

NEWSLETTER

TSSD – Tonle Sap Poverty Reduction and Smallholder Development Project Loan: 2599 / Grant: 0186-CAM (SF)

Tonle Sap Poverty Reduction and Smallholder Development Project (TSSD) is co-financed by the Asian Development Bank (ADB), the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), the Government of Finland and the Royal Government of Cambodia. The TSSD is designed to foster community-driven infrastructure, and capacity development for 1,239 Livelihood Improvement Groups in 1,236 villages, in 196 communes, in 28 districts in 5 provinces of Banteay Meanchey, Siem Reap, Kampong Thom, Kampong Cham and Tboung Khmum. The projects seek to improve the livelihoods of about 630,000 households in the four five provinces through (i) improved rural infrastructures to support agricultural productivity, market access, and the quality of life in rural communities; (ii) improved capacity of smallholder farmers to increase agricultural productivity; (iii) improved agricultural policy environment, (iv) improved availability and access to quality seeds; (v) increased access to agricultural information and market data; and (vi) effective project management that enables timely project completion within the agreed budget.



The TSSD has two Executing Agencies, the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) and the National Committee for Sub-National Democratic Development Secretariat (NCDDS), and three implementing agencies (IAs) – MAFF General Directorate of Agriculture (GDA), NCDDS and Ministry of Posts and Telecommunication (MPTC). The Council for Agriculture and Rural Development (CARD) heads regular semi-annual Project Steering Committee meetings.

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1. Improved rural infrastructure supporting agricultural productivity

Since 2013, over 400 rural infrastructure sub-projects have been identified and implemented by the target commune councils across the 5 provinces. These include rehabilitation and/or construction of rural road and irrigation-supporting infrastructure like canal, earth dike and pond. Seventy three of these 400 sub-projects have been completed, 94 are being constructed and the remaining are in preparatory steps.

After completion of a canal rehabilitation, some farmers in Chamnar Leu commune of Stoung district in Kampong Thom province are able now access to water for irrigation of their rice field, with a total irrigated area of 72 ha in wet season and over 10 ha in dry season cultivation. It is expected that next dry season, cultivated area for dry season crop will be further increased.



2. Improved capacity of smallholder farmers

TSSD is promoting the extension of stronger rural financial services to resource-poor smallholder farmers through Group Revolving Funds (GRFs) and enabling better access to support services and technical and market information on improved livelihood practices. Around 1,240 livelihood improvement groups (LIGs) are to be assisted by the project. Already 940



groups have been formed and 400 of them have received the basic training required for management of GRF. Members of these 400 LIGs have received their first trench of GRF-loan



of \$100 each to pursue improvement of their priority livelihood activity. LIG members have used their loan for rice production, livestock and small business (grocery retail outlet).

3. Building local capacity to respond to needs of smallholder farmers

Capacity building for LIGs will be mostly outsourced, with firms/NGOs or individual (including farmer) with specialized expertise being potential service providers. Funding for the required training service comes from the Community Development Fund (CDF) which is provided to each commune as a block grant.



CEWs practice preparing documents for procurement of training service for LIGs

The Commune Council is responsible for effective management of the CDF to respond to the needs of LIGs in the commune. To that end, the project has developed appropriate guidelines and provided training on supervision of delivery of outsourced training for LIGs to the commune staff and supporting district teams. During the second quarter 2014, four provincial training were organized with a participation of around 600 persons (150 females) who are C/S chiefs, Com-

mune Extension Workers (CEWs), district staff (district authority and agriculture office).

4. Improving access to agricultural information and marketing data for smallholder farmers

In order to improve access to technical and market information for smallholder farmers, the Commune Extension Worker (CEWs) are equipped with mobile ICT devices (tablets) with pre-loaded contents for key agricultural technologies and other

useful contents and mobile internet. The contents are provided by MAFF/GDA that have been collected and developed during the TA: Tonle Sap Technology Demonstrations for Productivity Enhancement (March 2010 - August 2013). They are also available online at www.telecentercambodia.org. More contents will be regularly provided to CEWs when become available, including the project commissioned materials in audio, video/multi-media and print formats.



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USB modem) and solar panels for the commune offices without access to electricity. This will allow internet access in the Each Commune Council is being provided with basic ICT equipment (laptop, printer and USB modem) and solar panels for the commune offices without access to electricity. This will allow internet access in the commune offices to enable effective information flow in response to farmers needs and for improved communication for commune administration.



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5. Piloting of a safe food production practice - Good Agriculture Practice



Since mid-2013, the project has supported piloting a field program on Good Agriculture Practice (GAP) for vegetables and fruits with a focus on food safety. The program's first phase, with farmer field schools organized in four pilot sites in Siem Reap, was completed late last year and a workshop was organized late March in Siem Reap



Town to promote the program's results and GAP products, with participations from trained farmers/growers, interested farmers, vegetable collectors, staff from Siem Reap PDA and representatives of selected NGOs.

Based on the experiences of the first phase, a training manual and auditing checklist on GAP Vegetables were developed by a team of staff from GAP Office of the MAFF-GDA. The project has now expanded into a second phase in two provinces – Siem Reap (in new districts) and Kampong Cham/Tboung Khmum. To build further capacity for expansion of the GAP initiative, a three-day Training of Trainer (ToT) on GAP was conducted in



Kampong Cham town for 44 participants who are staff from Provincial Department of Agriculture and six farmer trainers from both provinces. Resource persons for the training come from MAFF-GDA GAP Office. The participants are now organizing a total of 11 farmer field schools on GAP vegetables in their respective districts - seven in Siem Reap and four in Kampong Cham/Tboung Khmum.

6. Piloting contract farming for rice crop in Kampong Thom

During late 2013, a series of consultative workshop on rice supply chain with stakeholders were organized in all target provinces. Discussions during the workshops clearly reflected a need to close a gap between producers and buyers of

quality rice, through some arrangement based upon mutual trust between the two parties. In Kampong Thom, the need for the arrangement (i.e. contract farming) and the existence of favourable conditions (i.e. commercial millers, farmer groups, grain collectors) are more promising. During the second quarter of 2014, the project team from GDA and PDA of Kampong Thom conducted stakeholder consultative workshop on contract farming with participants from Rice Seed Producer Groups (RSPGs), farmers, Balang Agriculture Station, commercial rice millers and grain buyers. After the workshop KPT-PDA Office of Agro-industry organized follow up meeting with interested parties identified at the end of the workshop and facilitated process of formulation of agreements with farmers in 6 villages for contract farming for rice seed and grain production (of the Phkar Rumduol variety), namely (i) three for rice seed production between one commercial rice miller (providing seed) and three RSPGs in Santuk district, and (ii) rice grain production between one grain buyer/miller and grain growers/farmers from three villages in Baray district. In total, there are 37 ha of land that will be used for piloting contract farming for rice (seed and grain) production. Agreed price for seed is Riel 1,500/kg, while for grain a bonus (of Riel 50/kg) will be added on grain price of the variety surveyed at harvest time.



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7. Improved Availability and Access to Quality Rice Seeds

Many farmers in Cambodia use impure and low quality rice seeds, resulting in low yield. They keep their seeds for reproduction in a traditional way or just have an access to seeds in their community. They have planted traditional varieties, of which some of them are not in high market demand.

As seed quality is a major component in increasing yield, TSSD supports the program for production of rice quality seed and selection of varieties on high market demand, which aims at improving the income of the farmers in the target provinces. The project has supported production of quality rice seed and rehabilitation of the two Agriculture Stations (Balang / Kampong Thom and Teuk Vil / Siem Reap) with necessary facilities for processing and storage to ensure a reliable supply of certified rice seed to the Rice Seed Producer Groups (RSPGs). The Stations buy the Foundation Seeds with selected varieties on high demand from CARDI for the production of certified rice seeds. At the same time, the project has established and supported the 31 RSPGs across the five provinces for production of commercial rice seeds by using certified seeds from the two stations.



These RSPGs will produce commercial rice seeds for sale to LIG farmers and other buyers with sufficient and timely supply.

One RSPG, with 25 members (17 women) in Santuk district of KPT province, has been supported by the project since early 2013. During the first half of 2014, this group sold around 11 tons of good quality seeds to farmers in their commune and surrounding areas.