

Summary Report on Internal Evaluation Study of the Project "Improving Livelihood of Small Farmers in Kampong Tralach and Samaki Meanchey District, Kampong Chhnang Province (ILFARM-KTL&SMC)"

CEDAC, December 2009

By: Sok Thea

The internal evaluation study was conducted early December 2009, with the main objectives as follows:

- Assess the levels of adoption/adaptation of innovations developed by the project in cooperation with farmers, such as the System of Rice Intensification (SRI), Multi-Purpose Farms (MPF), chicken-raising, home garden improvements, and others;
- Assess the economic, social and environmental impact of the project, with a focus on quantitative and qualitative assessment of changes in living conditions of the target group, such as changes in production, income, nutrition, mutual help and cooperation, as well as sustainability of the farmers association, agriculture cooperative and pig insurance group;
- Make recommendations for future follow-up of the project; and
- Draw lessons learned from the project experiences.

Household interviews and focus group discussions were the key tools for collecting information from the field. Approximately 187 of 200 villagers were interviewed from 20 villages, 9 communes and 2 districts of Kampong Chhnang province. Ten focus group discussions in 10 villages were conducted with participation of 80 villagers. The Samchol approach was used to assess the quality of life of farmers as compared with before the project. Key indicators of the Samchol approach include health, friendship and cooperation, knowledge and money. To understand more about the perceptions of stakeholders during the project interventions, meetings were held with four representatives of commune councils. Key findings of the evaluation study are shown in the table below:

Key indicators	Change (%)
<i>Health</i>	
Farmers consume more organic vegetables	48%
Farmers smoke fewer cigarettes or are more aware about the importance of not smoking	25%
Farmers improved their sanitation	60%
Farmers visit doctors less often or purchase medicines less frequently	35%
Farmers improved their positive thinking	49%
<i>Friendships and cooperation</i>	
Farmers have reduced domestic violence	65%
Women in target areas improved their image and situation in society	52%
Farmers improved relations within their family	45%
Farmers improved relationships among members in the group, community or association	60%
Farmers improved relationships between families in the group and non-member families	50%
Farmers improved relationships between better-off families and poor/poorest families	36%

Pig insurance groups are established		22
Number of saving groups	0 (year 2006)	199 (year 2009)
Total members in saving groups	0 (year 2006)	3,261 (year 2009)
Farmers improved relationships between farmers and local authorities		60%
Farmers improved relationships between themselves and partners outside the village conducting development activities		25%
Knowledge		
Farmers apply SRI techniques		69%
Number of SRI practitioners	0 (year 2006)	3,307 (year 2009)
Average land under the SRI cultivation (hectares)	0 (year 2006)	0.3 (year 2009)
Farmers grow more vegetables		35%
Farmers apply fish-raising techniques		3%
Farmers produce natural fertilizers		96%
Farmers grow other crops on rice fields		8%
Farmers have marketing knowledge		41%
Farmers have savings knowledge		60%
Farmers improved their public speaking skills		39%
Farmers improved their reading skills		20%
Farmers improved their ability to think long-term		38%
Money		
	2006	2009
Annual rice yields (kg/ha/household)	1,360	1,711
Rice seed use (kg/ha/hh)	138	44
Annual income from on-farming activities (riel/year/hh)	895,200	2,240,000
Additional purchase rice for home consumption (kg/year/hh)	399	379
Reduction of expenditure on chemical fertilizers (kg/ha/hh)	82	52
Farmers borrow money from saving groups (%)	2	51
Total capital held by 119 saving groups (riel)	0	400,874,200

Based on the results of the evaluation study, conducted through group discussions and using the Samchol indicators, about **35%** of villagers in the targeted villages supported by the project improved their quality of life, as summarized below:

- At present, villagers pay much more attention to their health because they have learned about the advantages of consuming agricultural products such as vegetables and rice that are produced organically, and the disadvantages of purchasing non-organic agricultural products from the market. After the project's interventions, the villagers increased their cultivation of vegetables without chemical fertilizers for mostly home consumption instead of purchasing them from the market. They increased significantly their consumption of boiled water to protect their health. In addition, they dramatically improved the environment surrounding their homes by collecting wastes and manures to produce natural fertilizers for rice cultivation and growing vegetables. Most villagers reduced their use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides once they understood the effects on the health of consumers and users and rice fields and how it can be a waste of money;
- Several villagers changed from using conventional farming methods to techniques introduced by the project such as the System of Rice Intensification (SRI), ecological chicken-raising, pig-raising and home gardening. As a result, incomes of villagers increased compared with before the project. Besides increasing rice yields, SRI practices

reduced the amount of rice seeds farmers used. The trend of changing from traditional rice cultivation to SRI techniques will be increased in the future. In addition, villagers improved the soil in their rice fields by producing natural fertilizers to apply in the fields and growing other crops on the rice fields;

- Saving money through village saving groups is becoming very interesting for villagers as it provides a lot of benefits for them. Benefits include easy-to-borrow capital for the family when they need money, profits for the group through low interest rates, reduced cash flow outside the village and reduced borrowing from outsiders. In addition, the saving groups promote more long-term thinking and planning among farmers. For these reasons, villagers really appreciate and attach a high value to saving groups; most of their income was kept in the saving groups and they borrow when they need money;
- Villagers observed increased cooperation within and among families, between villages, and especially between villagers and local authorities. Increased cooperation is resulting in more sharing and exchange of knowledge and experiences. These activities will be increased steadily.

Based on the results, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Agricultural techniques, especially on-farm activities such as SRI, ecological chicken-raising, pig-raising and vegetable-growing help improve farmers' annual incomes. There should be follow up through frequently organized inter-districts workshops where representatives of farmer associations share and exchange their knowledge and experiences;
- Strong associations or saving groups should be encouraged to participate in district saving associations to increase the groups' total capital so members can borrow at low interest rates and reduce borrowing from outsiders such as private money lenders and credit institutions. Moreover, committee members of district saving associations should receive more training about the advantages of associations, their processes and how to manage them; and
- Committee members of pig insurance groups should meet regularly to share information about progress, problems and solutions of the groups. In addition, the capacity building of committee members on pig-raising techniques should be enhanced so that they can help members improve raising activities and the poor can receive pigs to raise again immediately after the loss of a pig. The concept of pig insurance groups should be disseminated more broadly to representatives of farmer associations, not only among the poorest farmers which project implemented before.