

Stories from the Ground

Case Studies from Live & Learn Cambodia 2015-2020



LIVE & LEARN
CAMBODIA



Live & Learn Cambodia

Building 54 (Room 502), St. 598, Sangkat Boengkak 2, Khan Tuol kork,
Phnom Penh 120408, Cambodia
+855 78 852 863
cambodia.office@livelearn.org

In affiliation with
Live & Learn Environmental Education International

Level 2, Donkey Wheel House, 673 Bourke Street, Melbourne VIC 3000, Australia
+61 3 96501291
enquiries@livelearn.org

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Introduction

Since its establishment in 2004, Live & Learn Cambodia (LLC), formerly Live & Learn Environmental Education Cambodia, has committed to community-led approaches to development, aiming to empower Cambodians with innovative solutions to achieve sustainable livelihoods and environment.

LLC primarily focuses on vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, such as youth, women and girls, people with disabilities and indigenous peoples. The organisation has a long history of working in the Tonle Sap region, particularly with floating communities, on grass-roots activities and capacity building.

This collection summarises half a decade of LLC's work on the ground. It showcases achievements in environmental protection, human rights, gender and women's empowerment, financial literacy and community empowerment.



Program Areas

AREA #1



Resilient
Livelihoods

AREA #2



WASH and
Nutrition

AREA #3



Environment

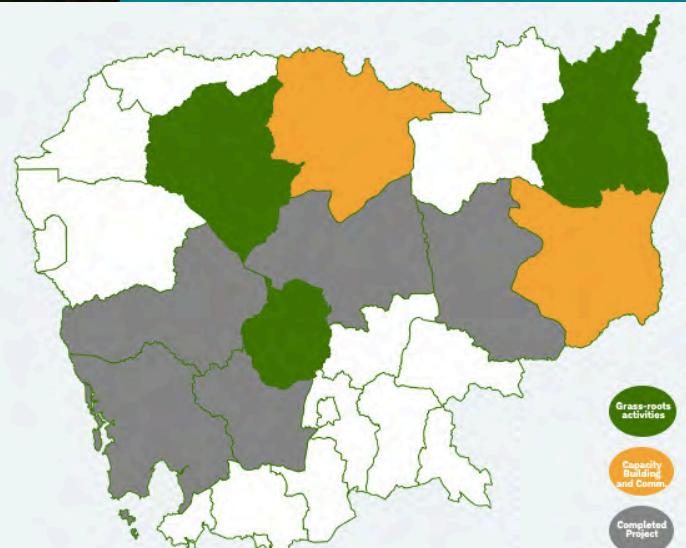
AREA #4



Low Carbon
Development



Project Locations



Brief Work History



Photos of Live & Learn staff

2004 Founded

- Environmental issues in the Tonle Sap: A Rapid Assessment of Perception

2007 Environmental Education

- Human Rights Education Campaign
- Community fisheries education for responsible small-scale fishers
- Tonle Sap Conservation Project: Mobile Community Outreach

2008 Environmental Education

- Tonle Sap Sustainable Livelihood Project: Educate for protection of natural resources

2009-2013 Technology and WASH Innovation

- Tonle Sap Floating Waste and Sanitation Treatment Barge
- Demonstration of Appropriate Energy for Floating Communities
- Floating Bio-digesters for Energy Recovery and Waste Treatment

2014 Natural Resource Management and Livelihoods

- Sustainable Livelihoods Development
- Angkor Participatory Natural Resource Management and Livelihoods

2015 Climate Change and Landscape Management

- Stung Siem Reap landscape and watershed assessment
- Kratie Irrigation and Community Resilience Project
- Building Community Climate Resilient Pathways through Innovation and Planning

2017 Community Empowerment

- Sustainable Livelihood through community empowerment in rural Cambodia
- Participatory Restoration of Upper Stung Siem Reap Watershed
- Local Stakeholder Engagement and Benefits under Climate Investment Funds' Investment in Cambodia: Case studies of Pilot Program on Climate Resilience

2018 Climate change and Agriculture

- Rural Water and Agriculture Infrastructure Initiative

2019 Gender and Women

- Women's Empowerment in Local Community Development

2020 WASH and Nutrition

- Improved nutrition and health status of rural population, especially women and children in the north eastern provinces of Ratanakiri and Mondulkiri through a multi-sectoral approach.



Case Studies

Good Nutrition is Everything

To improve the health of herself and her unborn child, Heam Aimpry, an indigenous woman from Ratanakiri province, adopted Essential Nutrition Action practices during her pregnancy. This change came about after she attended training sessions hosted by Live & Learn Cambodia (LLC) in February 2020. These sessions focused on nutrition, food hygiene and the importance of breastfeeding as a preventative measure for malnutrition. Cooking demonstrations were also conducted by LLC to increase awareness of diverse diets.

Thanks in part to these information sessions, Heam is still practising exclusive breastfeeding for her son, who is 2 ½ months old. She said, "During my pregnancy, I had many different kinds of food to eat four times a day. These were presented at the training. The diverse diet included a variety of green vegetables, yellow ripe fruits, beef, pork, fish, egg and rice – all locally available in my village. Moreover, I regularly visited the health centre, according to the schedule of the medical staff, for pregnancy care and to receive essential medication and advice."

This knowledge of improved nutrition was new to Heam's community. Before the training from LLC Heam and the other women were solely advised by the older women in their community. Crucial advice from experts on improved nutrition and feeding has helped combat any misinformation in the community. Heam is now passing on her knowledge to the members of the mother's group that she is a part of in Katieng 2 village, Ratanakiri province.

Heam delivered a healthy baby boy, weighing 3.5kg, and said of the training, "Improved nutrition brought me a healthy baby son. Thank you, Live & Learn Cambodia." The JUH-funded project supports vulnerable communities, with a focus on indigenous peoples of Ratanakiri province, to increase knowledge and practices on improved nutrition, feeding, hygiene and sanitation. This continuing work will lead to an improved nutritional status and the prevention of malnutrition.



Reducing Hazards and Improving Farming

It has been challenging for farmers to maintain a steady income due to the long-term effects of natural disasters such as drought and flooding, a situation that is further exacerbated by the inappropriate use of chemical fertilizers and pesticides. Seeing that these farmers had little access to coaching for communities on resilient farming techniques that can help improve productivity in the face of climate change, Live & Learn Cambodia (LLC) saw an opportunity to implement a disaster risk reduction project. This project is based in Trapaing Chan and Chak Commune of Boribo district, Kampong Chhnang Province.



The Climate Change Adaptation and Disaster Risk Reduction project has reached at least 1,000 beneficiaries through its awareness-raising strategies, and it has engaged with 60 farmers who earn their incomes from agricultural activities. Forty-six-year-old Cheang Mech comes from a family of farmers who have been working in agriculture for generations. Their income is dependent on healthy vegetable crops, which are now being affected by climate change. LLC conducts information sessions that involve bio-char production, compost-making and techniques on vegetable home gardening set-up.

Before partaking in LLC's disaster risk reduction activities Mech always used chemical fertilizer to improve the growth of her vegetables. After attending training sessions on producing compost and natural fertilizer she has now been able to improve her farming practices and has switched to more sustainable alternatives. This practice has not only saved her money she would have spent on chemical fertilizer; she has also been able to convert her rice field to a herb plantation, which brings in a higher income.

Cheang Mech has dreams of growing fruit on her land and sharing her knowledge with other interested members of her family and community. Improving the adaptive capacity of smallholder farmers and spreading awareness for innovative solutions to climate change hazards is a priority of the adaptation project. It has changed Cheang Mech's life and allowed her and her family to maintain their livelihood.

No Forest, No Income

Sustainable eco-tourism was prioritized by Live & Learn Cambodia (LLC) in Varin District (located in the far north of Siem Reap) alongside inclusive community development. Community development has played an important role in generating incomes for more than 150 people. Women in particular have benefited directly from the eco-tourism supported by LLC.

More than 21,000 tourists a year come to see waterfalls and wildlife (including diverse birdlife), and to take jungle treks in the local protected forest area, which covers 9,104 hectares of land. For the communities who rely on the forest for income, LLC's Changkran Roy Community Forestry (CKR-CF) development plan has provided an opportunity to strengthen local voices. In 2017 the local government of Varin District integrated the CKR-CF development plan into its district investment program, the total budget of which was \$9,677 USD and which was used for the construction of a spill-way in 2018.

The CKR-CF has 16 steering committees (which include 4 women) and 42 sub-committees (including 8 women). It covers 11 villages in 5 communes. Aside from supporting eco-tourism in the area the CKR-CF has now become a forestry management learning centre for local communities. With LLC's support, Varin District Council was active in engaging with the CKR-CF, especially compared with previous years. Regarding the income generation of the district, the CKR-CF stated that community-level forestry was a particularly valuable tool to help the districts achieve their vision for more sustainable livelihoods.



Youth Leadership

Inspiring the next generation to participate in environmental protection is an essential part of project implementation for Live & Learn Cambodia (LLC). Community protected areas, such as those at Kulen National Park and Prei Thom Popel Community in Siem Reap province have both seen an increase in youth leadership in LLC activities.

Mr Sout Thai Ly (Ly) is one of 46 young people working for a community in a protected area at Preah Layayarman Norodom Phnom Kulen National Park, an area which spans 37,500 hectares. In 2017 Ly joined LLC by assisting with the Participatory Restoration of Upper Stung Siem Reap Watershed Project activities. He was trained and coached in practical knowledge of grass-roots advocacy, human rights, report writing, community action plans, financial management, communication technology and project development skills. This allowed Ly to train in human resources skills and mobilize other young people working in forestry management.



Ly says, "Before the project came I never voiced any concerns about my community and would just sit in silence at meetings and workshops. I didn't know what to say. Moreover, I didn't know that I had a right to talk about community issues. Now I am appreciated for my practical knowledge and critical thinking. I know how to talk about community needs and issues to government officials. (...) They don't know what we need unless we use our voices on these subjects to improve community development." Thanks to his active volunteer work with LLC Ly has now been promoted as a local business coordinator of Eco-tourism Camping Company and is using his voice to improve community development.

In Prei Thom Popel Community, which covers 188 hectares, young people have been frequently nominated to join committee activities, training, workshops and debates with local authorities.

Village Chief, Mr. Leng Vanna, said,

"We understood that we needed to encourage and provide more opportunities for young people to join in the conservation of our natural resources, since they have had a better education and good vision for the future of the community. They are active and dynamic; we want communities who are united and strong to protect resources for the next generation."



The Prei Thom Popel Community project operates within target communities in Svay Leu district, where it has received a number of youth nominations for involvement in field activities. This intervention has garnered diverse interest in the project, with youth and elders working together to campaign for the environment. Together they have developed an understanding of committee roles, human rights and resource mobilisation.

Young people have shown great interest in these classes and have readily exchanged ideas and solutions to community issues. They have also assisted ageing participants with writing and leading discussions. Project participants seem happy to exchange ideas and share responsibilities regardless of age.



The Gender Task Force Responds to COVID-19



In January 2020 Cambodia confirmed its first case of the coronavirus. In response, Live & Learn Cambodia (LLC) mobilised its Gender Task Force (GTF) group, which is designed to spread awareness about the threat of family violence during the pandemic.

The GTF group conducted a specific awareness raising campaign to tackle the causes of family violence and reduce the number of incidences in homes and communities. For the first time the GTF group also distributed posters and information to community members in conjunction with awareness raising sessions. These sessions focused on sexual abuse, substance abuse, gambling and the absence of trust, which were cited as concerns that could lead to family violence during the COVID-19 outbreak.

The GTF group has built its capacity over the last two years of operation, increasing its members and joining in more public events with stakeholders. Training with LLC has helped members foster a thorough understanding of advocacy, child protection, a rights-based approach to development and how to prepare their own action plan and budget. The GTF group's members have become new community leaders, tackling local challenges, especially domestic violence, in collaboration with commune councils and other NGOs working in this area.

Concerned about the spread of COVID-19 in her community, Mrs. Tom Sreyleak was pleased to receive soap and awareness posters from Live & Learn Cambodia's Gender Task Force (GTF) group. She stated that these actions helped members of her community understand how to prevent and protect themselves from the virus.

Improving Education for All

Like many people living in a floating village, 24-year-old Tol Han and her family rely solely on fishing for their livelihood. Due to their low income Tol Han could not afford to enrol in school and was quickly made aware of the poor education outcomes of her village. She lives with her parents and six siblings in Phat Sanday Commune, Kampong Thom province. The state school was far away from their village and it was unsafe for children to travel there alone by boat.

Tol Han wanted to change this situation for her community but did not know how to teach. However, after volunteering with Live & Learn Cambodia (LLC) she developed the skills for teaching at level 3 through the Tuition Class Project. As a result of her training Tol Han has become a teacher, with a salary large enough to support her family.

LLC's Tuition Class Project has benefited others like Tol Han who are looking to improve their communities through education. Keavannak, from Phat Sanday Commune, is a single mother who wanted to see the education levels improve in her community. Keavannak realized that due to the high alcohol consumption and low levels of education in her fishing village there were also high rates of domestic violence.

Through LLC she was able to undertake three months of training to understand the basics of teaching. Members of her community encouraged her to continue her training and donated land for Keavannak to build her school on.

Today, Keavannak has been teaching for five months and has enjoyed seeing the enthusiasm of the students who come to learn from her. The parents are also happy to see their children receiving an education. By attending class her students have the opportunity to gain self-confidence and are able to recognise issues in their village and in their homes. Keavannak and Tol Han's work will give children the chance to have a more prosperous future free from violence and poverty.



Taking Financial Control

Mrs. Sina Phorn performs many roles in her community: entrepreneur (selling fast-food at a primary school), self-help group member of Rik Chamroeun Samrab Sa'trey, wife and mother to three children. However, despite her hard work, her family used to struggle financially. For a period of time Mrs. Phorn's family income was entirely dependent on her husband's role as a primary school teacher.

Today her livelihood has significantly improved as a result of joining Live & Learn Cambodia's (LLC) Saving Group. Instead of asking for high-interest loans when she needed money Mrs. Phorn now understands the fundamentals of saving. Through the Saving Group she can conduct her business as a fast-food seller with an investment of roughly \$100 USD.

The Saving Group has taught her many valuable financial lessons, including business plan training conducted by LLC. Mrs. Phorn has dreams of developing her financial skills enough to open a restaurant in her village along the highway, which will target tourists and travellers. She firmly believes that the Saving Group can change a community, saying, "I would like everyone in the community to know that it is possible; you can open a Saving Group which will help you meet your objective, reduce poverty, create empowerment, improve your livelihood, reduce default loans, earn interest from your own money and share-learning in the community."



Members of the Saving Group were celebrated with an Award Ceremony in 2016, which recognised the achievement of graduates and project participants. Seventy-one people participated (including 54 women) in the event, which was hosted by LLC in Kampong Chomlong Village, PSD Commune, Kampong Sva District, Kampong Thom Province. It was a great opportunity for members of the Saving Group to reflect on their hard work and success.

Gaining confidence and feeling empowered

The activities run by Live & Learn Cambodia (LLC) not only improve the development and financial wellbeing of communities; they also instil confidence in individual participants, who are empowered to realise their full potential.

Hun Chheng Kea, 35, is a farmer and housewife with three children. Before participating in activities with LLC she always felt nervous speaking to new people, and her husband did not see the value in her joining the workforce. When LLC arrived in her village in Phat Sanday Commune, Kampong Svay District, Kampong Thom, Kea saw an opportunity for personal growth and decided to join the Saving Group. The Saving Group is a project designed to help communities better understand financial management.

Kea was inspired to establish a Saving Group in her community, with 24 members (13 of which were women). She said, "This helped me change my way of thinking and start taking action. I became brave enough to raise my voice in commune meetings and demand people's needs. I developed a good relationship with local authority and could facilitate my group with solidarity."



Today Kea has been appointed as an accountant for the local Governance Support Group. Her skills in facilitation have led her to take charge of public community forums and she says that today her husband supports her work in the Saving Group and commune activities. He even helps with the housework.



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