

FNN Provincial Assembly in Kampot

On February 12, 2011, the Farmer and Nature Net (FNN) organized the provincial assembly on Agricultural Rice Co-operative Development at Dangtung district, Kampot province. More than 150 participants (whom 44 were female) from seven districts of the province, which include Kampong Trach, Angkor Chey, Banteay Meas, Chumkiri, Toeuk Chhou, Chhouk and Dangtung. The participants are leaders and representatives of 138 farmer associations and 4 Agricultural Rice Co-operatives of the province. Besides, were included deputy governors of five districts, commune chiefs/commune councilors of 21 communes, village representatives, CEDAC president, CEDAC Executive Director, FNN Director, FNF Program Manager and some local CEDAC staff.

The objectives of the assembly were (1) to present the activities results of the farmer associations in each district in 2010 especially the 4 agricultural rice co-operatives, (2) to reflect on the challenges of leading and managing their associations and cooperatives, (3) to reflect on the collaboration with local authorities and other stakeholders and (4) to elect new FNN provincial representatives.

After the opening remarks by the deputy governor of Dangtung district, FNN leaders of each district briefly presented about development results in 2010, which mainly focused on the following programs:

- Saving and credit program;
- Youth program;
- Women program;
- Bio-digester program;
- Natural resource conservation program;
- Saving Community for Prosperity program;
- Agricultural Rice Co-operatives program; and
- Farmer promoters program etc.

The presentations reflected the continuity of the activities at the local level after CEDAC projects finished. Besides, there were collective actions to build village road and water gates that facilitated by the farmer's associations. According to Dr. Koma, there are currently only two CEDAC programs in the province i.e. the Bio-digester program and technical support to vegetable producer groups. He is very proud to see farmers are able to work together in a sustainable manner via the farmer associations' network.

A young male farmer from Kampong Trach district made his impressions regarding the progress that he has observed in his district as follows:

- *Through farmer organizations, villagers are able to meet regularly in the saving groups, youth groups, and women groups etc. During meetings people always shared technical knowledge and important information. It helped to enhance the capability of farmers to speak in the public better and also able to facilitate the meeting.*
- *Farmers have better knowledge on land law, good governance issues, other stakeholders development programs through different kinds of workshops or trainings*
- *Saving for self-reliance, reducing the cash flow out of the community and promote self-help collective activities etc.*

After the presentations, floor was opened for questions and answers and comments from the local authorities as well. Some farmer's representatives mentioned about the challenges of leading the associations to meet the needs of farmers, while others raised about the paddy

price and the limited capacity of farmer cooperatives to have enough fund to purchase paddy from its members. Mr. Uon Sophal, FNN president and Dr. Koma, CEDAC president, provided answers with refer to challenges and constraints of the FNN, CEDAC and the Royal Government that currently facing and urged farmers to raise more local capital for cooperative business. In the afternoon, after the Q & A, the elections of new provincial representatives were organized. Each district nominated five members to cast the votes (37 voters in total). As result, three candidates were elected for the next three years mandate:

- 1. Mr. Uon Sophal, from Dangtung district, 32 votes
- 2. Mrs. Chey Siyat, from Kampong Trach district, 31 votes and
- 3. Mr. Mao That, 20 votes

Before the end, Dr. Koma informed the audience that CEDAC has implemented projects in 20 provinces (out of 24), in 90 districts (out of 185), in 600 communes (out of 1,621) and in around 3,000 villages (out of 13,000 villages). He is happy to see farmers are able to continue the activities despite some projects were ended. Three benefits could be earned via these collective actions: (1) spiritual; (2) information and knowledge and (3) resources (i.e. 2,000,000,000 riels were saved and used locally). This is the development approach of CEDAC to empower and develop communities with sustainable manner.

CEDAC really appreciated with FNN for making this assembly happened. Firstly, the assembly is organized by FNN and farmers themselves. Secondly, the farmer associations paid for costs of transportation by themselves as contribution. Meanwhile, the financial support was from the Canadian Cooperative Association (CCA) that main covered and used for solidarity lunch and dinner for all participants and CEDAC Bio-digester program responsible for other needed such meeting hall and so on.

The assembly ended at 4:30 pm after the closing remarks of the deputy governor of Kampong Trach district, following by solidarity dinner till 6:30 pm. *Uploaded by NOY Kimhong*

