

Cross-Border Study Tour: Biosecurity and Sustainable Livelihoods for Vulnerable Communities in Cambodia

CelAgrid-CRC – Pursat province, Cambodia: 23rd – 25th June 2008

As an outcome of the Regional Community-Based Avian and Human Influenza Practitioners' Workshop in March 2008 in Bangkok, CelAgrid Cambodia and Cambodia Red Cross (CRC) were selected by the AHI-NGO-RC/RC-Asia Partnership to host a three-day cross-border study tour. The study tour focused on CelAgrid's project on 'Community-based Good Practice in Chicken Raising and AI Awareness in three Provinces of Cambodia' and brought together participants from Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam.

Themes of the study tour were biosecurity for community-based management of AHI and its impacts on rural economies and livelihoods. The 20 participants visited CelAgrid's rural development projects and learned about different aspects of biosecurity for community-based management of AHI. Highlights of the three-day study tour included:

- Visit to CelAgrid's farm in Kandal Stoeung district
- CelAgrid presentation and discussion on 'Village Chicken Production Improvement and AI Awareness and Control'
- Site visits to project target villages in Kravanh district and discussions with beneficiaries, local authorities and stakeholders
- Discussions with CelAgrid's provincial-level AI management team on community-based AHI programme design



At the CelAgrid farm in Kandal Stoeung district, staff test models and practices to promote biosecurity and sustainable livelihoods in communities throughout Cambodia



Study tour participants and CelAgrid staff at the farm in Kandal Stoeung district

- Group discussions, experience sharing and critical analysis of community-based projects for the promotion of biosecurity and sustainable livelihoods

The cross-border study tour hosted by CelAgrid was the first of four study tours that are part of the project entitled ‘Strengthening Community-Based Approaches to Management of AHI in Asia’, supported by the Canadian government through Asian Development Bank (ADB). This project aims to highlight and strengthen the experience of NGOs, CBOs and their partner organisations in community-based management of AHI in Asia.

COMMUNITY-BASED AHI MANAGEMENT PROJECT

For a full project description, please refer to CelAgrid case study, in Chapter 3 of the resource kit – Communities Respond: Experience Sharing in Community-Based Management of AHI in Asia

Sixty communities in Kandal, Takeo, and Pursat provinces were selected for the implementation of CelAgrid’s project on ‘Good Practice in Chicken Raising and AI Awareness’, financed by USAID through AED. Project highlights include:

- Establishment of ‘Farmer Field Schools’ (FFS), providing farmers with information on disease prevention and control as well as knowledge and techniques to promote safer and more sustainable livelihoods
- Creation of three ‘DEMO’ plots in each community by farmers applying the knowledge and techniques they learned through the FFS (technical support and financial backing for 50% of costs were provided by the project)
- Creation of farmer ‘self-help groups’ to reduce dependency on outside resources, raise incomes, protect community livelihoods, and provide a safety net in case of unexpected events and emergencies
- Creation of pilot ‘village trade corners’ to limit disease transmission risks by providing a place on the village outskirts for farmers to sell their poultry to traders and for sharing of information on AI, poultry market prices and other issues

Key project outcomes include:

- Participants significantly increased their knowledge and understanding of AHI and of issues related to biosecurity
- One third of the 180 DEMOs set up to date are the result of families having voluntarily copied the original DEMO models that were part-funded by CelAgrid; these 'second generation' DEMO plot owners used uniquely their own resources to fund their plots, which include biosecure poultry raising enclosures
- The survival rate of chicks and the growth rate of chickens were significantly improved through better care and feeding, resulting in an increase in the incomes of participating farmers

Key lessons and challenges identified by CelAgrid include:

- Targeting women as beneficiaries is important in contexts where women are responsible for domestic/backyard poultry
- Involving Commune Councils and village chiefs in the selection of beneficiaries facilitates the selection process and promotes project sustainability
- FFS and DEMOs are effective tools for increasing farmers' knowledge and promoting the adoption of biosecure practices through direct observation of models in practice and peer-to-peer learning

DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY TOUR

A. Objectives of the Study Tour

The CelAgrid and CRC Study Tour aimed to promote:

- Learning from field visits to project sites and discussions with community members involved in the CelAgrid project
- Understanding of issues involved in developing, implementing and evaluating community-based projects focusing on rural biosecurity as a part of community-based management of AHI



Farmer Field School participants in Kravanh district discussed successes and challenges of CelAgrid's project with study tour participants

- Understanding of integrated strategies for promoting biosecurity at the community level within wider efforts to promote healthy and sustainable livelihoods for communities
- Sharing of experiences and lessons in community-based management of AHI between participants from different agencies and different countries
- Understanding of participatory processes and ways in which to involve communities in project planning and implementation

B. Participants and facilitators

A total of 20 participants attended the international cross-border study tour on 23rd–25th June 2008 (see *Annexes, Table 1*), representing NGOs and Red Cross chapters in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Thailand and Vietnam, as well as the AHI-NGO-RC/RC-Asia Partnership. CelAgrid and CRS jointly co-hosted the three-day cross-border study tour. CelAgrid took the lead in arranging field visits to the ecological farm in Kandal and to two villages in Pursat province. Presentations and discussions were facilitated by Dr. Khieu Borin, CelAgrid Director, and Mr. Pok Samkol, Project Coordinator. CRC arranged logistics and support and IFRC in Bangkok played a supporting role to CRC and CelAgrid, as well as facilitating group discussions on behalf of the AHI-NGO-RC/RC-Asia Partnership.

C. Study Tour Activities

Day 1: Monday 23rd June, 2008 – Visit to CelAgrid Farm in Pratheath village

On the first day of the Study Tour, participants visited CelAgrid's farm in Pratheath village, Kandal province, which serves as a research facility and a location for CelAgrid to pre-test its models for safe and sustainable livelihoods. Dr. Khieu Borin and Mr. Pok Samkol from CelAgrid provided introductory presentations on the national context for community-based management of AHI in Cambodia and on CelAgrid's pilot activities in promoting biosecurity and sustainable livelihoods.

The presentations highlighted the importance of small-scale and backyard poultry-raising within Cambodia's rural economy – especially for poorer households – and the difficulty of controlling the production and trade of poultry (for instance, large numbers of 'unofficial' poultry sellers operate outside of registered market stalls). CelAgrid drew attention to common disparities at the village level between awareness of the risks of AI and actual behaviour change to reduce these risks. CelAgrid has been working to promote such behaviour change and to enhance safe and sustainable livelihoods through building community trust and transferring simple and appropriate technologies for villagers through methods such as the Farmer Field School (FFS) and DEMOs, as described above.

Study tour participants then visited CelAgrid's ecological farm. This visit provided the opportunity to observe and discuss different models or techniques developed, tested and promoted by CelAgrid in their efforts to ensure safe and sustainable community livelihoods, such as:

- Biosecure poultry compound
- Low-cost chicken feed (including water spinach and earthworm cultivation)
- Pig and cattle compound
- Fish culture
- Alternative dry-weather-resistant animal feed and vegetables



CelAgrid promotes alternative livelihoods such as cattle raising to reduce community dependency on small-scale poultry production and trade

Day 2: Tuesday 24th June, 2008 – Field visits to O Heng and Prek I Villages in Pursat Province

On the second day, study tour participants visited the villages of O Heng and Prek I in Pursat province and met with the District Governor, the Commune Council, Village Animal Health Workers (VAHWs), school teachers and community members. Discussions focussed on successes and challenges in managing AHI at the community level.

The effectiveness of different communication channels for raising community awareness of AHI was debated, with villagers stating that their main sources of information to date have been TV, radio, VAHWs and CelAgrid staff. Community members described their previously ‘risky’ practices in raising poultry as well as changes that they have made as a result of their increased understanding of risks and risk reduction measures. Some techniques learned in the Farmer Field School (FFS) were described as well-suited to the local context – such as methods for producing low-cost feed alternatives for chickens, local production of composts and so on.

The visits to O Heng and Prek I enabled study tour participants to see for themselves aspects of CelAgrid’s project in practice:

- The community members with whom study tour participants discussed had taken part in the Farmer Field Schools and had formed a self-help group
- Both communities had a village ‘trade corner’
- In both communities, ‘model’ farmers (two in O Heng and one in Prek I) had set up DEMO chicken enclosures for backyard chickens, fish ponds for small-scale fish raising, and low-cost chicken feed production (comprising earthworms and water spinach)

During the field visits, the costs and benefits of different biosecure/risk reduction practices were discussed by study tour participants and community members. Farmers in both villages identified the benefits of fencing as being: reduction of poultry disease and death, increase in poultry growth rates, and prevention of loss due to predators and thieves. But disadvantages – and recognised disincentives that act as a barrier to other villagers adopting similar practices – include the initial cost of fencing and the increased time, labour and costs involved in feeding poultry that can no longer scavenge for food. Project beneficiaries highlighted the benefits of village ‘trade corners’, which restrict the selling of poultry by villagers to a specific location at the boundary of the village, thereby reducing the risks of the village being contaminated by infected birds transported by traders. Finally, families participating in the project expressed a strong commitment to the new ‘biosecure’ practices, stating their intention to continue implementing the health poultry-raising and other risk reduction techniques that they had learned.



CelAgrid staff have worked with community members to develop low-cost measures to reduce the barriers to fencing, such as locally produced chicken feed using earthworms (seen here) and water spinach

Day 3: Wednesday 25th June, 2008 – Feedback Session and Study Tour Evaluation

On the third day of the study tour, participants were welcomed to CelAgrid’s Pursat office by Mr. Kong Reatrey, Head of Office of Animal Health and Production (OAHP) in Pursat and Provincial Coordinator of CelAgrid. Through group activities, discussions and the written evaluation of the study tour, participants were invited to share what they had learned – *for a synthesis of key lessons identified by participants, see the following section.*

In their evaluations of the study tour, participants stated that they had learned most from the following activities:

- Observation of the different activities undertaken at the CelAgrid ecological farm
- Field visits and direct observation of CelAgrid’s models for biosecurity and sustainable livelihoods put into practice at the community level

- Discussions with community members on successes and challenges in the promotion of biosecurity and sustainable livelihoods

The compiled quantitative results of the written evaluation are listed in Table 2 (*see Annexes*). Overall, participants felt that the study tour had been a success, enabling capacity building through cross-learning and sharing of experience between representatives of different organisations and different countries. All participants expressed a desire to participate in other capacity-building activities conducted by the AHI-NGO-RC/RC-Asia Partnership.

STUDY TOUR SYNTHESIS: LESSONS IDENTIFIED

1. Lessons for community-based management of AHI:

1. Community participation is the key to success; projects should be designed to meet the needs of their beneficiaries and community members should be involved in participatory planning processes, thereby promoting buy-in and sustainability.
2. Involvement of different stakeholders (e.g. local government authorities, village leaders, the private sector) in the project is also essential to increase the likelihood of project success and sustainability.
3. There are often large gaps between awareness and behaviour change; NGO workers, local government representatives and others working to promote behaviour change can themselves become models for change, rather than merely dictating 'good' practice.
4. Linking AHI awareness and the promotion of biosecurity to the needs and priorities of communities is crucial; past experience has demonstrated the value of dealing with AHI within the wider context of promoting safer and sustainable livelihoods for community members.
5. It is important to look at the costs and benefits (or the perceived costs and benefits) to community members of implementing different 'risk reduction' practices; local, low-cost resources for biosecurity can be encouraged to circumvent some of the barriers to risk reduction (for instance, using local materials such as bamboo to build fences or involving families in the production of high protein chicken feed made of earthworms and water spinach).
6. Cambodian VAHWs play an important role at the community level in disseminating key risk reduction messages, in providing animal health care services, and in disease surveillance; strengthening their roles within the community – notably by developing trust with community members – and reinforcing their linkages to national government systems for AHI management can strengthen overall disease surveillance, prevention and control.

7. FFS provide an informal avenue for teaching farmers low-cost biosecure animal raising techniques, disseminating up-to-date information on disease management, channelling assistance to communities, and strengthening linkages between stakeholders.
8. The establishment of systems such as self-help groups can allow communities to decrease dependence on outside resources and promote community resilience by, for instance, providing the means for community members to buy medicines or vaccines at short notice or recover quickly from animal disease outbreaks.
9. Models such as CelAgrid's DEMO provide community members with the opportunity to learn through observing their peers and witnessing for themselves the real-life difficulties and benefits involved with changing farming practices.
10. In a context where women play the main role in backyard poultry production, targeting women in efforts to promote healthy and sustainable backyard poultry farming can increase their capacity to protect the livelihoods and health of their families and potentially raise the status of women within the community.
11. Although fencing chickens may to a certain extent limit the spread of disease, it is costly and does not eliminate all risks (for instance, disease can be spread through human traffic in and out of fenced areas); treating the village as the biosecure unit to be protected and installing 'trade corners' that reduce the risks of outside contamination can further protect communities from the risks of AHI.
12. Building on past experience and lessons learned from successes and failures is crucial in order to strengthen community-based management of AHI; for instance, key health messages can be updated and communication strategies improved to better reach their intended audiences.

Lessons for capacity development in community-based management of AHI:

1. Study tours involving site visits can promote capacity development for community-based management of AHI by providing participants the opportunity to witness a project 'in action' and to discuss its strengths and weakness with the project beneficiaries themselves.
2. Study tour participants can learn from the project as implemented by the host organisation and identify lessons and tools to strengthen their own projects in community-based management of AHI.
3. Study tours enable cross-learning and the sharing of experiences and lessons between participants from different organisations and contexts.

4. Field visits provide the opportunity for NGO workers and others often considered the ‘experts’ to share their own experiences and challenges in community-based management of AHI with community members and to learn from those who have real, day-to-day experience in dealing with risks to their livelihoods and health.

5. Study tour participants and the CelAgrid Study Tour hosts recognised that observation, discussion and critical analysis of community level work – rather than being negative – can lead to extremely valuable re-evaluations and improvements in designing and implementing current and future projects.



Study tour participants in Kravanh district, Cambodia

PROJECT DETAILS

The project on ‘Community-based Good Practice in Chicken Raising and AI Awareness in three Provinces of Cambodia’ is implemented by Centre for Livestock and Agriculture Development (CelAgrid), Cambodia and funded by USAID through the Academy for Educational Development (AED).

For more information on this project and on other work conducted by CelAgrid, contact Dr. Khieu Borin, Director, CelAgrid (khieu.borin@celagrid.org)

The AHI-NGO-RC/RC-Asia Partnership would like to extend special thanks to CelAgrid Cambodia for hosting the study tour, the Cambodian Red Cross (CRC) for providing the administrative and logistical support and MEDiCAM for their help with translation.

The study tour was part of the project on ‘Strengthening Community-Based Management of AHI in Asia’, which is funded by the Canadian government via the Asian Development Bank.

For further information on this study tour, as well as on the different aspects of the project on ‘Strengthening Community-Based Approaches to Management of AHI in Asia’, contact phe@adpc.net

ANNEXES

Table 1: List of participants who attended the cross-border study tour

	Organisation & Country	Participant
1	Asian Disaster Preparedness Center, Thailand	Ms. Anne Décobert
2	Asian Disaster Preparedness Center, Thailand	Ms. Janette Lauza-Ugsang
3	Adventist Development and Relief Agency, Cambodia	Mr. Kimlong Try
4	CARE, Vietnam	Ms. Nguyen Thi Hai Chi
5	CARE, Vietnam	Mr. Bui Tuan Nha
6	Centre for Study and Development in Agriculture, Cambodia	Mr. Kin Meng Se
7	CelAgrid, Cambodia	Mr. Pok Samkol
8	CelAgrid, Cambodia	Mr. Sok Sunnara
9	CelAgrid, Cambodia	Mr. Yim Sophy
10	Cambodian Red Cross, National Headquarters	Mr. Hang Chan Sana
11	Cambodian Red Cross, K. Cham province	Mr. Min Song
12	Cambodian Red Cross, Kratie province	Mr. Chun Darat
13	Cambodian Red Cross, Pursat province	Mr. Mom Choeun
14	DOHP-Pursat/CelAgrid	Mr. Kong Reatrey
15	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Bangkok	Ms. Wanree Saisamuth
16	International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, Bangkok	Mrs. Molly Schmidt
17	Lao Red Cross	Dr. Saphanethong Lounnavong
18	MediCam, Cambodia	Mr. Rith Bunroeun
19	Thai Red Cross	Dr. Chor Kensiri Khongraukiatiyoi
20	Vietnam Red Cross	Dr. Tran Quoi Hang

Table 2: Feedback from participants in the study tour, provided through the Participant Evaluation Form

Criteria	Yes, completely	Well met	Satisfactory	Insufficient	Not at all
Did the activities, presentations and discussions meet your needs and expectations?	-	64.3%	35.7%	-	-
Was the invitation and information given prior to the Study Tour satisfactory?	21.4%	42.8%	35.7%	-	-
Were the Study Tour facilities, organisation and general support satisfactory?	14.3%	57.1%	28.6%	-	-