



CAMBODIA'S SILK ROAD TO POVERTY REDUCTION



EXPORT-LED POVERTY REDUCTION PROGRAMME OBJECTIVE

The project was implemented from 2003 to 2007 to enable poor rural weavers to enhance the production and marketing of high quality silk products, so as to meet foreign market requirements (MDG 1). EPRP identified the Cambodian Craft Cooperation (CCC), a Khmer artisan association, as the national partner to implement a pilot project in Tanorn village (Takeo province), to complement CCC's efforts to develop the weavers' technical skills.

THE CONTEXT

Today, the weaving and wearing of silk are still expressions of the deeply rooted cultural and social traditions of Cambodia. The Province of Takeo is renowned for its skilful silk weavers, 90% of which are women, who produce scarves, handbags and home decoration items (MDG 3). However, the lack of marketing and design knowledge has left producers poor, receiving only a small fraction of the profit that their products could generate.



ACTIVITIES

A survey of European markets for handmade silk products was followed by recommendations on community building, marketing and quality management. Training in creativity and design, modern production techniques, as well as costing and pricing was delivered along with the preparation of marketing tools such as an e-sales website (www.silkfromcambodia.com), catalogues and brochures. Other activities included the institutional strengthening of CCC in order to support the weavers and network with Cambodian professional associations and stakeholders.

RESULTS ACHIEVED SO FAR

The project has generated, thus far, annual sales amounting to US\$ 147,000, of which 70% are exports. Within two years of the project launch, the average monthly sales turnover had increased eightfold. There is constant product development with about 30 new collections a year designed by the weavers, who now employ environmentally friendly azo-free dyes in conformity with EU import regulations (MDG 7). Two new sales outlets have been established in Phnom Penh and Tanorn village for professional buyers and tourists as well as a supply shop for the community's weavers.

IMPACT ON THE POOR

The monthly income of almost 100 weaver families rose from an average of US\$ 20 in 2003 to US\$ 100 in 2007. Weavers' children, formerly obliged to be part of the workforce, are now able to attend school. The exodus of the village's young generation to Phnom Penh's factories has been curbed. Women's self-confidence has risen through community building, and the silk heritage has largely recovered.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS AND SUSTAINABILITY OF THE INTERVENTION

To date, CCC has replicated the pilot project in five additional weaver communities, namely Say Wa, Kborb, Kdagn, Prek Antak and Prek Thoung, in three different provinces, reaching about 150 families. Sales turnover, especially from exports, has continued to increase by about 30% in 2008, even after the completion of the project and with no further foreign assistance. The CCC also uses EPRP methodology for its other sector associations such as silver-smithing and pottery. A number of organizations now visit Tanorn to learn from this successful poverty reduction experience. Stimulated by EPRP, a sector-wide national silk strategy, developed by Cambodia's major stakeholders in the sector, began to be implemented in October 2007 (MDG 8). As part of the sector-wide silk project, the EPRP pilot project is currently replicated in 30 additional weaver villages.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT



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