DEVELOPMENT AND PARTNERSHIP IN ACTION

Issue No. 4
September 2008

By Mr. Yin Aun

The fish population in the Prey Pdao dam, Kampot province was reported to have increased. On June 15th 2007 Chumkiri District Hall and the provincial Agriculture-Fisheries Office organised a public forum which was followed by the release of 50,000 fingerlings into the dam. – thanks to Development and Partnership in Action for their support.

The Prey Pdao dam is a big dam located in Prey Veng village, Sre Knong commune, Chum Kiri district, Kampot province. The use of electricity and other illegal fishing equipment in the late 1980s and early 1990s had made the fish population in the dam dramatically decrease.

“It was hard to find even small fish from the dam several years ago,” said Kay Thou, 27, a Prey Veng villager.

“The forum and the fingerling release event organised by the DPA had made the local authorities, the police, and the people understand their roles and responsibilities in protecting the dam and fishery resources in the dam. They are now very cooperative with one another to crack down on illegal fishing,” added Thou.

Husband Kay Thou and his wife, Nhem Tong, live near the Prey Pdao dam feel indebted to DPA’s public forum and the fingerling release. This year "I took up fishing in addition to farming. Now, we have fish to eat. We don’t have to buy. And we even can sell the fish for some additional income,” said Thou on the veranda of his small hut. —More on page 4

Contribution to Decentralization and Local Governance Reform

By Ms. Khan Sopheany

As a part of its contribution to the decentralisation and local governance reforms in Cambodia DPA organized an education workshop from 20 to 21 May 2008 to raise community awareness about their rights as citizens. Especially about raising issues for discussion and participating in making decisions of importance affecting the development of their locality.

Twenty-eight people, 10 of which were women, from 18 different villages in Chumkiri district, Kampot province attended the workshop and expressed their interest in what they had just learned.

“I have never been part of any training on decentralisation and local governance before. I only used to hear about it, but today I have understood it more. Participation in planning, budgeting and being responsive to the needs of the people within the community with transparency and accountability are very important,” said 53-year-old Hun Hok, Tmei village chief, Chumpouvoan Commune.

—More on page 4
In 2001 the “Women Advanced” money-saving group, called Self-Help Group “SHG”, formed in Thma village, Chres commune, Chum Kiri district of Kampot province. This group has helped improve the general earning conditions of the villagers, making them much less dependent on local money lenders and other private credit institution with high interest rate.

With 18 families as members, the SHG has now increased their saving up to 8.908.000 riel. On the third day of the month, each member contributes 2.000 riel to be saved. Their current base money is 2 million riel. When in need, each member can borrow 50.000 to 800.000 riel from the group for their business and pay back later with 3% interest.

Ouk Seng, Head of the Village Development Committee (VDC), and Pov Seng, deputy village chief and a member of the SHG, said that the group has so far proved to be a successful one in the village.

“This year, all the SHG members completely stopped borrowing money from private money lenders and other loan institutions and turned to the group only for money they needed,” said Seng adding that recently there were ten households that had borrowed the money to start a traditional basket-weaving business.

The Khan family, husband Khan Sarith aged 39, wife Teng Sareun aged 40 and their five daughters, are one among the ten families. The family can weave 10 to 15 baskets a month and earn an additional income of 120,000 to 165,000 Riel.

“We initially started the business in 1994, but we didn’t have enough money and it was not easy to borrow money from our relatives to buy bamboo and vines. Now being part of the SHG we can finally profit from our weaving skills,” said Sareun still busy weaving bamboo baskets.

Sareun and Sarith were married in 1988 when there was still fighting between the Khmer Rouge soldiers and the government’s soldiers. The family depended almost solely on wet rice farming and could hardly make a living. They knew how to weave the baskets but could never have started the business without the existence of the SHG.

“Our family’s livelihood is getting much better. We have a cow and a pig of our own. We have also sent our two youngest daughters to school as a result,” said Sareun with a grin.

The SHG not only helped to improve the livelihood of its members’ households in the village but it also contributes money for the common good such as road construction and care for the elderly and the very poor in the village.
Development and Partnership in Action (DPA) in late May conducted a one-week workshop in Kampong Chhnang province to build up the capacity of newly-established community-based organizations (CBO) on writing format and the writing process for a proper proposal.

“The quality of the proposals from these CBO’s is generally limited,” said Kuy Sophal, the workshop facilitator and DPA’s Partnership Program Officer, adding that this was the reason why they could not find other funding sources besides DPA.

The proposal-writing workshop is an important workshop organised by DPA to enhance CBOs’ proposal writing quality, in particular for proposal preparation to be submitted to DPA in early October 2008.

“At the end of the workshop, the CBOs will acquire a practical basis for proposal writing because the workshop covers preparation of the proposal’s front page through to completing the written proposal. We then monitor and further improve their capacity through our monitoring visit so as to ensure they produce quality proposals for submission,” said Partnership Program Assistant and another workshop facilitator, Sreng Phirum.

All the participants expressed their enthusiasm and interest in the workshop, though admitted that it was not an easy course for them to study either. Some, like Mao Soy, 62, deputy director of Leukstuy Chivapheap Kasekor (LCK) from Kandal province, had tried his best to understand the course and was determined to share the knowledge to the other members of his organisation.

“I feel very absorbed by the teaching. LCK is still young institutionally and there’re a lot of things that we have to learn. I will use the knowledge I gained from this workshop to improve the situation of my organisation and to share the knowledge to them as well, so all together we can better improve our community,” said Mao, grinning.

All participants in the workshop recognized that without proper writing skills, they would not be able to find funding sources and so would not be able to have their development projects implemented. Seung Sok Nov, 37, a member of Family Economic Development Association (FEDA) in Svay Rieng province indicated that her CBO used to send the proposals to other organisations such as UNDP and CEDAC, but failed.

“The workshop will help our CBOs to write the proposal properly. They will be able to expand the scope of their funding sources in the next round,” said Sophal positively.
To date there are about 35 households who fish in the dam. This additional job has improved the livelihood of the poor families in the village as they can catch five to six kilograms of fish a day and earn an additional income of 2,000 to 3,000 Riel per 1 Kg. The hard fishing days are now history for them.

When Thou and Tong got married they only inherited a 70-acre rice field from their widowed mothers. They could only do wet rice in rainy season and planted some vegetables in the dry season.

“At that time we could not even produce enough rice to live,” said Tong with the child playing on her lap. She added that Thou used to ride his old rusty bicycle around to buy and sell chickens.

“But those days are gone. Now, we have the money to buy food, care for our children’s health, and buy some materials to construct our new home,” said Thou, looking at the roof and the walls of his old small hut, which were made of old palm leaves.

Fifty-one-year-old Pin Saran, a farmer and a member of a self help group in Trapaing Prey village, Sre Samroang commune said, “I am so happy that I could participate in this workshop because it makes me know my roles and rights as a citizen, and also the roles and responsibility of the commune councils to respond to the need of the people.”

“The implementation of the decentralisation and good local governance formula gives people the opportunity to participate and make decision of relevant that impact upon their livelihood,” Saran added.

This workshop is not DPA’s last effort at contributing to the decentralisation reforms in Cambodia. “There will be more local visits that the DPA team will organise in order to have discussions to estimate the knowledge of the local people concerning the decentralisation reforms, and the change they have made in participating in the planning and monitoring of the development process in their community,” Said Chrea Sandan, a DPA Gender and Development officer and the facilitator of the workshop.