

CAO Success Story: Sreyleak's Impact in Agriculture



Born into a family of rice farmers, Sreyleak grew up understanding the struggles and resilience that define rural farming life. Now, in her role as Commune Agricultural Officer (CAO), she has become a powerful advocate for her community, guiding farmers toward sustainable growth while preserving the traditions she holds dear.

"I would miss home if I worked in an office" she says, a reflection of her deep connection to the fields and the people who work them, and her mission goes beyond administration: she actively connects farmers to crucial networks, linking them with organic fertilizer suppliers, quality produce buyers, and agricultural training opportunities. Every connection she fosters builds community — helping farmers grow healthier crops, securing better markets, and ensuring families have access to nutritious food. Sreyleak's impact reaches far beyond individual farms. She records essential farming data for a ministerial agriculture app, providing local and national officials with insights into soil health, resource availability, and farming trends. Her work ensures that support reaches those who need it most.

Moreover, Sreyleak's local presence is particularly useful during crises. Last year, a severe drought hit Kampong Thom, threatening the rice paddies with complete crop failure: "In May, I helped organise a community meeting with the district officers of the Department of Agriculture, the village chief, and 50 affected farmers. The rice was nearly dead and the farmers risked losing income and time." The meeting resulted in an official request to the provincial authorities to release water from a nearby dam. Eventually, the reservoir was opened, water flowed through the irrigation channels, and the rice paddies—and the livelihoods of dozens of families—were saved. "The farmers cannot send such a request letter and even the district authorities are sometimes hard to reach for them. But the CAO's are well connected and can help swiftly," she explains with a quiet smile.

As a leader and role model, Sreyleak embodies the power of women in agriculture, blending local knowledge with modern solutions to build a resilient, thriving future for her community. She is not just an officer—she is a beacon of progress, rooted in the land she loves.

And just as Sreyleak is serving her native commune many more local CAOs are doing the same across the country. Soon each and every Cambodian commune is supported by this entirely new generation of young and well educated CAOs—of which about 40 % are women. And they are out in the field, close to the farmers and ready to collaborate with Development Partners and their programs.

The CAO's continuous presence at grass roots level helps in supporting farmers by:

- Linkages to suppliers, traders and training opportunities.
- Supporting with short communication channels in times of crises.
- Providing real time data on agricultural developments to local and national decision makers.



Ministry of Agriculture,
Forestry and Fisheries

CAOs – An Opportunity for Development Partners for Cooperation

Sreyleak's Impact in Agriculture

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).

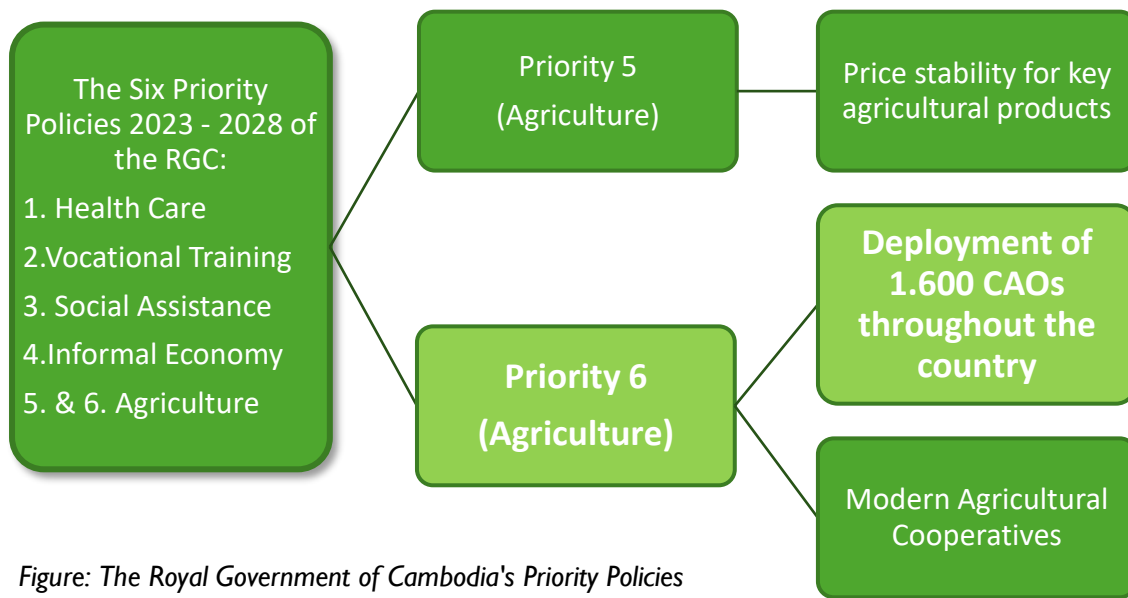


Figure: The Royal Government of Cambodia's Priority Policies

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 Sreyleak

