

Village Based Farmer Association and Local Development

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"**SAMAKUM TROTRUNG KAKSEKOR**" [in English **Association for Supporting Farmers**] is the name of the village-based farmers association (VFA) that was founded on 15 October 2006 with technical assistance from CEDAC. This VFA is located in Chheu Lom village Morhareusei Commune in Kong Pisei district of Kampong Speu Province. Initially, the VFA had 1 saving group, consisting of 37 members (19 women) with savings capital 470,000 Riles. Currently, there are a total of 94 households with 446 people in the village (226 women). The VFA has 11 farmers groups: 5 saving groups (including 1 young farmer and 2 women's groups), 1 organic rice producer group, 1 chicken producer group, 1 community shop, 1 animal feed processing enterprise, 1 rice wine distillation group, and 1 collective rice paddy group. Total membership in these groups is 110 people (88 women) from 90 households equal to 95% of all village families. Total VFA capital is 31,660,000 KH-riel.

The **SAMAKUM TROTRUNG KAKSEKOR** was established with the specific objectives of:

- Improving agricultural skill and knowledge.
- Improving solidarity and cooperation among villagers.
- Collective selling and buying products.

1- The village situation before cooperation with CEDAC

Previously, this village had limited access to technical information provided by public extension services, mostly they depend on external input to practice agricultural techniques especially chemical fertilizer and pesticide, and mono culture cropping; limited collective action and cooperation among farmers to work for mutual help and their own interests. There was especially a shortage of key actors involved with village development and limited access to marketing services and knowledge, and limited information sharing.

2- The village situation after cooperation with CEDAC

Recently, we observed that this VFA has experienced positive change; they joined together to form a village-based farmer association, to save money and access credit together, selling organic rice paddy, selling piglets, establishing an animal feed processing enterprise, setting up a community shop and more. The VFA has three persons, **Mr Thorng Leang Kry**, **Mr Svay Saroeun** and **Ms Uk Kong**, who are key actors in leading this VFA and who take responsibility to develop their own village to be successful and to be a model VFA. Innovative agricultural techniques are widely adapted in this village, including home gardening, system of rice intensification (SRI), pig raising, chicken raising, ecological fertilizer collection, etc. In addition, the villagers have understood the importance of using local existing resources and they have tried to cut down their use of external agricultural inputs such as chemical fertilizers and pesticides and seeds. The VFA committee members have regularly attended training sessions, workshops and other activities organized by the project and then shared what they learned with their members and villagers.



Community shop

VFA committee members

The achievements of the VFA consist of the following:

- There are 5 saving groups with 110 members (88 women) encompassing 78 households with the savings capital 23 million KH-riel.
- 1 organic rice producer group with 5 members with paddy sold of 2200 kg.
- 1 community shop with 16 households as members with investment capital of 4,660,000 KH-riel.
- 2 women's groups with 82 members and 11,720,000 KH-riel as savings capital.
- 1 young farmers group with 15 members (9 women) and with savings capital of 528,000 KH-riel.
- 1 animal feed processing enterprise with investment capital of 4,000,000 KH-riel.
- 1 collective rice paddy savings group with 720 Kg rice paddy (just starting up).
- 98 households applied SRI with average rice yields of 2.7 t/ha.
- 23 families are practicing ecological chicken-raising.
- 22 families are raising pigs.
- 5 farmers are local seed producers, producing rice seed, chicks and piglets.

To date, the VFA has hosted 20 exchange visits from government and non government organizations consisting of 400 participants (52 women), coming from 13 provinces of Cambodia.

3- How did the VFA become successful?

- The VFA conduct regular meetings such as core team meeting, members meeting and strengthening the capacity of committees and members through providing of training and directly follow up support at member's home
- Closely cooperation with village chief.
- Regularly sharing all achievements of VFA with members.
- VFA leaders have self-confidence in leading and play an important role by setting an example for members.
- Transparency and accountability in bookkeeping and VFA management.
- The VFA leaders have initiative and ideas for doing things.
- They identify a key person responsible for specific VFA work and make him or her as contact person for communicate or deal with development or business agency, and stakeholders.

4- Challenges and solutions

Challenges	Solutions
<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Capacity of committee in bookkeeping- Limited in managing village information	<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Learn from best practices applied in the village and ask project staff- Asking together and trying to observe villager's activities and village general situation to gain more information.

5- Sustainability and Planning

- Expand and build capacity of human resources.
- Increase savings to reach 100 million KH-riel in 2015.
- Expand collective rice paddy activity.
- Improve operation of community shop especially bookkeeping and marketing knowledge.
- Strengthen and improve both the producer groups and quality of their products including the organic rice producer group, chicken producer group and rice wine distillation group.
- The agricultural techniques promoted at village level will be considered in VFA planning, especially, SRI, integrated farming, chicken raising and pig raising.
- Build a network with neighboring villages.
- Build the capacity of the next generation to continue the work.

6- Conclusion

Through active cooperation with CEDAC, the VFA received important technical support for their village through useful training and supervision, which has resulted in their gaining efficiency, knowledge and skills to improve their prosperity and living conditions. Moreover, they are now able to access credit together, operate collective community business, rely on a network for mutual help among villagers and they have reduced their dependency on external inputs such as chemical fertilizer and pesticide. And the VFA can serve as a demonstration for other NGOs and community-based organizations to learn from their experiences.