



Young woman in Koh Kong shows how Cambodian women can have it all

Young Chin, 27, is an example of a woman who has taken control of her life and embracing all that she can be. She has doubled her family's income through home farming activities and is one of the graduates of Cambodia's first all-female class of village animal health workers (VAHWs)—all of which she has achieved while looking after her own young family.

Women in rural Cambodia sometimes feel that their income options are limited, particularly as cultural attitudes towards women often lead them to stay at home. As a result forging their own path can be even more challenging, but women such as Chin are finding that the rewards can be worth the effort.

Her transformation began when she joined CARE's training for young women to develop their own home businesses. Her efforts, which included raising pigs and growing vegetables for sale, resulted in her family's profit, which primarily came from her husband's work as a fisherman, going from 200,000 riel (USD50) per month, to 400,000.

But Chin's ambitions didn't stop there. Despite having just delivered her third child, Chin chose to join the VAHW training provided by CARE. VAHWS are community based vets who are recognised by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries as being qualified to provide treatment services for livestock and sell animal vaccines. Chin saw this as an ideal way to earn additional income and improve her family's position.

Chin believed in her abilities and having proven how much her efforts could benefit her family, she was able to gain the support of her husband and other family members to take on this new challenge. Studying for a new career while also breastfeeding an infant and continuing to develop existing income activities is not always easy. However, the family rallied together to make sure her dream was achievable.

When Chin attended training her husband or father often took on the traditional women's role of caring for the baby, bringing her child to her at the training so she could continue breastfeeding while she learned. This family support also extended to her existing business activities when Chin was recovering from the birth. Chin's mother and mother-in-law not only helped with household chores and prepared food for her children, but also mucked out the pig pen and made sure the animals were fed. Under



Chin's guidance on the technical aspects, her husband prepared a drip irrigation system to ensure their vegetable garden continued to thrive.

Chin speaks of the value of this support for her career and her personal development: "I am very happy that I have had the opportunity to learn technical skills. Now I am able to help develop opportunities for my family as well as care for them and what I have learned from CARE has helped make sure these are successful ... Before I used to only stay home and look after my children. My husband did not help and any extra I tried to contribute, I had to do myself. Now I feel able to ask for help when I need and my family will respond."

Chin is lucky that her family recognised her potential and saw how this could positively benefit their whole family. What they may not realise is that by supporting Chin to pursue this career, they have also contributed to a benefit for the whole community. Many villagers were keen for Chin to become a qualified VAHW because the market selling animal vaccines is very far from their homes. With Chin providing services from within the community, the success rate of all of their livestock raising activities is likely to improve.

"I would say to other mothers with young babies that they have a right to join activities in the community and they should show their families that their contributions are so valuable," concludes Chin. "Working together to support each other is the best way for a family to progress. When my daughter grows up I would like to study more than I did; I hope for her to become an intelligent young woman who can support herself in the future."

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