

# Our Action, Our Voice!

Newsletter, Issue 001

## Community Fishery Network and Livelihood



Trapeang Sangkea is one of the community fisheries in Kampot, established on 10th July 2009.<sup>5</sup> Sen Nos, Deputy-chief of Trapeang Sangkae Community Fishery (CFi) shared that the purpose is to protect mangrove forests and fishing grounds. He and one other initiator see that having proper regulation, the natural resources within the community will be protected and conserved. The CFI also aim to prevent unregulated use of land and marine resource by the company's economic activity. According to sub-decree on Community Fisheries Management (2005), Article 12 states that

*Community fisheries have no right to sell, exchange, rent, donate, share, divide, borrow, pawn or transfer community fishing area at all and in any form.<sup>6</sup>*

**K**ampot and Kep are the coastal provinces in the Southern part of Cambodia. Kampot is among one of the largest seagrass beds in the South China Sea.<sup>1</sup>

The seagrass beds in Kampot is among the most extensive coastal ecosystems and stretches approximately 50km along the Kampot coastline, extending through Kep and further past the Vietnamese border in Hat Yien.<sup>2</sup> Those rich resources have supported the ecosystem and livelihood of thousands of households relying on fishing.

However, these provinces have become high potential in tourism development projects in the last 10 years. Those provinces have been attracting local and international investors and developers' attention. Many development projects, such as hotels, casinos, resorts, restaurants, factories and economic zones, grow in those areas. In recent years, 4 major development projects have been set for a significant change in the face of Kep city.<sup>3</sup> Many landfills have started since the rapid rise of mega development and commercial projects, which have affected biodiversity, seagrasses, mangroves and the loss of marine species.

Marine resources play a significant role in supporting the socio-economic condition of local people and the national economy. Marine resources, including the corals, mangroves and seagrasses, are the key habitat for fisheries in terms of food, migration, breeding, etc. Higher fishery production is a good indicator of the richness of marine natural resources.

In Kampot and Kep province, the livelihood of Community Fisheries (CFi) depends on access to and control over their land and natural resources. Community fishery members rely on earning their income through ecotourism and fishing. However, since the economic activity<sup>4</sup> increased, several CFis experienced land encroachment, land and marine resource degradation, and the risk of relocation from the land and the city.



In 2018, Kampot Provincial Community Fishery (CFi) Network, consists of nine community fisheries, was established and registered under the Ministry of Agriculture of Forestry and Fisheries and Kampot Fisheries administration Cantonment with its official By-law in 2020. This network was built to contribute to the sustainable management, protection, and conservation of coastal fisheries resources, natural resources, and the marine environment for the better Livelihood and economy of the community members.

<sup>1</sup>Supkong, P. and Bourne, L. (2014). A survey of seagrass beds in Kampot, Cambodia. [https://www.academia.edu/14184082/A\\_survey\\_of\\_seagrass\\_beds\\_in\\_Kampot\\_Cambodia](https://www.academia.edu/14184082/A_survey_of_seagrass_beds_in_Kampot_Cambodia)

<sup>2</sup>ActionAid Cambodia. (2021). Report of Environmental and Social Impact Assessment Impact of Development Projects on Marine Environmental Resources. <https://cambodia.actionaid.org/publications/2021/report-environmental-and-social-impact-assessment>

<sup>3</sup>Khmertimes. (2023, June 15). Four Major Development Projects changing the face of Kep. Khmertimes. <https://www.khmertimeskh.com/501308848/four-major-development-projects-changing-the-face-of-kep/>

<sup>4</sup>According to CCHR Fact Sheet, in 2018, OMNI Kampot Development, a private company that has an ambitious plan to establish a resort hub, including an artificial island in Kep. The ambitious plan will cover almost 4,000 hectares of land in Kampot's Tuek Chhou district, Kampot province, and Kep City, Kep province came to threaten several CFI living in the area, including Kampong Samaky, Trapeang Sangkae of Kampot, and Phum Thmei, Kampong Tralach and Ou Krasar CFI of Kep. While CHING KOR project will cover 640 hectares, overlapping with two community fisheries in Kampot Province.

<sup>5</sup>Community fisheries were formally publicised by Royal Decree in 2005.

<sup>6</sup><https://www.ajne.org/sites/default/files/resource/laws/7210/sub-decree-80-on-community-fisheries-management.pdf>



# Women in Leadership



**T**he disaster has increased, and its impact became severe as years passed. According to World Risk Report 2022, Cambodia ranked 65th out of 192 countries, indicating

the high-risk level and prone to disasters such as floods and drought. In coastal areas, many houses blew away and the fishing boats and tools of fisherfolk were destroyed because of storms and the strong winds. The drought and heavy rainfall affected farmers' paddy fields and crops, causing animals' deaths and food shortages. Women and children face difficulty in access to clean water due to the long distance to water sources. Additionally, women have little or limited opportunity to speak up and voice their issues and concerns.

In 2016, with the support from Children and Women Development Center in Cambodia (CWDC), five Women Champions<sup>10</sup> were first selected in Kampot and the following year, more of them were selected in Pursat with the support from Rural Friend Community for Development (RFCD) and was expanded to Koh Kong and Kompong Thom in 2020.

The purpose of this network is to enhance women's capacity to engage and mobilise, to participate and carry out actions in awareness raising, campaign, lobby and advocacy on gender-related issues in disasters and climate change of the Commune Investment Plans and budgeting.



" Frankly, I hesitated to accept the role as a Woman Champion. In the early days when we were asked to conduct the community outreach activities, I was really nervous to talk to people in public, and I felt small comparing to other women leaders. Besides, my family's economic condition was not favorable enough for me to leave the house."

-- Mom Chanthoern

Continued to Page 3



Continued from Page 1

The creation of the network is under the purpose of mobilising fisherfolks to participate in maintaining, protecting, managing, and conserving natural resources in their community fisheries areas. Additionally, it aims to promote their equitable access and control over community fisheries and natural resources, reinforcing community solidarity, strengthening joint advocacy actions to protect fishery resources from commercial exploitations and land grabbing, building community members' capacity in terms of laws and regulations related to the conservation are set to be the cornerstones in empowering their influential participation and securing the CFI domains for sustainable livelihoods. The network conducts monthly, quarterly, and semester meetings to monitor the growth and problems within each community. Mr. Sen Nos, the representative of the network mentioned the network also facilitates communication between the communities and government and NGOs.

The network plays an essential role in amplifying the voice of the CFIs', Human Right Defenders' (HRDs) and CJs' (Citizen Journalists) needs and rights and building solidarity with other provincial networks. It also addresses issues and challenges and reports positive changes at the sub-national and national platforms, such as the National Advocacy Conference (NAC) on Land and Natural Resources Governance and the regional Conference in Coastal provinces.

Community's understanding of law related to illegal fishing and land tenure rights has improved through their engagement with the network. "People won't take justice into their own hands anymore and try to follow the procedure when dealing with illegal fishing," Sen Nos explained.

Since establishing fishing communities and networks, the communities have been able to halt invasive development plans from private companies. "We used to do demonstrations against private companies. Now we use the law to counter them."

Currently, the "Omni Kampot" company is what worries the community. This company plans to turn 3,190 hectares of land into tourist attractions. This

plan will harm five fishing communities in Kampot and Kep, Trapeang Snagkea. Sen Nos said the development plan has gone quiet however, he doesn't believe the company would stop the development plan. "I am most worried about big companies like this one."

OMNI and CHING KOR project operation have been put on hold. OMNI Project covers 3,910 hectares, which overlaps with five community fisheries, while the CHING KOR project covers 640 hectares, which coincides with two community fisheries in Kampot Province. Should the construction start, the new artificial island will affect more than 6,000 hectares of marine resources, most of which are the sources of Livelihood for more than 5,504 families.



Credit photo: VOD7

Large-scale development projects need to be proper standards and transparency in the Environmental and Social Impact Assessment to ensure that people fully understand the projects and their impact. According to Article 7 in Chapter III of the Law on Environmental Protection And Natural Resource Management (1996), every investment project application and proposed project which are submitted by the state shall enclosed with them a preliminary Environmental Impact Assessment or Environmental Impact assessment as stated the Article 6 of this law.<sup>8</sup> Article 7, the Ministry of Environment shall consider and make recommendations on the preliminary Environmental Impact Assessment or Environmental Impact Assessment to relevant competent bodies within a period as determined in the law on Investment of the Kingdom of Cambodia.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>7</sup>Danielle Keeton-Olsen and Mech Dara ( 2021, Sep 17). Reclaimed Land, Lost sea. VOD : <https://vodenglish.news/kampot-kep-coasts-cluttered-with-sandfilling-plans-developments/>

<sup>8</sup>Law on Environmental Protection And Natural Resource Management, <https://data.opendevelopmentmekong.net/dataset/bd97246-gf42-4579-9f70-fc9d02b4a7/resource/9d42dc32-17bb-42fe-82ce-03a9db525eb/download/303c2a33-769e-44e6-948e-2275c4f863c2.pdf>

<sup>9</sup>Law on Environmental Protection And Natural Resource Management, <https://data.opendevelopmentmekong.net/dataset/bd97246-gf42-4579-9f70-fc9d02b4a7/resource/9d42dc32-17bb-42fe-82ce-03a9db525eb/download/303c2a33-769e-44e6-948e-2275c4f863c2.pdf>

<sup>10</sup>Women Champions are selected from women volunteers in the community and women from sub-national levels to contribute to climate change resilience and respond to gender responsiveness in local communities.





Continued from Page 2

Sen Nos, he implores the government to conduct environmental and social impact evaluation thoroughly before approving any development projects. He and many others are dependent on the land and marine resources in the areas. Furthermore, natural resources like mangrove trees and seagrasses are beneficial to the whole world, not just its communities. "Protecting mangrove trees is good for the trees can produce 1 ton of oxygen. If it's all gone, it affects the whole world" he mentioned.

Environmental Impact Assessment Process was formally publicised by the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) in 1999, and it requires every private and public project to undergo an Environmental Impact Assessment. The project and assessment report must be reviewed, by the Ministry of Environment, prior to the submission for a decision from the RGC and that the projects take into account of the findings and recommendations and input them in the project conceptual design.

# From A Low Self-Esteem Groceries Seller to a Confident Deputy Village Chief

**"F**rankly, I hesitated to accept the role as a Woman Champion. In the early days when we were asked to conduct the community outreach activities, I was really nervous to talk to people in public, and I felt small comparing to other women leaders. Besides, my family's economic condition was not favorable enough for me to leave the house", said Mom Chanthoeurn, a 61-year-old single mother of four sons, who was selected as a Woman Champion in 2017.

"But the support from the fellow women champions and especially the appreciation and the continuous support from the villagers made me realize my own value and the worth of my contribution to this community", she added.



Chanthoeurn lives in Sthani village, Svay At sangkat, Pursat city, Pursat province. She has a grocery shop at her house and the shop will be closed when there is no one home.

People outside the village would find it hard to believe that this flat area of her village, which is only a few hundred meters away down from the National Highway, would turn into a completely flooded area where the residents need to use boats to commute or to be evacuated to a safe area during the flooding season.

Back in 2006, when the severe floods strike the village, the people living here were not prepared for it neither knew where or how to move to a safer area. Only after a night, the water entered the village from another village unexpectedly and spread over the whole area. Such floods would sweep away villagers' properties on the ground, especially their crops and animals resulting in a huge scale of losses. During that time, she also suffered from the unpredictable rising level of water around her house causing damage to her kitchen and groceries inside her shop almost entirely.

After the Women Champion were selected, Action-Aid Cambodia and partner, RFCD, had provided capacity development to the selected women candidates on disaster preparedness and prevention, and promoting women's participation in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) work, specifically women leadership, women's rights, and gender equality.



At that time, I joined the training courses only because I thought I could earn some money and cover some cost of my daily meals." Chanthoeurn expressed.

After various training courses, exchange workshops, exposure visits to different places, national and internal forums she had joined, Chanthoeurn has developed her proposal writing skills, and significantly, she has built up her confidence in speaking and sharing in public on several topics, for instance, disaster preparedness and COVID-19 infection prevention and control.





She added, *“I am braver than before; I am confident when talking to local authorities and community people. And when I raise awareness in the village, I am not afraid as I used to be.”* She now understands the value of her work, and is more than happy to voluntarily help her community without expecting anything in return. In 2020, when the village was hit by floods again, Chanthoeurn and other women champions worked closely with the local authorities and carried out the relief operation in the harder-hit area.

With her knowledge of the geography of the village, the rescue team was able to help those who lived on the lower-land part move to a higher ground safely and in time. According to her, that year, the information and warning of the floods were shared widely in the community, so the villagers were well-prepared and got ready when the flood arrived. This is the result of the awareness raising and sharing on disaster preparedness that is conducted by the women champions network in collaboration with local authorities.

Today, Chanthoeurn is a deputy chief of her own village. She was nominated by 5 community representatives, village chief and the commune chief in 2019. She is also an active member of women champion network in Pursat. She proudly said, *“I wouldn’t have been where I am today if it was not for our women’s solidarity, their humbleness, and all kinds of support they provided to me.”*

**act:onaid**

ActionAid Cambodia  
 #33, Street 71, Sangkat Tonle Bassac  
 Khan Chamkarmon, Phnom Penh, Cambodia  
 Tel: +855 23 211 462  
 Email: e-mail.cambodia@actionaid.org

Follow Us

🌐 <https://cambodia.actionaid.org>

📘 @actionaidcambodia

📧 @actionaidcambodia

📺 @actionaidcambodia1915

🌐 @actionaidcambodia

🐦 @ActionAidCambod