

Women & Success

Women of Preah Sihanouk province show that given an opportunity to succeed, anything is possible! In less than 6 months, they have more than doubled their savings and are continuing to grow their loan capital.

WORTH Program in Cambodia Quarterly Newsletter

Year One Highlights

In the past year, Pact Cambodia and partners have been active in engaging communities in the fishing communities at Preah Sihanouk province in health and income-generating activities. Base on outcomes of the recent mid-term survey, this second issue covers the changes in the communities as a result of their learning on health and on women's achievements in their village banking activities. All of these collaborative interventions have been possible with the generous support of Chevron.

Health outcomes. To help prevent the spread of diseases such as tuberculosis (TB) and HIV/AIDS, Pact and partners disseminated information and communication tools to more than 400 women to create awareness on how diseases can be prevented, transmitted, and treated. As measured in the mid-term survey:

- 98% of the women have heard about HIV/AIDS and know how it is transmitted.
- Of those 98%, 77% were trained on preventative measures and 41% got tested for HIV.
- 96% are aware of TB and its symptoms, however few were able to provide correct answers about how it is spread, and fewer on how it can be treated.
- The women's knowledge on personal hygiene and safe drinking water was high.

While Pact has achieved the project's objectives, and the general awareness of TB and HIV/AIDS is high, the women need more education regarding how these diseases are transmitted and prevented.

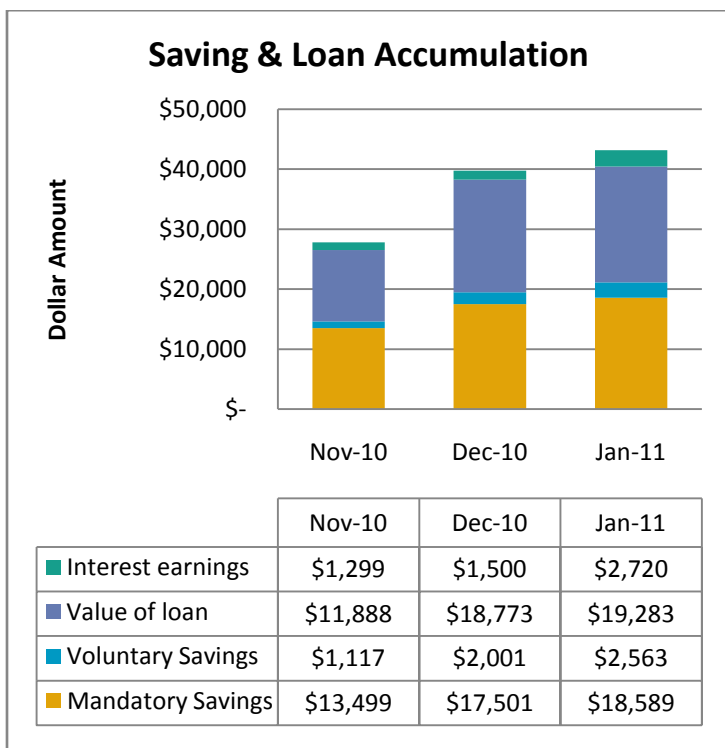


Women's Hope Group in Boeung Taprum Commune practices their literacy and numeracy skills before their savings activities.

Literacy and numeracy skills. Literacy and numeracy are important for women's livelihoods. By reading and practicing basic math exercises using WORTH materials, Pact believes that the women will not only use that knowledge to improve their micro-business activities, but they will take more ownership of the program. In September 2010, a literacy assessment showed that of 400 women, 165 had very poor skills, 12 had poor skills, 77 had fair skills, and 147 had good skills. Literacy is one of the three core elements in the WORTH program. Therefore, Pact will ensure that more

women participate in improving their literacy and numeracy skills.

Income and economic status. More than 400 women are actively engaged in village banking activities. These women are not only bankers, but also owners of their own community banks. Compared to last quarter, there was a slight increase in income earned. More notably, there was a significant difference in debt. Before joining the groups 66% of women were in debt, and after joining, only 18% were in debt. Mostly notably, after participation in the program, indebtedness to money lenders decreased from 42% to 14% and indebtedness to microfinance institutions decreased from 55% to 9%. Approximately 75% of the women borrow from the groups with a 91% on-time repayment rate.



The graph above illustrates that women have accumulated savings totaling more than \$21,000 in the last quarter and were active in lending out the loan capital. On average, their return on savings is 11% -- a rate that cannot be achieved at most commercial banks today.

By investing in the WORTH program, Chevron has helped communities realize the wealth they have always had and how to make it work harder for greater returns. The community's knowledge on health and their increased wealth will continue to bring about positive social changes.

Success Story

Income Generation

Ms. Kheum Chenda lives in Oung Village, Ream Commune, Prey Nub district, Preah Sihanouk province. There are 19 people in her WORTH group and they have a total savings of 2,184,000 Riels or \$546, and have lent a total of \$369 to seven members. Knowing that the more members borrow the higher their interest earnings at the end of the cycle, Ms. Chenda borrowed 100,000 Riels or \$25 so that she could start a small business selling desserts in her village. Her goal is to help increase her family's income so that they won't have to rely solely on the minimal income her husband brings home from fishing. Now, in addition to her husband's income, Ms. Chenda is bringing home an extra \$1.25 to \$2.50 a day, and is paying back the loan principle and interest every week to her group. She's also making her money work for her by increasing her voluntary savings amount from \$0.25 to \$0.50. She's happier today because she sees the value of saving, and is encouraged to continue participating so that she can steadily increase her family's income, as well as have greater opportunity to grow her business.



“Where there is a will, there is a way.”

