STORIES FROM A CLIMATE CHANGE HERO

Strengthening Climate Information and Early Warning Systems in Cambodia

As a trainer in drought-resistant agricultural techniques, Mr. Sarom Yim sees his work as a crucial part of a bigger process. Growing vegetables and using charcoal are key skills that Mr. Yim focuses on during his trainings.





Learning to prepare a circle garden. Photo credit: UNDP Cambodia/Kelsea Clingeleffer.

As Mr. Sarom Yim explains developing a circle garden to a group of local farmers, he notes the importance of agricultural methods adapted to the local climate. "When there is a drought or unexpected change in the climate, farmers do not have product to bring to the market. To save money, they will sometimes make a small garden near their house, which means they don't need to buy food from the market and they can put the money towards things like sending their children to school."

Mr. Yim is a trainer in <u>DanChurchAid</u>'s Drought Resistant Agricultural Techniques (DRAT) training, conducted in partnership with <u>United Nations Development</u> <u>Programme</u> (UNDP). Originally from a farming background in Kandal and now based in Phnom Penh, Mr. Yim has worked around the region and specialises in vegetable growing and use of rice husk charcoal kilns. Mr. Yim demonstrates to the farmers how to use a rice husk charcoal kiln: "Rice husk charcoal plays an important role in agriculture – the charcoal helps to keep water in the soil, which is especially important during drought. This means you can continue production, even when there are limited water supplies."

According to Mr. Yim, incorrect or excessive use of chemicals can have negative impacts on both farmers and consumers, yet the importance of organic approaches to agriculture is underemphasised. Impacts of excessive use of pesticides can include a reduction in market value and an increase in health and environmental concerns.

Mr. Yim sees his role as key in a larger system that is vital for farmers. As he described it, "It is all part of a process. They [farmers] do not know about drought, so we train them on that. Then we talk about connecting them with market, and how to get a high price."

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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