



Mrs. Ngin Pheoun joins the meeting at the Phateas Rong Commune Office. Photo by Mao Daneth/CRS

Empower Commune Leaders to Invest in Community's Health

SUCCESS STORY

Phateas Rong is a commune in Pursat Province, located in the western region of Cambodia. Based on the commune's record, the commune has a total population of over 18,000 (over 4,000 households). The majority of the population are agricultural farmers who plant cassava, corn, and rice, while others forage the nearby forests to collect forest products. Because Pursat is located near the border with Thailand, some people have migrated to the country. The major health concerns of people living in the commune include both communicable and non-communicable diseases, including malaria, dengue, tuberculosis, high blood pressure, and diabetes.

Mrs. Ngin Pheoun is 59-year-old mother of four children. Mrs. Pheoun has been working at the Phateas Rong Commune for 20 years. For the first five years, she was a member of the commune council, and was later promoted to the Vice Chief of the Commune responsible for the Commune Committee for Women and Children. In her role as a vice chief of the commune, Mrs. Pheoun leads the health center management committee (HCMC), she oversees all commune council support for women, children under five years, elderly people, the committee for people with disabilities, and community pre-school learning. Mrs. Pheoun works closely with Tasas Health Center (HC) staff and village health support groups (VHSGs). She has been recognized as an active, energetic, enthusiastic, and supportive commune leader, and has a high commitment to her role and responsibilities.

Since 2018, with support from the Global Fund, CRS has implemented the Resilient Sustainable System for Health (RSSH) project in Pursat Province. The project enhances community responses to local health issues and strengthens institutional capacity of health structures, with particular focus on the functioning of HCMC and VHSG. CRS supports capacity-building training for HCMC members on plan development and resource mobilization. The training has enabled HCMC members to cultivate their leadership and ownership for developing commune investment plans and mobilizing resources for improving health services at the community level. Mrs. Pheoun was one of the trained participants, and through the training she was inspired to advocate for having commune budget invested in health. Between 2019 to 2020, Phateas Rong commune did not mobilize commune budget for the HCMC and VHSG meetings. HCMCs are encouraged to hold six meetings per year, and during that period, CRS provided funds for four HCMC meetings and the HC funded two meetings. As a result of the training, ongoing coordination by CRS, and efforts of community leaders like Mrs. Pheoun, from 2021 until today, the commune has invested budget for HCMC and VHSG meetings. Moving forward, CRS will continue working closely with the Phateas Rong commune and health center staff in an effort to see all expenses for HCMC and VHSG meetings included in the commune investment plan from 2023. The investment of commune budget in HCMC and VHSG meetings and other health priorities maintain functioning of these groups, enhance feedback mechanism from community to commune and health center levels, which allow health service improvement, engage local authority responsibility/accountability in health, increase domestic resource mobilization, build local ownership/leadership and develop resilient health system at the community level.

Mrs. Pheoun has recognized and appreciated the supportive collaboration with CRS. After she joined the training, she felt empowered; "I'm motivated by the support from CRS. This is as same as other HCMC members. CRS enables my leadership knowledge to grow. I am more confident in leading the work in my commune. When CRS stops funding, I am sure that I could keep the activity moving."

