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Newsletter

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UNDP partners with people at all levels of society to help build nations that can withstand crisis, and drive and sustain the kind of growth that improves the quality of life for everyone. On the ground in 177 countries and territories, we offer global perspective and local insight to help empower lives and build resilient nations.

Switzerland gives US\$3 million for mine action in Cambodia

PHNOM PENH – Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) has given US\$ 3 million for mine clearance in Cambodia. The fund will be used to support various activities under the Clearing for Results Phase II (CfR) project, which is implemented by Cambodian Mine Action Authority (CMAA) and managed by UNDP, until the end of 2015.

Ms. Rahel Boesch, SDC's Director of Cooperation, and Ms. Setsuko Yamazaki, UNDP Country Director, signed the funding agreement during a ceremony on 26 November, which was witnessed by H.E. Prak Sokhonn, CMAA's Vice President.

In her remarks, Ms. Boesch said the financial contribution demonstrated the firm commitment of Switzerland to fight against anti-personnel mines and the consequences of cluster munitions, as well as other explosive remnants of war. She said: "It is our conviction that all citizens in the world deserve a minimum of human security and protection from the danger posed by these weapons not only during, but also post-violent conflict."

Since 2006, the Clearing for Results project – which has also received support from other international donors including Canada, Australia and Austria – has helped get rid of the deadly devices and free more than 54 square kilometres of land in Cambodia. Some two-thirds of the cleared areas have been converted into farmland, contributing to reducing poverty and improving food security in the rural areas. The project has also helped strengthen national capacity to regulate, coordinate and monitor the sector.

"With the US\$3 Million from SDC, the project is expected to fast track the achievement of the mine clearance objectives so as to release more land for productive use by the communities," Setsuko Yamazaki, Country Director of UNDP Cambodia, said at the ceremony.

Backyard fish farm – an answer to food insecurity in rural areas



Photo: UNDP Cambodia

Mr. Say Sorn, in the background, and his wife, Yi Sinuon, in the foreground, feed fish they raise in the backyard of their house in Siem Reap province.

SIEM REAP – In the past when he needed fish for his wife to cook food, Mr. Say Sorn would fetch a net to cast in the canal in his village. These days he can just get it right from his backyard – a landscape occupied by a giant water filtration tank, hatching containers, and 12 fish ponds holding altogether about three tons of fish.

Welcome to Mr. Say Sorn's fish farm – a positive model of how family fish breeding like his can help ensure food security for the rural population in Cambodia.

Say Sorn got into this venture six years ago out of a simple awareness that fish stock is dwindling in the Cambodian river systems. The reasons, he said, are the increase in the country's population and illegal methods used by many fishermen in their trade.

"My fear is that there may not be many fish left in the river to catch in the future," Say Sorn said while feeding his fish one recent afternoon.

The 73-year-old man used to earn a living from repairing motorcycles in his village about 15 kilometers west of Siem Reap provincial town. And part of his responsibility as a breadwinner was to go catch fish – the main source of protein for Cambodians – for his wife to cook. "More and more I was able to make little catch. There were days when I couldn't catch any fish at all," he said.

Initially he knew nothing about raising fish. What he did was buy fingerlings from a local market to release into a pond at home. But none of them survived because the water was too murky. "I thought they would grow up just as any fish in any water," he recalled.

He did not give up, and his persistence one day got the attention of Cambodia's Fisheries Administration (FiA). Through support from development agencies and Cambodia Climate Change Alliance (CCCCA) – a programme funded by the EU, Sweden, Denmark and UNDP – the

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Backyard fish farm...

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FIA gave him some training in sustainable fish farming. It was part of a broader government's strategy designed to enable rural families to increase food security and their ability to earn income and adapt better to impacts of climate change. CCCA has also awarded grants to similar climate-resilient fishery projects in three other provinces: Kratie, Kampong Thom, and Pursat.

"In other parts of the country we have many villagers who are doing family fish farms like Mr. Say Sorn," Chin Da, Deputy Director of Department of Aquaculture Development, said. He added that, however, Say Son has stood out as someone with "a strong commitment" to his work and who "actively shares technical information about fish farming to other villagers too."

"I have so far taught about 200 people in fish hatching and nursing techniques – for free," Say Sorn said. "Water filtration is important. It helps improve quality of the water and increase the amount of oxygen in it, which is crucial of the fingerlings to survive and grow," he explained.

Today, his 7,000-square metre backyard is one sophisticated fish raising facility. A key feature is the concrete filtration tank. Here, ground water is stored and filtered through layers

of rock and sand for use to hatch and nurse fingerlings before they are big enough to be released into the ponds. There, the fingerlings – and brood stock – are raised inside floating nylon cages designed to keep them from escaping during flood. The 12 ponds in the farm hold about three tons of carp, tilapia, and African catfish. From their sales he is able to make an average income of US\$150 a month to support his family of five. Last year, using his savings from the fish sales, he bought two bicycles for his granddaughters to ride to school and a computer to help them in their studies.

Despite the success, he still has one major

problem – the rats. At night, they invade the farm by chewing away at the net that forms the fence around the ponds to keep the fish from escaping during flood.

"Maybe to protect my fish I should also raise a lot of cats to catch the rats," he said, adding that, with his advancing age, one day he will retire for good.

But one of his two granddaughters, Say Danou, 18, is ready to carry on his legacy.

"This is already our family's business and, if I can, I will make the farm even bigger in the future," she said.



Photo: UNDP Cambodia

Say Sorn's daughter Say Ratana, left, seizes a catfish caught from a pond in her family's backyard.

Weaving more effective partnership for development

SIEM REAP – As Cambodia prepares to transition out of Low Income Country status, fully integrate into ASEAN and set new development goals in 2015, harmonizing national development resources and activities is more important than ever. The Royal Government of Cambodia acknowledges this and as such is in the process of finalizing a new Development Cooperation and Partnerships Strategy for 2014-2018.

On November 13 and 14, development partners and line ministries representatives met in Siem Reap to discuss the effectiveness of Cambodia's current development cooperation architecture and how it can be improved to best facilitate collaborative

implementation of the Government's priorities.

The draft strategy lays out the achievements, challenges and opportunities that development cooperation in Cambodia has undergone, highlighting the progress that was made under the previous strategy. Global commitments, like those of the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, the 2008 Accra Accord, and 2011 Busan Partnership for Development Effectiveness are reaffirmed in the new Strategy with renewed determination to work toward these goals together.

The recent economic downturn has seen both a decrease in traditional sources of

ODA and a rise of new, non-traditional development partners. This shift introduces new challenges and opportunities that require flexibility and innovation on behalf of the Government as well as the development community. In response, the new Strategy calls for improved efforts to partner with private sector and CSOs, engage with other South countries and align activities under joint results and work plans.

The Strategy also takes into consideration the Rectangular Strategy III and National Strategic Development Plan (2014-2018) to ensure development cooperation efforts are aimed at Cambodia's top development priorities. The new Partnership Strategy is due to be finalized in early 2014.

Cambodia rolls out national strategy on climate change



Photo: UNDP Cambodia

A solar station supported by UNDP's project allows residents in Trabek village, Kampong Chhnang province, to charge batteries to use as home light.

PHNOM PENH – Cambodia has rolled out a climate strategic blueprint, setting the pace for actions to build resilience to impacts of climate change and promote low-carbon development in the future.

Prime Minister Hun Sen officially launched the Cambodia Climate Change Strategic Plan (CCCSP) on 5 November, the opening day of the three-day National Forum on Climate Change.

“Recent flooding in Cambodia which claimed many human lives, destroyed farmer crops and infrastructure, and hindered daily life of the people add new evidence to show the severity of climate change and it is now a matter of great urgency,” the prime minister said in his speech.

“This challenge requires us to urgently create an appropriate climate policy that responds to local, regional and global levels,” he added.

Cambodia is known to be among the top 10 countries that are highly vulnerable to climate change effects due largely to its limited ability to adapt. Most vulnerable are the people in the countryside, who depend on subsistence farming to support livelihoods.

This year’s flooding that began in mid-September has affected 20 provinces, causing extensive damages to roads and crops, and the death of 168 people.

The CCCSP outlines the government’s vision for promoting climate-resilient development during the next 10 years. All climate-related issues, including a climate change financing framework, will be gradually integrated into development strategies and planning at

national and sub-national levels as a matter of priority. A key focus in the next five years will be on increasing adaptation activities to improve the resilience of people living in rural communities, where irrigation still remains a challenge facing farmers. According to CCCSP, only 7 to 8 percent of 3.3 million hectares of arable land is adequately irrigated, 10 percent is covered by both irrigation and rain, and the remaining 80 percent rely completely on rainwater. In this context, the strategy says, more investment into improving irrigation systems will be needed for Cambodia to realize its goal of 5 percent growth annually in the agricultural output, namely rice, to meet export target in 2030.

“For a developing country like Cambodia, which has recently been ranked among the top 10 countries most vulnerable to climate change, securing the required financing for climate change adaptation will be crucial,” H.E. Ros Seilava, Under Secretary of State of the Ministry of Economy and Finance, said during the forum. To make the best use of financial resources, he added, climate response should gear toward a more programme-based approach rather than “stand-alone” projects.

“In a situation where resources are scarce and demand is high, strong coordination is fundamental for effective climate change responses among Government, development partners, civil society, academia and the private sector,” H.E. Sabo Ojano, Secretary of State of the Ministry of Environment, said.

In her remarks, Ms. Claire Van der Vaeren, UN Resident Coordinator in Cambodia, stressed that climate response should not overlook issues concerning women.

“The adverse effects of climate change risk deepening existing patterns of gender inequality, threatening the livelihoods and security of women,” she said. “Yet, women in the community can also be crucial contributors to livelihood adaptation strategies if they have the opportunity to participate in finding solutions, and in making decisions both on setting policy and on implementing them.”

The CCCSP is another key milestone of the work undertaken by Cambodia Climate Change Alliance (CCCA), a joint initiative funded by the European Union, Sweden, Denmark, and United Nations Development Programme.

Canada’s support for climate change adaptation

PHNOM PENH – Canada has given US\$2.2 million to support a UNDP-managed climate change adaptation project for the next two years.

With the latest fund, the project – Promoting Climate Resilient Water Management and Agricultural Practices in Rural Cambodia – is now starting the second phase. Its targets are farmers and local authorities in 32 communes in Kracheh and Preah Vihear provinces.

The project will build on its previous achievements through different agricultural and livelihood schemes to help improve the villager’s ability to adapt to the impacts of climate change.

“This additional fund provides an opportunity to replicate the project successes, and more importantly those that are defined and needed by the vulnerable community,” said Napoleon Navarro, UNDP Deputy Country Director.

More than 5,500 families will get support with implementing an integrated farming scheme, which includes home vegetable gardening and climate-resilient rice production to improve their living condition.

“If we do not respond effectively, climate change will permanently affect our economy, society, and people’s livelihoods,” said H.E. So Khanrithykun, Director-General of Agriculture, Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries.

During the last four years, the project was supported by US\$3 million from the Global Environment Facility (GEF), UNDP, and the Royal Government of Cambodia to carry out a series of activities. They included, but were not limited to, installation of solar-powered pumps to provide clean water for consumption and farming, and restoration of canals to supply adequate water to the rice field.

The Ministry of Agriculture is implementing the project in partnership with the Ministries of Water Resources and Meteorology and Women’s Affairs.

Database system for better response to disaster

PHNOM PENH – Cambodia has introduced a database system aimed at improving preparedness to respond to natural disasters.

The National Committee for Disaster Management (NCDM) activated the Disaster Loss Database (CamDi) in mid-October, when many parts of Cambodia were hit by a big flood.

“The importance of this disaster database system cannot be overstated,” said Napoleon Navarro, Deputy Country Director of UNDP in Cambodia. “It is very useful for the government and development partners in the joint efforts to save lives during the flood as well as for future inventions to deal with other disaster events,” he added.

The implications of disasters, especially floods, in recent years have prompted efforts to strengthen Cambodia’s capacity in disaster preparedness, risk management and coordination for better and effective response. Until recently, disaster loss and damage data existed in various government ministries but the datasets were not well organized. In this light, UNDP, in August 2012, commissioned a project to assist NCDM in its capacity to manage disaster



Photo: UNDP Cambodia

A man and his children ride a motorcycle on a flooded embankment in Kampong Speu province.

data collection and analysis by making them more systematic and consistent.

CamDi is the first centralized disaster management information system in the country. It houses different sets of data on disaster events such as floods, fires, storms, droughts, lightening, pest outbreaks riverbank collapse and epidemics.

Aside from giving up-to-date information for

emergency response and early recovery from the recent flood, CamDi is designed to be a long-term strategic tool. In it, data on various disaster events is stored and analyzed to assist in recovery and reconstruction efforts after disasters hit, and more importantly in planning for better preparedness that would help lessen impact of disasters.

CamDi: <http://camdi.ncdm.gov.kh/DesInventar/profiletab.jsp>

HIV-affected families in need of social protection

PHNOM PENH – Families affected by HIV still remain worse off economically and therefore are in need of greater action to prevent them from falling deeper into poverty, according to a recently released report.

“HIV-sensitive social protection is a way for us to ensure that people living with HIV are part of the human investment so they too can have reduced economic and social vulnerability, and enhanced status and rights,” UNDP Country Director Setsuko Yamazaki said.

She made her remarks during the launch of the report “A review of Cambodia’s social protection schemes for incorporating HIV sensitivity” on 19 September. The report was produced jointly by Council for Agricultural and Rural Development, National AIDS Authority, UNAIDS, and UNDP.

Cambodia’s success in tackling HIV/AIDS has

come a long way. In 2012, HIV prevalence among adult population was 0.7 percent compared to 1.7 percent in 1998. This represents a significant drop which is owed to government’s commitment with support from development partners and civil society groups, in tackling the HIV epidemic. The anti-retroviral therapy covers over 80 percent of the people in need of the treatment, among the highest in the world.

Despite these gains, the report said more than 60,000 households affected by or living with HIV are still facing disproportionate socioeconomic challenges and need social protection schemes. This number amounts to at least 280,000 individuals “who may belong to marginalized sections of society,” it added. A UN study in 2011 revealed that households affected by HIV face severe socioeconomic challenges due to stigma, discrimination, and health issues. Other vulnerable population groups in need of

social protection schemes include men who have sex with men, transgender persons, sex workers and people who inject drugs.

Ms. Yamazaki said that, as Cambodia is gradually transforming to be a middle income country, “inequality” remains a major concern. Therefore, she added, the review of Cambodia’s social protection scheme was another important step toward ensuring that it “will leave no one behind.”



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