

Case Study

Chea Borey: From Construction Worker to Agri-Entrepreneur

Chea Borey is 27 years old and lives with his parents and four other family members in Prey Kuy village, Trapaing Sre commune, Mesang district, Prey Veng province. Borey stopped studying at grade 12 in 2004 after failing the Bac II exam. For six months afterwards, he worked as a security guard in Phnom Penh, and then became a construction worker. During the following years, he worked hard to achieve the skills of a master craftsman in house building. However, his income remained low, around US\$100-150/year, and he often had to find work in other provinces.

He explains that he was concerned construction work would not be sustainable when he got older. So he returned to his family's farm. In September 2008, Borey learned about the announcement for the Young Agri-Entrepreneurs (YAE) program from a relative who was working with CEDAC, during his visit home on Phcum Ben day. He decided to apply to the program and implement the innovations he would learn from CEDAC on the family farm. He was selected and worked very hard during the one-month probationary period to become a trainee in the program. This meant doing weekly assignments and presenting them to the CEDAC office, which is 38 km distance from his house.

Over the course of the one-year training with CEDAC, Borey participated in training sessions that focus on both agricultural and social topics such as ecological chicken-raising (ECR), pig-raising, fish-raising, System of Rice Intensification (SRI), basic ecological agriculture, vegetable planting, preparing a business plan, self-development and planning for success. He also attended three internship/exchange visits at Takeo and Kampong Chhnang and read many books related to agriculture and self-improvement. Borey adopted and adapted agriculture techniques that he learned during the program. The following are innovations he has applied on his farm:

- Ecological chicken-raising: In January 2009, he built a chicken house and fence, starting with five hens and one cock. He constructed two cages for feeding the chickens, and grows water convolvulus (a local spinach-like vegetable) and collects water coconut (small aquatic plant) as natural feed for the chickens. He sanitizes the chicken house and surrounding land every day and supplies clean water mixed with medicinal plants to ensure their health. These techniques have enabled him to increase the number of hens to 13. After attending the program for one year, he could already raise enough chickens to sell three times, earning 400,000 Riel (US\$100) to invest in his farm and for family needs.
- Fish-raising: Borey recounts that when he came back from the visit to Takeo, he was very interested in fish-raising. In June 2009, he tried to improve the quality of the water available in front of his house to raise fish, starting with 2,000 fingerlings in a 150m² pond. Seeing good results, he improved another pond, adding 5,000 fingerlings. For the small fish, he continued using feed from the market initially but then tried making his own feed from cooked rice, bran, vegetables, water coconut, etc. After two months, he stopped purchasing feed from the market. During that time, he was also raising earthworms as feed for his fish.
- Vegetable planting: Previously, his family never cared about planting vegetables. They sowed vegetable seed like sponge gourd and let the plant grow up the tree. Sometimes they collected it as food and sometimes they couldn't because it had grown too high. Currently, they have two plots of land for growing water convolvulus, cucumber, long bean, and bitter melon on the raised beds used as rice nurseries. Borey says that his family now never buys vegetables even during rice transplanting season. They are self-sufficient.

- Building the feeding machine: With strong support from his family, Borey invested US\$220 in a feeding machine in September 2009. The machine can be adjusted so that it can produce animal feed for fish, chickens and pigs using different raw materials.

Besides implementing these practices on his own farm, Borey is sharing his experiences with other villagers. He is also applying the personal and social skills he learned in the YAE program such as positive thinking and thinking long term, listening and speaking with respect, being his own boss and doing something with an objective. His attitude has even helped address problems with a gangster in the village. He is told that the villagers like him and want him to share his experiences with them.

Borey is especially keen to expand his fish-raising enterprise. In 2010, he plans to raise more than 10,000 fish on his farm. He is confident because he understands clearly the concepts and practical lessons he learned from expert trainers and expert farmers in the YAE program. If something goes wrong he can contact them by phone. His long-term vision is to have a successful business selling fingerlings in his area.



He is feeding the fish with cooked rice mix with bran for 5,000 fingerlings.



Chicken house and fence for chicken-raising



Machine for making animal feed.



Earthworm-raising for fish and chicken feed