



# Co-operative Association of Cambodia (CAC)

## Empowering Enterprise for Cambodian Rural Women

Cooperative effort is ultimately the group instinct in human beings, which enables to live together and help each other in times of stress and strain. Unconsciously, the principle has always penetrated the life of human race. The history of modern civilization is in fact, the history of cooperation, for without it social and economic progress would have been impossible. "As women are generally the poorest of the poor and, at the same time, key actors in the development process, eliminating social, cultural, political, and economic discrimination against women is a prerequisite of eradicating poverty...ensuring quality family planning and reproductive health services, and achieving balance between population and available resources and sustainable patterns of consumption and production." Cooperatives play a great role in empowering women on economic development.

The lack of economic opportunities for women creates economic dependence on the husband. This makes a woman extremely vulnerable if something happens to the husband or to their marriage. Because these women have no economic opportunities, in resource-poor settings, such women may be forced to use sex as a commodity in exchange for goods, services, money, food, accommodations and other basic necessities. This can result in HIV, pregnancy or sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and discrimination from society.

Women also often bear the brunt of environmental degradation because the household duties for which they are responsible (fetching firewood and water, food preparation and agriculture) are tied to the land and the available resources. When these resources become scarce, women can be forced to travel for miles each day to provide for their families.

- ***What does the Co-operative Association of Cambodia (CAC) do to solve these problems?***

To solve these problems, CAC has developed its objectives and activities to respond the needs of women as co-op members to create the small enterprise and self-employment.

- Improve the Co-ops throughout creating the small business and microenterprise orientation and development for women co-op members.
- Assist Co-ops to identify and access to the markets for agriculture products and small enterprises for its sustainability.

CAC provides the specific technical support and capacity building on different aspects of enterprises for the rural women in eight provinces so they are able to benefit and generate incomes for their households.



## Coop Rural Women are practicing on record keeping of business

CAC has seen many Cambodian rural women working on enterprise do not record their incomes and expenses during their operation of businesses. CAC has provided the basic business record keeping training to the women enterprise at the villages which are the target operation of CAC so they will learn and practice to record incomes and expenses of their businesses. CAC also provided them with various training such as the product development, business concept, marketing, product design, packaging and hygiene.

CAC and the local cooperative help to follow up and advise to the women enterprise on the different aspects of business and also linkage their business to the market. When they have the capacity of business, they can have greater access to markets and increased selling power when they go to market. The coop is also negotiated with the women enterprise to work together for the whole sell products so that the buyers can give them a sub-contract with reasonable price and able to transport with the low cost.



### The co-operative supports the poor families to *create the business (Agriculture is a business)*.



Ms Kong Srey Oun with her husband Mr Hip Yun, have two daughters and a son are living at Kandal village, Kampong Seng commune, Prey Veng province. This family is very poor and marginalize. Her husband works as labour support family day by day and Srey Oun looks after children at home. One day their child got sick, they have no money to pay for treatment. They decided to sell a small plot of rice land for treatment bill. As they are very poor, they could not join the coop membership. CAC village enterprise project has begun to this location in late 2013 and choose this family as pilot activity. First, CAC discussed with her family about the possibility of skills so that they can join the project. After discussion, they haven't any skills but Srey Oun wants to raise pigs so she can also look after the children. As they are very poor, they want to get out of the poverty. CAC linked her to the local expert and invested 50\$ for two piglets (pig for meat) and extra two

piglets, she got loans from the cooperative. Since project begins in early 2014 to March 2015, she sold her pigs four times (she sold once every three to four months) and her profit has bought the rice land back, dig a well close to the house and bought two cows. She still has three piglets in her cage. She sent two older children to school. Now she wants to put some shares with coop and join a membership in 2016. Before join membership, she deposited her savings into the coop. Her savings now is 460,000 riel (equal to 115 US\$). As many organizations did not success with pig raising. CAC has worked closely with famers to build the ownership and knowledge of income generation so that they will be able to participate with rural economic development. Now there are 10 poor women join the pig raising project with successful stories of individual.

#### For More Information

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