

Resilient Agricultural Techniques Revitalises Hope.



Ms. Chot Vith and her husband in their backyard garden in Srith village, Siem Reap.

Photo: UNDP Cambodia

"We are contented to be part of the livelihood improvement activities. We have learnt a lot from the project over a year through supportive training sessions. We gain improved knowledge and techniques, and we start to grow all these mustard greens in our home garden, according to the given instructions. Now we can't tell [you] enough how happy we are to see all these flourishing mustard greens, and no wonder we envisage better yields. I wish to imply that it is very different from what we used to do conventionally. We know good seeds to plant, how to prepare the fertile soil, and how to water the crops accordingly,"

—Ms. Chot Vith, a farmer in Srith village, Prasat Bakong district, Siem Reap.

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On a bright and fresh morning, farmer Chot Vith and her husband work together in their backyard garden. Her daughter and son busy themselves by running around the vegetable garden, full of flourishing mustard greens.

Her husband gathers water from a nearby well to water their veggies, while she weeds the green mustards. They're growing nicely and due for harvest any day now.

As a 40-year-old farmer, Chot Vith is an energetic member of the Livelihood Improvement Group (LIGs) in Srith village, which was formed by the SRL project in early 2018. In a sitting posture surrounded by the mustard greens, Chot Vith explained that she has been engaged with the project for almost one year, during which time she and her husband have received practical guidance and training on vegetable growing. She implied that vegetable gardening is one of her favourite daily life activities, not only because she can grow her own natural veggies for domestic consumption, but because she can also contribute to her household income.

"Besides home gardening, we also obtain some more crucial knowledge and techniques about resilient chicken raising. Since then, we have raised some chickens, and if I can remember well, we can earn roughly 500,000 riels from chicken sales," added Chot Vith.

The earned income is used to support her family, replant veggies, buy fertilizers, attend social events (wedding, house warming, birthday party, funeral, etc.) and send her kids to school.



Photo: UNDP Cambodia

Ms. Chot Vith is getting rid of weeds from the mustard greens ridge in her backyard garden.

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The early morning rain has subsided, leaving hundreds of crystal waterdrops on the bright green vegetables. The sun is shining, and the air is fresh and crisp in Konsat village, Trapang Thom Commune, Prasat Bakang district.

In front of a countryside wooden house is a small green vegetable garden comprising of around twenty rows of eggplants. Some are bearing its flowers in vivid violet colours, while some are producing young and mature fruits. Around those eggplant rows, you will find lemongrass growing. Pech Pov is 24 years old and her spouse, 26-year-old Pheanh Long, watch over their two sons as they play in the garden.

A typical day at their home consists of the young couple tending to their veggie garden, watering their plants, and picking mature eggplants. Having been one of the household members of the project's livelihood improvement group since 2018, they have been hopeful of high yields from their current eggplant cultivation using the resilient agricultural techniques.

"We are very glad that we can grow this crop very well. We can't remember exactly how many sales we have made so far, but it seems that we can earn around two million Riels. So, it should be circa 20 times, I guess," said Pov while looking back to her husband nearby, who nodded in a smile.

Farmers tend to earn incomes by means of agricultural work and raising livestock. Aiming to improve the livelihoods of target farmers, particularly those with limited farming lands and financial resources, the SRL project has been designed to provide guidance on frog raising, vegetable gardening, and rice cultivation. The project was implemented by a contracted specialised service provider, CADTIS.



Pech Pov in her eggplant garden in front of her house in Srith village, Siem Reap.

"Previously, we did not know how to make it grow like this! I mean, we just grew it traditionally. We know there is a better technique to use, but we don't know how to get it. And then we heard that one project is supporting people in our village to grow vegetable and raise chickens. So, we make it! We are happy and we want to grow it as much and as often as we can," she further expressed.

In addition to the vegetable home gardening, they are currently implementing chicken raising techniques. With around a dozen chickens eating homemade foddors in a small coop built next to the garden, Pov said those chickens will be used just for their own domestic consumption for the time being, but they expect to make some extra income from selling chickens in the future.

"We start to follow the given instructions and we believe it's going to be better than what we used to do like what we have done with the vegetable growing. So, we know how to make money-saving homemade foddors, how to build the right coop, how to feed them with enough water, nutrition, vitamin and vaccine," said Pov while standing next to the coop.

Being farmer is not an easy way of life, but Pov and her husband still want both their sons to pursue higher education in agriculture. They wish to scale up what they are doing with more advanced techniques so that they can gain greater results.

