



AUSTRALIAN EMBASSY PHNOM PENH

21 July 2020

Samdech Prime Minister Hun Sen visits Australian Government-funded irrigation scheme in Takeo

On Tuesday 21 July, Prime Minister Hun Sen together with Minister of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries Veng Sakhon and other ministers visited Prey Kabbas district in Takeo province to see demonstrations of modern farming machinery and a recently constructed irrigation scheme, accompanied by the Australian Ambassador to Cambodia, Pablo Kang.

“Agriculture has always been the backbone of the Cambodian economy and a safety net for the Cambodian people,” Ambassador Kang said.

“As a friend and neighbour, Australia is building on decades of support for Cambodian agriculture to respond to the impact of COVID-19. As many Cambodians face hardship and uncertainty at this time, Australia is proud to play a role in supporting Cambodia’s food security and its economic resilience.”

Ta Soung is a complete irrigation scheme built by the Australian Government-funded *Cambodia-Australia Agricultural Value Chain Program* (CAVAC). Ta Soung is connected to the Prek Ambil river – and uses a single pump station to transport water through almost 50 kilometres of canals and field channels directly into farmers’ fields.

Before the scheme was built in 2017, most of the 970 farming households in Ta Soung could only grow one rice crop each year, using the receding waters from the annual flood. Farmers now produce two or three crops each year, more than doubling their agricultural income. Water costs have reduced almost threefold, and average rice yields have grown from 4 to 5.5 tonnes per hectare.

CAVAC has constructed ten such schemes in Takeo, Prey Veng, and Kandal provinces since 2016. Collectively, they irrigate 9,000 additional hectares each year and have doubled rice production, representing about USD 10 million of additional income for farmers annually.

CAVAC works with Provincial Departments of Water Resources and Meteorology to establish and train Farmer Water User Communities (FWUCs) to take responsibility for managing the scheme when operations begin.

Australia is committed to quality infrastructure that meets the needs of the communities it serves. Australia is now working with the Cambodian Government and other stakeholders to apply the lessons from CAVAC to other irrigation schemes in Cambodia.

In addition to sustainable irrigation services, CAVAC is supporting agricultural mechanisation, encouraging the use of better-quality seed and appropriate inputs, and promoting investment in higher value crops and agro-processing. These strategies – implemented with both the RGC and the private sector – are key to the modernisation of Cambodian agriculture which will support economic resilience in the face of COVID-19 challenges.

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Photo: Chin Saosereymony



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