

## Top tet's Story: Adapting Climate Resilient Farming for a Better Future

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**Top tet** is a sprightly, 51 year old woman who lives in Kompong Chhnang Province's Spean Dek village. She and her family work tirelessly for their livelihoods, which primarily consists of farming rice and vegetable plots, and raising livestock.

Before CEDAC's project, Top tet didn't know what climate change is. Thanks to the project, titled "Promoting Climate Resilient Livelihoods for Small-scale Farmers in Samaky Meanchey District of Kompong Chhnang Province," she is now more aware of the effects of climate change and how to adapt to them. This project is funded by Forum Syd through the Joint Climate Change Initiative (JCCI). The project goal was to contribute to the eradication of extreme poverty and hunger among small-scale farmer families in dry land areas, by enhancing their resilience against climate change, drought, and soil degradation.

Thanks to CEDAC, she now implements agricultural innovation techniques gained through the project's trainings. For example, she farms a System of Rice Intensification (SRI) plot without any agro-chemicals at all, and applies some SRI techniques to another paddy field, using fewer pesticides and chemical fertilizers to avoid soil degradation. Top tet also implemented circle gardens (a type of gardening technique to optimize soil moisture retention) during the dry season.

Top tet also serves her community as a role model for the implementation of climate change resilient farming techniques. Her farm is a demonstration farm for other villagers to come and see, in the hopes that they will model their own farming practices after hers. Top tet remarked that these agricultural innovations have helped her economically. Her rice fields have produced greater yields than before, when she didn't use SRI techniques. As a result, not only has her family made a profit from their rice yields but they have also saved money by not needing to buy as many rice seeds for the next planting season.

Before CEDAC's intervention in Spean Dek village, Top tet struggled to get enough food for consumption for her family. After using SRI techniques though, she is now able to consistently feed her family as well as sell about 24 kilograms of rice per year.

Top tet said that the quality of her family's life has improved too. She is now able to pay for all of her children to get basic schooling and even for some to receive higher education at a university in the capital, Phnom Penh. A further improvement in her family's life is that their overall health has improved. In the past they had more frequent health problems (such as diarrhea), but now feel healthier and have fewer expenses on medical services, thanks in part to a more organic diet.

This project comes at a crucial moment in time as climate change has been adversely affecting Cambodia's weather. Farmers complained of rising temperatures, which cause smaller water reservoirs to get too warm for fish, many of which die as a result. In addition, drought-like conditions have lasted longer during the dry season, and the rainy season is shorter and more intense, resulting in floods. Such conditions make it very difficult for farmers to grow and harvest rice.

Although Top-tet continues to face adverse weather conditions, she feels more hopeful for the future. She and her family feel more equipped with the skills and knowledge necessary to adapting to and mitigating climate change effects. Moreover, local leaders (including Top tet) are continuing to disseminate this knowledge within their communities. This kind of information sharing is a great boon to the success of CEDAC's project.