

Self-Sufficient Livelihood - an ICC Strategic Focus



On 20th February 2019, Cambodia Prime Minister Hun Sen called on farmers to halt rice farming during the dry season this year due to the drought. "I want to call on all authorities to advise all people not to do dry-season rice farming. Please do farming only one time this year because we do not have enough water." Adding that Cambodia will face severe drought and water shortages this year¹.

This year, Cambodia encounters a serious drought, which is indirectly affected by a phenomenon called El Nino, which refers to a short-term heat wave from South America to Australia. Between March and May, Cambodia withstood temperatures ranging from 40 to 42 degrees Celsius. The drought affected more than 20,000 hectares of rice fields in 13 provinces, according to the National Committee for Disaster Management. Moreover, communities in 16 regions across Cambodia faced water shortage. As a consequence of water shortage, lack of electricity affected the whole country in the same period, which was very harmful to the private and public sectors.

Ratanakiri province is known for its natural resources, from which indigenous groups for generations have made a livelihood. These indigenous groups use the natural water source from mountains and forests in the traditional way for drinking, washing and cooking food. However, before 2017 some villages faced water shortage and drought due to climate change and human harm to nature, such as deforestation. While the natural phenomena El Nino in itself is a disaster for people's livelihood, the human harm to nature contributes to climate change and negative environmental impact, including drought. Given those circumstances, ICC iBCDE project (identity Based Community Development and Education), which is operating in

Ratanakiri province, has implemented a program called Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR), with a focus on reducing destruction of natural water sources in the community.

In 2017 and 2018, the DRR program was implemented in two villages; Raya and Kangmis Toch villages. Those two villages had faced drought for a whole year, due to deforestation and climate change. However, the two villages lacked knowledge on water protection, which through generations had come from their mountains and forests, where local community people live close by. Their water sources had also provided people with vegetation, which they depended heavily upon, as the vegetables can only be grown in moist areas along the water stream. Without their normal level of natural water sources, the community people faced severe problems and lacked fresh vegetables for their livelihood.

The iBCDE team educated community people about the risk and negative impact of drought as a result of e.g. deforestation and climate change. Also, the iBCDE team helped preserve and protect their natural water sources, as shown in the picture above. At the same time, the iBCDE team was able to seek involvement and participation from local authorities, and established a joint effort with the community to protect their natural resources. The iBCDE team is still following up on the DRR program, and assists communities in developing their own DRR plans.

Today, community people are becoming more aware of the importance of their natural resources, as well as the effects of climate change. People value the increase of water, as well as more vegetation in their areas, as a result of their community DRR plans.

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¹ <https://www.voacambodia.com/a/gripped-by-drought-cambodian-farmers-struggle-against-changing-climate/4809586.html>