

Fact Finding in Prey Veng Province

Written by: Yim Sok Sophors

From 11-13 May 2008, 4 CEDAC staff, including Yi Kimthan, Yim Sok Sophors, Meas Somica, and Chhin Chhunhoir, conducted a fact-finding study in 3 districts of Prey Veng province, including Baphnom, Kampong Trabek, and Prah Sdach districts, *to gain a better understanding of agricultural practices, food security and CEDAC's impact in the area.*

The study was conducted in 3 villages in 3 communes of 3 districts in Prey Veng province. Three focus group discussion meetings were organized in total. On average, **15-20** key informants participated in each meeting. The management committee members of village-based farmer associations (VFA), representatives of collective savings groups and the village chief were invited to participate in the group discussion. According to the National Institute of Statistics, Ministry of Planning (September 2008), Prey Veng's total population is 947,357 persons or 7.0% of Cambodia's total population of 13,388,910. Within Prey Veng 825,818 (80.5%) persons are farmers; 140,685 (13.7%) are fishermen; 44,561 (4.4%) are traders; and 14,267 (1.4%) are government officers. The average density is 194.0 people per km².

1. Basic Data on the Villages Studied

1.1. Number of families per village

There are on average 185 families per village, and almost 10% or 18 families are headed by women. Based on information collected during the group discussions, 13 out of 185 families, or approximately 7%, are considered young families as the head of the family is less than 30 years old.

Table 1: Number and description of families by each district studied

| Description | Baphnom | | | Kompong Trabek | | | Prah Sdach | | |
|--|---------|-----|-----|----------------|-----|-----|------------|-----|-----|
| | Max | Min | Avg | Max | Min | Avg | Max | Min | Avg |
| Number of families per village | 218 | 70 | 133 | 365 | 156 | 280 | 238 | 69 | 144 |
| Number of women-headed families per village | 27 | 4 | 10 | 48 | 9 | 30 | 38 | 6 | 15 |
| Number of families where the family head is under 30 years of age (family/village) | 25 | 5 | 11 | 30 | 3 | 16 | 32 | 5 | 13 |

1.2. Size of cultivated rice field

Also in the villages are landless families. These are families who have no rice field. Out of 185 families, generally 14 or 7.6% are landless. However, CEDAC found different numbers of landless families in each district. Particularly, in Prah Sdach district, 11% of all families in the village are landless; in Baphnom on the other hand only 5% were landless and in Kompong Trabek district only 6.5%. As regards rice field size, 22% of families have a rice field smaller than 0.5 hectare (ha) and 43% have a rice field between 0.5 ha and 1 ha. Therefore, 65% of villagers have rice fields smaller than 1 ha and the majority of them have fields between 0.5 and 1 ha.

Table 2: Size of cultivated rice field

| Description | Baphnom | Kompong Trabek | Prah Sdach |
|-------------|---------|----------------|------------|
|-------------|---------|----------------|------------|

| | Max | Min | Avg | Max | Min | Avg | Max | Min | Avg |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Number of total families per village | 218 | 70 | 133 | 365 | 156 | 280 | 238 | 69 | 144 |
| Number of landless families | 11 | 2 | 7 | 36 | 6 | 18 | 35 | 5 | 16 |
| Number of families with rice field smaller than 0.5 ha (family/village) | 40 | 7 | 19 | 84 | 28 | 60 | 105 | 12 | 42 |
| Number of families with rice field 0.5 ha to 1 ha (family/village) | 70 | 20 | 48 | 293 | 78 | 144 | 90 | 30 | 49 |

1.3. Food security in the villages studied

Based on the analytical data from the group discussion meetings, **9%** of all families in the village buy additional rice for family consumption during the year (12 month/year). Normally, the landless families are most affected by food insecurity as they have no land for rice cultivation. Almost one quarter (**21%**) of families have just enough rice for household consumption, and only **10%** of families have enough rice for their own consumption and surplus for selling. However, the quantity of paddy sold is small: on average 1 ton¹ per family per year. Another quarter of families (**26%**) lack enough rice to eat 3-6 months out of the year and there are another **22%** of families lacking adequate rice for family consumption 6-12 months in the year. In total, **48%** of all families in the villages studied confronted food insufficiency.

Table 3: Situation of food security in the studied villages

| Description | Baphnom | | | Kompong Trabek | | | Prah Sdach | | |
|--|---------|-----|-----|----------------|-----|-----|------------|-----|-----|
| | Max | Min | Avg | Max | Min | Avg | Max | Min | Avg |
| Number of total families in the village | 218 | 70 | 133 | 365 | 156 | 280 | 238 | 69 | 144 |
| Number of families who buy rice for household consumption throughout the year (family/village) | 11 | 2 | 5 | 57 | 11 | 28 | 45 | 5 | 18 |
| Number of families lacking rice for consumption 6 to 12 months/year (family/village) | 45 | 10 | 26 | 85 | 15 | 51 | 105 | 15 | 47 |
| Number of families lacking rice for family consumption 3 to 6 months per year (family/village) | 30 | 10 | 15 | 150 | 19 | 87 | 123 | 9 | 43 |
| Number of families having enough rice for family consumption the whole year (family/village) | 90 | 30 | 51 | N/A | N/A | N/A | 45 | 9 | 27 |
| Number of families having enough rice for | 25 | 8 | 15 | 100 | 9 | 27 | 35 | 3 | 16 |

¹ Refer to the study on practices of rice production in Thnoug village by CEDAC in March 2008.

| | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|
| family consumption and to sell (family/village) | | | | | | | | | |
|---|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|--|

2. Significant changes in the villages after CEDAC's intervention

Based on the group discussions with the key informants, CEDAC's intervention has led to the following positive impact:

- Rice production has increased so that the majority of farming families in the villages are able to fulfill their family's consumption needs throughout the year. Indeed, some families not only produce enough rice now for household consumption, but also have rice to sell. In the village in Chheu Kach commune, 50-60% of all families produce adequate rice for their consumption. Based on the study by CEDAC in March 2009, the average rice yield of wet season rice production is 1.9 ton/hectare. The rice yield before CEDAC's intervention was only 1.1 ton/hectare. In addition to progress in rice production, vegetable production has also improved compared to the situation before CEDAC's interventions.
- Farmers have reduced the amount of chemical fertilizer and increased natural compost making. The number of multi-purpose trees planted by the community farmers is also increasing, especially fruit trees such as mango, lemon, and others. In term of integrated farming practices, we see marked differences among the farmers who have developed the System of Intensification and Diversification (SID).
- The results of poultry raising and pig raising are better than before CEDAC's intervention, especially where farmers have changed to confining pigs properly to prevent them from roaming freely. Moreover, fish raising and natural fish trapping is also improved.
- Human capacity building for agriculture and community development significantly improved. Among the 3 districts studied, the most improvement was found in Prah Sdach district. Farmers have improved their knowledge and changed their attitude, using time more productively for farming and other business activities helpful to boosting their families' livelihoods.
- The role of women in decision-making process and other social development activities has also been enhanced.
- In the period of CEDAC's intervention, farmer organizations were formed, such as collective savings groups, farmer producer groups and VFAs. These groups are dealing with community development issues and partnering with local authorities to provide community development services. The farmer producer group members are able to get a better price for their products as they have gained negotiation skills in interacting with middlemen.

3. Problems and Constraints of the Districts Studied

The following are some of the problems and issues raised by key informants during group discussions:

- While the majority of families in each village have improved their livelihoods and knowledge about ecological agriculture techniques, there are still families whose situation has not improved significantly. Nutrition intake in the dry season is still a problem to be taken into account.

- In particular, the poorest families in Chheu Kach commune of Baphnom district are not showing much progress in vegetable growing or livelihood improvement. This suggests that understanding is limited among this group and that attitudes have not changed much.
- It was noted that due to poverty some pregnant women² do not go to the state hospital to give birth. It is less expensive to pay a traditional midwife than to go to the state hospital.
- Catching fish illegally by using electric shock is still a problem in the villages. Mortality rate of chicken and pig is still high and access to good quality agricultural inputs (piglets, chicks, fingerling, etc.) is still limited access.
- Some families, especially the poorest ones, still face food insecurity. Thus, most of the poorest families are migrating to work outside the village and they are highly dependent on the off-farm activities. It would seem that they don't have skills to develop a job opportunity within the villages.
- The poorest and most vulnerable families tend not to participate actively in capacity building and other social development activities provided by Non Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and other development agencies, so they can be considered as disadvantaged groups.
- Some VFAs³ that were previously formed and supported by CEDAC are still limited in terms of practical leadership and management, and thus not yet self-sufficient.
- The majority of the collective saving groups⁴ are not yet well established and the capacity of management committee members is limited. The farmers need larger amounts of money for investment, so the savings groups have insufficient money for lending to meet members' demands.

4. Opportunities

Based on the results of the fact-finding study, the study team has identified opportunities for consideration in implementing the next proposed project:

- There are existing VFAs in the districts studied that can be the partners with CEDAC to implement the next development project. While the majority of the VFAs are not yet very strong, each VFA has some human resources with experience in working to support the poorest families.
- There are some good farmers who can be model farmers for other villagers to follow and who will be good catalysts to attract and encourage more farmers to apply agricultural innovations.

² Based on the final evaluation report of IFARM-PV, 53 women groups were formed by the project with 565 members, averagely 12 members per group

³ Referring to the final evaluation report of ILFARM-PV, 160 village-based farmer associations were formed by the project with 2,851 members (1,245 women members), averagely 18 members per association. 21 clusters of VFAs at the commune level were set up.

⁴ 310 collective saving groups with 4,294 members (2,348 women members) were formed by ILFARM-PV

- CEDAC is well known by the local authorities and stakeholders in the districts studied so it is easier to strengthen cooperation with those local authorities and other stakeholders.
- There still remains the group of poorest families and other vulnerable families (women-headed families, young families, some seasonal migrant workers, etc.) that should receive agricultural technical assistance to develop skills that can generate further income to support the family's basic needs and improve their living conditions.

5. Conclusion

Generally, CEDAC's projects have contributed to improved living conditions of the targeted communities. Both agricultural production and social interaction among the villagers and other relevant stakeholders have improved.

- The number of poorest families in the villages studied warrant further action by CEDAC; in each village they could be formed into farmer groups so that it will be easier to provide training support.
- In the case of Kompong Trabek district, and especially in Kor Khchork commune, the VFAs still lack self-management capacity as the knowledge and capacity of the VFA leaders are still weak. Additionally, the study team found that there are some VFAs that have dissolved due to poor management and lack of leadership skills.
- The poorest families can be considered as disadvantaged because they have not benefitted from the intervention of previous development projects. It seems that the poorest families and other vulnerable families were not prioritized to be the projects' beneficiaries of the development agencies.
- There are still some families who are facing food insecurity, especially the poorest families and other vulnerable families. Most of them are landless or they have only a small piece of land and have no other skills to generate income.
- There are many young families where the family head is under 30 years old and has no good job opportunities or knowledge and skills to generate income. Therefore, it is good if the project works to support this kind of family. However, the project needs to select families who really want to cooperate with the project without migrating to work outside the village.

6. Recommendations

Based on discussions with the key informants, the following ideas emerged:

- For future interventions, CEDAC should firstly consider the potential of the poorest farmers to apply agricultural innovations. Additionally, CEDAC should consider strengthening its capacity building for the poorest families where the family head is less than 30 years old to become farmer experts or young agri-entrepreneurs.
- The System of Rice Intensification (SRI) should be introduced where the geographic location is appropriate so that more farmers adopt SRI.

- CEDAC should organize workshops at the district level as well as the communal level in order to select the potential villages. Potential villages should be selected to ensure efficiency and effectiveness in implementation.
- It is important to provide capacity building to existing farmer promoters and to strengthen the farmer promoter associations to play an active role as local development service providers in the communities. Existing potential farmer promoters should be selected and trained.
- More capacity building should be provided to existing VFAs, especially to expand their membership.
- CEDAC should consider setting up community-based rice mills to ensure a good stock of paddy and rice and enhance food security in the communities.
- In summary, CEDAC should take into account the following:
 - ☞ *Strengthening the capacity of existing VFAs to be effective in supporting the most vulnerable families and young farmer couples improve their incomes and household food security through capacity building in agriculture and micro/small business development and management.*
 - ☞ *Increasing food availability and income of vulnerable families by setting up community-based rice mills and rice stores.*
 - ☞ *Improving nutrition intake especially among the poorest families by raising awareness about access to clean drinking water by drinking boiled water, using ceramic water purifiers and training young mothers how to cook meals with a greater variety of nutrients.*
 - ☞ *Increasing local authorities' and stakeholders' knowledge and actions in promoting participatory and effective social development for food security in their villages and communes.*
 - ☞