

## Connect2: Cambodia update March 2018

**CAFOD's Jess Michelmore is just back from Cambodia, where she took your greetings to the people benefiting from your help. In this update we hear from Jess, who is on CAFOD's Asia and Middle East team, and visit local field worker Yan at work.**



Jess with Yan and shopkeeper Kahop

*Dear Connect2 Cambodia supporters,*

I was delighted to visit our project recently to see how your donations are helping improve the lives of poor farmers in Pouk district, Cambodia.

The villages we visited are an hour's drive from the amazing Angkor Wat temples, along bumpy red dirt roads. From the bustle of town, we arrived in another world, with wooden homes on stilts standing in tropical greenery. The pace of life seems calm, with just a few sounds from cows and chickens.

Most people here are subsistence farmers, whose outlook is being improved by cultivating home gardens, chicken breeding and perhaps most important of all, building their own confidence and learning to plan ahead.

I was amazed to see the progress made by Connect2 narrator Dos La and his wife Koeun Kay. They only entered the project a year ago, when they were identified by their village leader as one of the very poorest families.

Now they are raising chickens and pigs and growing vegetables, not just to feed their family but to earn a profit. The difference is remarkable.

I loved being shown around by Yan, who is the field officer for CAFOD's partner Srer Khmer. She really inspired me because I can tell the villagers trust her and see her as a role model. I was very moved by her dedication, she has a real vision for these farmers and is on a mission to help them grow stronger and take control of their own lives.

Together with Yan, CAFOD's Cambodia officer Sorphoarn Sok and the rest of the Srer Khmer team all left me with a wonderful sense of how much can be achieved when people are given genuine care and encouragement.

A huge thank you on behalf of all the wonderful people I met on my trip,

*Jess Michelmore*

## On the road for CAFOD

**Her little moped loaded down with farm supplies and training resources, Yan is a busy woman.**

Every day she sets off to visit farmers supported by Srer Khmer. Raised as a poor rice grower herself until she became a community trainer, she trusts the farmers and they trust her.

### What's your typical day?

I visit the communities every day. There are 7 villages. In the mornings I usually lead activities and training such as the Farmer Life School. (Villagers receive training in growing crops, raising chickens, compost making, rice production.)

In the afternoons I do home visits, where I discuss different skills and we practice techniques, like how to make compost and develop their gardens.



Yan (left) supporting a village savings group



Photos: Chin Panhavion

### What progress do you see?

The Farmer Life School has helped communities a great deal because they are starting to analyse their lives and develop a plan for the future. The communities are starting to set their own goals to solve their problems.

The savings group has also been very helpful; people can borrow money to buy agricultural tools, fertiliser, food and pay for their kids' school fees.

### What do you love about your job?

I'm very happy that I can help people work together and improve their livelihoods. I want to see strong communities working together and finding good solutions for themselves.

### Have you a message for Connect2 supporters?

I'm so happy that people in the UK are interested in our communities and I want to thank them for all their support. It is very important that we keep on helping people to improve and develop.

## Working together

**Supporters asked CAFOD how the partnership with Srer Khmer works in practice. Yan explains.**

We really wanted to work with CAFOD in order to be able to support more farmers. Srer Khmer and CAFOD have very similar values: we work with the poorest communities and want to improve farmers' livelihoods.

**Working in partnership with CAFOD helps our organisation achieve its mission and vision.**

We began working together two years ago and CAFOD has helped us a great deal, with training on how to design projects. CAFOD staff motivate us and give us opportunities.

I met the village chiefs and discussed the project with them. They then recommended the families they considered most vulnerable.

**These families started with no real plan for the future and now we can see the results.**

## Parish special mention



*Dos La and family look at the UK greetings*

**Jess writes:** When I saw Connect2 narrator Dos La and family, I was delighted to give them greetings and photos from the CAFOD/J&P group at Camberley and Bagshot parishes who raised £2280 in 2017.

Dos La's wife Koeun Kay gave a big smile when she saw the photos. "I'm very excited to see them! I'd like to wish them all good health, and a long life."

I told them about the parishes' wonderful fundraising efforts and they were amazed! In the next update I'll tell you about Dos La's new business plan for recycling.



*The Srer Khmer & CAFOD Cambodia staff enjoy the UK messages*



*Camberley and Bagshot fundraiser event*