



ABOUT THE PROJECT

This paper was produced by the Batch Seven students of the Department of Media and Communication (DMC) of the Royal University of Phnom Penh as part of their Multimedia Journalism class. The DMC is financially supported by the Konrad Adenauer Foundation.

Six groups of students went to six different provinces to capture disasters in each province and produce six multimedia news packages including mini-documentaries, feature stories and photo stories. This paper which includes feature stories and photo stories is a supplement to the mini-

documentaries which is featured on DVD.

The aim of this production is to examine the vulnerability of the communities, how disasters impact directly or indirectly on the communities as well as what have been done and what should be done to help those vulnerable communities.

This project was produced with the financial assistance from the European Commission. The views expressed herein are those of the producers; therefore, they in no way reflect the official opinion of the European Commission.

PORTRAYING DISASTER

DMC. 2011



Words from reporters:

This is our masterpiece again. We learnt a lot from Multimedia Journalism class during our final year in the DMC. This project was made possible by instruction and supervision of our lecturer Ung Bun Y. Thanks to the European Commission financial assistance through the ActionAid. We positively hope that this production will offer more knowledge and information to Cambodian people and policy makers. In addition, this project would put more emphasis on the role of media in Cambodia in distributing information. Finally, we would like to express our appreciation to the DMC and Konrad Adenauer Stiftung and every individual involved.

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AFTER THE RAIN FALLS



About 2 kilometers from Kampot town, Prei Tom village located in Prei Khmum commune is where a man was killed during the 2009 flood. The village indicator which is not far from the man's house became a memorial scene reminded villagers about the death and the whirlpool flood.

Ek Vannak and her son feed animal at home. Also she works as a collie at Samaki market and in rice fields. Life becomes more difficult after her husband died. They are discussing whether or not Sok Heng (her son) wants to go to the rice field with his mother this afternoon.



The mother and the son work from one to another field around this area to earn money. Once after school, he asks his mother to go to the field, otherwise he will be alone at home. Since now on, they had each other for daily life. The boy learns the way to survive without his father.

Kampot province is affected by flood almost every year. In 2009, this city was covered by flood caused by torrential rain flow from the mountains. According to Reuter, the flood caused two people died, almost 5,000 families were affected and hundred hectares of crops were destroyed.

Hem Prak Yath (as shown in the picture) worked as a collie at Samaki Market in Kampot town. He was assumed by rumor to die of drunk on the way back home. Ek Vannak, his wife, clarified that he was not a drunkard. He died because he couldn't swim and tried to flee from flood.

Working in the rice field, she earns 10,000 riels per day while working at the market she can earn similar amount of money. When Ek and her son leave home for the field, their relatives and neighbors come to their house to relax and look after it in the afternoon.



FIRST NO RAIN THEN NO RICE

BY NGO MENGHAK
ADDITIONAL REPORT BY
CHHENG SAMBO AND LY SOKHENG

PREY VENG - In the searing heat of the day Un Kon with her crying baby in her left hand and a sickle in another is on the way to her rice fields, about one kilometer from her home.

Kon, 42, lives in Prey Sangkum village, Chres commune, Prey Veng province. She has seven children. She and her husband are hopeless with rice farming now. Like her fellow villagers, Kon's family earns a living from farming, but this year, with lingering drought and lacking of irrigation system, she cannot get good yields from rice cultivation, putting her family face to face with food shortage.

Harvesting in the rice fields with her fellow villagers under the hot sun, Kon complains about the rice output she gets this year. She is worried that her family will not have rice to eat for following months.

"Because there is no rain this year, I can collect only 15 sacks of rice which are enough for a short period of time only," she says. "What I earn in the morning is just enough for the morning, and what I earn in the evening is just enough for the evening."

When talking to this point, she looks at her children and fondles them. She says that she is really worried about her children's future because she cannot send them to school.

"Some of my children are studying at primary school, but when they go to a higher level, I don't think I can afford it," She adds.

Because of not having enough money to buy nutritious food, Kon's children are very prone to sickness.

Wearing ragged clothes and sitting on wooden stairs, a 42-year-old man, Bith Phiang, is about to drop his tears when he is reminded of his 18 year-old daughter who died of typhoid last year.

"Nothing could ever come close to the feeling of losing my lovely daughter. I feel very painful for not being able to save my daughter's life," he adds. "If I had had money to pay for treatment, she would not have died."

Phiang has been concerned as he does not know what to do next after his little rice stock runs out.

"I feel so pitiful for my children when I see them have nothing to eat," he said. "So, I always try to catch fish to sell or

exchange with some stuff for a living."

Life of most people in Prey Sangkum village is not much different from Phiang's, many of them get little output from rice cultivation.

Sorn Chheoun, 50, Chres Commune deputy-in-chief, says that there are 19 villages or 3,613 families in his commune, but AndongTasren and Prey Sangkum villages, which have around 570 families, are badly affected by drought this year.

"These two villages have suffered from drought for two years and now villagers are facing with food shortage," he says.

He adds that the living condition of people in these two villages last year was even worse than this year. Some families could not even grow rice.

So far, there is no irrigation system in Chres Commune yet and Chheoun has already sent a request to the Ministry of Rural Development for the building of irrigation system in his commune, but Chheoun says that there is no response from MRD due to lack of funds.

Forced by and faced with starvation, many villagers migrate to work in the city and Thailand.

Ath Khea, 32, another Prey Sangkum villager, says that she has one hectare of farmland, but because of the drought this year, she can get only 20 sackful of rice which is just enough for two months.

"It is very difficult to live because I usually face with food shortage," she says. "My husband always goes to work as a construction worker in Phnom Penh when we run out of rice."

Nhik Sopon, Me Sang district deputy governor, says that there are more than 22,000 families in his district and 90 percents of them are farmers. He adds that drought this year has affected at least six among eight communes in Me Sang district.

This forces the villagers to seek refuge in Phnom Penh to avoid starvation. Sopon recognizes that some of them migrate to the city to be beggars.

Looking at a sack in the house, Taing Chea, 33, AngdongTasren villager, says that this year's drought has put her family in trouble because she can get only 10 sackful of rice which is enough to last only three months.

Chea mortgaged her rice field last year and decided to migrate to the city to avoid starvation.

"Last year, I went to the city and worked as a beggar," she says. "If I did not beg,

my children would have nothing to eat."

Besides suffering from drought, Chheoun says that, at least 10 villages in his commune have recently had problems with foot-and-mouth disease which has already killed 85 cattle.

Chheoun is concerned that foot-and-mouth disease will put another huge burden on people in his commune since all of them depend on cows and buffalos to do rice farming.

He says that he has urgently reported these cases to veterinary office and requested assistance to send its team to care for the sick cows and buffalos.

However, he explains that the local veterinary team cannot cure sick cattle on time since foot-and-mouth disease is highly contagious and can decimate animal populations at great speed. That's why a lot of cows and buffalos have died of this disease.

"Due to drought and foot-and-mouth disease, a lot of people in the two villages have migrated to seek for jobs in Phnom Penh and Thailand to avoid starvation," he says.

However, Chheoun says that migration may become another big issue for government to deal with because it causes a lot of social problems, especially migration to Thailand.

"Some of our citizens are arrested and beaten by Thai soldiers due to illegal migration," he says. "At least five or six migrants in my commune were killed by Thai soldiers last year."

He adds that some migrants, due to lack of HIV or AIDS awareness, have contracted HIV and transmitted it to their wives which causes a high rate of people living with HIV in his commune.

Having seen migration as a big issue, Chheoun has cooperated with some local organizations to provide his people with vocational training such as raising pigs, ducks, cows and hens, aiming to reduce migration. But he observes that there is little improvement since there are not many participants.

Nowadays, drought continues to happen in Chres commune. So, as a Chres commune deputy-in-chief, Chheoun would like to appeal to the upper national government level to seek for an urgent assistance such as building irrigation system and sending agricultural experts to provide vocational training to the people. By doing so, he hopes that it can help his commune avoid drought and starvation next year.



"We may face shortage of food soon this year because drought has damaged most of our rice," Un Kun said.



Un Kun's son, first from the left, has no chance to go to school because of the living condition; instead, he spends his time helping his parents harvesting rice.



Un Kun's family in Prey Sangkum Village, Me Sang District, Prey Veng province.



Un Kun's husband, Beth Pheang, worries about his living condition after the harvest season. He could harvest little of the rice output, but he hopes fishing would be another job to survive instead of leaving the family to work in Thailand.



Drought has stop the rice from developing. It also brings food shortage to Un Kun's family and other villagers while threatening the rice stock for next year's farming."

LESSONS LEARNT TOWARD FUTURE TRAGEDIES

BY NGOEUM PHALLY
ADDITIONAL REPORT BY
TITH CHANDARA AND CHEA NGING

Vulnerable family

KAMPOT - Prei Tom, located in Kampot's Prey Khmum commune, is a quiet village with picturesque rice fields and the mountains. But lying beneath the ground is the trail of a tragic flash flood in September 2009 during which most parts of the village were submerged and one person died. The flood came so sudden that local people had no time to prepare for it.

"I had prepared nothing because I didn't expect that there would be such a heavy flooding. I expected it to be just another usual yearly flood," says Chann Meth, 42, a farmer in Prey Tom village.

She says that she lost one brother and 100 kilograms of rice. Her children had to move and stay with neighbors until the flood receded. Also, she was facing with serious lack of food and clean water.

Kampot experiences flood every year; the two major disasters were in 1990s and 2009. In a report by Reuters, the 2009 flood drowned two people and affected 5,000 families while damaging 350 hectares of crops.

Yearly rising of water in Mekong River was not a main factor in recent flooding. Much of the water contributed to the floods was from heavy raining, according to a report by the Phnom Penh Post.

Chann Meth can still remember how helpless she was when her brother, Hem Prak Yat, died. She could only feel the grief over his death

Consequently, Chann and some villagers believes that the death was a direct result of limited awareness on pre-flood preparation and disaster management. Ignorance is the first issue and the lack of warning from the authority is another.

"There had been no training about flood preparation by NGOs or governmental officers before. And I didn't receive any information alerting about the flood. It only came two or three days after the heavy rain," says Chann Meth.

Attention to the weather forecast

The villagers had limited information about flood management. The weather forecast was the only available source, but it was not of their interest.

Chheun Sok Keo, a farmer in the same village explains that for the educated people, they find news interesting and worthy. To her, this kind of news such weather forecast is totally out of her interest because she cannot understand it, anyway. "I don't think I care about it," she says.

"I've never watched the weather forecast. I turn off the television or change to another channel immediately after I see this program," says Chheun.

She claims that with the electricity price of 2000 riel per kilowatt, she prefers watching movies or other entertainment programs rather than weather forecast. Besides, in weather forecast, she says, there is no any news about flood management.

Most of the information about flood, storm and weather changes reached her by words of mouth from one person to another. Similar to other villagers, she says that there was not any source of news about flood that could be an alert. "The village chief didn't even know about that, too," she says.

To Heng Phethra, a teacher at Chakrya Vong secondary school, who also lost hundreds kilograms of rice and jars of palm sugar, weather forecast is very important. He says it allows people to foresee the disaster and be able to prepare for future floods.

However, he addresses that the weather forecast is not a hundred percent correct and he needs more information from the authority and NGOs regarding the flood management. "I will be very pleased if there's such training," says Heng Phethra.

Regarding flood management, Pal Sarith, 60, Prei Tom village chief claims that during the flood, the village cooperated with the nearby pagoda by beating the pagoda's drum as a signal to the villagers about the arrival of flood. They also called the sub-village chiefs' mobile phones to spread the information to villagers.

As a result he says that a disabled couple in the village was successfully rescued in the 2009 flood. The village chief somehow admits that these actions were done when the village was already submerged by the flood.

He adds that not many of households who own television or radio set concentrate on the weather forecast as they believe that the news is not worthy for them.

School: Insert flood preparation into the course

Another way to increase the flood awareness and management is by including the lessons of disaster risk reduction for children at school. Since the province experiences flood every year, the lessons about flood protection play a crucial role for the attentiveness of children.

As an example, Sovy Visal, 9, whose relative was killed by the flood, says she knows clearly her responsibility before and during the flood.

"In the pre-flood period, I help my parents by reserving some grass for cows and move dishes to my grand parents' house where the ground is higher than my house," she says.

She continues that, "When my village is flooded, I know that I shouldn't go anywhere besides staying at home looking after and playing with my siblings in order not to make my parents worried about me."

Besides knowing her own tasks, Visal also tells her friends to do like her.

According to Sun Cheng, the director of Wat Prei Tom primary school, "there is no course about flood management. But, students gain the knowledge of flood awareness from teachers who tell them in class."

He adds, "As we know that children like playing with water which is very risky for them, this extra knowledge can be seen as an effective way since no student drowns during flood."

The victim family and Heng Phethra share the same answer that through the experiences of losing relatives and properties, they need to be ready before the flood next year; especially the food security and proper places for animals and properties.



Srey Mom and others participants are taking their exam with only 15 minutes to complete all the questions. After that, there is a practicing exam to decide their final scores.



This is the First Aid and Health Education Training Workshop on December 23-25, 2010 in Svay Rieng province. Totally, there are 30 participants from 15 villages in Svay Rieng province.



After finishing the workshop, Srey Mom receives a package of first aid medicines and equipments for helping her villagers whenever they need it.



After listening to the instructor, Srey Mom starts to practice on how to save victims in many different types of accidents or injuries. In this scenario, she is practicing how to save a victim with head injury.

FIRST THING, FIRST AID

COMMUNITY ARTS: PERFORMANCE FOR EDUCATION

BY KIANG SOKUN

ADDITIONAL REPORT BY BIN MOLYKA AND KIANG TONG NGY



Here it is called "Street Theater". The actors including teachers, farmers, and community members are performing a show called "Building and Rehabilitation of our Infrastructures". Besides providing fun, the show aims at educating people about disaster risk reduction and social issues.

BANTEAY MEANCHEY – In the breeze of dry season wind, Banteay Meanchey's Toul Pong Ror Community Art Group is rehearsing under the watchful eyes of Pol Pirun who is both a storyteller and a musician. Phirun says without hesitation that, "Actually I am a former Khmer Rouge artist. After the war, I thought my art career was going to end, but now I can continue it happily even it is part-time."

In Toul Pong Ror commune, there are two community art groups – the adult group with 10 members and the children group with 12 members. Most of the performance focuses on five main topics – Disaster Risk Reduction, Infrastructure Renovation, Community Solidarity, Land Mine Danger Awareness, Chemical Use, Drugs and Violence.

The community art band was established by ActionAid under its partner, Cambodia Human Resource Development (CHRD) since 2007 in

three provinces, Banteay Meanchey, Svay Rieng and Kratie province. The group was first provided a skill of shadow drama required night play. Since 2009, with continuous financial support from the European Commission, ActionAid had provided additional skills to the groups on puppet and street theater performance and enhance their knowledge on hazards and preparedness to enable them to send message to the community correctly and effectively.

Phirun started to join the group for more than a year. "As I remember, the group has performed for at least 30 times on various topics related to seasonal hazards in the community and school," said Phirun. "After each show, we get 75 US dollars from CHRD."

"Education for all, all for education"—this slogan appears on his stage at every show. Both fun and sad tones are used in the stories in order to attract the audiences. Furthermore, most of his stories reflect the society.

With smiling face, Choun Lyna, a

program assistance of CHRD based in Banteay Meanchey, explains that the implement of the project is in the form of community art performance. Local people are informed by authority before each show is played.

Under the hot afternoon sun, in front of O'Ampil Primary School, children and villagers are waiting for the show of the adult group.

While preparing equipments before the show, Mr. Chat Khoeun says he has spent his free time from farming to join in the community art group because he wants to educate people about disasters; not because of the mere fact that he could make extra money for his family.

The audience crowd is getting bigger as another group of kids is on the way to see the performance. Since the start of the show, laughter and cheerful applauds are turning a quiet Saturday school into a noisy yet entertaining and educational place.

The show ends and it is time to answer the questions for prizes. Young children raise their hands to answer after the announcement of the questions. Their correct answers demonstrate that art performance is an effective tool to send messages to its audiences.

With one hand carrying a bottle of water to drink and the other taking off sound equipment from his waist, Mr. Ket Sithol, the group leader, says he is pleased to join the show, particularly when people like their performance. The audiences tell him that the show conveyed clear messages; and it is not boring.

Similarly, Miss. Kung Sobon, a group member and also a probation teacher at the school says that sending messages through the show is more effective than reading for them. She adds that as a teacher, she used to teach about disaster risk reduction but it was not interesting to her students.

STREET THEATER

The main road to this community was cut off during the flash flood caused by heavy rain in 2010. Environmental experts explain this as the effect of global warming. A small car needs to spend 1,000 riels to take detour road with a wooden bridge. Trucks have no choice but to cross this road and very often they get stuck and spend hours to come out.



Pol Phirun is also a senior member of the adult group where he is responsible for writing story and leading the show. He said, "I am very happy with my job now even it is not my full time job."

It is a sunny Saturday afternoon at a primary school in western Banteay Meachey. The students, who always have lessons on Saturday, are not studying now as they are doing something different— watching a kind of role-play.

Following the success of the adult group, another group of young performers have been trained in the hope to replace the adult performers, some of whom will get married or quit the group. The young group, which started in November 2010, has 12 members. They are equipped with musical instruments. "It's unbelievable that in only one month, they can performed so well," said the team leader Pol Phirun.



Besides disaster risk reduction and social issues, the show also focuses on personal hygiene, which is still one of the major concerns among the children of the community. This girl, without shoes, is scratching her neck while her legs are covered in dirt.



FIRST AID TO A WHOLE COMMUNITY

BY HIM SOKUNTHEA
ADDITIONAL REPORT BY
THY RATHANAK, PIN MANIKA AND PRAK THIDA

SVAY RIENG – Taking comfort in the shade of a house, around 20 women are sitting together and listening to an elder man, Prak Sam Ang, 59, Krasaing Chhrum village chief. He is informing the villagers about first aid knowledge which he learned a few days ago at Svay Rieng provincial town.

Like many other villagers, these people have limited knowledge about the first aid. When they hear the word "first aid," they simply think it is only for minor injuries. But first aid is far more useful, especially during the disaster period.

According to Poan Chanthou, a first aid trainer from Cambodian Red Cross, first aid refers to initial assistance to victims before doctors arrive and it helps ease victims from serious pain making it easy for the doctors to help the victims.

"Sray Rieng province has had first aid training several times because it is considered one of the most affected areas and is geographically vulnerable to many kinds of disasters including flood and drought," says Penn Ny, ActionAid Program Officer based in Svay Rieng.

The latest first aid training, participated by 30 people from different villages, was held at Svey Rieng provincial town from 23 to 25 December 2010 by Association For Development Increase the Family Economics (AIDFE), an ActionAid's partner, and Cambodian Red Cross (CRC) under financial support from the European Commission.

Prak Sam Ang is one of the participants from 15 villages attended the first aid training in Svay Rieng provincial town. After the training, he and other trainees spread what he learned to other villagers in the communities, since first aid assistance is very important for rural areas where public health service is limited and farming accidents or injuries are frequent.

"First aid is necessary for my

community because there's no health center here. The first aid training helps me and the villagers, in general, to be informed and prepared for unexpected incidents," says Prak Sam Ang.

Krasaing Chhrum village is located in a very remote area nearby Vietnam's border. It consists of 2,057 villagers and comprising of 521 families which is about 20km from Svay Rieng provincial town, in the southeast of Cambodia. Business center as well as hospital or even health center is not available in this village, and farming is widely practiced for the villagers.

Despite being a seemingly trivial skill, first aid knowledge can help people avoid accidental mistreatment of victims, ActionAid program officer-Penn Ny adds.

In every meeting, most participants in Krasaing Chhrum village are women from mid 20 to 40 years old. Some women bring their child along while others come individually.

Holding her seven-month old daughter, Heng Houch, 23, says with enthusiasm that she is willing to join this meeting since she can learn new and important skills.

"It is a great chance for me to know about the first aid skill because it enables me to help myself, my family and other villagers when unexpected incidents happen in the village," she says.

Houch continues that in the past, she preferred using traditional methods whenever she had accidents but now she quit using the old treatment since she has noticed that modern treatment by using medicine is much more effective.

In order to share the knowledge about first aid, Prak Sam Ang employs a few methods. "I usually invite villagers to gather in one place and tell them about what I have learned and sometimes I go directly to individual house to inform them in a way of chit-chatting. The meeting is usu-

ally held once or twice a month," he explains.

Even though the meeting is held regularly, Sam Ang encounters a few difficulties in sharing the first aid knowledge.

"Not all the invited participants join the meeting and some of them have limited knowledge to understand what I want to tell them," the village chief says.

"Men rarely attend the meeting, especially for sensitive topics such as domestic violence because they do not want to hear about that so they ask their wives to come. Also if they are not interested in the topics, they just walk away," he says.

Penn Ny, explains that in one village, there are three main groups to provide local community some basic helps in accidents or disaster relief. The first group is called discovery group who is responsible for investigating the causes of the diseases or disasters. The second is media group, who works as the informer about the disaster and the last group is named the rescue team, who gives first aid treatment to victims. Those three groups are very significant in working cooperatively to help or rescue victims in the community.

"The Cambodian government is emphasizing the need of first aid training after the stamped incident at Koh Pich bridge. If many people at the incident had known clearly about the first aid treatment, many people would have been saved," Chanthou says. He says that just one month after the accident at Koh Pich bridge, the first aid training is increased three times more for him as a trainer.

The first aid and disaster training are conducted in three provinces, Svay Rieng, Kratie and Banteay Meanchey. After finishing the training in the three provinces, the project will then go to Kompong Thom province and other disaster affected areas under ActionAid's sponsorship.

DYKE SYSTEM CANNOT PROTECT OUR FARMS

BY NGOUN DALEN
ADDITIONAL REPORT BY
CHUM SOPHEA AND EM SOPHEAK



Peam Krasaob I village, known as Phum Chas (old village), where hundred of families were moved to the mainland in late 2004 and early 2005 as the landmass kept decreasing in size.

NEW LOCATION, BETTER LIFE



A group of fishermen at the old village, on the wooden yard above the sea, are fixing their nets. They are among around 30 families who remain here, claiming it is easier for them to go fishing.



Young kids help their relatives prepare fishing nets at the new village after their study. They could not go to school when they were at the old village, because there was no land to build school there.



Tourists are taking a boat trip to enjoy the scenery of mangrove forest in Peam Krasaob area. Serving tourist-boat is another job for people in this new village. They take turn to serve boat for tourists.



Even after they have moved to the new village, 7 kilometers from the old one and Koh Kong town, fishing is still important for them. They say the new place is a bit far from the fishing area and the waterway is also small.



A kid is walking on the wooden bridge which is still under construction. This bridge also serves as a small port for them to tie up their boats.

SIHANOUK - holding a sickle in his hand and apparent distress on his face, Kor Phay is leaving his rice field with his wife and two sons after disappointing half-day harvest. His rice yield shrinks so much that it only needs half day to harvest. Most of the rice was destroyed by 2010 flood.

Kor Phay is among the farmers in Prey Nup Community affected by the flood. He has 1.60 hectares of cultivation land in the community. Yet the mid-year heavy rainfall damaged more than half of his cultivation land. He says his family living condition is getting worse and worse. "60 percent of my rice, an equivalent of about 30 sacks, was submerged," he says, adding that in 2009 overflowing sea water also destroyed his crops.

Kor Phay claims he can normally get 60 to 70 sackful of rice from his 1.6 hectare field but consecutive flooding drastically reduce his yield to only 15 sacks in 2009 and around 30 in 2010.

Prey Nup community is no stranger to natural disasters. Defined as a vulnerable coastal zone by Cambodia Climate Change Alliance (CCCA), it has been affected by many storms between 2006 and 2007 in addition to flooding by tidal activities and heavy rainfall. What worries farmers the most is the rising sea level which may completely destroy every paddy field whenever the sea water flows through.

During the French colony, a dyke system was built to protect the whole crop areas from being flooded by



Prey Nub's water reservoir is 90 km in length constructed in 1930. In 1998, it was renovated and divided into smaller six blocks for better controlling. Nowadays, the second and sixth block need renovation as a result of a severe flood in 2009.

the sea. The 90-kilometer long dyke helps to stock water in rainy season and prevents the overflowing sea from flooding into the cultivation area.

A committee was created in 1998 under the support of Agence Française de Développement (AFD), aiming at maintaining and controlling the dyke system for the sustainability of the community cultivation. Since then, the dyke has been renovated and divided into six reservoirs.

As the dyke is the only way to prevent the disaster, each farmer has to contribute fee annually to the committee in order that they can take care and repair the dyke system as well as other infrastructures in the community.

"Regarding the payment, firstly, there is a problem in collecting the fee because people think that it is a kind of tax, but later people understand that we use that money to maintain

the sustainability of the dyke and the infrastructure in the community," Yim Boy says. He adds that because the dyke lays on the soft soil, every year it is 0.01 meters caved in.

However, the dyke is not effective in protecting the whole area because the water in the canal and the sea keeps rising annually.

According to farmers, the second and sixth reservoirs were damaged in 2009 by heavy rainfall rendering it impossible to store water effectively. As a result, the surrounding areas are often flooded during the annual overflow of the sea.

Sarat, chief of the sixth reservoir, says that to prevent the cultivation land from being flooded, the dyke needs to be renovated and built higher to compromise with the annual rise of the sea level.



Kor Phay, 47, is one of the farmers in Prey Nub "Polder Community". His farming land was destroyed by heavy floods in 2009 and 2010. He says he can get a rice yield of around 70 sacks annually, but during the two flooded years he could collect only 15 sacks.



In rainy season, excess water from the sea and Bokor mountain flow through this channel (Prek Thom) toward Prey Nub Community. "Because farm land of Prey Nub Community is lower than other areas, water comes from everywhere and floods the community," said Yim Boy, Prey Nub Community chief.



The water gate keeps fresh water for farming in dry season and to release water whenever the area is flooded. However, all water gates can't protect farming land of the community if the area is flooded by heavy rain.



The farming land of Prey Nub community spreads over 10,494 hectares which is divided into 6 "polder" blocks in Preah Sihanouk province. According to Cambodia Climate Change Alliance (CCCA), the area is flooded annually.



Prey Nub Community is founded in 1998 under the support of Agence Française de Développement (AFD) aiming to protect farming land along coastal area. Every week, representatives hold a meeting on weekly condition and situation of their in-charge reservoir.

BETTER DYKE DEMANDED

MOVE TO BETTER LIVELIHOOD

BY ITH SOTHOEUTH
ADDITIONAL REPORT BY
CHAN SOVANNARA AND THA PISETH

KOH KONG - the sun is sinking into the horizon and most people at markets or offices are ready to be off from work to their houses; but for a group of fishermen at Peam Krasaob commune, their working hours just begin. After preparing their fishing nets and boats for fishing in the sea, they normally leave home around 5 p.m. and come back the next day at around 4 a.m. bringing back crabs, shrimps and other sea creatures.

Peam Krasaob commune, comprising of two villages--Peam Krasaob and Koh Kang, is located about seven kilometers from Koh Kong town. Until 2004, more than 90 percent of villagers were fishermen who spent their adventurous lives on boats. A fifty-year-old Tun Chanthorn is one of the lifelong fishermen in Peam Krasaob village. He says that fishing used to be the only source of income for his family so whenever there was a storm, his family livelihood was threatened.

"At home we almost ran out of food sometimes," he says, "we spent our money on fishing equipments leaving only little money. Occasionally, we plan to go only two or three days. But it takes us one week to come back because of the storms."

He explains that when the weather is not good, villagers dare not go fishing far away from the village, because they are worried about their safety. However, he adds that with the increasing number of fishermen and the fish production from the nearby area is not sufficient, he, as well as some other villagers, sometimes takes the risk of fishing at the places they have been to.

Chheng Sinat, deputy chief of Peam Krasaob village says that because his village is on the sea, 7 kilometers from mainland, villagers have limited access to public services.

"It is hard for those who were sick at night or pregnant women, because it is so far from the town ... and children could not go to school," he says.

He adds that because the village area is surrounded by sea, land erosion is another problem in his village. He explains that the change in sea level is a cause of the erosion and mangrove logging also contributes to this.

"Starting from 1985, people logged mangrove trees to produce charcoal and sold them to neighboring country [Thailand]," he recalls.

Chheng says that the size of his village was more than one hectare, but it remains smaller than four acres by the end of 2010.

"There used to be land and pagoda in that area. Five years later, the land and pagoda were washed away by waves," he says. "With such erosion, we are fearing for the future, we believe if we do not manage it properly, our villagers will no longer have place to live on."

After discussing with related authorities and ministries, in late 2004 and early 2005 the local authorities started to move villagers to a new place in Boeung Kayak village of Khemrakphoumin's Stoeung Veng commune, seven kilometers from the old village and Koh Kong town. The new location was divided into two different villages. They are Peam Krasaob I where people from Peam Krasaob village were moved to and Peam Krasaob II for people from Koh Kang village.

Chheng says that each family was offered a plot of 15 meters by 50 meters land in exchange for their relocation. Chheng, however, says that not all families have moved and lived at the new place since they do not have enough money to build new house and many people still rely on fishing as the main source of income.

Now there are about 30 families still living temporarily in the two old villages. Chan Bunly, 48, is one of villagers who is still living in the old Peam Krasaob. He

says that it is more convenient for villagers to go fishing from the old village than from the new one. Chan explains that since the waterway which links the new village to the sea is small, sometimes it is hard for villagers to sail their fishing boats out.

"The waterway up there is small so our boats are stranded during low tide," he says.

Seeing the usefulness of mangrove and aiming at reducing villagers' dependency on fishing, authority transformed Peam Krasaob area into a tourism site. Chut Tith who has been the commune chief of Peam Krasaob since 1979 says that after the conversion of this area to be a tourism place, people now know more about the advantages of mangrove forest.

"It is very crucial to preserve mangrove forest in this area. If we can protect them, it is like we have protected our people's lives," he says. "Crab, fish, shrimp and other creatures live there. So the villagers help protect mangrove forest."

Chan says that besides being a sanctuary of sea life, mangrove also plays a role as a wall to protect the village from strong wind as well as soil erosion. "Some trees are even higher than 10 meters. They can protect us from strong winds," he says.

Tun found his life at the new location better since he can earn more money from tourism and importantly he can access public service.

"Firstly, we have tourist boats from which we can earn a living," he says, "secondly, children can go to school and thirdly we have water supply and electricity here."

Chut says in spite of the fact that villagers have been given a plot of land at the new location, the commune still allow them to go and stay at the old village temporarily since it is easier for them to do their fishing. He, however, reminds that authorities still keep their rights to take the land when they need it for development.

PORTRAYING DISASTER

Six groups of students went to six different provinces to capture disasters in each province and produce six multimedia news packages including mini-documentaries, feature stories and photo stories.

