



Stories of Change

A collection of stories to highlight **Morodok's** achievements from 1997 to a fully localised NGO in

2012





Content

Acknowledgements.....	1
Introduction	2
How we started	3
A message from the Executive Director.....	4
Morodok Vision, Mission, Objective.....	5
Where we work.....	6
The current situation.....	7
Fishing in paradise	8
Fishing public forum.....	9
Women in leadership.....	10
A Fight for the Forest	11
Savings by the Sea	12
The challenges of village life.....	13
Youth empowered	15
Buffalo pride.....	16
Beautiful forest, beautiful future	17
Rice trading business in stung hav	19
Agricltural improvement.....	21
Community groups, commune and technical officials are connected in problem solving.....	23
Conclusion	24

Stories of Change



Acknowledgements

Morodok would like to thank Ms. Deirdre Smith, Consultant, for researching Morodok's programmes and for writing up the Stories of Change.

We would also like to thank Ms. Carly Garonne, Morodok's Communications Assistant, for facilitating the writing process, and for interviewing and writing up the case stories found within. Also to Mr. Sum Song, Morodok's Administration Leader, for translating and assisting with the collection of case stories.

Thank you to all other key staff of Morodok for their support – providing information to support the research, offering ideas and suggestions, and for driving staff to visit the key informants.

We would also like to thank our donors for their support to our program, for this we are eternally grateful: American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), Evangelischer Entwicklungsdienst e. V. (EED), ICCOenKerkinActie (ICCO) and Diakonia.

A special thank you to our key informants for taking the time to share their stories.





Morodok

Introduction

Morodok is a local non-government organization (NGO) working in the coastal communities of the Kompong Som Bay region of Cambodia. We work to improve living conditions, strengthen solidarity, and create ownership for poor people living in the area.

Morodok operates in five target districts serving 17 communes, 80 villages and nearly 15,000 households. Our major goal is to promote and strengthen community group networks at the commune, district and regional levels. We work alongside local communities, specifically with small-holder farmers and women, to secure their rights in terms of land, forests and fisheries.

An essential part of our work is natural resource management. Morodok concentrates on building the capacity of women and youth, specifically in leadership and decision-making.



How we started

In 1997, the American Friends Service Committee (AFSC) started the Integrated Sustainable Livelihood Program (ISLP), based in Sre Ambel District, Koh Kong Province. At that time, no other NGOs were working in this sparsely populated insecure rural area.

The initial program offered a wide range of services, including agriculture, irrigation, credit, health and educational programs, however in 2001 AFSC/ISLP narrowed its focus to concentrate on assisting communities manage and protect their natural resources and improve their livelihood options.

AFSC believed that initiatives for change were most sustainable when inspired and managed by local leadership, so together with the program staff, AFSC developed a transition plan to build the capacity and create the structures necessary for the program to operate independently. By 2003, ISLP was completely staffed by Cambodians and in 2004 it adopted financial monitoring tools to enable staff to manage their own budget.

To prepare for full localization, in 2008 AFSC/ISLP organized a number of internal workshops for ISLP staff to explore how to become a local organization, and a 3-year localization plan was prepared. Staff developed their future vision and mission, and began a transition process in which the program developed its identity, policies, by-laws, governance structures and organizational capacity.

In April 2011, the ISLP team registered as a local NGO under the name Morodok. In Khmer, Morodok means ‘heritage’, ‘inheritance’ or ‘legacy’. According to Morodok’s by-laws, it is also an acronym for a phrase meaning “ways towards progress with transparency for inheritance of the next generation”.

AFSC officially handed over the program to Morodok in October 2011, with a handover ceremony in Sre Ambel on 5 October 2011. In the year following the handover, AFSC continued to provide advice and technical support (in addition to a small grant) to maintain a smooth transition and remain engaged with Morodok. AFSC’s financial support finished at the end of 2012.

There has been a seamless transition from the AFSC-owned project to Morodok, with the same staff implementing the program as before. In this document, we have used the name Morodok to refer to the program at all stages of its history.



A message from the Executive Director



The Kompong Som Bay region of southwest Cambodia has seen many changes since AFSC began working there in 1997, when it was the only organisation working in the area. Over the years, AFSC's efforts, through its ISLP, have seen poor villagers, who rely on using natural resources, unite to improve their standard of living through community projects and alternative income-generation schemes.

Now, after three years of carefully planned transition, AFSC has stepped back, allowing for the 'birth' of the fully localized NGO, Morodok. Morodok assumed responsibility of ISLP at the end of 2012.

This Stories of Change book documents the achievements of villagers in the region, and the transition of the program to a local NGO. They are just a few among many stories of success that we are proud to highlight.

Since 1997, ISLP has given poor families alternatives to natural resource exploitation by increasing their livelihood options. The project has seen villagers form interest groups and undertake small agricultural or business ventures. They organize community revolving funds to support these initiatives. Villagers also organize community groups to protect the forests and fisheries from overuse.

Now we are proud to say that villagers effectively participate in solving problems and conflicts over natural resources affecting their community and surrounding communities.

While we are proud of our achievements, there is still much work to be done. Despite successes, it is clear that the livelihoods of the local community cannot be sustained through natural resource management alone. The population is increasing, and new developments are putting additional pressures on natural resources. Alternative sources of income for the rural population need to be promoted so people can organize themselves into networks of small business entrepreneurs, and claim their rights to community economic development.

As Morodok, we look forward to many years of service among the communities of the Kompong Som Bay region.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'O' followed by a series of loops and a horizontal line at the end.

OUNG TIVEA
Executive Director, Morodok



Vision

Morodok envisions peaceful rural communities in Cambodia where people have equal rights and opportunities to manage and utilize natural resources in a sustainable fashion, for the improvement of their quality of life.

Mission

To improve living conditions, strengthen solidarity and create ownership for poor people in the coastal communities of Cambodia, through building their capacity, supporting their initiatives and facilitating dialogue between relevant actors.

Objective

To promote community empowerment toward socio-economic development through enhancing capacity of community groups (CBOs and livelihood groups) to participate in local democratization and good governance processes.



Where we work

Koh Kong province, located in the southwest coastal area of Cambodia bordering Thailand, is a sparsely populated, mostly forested area. In mid-1997, when the program began, Koh Kong received few government services and almost no international assistance, as it was considered a high-risk area. Armed groups, mostly former Khmer Rouge, still remained in the area and controlled large tracts of land and resources.

This region falls under various land tenure designations including environmental protected areas, logging and agricultural concessions, community forestry and fishery areas, small-urbanized areas and farmland – usually with no legal title. The area is environmentally diverse, with mountains covered in evergreen and deciduous forests, lowland seasonally flooded forests, rivers, freshwater wetlands and mangrove estuarine systems.

The living conditions of rural people in the program area depend significantly on the ecological integrity of the natural environment.

Traditional fishing villages around Kampong Som Bay have faced increasing pressure from mechanised trawlers that fish illegally in shallow waters, and from other illegal and destructive fishing practices. Despite some successes in increasing fish stocks through community fisheries, competition for fishery resources has forced families to seek alternative ways to generate income and maintain their livelihoods, such as making charcoal from mangrove timber and clearing mangrove forests to plant rice fields.

Other community groups have traditionally depended on forest resources such as hunting, logging, making charcoal and collecting non-timber forest products to sell. Agriculture in these areas is sporadic and basic.

Land ownership is an issue, with the majority of villagers having no clear title to their land. They have come to possess their upland farms by clearing and cultivating the land. Although they could claim ownership through customary rights, lack of legal recognition puts their land at risk of being taken from them.



The current situation

Villagers in Morodok's target areas have livelihood concerns that include low rice production, poor vegetable crop harvests and lack of crop diversity, high animal mortality and lack of access to suitable local financiers. As a result of these concerns, they all have similar seasonal food shortage periods and their household incomes are low. Compounding these factors are unemployed youth and low levels of literacy, particularly among women, as well as poor access to health services, clean water, and vocational training and education.

Morodok's interventions have been successful in enabling poor villagers to improve their income through organizing different agricultural production groups and business practices. There is now a real need to strengthen and sustain these practices through business networks and improving the entrepreneurship of poor families. Much of Morodok's success stems from getting people talking and understanding each other's needs and difficulties. Increasing understanding of alternative livelihood solutions for the poorest groups is an important issue for community participation and empowerment. Lack of communication has been identified as a major cause of conflict, as has villagers' limited knowledge of government policy and laws. Morodok helps people raise their concerns to the Government to address their problems and to look for solutions.





Stories of Change

Fishing in paradise

Chroy Svay commune is a little piece of untouched paradise. Walking along the crystal clear beaches lined with palm trees, you could easily assume life here would be idyllic. But many of the communities of Chroy Svay, who depend on fishery resources to support their livelihood, struggle to meet their basic needs.

Mrs. Norng Lim Heang, 41, understands the struggles of her community and is overcoming her own livelihood problems with help from Morodok.

Morodok supported the creation of the Chroy Svay Community Fishery in 2003, in cooperation with fishery officials and local authorities. It became officially recognized in 2005 by the Provincial Authority of Koh Kong. Since then, 523 families have become members of the community fisheries, located across six villages.

Mrs. Heang has been a member since the Chroy Svay Community Fishery was founded and has held the position of Deputy since 2009. Her main role is to mobilize people to meet and discuss the advantages of the fishery and provide advice on the effective use of fishery resources.

Morodok provides administrative support to the community fishery management team on how to apply their tasks and responsibilities. Mrs. Heang said this had 'really helped boost (her) confidence to manage the members'. They also assist the committee to develop their negotiation skills to communicate effectively with relevant authorities to protect their fishery resources.

Mrs. Heang said Morodok had played a strong role in encouraging women, like herself, to actively participate in all project activities. Women used to be scared of involvement in any work outside of the house and only stayed at home to look after the family. Mrs. Heang proudly said that 'women are now very active in my community and their husbands continuously encourage them to participate.'

Before Morodok came to this community, villagers primarily focused on fishing and rice cultivation to meet their livelihood needs. People have now improved their livelihoods through alternative means, such as raising animals. Previously, people were uneducated and ill-informed on social or political affairs concerning the environment. They now have a depth of understanding on fishery laws and the sustainable use of fishery resources.

In the future, the community fishery would like to establish signposts around the community boundaries and implement ecotourism in the area. With that crystal clear tropical beach in Mrs. Heang's backyard, ecotourism sounds extremely promising.



Fishing public forum

In August 2012, Morodok held a public forum to discuss fishery resource management around Kampong Som Bay. An overwhelming 225 people participated in the event, representing four different communities. Concerns were raised to the Directorate of Marine Fisheries, the Deputy of the Department of Fishery Development Affairs and the Deputy of the Administrative Department.

This forum is held twice a year and gives villagers the chance to have formal, organized discussions on illegal activity and conflict that has been continually occurring in the region.

Realizing that dialogue was needed with relevant parties, Morodok began the bi-annual forum in 2009 in cooperation with Kampong Som Bay Fishery officials, the Mlup Prumvihearhor Centre (MPC) and other NGO partners.

Mrs. Sous Siem, Morodok Team Leader for Stung Hav, was amazed at the villagers' participation during the August 2012 event.

"The community was able to raise various concerns about laws, fishery equipment use and methods, and conflict resolution between fishing groups," she said.

She said some fishers raised issues regarding blood-cockle raising and investment projects in the flooded mangroves.

Following the meeting, Mrs. Heang, the deputy of Chroy Svay Community Fishery, observed a significant decrease in illegal fishing. Before the forum, officials did not have a presence in the area, but now staff from the Koh Kong Department of Fisheries regularly patrol the region and positive changes have been noted across the bay. Fishery resources have increased as a result and the local people can now fish where they want.

Mrs. Heang believes the Fishing Public Forum was a great opportunity for local people to raise their concerns and show what resources they have, and what their problems are. Hearing details of basic law enforcement from the authorities was another benefit of the forum. Every question raised was answered appropriately and officials provided the information that was required. She was happy to receive a positive response from the experts.

Mrs. Heang said officials have carried through on all promises they made during the forum, with the fishery officer always calling the community to make sure the patrolling plan is in place.



Women in leadership

Mrs. Nou Chai is a role model for women in her community. As the Chief of the Koh Kchorng Community Fishery and an active woman among its 9 committee members, Mrs. Chai takes overall responsibility for the fishery's management, and is involved in patrolling activities, public forums and round table meetings with relevant actors. She regularly mobilizes villagers to organize meetings concerning the fishery.

Even before the fishery was established in 2000, some 95% of the villagers relied on fishing to meet their daily needs. Fish supplies began decreasing due to illegal fishing, and the local community was unable to generate income to feed their families. They had limited understanding of law enforcement.

The community fishery was established by Morodok to ensure the sustainable use of fishery resources. It has since received official recognition from local authorities and the Koh Kong Fishery Department Cantonment Director. In 2003, Morodok provided start-up capital to interest groups that were members of the community fishery to implement various projects as alternatives to fishing, such as credit groups, savings groups, pig raising, buffalo banks, sugarcane farming and rice banks. This has reduced the stress on fishing resources.

Currently, 255 families are supported by Morodok in three villages of Chikor Kraom commune. Mrs. Chai said illegal fishing has decreased by 70% and fishery resources have been increasing.

She also noted a big change in participation rates. She said villagers previously never participated at village level meetings, especially women. Now, when meetings are conducted villagers always come and contribute their ideas. And when people attend external trainings they always share what they have learnt with other villagers.

Mrs. Chai said they also now inform community fishery leaders and local authorities when they observe illegal activity.

"Before I became a member of the community fishery, I was an uneducated person. I did not know about social affairs. I only looked after my family and was scared to raise any concerns. After participating with the community fishery, I know the importance of social development participation, I know how to lead, manage and negotiate with external actors for my villagers needs. My husband (a farmer) always encourages me," Mrs. Chai said.

She said that to ensure sustainability, the community management team had created a list of future plans, such as putting up signposts on community boundaries, planting new mangroves and improving and training patrolling teams. The community also managed to get the plan approved, stamped and signed by officials as a part of the commune development plan.

With a smile on her face, Mrs. Chai said, "I am feeling very happy that Morodok has come and supported the community so far and I want Morodok to stay in the community to improve all villagers' capacity."



A Fight for the Forest

Nestled among the foothills of a beautiful mountain range, beside the waters of the Kompong Som River, lies a little village known as Bak Angrut. The villagers of Bak Angrut rely heavily on the forest for their livelihoods, and they continue to fight for rights over their land.

The majority of these villagers were former Khmer Rouge soldiers who were based here during the civil war. Once peace was stabilized, the village gained formal recognition by the government in 1996. At this time, all activity in the area was 'illegal' as there was no one to monitor land use. In 1999 the villagers mobilized in an attempt to gain legal recognition to use the forest. The villagers use the forest to collect timber to make handicrafts and find fruit for their own consumption, as well as to sell at the market.

As there are minimal jobs available in the area, the villagers rely almost exclusively on the forest to meet their daily needs. However, they must continually battle with external companies for rights over their land. A private company, which was given an economic land concession from the government, built a hydropower plant just a few kilometres from the village. The company had promised to build a school, hospital, roads and fishing lots, and provide power to the community; however, they have yet to act on their promises.

Mrs. Cheng Aun was one of five people, including four women, to establish a committee to discuss land protection. The committee's role is to:

- Patrol forest areas to prevent illegal activities
- Mobilize people for village meetings
- Raise issues in the community to the commune chief, village chief, organizational staff and government officials
- Directly educate villagers on topics such as forestry law, the advantages and disadvantages of using the forest, daily livelihoods affected by the forest and conflict resolution in the community.

Mrs. Aun explained that Morodok had assisted the villagers by providing capacity building on forestry laws, environmental laws and other relevant policies, as well as advice on communicating with government officials. She said Morodok had provided much-needed advice on conducting village meetings, as well as technical advice. She states that she "feels comfortable being able to approach Morodok whenever there is a problem, as I know that the organization will do what it can to support my community's needs".

Bak Angrut village has recently received official recognition over the use of natural resources from provincial and national authorities. It has been a long fight to win recognition, and the fight will continue, however, this acknowledgement from authorities has been a large step towards a more prosperous future.



Savings by the Sea

Based along the shores of Botum Sakor, an isolated community struggles to meet its daily needs. Proteal village, in Andoung Teuk district, is a seaside town where many families strive to meet their daily needs through collecting seafood such as fish, seashells, crabs and prawns. They struggle to generate any income, save money and provide for their children. But their lives are now beginning to turn around, as they have the opportunity to save money through Morodok's Community Revolving Fund (CRF). By establishing interest groups, the villagers are able to create alternative livelihoods, save money and build social capital.

The CRF in Andoung Teuk has been able to increase its original start-up capital by 19 million riel (US\$4,642) since 2008. The CRF covers Proteal village, as well as Ta Ok and Tamiek villages, and has seven committee members, including two women. They are responsible for the circulation of funds between 18 interest groups. The interests groups include:

- buffalo banks
- savings groups
- youth groups
- fishing producer groups
- animal-raising groups
- cash-crop producer groups

Morodok has supported this CRF by facilitating the establishment of new interest groups and monitoring them afterwards, advising them on effective bookkeeping, assisting the groups to put money in the bank, and facilitating any issues that may arise.

The CRF has improved villagers' livelihoods, as they can now initiate new projects to improve their living, they have the ability to borrow without interest, and social capital is enhanced through community discussion, which was not possible before.

Mr. Som Sophan has experienced personal gains from being a committee member for the CRF.

"I used to be scared to talk with people with more education than me and I was not able to solve problems in my community when I wanted to. But now I have the skills to do so and this makes me happy," he said.

Mr. Sophan has been trained by Morodok staff in leadership skills, management, bookkeeping and reporting skills. He recognizes that this has helped him "take charge of [his] responsibilities in the role of a committee member".

As the CRF is developing quickly, the committee plans to establish new interest groups and look for new markets for local products. With large volumes of resources available in the area, there are many opportunities for growth.



The challenges of village life

Mr. Long Say, 60, is a central figure in promoting the work of Morodok in Dang Peng commune, Sre Ambel. Mr. Say is deeply involved in his community through his role as chief of the Animal Health Association, and as a committee member of Khmer Traditional Ceremonies. Most importantly, he has been a keen promoter of Morodok's projects in this commune. He plays a key role in Morodok's support to animal raising by organizing the distribution of buffalo, cows and pigs among the villagers – based on the community's analysis of who is most in need.

Morodok has a long history in this commune, beginning in 1997 when the program was run by its predecessor AFSC. In the process of establishing themselves in the community, Morodok staff did extensive research in the region to truly understand the living conditions in the villages. They brainstormed ideas with villagers and advised them on different ways to develop their lives. Based on their severe level of poverty at the time, they were unable to articulate their needs, so Morodok needed to become more involved. The village was noted as a high priority for the organization's work, as it was evident the residents were extremely poor.

One of the main projects developed in this initial stage was the community water dam. The water dam, built in 1998, is successfully used by many villagers in farm and crop production. The dam covers a large area in the centre of the village for all to access. Mr. Say explained that a fishery officer comes to regularly check the dam to ensure its sustainability.

Mr. Say happily talked about the various areas Morodok supports in the commune. These include:

- capacity building
- provision of animal seeds, rice seeds, vegetable seeds
- training in fishing techniques
- training in medical treatment for animals
- study visits and external visits to gain experience

According to Mr. Say, before Morodok arrived, villagers used old, labour-intensive, traditional farming practices. Now, having learnt new farming techniques and received animals for labour, they have larger yields and less stress. Previously, villagers could produce only a little rice and had to borrow from large external businesses, but thanks to Morodok's rice bank scheme, there is now no need to borrow rice - they can produce it themselves and share it among their members.

However, there are still challenges. As the village is located close to the ocean, seawater



continually floods the farms, destroying the rice. There are also issues with the rice banks as some villagers tend to borrow the rice and only repay interest, unable to pay it back in full, as they are unable to produce efficient harvests. There is also a limited amount of fertilizer, as the villagers do not have the skills or knowledge to produce it effectively. External microfinance organizations often come to the village and many villagers borrow money, however they are not able to pay back the loans, and fall into debt.

The migration of younger generations in search of work is also a challenge for the village. Mr. Say explained that many younger people were moving to Phnom Penh or neighbouring countries looking for work, leaving a labour gap behind in the village.

Mr. Say observed the positive contribution that women were having in the area. Previously, women were not permitted to speak up for themselves, but now they have developed the confidence to be more assertive. This has been made possible thanks to gender training courses provided by Morodok staff. Mr. Say noted that the female villagers were now raising their own ideas and concerns to relevant actors, something he sees as a gain for the community.



Youth empowered

What do you get when you bring together a group of young people all committed to increasing their income? You get the dedicated Development Youth Group in Tamiek village of Andoung Teuk commune.

Miss Norng Tam, 18, is one of eight members, including seven females, of the youth group, which was created in April 2012. She was invited by Morodok to join a meeting where the staff talked about the advantages of saving money. She decided to join the group as she also wanted to practice more efficient savings.

Before joining the group, Miss Tam saved her money in a little box at home. However, she would constantly break it open and spend her entire savings at once, finding herself left with nothing. Miss Tam is grateful that she has had the opportunity to join the group where she can borrow money and receive interest on her savings.

She began generating income through fishing on the waters of Kampong Som Bay, however, since joining the savings group she has learnt alternative livelihood options. Her family now raises chickens and ducks, and has extended its farming land. She continues to work for a fishing group that pays her for labour. So far she has saved 105,000 riel (US\$26).

The savings group meets once a month to discuss how much each member has borrowed, how much they have in hand and how much interest they have made in the past month. They also discuss what they have used their money for.

Members use the money to buy fishing nets, feed for their animals or chickens to raise. Miss Tam enjoys seeing her peers being able to afford items that will increase their income in the future.

One of Morodok's focal areas is to work with youth in the target communities. Morodok understands that youth are the future of this region and it is important to get them involved in project activities; to empower them to achieve their goals.

Morodok provides capacity building to the youth in this community on the concept of savings, bookkeeping and how to initiate new livelihood options. The members have an opportunity to share ideas during meetings and raise their concerns.

In the future, Miss Tam would like to own her own business related to fishing. She would also like more villagers to become involved with the savings group.

"I can truly see the benefits of helping each other based on each other's needs. We have produced good social relations and I am feeling more educated now," she said.

"I'm happy to thank Morodok to support my group to save and I propose to Morodok to regularly follow up and assist the other groups just as they have done with mine."



Buffalo pride

During a meeting of villagers in Sre Ambel to discuss the future of buffalo banks, Mr. Saing Say surprised everyone when he suddenly jumped up and ran out of the room. Five minutes later he returned with his valued possessions – three strong, healthy buffaloes. One of these buffaloes had been given to him by Morodok as part of the buffalo bank scheme, and has since produced four calves. He has passed two calves on to other families and kept the others. He is very happy that he no longer has to use manual labour on his farm where he grows cash crops such as cassava and sugar cane that he sells to a private company.

When he was first given his buffalo he was concerned that he would not be able to care for it or keep it healthy, as he was very poor at the time. However, Morodok trained him in how to look after the buffalo appropriately, and offered him advice on effective treatment and training in food and water supply. Morodok also built a shelter for the buffalo, though this has since been destroyed and he has not been able to fix it as he lacks additional financial resources. Morodok also taught Mr. Say the importance of using a mosquito net for his family.

“I want to keep my buffalo forever as I am very thankful to Morodok for giving it to me to improve mine and my family’s livelihood,” Mr. Say said.

Mr. Say’s five children used to spend a great deal of time helping him on the farm, but now the buffaloes do the work and his children can go to school.

Educating his children was not possible before Mr. Say received the buffalo. He explained proudly that one of his children is working in Phnom Penh, one is studying in Koh Kong, and the rest study locally.

Mr. Say is also a committee member of Morodok’s rice bank scheme, with another three villagers. He sees the rice bank as an opportunity to build the capacity of the 43 rice bank families in growing and selling rice, as well as a way to build relationships in the community. This social capital is consolidated during regular quarterly meetings where members share information and advice with each other, discuss and review regulations, and remind each other of their relationship together to limit conflict. He reinforced the fact that he is committed to being open with other members in sharing information with them, and would not go against the rules in his contract.

Mr. Say expressed his great appreciation for Morodok and hopes that it will continue to support the families in his village.



Beautiful forest, beautiful future

Mr. Meas Chrean, 61, lives at the base of a beautiful eco-rich forest. He lives with his wife and five children, in a traditional Cambodian wooden house with chickens and pigs running around outside. He sits on the old rusty chair out the front, looking up to the forest ahead in the Tobcheang community forest.

Living in the region most of his life, Mr. Chrean has observed illegal activity fluctuate at various periods, however he noticed a heavy increase in activity from about 3 years ago. Illegal logging has been occurring steadily since then, as outside villagers have come to use this land for private means.

Morodok came to Mr. Chrean's village and formed the Tobcheang Community Forestry Committee, which gained official recognition in 2010. Morodok acted as a facilitator to help villagers create the committee, select the committee members and develop the rules and regulations. It continues to provide capacity building, which Mr. Chrean sees as a valuable learning opportunity. He also believes that Morodok's support to alternative livelihood options has been of great benefit to his community – judging by the amount of chickens and pigs running around his home, it is clear he is also benefiting from these alternatives to forestry.

When Mr. Chrean first became involved with the Community Forest he accepted the position of Deputy of the Committee, and has since been promoted to the role of Chief. The group is currently managed by seven members, including two women.

The community uses the forest to collect non-timber forest products, which are then exported to producers in Phnom Penh, Kampong Som and Sre Ambel. The products are used to make furniture and handicrafts. For one non-timber forest product, producers can earn 1000 riel (US\$0.25), of which 100 riel will go to support the community forestry committee.

Mr. Chrean views the recently constructed hydropower plant just down the road disapprovingly. Before building began, the company asked if it could research the area with the committee's participation; however the research, construction and development all went ahead without consulting the community. Many trees within the community's 3,064 hectares were destroyed to construct the hydropower plant. The community is concerned that this could happen again, which is why the villagers are committed to sticking together, to remain a force against outside interventions.



The group plans to use the remaining trees to build houses for families who cannot afford housing.

The community forestry committee has detailed plans for the future, including:

- Building a shelter for a patrolling team
- Introducing ecotourism
- Finding external support for capacity building on how to make handicrafts and furniture instead of having to sell the raw products to producers
- Developing a clear forestry management plan to get official land rights

“Since Morodok came along, I have improved my understanding of law enforcement and I am happy to have improved my ability to encourage people to join in forestry meetings,” Mr. Chrean said.

He said he can now communicate effectively with relevant actors, which he could not do before, and explained that community members are now actively protecting community forests and are energetic about implementing other projects supported by Morodok.



Rice trading business in stung hav

The people of Tumnob Rolok commune have long depended on the resource-rich fishing grounds of Kampong Som Bay for their livelihoods, particularly those living in the village of Phum 2.

Phum 2 is one of five villages in the commune, part of Stung Hav district, Preah Sihanouk province. Tumnob Rolok means 'sea waves' or 'embankment'. There are about 253 households, with 1,266 people (including 629 women) living there.

The majority of the villagers are fishers, some of whom are registered members of the community fishery. The fishery protects the fishing grounds in Kampong Som Bay. In recent years, more and more fishers have migrated from other provinces to the region for fishing and as time has gone on, fish resources have declined. Fishing has become a very difficult business for the villagers, especially for the poor families.

Alternative income generation activities have been adopted and tried out by some of the villagers in Phum 2; however they face many challenges starting new businesses, such as lack of capital, vocational skills and knowledge on business practices.

In 2007, Morodok began a program to assist and support community groups in Stung Hav district, both to ease the conflict over fisheries among people in Stung Hav and surrounding communities, and to alleviate pressure on the use of marine resources. The program introduced poor villagers to alternative activities to fishing, to generate income.

Morodok helped villagers organize different interest groups, such as savings, pig and chicken raising and small business. In 2010, Morodok assisted 52 poorest households, including 40 women, in Phum 2 to organize a collective business on rice trading. There are 195 family members (including 84 women) who benefit from the collective business. In February 2010, staff helped coordinate the group to mobilize its own capital, with each member contributing 50,000 riel (US\$12.50) as shares. Morodok contributed 3,990,000 riel (US\$997.50) to be used as revolving capital. This rice trading business started with the initial capital of 5,590,000 riel (US\$1,397.50). There are 5 people in charge of the business, with one Morodok staff member attached to the group as an advisor, but with no decision-making power.

By September 2010, the group had made a profit of 2,265,000 riel (US\$566.25). There are more than 100 clients associated with rice dealing, while an additional 10 poor families applied to be new members of the collective business.

Mrs. Hem Sokha, 29, is a member of the rice trading business living in Phum 2 with her husband and two children.



“Before I joined the rice trading group, I and my husband only earned a daily income through selling our labour, through fishing work, cleaning fishing nets, sea fish processing, and so on – but now my family has additional source of income,” Mrs. Sokha said.

“Since my family became a member of the rice trading group, I can buy rice for daily consumption with fair price and good rice quality,” she added.

Mrs. Sokha said that in this region, when the sea climate was bad, fishers could not go fishing.

“Most poor people like me and my husband do not have a job to do and also have no income; however, since my family became a member of the rice trading group I could also get some rice on loan for household consumption”.

“As a member of the group, my family feels very safe from hunger, and has a food security measure when my family has no job; I would see my group has a kind of internal rule and regulation in helping, caring and sharing with each other for a better life; and we all trust each other in business,” Mrs. Sokha said.

Members of the group can acquire a loan of two to three sacks of rice to support running a local food shop.

Smiling at her children, Mrs. Sokha said she was “really happy” to be a member of the rice trading group.

“I can get some part of the profit to support my children better. They can go to school and I can improve my household food consumption.”

The rice trading business in Phum 2 has been recognized as a good model to improve livelihoods for poor households.

Some members of the rice trading group said, “even though we are fishers, rice security could be one of the other measures for supporting our fishing business and other livelihood practices.”

Mrs. Seu Eav, 56, is a group leader in managing the rice trading business.

“I love my job as leader in the rice trading business,” she said. “I always call for group meetings to share information about the capital invested, income, expenses and profit to all members in the group. I also encourage discussion among group members to think of how to expand the business.”

“I observed that currently the rice price in the Tumnob Rolok is stable, our rice shop and other shops have similar selling rice price and quality, and now villagers can have better choice to buy rice. In future I want to discuss plans with my group about sustainable management of the rice trading business and its development,” Mrs. Seu said. “The stronger we could mobilize our resources, the better chance for our group to grow up and have a fair business competition.”



Agricultural improvement

Crop production

In 2010, to promote income generation for rural community groups through intensive cultivation, staff assisted and supported 12 of the poorest villagers, including eight women, in Sre Ambel district. They organized three interest groups in sugarcane and rice production. There were 68 family members who benefitted from the projects.

The groups mobilized funding support: they contributed their own capital of 3,560,000 riels (US\$890), and Morodok contributed 2,941,000 riels (US\$735.25). Staff introduced technical know-how, provided information on marketing and helped the groups develop internal rules and regulations for group management.

The groups agreed to pass on the capital provided by Morodok to the next waiting group in two or three instalments (50% or 33% each time) by the end of the project.

The crop production groups organized equal labour between men and women for cultivation activities, such as preparing the field, transplanting, applying fertilizer, managing water, and pest control measures.

Mr. Moss Phan, 45, was a group leader of a rice cultivation project in Saray village, Chroy Svay commune. He talked about the system of rice intensification, which they were piloting for the first time in this region:

“In previous times, the villagers used to do rice cultivation following their traditional practices. Since we started using the new cultivation techniques, many neighbouring villagers came to visit and learn from the production group”.



Animal raising

From April to September 2010, staff assisted 78 of the poorest villagers, including 36 women, to organize 11 animal raising and production groups. There were 355 family members who benefitted from the projects. Villagers and Morodok contributed money to be used as revolving capital. Commune councillors and technical officials signed agreements committing themselves to assisting the projects through technical advice and official oversight.

During the previous six months, October 2009 to March 2010, staff had assisted 27 villagers, including 22 women, to initiate six chicken and pig raising groups in two districts. There were 162 family members who benefitted from those projects.



Ms. Phav Sophear, 32, from Triek village, Sre Ambel commune, was recognized as an active vet and leader by members of the animal groups and the VAHW Association. She shares new knowledge with members of the animal raising groups, as well as with her VAHW colleagues.

"Quite a while ago I gained my knowledge on animal raising and management techniques from Morodok. Through daily practice, I have now improved my veterinary service, and have more clients."

Sophear has been successful with her chicken demonstration project, supported by the Commune Council Fund. She uses chicken dung to grow vegetables near her house.

"Chicken dung is a very good natural fertilizer for growing vegetables. These skills and knowledge from Morodok are very useful for poor villagers who have little cultivated land for improving their livelihood. I will share my knowledge on chicken raising with my relatives and with the other poor villagers... It is a good way to improve one's livelihood for a better future."

Staff gave the interest groups nine training sessions on animal health care and management, and conducted regular monitoring meetings to reflect on progress of the projects. They covered measuring animal weight and checking the number of chicks, among other things. Staff assisted meetings of the Pharmacy group to check their business record books (stock in-out, income, expenses and profit and loss).

9 women were elected as group leaders for the 17 animal raising groups and there were two women-only groups (10 women in total). They were the first to earn income from selling pigs and to pass on the first tranche of revolving capital to the Community Revolving Fund committee. The groups bought 15 new piglets to start the second pig-raising cycle.

The projects became an attractive model for other villages in the area. Some neighbours said they wanted to organize new waiting groups to receive revolving capital for animal raising projects.

To better promote suitable and accessible animal health services for animal raiser groups, staff helped 28 Village Animal Health Workers (VAHWs) in the region (eight of which were women) to establish a pharmacy for medicine, vaccines and other veterinary supplies. The group has been able to maintain good cooperation and relations with the veterinary officials at provincial level, as well as the private sector, on medical supplies. The profits from the pharmacy ensured the sustainability of the program.



Community groups, commune and technical officials are connected in problem solving

There are 150 families living in Pang village of Dong Peng commune, and 140 families in Chamcar Krom village of Sre Ambel commune. The villagers live closely together and share the natural resources and non-timber forest products, forests, water, and fishery resources. The main coping strategy of villagers are rice farming, fishing and collecting non-timber forest products, such as tree branches, rattan, vines and herbs to build their houses, make poles and fences, build animal cages and to use as medicines and firewood.

Each family occupies about 0.4 ha of rice fields, but as the population has increased, the villagers have needed more land for rice cultivation. The villagers needed to expand their cultivated land into an area that has been designated a National Protected Area by the Ministry of Environment and were concerned about future land use for younger generations.

In response to the villagers' concerns, Morodok staff arranged for the villagers to meet environmental officials and commune councillors. As part of their ongoing assistance to help the community, staff assisted villagers to work together with commune and technical officials to develop a proposal requesting the establishment of a Community Protected Area for Preang and Chamkar Krom villages of Sre Ambel Commune. This has since been approved at the provincial level and has meant that the villagers can now cultivate rice within the designated Protected Area.

In the past, people in these villages perceived technical officers as 'the enemy'. Officials often confiscated items or fined people who cleared forests, or collected poles and other non-timber forest products. Villagers became angry when their things were confiscated or when they felt threatened by officials. As these problems were never addressed, tension grew between villagers, commune officials and technical officers.

Morodok staff approached each group and helped them consider possible solutions, encouraging them to participate in meetings and strive for a resolution. As a result, some ongoing activities have been implemented between villagers, commune councils and technical officials, conflict has reduced, and the community can talk directly and more effectively with officials.



Conclusion

These Stories of Change highlight just a small proportion of the successful ventures Morodok has seen come to life since 1997. Our program has evolved over time, from humble beginnings to where we are today – a stand-alone local NGO reaching out to empower people in some of the poorest areas of Cambodia.

We are grateful to AFSC for its unwavering support, and for making our transition to independence a smooth one.

Of all the changes we have seen since 1997, whether they be social or economic, by far the most important change is in the people of the Kompong Som Bay region themselves. Community groups want to participate in alternative income generation, they truly desire, and work towards, peaceful conflict resolution, they are empowered to take action to improve their livelihoods, and they believe in themselves.

At Morodok, we plan to continue along this path in the coming years, aware of the changes and challenges that face us. We will adapt to the changing context so that these success stories will grow and the people of these communities will prosper.







អង្គការមរតក

MORODOK ORGANIZATION

Registration no (Mol): No. 495 (Sor Chor Nor)
c/o AFSC Phnom Penh
PO Box 64/CCC Box 5
Phnom Penh, Cambodia
email: oungtivea@gmail.com
phone: +855 (0) 35 940 740
www.morodok.net