



CASE STUDY

CAMBODIA

2020

WORKING
WITH



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VEGETABLES AND WOMEN GROW TOGETHER WITH THE HELP OF A NEW SOLAR-POWERED WATER PUMPING SYSTEM



Villagers in Punchea Village in Ou Krieng Commune, Sambo District, Kratie Province—90 percent of whom are Phnong indigenous people—live where the water of life flows, 500 to 1,000 m away from the bank of the Mekong River. But none of them were able to grow vegetable, because they didn't have enough water at home.

But in December 2018, with the help of a new water pumping system, young girls and women in the village no longer needed to carry heavy buckets of water from the river to their houses. Women who once barely managed to collect enough water for daily cooking could now grow vegetables and sell them. For the first time, they even spared some pocket money to give their children for when they go to school. Not only do these water pumps reduce the women's health risks, but they also provide better economic freedom.

The water pumping system was fully installed and in operation with the help of the Healthy Place Healthy People (HPPH) program and WaterAid Cambodia, and a management committee was also formed. Solar-powered, the system pumps water from the river and stores it in two 5,000-liter water tanks, which are later carried to households around the village via smaller water pipes connected to water meters to measure their monthly water usage.

The management committee was in charge of operating the system, doing the finance, connecting pipes to the villagers' houses, maintaining the pipes and providing 24-hour service calls for any reports of broken pipes. In seven months (January to July 2019), the committee earned 1,650,000 Khmer riel (US\$412.5) from installing water meter service and selling the water to the villagers—paid to the committee's joint bank account for transparent records—20 percent of which supported community members in patrolling the Mekong River to combat illegal fishing, another 20 percent for system improvement funds, 10 percent for the management committee, and the remaining money saved as reserved funds for future uses.

Mrs. La Chhea, a 56 year-old committee member who helped install the water meter and pipes, regularly goes around the village with three other members to inspect and fix broken pipes in order to prevent water loss and guarantee water access to all villagers.





“We regularly monitor the water tanks, the solar panels and the pipes connected to houses in the village, so when any pipe is broken, we can fix it for the villagers on time. When there’s a broken pipe, we’ll close off the water from the big tanks and fix the broken pipe immediately so that other households can resume access to the water as quickly as possible. Sometimes, our cows or buffaloes steps on the pipe and break it, and our villagers would call us immediately. Whether it’s day or night, we’d go right when they call to go fix the pipe”

Mrs La Chhea watering eggplants at her vegetable garden. © WWF-Cambodia / Sina

“In the future, I want to expand this solar-powered water pump system across to other villagers. Right now, it has only reached half my village. The other half still doesn’t have water from the system yet. The villagers really want to use the water-pumping service”

Mrs. Ploy Savy, a Punchea villager who once looked thin and ailing, saw a complete transformation in her life after the water pumping system was installed.

“I use the water from the water system to grow vegetables to eat at home so I don’t have to buy vegetables from the market, most of which are contaminated with chemicals. The vegetables that I grow by myself are safe to eat, unlike the vegetables bought from the market which can cause stomachaches,”

“I couldn’t carry heavy water buckets on my shoulder—it’s too difficult and exhausting for me. Before I didn’t grow vegetables because I couldn’t carry the water”,

But since the water system was installed, she now grows chillies, eggplants, green lilies and lettuce in the small garden in her backyard. By selling her vegetables, she could earn between 10,000 Khmer riel (US\$2.5) and 20,000 Khmer riel (US\$5) each day, enough to buy ingredients to cook her meal and also give her kids some pocket money.

“Back then, when my children would ask me for some money, I didn’t have any to give them, but now I do,” said Mrs. Savy. “I also have the money to buy rice, even when my paddy fields don’t have a good yield.”



Mrs Ploy Savy watering her vegetables at the garden behind her house. © WWF-Cambodia / Sina

Sixty-nine year-old Mr. Prak Lom also saw the same benefits of the water system, mainly using the water for irrigating his vegetable garden and reserved rain water for drinking. However, he is still slightly concerned about its fee.

“The water from the system is useful—it’s good for watering vegetables, cooking rice and food and other household uses, but I think the fee is a bit expensive for me. I think if it’s 500 riel (US\$0.125) cheaper, it would be good. One thousand five hundred riel (US\$0.375) would be suitable. I think it’s easy for everyone here, and everyone here is so happy to have the water system. The households who don’t have access now want some,”

The water management committee and other community committees usually held meetings with villagers to discuss community issues. In such meeting, villagers could raise any concerns to the committee who then would offer possible solutions. In the case of water fee, the water management committee only charged US\$ 0.125 per cubic meter of water for farmers who used the water largely for growing vegetables. The committee charged US\$ 0.50 for those who used the water for normal household consumption because they wanted to reserved enough money the system maintenance and replacement in case the current one malfunctioned or broke down.

This project is a joint initiative between the Healthy Place Healthy People programme (HPPH) and WaterAid Cambodia. Funded by the Swedish Postcode Lottery, it was launched in September 2017 and goes on until August 2020, with the aim of providing food security and building an income generation through improved irrigation for farming for local communities. The whole program has been spread to 10 villages across five Community Fishery (CFi) groups and five Community Forestry (CF) groups in Sambo district, Kratie province.



A Punchea villager working at her vegetable garden. © WWF-Cambodia / Sina



Mr Lom sitting at a small patch of his vegetable garden at his house. © WWF-Cambodia / Sina

WWF-Cambodia in Numbers

167,000+

number of followers on
WWF-Cambodia Facebook page

27,450km²

Total area of Mekong Flooded
Forest landscape (MFF)

62,863

total area of protected areas in
Sambo Wildlife Sanctuary and
Praek Prasab Wildlife Sanctuary in
the Mekong Flooded Forest landscape.

92

The Irrawaddy dolphin in the
Mekong Flooded Forest landscape
increased from 80 in 2015 to 92 in
2017, the first increase in 20 years
in the history of dolphin survey.



Why we are here

To stop the degradation of the planet's natural environment and to build a future in which humans live in harmony with nature.

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