

Meet Phany, Cambodia



Phany planting seedlings in a nursery at her home in Cambodia. Before joining the Caritas program her family only grew seasonal rice and Phany and her husband had to migrate after each harvest to the cities to work construction. They could only earn \$2.50 a day.

Watch the [film](#).

What are your hopes and dreams for the future? Do you have the support you need to start pursuing your dreams?

This is a story about Phany (pronounced par-nee) – a mother, wife and talented farmer living in a beautiful rural village in western Cambodia. Phany's dream was to stay at home in her village raising chickens and growing vegetables and, with the support of Caritas Australia and the Environment Protection and Development Organisation (EPDO), this dream has now come true.

Life for Phany and her family has not always been easy. In Cambodia, 1 in 8 people live below the poverty line.*This means they have less than \$2 a day for all their needs.

Unlike Australia, most people in Cambodia live in villages in the countryside. Traditionally, farmers in Cambodia have made a living by growing and selling rice. In recent years the weather in Cambodia has been changing – it has been getting hotter and there hasn't been enough rain to water crops. When families cannot grow enough food to eat and sell, they are forced to borrow money to help look after their family. Once you get into debt it can be very hard to get back out again.

Six years ago, this is the situation Phany and her husband were in. They had no choice but to leave their two year-old daughter at home in the village with a sick grandparent and travel to the city in search of work. Phany found work in the construction industry in Phnom Penh – the capital city of Cambodia. Unfortunately,

building sites in Cambodia do not have the same safety rules as they do in Australia. For five years, Phany worked long hours, carrying heavy lime and bricks. The work was dangerous and she didn't earn much money, but it was the only way she could help care for her daughter back home.

In 2016, Phany joined the Upholding Community Dignity Together program, run by Caritas Australia and EPDO. Through the program, Phany learnt new farming techniques, such as drip irrigation – which delivers water slowly, drip by drip, to the base of the plants so that none of it is wasted. Simple water saving techniques like this have made a huge difference. Phany has learnt to grow a variety of vegetable crops, and is also raising chickens and ducks, just like she'd dreamed.

Phany is a role model for other farmers and an inspiration to her community. She can now earn enough money from farming all year round and no longer needs to travel to the city to find extra work. Her family can now afford a small house, they have enough food and clothes, and can afford to send their daughter to school. "I am proud that I was a farmer who had no skills and now I can earn and improve my living, share my knowledge and also improve solidarity in the family and amongst our neighbours," Phany says.

In addition to learning new farming techniques, Phany and her community have been trained in health, nutrition and hygiene, as well as how to prepare for disasters and cope with the environmental changes that are taking place. Phlong Sokly, EPDO's Program Coordinator, says "climate change is a problem, but the community lacked knowledge and had no strategy to deal with it. The community now thinks more about water management and adaptation to the change of season... People work better together when they need to mobilise resources for the community's common good."

Phany continues to have hopes and dreams for the future.

For my family, I hope to own a plot of land to expand my vegetable and animal raising activity. For the community, I hope we have enough water for all year-round, to reduce migration to the cities, and that no one is trapped in debt.

Phany

**Source: WFP*

PHANY, CAMBODIA

Learning Tasks

1. Read and discuss:

- What hard choices did Phany have to make?
- What are the challenges that Phany and her community face?
- Explain how Caritas Australia and their partner in the Cambodia is supporting people to improve their lives.
- How is Phany now earning an income?
- How has Phany's involvement in the Caritas Australia program helped the rest of her community?
- What is one thing that has surprised you about this story? Why does it surprise you?
- Does this story remind you of any other issues you have learned about?
- Which Catholic Social Teaching principle is illustrated in this story? How?

Curriculum: English ACELY1676, ACELY1692, HASS Year 6: ACHASSK149, ACHASSK141

2. Discover Drip Irrigation

Our Caritas Cambodia partners explain drip irrigation, which is used by Phany and her community to increase their crops:

A drip system is a tool connected from water source/storage and brings the water to the field either from above the soil surface or buried below the surface. It sprays the water in a slow effective manner and reaches each plant's roots with the same volume of water in the same time.

There are a number of materials to set up the system such as: valve, drip tubing, pipes, cover plastic, tube punch, dripper and fitting.

Crops are planted between 3cm to 6cm from one another and each row is normally length between 12m to 15m (small size of farm between 300m² to 500m²).

The drip system is really helpful for a number of reasons:

- Saves time and labour
- Saves water consumption and reduce weed/grass presence
- Is easy to apply fertilizer and retain it in the area needed.

The watering method is important in drought prone areas. What do you know about drought? How does it affect people in Australia? For people like Phany it made growing food was more difficult.

Tasks:

- Students design a drip irrigation system for a garden at school or home.
- Put it to the test. Design an experiment where students trial using different watering methods. e.g. spray, watering can and drip using a droplet tool. With the drip method, take note of the information provided above. Record results of growth.
- Drip Irrigation Photo match

Curriculum: Science Year 5: ACSSU043, ACSHE083, Year 6: ACSSU094, ACSHE100.

3. RE LINK: Living the mission of Jesus

During Jesus' ministry, he spent most of his time with the poor and marginalised in society.

How are we living the mission of Jesus when we donate money, goods or our time for acts of charity?

Create a poster encouraging individuals to support the work of Caritas.

Discover how drip Irrigation works: Photo caption match

Match the photos with the captions on the following page. You might find two captions for one photo.



Discover how drip irrigation works: Photo caption match

Before joining the Caritas program, Phany and her family only knew how to grow seasonal rice. They couldn't grow and earn enough to survive the year.

Phany (27) is married to Seiha and they have one daughter called Phally (7). They live in Pursat province, located in western Cambodia.

A drip irrigation system requires materials like: valve, drip tubing, pipes, cover plastic, tube punch, dripper and fitting.

The watering method is important in drought prone areas. The community suffer from climate change related issues such as drought, floods and fires. The program has taught farmers like Phany to reduce the impact of drought. They can now provide water for their crops all year.

Crops are planted between 3cm to 6cm from one another and each row is normally length between 12m to 15m

The drip system is really helpful for a number of reasons:

- Saves time and labour.
- Saves water consumption and reduces weed/grass presence.
- Makes it easier to apply and retain fertiliser in the areas it is needed.

A drip system is a tool connected from a water source/storage that brings the water to the field either from above the soil surface or buried below the surface.

It sprays the water in a slow, effective manner and reaches each plant's roots with the same volume of water in the same time.

Phany and her family have moved from their basic bamboo house with no sanitation into a new home. They now have better food security (better food, more often) and can afford to send their daughter to school.

Through the Caritas program, Phany also meets other community farmers to share ideas and resources. The community has also been able to install a water pump in the village that has increased year-round water supply.

Using a drip irrigation system can save an average of 10 times more water than traditional methods. Farmers use this system to water their crops 2 to 3 times day for 5 to 10 minutes each time.