

Meeting of Key Farmer Association Leaders in Kampong Thom Province

KAMPONG THOM: On May 15, 2011, the second provincial and local networks meeting was organized by CEDAC/FNN at CEDAC's office in Kampong Thom province. In total, 32 key leaders of FNN, of whom 11 were female, from 23 associations across 4 districts were in attendance. Three of the leaders, including CEDAC's President/FNN Advisor, Dr. Yang Saing Koma, FNN President, Mr. Uon Sophal, and FNN Director, Mr. Pan Sopheap facilitated the meeting. The objectives and outputs achieved as a result of the workshop include:

- Progress reports from 23 potential self-help saving associations in the 4 districts were shared. To date, the total savings capital of the 23 associations is 624,100,300 riel (about US\$152,219.59) from 1,343 savings members. These figures have significantly increased since they began with only 453 savings members and 7,248,000 riel in savings capital (about US\$1,768). Among the 23 associations, 10 have already paid membership fees.
- Mr. Uon Sophal shared the best practices of savings and credit, mobilization of human and financial resources, management and leadership, and cooperation and collaboration with local authorities in Dangtung district, Kampot province. To date, his association in Khcheay Khanglech village, Damnak Sokrom commune, Dangtung district has 147 savings members and a combined savings capital of 189,000,000 riel (roughly US\$46,097.50). His association started in 2000 with 6 founding members and 60,000 riel (US\$16) startup capital.
- Mr. Srey Sai, the Chairperson of the savings association in Thamaneat village, Tang Krasang commune, Santuk district shared the experiences of his association. It started in 2008 with 17 savings members and 170,000 riel (US\$43) in savings capital. To date, the association has 243 savings members and 172,000,000 riel in capital (US\$41,951.21). Additionally, the association has a biogas digester has already paid its US\$5 membership fee for 2011.
- The strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats (SWOT) of the self-reliance savings associations were reviewed.
- Ideas and recommendations for future improvement were collected from the plenary.
- An action plan for 2011 was developed.
- A vision for self-reliant and sustainable development was conceived.
- Biogas digester use at the family level was promoted.
- Potential and existing self-reliant associations were selected to attend the next meeting.

Dr. Koma was frank in expressing his admiration for the fast development of the farmers associations in the province, especially with regards to their rapid increases in self-help savings. By the end of the meeting, participants had a clearer idea about the concepts of self-reliance and sustainable development. In particular, they had a solid understanding about "MEANS and END GOAL". The next meeting will be organized on June 17, 2011 so that participants can discuss further plans and strategies as well as share updates and progress development. The meeting will include an in-depth discussion about collection of membership fees and contributions to maximize self-reliance and sustainable development.

