

Food Security Program Officer of European Union Conducts Field Visit to PRS-EU 23-24 February 2010

With a supporting grant from European Union (EU) and the Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst (EED), CEDAC has been implementing a development project titled “**Poverty Reduction among Subsistence Rice Farmers through the Promotion of Sustainable Livelihood System (PRS-EU)**” since January 2008. The project will be completed in December 2010. The project’s target areas are 270 villages in 25 communes of 4 districts, Samrong and Barti districts (Takeo province) and Borsedth and Kong Pisei districts (Kampong Speu province).

The PRS-EU project recently hosted a two-day field visit by the EU’s Food Security Program Officer, Ms. By Sokunthea, from 23-24 February 2010. The main objectives of this field visit were to assess the project’s progress and achievements as well as to develop recommendations with the target groups and the project team.

Ms. By Sokunthea met the project team members to discuss the project’s structure, including how the Community-based Field Assistants (CFAs) and project staff work with beneficiary farmers, its challenges, successful factors of project implementation, the project’s strategic plan for 2010 and its sustainability. After the meeting, the project team members accompanied her to visit project cooperating farmers, groups and activities such as System of Rice Intensification (SRI), the Multi-Purpose Farm (MPF), community shop and seed storage facilities, the farmer community-based learning center, the Village-based Farmer Association (VFA), community-led saving group, animal feed processing cooperative, and local seed producers. During the field visits, she discussed with target groups about changes experienced by village and target families since cooperating with the project, sources of incomes, progress of agricultural technical innovation practices, how to operate and manage the VFA or community-led businesses, challenges, solutions, and ways to ensure sustainability of activities and improve the project.



Reflection meeting



Ms. By Sokunthea interviewing farmers

After the field visit, a reflection meeting was organized at CEDAC’s office in Kompong Speu province. At the meeting, Ms. By Sokunthea expressed her satisfaction and pride in the remarkable progress and achievements accomplished by the project. She observed that the rice yield from SRI practices increased significantly, farmers had reduced their high dependency on external agricultural inputs, especially chemical fertilizer, and they increased the amount of money they have been able to save. They also have better access to credit services, and each village has competence, commitment, and more trained human resources. She said that *“I was very impressed by the achievement of the project and also proud that a local NGO like CEDAC has a very good and clear strategy in addressing the problem of the farmers”*.

However, she concerned on forming of saving association at commune/district level (SoSor) and how the project support it because it is the end year for project implementation, and she also recommended that the project should provide further support to increase capacity of VFA leaders.