STORIES FROM A CLIMATE CHANGE HERO

Strengthening Climate Information and Early Warning Systems in Cambodia

Ms. Chea Navin and Ms. Lay Nary, researchers from the Royal University of Agriculture in Phnom Penh, are pursuing a future in which climate information is accessible to those within Cambodia and further abroad.

Working on the ground is an important part of climate adaptation. Photo credit: CAES, RUA

As Ms. Chea Navin presents at an agricultural adaptation workshop in Siem Reap, it is clear this is not her first public presentation on climate change. As a lecturer and researcher at the Royal University of Agriculture, she knows the importance of communicating data on the Cambodian context in an easily understandable way. Ms. Lay Nary, a researcher who works alongside Ms. Navin, sits nearby gathering vital information to be used in upcoming training.

Both women feel a strong responsibility for building awareness of climate challenges in Cambodia. As Ms. Navin said, "It is really important to address climate change now - if we don't build the capacity of the young generation, they cannot effectively deliver the information to farmers. If we don't take action, the farmers will lose hope and agricultural production will decrease. The resources and people [with knowledge] in Cambodia are limited and the needs of the farmers are huge."

Both Ms. Navin and Ms. Nary have completed the Royal University of Agriculture's undergraduate degree in agro-industry in Phnom Penh, with Ms. Nary following Ms. Navin's footsteps to pursue the university's Masters of Natural Resource Management.

One of the roles that the women play is in updating and translating the World Overview of Conservation Approaches and Technologies (WOCAT) database into Khmer language. WOCAT represents a global database outlining best practice in sustainable land development – a local translation will allow Cambodians and public sector to access information that will help improve productivity. Ms. Navin and Ms. Nary compile and enter information on Cambodian agricultural practices, allowing stakeholders both locally and from around the world to use the information to reduce soil degradation and better adapt to climate change. Such activities are supported by their continual review of current situations and news related to climate change, which is then used to update global Facebook pages, present lectures, manage demonstration plots, conduct research and discuss with relevant stakeholders and donors.

Ms. Navin says sharing knowledge with and among communities is critical not only for spreading best practice in sustainable land management, but also to enhance farmer's economic capacity. "I'm proud of my farmers. Once we help them, their knowledge and production increase a lot. They can also share what they've learned with other farmers. We are very happy to see this. We request open sharing of knowledge; we want all our farmers to help others grow." Ms. Nary echoes the sentiment: "Sometimes we research in the office or write but the best part is seeing real solutions applied in the field."

Ms. Navin and Ms. Nary have been part of developing the FARM curriculum under a partnership between United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and Regional Integrated Multi-Hazard Early Warning System for Africa and Asia (RIMES). FARM allows farmers to use forecasting information to manage agriculture risks in Cambodia.

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 'Strengthening Climate Information and Early Warning Systems' is supporting the Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology (MoWRAM) 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.

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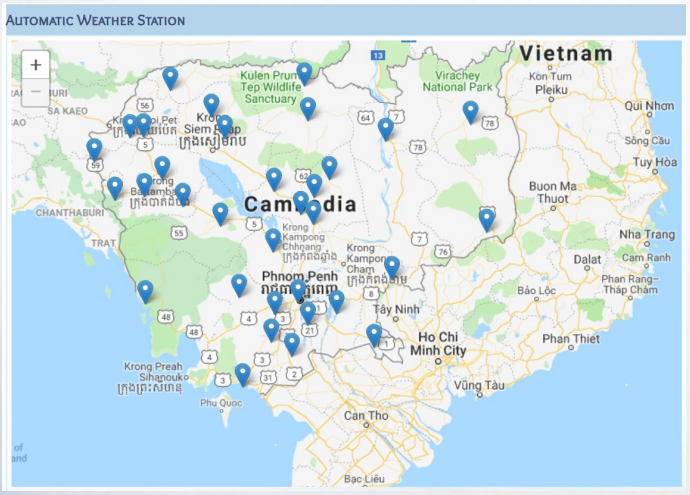
Under the project, 24 automatic weather stations and 29 hydrological stations for surface and ground water have been installed across the country, integrating technology and placing communities at the heart of a people-centred early warning system.

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



Globally, 45 countries are developing and strengthening early warning systems, with 189 new end-to-end 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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