

Rural Development through self-sustaining capacity and Empowerment

Context

The HEKS/EPER Country Programme in Cambodia supports projects by local partner organizations in six provinces. The aim is to ensure food security for the rural population and strengthen their empowerment with the objective to promote sustainable rural development.

The rural exodus is a major problem in Cambodia. Unable to find paid employment in the countryside, ever more young people migrate to urban centres. Villages therefore lack essential labour force. HEKS/EPER's projects aim to create employment opportunities and new income sources in rural areas. The building of irrigation canals in remote villages is one example.

Cambodia has a very young population. Basic and continuing training is therefore a key component of HEKS/EPER's projects.

Objectives, priorities, activities

The HEKS/EPER Country Programme aims to guarantee the right to food in all project areas. This implies a quantitative as well as qualitative increase of agricultural yields. Due to the fact that irrigation facilities are still sparse in remote Cambodia, most smallholder farmers depend on rainwater. Over the past years smallholder farmers increasingly faced extreme climatic conditions such as extreme droughts and floods. HEKS/EPER therefore supports the construction of irrigation and drainage canals so that farmers can harvest rice twice per year.

HEKS/EPER also promotes the training of local farmers in sustainable agriculture and integrated organic farming. At a small agricultural centre in Prey Veng farmers for example learn how to achieve good harvests without using chemicals.

HEKS/EPER also supports a local agricultural research centre in developing resilient and context-adapted vegetable and rice seeds.





Politically, Cambodia is at an advanced stage of decentralization. Political participation mechanisms exist but are hardly being used by the local population owing to ignorance or lack of trust. HEKS/EPER encourages and facilitates a trustful dialogue between the duty bearers and rightholders so that in future the latter can take more ownership of their own development and hold the duty-bearers accountable.

Target groups

Smallholder farmers and rural communities

Partnerships, networks, alliances, memberships

HEKS/EPER Cambodia is a member of the «NGO Forum on Cambodia for local and international organizations dealing with land and livelihood programs», the Disaster Risk Reduction Forum and of ACT Alliance. HEKS/EPER also works with local networks to promote organic farming.

HEKS/EPER on the ground

HEKS/EPER operates a coordination office in Cambodia with eight staff members who support partner organizations and monitor project work. The staff of the HEKS/EPER office are responsible for regular reporting on project work and for ongoing monitoring of quality and outcomes. They are also responsible for communicating with authorities, coordination with other aid agencies and for organizing and participating in events.

Progress

HEKS/EPER has been working in Cambodia for over 30 years now and has evolved both thematically and structurally over time. The focus was initially on refugee work. Currently, the priority is rural development and the sustainable improvement of agricultural production. Besides, in contrast to past practice, cooperation with local partner organizations in project implementation is now of central importance to HEKS/EPER.

One important change in the 2014–2017 programme phase is the greater emphasis on conflict management and peacebuilding. An outside study of HEKS/EPER projects has revealed that to date conflicts within the rural population and with local authorities have been insufficiently recognized and addressed. In the new phase HEKS/EPER projects will therefore place more emphasis in strengthening trust within communities and encourage the empowerment of the local civil society.

Country:

Cambodia

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