



Snapshot on China-Cambodia-UNDP Trilateral Cooperation Cassava Project



Empowered lives.
Resilient nations.

Context

Following the signing of the 2010 China-UNDP Memorandum of Understanding, the cooperation aims to jointly promote research and concrete project cooperation under the framework of South-South cooperation, research and concrete project cooperation, China's Ministry of Commerce (MOFCOM) and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) took first steps in 2011 to establish a trilateral cooperation project with the Government of Cambodia, which focused on improving cultivation and boosting trade of cassava. The project included two phases. *Phase I* ran from December 27, 2011 to January 16, 2012. *Phase II* was launched in May 2013 and was completed in March 2015.

Key partners

MOFCOM provided USD 400,000 to support the project, and the Chinese Academy of Tropical and Agricultural Sciences (CATAS) was responsible for implementing the project in Phase I. In Cambodia, Cambodia's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), the Kampong Cham and Pailin Provincial Department of Agriculture (PDA), and several academic institutions participated in the project. UNDP China was the overall project manager, facilitating liaison and coordination between the project stakeholders in China and Cambodia.



Observation of the cassava root development on the demonstration plots testing (2014). Photo: UNDP

Major activities

The purpose of *Phase I* was to leverage the value-added of Chinese and UNDP joint involvement through the involvement of Chinese and international expertise. A training programme was organized in Hainan through which each party was able to add substantive value and jointly produce successful knowledge products and training activities on cassava production and export. Phase I concluded in January 2012 and was assessed as successful by both China and Cambodia, with a request to expand the cooperation in terms of further research, training and testing the establishment of direct linkages with processors and buyers. Based on the success and lessons learned from the initial phase, and based on the request from Cambodia Government, MOFCOM agreed to support a second phase and created a new funding window of US\$400,000 as a cost-sharing contribution – the first time that the Government of China provided grant-based financial support for any trilateral project by any partner. Phase II of the project was launched in May 2013 and completed in March 2015. During *Phase II*, more trainings were held and a study tour was organized during the 11th China-ASEAN Expo. In addition a number of catalytic knowledge products were prepared, facilitating the expansion of cassava production using environmental sustainable methods.



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Main outputs

Phase II of the project revolved around three main outputs:

- **Knowledge and Research:** Two influential and important knowledge products were produced. First, a comprehensive Needs Assessment Study (NAS) aimed at identifying specific needs of the Cambodian cassava sector in relation to production and processing, as well as gaps in relation to supply and demands for the Chinese market; And second, Cambodia's first ever Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) aimed at mitigating the environmental damage resulting from malpractice in cassava cultivation techniques, which elicited some surprising but critical findings.
- **Improving yields:** Initially, specialized training on cassava cultivation was provided to 30 Cambodian officials from MAFF, the Kampong Cham and Pailin Provincial Department of Agriculture (PDA), and Cambodian academic institutions. Later, in Phase II, tailored training materials and targeted training for processors/exporters, farmers and Government officials, was developed, and these trainees were then also empowered to become trainers themselves (Training of Trainers approach to ensure scalability).
- **Increasing Trade:** Targeted support to enhancing exports from Cambodia to China was provided through a business-matching mission, where a Cambodian delegation of key stakeholders visited the city of Nanning in China's Guangxi Province in September 2014. They met with potential Chinese cassava buyers, local trade and commerce officials, and other major actors in the cassava industry in China. The mission, and follow-up thereafter, proved significant for understanding market requirements and entry points.

Lessons learnt

- The foundation for trilateral cooperation should always be national ownership and leadership, and follow the principle of being raised, agreed and led by recipient countries;
- Interventions can and should be built on real experiences and sectoral capacity from all parties involved;
- Linking local and global knowledge networks adds significant value;
- Measuring the impact of trilateral cooperation is complex but possible and very important.



*Training of the Trainers (ToT) Session on Cassava Planting and Pest Control (2014 monitoring mission)
Photo: UNDP*