

# STORIES FROM A CLIMATE CHANGE HERO

## Strengthening Climate Information and Early Warning Systems in Cambodia

Ms. Tep Phollarath is Cambodia's longest standing meteorologist. With over 30 years' experience, she has created the way for data management, information sharing and new generations of meteorologists.



Pages of numbers, columns and statistics would daunt many people but not Ms. Tep Phollarath, Vice Chief of Climate Office at Cambodia's Department of Meteorology. Every morning, Ms. Phollarath spends several hours surrounded by computers as she generates Cambodia's 3-day forecast before returning to her office to contact provincial officers from around the country to collect, enter, correct and analyse weather data. "I like the statistics, and I am interested in the models we use in meteorology. One of the biggest challenges is trying to get accurate data, which allows us to do the weather prediction from day to day, from month to month. Now we have lots of stations in meteorology. It is easy for me to gather all the data from the whole country, then analyse it and give to the relevant agencies."

Raised in Phnom Penh, Ms. Phollarath began her career in meteorology as part of a family tradition. "I started with the Department of Meteorology in 1985 after I watched my father. He was the Deputy Director of the department." Shortly after commencing, Ms. Phollarath moved to Russia for five years to hone her expertise before returning to Phnom Penh where she has worked ever since.

With 34 years' experience, Ms. Phollarath is one of the best positioned individuals to note shifts in the climate of Cambodia. "The climate has changed over many years – there are more heatwaves, strong winds now. Before only 30% of people knew about the climate information, but now 50 – 60% of people know



*Completing the 3-day forecast; working together at the 7th Monsoon Forum. Photo credit: UNDP Cambodia/Ratha Soy/Manuth Buth.*

information about the climate. They watch TV, they listen to the radio, they talk to their neighbours, so now they know about the climate and disasters before they happen."

Ms. Phollarath is a big believer in collaboration and reinforces the importance of interdependence between government departments and the communities they serve. "Meteorology is important in Cambodia because we need to provide forecasts to the public, to relevant agencies so that they know the relevant information and climate. For example, I work with the Department of Agriculture and Department of Health to provide relevant information. Health is affected by the amount of rainfall, so the department needs to know this information to predict the spread of diseases that are water related such as dengue."

Ms. Phollarath has been a key part of UNDP's engagement with the Kingdom of Cambodia's Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology (MoWRAM), with involvement across many projects including [RIMES FARM school](#), forecast training, and the [7th Monsoon Forum of Cambodia](#). Within these events and many more, she can often be found facilitating workshops and groups, sharing her extensive knowledge, and mentoring community members, colleagues and Cambodia's future meteorologists.

## 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.)

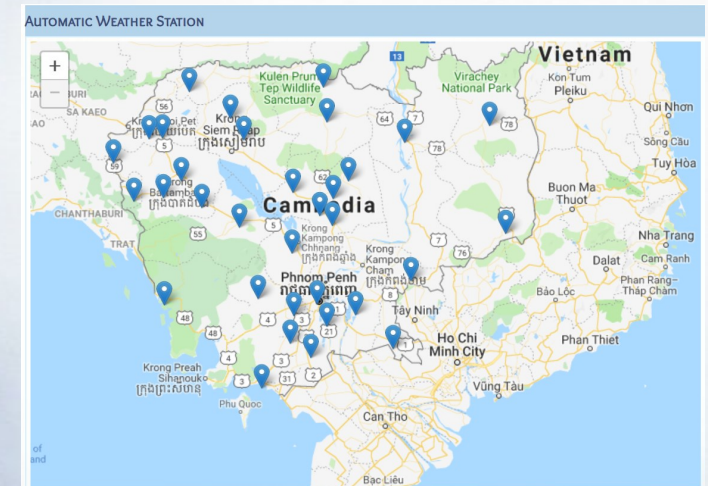
Cambodia's geographical exposure and the lack of adaptive capacity make it particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. With over 80% of the population dependent on subsistence farming, rural populations are particularly exposed.

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.

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.**

[WATCH OUR VIDEO](#)



**FOLLOW US:**

[@UNDPCambodia](#)

[@UNDPClimate](#)

