



Mr. Chorn Chen and his wife always have good care for their pigs since they are the income's source of the family. Photo by Khorn Linna/CRS

## Turning Zero Hope into Better Life

### SUCCESS STORY

Mr. Chorn Chen, 62, and Mrs. Chea Sam Orn, 57, are parents to seven children. They live in Samlot District, Battambang Province, in the western part of Cambodia, near the Thai border. Samlot District is mostly covered by dense forests and mountains and is also known as a good area for farming agricultural crops such as corn, cassava, beans, durian, rambutan, and mangosteen.

Back in 2002, Mr. Chorn Chen's health quickly deteriorated, and he could barely move from the sedge mat or perform his daily work. With his life alarmingly at risk, his wife decided to take him to the Battambang Referral Hospital to conduct some tests. Two weeks later, they received news that he was HIV positive and also had tuberculosis. The treatment journey started with tuberculosis treatment for six months, followed by HIV treatment. However, that was not the end of their struggles. Two years later, in 2004, his wife also tested positive for HIV.

Mr. Chorn Chen and Mrs. Chea Sam Orn lives had become incredibly difficult, encountering various challenges while trying to support their seven children. They both continued to work, regardless of their illnesses, in order to put food on the table for their children. To make ends meet, they also had to sell nearly all of their family property and their children eventually migrated to Thailand to support their family income. In addition to their challenges, the entire family felt discrimination by their neighbors and relatives who held misconceptions about HIV rooted in stigma.

Through outreach activity implemented by staff of CRS HIV Global Fund project, the family's challenging situation was identified. CRS HIV staff are fully integrated within local health structures, including antiretroviral therapy (ART) sites. In collaboration with the Battambang Provincial Health Department (PHD) and health structure on the ground, CRS staff reached out to support and motivate the couple in receiving appropriate treatment and care services at the ART site where the service providers have been trained with the support of CRS HIV project in counselling and communication skills. Additionally, staff visited the family regularly to check in on their well-being, educate them about safe-hygiene practices, and provided financial support for transportation costs for receiving treatment at the ART site and other basic needs, such as basic food. By June 2022, the project supported 3,022 individuals (of which 1,498 were women) in Battambang Province, with 94 patients (of which 55 were women) located in Samlot District.

With ongoing financial and emotional support from the project, Mr. Chen and Mrs. Chea Sam Orn were able to improve their health and financial situation. As a result, they started a small business raising pigs. Starting with only one pig, they currently own more than 50 pigs. Nowadays, they earn approximately two million riels per month (USD \$490) from their business. With the efforts from CRS and ART site services in making their lives better, they are now happier with their five grandchildren living in their house in Samlot District, Battambang Province.

Mr. Chen stated, "Now, my health is fine as same as my wife's health. We can grow pigs as our family income and at the same time we take care of our grandchildren while their parents have migrated. I honestly thank CRS staff who saved my life and brought new hope for my family."

