stations and make sure that all of the systems are operational and maintained. If there is an issue we solve the problem. Sometimes we find the solution and other times we need to call for support."

Born in Siem Reap, Mr. Hon moved to Phnom Penh in 1998 to study information technology (IT) at what is now known as the National University of Management. Once he finished his degree, he worked in the private sector before commencing with the Department of Meteorology in 2011.

Mr. Hon demonstrates the type of adaptability often found across members of the Department of Meteorology. "I have



Mr. Hon working by hand to maintain Automatic Weather Stations. Photo credit: MoWRAM

done several trainings, but most things I have learned on the job. I have learned about operations, management and maintenance [of the department's systems]. I always enjoy working in the department, there are so many things to do. In other places, people have specific jobs and only do those jobs. But here in Cambodia, we have many jobs to do and if we can do one of the other jobs, we do it!"

The Systems Support team at the department play a vital, but often unrecognised role, in providing the country's weather forecasts. In the field, they often clear grass and fix stations by hand under Cambodia's scorching sun. Back in the office, they are just as essential. As Mr. Hon states, "My job is very important in the Department of Meteorology. There is a lot of data that comes from the satellites, the radar, the Automatic Weather Stations and we need a place to bring all that data together to display to the forecasters. Without IT, we can't get the data from the other side of the world or from on the ground. Without us, the forecasters can't get accurate data."

Working together to build the country's forecasting capacities

Project Brief

Duration: 2016-2020 Project Budget: USD \$4,910,285 Implementing Partner:

Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology **Funding:** GEF-Least Developed Country Fund **Location:** Cambodia, nation-wide **Population to Benefit:** Over 15 million (est.)

Cambodia's geographical exposure and the lack of adaptive capacity make it particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. With over 80% of the population dependent on subsistence farming, rural populations are particularly exposed.

Floods in 2013 affected 1.7 million people, with an estimated loss of US\$ 356 million. In 2016, floods affected 2.5 million people. These events are precursors of the impacts of the changing climate. Climate information is essential to prepare farmers.

With support from UNDP and funding from the GEF-Least Developed Countries Fund, the project <u>'Strengthening</u> <u>Climate Information and Early Warning Systems'</u> is supporting the <u>Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology</u> <u>(MoWRAM)</u> to increase Cambodia's institutional capacity, to assimilate and forecast weather, hydrological and climate information, and to improve communities' access to reliable information and early warning systems. Under the project, 24 automatic weather stations and 29 hydrological stations for surface and ground water have been installed across the country, integrating technology and placing communities at the heart of a people-centred early warning system.

Information from the stations will be key to generating early warning messages, both for planning and for disaster preparedness and emergency response.

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Globally, 45 countries are developing and strengthening early warning systems, with 189 new end-toend early warning systems established in 26 countries. With UNDP support, nearly 21 million people have improved access to reliable climate information and early warning systems.

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