



Adaptation for  
Smallholder  
Agriculture  
Programme  
**ASAP**



Investing in rural people

## ASAP Innovations, Policy and Scaling

### CAMBODIA

A successful combination of training, demonstration and incentives led to a new ecosystem for a pluralistic, farmer-centered, and market-oriented extension system in Cambodia, fully mainstreamed and embedded in national policy and institutional frameworks.

This resulted in an expansion of the traditional range of public investments in infrastructure for irrigation and improved water management; clean energy-powered equipment; natural resource management; erosion control; forest replanting; and disaster preparation.

#### The challenge: Sustaining community resilience amidst COVID-19 and climate change impact

Over the past few decades, Cambodia has made remarkable strides in reducing poverty. However, the nation faced a sudden setback due to the far-reaching consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. The poverty rate, which had been steadily declining, experienced an unfortunate surge, jumping from around 10% to 18%. At the time of the ASPIRE design, approximately 2.8 million Cambodians were still poor, and an overwhelming 90% of them resided in rural areas.

Rural poverty is exacerbated by insufficient resilience to climate change, particularly the impact of floods and droughts, resulting in low agricultural productivity. Other challenges for the poor include the lack of diversification in agricultural production, poor soil quality, small and fragmented plots of land, low access to inputs such as improved seeds, high post-harvest losses, poor infrastructure, and high energy costs.



#### Agricultural Services Programme for Innovation, Resilience and Extension (ASPIRE)

2014 - 2022

#### Project Financing

Total project cost: US\$ 86.25 million  
IFAD financing: US\$ 53.4 million  
ASAP grant: US\$ 14.9 million

#### Outreach

- All 24 provinces of Cambodia, 32 districts and 427 communes
- 148,230 households, reached of which 49,760 are woman headed
- 283,261 households benefited from climate resilient infrastructure

#### Target group

- Productive poor farmers and smallholders who are vulnerable to falling into poverty due to climate change, market disruption or other social or economic shocks

#### Programme objective

Enhance the Cambodian model of agriculture services and assist smallholder farmers in achieving profitable and resilient farm businesses and adopting the model as government policy.

**The innovation:  
A pluralistic approach to improve  
extension services and enhance  
farmers' access to technologies and  
markets**

ASPIRE implemented a transformative and demand-driven approach to agricultural extension services, fostering innovation through new policies and strategies. By building the capacity of farmers and public, private and non-governmental agencies with context-relevant agricultural knowledge, the project has created an enabling environment for change.

One of its remarkable innovations lies in the introduction of business clusters, enabling the development of informal organizations that evolve into formal agricultural cooperatives. These clusters have facilitated collective action among farmers, forging essential linkages with buyers, private service providers, and financial institutions through dynamic private-public partnerships.

Supporting specific agricultural value chains within business clusters through farmers' organizations has proven highly effective in delivering agricultural advisory services and optimizing post-harvest processes.

ASPIRE's commitment to promoting adaptation measures such as improved crop management, the use of climate-resilient seeds, agroecological farming systems, efficient water management, and the construction of climate-proof irrigation infrastructure has resulted in tangible benefits for farming communities facing climate change and extreme events.

The programme's success is further bolstered by the adoption of climate mitigation measures, such as the use of solar pumps for irrigation. ASPIRE has also piloted integrated farming systems under the Scaling-up Climate Resilient Agriculture (SUCRA) sub-component, which has demonstrated multiple benefits for the resilience of farming communities exposed to climate and weather shocks.



Mr and Mrs Un Mei, participants of the IFAD-supported ASPIRE project, work on their vegetable farm in Kandal Province, Cambodia.



## Results and impacts

ASPIRE supported the development of a policy and strategic framework that provides solid foundations for agricultural development and modernization at the national and provincial levels, with Agricultural Strategic Development Plans developed for the first time. Substantial enhancement of the capacity of the staff working in agricultural extension, a web-based Extension Portal, and a mobile application for smallholders' extension services – the Chamka App - also feature among key programme achievements.

At the farm level, the combination of training, demonstration and incentive packages, along with support provided by Community Extension Workers and lead farmers, enabled the adoption of more efficient and climate-resilient production models and increased food safety. As a result, ASPIRE was successful in developing a new ecosystem for a pluralistic, farmer-centered, and market-oriented extension system in Cambodia, which is fully mainstreamed and embedded in national policy and institutional frameworks.

The programme contributed to mainstreaming climate resilience into local planning at the district and community levels. This resulted in an expansion of the traditional range of public investment covered by district and commune development plans to include investment enhancing climate resilience, such as for infrastructure for irrigation and improved water management; clean energy-powered equipment; natural resource management; erosion control; forest replanting; and disaster preparation.

## ASPIRE Footprint



Against the target of 144,000, ASPIRE reached to **148,230 households**, of which 49,760 are woman headed.



A total of **2,584 Business Clusters (BCs)** were created, which accelerated the evolution from individual to collective marketing. **88,232 business clusters members**.



**Household assets increased** from an average of USD1,453 to an average USD2,055 per household, or 41% (164% of target).



Household net income from agriculture increased by **18%**.



**54% increase** in the farm income at the stage of project completion in comparison to the “without-project” farm income.

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International Fund for Agricultural Development

Via Paolo di Dono, 44 - 00142 Rome, Italy

Tel: +39 06 54591 - Fax: +39 06 5043463

Email: [ifad@ifad.org](mailto:ifad@ifad.org)

[www.ifad.org](http://www.ifad.org)

 [facebook.com/ifad](https://facebook.com/ifad)

 [instagram.com/ifadnews](https://instagram.com/ifadnews)

 [linkedin.com/company/ifad](https://linkedin.com/company/ifad)

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