

IMPACT STORY



BRINGING WATER FOR A LIFE CHANGE

Positive life changes for a rice farmer after getting regular and reliable access to water

Sbov Andeth, Kampot.

Mrs. Ouch Keurn has been growing rice for most of her life. Rice farming is the most important source of staple food and income for her family. However, being able to plant and harvest only once a year with low and fluctuating yields due to total

dependence on rain, Keurn has never produced enough rice from her small piece of land for personal consumption. The family have had to hold many other jobs, such as fishing, making palm sugar, and weaving traditional mattresses, to support themselves.

This year, however, is a different year for Keurn. For the first time, she can grow rice twice within the year by accessing water during the dry season from the newly constructed canal in her village.

CAVAC, an agriculture program funded by AusAID, has been collaborating with local government and has supported the construction of canals. These canals are providing a reliable water source for farming and ensure it now can take place in both the wet and dry seasons.

Regular and reliable availability of water can have a huge impact on the lives of most Cambodian farmers who usually can only grow rice once in a year - in the wet season. This increase of the growing season improves food security as well as increases the income of these poor farmers.

The reliable access to water from the canal also allows Keurn, as well as other farmers in her village, to switch to a modern rice variety, which has a much shorter growing period and a higher yield. With the new variety, she can almost double her yield. This modern variety requires higher input to provide higher yields but the benefit - measured in total income - is still higher compared to the traditional variety of rice.

Keurn has just started her second cropping season and she is confident that the second crop will provide a similarly high yield. She feels that she has achieved food security now.

“The additional yield will provide all rice to consume for the whole year without having to buy additional rice. In addition, we will be able to sell some surplus for profit.”

While Keurn and her family are able to grow rice more often in a year, they have found that they still have time for their other jobs. Keurn is very hopeful about her future.

“If things remain the same like this, in the future, I will be able to rehabilitate my house, buy some material for my husband and me to fix bikes and open a small retail shop, and will be able to have kids with enough support for them.”