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**Vegetable gardens covered with a net**

**Project Title**: **promotion of agriculture in Rumdoul with net-protected vegetable gardens**

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| **Contact information** |
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Cambodia is much affected by climate changes and last year especially the drought has been devastating. Some villages were without water altogether.

Rumdoul is the district where Mekong Plus operates, with a team of 16 social workers. They run a community development project, focused on agriculture and the very poor who live with less than 2$ per week/person.

Most farmers produce only one crop per year. After harvest they escape to the city for work or to other remote districts where they find some work for 4-6 months. The children are left behind at the village. Many adult men return with HIV-AIDS. There are also many social issues, as the children are left not well attended for long periods. 75% do not go beyond 9 years of education.

The focus of the Mekong Plus project in Rumdoul is to develop the local economy for the poor so that they would find enough employment and income all year round in the village. Promotion of the best agriculture techniques, associated with technical support and microcredit for the poorest are key activities.

The farmers have little access to good seeds and good techniques. For example vegetables are scarce. In the nearby city they are often imported from the neighboring Vietnam. Vegetable gardens are an ideal option for the poor. Not much land is required, so is water. However the vegetable gardens are plagued with pests and the heavy monsoon rains discourage the farmers who too often lose their whole crop.

The protective nets are an ideal solution: the rains do not devastate the gardens anymore and the vegetables are protected from pests. The farmers may thus grow off-season thus making very good profits.

Typically the investment for a little garden of 100 m2 is just 40$ (plus labor). After already 1 month the first harvest generates a health return of 50$. There are usually 11 harvests in one year. Besides this good income for a low investment, the gardens are also a regular source of cash, which is so important for the poor.

Mekong Plus has observed that training pilot farmers is very efficient. In general one such pioneer farmer is soon followed by 3 others. Mekong Plus thus provides support to just a few farmers, while the followers receive only technical support but no financial subsidy.

The project aims at targeting 20 pilot farmers; in a second phase the project will provide technical support with regular on-site visits etc. to another 60 farmers.

The budget is as follows:

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| 20 Pilot farmers |  |  |
|  | Training & technical support | 20\*12$ | 240$ |
|  | Seeds  | 20\*2,5$ | 50 |
|  | Support for the net | 20\*10$ | 200$ |
| 60 following farmers |  |  |
|  | Training & technical support | 60\*12$ | 720$ |
| Total |  |  | 1.210$ |

This project will generate approximately 30-40.000$ additional income in the district, every year.

Bernard KERVYN and Rath Sarath, 7th July 2016