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Newsletter

No. 38
June 2013

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.

China funds cassava project in Cambodia

Phnom Penh - A trilateral agriculture project worth US\$400,000 provided by China has been unveiled to assist Cambodia in boosting its cassava production for export.

Senior officials from Cambodia's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China and UNDP in Cambodia signed an agreement at a launching ceremony on Tuesday, 21 May, formally kick-starting implementation of the China-Cambodia-UNDP Trilateral Cooperation Cassava Project – Phase II.

In her speech at the ceremony on Tuesday, Ms. Luv Zhouxiang, of Department of International Trade and Economic Affairs, Ministry of Commerce of the People's Republic of China, said the project would "help move Cambodian producers, processors and exporters of cassava up the value chain."

She was joined by H.E. Teng Lao, Secretary of State of Cambodia's Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, and Ms. Setsuko Yamazaki, UNDP Country Director in Cambodia.

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Restored canal gives Cambodian farmers a much-needed boost



Photo: UNDP

Cambodian farmers collect rice harvest in Sambuor commune, Takeo province. Residents of the commune are now able to grow rice three times per season following restoration of a water canal with financial support from Sweden.

Takeo – Farmer Tous Sok Heang carefully jots down in a notepad the number clocked on the scale each time a sack of rice is put on it to weigh. The rice buyer does too for his own record. When the last sack is lifted from the scale, the buyer hands her US\$200 in down payment, promising to pay up the rest later.

"We are rich today," Tous Sok Heang quipped, flipping the cash in her hands.

It's another pay day for the 30-year-old woman who lives in Tnot Chum village, Sambuor commune in Takeo province, southern Cambodia. And she had every reason to be happy. For the first time, she enjoyed a high yield season. During a single nine-month season ending in February this year, she and her neighbors were able to reap three harvests, boosting total rice yield by three times as much.

Previously, one rice cycle was the norm because the water canal that zigzags across the paddy field was hopelessly shallow, leaving the villagers to bet on the mercy of the sky every year.

"In one year rain may start early in the season but in the next it may arrive late," said Chi Chim, the commune chief.

"For example, two years before the restoration of the canal started, we had a bad drought. Rice wilted and died because of water shortage. You cannot pin much hope on the rain these days," he added.

In mid-2012 the canal was dredged and widened with funding from Sweden and Australia. Stretching 6.5 kilometers, it is now linked up with a lake to give farmers

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Restored canal gives Cambodian farmers a much-needed boost

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water enough to grow rice in three cycles, each lasting three months from planting to harvest.

Rice farming is the main livelihoods for the majority of the rural population which makes up around 80 percent of Cambodia's 14.5 million people. Despite a steady rise in production in recent years, farmers continue to face several constraints including high vulnerability to drought and flood, and inadequate infrastructure such as roads and irrigation system.

The canal restoration in Takeo was carried out by a non-governmental organization in cooperation with the local authorities. It was part of a broader intervention overseen jointly by United Nations Development Programme and Global Environment Facility to help reduce vulnerability of the rural families to impacts of changing climate.

Overall some 47 kilometers of canal have been dredged to feed water to over 41,100 hectares of rice fields during dry and rainy seasons in 12 provinces. This will provide some 11,240 poor families across those provinces with a better irrigation for farming.

But having enough water is just one part of the story. Seeds also play an important role in increasing yields.

- *Rice farming is the main livelihood for the majority of the rural population in Cambodia. But lack of irrigation system is among many constraints still facing them.*
- *Some 47 kilometers of canal have been dredged and enlarged to feed water to over 41,100 hectares of rice fields during dry and rainy seasons in 12 provinces. As a result, farmers are now able to boost up rice yield three times, generating more income.*
- *The canal restoration is part of a joint UNDP-GEF/SGP project funded by SIDA and AusAid. It is designed to assist rural communities in improving resilience to climate change impacts through effective use of water resources and farming diversification.*

Traditionally, Cambodian farmers use long-cycle seeds which take six months to harvest. But to make the most of water resource, many have gradually switched to short-cycle seeds that take just three months to grow and harvest. This led to a bumper crop last year across the communities where the joint UNDP-GEF project has been working.

According to estimate by local officials in Takeo, on average, a family with one hectare of land produced 15 tons of rice from three cycles of crop within a nine-month period. That is 5 tons per hectare in a three-month growing cycle, which fetched approximately US\$915 in sale. The villagers and local officials said that at the end of each cycle a family was able to pocket around US\$260 in profit after deducting input costs on

operating generator to pump water into the field, fertilizer and renting harvest machine.

Holding bricks of cash she has just received from selling her rice, Lim Savoeun, another farmer, said the profit helped make a big difference for her family.

"In the past, we struggled to scrape by and sometimes had to loan money from others to fill the gap [in the income]," the 37-year-old woman said. "But we can avoid that since we are now able to grow rice in more often than before. This will allow us to make more savings to support our children's education."

"As long as long as there is water, we will keep working tirelessly on our land. We can't complain," she added.

China funds cassava project in Cambodia

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Ms. Yamazaki said the project will contribute to diversification of export base to lessen Cambodia's vulnerability to external economic shocks in the future.

"One key anticipated impact of the [project] is to promote job creation and poverty reduction, as the sector is labour-intensive and recruits from a broad segments of the population, including those in some of the poorest regions of the country," Ms. Yamazaki said.

But she also noted that even though cassava has become the second largest agricultural crop in terms of income, employment, hectares cultivated, and exports, "there is very little technical assistance support provided to the sector."

Cassava growers face a range of difficulties, including lack of high-yielding varieties, cultivation techniques, extension services, access to markets and capacity to improve

production and quality standard for export. China is a major market for export of cassava crop from Cambodia.

The first phase of the project – which is part of a South-South Cooperation framework – began in late 2011 when 30 Cambodian cassava growers were sent to take part in training on cassava cultivation techniques in Hainan, China. The second phase will run through September 2014.

Swedish aid to build climate resilience in rural communities



Photo: UNDP

Cambodian girls prepare fishing nets in Koh Sralao village, Koh Kong province. The village is one of several rural communities where Sweden-funded livelihood projects are working to build villagers' resilience to climate change impacts.

Phnom Penh – Sweden has provided new grant to support United Nations Development Programme in carrying out projects aimed at improving livelihoods of Cambodian people in rural communities that are most vulnerable to impacts of climate change.

Swedish Ambassador Anne Höglund and UNDP Country Director Setsuko Yamazaki signed the grant agreement of SEK 10.57 million Swedish Kronor (US\$1.6 million) on Friday, 10 May 2013. The amount is in addition to SEK 17.30 million (US\$2.6 million) that the Swedish Government has given earlier to UNDP to implement Cambodia Community-Based Adaptation Project (CCBAP).

"We are happy to be able to continue the cooperation with UNDP and support a program that has so far produced very good results. It provides civil society organizations and local authorities with a better understanding of climate change issues, challenges and opportunities, and help communities to prepare for and adapt to climate changes," Ambassador Höglund said.

CCBAP works with targeted rural communities through livelihood activities to enhance adaptive capacity and resilience of the villagers to survive adverse effects of

climatic events such as drought and flood.

Since 2010, CCBAP has funded 46 projects to local NGOs and community-based organizations to implement initiatives in 380 villages in 21 provinces across Cambodia. They include, among others, restoration of water canal for rice cultivation, building household ponds, training villagers on climate resilient rice seeds and using system of rice intensification, and integrated farming to improve ability to earn more income. Those initiatives are benefiting some 12,076 families among which women make up 50 percent.

Referring to natural disasters that affected many countries in recent years, Ms. Yamazaki, UNDP Country Director, said those events only re-affirm further the need to prepare vulnerable communities in Cambodia to be strong and capable in adapting and responding to the challenges.

"The programme like Cambodia Community-Based Adaptation Programme provides such support to the communities to build their resilience to climate change impacts. On behalf of the Cambodian people, we are grateful to the Swedish Government and its people for the continued support and generous contributions to Cambodia," Ms. Yamazaki said.

Climate change strategic plan approved

The National Climate Change Committee approved the Cambodia Climate Change Strategic Plan (CCCSP) during a meeting on 29 May, marking an important milestone in a long consultation process to enhance Cambodia's capacity to respond to climate change impacts. The CCCSP has a mission to create a national framework for engaging public and private sectors, and civil society in a participatory process for responding to climate change to support sustainable development. The goals are to: 1) reduce vulnerability to climate change impacts on critical (natural and societal) systems and most vulnerable groups of the country's population; and 2) shift towards a green development path by promoting low-carbon development and technologies. The strategy, once signed off by the prime minister, will become an official document to guide all relevant stakeholders in their work towards developing "a greener, low-carbon, climate resilient, equitable, sustainable and knowledge-based society" in Cambodia.

Disaster database training

A training workshop on National Disaster Loss Database was held on 4-6 June. Thirty two participants from various government institutions, UN agencies, development partners and NGOs learned how to use a computer programme – Cambodia Disaster Information (CamDi) – to compile and analyze data on disaster loss and damage in Cambodia. Currently disaster loss and damage data exists in various ministries but the datasets are not well organized. The training was designed to enhance the Disaster Management Information System in Cambodia to ensure that disaster loss database on various disaster events can be systematically collected, stored and analyzed to assist in better planning for future disaster preparedness, mitigation, response and recovery. The National Committee for Disaster Management organized the training with support from UNDP.

"Think.Eat.Save: Reduce Your Foodprint"

Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's message on World Environment Day, 5 June 2013

We live in a world of plenty, where food production outstrips demand, yet 870 million people are undernourished and childhood stunting is a silent pandemic. To create the future we want, we must correct this inequity. We must ensure access to adequate nutrition for all, double the productivity of smallholder farmers who grow the bulk of food in the developing world, and make food systems sustainable in the face of environmental and economic shocks. This is the vision of my Zero Hunger Challenge, launched last year at the Rio+20 UN Conference on Sustainable Development.

One way to narrow the hunger gap and improve the well-being of the most vulnerable is to address the massive loss and waste inherent in today's food systems. Currently at least one third of all food produced fails to make it from farm to table. This is foremost an affront to the hungry, but it also represents a massive environmental cost in terms of energy, land and water.

In developing countries, pests, inadequate storage facilities and inefficient supply chains are major contributors to food loss. Those who grow for export are also often at the mercy of over-stringent expectations of buyers who place a premium on cosmetic perfection. In developed nations, food thrown away by households and the retail and catering industries rots in landfills, releasing significant quantities of methane, a powerful greenhouse gas.

Food loss and waste is something we can all address. That is why the United Nations Environment Programme, the UN Food and Agricultural Organization and public and private sector partners have launched the "Think.Eat.Save: Reduce Your Foodprint" campaign to raise global awareness and showcase solutions relevant to developed and developing countries alike.

Infrastructure and technology can reduce the amount of food that perishes after it is harvested and before it reaches the market. Developing country governments can work to improve essential infrastructure and maximize trade opportunities with

neighbours; developed nations can support fair trade and rationalize sell-by dates and other labelling systems; businesses can revise their criteria for rejecting produce; and consumers can minimize waste by buying only what they need and re-using left-over food.

On this World Environment Day, I urge all actors in the global food chain to take responsibility for environmentally sustainable and socially equitable food systems. The current global population of seven billion is expected to grow to nine billion by 2050. But the number of hungry people need not increase. By reducing food waste, we can save money and resources, minimize environmental impacts and, most importantly, move towards a world where everyone has enough to eat.



Photo: UNDP

Villagers buy vegetables in an open market in Choam Ksan village, Preah Vihear province.

Human Development Report 2013

On 29 May, UNDP Cambodia organized a mini-launch of Human Development Report 2013: The Rise of the South. It was attended by 25 representatives of development partners, who were presented with the report's findings and analysis on Cambodia. According to the report – which was formally launched in Mexico in mid-March – Cambodia's performance in terms of human development between 1995 and 2012 was favorable. The country is ranked at 138 out of 187 countries and territories. Its Human Development Index (HDI) value for 2012 is 0.543 (a rise from 0.411 in 1995), putting it in the medium human development category. Overall, Cambodia's

HDI for the period between 1995 and 2012 experienced fast growth in the three HDI dimensions of educational attainment, health and income. However, to unmask inequality in the distribution of human development across the population of a given country the report uses the inequality adjusted HDI (IHDI). As a result, Cambodia's 0.543 HDI value for 2012 discounted for inequality falls to 0.402, with an average loss of 25.9 percent due to inequality in the distribution of the dimension indices: education, health and income which is regarded among the highest losses due to inequality the 2012 HDI in East Asia and the Pacific region.

For more information please go to www.un.org.kh/undp/knowledge/publications/human-development-report-2013-analysis-on-cambodia



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