

STORIES FROM A CLIMATE CHANGE HERO

Strengthening Climate Information and Early Warning Systems in Cambodia

With a flair for community engagement and environmental creativity, Kampong Pou commune School Director Mr. Keat Veasna is using his position to change both the next generation and the community around him.



When you first meet Mr. Keat Veasna, it becomes very clear that he is much more than just the School Director for Kampong Pou Primary School in Pursat. He is a community leader, dedicated to rallying those around him into a more environmentally friendly future.

Since commencing at the school in 2007 with only 17 students (in the two years prior, there had been zero enrolments), Mr. Veasna has grown the school to over 230 students. He sees each of these children as having an important role within the wider community.

"I love to teach community life skills and community resource mobilization," says Mr. Veasna with a big smile on his face. The outcomes of this are clearly demonstrated through a school-based contingency fund set up to support vulnerable community members, such as a child who needs school materials and uniform but cannot afford them. The students also go out and make visits to the elderly and other vulnerable members of their community, whose homes have been marked alongside the student's own residences on a map in the school. Ms. Veasna guides the students in vegetable growing, which provides a source of income for the school and can be used to as a food supply both during school hours and in student's own homes.

Such activities have been noted and appreciated by many. One parent, Ms. Hok Laykeang, describes how Mr. Veasna always informs



Mr. Veasna demonstrating the new solar water pump and repurposed bicycle tire fence for the school © Kelsea Clingeffer/UNDP Cambodia

them if there is a need within the school community and helps identify actionable solutions to address the issue, saying that "he keeps in touch with the families."

The second passion of Mr. Veasna is environmental awareness; examples of this can be seen simply by looking around the school yard, in which he has taught and guided students in tree planting, reducing plastic use, and repurposing tires into colourful fences and swings. "We also set up fans in the school because it was too hot for the students to work. Most schools don't have these, so we raised money and put fans in all the rooms," he described happily. His students were also involved in a community disaster conference in recent years.

Mr Veasna is particularly excited about recent installation of a solar water pump on the school ground, completed under an [ActionAid Cambodia](#) and [United Nations Development Programme](#) (UNDP) partnership [funded by the GEF-Least Developed Countries Fund](#). "The solar water pump is going to be very useful," said Mr. Veasna. "It makes me very happy. I am now confident that I can earn income for the school from selling vegetables now that we have water. I want to create a green school!"

Working together to build the country's forecasting capacities

Project Brief

Duration: 2016-2020

Project Budget: USD \$4,910,285

Implementing Partner:

Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology

Funding: GEF-Least Developed Country Fund

Location: Cambodia, nation-wide

Population to Benefit: Over 15 million (est.)

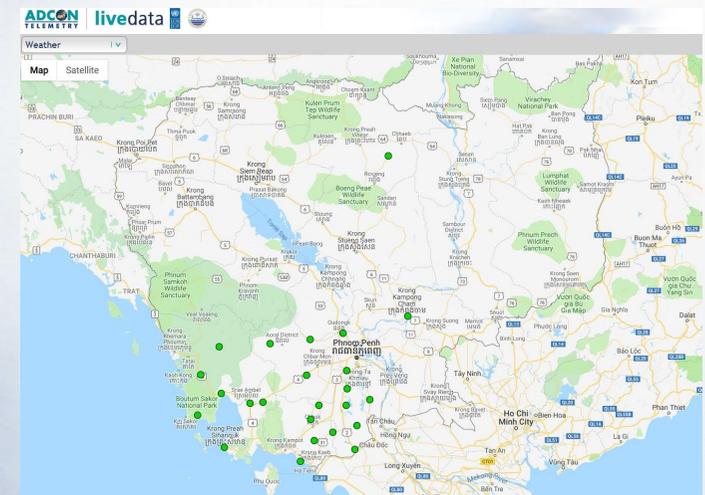
Cambodia's geographical exposure and the lack of adaptive capacity make it particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change. With over 80% of the population dependent on subsistence farming, rural populations are particularly exposed.

Floods in 2013 affected 1.7 million people, with an estimated loss of US\$ 356 million. In 2016, floods affected 2.5 million people. These events are precursors of the impacts of the changing climate. Climate information is essential to prepare farmers.

With support from UNDP and funding from the GEF-Least Developed Countries Fund, the project '[Strengthening Climate Information and Early Warning Systems](#)' is supporting the [Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology \(MoWRAM\)](#) to increase Cambodia's institutional capacity, to assimilate and forecast weather, hydrological and climate information, and to improve communities' access to reliable information and early warning systems.

Under the project, 24 automatic weather stations and 29 hydrological stations for surface and ground water have been installed across the country, integrating technology and placing communities at the heart of a people-centred early warning system.

Information from the stations will be key to generating early warning messages, both for planning and for disaster preparedness and emergency response.



Globally, 45 countries are developing and strengthening early warning systems, with 189 new end-to-end early warning systems established in 26 countries. With UNDP support, nearly 21 million people have improved access to reliable climate information and early warning systems.

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