



Feed the Future Country Fact Sheet

Online Version: <https://www.feedthefuture.gov/article/watersheds-benefit-improved-management-cambodia>

Watersheds Benefit from Improved Management in Cambodia



Credit: HARVEST

Watersheds, or areas of land where water converges from higher elevations, are a vital feature of the Cambodian countryside and perform a number of important functions: they protect biodiversity, maintain upland forests and rain catchments, sustain dry-season lake levels and preserve fish stocks. In doing so, they help sustain hundreds of thousands of people whose livelihoods depend on forests, agriculture and fisheries.

But as Cambodia develops, watersheds have faced increasing threats, such as over-logging, economic concessions and swidden agriculture (a practice where farmers clear plots of land and burn the remaining plant residue on top of the soil).

To help the country better protect these vital watersheds, Feed the Future's flagship program in Cambodia is establishing and training watershed management committees, which strengthen local institutions and help stakeholders more effectively manage essential water resources.

Working closely with provincial and local authorities, Feed the Future has established four district-level watershed management committees, the first ever created in the country. Over the life of the program, Feed the Future will establish a total of six of these committees in four target provinces of Cambodia.

The 180 members of these watershed management committees have received training on topics such as how to identify stakeholder roles and responsibilities, watershed management and monitoring concepts, and strategies for engaging the private sector. Thus far, the majority of members come from local government bodies and NGOs, with representatives from the private sector expected to be included in the near future.

Sik Bunsin, a district governor who is a member of a provincial-level watershed management committee, says the training is helping committee members better understand the importance of improved water resource management for the long-term viability of their agricultural communities.

"It's been a wakeup call for all of us. We realize we need to do something," Bunsin says.

The committees are creating management plans of action that will be integrated into commune and district development plans, ensuring their future sustainability. Proposed upcoming activities include planting trees, bamboo and other crops to limit riverbank erosion, and creating teams that will monitor the quality of water.

"We want to continue our work when our collaboration with Feed the Future ends," Bunsin says.