

Promoting Sustainable Agriculture in Samroung Commune, Prey Chhor District, Kampong Cham Province through Network of RCE Greater Phnom Penh

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Abstract:

Agriculture is one of the important sectors in Cambodia, as more than 70 percent of populations are engaging in the agricultural sector. Phnom Penh is the capital of Cambodia having more than 1.3 million people. RCE Greater Phnom Penh (RCE GPP) was established in December 2009 to promote ESD in Cambodia. RCE Greater Phnom Penh covers not only Phnom Penh but also surrounding provinces, such as Kampong Cham, Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Speu, Kandal, Prey Veng and Takeo.

Recently, in Kampong Cham province of Cambodia, subsistence agriculture tends to be converted to mono-culture. Also, more than 60 percent of farmers have been applying agricultural chemicals without understanding the impact on health and food safety. It is necessary to promote and enhance the understanding of sustainable agriculture among local people including farmers and elementary school students, as the students are the successors of local farmers. So, attention has been paid to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in the agricultural sector for achieving food safety, conserving environment and reducing expense for agricultural chemicals in Kampong Cham province.

RCE GPP and ERECON have been collaborating in the project entitled “Promoting ESD through Food, Agriculture and Environment Education in Elementary Schools and Rural Communities in Cambodia”. In Prey Chhor district, Kampong Cham province, the project is implemented with focusing on raising awareness of local farmers and elementary school students concerning sustainable development in agriculture. The targets of the project are 11 villages and 10 elementary schools that are located in/around Samroung Commune, Prey Chhor district, Kampong Cham province. The project in RCE GPP activities covers the promotion of concepts on sustainable development in agriculture, the extension of sustainable farming practices including demonstration on how to make compost, pellet compost, liquid fertilizer and bio-pesticides, the leadership training, and the workshops to disseminate sustainable farming practices with local resources.

Keywords: RCE Greater Phnom Penh, Sustainable agriculture, ESD

INTRODUCTION

Agriculture is one of the important sectors in Cambodia, as more than 70 percent of populations are engaging in the agricultural sector. Phnom Penh is the capital of Cambodia having more than 1.3 million people. RCE Greater Phnom Penh (RCE GPP) was established in

December 2009 to promote ESD in Cambodia. RCE Greater Phnom Penh covers not only Phnom Penh but also surrounding provinces, such as Kampong Cham, Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Speu, Kandal, Prey Veng and Takeo.

In Cambodia, attention has been paid to Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) in the agricultural sector for achieving food safety as well as environmental conservation. RCE Greater Phnom Penh (RCE GPP) has been promoting public awareness on the importance of creating harmony between agricultural development and natural environment conservation.

In Kampong Cham province, mono cropping based on conventional farming system with applying chemical fertilizer and pesticide is a major style, because commercial agriculture has been advanced in recent years. But chemical pesticides affect not only positively but also negatively for natural environment and human health directly or indirectly. It is also a problem that farmers do not have enough and appropriate knowledge about applying agro-chemicals.

Although there are some factors constituting sustainable rural development as economic growth, social development and environmental conservation, the Food, Agriculture and Environment Education was focused as a first step for approaching sustainable rural development in the area of Greater Phnom Penh. RCE GPP has been focusing on local farmers as well as students in the elementary schools, as the students are the successors of local farmers. In the collaborative project entitled “Promoting ESD through the Food, Agriculture and Environment Education for Elementary Schools and Rural Communities in Cambodia”, the activities were focused on “Forming farmers’ groups and promoting organic farming based on natural resource circulation”, and “Promoting the Food, Agriculture and Environment Education for agricultural successors” under the collaboration of government, university, local NGO and local communities.

This report dealt with the description of the collaborative project in RCE Greater Phnom Penh entitled “Promoting ESD through the Food, Agriculture and Environment Education for Elementary Schools and Rural Communities in Cambodia” implemented in 2012.

TARGET AREA

Target area is Samroung commune in Phrey Chhor district, Kampong Cham province, Cambodia. This commune is located at 83 kilometers far from Phnom Penh (Fig. 1). The commune is consisted of 11 villages with 8,447 people in 1,792 households (2012). Main production is rice for both sales and self-consumption. Farmers producing vegetables for sales are much less than that of rice. In Samroung commune, conventional farming system is mainly applied for production in order to increase yields.

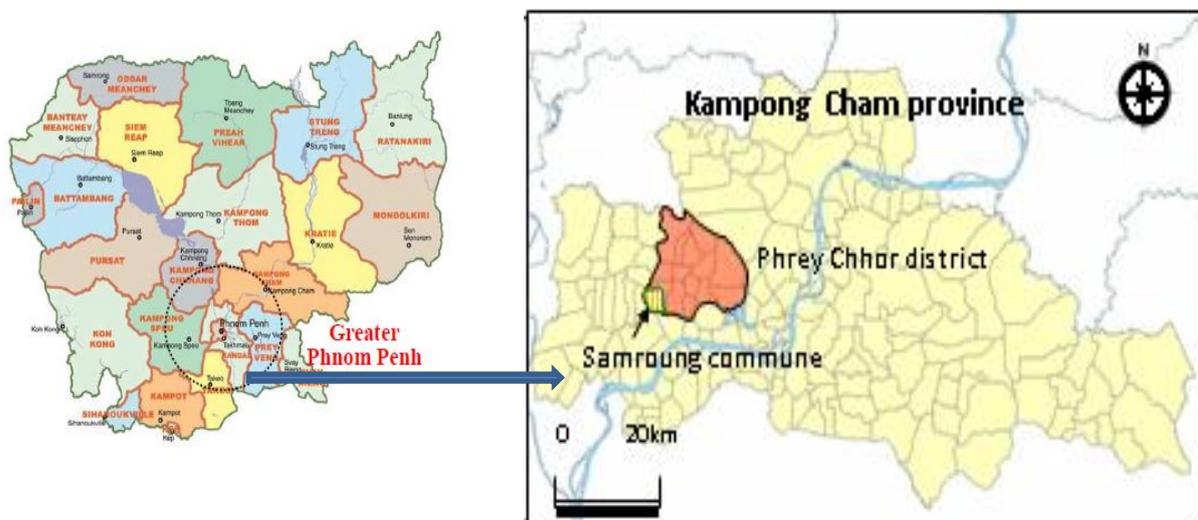


Fig. 1 Location of Samroung commune in Kampong Cham province

PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Promoting ESD through the Food, Agriculture and Environment Education at Elementary Schools

As education is the key for developing the human resources and skills, Cambodian government and many international and local non-governmental organizations try to provide better education. However, it still needs more time and supports to achieve certain level of education comparing to other Asian countries. Schools in remote areas are lacking buildings, desks, chairs, books and materials for learning. Many families in rural areas are still poor and their children are spending less time in the classroom as they have to work in the fields or seek additional jobs elsewhere. Also, in some schools, the teachers, underpaid grossly, have to charge their students unofficial fees. So, the development of human resources through education is necessary to increase the quality of life for people in Cambodia.

The Food, Agriculture and Environment Education is expected to be a part of life skill education, and networking for sustainable agriculture is promoted. School teachers are expected to acquire teaching skills for the Food, Agriculture and Environment Education and to continue such classes in all schools in the school cluster in Kampong Cham province. In addition, networking is expected to promote sustainable agriculture based on natural resource circulation in the whole Kampong Cham province.

Under the collaboration of government, university, local NGO and local communities, the promotion of the Food, Agriculture and Environment Education has been implemented at several elementary schools in Kampong Cham province of Cambodia. The contents of education implemented were as follows; establishing school garden as well as compost box, holding seminars for deeper perception on sustainable development in agriculture through composting and organic farming, and conducting questionnaire survey for evaluating the perception on organic agriculture and environmental conservation for sustainable development at elementary schools. In addition to enhance motivation and understanding of students, the training for teachers has been strengthened.



Figure 1 Activities on the Food, Agriculture and Environment Education at elementary schools

Promoting ESD through the Food, Agriculture and Environment Education at Rural Communities in Cambodia

Now a day in Cambodia, the traditional agricultural system has been changed to mono-culture depending on agricultural chemicals. Recently, attention has been paid to the education for

sustainable development (ESD) in agricultural sector to make harmony between the farming practices and the natural environment. It is necessary to promote and enhance the understanding of sustainable development in agriculture among local people including farmers. So, this project has been focused on raising local farmers' acceptability of sustainable farming practices.

The project activities in RCE Greater Phnom Penh, such as promoting sustainable farming practices through demonstrating how to make compost, pellet compost, liquid fertilizer and bio-pesticide, as well as leader training and workshops for their deeper perception on sustainable development in agriculture were implemented for capacity building to local farmers under the supports of government, university, local NGO and local communities. In addition to the activities, the surveys by interview or questionnaire for evaluating local farmers' acceptability on sustainable farming practices were conducted occasionally.

In 2013, it is expected that sustainable agriculture based on natural resource circulation is enhanced and more agricultural products with low chemical input are available on the market. RCE activities are closely connected with government policy regarding greening agriculture and the needs of increasing agricultural products.



Figure 2 Activities on the Food, Agriculture and Environment Education at local communities

SUMMARY

RCE Greater Phnom Penh was established for promoting ESD activities. The Food, Agriculture and Environment Education have been focused for promoting sustainable development in the areas of Greater Phnom Penh. Sustainable farming practices such as producing and applying compost, pellet compost, liquid bio-fertilizer and bio-pesticide have been promoted at the local communities as well as at the elementary schools.

For raising awareness on ESD at the elementary schools, the student experiments and the seminars on the Food, Agriculture and Environment Education were conducted in 2012. Also, the capacity building on ESD has been run for local farmers. For building local farmers' confident, the excursion to other farms managed with sustainable farming practices in Thailand or Cambodia was conducted. It was effective for deepening perception for local farmers.

The activities of RCE Greater Phnom Penh are in line with the global aspiration of sustainable production and consumption embracing the pillars of sustainability; economic, environmental, and social. Accordingly, it can be evaluated that the activities of RCE Greater Phnom Penh are contributing to promote the green agriculture, sustainable production as well as sustainable consumption for achieving global sustainable development.

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