

PROJECT UPDATE

A NEWSLETTER FROM THE NEXT GENERATION
AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION PROJECT



Collaborative learning

FROM BRIAN COOK

PHOTO: LITA MOM - HOUSEHOLD CENSUS DATA COLLECTION

Hello/Chom Reap Sour (ជំរាបសួរ) from the research team of the *Next Generation Agricultural Extension Project: Social relations for practice change*. This quarter we have been exchanging knowledge and learning with our partners on-site and online. Team members have delivered research methodology lectures in-person at the National University of Battambang and have participated in ongoing reflexive learning sessions using a photo diary methodology. In this issue we also take a closer look at the work of Sophanara Phan, a research team member from our project partner, the Department of Agriculture, Pailin Province.

Project Overview

FROM CAITLIN FINLAYSON

This project aims to produce an innovative model of agricultural extension founded on expanding enabling social relations, which will complement and/or replace existing models of extension based on the provision of technology, capital and information.

Duration: January 2021 to December 2026

Target Areas: Cambodia

Budget: AUD\$4.5million

Project Leader: Dr Brian Cook, University of Melbourne

Working with the next generation

FROM THONG TRAN AND VAN TOUCH

PHOTOS: THONG TRAN - LECTURING AT NUBB AND GROUP PHOTO WITH RESEARCH PROJECT OFFICERS

In November 2022, Dr Thong Tran visited Battambang. Working alongside Dr Van Touch, Dr Ariane Utomo, A/Prof. Brian Cook and our partners at the National University of Battambang (NUBB) delivered lectures on qualitative, quantitative and mixed-methods research approaches from a social science perspective.

15 undergraduate, 20 postgraduate, and 5 NUBB staff attended the 2-day research methodology course. Our research project officers (Sopheha, Chariya, Saroeut, Sinuon, Sao, Pherom) from Partners for Rural Development also took part (as pictured together with Thong and Van in the middle image).

Course content included:

- An introduction to qualitative research methods (including interviews, participant observations, focus group discussions)
- Planning and designing qualitative research
- Qualitative data analysis using NVivo software
- An introduction to quantitative research methods (including sampling types and procedures, questionnaire types and designs, and data types and recording)
- Quantitative data analysis using R software

Dr Pao Srean, the Dean of the Faculty of Agriculture and Food Processing at NUBB commented that *"it was great to have the team contributing to the curriculum"*.

Students expressed their appreciation and satisfaction with the sessions, commenting that *"the theory was presented in great detail, supported by relevant examples and practical sessions"*.

These activities give us as a research team an opportunity to foster knowledge exchange and build relationships with the next generation of extensionists in Cambodia.



Reflexivity in action

FROM ARIANE UTOMO AND CAITLIN FINLAYSON

PHOTOS: CAITLIN FINLAYSON, PHEROM SONG, CHARIYA KORN - PHOTO DIARY SESSIONS

Since August last year, as part of Activity 2, we have been undertaking photo diary sessions in an effort to support and foster reflexivity amongst our research team. Reflexivity is a practice of developing an understanding of how our positions as researchers shape the research topics we choose and the methods used to study the social world.

Every 2 weeks we meet together online (pictured below on Zoom!) and listen to the presentations given by our eight research project officers who are in the field collecting household census data. The presentations describe a photo which visualises anything related to the data collection process or related to the researcher during the data collection process.

For example, photos could be of field sites, respondents, a respondent's house, farms, people, the surrounding environment, modes of travel or the researcher themselves. Chariya's photo on the left is of farmers peeling bamboo rice. Pherom's photo on the right is of organic liquid fertiliser made by one farmer for vegetable crops and fruit trees.

The researchers share where and when the photo was taken and why they decided to share it with the team. All photos are taken with the permission of the respondents.

These sessions have been invaluable to bring to the fore the voices and stories of farmers. Equally they have enabled the research team to reflect on and share the data collection process, to ask curious questions about the research and the role of researchers, and to identify key themes for the project.



Spotlight on Pailin Department of Agriculture

FROM CAITLIN FINLAYSON

PHOTOS: VAN TOUCH - FARMER INTERVIEWS

Sophanara Phan, Chief of Agronomy and Agricultural Land Improvement with the Pailin Department of Agriculture (PDA) in Northwest Cambodia is a key research team member.

Through his role at PDA he is responsible for cropping systems and production, on-farm demonstrations, and reviewing farming practices. He holds a Master Degree (funded through ACIAR and the scholarship program of Suranaree University of Technology, Thailand) and has over 15 years experience working with PDA Pailin.

In the last quarter, Sophanara has been working with Dr Van Touch and Dr Thong Tran (pictured together in the middle photo) to conduct interviews with farmers to exchange cassava knowledge and explore farming practices.

In the top and bottom photos we see Sophanara and Van interviewing a woman farmer in Samlout district. Through a collaboration between the research team and this farmer, her farming practices have transformed. She explained how she can now identify the cassava variety and stems best suited for planting and remove unwanted plants earlier. She also decided to increase her investment in labour to ensure that plants are cut correctly during harvest.

Through these changes in practice, this farmer was able to almost double her yield. Of equal importance she spread her knowledge through her social network and influenced the practices of other farmers.

A fantastic example of the possibilities for change when access to knowledge and resources are generated through connection and social relations.



Project Partners



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Resources

Check out the latest articles, blogs and research outputs which are shaping the project

Sustainable land management in Battambang

Taingaun Sourn and colleagues provide a historical and long-term analysis of land use and land cover changes in Battambang Province, providing new knowledge about the drivers behind such processes.

[Read more.](#)

Smallholder farming persistence in Cambodia

Through a lens of labour geography these authors explore how non-farm workers remain linked to their rural homesteads via financial and social arrangements, contributing to our understanding of the persistence of smallholder farmers.

[Read more.](#)

