

'Sok Sabay, Ch'nam Tmey' "Happy New Year"

Last month, Cambodians celebrated Khmer New Year, an important national holiday celebrated over three days. During New Year, Cambodians often spend time with their loved ones, visit temples to receive a blessing and offer food or gifts to their elders. New Year in Cambodia also marks the end of the harvesting season when farmers usually enjoy the fruits of their harvest before the rainy season begins again in May. However, for many farmers in Cambodia, producing enough food to feed their families remains a major challenge.

Meet Kahop



Kahop with her son
Photo: CAFOD

Kahop is a mother of two young children. She runs her own business selling vegetables and snacks and also grows rice on a small plot of land to feed her family and earn some extra income. For Kahop and her husband Lot La, their biggest challenge is making enough money to support their family.

Kahop grows rice on land that her mother gave her and the rice that she produces usually feeds her family for about 6 months of the year.

connect2: Cambodia

Kahop's plot of land is about 10 km away from where she lives and she sometimes has to travel there by boat when the surrounding areas are flooded. Flooding and droughts are common in Cambodia which makes it especially difficult for farmers to grow and harvest crops.

Kahop explains, *"There was a time when it rained so hard that my land flooded and I couldn't collect my rice until early April which is very late for us"*.



CAFOD's partner Srer Khmer is supporting families by helping farmers to understand a complex range of agricultural issues and train them on new knowledge, skills and confidence that will reduce their vulnerability. This is done by supporting communities to adapt to climate change and helping them to develop sustainable ways to make an income.

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Farmer Life School

In Lvear village in Pouk district, Srer Khmer have set up a Famer Life School to support rural communities to increase their knowledge and confidence to solve some of the challenges they face in supporting their families.

As part of the training, participants develop their individual household plans for earning money which may include chicken raising, setting up home gardens, producing rice, organic compost making, accessing markets and forming a savings or self-help group.

Building people's confidence in the community is key and community members are already sharing their new agricultural knowledge with other members of their villages by teaching others how to use land for home gardens and how to raise chickens.



After farmers in Kork Sramor village discussed how to help the most disadvantaged families in their village, they mobilised themselves to help build a chicken pen for a widow who is ill and not able to make an income to support her children.

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Kahop drying rice

Kahop is very pleased with Srer Khmer' support, "We wish to improve what our family can produce and we want to do this by chicken raising and growing vegetables. Srer Khmer will help with this by giving us the skills and tools required to succeed"

Kahop's father is also very positive about the future, he explains "Srer Khmer provides education so that we can produce more effectively. Currently in the community, we don't know how to solve the problems associated with chicken raising and different agricultural methods. Recently the chickens caught a fever in the community and they all died, when Srer Khmer teach us how to treat this it will no longer be a problem. The conditions are there for chicken raising, they are good, but we just don't know how to keep them healthy all the time. We need life skills in agriculture".

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Farmers help each other grow vegetables by taking turns in offering their labour. They plan to eliminate the causes of poverty by strengthening solidarity among their villagers and increasing their vegetable produce.

The Farmer Like School is helping farmers develop their family action plans to make a better living. One farmer's action plan is focusing on reducing the amount of times his children become sick by providing them with more nutritious food, improving their food hygiene and household sanitation so that the family spend less time on health treatment and have more time to work.

“With CAFOD’s support, the poorest rural villagers in seven villages have been able to develop a deeper understanding of poverty issues relating to their families and have improved their knowledge and life skills to help them make better decisions and take control of their lives”

Sorphoarn Sok, CAFOD Programme Officer, Cambodia.