

# CAO Success Story:

## Combatting Insect Pests More Efficiently



In July 2024, Svay Rieng Province faced a severe outbreak of white flies. Farmers in Trapeang Sdau Commune, distressed by the damage to their fields, turned to local CAO Sorn Sary for assistance. Recognizing the urgency of the situation, he swiftly contacted the Ministry of Agriculture (MAFF). Within just three days, a response team arrived with state-of-the-art drones to conduct targeted spraying over the affected fields.

This intervention marked a turning point for the farmers, many of whom had previously relied on manual spraying with largely random pesticide mixtures and hand pumps—a method that not only lacked precision in tackling the pest but also posed significant health risks due to prolonged chemical exposure.

Sary took it upon himself to closely monitor further outbreaks and guide affected farmers in replicating the same mixture while emphasizing essential safety precautions. Thanks to his hands-on approach, all affected households swiftly and successfully managed to control the white fly infestation.

In September, the farmers faced another challenge—the rice leafroller pest. Once again, Sary promptly alerted the Provincial Agronomist from PD AFF, who arrived the very next day to assist in combating the issue with his specific technical knowledge. The timely response helped mitigate further losses.

Among the many farmers who benefited from these interventions was Tep Oan. She had initially feared massive losses due to the whitefly infestation. However, with direct support from both the CAO and PD AFF, Oan experienced only a slight decrease in yield compared to previous years. She remarked, *“Now the response is much better than before.”*

Meanwhile, in neighbouring communes without a local CAO, farmers faced devastating consequences, losing between 60% and 90% of their crops. The swift action in Trapeang Sdau Commune underscored the critical role of having a dedicated CAO on the ground and demonstrated the power of local coordination and modern agricultural techniques.

First Deputy Commune Chief Kung Naem: *“The rapid and effective response greatly helped to build farmers’ trust and appreciation for this new approach, ensuring a more cooperative and resilient agricultural community for the future.”*

Just as Sorn Sary is serving his commune, many more local CAOs are doing the same across the nation. Soon, every Cambodian commune will be supported by this entirely new generation of young, well-educated CAOs—about 40% of whom are women. They are out in the field, close to the farmers, and ready to collaborate with more development partners and their programs.

The CAO’s continuous presence at grass roots level helps in supporting:

- Rapid and more specific responses to pests
- Mitigate risks for human health from inappropriate use of pesticides
- Avoid major losses of crops and produce
- Trust building with farmers for more cooperative and resilient communities.



**CAOs – An Opportunity for Development Partners for Cooperation**

Ministry of Agriculture,  
Forestry and Fisheries

## Combating Insect Pests More Efficiently

### Background: The 6th Priority Policy of the Royal Government of Cambodia:

In the current 7th legislative term, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) embarks on the ambitious endeavour to create a stable and sovereign framework for future agricultural growth. With the 5th and the 6th Priority Policy the Government promotes production, marketability and price stability for agricultural products, establishes a nationwide network for agricultural extension by deploying Commune Agricultural Officers (CAOs) all over the country, and develops Modern Agricultural Cooperatives (MAC).

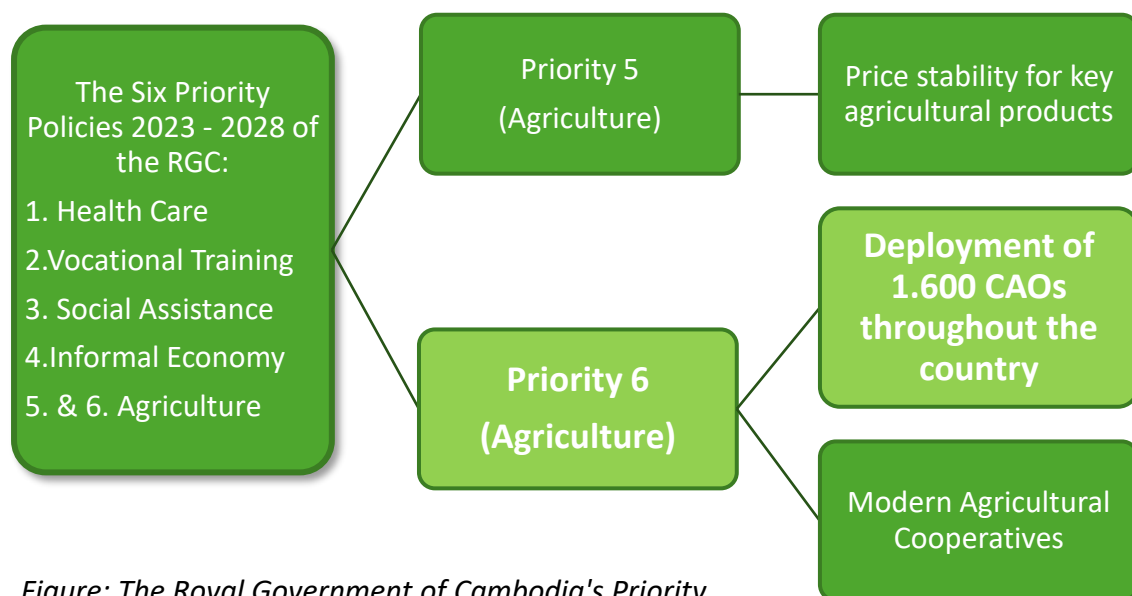


Figure: The Royal Government of Cambodia's Priority

Within the 6th Priority Policy, a nationwide agricultural extension structure aiming for a total of 1.600 Commune Agricultural Officers (CAOs) covering all agricultural communes in the country is envisaged. And the structure is rapidly taking shape: For the time being (April 2025) a total of 1.250 CAOs have taken up duty, the first group started serving their communes more than a year ago. By late 2025 the final group of 350 CAO will complete the picture.



CAO  
Sorn Sary



Farmer  
Tep  
Oan