



Changes come from
positive actions



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Foreword

While inputs are gathered to generate these stories of changes, it comes as the most common response that the area where existing ADRA project in Vinh Long addresses has not been undergoing adverse impacts of disasters, in terms of number and frequency. This leads to an obvious outcome that a majority of population ignore and underestimate the preventive and coping mechanisms for disasters and “often passively deal with the aftermath”.

The very first and foremost positive result of the Livelihood Improvement for Building Resilient Communities Project – LIBRE as in short – after 3 years of implementation appears as general awareness increased, and therefore attitude and behavior are embracing constant changes towards “proactive state”. The most impacted subjects are local officers and key community members acting as “trainers” of the ToT methodology. All of interviewed individuals show understanding of the happening disasters and the impacts, ability to establish the links between disasters and climate change, and effort on generating related community-based schemes. One report they want to continue the project activities to spread the public awareness in wider scale, for now the poor and the near-poor are the most affected but still lack education to gain

better understanding and have more livelihood concerns to distract them (some have from the linkage between livelihood and disasters but some have not done comprehensively).

The months at the beginning of 2016 witness the drought and saltwater intrusion in the entire lower Mekong basin, Vinh Long province is impacted in four communes of the ADRA project location. Thanks to the up-to-date activities of the LIBRE project, not only about the awareness that people see now it is true climate change is bringing unexpected extreme weather patterns, but also there are people who do have preparedness method or sense more about the importance of preparedness.

The LIBRE project is funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, and implemented by ADRA Vietnam in partnership with ADRA New Zealand.



Act together

This specific project of ADRA, so-called Livelihood Improvement for Building Resilient Communities, provokes a movement towards making positive changes amongst the local farmers. Most of them stayed with limited understanding towards the risky events and lacking awareness to prevent and control the consequences, hereby they embrace the practice of old customs and resist the devotion of time and effort for the other preparedness. In the case of disaster's coming, its impacts kept draining the resources, especially of the poorest and so making these subjects even more vulnerable.

I recognize that since the project boosts motivation in people through building capacity and understanding of the new field, encouraging key community members to embrace changes, the local people learn from each other, follow and replicate the 'good practices'.

—said Nguyen Van Nhieu, dwelling in Vinh Tien village (Vinh Xuan commune, Tra On district)

Nhieu has a lovely family of his wife and two daughters whose ages are over 20 years old. Presently, only the second child is living in the same accommodation with Nhieu's couple, while the older already settled down with her own family. The household's main income is from the fruit orchard, which has been invested for years by

him and his spouse and has brought them to the middle class in the neighborhood.

Nhieu becomes the targeted primary beneficiary of LIBRE project since it starts. He engages deeply in every component of the project. Speaking about the disaster risk management component at locality, Nhieu opines:

“There was not so much communication, both informal and formal about disasters and its relation to the currently hot issue of climate change; people ergo were not aware and preparing for any coming situation. Mostly we conducted the recovery works if something unfortunate happened. In addition to structural damage to home, impacts on agricultural production are quite obvious. Strong winds can sweep away 1,000m2 areas of maize or paddy rice in a blink, consequently owner of the field loses the harvest season.

Acting as the village leader, I assessed and made the report to the local government. At the end, the families of smashed accommodation would receive a humble amount of assisted finance for fixing purpose. The noteworthy point is that bad luck usually falls into the poor households; because of

their poor conditions, they are the most affected. Families having people with disabilities or sick patients are even put in more extreme circumstances, since their resilient capacity stays low (for instance the saving budget used for emergency is limited).

Since the communication activity of ADRA project appears, the local people continuously listen to and are reminded of the disaster preparedness measures, as well as their meaning and importance. They start forming and developing proper attitude towards the changing situation. Especially relating actions, the project engages disaster simulations in motivating community members. Techniques to fortify the house, trim tree branches that are likely to cause danger, locate safe places and evacuate vulnerable subjects are practiced on spot. The number of households engaging in preparedness actions has been recorded since then as at increasing rate, particularly of the poor ones because they are more often encouraged by the key community persons and the neighbors. There are still a lot to go in order to mobilize the whole population towards a safer society, but this project is laying a foundation for the change in awareness and actions of the people.”

"Recently, my own experience goes with the improvement in the house kitchen. I was called to attention by the ADRA trainer about the energy-efficient and smokeless indoor stove. Recognizing the instant benefits to family members, by the time my house kitchen is to be repaired I build a suitable cooking system to save fuel, make best use of the emitted energy and reduce the indoor haze."

In order to talk to people and persuade them to do something, I as the key community person have to set up the example first.



The typical model of energy efficient cooking stove used in rural areas of Mekong delta (Vietnam)



Empowering the vulnerable

“Standing from the perspective of the Sponsoring Association for Poor Patients, I feel deeply appreciative for the meaningful project works that create better living conditions for the families in most need. People with disabilities (PWDs) who barely walk or just crawl on the floor can be more independently handling themselves to the new clean and safe toilets; that does not only eliminate the personal inferiority but also lessen the other family members’ burden of caring. Few years ago, the Association could fund only 5 toilet buildings; the selection of beneficiaries was a tough procedure because each had a unique situation. In partnership with ADRA project, 20 works were completed in 2015; the number of beneficiaries was quadrupled.”

Her name is Tran Thi Tuyet, 58 years old from Xuan Minh 1 village (Trung Thanh commune, Vung Liem district). She had experienced the social work from the Women’s Union until her retirement age, that moment she decided to keep working for the Sponsoring Association for Poor Patients, of which subjects are orphans, children with disabilities, the elderly and other poor patients. Ms. Tuyet was contacted to coordinate with LIBRE project for conducting the assessment of families having

people with disabilities to receive project’s grants of building suitable latrines, she would be also responsible for supervising and monitoring the construction works once the sponsorship was transferred.

It is the general situation that families having poorer living conditions still practice open defecation. For people with disabilities in any form, they face higher risks by using those sanitation facilities.

Mrs. Tuyet shares about the whole process of working with ADRA project: “working closely with the field project coordinator, we came together to visit the families listed in the official record, so as to carefully scan and double check their current situation. After selecting the proper beneficiaries, the house representatives were invited to the training on designing and building facilities, which would be taken the most use by the persons in special need of the house (PWDs and children, the elder). Several criteria were mentioned, such as flush toilet with proper seats for PWDs, indoor location or the closest spot to the living area, having roof and surrounding walls.

All families were supported 2 million dong and they all attempted to use family money to contribute the

building of double cost, which was approximately 4-5 million dong. There were also five families, who could not raise the money from relatives and acquaintances, so they used 2 million to finish the core part and utilized natural materials such as bamboo and leaves to cover the top and the surrounding.

Half out of total number 20 toilets were extended the space of bathroom. This is one of the ADRA project’s highlights in comparison with the previously foreign-funded project at locality, which delivered a fixed design of the toilet to the local, and so was generally evaluated not suitable for common use.

The improved or brandly new sanitation facilities not only attribute to the lives of direct beneficiaries, but also play a part in the campaign of protecting environment, preventing diseases. Mrs. Tuyet shares that an example of practicing open defecation is that if someone is diarrhea infected, the outbreak might affect the family members and surrounding people via water infection. This will be intensified by the happening of climate change, the phenomenon of drought or flood.





Swim to survive

According to the statistical report of the Ministry of Labor, Invalids and Social Affairs, Vietnam has the rate of drowning in children 10 times as high as that of developed countries. Especially, this type of accident increases significantly in the season of summer and monsoon/flooding. The fact that there are a great number of children who are not equipped with swimming skills, as well as the other proper rescue techniques has been holding one of prime reasons for the hurtful situation.

These sorts of response are collected in the field of LIBRE project, coming from the parents' opinions:

"The canal water is getting more and more contaminated because farmers use a lot of chemicals and the water from the field brings the toxic to the rivers or canals. Besides, there are few families doing big-scale animal husbandry models, and they do not implement the proper waste management so the waste goes straightly to the waterbodies. Unlike my generations and the older ones used to swim in the rivers or canals, the nowadays children hardly can do."

"Water of the recent time has been affected by saltwater intrusion due to El Nino climate phenomenon. The children get skin infection when they expose to this water. My son has been suffering the itchiness for weeks."

"There's no nearby swimming pool for the parents here to bring their kids to. If we allow the children to swim in the river, we have to watch for their safety. If we allow them to swim in the canal, we worry about the water quality. There's no good option existing."

Nguyen Phan Chinh Quan is the 8-year-old boy from Xuan Thanh commune coming to the swimming class organized by ADRA. He shares about his direct experience with the project:

"I will surely go to learn swimming this summer if I am allowed to. I did enjoy much the last year course. In the swimming pool with teachers, I was able to float and do simple basic techniques. At first the fear came and overwhelmed my entire mind and body, then I and other children were instructed to use the floats. We left the floats after few lessons and could control the body on our own. When the swimming course organized by ADRA finished, my mother let me swim with some brothers in the house."

Quan has another 4 year older brother. Both of them were convinced to participate in the provoked array of activities by ADRA that aim at reducing children's vulnerability to disaster risks –

the swimming training courses and the Against Children Drowning competition and communication events. Being older than Quan, his brother could swim well after the 2015 course.

Saying by Quan's mother: "as parents we already heard about the campaign to teach children the swimming skills, but adults here are busy to earn money for the whole family's survival so most are careless until any unfortunate situation occurs. Thanks to this LIBRE project, my kids were helped improve their survival skills, I am truly happy for that."



Bring up the future

Some do not need to hold a big dream about their children's future, but do hope that the children can at least access to proper education, so that they can have good jobs, and support the parents when they get older.

When one of the children unluckily has brain defect, Thach Thuy Minh (38 years old) along with her husband have been attempting throughout 14 years to maintain her life. They also have another 11-year-old son after the first child with disability. Minh's husband often gets the seasonal job to earn an unstable source of income; meanwhile she works on the plot of land rented from her own mother and spends most of the time for caring the child. Three cultivating seasons per year can only provide sufficient stable food to this family of four members. Part of the products harvested is to return to her mother in the form of renting fee (Minh's mother also lives in poor condition with the family of her other child). Life goes so difficult, Minh and her husband barely step out of the poverty cycle since they cannot make any saving to reinvest or develop any model.

Beginning of April 2014, being approached by the Livelihood Improvement for Building Resilient

Communities (abbreviated as LIBRE) funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, the family of Minh was selected to become direct beneficiary of the Cow Bank Initiative, which is about to support the families in most difficult situation to develop a suitable livelihood model. Even though the core principle of ADRA project activities is building up the matching fund, Minh and her husband did not feel less interested and they did try to match the value of 3 million dong. After a year, efforts of taking good care of the female cow was compensated, their family returned a calf to the cow bank and this little cow was ready to be revolved to the other poor household. They also received a financial support's worth of 1.5 million dong (taken from the cow bank fund that the families in the next round of receiving cattle contribute).

"The whole family of mine loves this cow and we caress her as one of family members. In the past we also wanted to own one to generate capital but the haunted poverty held us away from the dream. Now the wish is fulfilled and we plan to keep raising this cow to extend the herd. My husband also projects for the next year to focus on cattle husbandry only, so we will not plant vegetable but

instead grow grass to feed to cows (this female cow is currently pregnant and will deliver a calf end of this year or next year)", Minh happily shares.

Minh keeps saying: "besides providing the cow, this project also delivers a chain of training lessons on animal husbandry. My family did not have the previous experience of raising cow and therefore this component is really important and meaningful for us to keep the cow profitable. If any situation happens such as an outbreak of disease, we are alerted to keep the cows vaccinated. This is perhaps the one and only project at locality that brings this loop into reality."

The money earned and saved from herding cows will be supporting the future education of Minh's son.



A jar of water – A jar of hope

The rheumatoid arthritis has stolen the work capability of Mrs. Thach Thi Liem for a number of recent years, leaving her in vulnerable state of health. This 58-year-old Khmer woman now stays home alone and barely walks far for any of special needs.

Mrs. Liem exposes the words from her heart: “this year (2016) the drought came unexpectedly several months ago, dragging saltwater intrusion to the area of cultivable land. We responded weakly and most of families here suffered the harvest losses. For daily life, the situation went worse as the water source got drained. We had not been connected to the water supply plant, and the rain kept not coming. The solely solution was to take water from the canal where water still remained and one of my daughter had to do the job. Luckily, we received the jar from ADRA project just before dry season started, so the trouble was partially solved. From my point of view, it would have made no sense if we had not had the ‘proper container’ for storing.”

Being one of ethnic minority families in the neighbourhood of project site, Mrs. Liem was prioritized for the receipt of in-kind support from ADRA. She gladly explains without the water jar,

the family would experience a tough period of lacking water for domestic purposes including cooking and drinking, needless mentioning to bathing and washing activities.

In the face of increasing drought-induced saltwater incursion, ADRA comes up with local people to build the concrete water jars, which own longer duration of use. The project grant given to each household is valued 600.000 dong, accounting for three quarters of the total cost for a jar. The remaining of cash is contributed by the family. These water jars help increase the storage capacity of rainwater that serves domestic purposes.



Positive spirit and attitude leading to sharp action

“During the recent period of extreme weather event (drought leading to salinity intrusion) in Lower Mekong River Basin, the people here reacted with calmness and knowledge to reduce the consequences. I personally think this is one of positive impacts created by the ADRA project”, says Mr. Le Van, currently an officer of the People’s Committee of TrungThanh commune (VungLiem district, Vinh Long province).

Mr. Dung is also a member of the Project Management Board under the Livelihood Improvement for Building Resilient Communities (LIBRE) funded by the New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade and executed by ADRA New Zealand and ADRA Vietnam.

“In 2013 when I was the President of Farmers’ Union of the commune level, I was convinced by the LIBRE project goal. It is the fact that this area has not been acutely affected by the disasters during decades; as a result the local mentality towards preventive and preparedness work was very careless, the project officers explained to us comprehensively about the importance of CBDRM.

I feel happy to be part of the project and have witnessed the positive changes stemmed from the project activities.”

About the learning process for my individual, I am confident of the obtained knowledge and more importantly how to spread that knowledge to the others. The ToT training courses are the most interesting part so far, as the facilitators bring on interactive methods to engage people such as group discussion. We always bring about the real situation and context to analyze.

About positive changes in community, the people’s awareness has been improved during 3 years through the tool of 25 actions to be implemented at home. The village leaders, and vice-leaders, along with representatives of the Women’s Union all are mobilized to engage in project. They learn the new knowledge, think about the change then bring it back to community where they are living. The communication events target all subjects, but the most vulnerable is prioritized because practical activities to deliver direct support aim at those first and foremost.

Knowledge does not matter if it is not accompanied by practice. During the project period, we organized simulation drills at 2 levels: commune and village (by the year 2014). The villages developed their own scenarios (for instance falling trees, drowning children, blown house roofs). There was 45-50% of the population who participated in the exercises.





Improve sanitation facilities

Since she got the serious illness, the family of Tran Thi Loan came back to the class of “poor household”. Much of the family saving has been spent to improve Loan’s health. Two years have passed, and Nguyen Minh Hung – husband of Loan still works hard every single day to care this little home. They have a 14-year-old daughter; Hien (the daughter’s name) helps take care of her mother when she is not going to school.

Loan cannot produce the sound when she speaks; the tumor in her throat also develops by days and it causes trouble for her to take in the food. Loan is getting weaker, in order to greet the guests, her husband –Hung has to interpret her opinions.

This family of Hung and Loan was also in the initial assessment to be engaged in the project’s Cow Bank Initiative; however they could not accept this source of support, due to the fact that there is no person in the family to raise the cattle, and they hardly possibly afforded the matching part of the Cow Bank fund. They were then assisted to build the home toilet, which is the modern style in order to stop the practice of open defecation.

Hung says: “after few months my wife’s has gone

severely worse because she cannot eat much. Since the day we had the new toilet in the house, my wife could go there on her own while there was no one at home. Sometimes she falls down inside but I know it is less dangerous than in the outside of the house. When I built it, I also noticed to choose the most suitable location for this sanitation facility.”

The new facility does not only affect the current situation of Mrs. Loan, but also put the other people in better living condition. Hien tells: “the toilet inside the house is more private and safer”. Thinking about a female teenager like Hien, it is known that this is a remarkable change for her life.

We hope that following the improvement in the family having most difficult situation, to some families already aware about the environment, the rest of the community will soon change the awareness and behavior, so as to invest in proper sanitation facilities.

*Loan tries to voice up her feeling,
saying "happy".*



Spread the use of an effective tool

"I find this communication tool informative, clear and easily adaptive to the local context. It is voluntarily based so is the most democratic form to encourage the families to self-assess and realize what they need to improve. We always suggest them to go from the easiest to the more difficult. Once they decide what to do, they have to set up the time for commitment", says Mrs. Nguyen Thi Tuyet Hong.

Mrs. Nguyen Thi Tuyet Hong becomes one of the communication facilitators in Trung Trach village (Trung Thanh commune, Vung Liem district) for a year. She did not participate in the project from the beginning, but when being involved more deeply in the project's components, especially the communication content, she has been enthusiastic to join.

She says: "I go to learn about ADRA, and it is a humanitarian program so I find really suitable for the people to develop understanding of their benefits and the benefits for their families. I realize that the people do not understand about climate change, environment, so I want to gather and meet with the people to tell them about 25 actions that can improve their living conditions and bring about the changes for their children's generations in the future.

No one talked about climate change before the appearance of project, but thanks to learning from project that I have knowledge to talk to the people. Explaining in a crowd of more than 30 attendees, I am given a picture book with illustrations and clear explanation (one of the project documents) to support. Besides I integrate the local samples in the talk, revealing the benefits and harms of each action. I insist on convincing them that following these instructions, your family will be firstly benefited, then you yourself set up the example for the next door families, then the whole change can be generated."

Mrs. Hong informs that the best conducted improvement is to keep clean the living environment; storing food and clean water and fortifying house before the storm season is also strictly practiced. Even the attitude about proper or improved sanitation facilities and the animal farming places have not been improved a lot. They hold the belief about decent human living space, not to the surrounding environment (for example they claim the stink smell can come from the modern toilet, not the fish pond type). Mrs. Hong says she will attempt to convince these families

about the new trend.

The new method in order to encourage the local is also shared by Mrs. Hong: "after communication event, I invite the people to my house to observe and learn. I as one of those speakers or communitors have to set up the example first; otherwise no one will listen to. Besides, I also come to the house and check for the actions of improvement they registered. A number of households learn and do after the others so that also creates a movement to encourage them."

"At the moment am explaining this Participatory Actions Oriented Training and the accompanied documents to the friends of mine, most of them are teachers at schools and other educational institutions. I think the content of this project should be raised at school because teachers are more open-minded and they want to share this to the student's generations. They will integrate the proper program to each age so the kids can understand about hot issues of the globe related to our own living space."



About climate change, I see at first the global warming and the amount of trash that is not treated affect the human health. I find this project of significance to diffuse in the public.

The purpose is to improve the health for the person himself/herself, and then to the people who are related or live closeby. It is important to think about the community, not only about the self.

Community initiative to improve transport connectivity while reducing disaster risks

"This is the main road leading to the so-called 'big field', where a substantial number of families own their cultivable land gathered in a zone. In order to work in the field and transport the agricultural tools and harvested products, the residents of the area used to keep a reasonably big space for the access road. However as population grows later, the road gets shrinken in terms of width but still follows the formal direction. The road had not been upgraded for years. As the consequence of frequent movements of humans and animals, it fell into extremely poor condition. Five to six years ago, I mobilized few people in the village to give a hand in repairing the road for temporary use. We looked for the construction waste(i.e. the broken gravels or bricks) to use for layering another level on the road which was so muddy, so it helped ease the travelling a bit", Mr. Thach Be, a resident of An Nhon village (Trung Thanh commune, Vung Liem district) shares.

His family moved to the area more than 20 years ago. The house was built and through time was repaired following family's need; only the location stays still, that is adjacent to the main road leading to 'big field'. Close to Mr. Be's dwelling, many other nests are still

in poor conditions, which are coconut leaves thatched roofs and walls.

Mr. Be owns the experience of being a communication officer at district level, at the moment he still plays a coordinator for the district or provincial level social programs, besides the work of building up cultural profiles. He frequently proposes to the local government of various levels to invest in the construction of public buildings. The mentioned road is one of those. Nevertheless, the biggest obstacles faced are limited governmental budget and the orientation as well as strategy from central government to focus on the 'pointed/highlighted communes' aligned with criteria of New Rural Development Program.

The proposed rural road was answered to receive 50% of financial assistance, out of the total cost. Mr. Be projects: "with this ratio, it will take 3 more years for local contribution to match the rest, since there are a considerable number of poor and near-poor households in the area."

By the year of 2016, implementing the Community

Development Initiatives activity of ADRA project, the People's Committee of Trung Thanh commune targets An Nhon village, where Mr. Be is currently living. The whole selecting procedure follows carefully the principle of transparency and community-based decision making.

There are 30 households living next to the road, which are benefited directly by the upgraded rural road, along with an additional number of people having less frequent travel to their field or on the road.

"The most obvious change is the look of this residential area, every one is content of the new common road. Families of my children also live close-by, when we were mobilized to attribute to the matching fund with the government's and the project's grants, few related families of mine voluntarily contributed 1 million dong, instead of 700,000 dong per said. Since the date of rehabilitating the road, transporting agricultural commodities and production activity reaches another level. Raising an example of harvesting or tractor machines, those are brought directly to the family's land plot at the moment, saving time for the farmers in each process.

Agricultural commodities can be transported conveniently by motorbikes, attracting more buyers to be in touch with the growers. Apart from production activities, it brings the meaning to people in sense of social life. Before, few elder people living here could not move the wheelchair on their own; all the moves must have been depending on their children to carry them on the bikes, sometimes this even did not work if the weather of previous days was suffering from torrential rain. Nowadays, some can handle the wheelchairs on the new road, so the feeling of reliance should be relieved. Taking into account emergency cases, the patients (even in serious situations) used to be carried to the medical centers by motorbikes, few of the families here had to keep the boat; now the ambulance can access to the house gate, that is really meaningful for saving lives", Mr. Be expresses his bustling feeling.





Elderly people involved in the project for Disaster Risk Reduction

"This is a first project promoting disaster risk management through livelihood activities that is taking place in the area, simultaneously it involves the participation of other mass organizations, including the Seniors' Union", Mr. Le Phuoc Hau says.

Representing the Seniors' Union in Tan Quang village (Hieu Phong Commune, Vung Liem District), Mr. Hau is invited to the Training of Trainers workshops along with other persons holding positions in community, including the village leaders, representatives from the Women's Union and Farmers' Union. Despite old age, he enthusiastically contributes opinions to the training discussions.

"I think that the body of knowledge provided by the project is very complete; if the learning procedure is done properly, positive and long-lasting impacts will be generated", Mr. Hau states.

He shares more about the procedure to disseminate information at locality after the training sessions: "I often collaborate with other mass organizations to gather community members of 3 to 5 residential units, so as to make the meetings more interactive

and generous in contributing sharing and ideas. This time, I summarize the content of most recent training and repeat the communication content of 25 actions to improve at household level. There are a number of households having special circumstances, of which none of family members can attend the meetings; for those cases I sometimes come to the houses to share and instruct them directly."

Being the longtime resident of the neighborhood, Mr. Hau exposed there were disasters occurring that caused tremendous consequences to the local lives, "it was the storm recorded number 9 in 2006". After the catastrophe, the local government started some preparedness measures of small-scale and simple plan; that is different from this project since it consults people to build up a complete and thorough scheme. "In the community-based plan there is also the risk mapping component that is done by the local opinions. The villages detect and highlight locations, safe and dangerous routes, people who are assigned to assist those in special needs."

Mr. Hau expresses his personal opinion about the participation of the members in the Seniors' Union in ADRA project: "I see the significant role of the elderly in these projects, especially in sector of disaster risk management. The elder are more experienced and knowledgeable about the local context, when they get informed fully about the situation, they can remind or even warn their children and the surrounding people. In the simulation exercise organized in the village, some elder people were invited to implement the scenario of evacuation to the safe zone (in this case the place is normally the office buildings of governmental agencies). After the event when being asked, the attendees said they kept in mind to frequently notice the special weather statements, so as to actively remind the people in the house to prepare."

Prevent a leading cause of the child death in face of increasing disasters

Nguyen Minh Thoai (10 years old) is living with his family in Xuan Minh 1 village (TrungThanh commune, VungLiem district). He is naturally expressive of the most exciting last summer activity:

"I went to the pool with friends of the same age or a bit different range of ages to attend the 12-swimming lesson-course. There were 2 teachers always accompanying and carefully instructing us. Before that, I heard this activity was initiated by the organization called ADRA. There was a person from the project – Ms. Quyen (project field coordinator) – talking to my mom and asking me directly whether I would be fond of joining. I said yes of course."

The swimming class for children from 6 to 14 years old is a cornerstone attributing to the LIBRE project goal of building resilient communities to disasters and climate change. It approaches one of the most vulnerable groups in society. In 2015, the project site selected for piloting the activity was TrungThanh commune, due to the fact that there is available facility serving the safe training. Total number of 37 children was arranged in 2 classes of similar ages and physical features, so as to boost their confidence,

sense of comfort and ability of concentration to learn the skill. Besides, the ADRA project also equipped necessary tools such as floats or floating suits for the children's use during the course.

Thoai laughs while he is asked about the fear of getting drown, saying something later: "I am actually not afraid of that. I faced the situation once when I was smaller and my brother saved me."

His optimism surprises the ADRA staff, but he continues: "nevertheless I think knowing well the swimming skills is still better, for instance in case of emergency I understand not to get panic and calmly help the others. At school, we also learn about the linkage between survival skills as swimming being one of and the possibility of getting less risk once disaster hits. If there is another course organized by ADRA, I still would like to attend."



Supporting the ethnic minority people

Mr. Son Soi reveals some statistics that Xuan Minh 2 village has 252 households, of which 45 are Khmer ethnic minority group. Most of these ethnic minority families stay in the less accessible areas and have more difficult economic situation compared to the general population.

"Owning least or none piece of land is the main reason for the economic hardship of Khmer families. Many of them become hired labor or have to rent land from the other owners to cultivate rice or vegetables. The profit deducted by the renting fee is not considerable.

Since the implementation of ADRA project focusing on disaster risk mitigation and livelihood development, the large number of households here have benefited from the communication program for awareness raising. Beyond that, solutions for financial support (such as water jars), the poorest people are given priority, including many Khmer households", said Mr. Soi.

Talking about the method of communication to every household project Libre, Mr. Soi shares besides the specifically designed materials to hand to single households, there are also the big size posters installed in public areas. "I find these posters bring

certain results while transferring the message to the audiences. People go back and forth will sooner or later notice the slogan.

Sometimes adults are with their children, the juniors pop up to questions about the posters' content, it is a way to remind the older to make up the improvement."

In action, Mr. Soi along with other members of the village participating in the training project already talk and repeat to the people about 25 actions in the quarterly meetings. There were two activities, which concerns strengthening house structure and trimming tree branches before the arrival of storming season. The other actions in fact are related to daily activities (such as storing clean water, putting litter in designated area, keeping the living area hygienic, etc) should be further encouraged to achieve better results.





Livelihood diversification

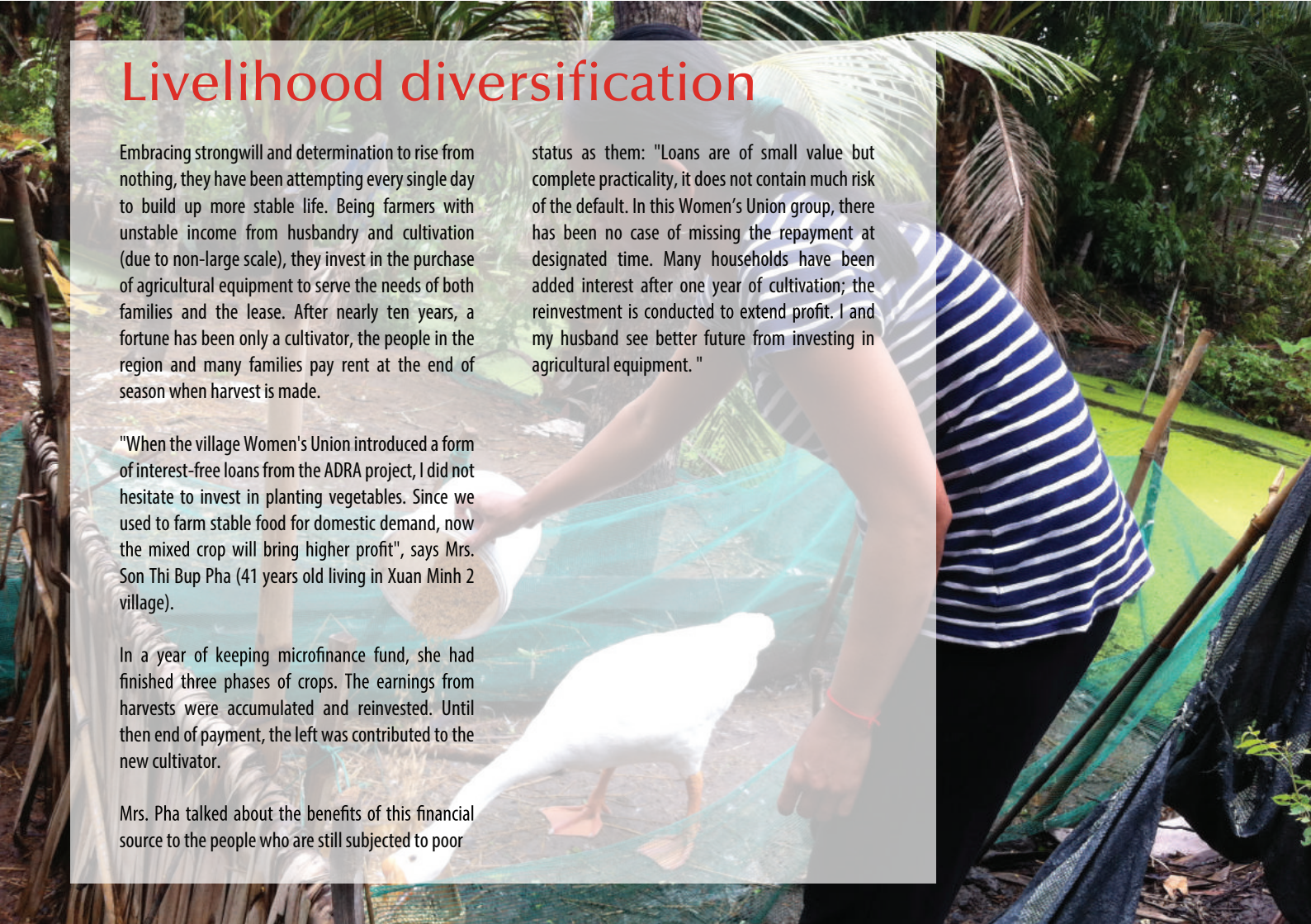
Embracing strongwill and determination to rise from nothing, they have been attempting every single day to build up more stable life. Being farmers with unstable income from husbandry and cultivation (due to non-large scale), they invest in the purchase of agricultural equipment to serve the needs of both families and the lease. After nearly ten years, a fortune has been only a cultivator, the people in the region and many families pay rent at the end of season when harvest is made.

"When the village Women's Union introduced a form of interest-free loans from the ADRA project, I did not hesitate to invest in planting vegetables. Since we used to farm stable food for domestic demand, now the mixed crop will bring higher profit", says Mrs. Son Thi Bup Pha (41 years old living in Xuan Minh 2 village).

In a year of keeping microfinance fund, she had finished three phases of crops. The earnings from harvests were accumulated and reinvested. Until then end of payment, the left was contributed to the new cultivator.

Mrs. Pha talked about the benefits of this financial source to the people who are still subjected to poor

status as them: "Loans are of small value but complete practicality, it does not contain much risk of the default. In this Women's Union group, there has been no case of missing the repayment at designated time. Many households have been added interest after one year of cultivation; the reinvestment is conducted to extend profit. I and my husband see better future from investing in agricultural equipment."



Cow loan

One of the limitations in accessing the source of financial support is that poor households retain the mentality of “not wating to borrow”. The fear of risks arisen during the implementing period of developing any economic model, causing heavy consequences on the repayment ability has degraded the spirit of getting out of poverty.

The household of Nguyen Thi Tham (41 years old) and Ly Van Nhan Em tells about their situation of years ago: “we were both hired labour for any kind of job. Working from the distance to home gave better earnings; therefore my husband was not home for 7 years to follow this path. I stayed home taking care of 2 kids. In order to increase the obtained income, I borrowed a loan to raise pigs and poultries; unfortunately that went into failure and I had to use our plot of agricultural land as collateral. After 11 years, my youngest sibling helped take back the land, but now I still owe her an amount.”

Tham says her thoughts go this way: “raising big cattle like cow is easier, the caring time can be easily scheduled so I am able to work on the other things. It is less dirty as raising cows to the other animals like pigs. The manure can be utilized to make fertilizers or for sale. In a nutshell, I am in big fondness of trying

this model, but I don’t have the capital to initiate the real action.”

One day Mrs. Tham was called to participate in the ADRA project with the component of lending the female cow and revolving the calves. Her dream was turned into true and she became one of very first families receiving cows in first phase (2013).

“We contently took the cow home in the first day. We built the shed in the prior time according to the criteria list of project; we signed the memorandum not to sell the cow before returning the first calf to Cow Bank. I have been utilizing half of the land plot to plant grass for cow, so she had the freshest and safest food. I follow all the instructions given by the vets and experts during the ADRA training courses”, Mrs. Tham tells about the procedure of receiving and taking care of her cow until now.

At the moment, Tham finds another job to work in a local food stall in the early morning, while her first daughter helps care the cow during this time. Tham confidently speaks out about the future plan: “I will never sell the mother cow that I received from project. She must be kept to extend the herd. I hope the market price will not drop down so that

my husbandry model can get more and more profitable.”

During the period of February to April of 2016, the cow husbandry model in Vinh Long confronts some threats due to the effects of drought and saltwater intrusion. The LIBRE project staff keep following up and encouraging the borrowers not to sell the project cows before returning the calves. Thanks to those, no cow was sold and the price has come back to the normally good rate recently.





The cow in Mrs. Tham's house drinks clean water from the supply water. Tham does not allow the contaminated water to avoid the disease the cow might get.

Implementing structural risk reduction measures

One day near the end of May when the LIBRE project coordinator in Vinh Long visited community initiatives on rural road rehabilitation, I had the opportunity to see the firsthand changes and the positive impact that the structural risk reduction measure is and will bring more to the residents of the area.

Viewed from this side of the river embankment, the other side was invested for renovation by the state's investment; the road along the river thereby is also more robust, safe for both commuters and people living on the bank. This side of the water has been swallowing some of the civil works, forming the right side of the road cleft that directly threatens the lives of the households. I stand on the newly upgraded road and was totally surprised by the design of the work. The road platform was elevated about one meter above the old level of the house's courtyards. Being convinced of the reason that this will block the water to overflow the banks, I wandered to see more clearly the eroded points. Two people came close and talked to me: "if the people of the project and the People's Committee, we are extremely grateful for this new road. Thanks to it, the water cannot spill

over the bank, especially in October to December following the lunar calendar, causing damage to property and the inconvenience of traveling. Previously, people struggled to wade, also children were put at stake in case falling into a hole or ditch of on the road. Now the road gets straight as the other shore's one. We are waiting for the coming time when this work is completed by embankments against landslides."

Farewelling the two people, I visited another household that was directly benefited by the new infrastructure. Ms. Tran Thi Nho (born in 1954) acting as the team leader of Nhon Ngai village (Hieu Phung Commune, Vung Liem District) was whom I met. She was one of those who mobilized the group of residents to contribute finance to the work once the community development initiative was provoked.

"We collected from 40 households gaining direct benefits from the road. The highest contribution was 1.5 million dong. Poor households were also interested in participation, for the good sake they saw obviously, those contributed 200,000 dong.

The benefits of this project are well seen, in order to minimize the impact of disasters, and floods in particular here."

"More convenient traveling is, more economic benefits can be gained. For instance, several households doing business in the area are contacted by the traders because they can come to see the products more easily", she cheerfully shared to me.





The level of most of the houses along the route is lower than the road platform, however Mrs. Nho said the drainage system was well built so torrential rain would not make trouble.

Improving Water, Sanitation & Hygiene

"Thirty-two years have passed and she has been staying in the same situation, needing great care of the others. She is my first daughter, having disability since birth. As her mother, I spent long time to take care of her and could not possibly do something else. Few years ago I still walked to sell bread in the early morning, and then got back home at 9 o'clock to keep an eye on her when all the family members are not home. Recently the illness has degraded my health, kept me away from the streets. My husband earns from the hired works and the second daughter has an income from her job in the factory, which does not help much the whole family", Mrs. Tran Thi Be Hai (52 years old, Hieu Phung commune, VungLiem district) tells. From the appearance, Mrs. Hai even looks smaller than her disabled daughter. It is recognized the great burden on her shoulder while making daily care for the child.

By late 2015, her family was selected to the list of households receiving funding from the ADRA project— LIBRE —to build home toilets. In 2016, the family of her sibling that shares the same dwelling platform decided to contribute to the sanitation facility, along with the ADRA grant. The toilet was finally done, serving at least two families and their members.

Goals on water and sanitation, environment are included in ADRA's projects focusing on disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation. The structural solutions such as providing water jars, sponsoring household toilets accompanying the non-structural solutions, including education and communication for awareness raising, behavior change are deployed in most of areas and offer first support to households with special circumstances.

"To tell the truth about going to the toilet, the family used fish pond toilet as most of people living in the area. We use the bucket for the disabled child but then dump it into the fish pond. By now there is a new toilet in the house; we can use the proper one. My daughter is put in the wheelchair to head to the toilet. In some moments I know she recognizes the change, but that is the one that she enjoys so she smiles. If one day I am in weakness, the bucket cleaning is much more easily done in the toilet", shared Mrs. Be Hai.





The secret of success is consistency of purpose

"If it is just only one time of talking to people about changing awareness and behavior, I believe no one will take that into practice. We all understand that doing communication is a constant work, and the communicator should be patient and consistent for the purpose he or she pursues. Not only that as the necessary condition, communicators shall understand well the local context that they are deal with the dwellers."

Ms. Nguyen Thi Thinh, Head of the Women's Union in Quang Thanh village (Hieu Phung commune), at the same time positioned as the leader of the population unit number expresses her point of view towards the communication methodology that she learned and is practicing in the LIBRE project.

"Information of the climate change and disaster risk is disseminated by the Women's Union (WU) at general level. Meanwhile by the specific tools of project, namely the picture books and the registration table at home for each family, the communicators are possibly coming to the house, if it is needed, to explain the content to the people. It is also possible for the people to learn by themselves, and later disseminate the knowledge to the others via some visual aid mechanisms."

It is recorded that averagely 50% of the households in population units coming to the communication events of the project. This is a positive figure since many of the dwellers are concerning about their production activities all the time, therefore cannot participate in the meetings even if they want to.

"After the training for the communicators of the project, I combine the new method with my own understanding of the local context, which is enriched through the in-depth discussion with the people, in order to promote the best approach to the issue. During the exchange time, the participants are encouraged to open their hearts and discuss freely about the problems and solutions; that helps add up more positive results to the gatherings."

In addition, the other information and communication tool of the project is the big banners set up in selected public places. This triggers firstly the curiosity of passengers and makes them think about the content, if not affects to their awareness promptly. Similarly, the registration table of 25 actions to improve, which are hung on a number of households' walls creates motivation for some others, who did not participate in the project meetings.

"I was asked by some residents to provide them the registration tables, since they would like to attempt as the neighbors do. This shows the obvious impacts of the IEC materials developed by the project."

At first, many people feel strange the concepts of climate and some reckon that they do not live until the severe impacts of climate change, so they show as careless persons to act for the future. Presently, the impact of communication activities has been changing the awareness and constantly this leads to the behavior of people.





5000 ± 5%

50 kg ± 5

Stair gap

100 kg / floor

50 kg - Floor

100 kg

no. 10' last hand turn
tốt nhất

P

Kg

G-l

2,54 m

≈ 32m

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ch. 5 1995

30.4.1995

2000

+ 100%

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(mang trên
ghép - đồ kỹ)

1 - 11

2 - 10

3 - 7

4 - 6

5 - 9

Theo mien

- Bức ch. kỹ

- Công d. / ch. kỹ

UB

PTN MT

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- LÂM THẾ

- TỐT NHẤT

- CHẤT LƯỢNG

- KHÔNG C

- MÀU M

- KHÔNG C

- VẬT CH

- Theo H

- KHÔNG b

- TRÁI T

- DÙNG B

- TRÁNH A

- SÂU R

- VỎ M

- ĐĂNG

Household economic development

Granted the 'poor' status based on national criteria, the couple of this story moved out of the in-law's house thanks to having a plot of land borrowed from the uncle to set up a temporary dwelling.

As the couple of Nguyen My Le (38 years old) do not own any capital, they have to focus on the earnings from seasonal works. Regardless of hardworkingness, the cash is never of considerable and stable source. In order to improve the family's living, Le works on the cultivating land that she rents from her mother. Returning two million dong every year to the landlord, Le does not keep much of her profit to re-invest in any new models.

In 2015, Le received the micro-loan from LIBRE project. She worked hard on cultivating vegetables and did three crops per year. Cucumber was the variety selected and profits earned thanks to the good market price helped pay the loan according to six month basis and equip the house with more stuff.

Le says: "I look forward to borrow more loans from the project in order to purchase the good seeds. I should wait for another 6 months as this is the regulation set up by the Women's Union – the organization delegated to manage the fund of micro-loans.

There is a Denmark project that also provides loans to local women through the management of the Women's Union; however the interest rate increases along with the amount of loan. I personally prefer this funding source of ADRA."



Accessible toilet for people with disabilities

She is a victim of Agent Orange infected, passed from her father who engaged in the past battlefield. Her name is Bui Kim Thanh. The lovely woman has a cheerful smile, despite the unusual situation. She lives with her young daughter, a few months ago her mother died.

Thanh shares: "having this toilet in the house, even quite late since we had the roof, my mother was really happy to use it. She had arthritis for long time, the legs have been shrunken legs, leaving her crawl on the floor whenever she needs a move. We have fish pond toilet, which is even less convenient due to the distance from the house. Due to the outbreak of leg pain, she had to use the bucket in the house. Since the septic tank toilet was installed, my mother was really content to go toilet on her own, it is clean and more convenient. I had a piece of the wall from her room carved to make door straight to the toilet."

Thanh's mother passed away few months ago, life of her family is still maintained accordingly the old life. She opens a small hairdressing shop at the house, sometimes a few people come to have hair cut, helping her earn an extra. When building the toilet, she would not find any funding, so just utilize the project grant to complete the basic construction.

Later, Thanh had her nephew back up by using the old fibro cement pieces to make the temporary side coveing and roofing. The new toilet combined with bathroom area has helped ease the life of Thanh and her daughter.

"The night when storm hits, this new toilet will protect us from getting wet and being dangered", says Bui Dang Dong Dao, the daughter of Mrs. Thanh.

In addition, the household of Thanh also received an additional clean water jars. "This is very practical tool. We have a small one for years; water is pumped from my sister's house that lies in the adjacent land plot. Unlike the current situation that water can be pumped once per week that helps save expense on the electricity bills, we had to do every single day during the previous time."



Lessen the burden on the poor

The most efficient in the operation of the project to date is the enhancement of access to finance services for households with difficult circumstances. Combined with general awareness improvement about disaster risk reduction mitigation that those households are an integral part, I find all the vulnerable subjects are "touched" and their lives have gained highlighted improvements.

—said Mr. Nguyen Thanh Binh, Vice President of the People's Committee in Vinh Xuan commune.

In terms of livelihood, ADRA project supports Vinh Xuan commune in two forms of credit and cow loans. Poor households with special circumstances are ranked first by the relevant associations and the Communal People's Committee for receiving loans and cows (with matching fund). The worth of the loan can be not too much for many people, but for the family who hardly get out of the poverty cycle, this without interest rate is a very significant incentive. They mainly focus on cultivation, although it is the short-term model, but if it is "the short-term to grow the long-term", family will earn more profits. As for the cow, which adds such a large fortune in the family, this makes them feel more motivated for the future plans, to care their children's education or to maintain and expand the model to be profitable.

In terms of environment aspect, the people here are supported the toilets and water jars. Water jars are essential item in the families of this region, but ones in difficult situation barely afford on their own. Households having sick people, whose domestic resources are primarily spent on caring activities, are engaged in the toilet activity. This is not only practically meaningful for the other patients, but also helping change the hygiene habits for the whole family.

Recently, these results helped reduce the rate of poor households in the commune considerably.

Also through training courses, local people also learn the new techniques to help increase productivity and prevent diseases. Local officials related to the project have skills capacitated; they form the obtained knowledge a base to disseminate to the wider community.

In the knowledge about climate change and disaster risk reduction, the LIBRE project does not only provide detailed information, but also support the simulation drills. The drills are organized following few scenarios, which are chosen by the community to increase the efficiency and meaning

of the practice. After the activity, people are more aware of the extreme weather events and the prevention and preparation plans. The authorities must develop community-based plan as requested by the project.

These plans reveal a great number of details that relate to arranged facilities, equipment and schemes for vulnerable subjects.

Besides the developed livelihood objectives, people grow more sense of "preparedness", especially after the most recent drought and saltwater intrusions (lasting from late January until the end of February in 2016). Extreme weather events are happening, that make people more aware of the prevention and preparation mechanisms.



Building community-based disaster risk management plan

Mr. Nguyen Hoang Khang – Vice-President of the People's Committee in Tich Thien commune, at the same time holding position of the Project Management Board opines:

“Prior to the project launching, on the regular base the acknowledgement and leading actions of the local people are not ample. Specially the local government orients and regulates people to the flood and storm control, the level and activities of preparedness are rather simple. Most of the activities are about recovery once disaster happens and affected the life of people.

Through the training with related officials and governmental agencies, mass organizations, the ADRA project helps transform the awareness and attitude of these subjects towards disaster risk management works. After that, the dissemination events to grass-roots level are implemented to widen the impact in population, making them understand how disasters did, do and will impact their lives.

In the first year of project, disaster is an ambiguous concept for most of people. Because they reckon

there is annual flooding, however rarely recognize the other extreme forms of weather patterns, such as drought. They are more reliant on the support of government for recovery. Later the people's awareness increases in terms of understanding about the weather, climate and disaster, so as to form specific control and prevention schemes. Within two recent years, households in project sites start conducting active practice to protect their lives and assets, by fortifying the dwellings, dykes, etc. The farmer families diversify crops and switch to livelihood models that are less affected by the climate.

The community-based disaster risk management plans at commune and village level are the final results serving project goal. The methodology to build up plans is instructed detailedly, so they are made inclusive plans for vulnerable subjects. By February of 2016, the plans were completed and are on the way to be approved by the relevant governmental authorities.

Happening in 2016 is the drought and saltwater intrusion, which lead to remarkable consequences.

Therefore the preparedness and response plans include this type of disaster. The people in Tich Thien commune voluntarily contribute finance to rehabilitate the canal system serving the irrigation and drainage purposes, at the same time to reinforce the dyking system. This work will help store water used for daily life activities and agricultural production.

The canal system exists for years. The government supports the annual rehabilitation by a certain funding source; however the finance is not fixed and focusing in the main route solely. The voluntary contribution of local significantly reduces the risk of losing lives and assets.

To put in a nutshell, the LIBRE project contributes to fulfill the government plan in disaster risk management, bringing positive impacts to the people.”



Improving health

"Working as the village leader is a busy job but interesting, I have done since 1999 and still continue until the present. The national programs or projects conducted at locality I have been participating. The first project funded by foreign source was about the primary health care for mothers and children (from Denmark in the period 2005-2007), then coming to this project of livelihood and disaster risk management of ADRA.

I personally recognize that the ADRA project generates benefits in more aspects than the one from Denmark, including the health, economic, environment and social aspect, for instance providing micro-finance to small-scale animal husbandry and business; improving healthcare by communicating in the village about the availability of medical box in the house, swimming training, first aid training", Ms. Nguyen Thi Sau, leader of Xuan Minh 1 village mentions her opinions.

Ms. Sau lets know that a number of village residents did not come to the meetings, excusing for their hectic livelihood activities. Nevertheless after seeing on own eyes and hearing from the neighbors about the registration form for improvement, they bore the interest to understand more, so come to see her

to talk about the improvements. Because these improvements are voluntarily-based, so people detect their own problems and follow the instructions of the table to change. Most of people feel comfy and undergo no pressure. After registering to the project communicators, the households might be visited randomly to receive notice or support from the project staff or related local officials. Most of people registered actions which are more easily to conduct, such as home cleaning, waste disposal at designated places. During the time, Ms. Sau reports all the households are following well the registered activities.

Another point of the project is to take care and improve the people's health, although the materialistic solution offered are not of many and only "touches" the most disadvantaged groups. Communication on the 25 actions reaches out wider population, for instance the simplest action is to have a medical box in the house, or at least the least economically advantaged households will prepare the essential medicine and store in the plastic bags. This is to help in case of emergency while the people can deal with the most basic cases. "I see 80% of the households who approach project have achieved this", Ms. Sau says. Training

on first aid was conducted in disaster drill; this content had never been organized at village level so people were quite excited. "Now that the participants already know how to do first aid for people who fall out of the bikes and might have broken leg or hand. The Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation was a bit harder, some report to me that they don't know how deep should be the breath, perhaps because the practice lasted quite short, so most haven't excelled. And as far as I observe, doers might be the braver ones to conduct this aid", Ms. Sau continues.

Many communication sessions at village level will be intensified even more in the final year of the LIBRE project, in order to encourage people to continue conducting improvements.



Savvy to reduce the disaster risks

Disaster risk management is primarily to save human lives first and foremost, and then is subjected to restrain the consequences to economic and social life.

Mr. Nguyen Van Sang (57 years old), a member of An Trung village (Trung Thanh Commune, Vung Liem District) speaks his thoughts about the project impacts that LIBRE has brought in more than 3 years.

"There are three main points I would like to share about the impacts on the community. The first is the people's consciousness; possibly not all but the majority has been strengthened on information of disaster and risk prevention. Such as in case of storm alert, after getting updated by the weather forecast or early warning, households will self-check and reinforce the dwelling structure if it's needed. Simulation practice showed people the evacuation spots prioritizing the most vulnerable subjects so families can react. Also, everyone knows about food reserve, teaching swimming techniques to children and even adults, farm households know to diversify the crops.

In the environmental aspect, the project does communication and provides tools such as the trash bins to store used agrochemical containers.

Previously, people littered those containers into the river or canal. Later when the bins are available, people change the habit of littering; they throw into the bins and when the bins are full there is a person in the village to dispose. Despite some obvious changes, I still find that improvement still needs to be carried on. Given the number of new garbage containers concentrated in densely populated areas, the households residing in far-off areas have not practiced the changing habit.

The ultimate highlight of project so far is the direct influence on the population of the poor, near poor and less fortunate through three channels: 1 / providing capital to small business production; 2 / lending cattle to develop the capital; 3 / providing water jars; 4 / building toilets for households having persons with disabilities. The process of implementing these activities is closely checked and monitored (both quantity and quality) therefore beneficiaries get the most out of benefits."

Being one of the activity implementers, Mr. Sang shares the people who become trainers for the local population in the project do not hesitate or feel "depressed" when doing their work, even though

volume of the assigned project tasks is quite substantial. Everyone identifies this project's benefits to local community so endeavor with their utmost effort.



Participatory Action Oriented Training communication method

"I ask if the community people can recognize the content of 25 pictures illustrated in the registration table of improving actions. The people say yes and they can explain about the information given, the how-to-do and speak about the improvements that they are able to embrace within the short and long-term. In terms of disseminating information, I am driven positively by the effectiveness of this communication method, firstly due to the convenient design that is similar to a conventional-type-typed-calendar hung on the wall of every house", Mr. Nguyen Van Thach Em, Social Affairs Officer in Hieu Phong commune (Vung Liem district) shares.

Being one of LIBRE project coordinators, Mr. Thach Em leads mostly the communication activities, thanks to his personal skills achieved after years in the official position. Utilizing the naturally influential voice and the possessed well of local terms, he is able to transfer the messages thoroughly to the people and listen to their feedback.

"The suggested actions by project can be done by most of the households; nevertheless most of local residents have not been determined in conducting

the actions. Once a reminding tool introduced by the project approaches each household, the people are more motivated to conduct the improvements, since they easily check what they have done, keep track with what they commit and compare with the others' improvements. I recommend them to put the registration table of improving actions in the most visible place of the house, so every member can have a look, pop up to a thought and remind the others. The children can learn from their parents, but sometimes they are the ones to remind the adults", Mr. Thach Em says.

Talking about climate change, the communication facilitators often compare the previous weather patterns to the unexpected phenomena occur recently, for instance in Vinh Long it is the saltwater intrusion happening. The emphasis is that people should protect themselves first (such as saving an emergency fund or storing clean water), the external factors including government and other organizations can support partially and will target the most disadvantaged ones, but not the whole population during long time.

The ADRA project stays close to the people, through the communication events to influence the "carelessness" attitude towards disasters.

PAOT method is considered simple, easy, less costly. In the coming time of project, ADRA will continue supporting to improve the knowledge, communication skills for communicators to maintain this method and the developed documents even after the completion of project.





Emancipating women

Standing from the perspective of the Women's Union in Hieu Phung commune, Ms. Nguyen Thi Kim Hoa as the representative of the organization says about the LIBRE project's activities: *"my experience with ADRA proves the best practice of project going along the microfinancing component. The model of ADRA involves not only lending at the 'true cost of capital' but also with 'intervention' such as training to provide information and techniques, that in return generates greater profits. The women used the money productively in their modest commercial enterprises and repaid the loan in time."*

In tight collaboration with ADRA project, the Women's Union at commune and village level regulates a tight management procedure of providing 'loans' to households. In order to disseminate the clear information of the fund and loans, training courses are set up for local beneficiaries who have interest on the borrowed credits. Knowledge on developing the new or expanding the existing household economic models is prepared at general but context-based level; besides content of financial management on every investment is raised to ensure more detailed record of borrowing families, that helps to form the new habit for market-led logical thinking. Moving further from the knowledge round, the selection of borrowers is conducted democratically. List of families in most special need, which also

have the determination to access the fund, is established; afterwards the other members are to be put in drawing lots. Members can reapply the loans in a six-month interval; this generates more motivation and confidence for the families to operate their pilot models. In the event of distributing loans to widely voted members of the Women's Union, the ADRA project officers remind of the skill to manage the capitals and turn them into profits. "This is a highlight of ADRA, because there was none of the organization or agency instruct the people clearly about what they can do with the supported cashes and about the skills that people can learn and utilize during the whole process.

Due to the fact that there are enforcing and regulating mechanisms, borrowing families have not spent money carelessly from other expenses, rather than the production activities. Most of the submitted models are planting vegetables, flowers or opening small kiosks in the market. Despite of the real profits obtained from these models are not yet significant (averagely 1.5 – 2 million dong of profit/crop of three months), there has been no case marked of delayed repayment (according to the report of Women's Union).

Ms. Hoa apprises: "in the area, most of the women

hold the primary source of domestic funding used for saving and spending even though decisions regarding investment are counted mainly on the male househeads. This type of loan given in the name of Women's Union members gives the local females more chances to flourish the domestic production activity that they bear."





Impacts of multi-intervention project

"Local people used to learn information about the weather and natural disasters through mass media which are television or radio or loudspeaker. As far as I see the acknowledgement of this field was not systematic and comprehensive. When being asked many people are vague to interpret the weather patterns or how the effects go into their lives, thus they do not have any preparedness plan to minimize the risks."

Mr. Nguyen Thanh Tung, leader of Project Management Board in Hieu Phung commune (Vung Liem district) say there has been no specific program on disaster risk management is organized locally. These contents can be integrated in a number of planned activities of mass organizations, however remaining in communication session. For example, the Women's Union mobilizes the parents to bring their children to swimming training courses, so as to prevent drowning accidents that often occur in the summer.

"Thanks to the LIBRE project of ADRA that a specific plan is set, not only the capacity for the assigned staff and a part of population is enhanced, but also a number of initiatives are brought into reality. I personally think that the impact ratio of the project

to the target groups who are directly benefited is very high, compared to the implemented state program", Mr Tung said.

The project is implemented in a short time (4 years), but its effectiveness for local people to approach and earn benefits is 5-10 times faster than that of the state programs.

Mr Tung shared the majority of activities following the project outcomes have been widely deployed to the third year of project, however the most recent communication activities to promote improvements at household level are to be repeated, that reinforces the examination and reassessment of knowledge obtained previously. Due to the funding source of project is more generous than the state's programs, it appeals local people to come and listen to the disseminated information, afterwards understanding the situation, the local people will apply to their real lives.

About the capacity of the trainers, Mr. Tung said: "staff in Project Management Board and village leaders, representatives from the Women's Union, Farmers' Union and the Seniors' Union have acquired the knowledge and skills at rate of 100% over the

last training sessions of ADRA. However, the ability in order to communicate to the community, I believe the Project Management Board's members can do 100%, while the other trainers can transfer 40-50% of the information to be disseminated. I also hope that after a period of carrying out more communication events, this percentage will increase."



Building community capacity on preventing, controlling and adapting to frequently happening disasters in Vietnam

Extreme weather occurring unexpectedly formed a disaster in the Mekong Delta region at the beginning of year 2016, that was drought which later resulted in saltwater intrusion. Mr. Huynh Van Thai – the President of Farmers' Union in Vinh Xuan commune – tells: “since the dry season starts, the local already stored water for daily usage but no one anticipated about the salinity intrusion. Once the river water level went up, people here opened the culverts so water inundated the fields serving agricultural purposes. One family swam in the river and accidentally found out the water was salty. They informed the local authorities and that was the moment we found out sea water already destroyed the cultivable land. Both Vinh Xuan and Tich Thien commune were impacted. The relevant governmental agency was assigned to conduct assessment of harvest loss, pointing out a total number of 217 heavily affected families ultimately. This area had not been affected by salinity intrusion during previous period, by this time the density of saltwater was four times higher than the acceptable level for agricultural purpose, causing the plant kill. Local government dealt with

the aftermath by regularly updating the situation to the dwellers, delegating agricultural officers to check the density of saltwater and issue notifications for the farmers to pump or drain water from which canal. Besides, the main culverts were kept close. The phenomenon of saltwater intrusion repeated through a month so the arable plot of land could not be recovered, farmers had to wait for rain to wash the soil before starting the new crops.”

Mr. Thai says after this disaster, the people become more aware of the happening of climate change and the necessity of preparedness measures towards disasters. “The LIBRE project was considered suitable and in time by local officers, but community members had not comprehensively understood about the project goal until they got involved directly in the activities. I think in the last two years of project when the communication activity is about to be conducted at the village level, more and more community members are about to have awareness changed and capacity enhanced, and they will bring suitable preventive and preparedness measures

into practice.”

Some other in-kind supports from existing ADRA project is changing lives of the people here, Mr. Thai shares. “Most of poor and near-poor households received the water jars from the project. The project jars are of bigger capacity than of the ones they normally own here, thereby can store more clean water.”





Motivation: The drive to change

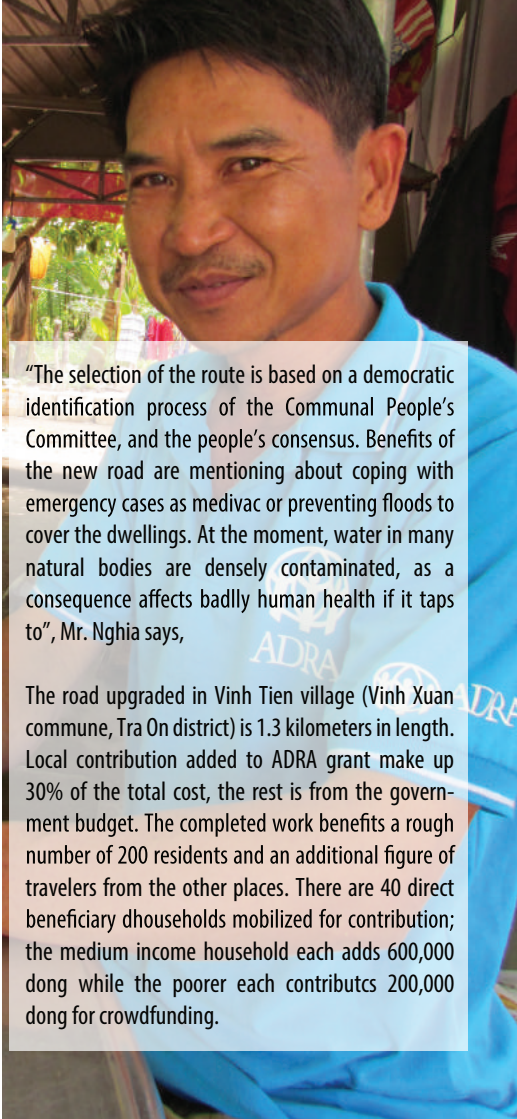
Mr. Nguyen Huu Nghia is the communication facilitator of LIBRE project; he executes the activities in the entire Vinh Tien village (Vinh Xuan commune, Tra On district). As he is met to share about the project work, the story is revealed:

"I am participating in the community mobilization program of the government, mainly concerning the New Rural Development Paradigm. When I start approaching the information provided by the ADRA project focusing on the disaster risk management and livelihood development, I have been incorporated the content to the periodic local meetings that I am involved. The remark is about the applied communication method and the set of tools developed by the organization, I find them really effective while deliver the clearly understandable messages, at the same time encourage the local to voluntarily take actions.

I realize that my person and family are capable of executing improvements, due to the fact that we do have suitable conditions to support; nevertheless not all the families of the neighborhood are willing to adopt changes because it is sometimes less complicated to follow the old habits. Being a communication facilitator to inspire by verbal words, but also a

motivator for the surrounding people in order to bring ideas into practice, I have to work patiently. It takes more time to persuade the rural residents about the benefits of building hygienic sanitation facilities, as in fact the people living in commercially busy areas (close to the main road or market) are more content to create change and they do have the resources, it is not the case of the population in poorer areas to adapt quickly."

Mr. Nghia opines that initiatives, which are pushed into actions by the ADRA project's support, are compatible step with awareness raising campaign. Case in point refers to the upgrading and rehabilitation of rural roads, which not only serve the traveling purpose but also protect the human lives as well as family assets. Almost all of local people reckon this is the solely state's responsibility so hesitate to move on a proactive solution. Later by the working procedure initiated by the ADRA, households contribute on a voluntary basis to the matching fund of local government's source and project grant. This is a thought transformation happening in the local mindsets, which moves from the passive state to pro-active while building up solutions.

A portrait of Mr. Nguyen Huu Nghia, a middle-aged man with dark hair and a mustache, wearing a blue polo shirt. He is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. The background is slightly blurred, showing some outdoor structures and foliage.

"The selection of the route is based on a democratic identification process of the Communal People's Committee, and the people's consensus. Benefits of the new road are mentioning about coping with emergency cases as medivac or preventing floods to cover the dwellings. At the moment, water in many natural bodies are densely contaminated, as a consequence affects badly human health if it taps to", Mr. Nghia says,

The road upgraded in Vinh Tien village (Vinh Xuan commune, Tra On district) is 1.3 kilometers in length. Local contribution added to ADRA grant make up 30% of the total cost, the rest is from the government budget. The completed work benefits a rough number of 200 residents and an additional figure of travelers from the other places. There are 40 direct beneficiary households mobilized for contribution; the medium income household each adds 600,000 dong while the poorer each contributes 200,000 dong for crowdfunding.

The role of women in building community resilience

The Livelihood Improvement for Building Resilient Communities executed by ADRA Vietnam in Vinh Long province integrates the role of local women in both core components, including managing disaster risks and developing livelihoods. Local women, especially officials or key members of the Women's Union at different levels are supported to participate in training courses with the purpose of broadening knowledge and enhancing skills. They gain more understanding about local climate and the sudden changes happening and in turn translate their knowledge into easily understandable terms for the general population. These women have, in other words, used this information for their own benefits and shared it with others in their village.

Ms. Le Thi Gam, representative of the Women's Union in Vinh Tien village (Vinh Xuan commune, Tra On district) speaks the words:

“According to my personal reckoning, this project has proved highly effective. So far the women at locality are specially assisted while engaging in the revolving loan initiative and voicing their opinions in community-based schemes. Improvements are obviously found in the daily practices at home or in the society.

They also actively pass the information and the successfully applied mechanisms to the others, who do not reside in the project location.”

Of her own benefits, Ms. Gam becomes one of three representatives in the village to be present in the array of training workshops provided by project. Along with the leader and vice-leaders of village, they are enhanced capacity in order to implement specific activities and disseminate the information at community level. She says:

“In reality, I organized only one meeting to talk about the 25 actions to improve, which can be adopted at household level. Throughout the previous time, the village leader and vice-leader implemented this communication activity based on the quarterly plan. We gather members of 2-3 residential units every time and about 30 house delegates come to participate. That is saying solely about the project communication events; apart from those, I always incorporate the relevant project contents to different meetings of the Women's Union, of the residential unit or of the medical group. The reason of this information

dissemination finds its way in the volume of project's synthesized knowledge that is diverse and adaptive to the local context.

The campaign “Five Nos and Three Cleans” provoked by the Women's Union has been nationwide spread; however I find the results unremarkable. It can be counted for the reason that there has been no initiative accompanying with the campaign so as to motivate people for the actions. Unlike so, few criteria of the 25 actions to improve at household level from ADRA project go along with detailed solutions, which put the less fortunate groups or people in special needs in priority. The most specific instance refers to putting trash in designated areas. The LIBRE project sponsored the cement trash bins, which are situated in appropriate locations to collect the used containers of agrochemical. Local farmers hear about the action of not littering, but also exercise on the spot. Denoting the preparedness practice before the season of frequently occurring disaster, residents of the area joined LIBRE project to carry out simulation drills so they learned about the

techniques to fortify the house against storms or tornadoes. Most of families are at the moment proactive in detecting the threats caused by extreme weather and come up with the measures to self-protect.

Besides, the simple improvements requiring no support such as reducing plastic bag usage is taken by the local women positively. I observe that more and more persons are using the hand basket in the market. Motives for few who have not practiced completely are they forget at home sometimes or they still follow the old habit; fortunately those are getting more reminding for the surrounding people to change. Additionally in the livelihood aspect, families used to develop their own economic models, without listening to consultancy or orientation of the others. Since they participate in the microfinance initiative of LIBRE project (most of these families are classed poor or near-poor), the local organization delegated by ADRA to monitor and manage the so-called Community Development Fund support information for the borrowers, the local therefore are more willing to hear the contributing opinions.

Despite all mentioned achievements, I recognize the knowledge about market and price, value chain, marketing provided in project's training has

not brought into play its advantages, mostly because the local women's understanding still faces some limitations and they are working at small-scale models. This is perhaps the only point that has not gained significant result in the project."

Studying more about the family's profile and improvements that Ms. Gam embraces after joining in LIBRE project, it is known that her family is executing the bio-gas model. "This energy model will utilize the animal waste produced at home, at the same time save the expenses on the other power sources (such as electricity or burning wood). Currently there are more than a dozen of families in the area owning this model. In fact few years ago, only several households applied it; but since ADRA project does more communication on energy and environment topics while letting people increase discussion and sharing, this has encouraged more families to follow the new pathway.



Interest-free microfinance

This is a form of “soft loan” set up by the current ADRA project (LIBRE) that does not request interest in return. Despite the approved amount to each borrower is of relatively small value (approx. 135 USD), local people are all delighted to have the opportunity tapping into this financial source. Some of the households in better economic conditions still prefer embracing the loans in order to scale up the existing models. The poorer ones as featured in this story are finding these the most suitable, so they can invest in growing vegetables or flowers, of which models generate better profits than cultivating rice.

Nguyen Van Hai and Le Thi Ut are one of the families participating in the livelihood development component of LIBRE project. In May of 2015, they registered the interest-free loan (worth of 3 million dong) to prosper the flowers and vegetables planting model.

Mr. Hai excitedly shares about the obtained profits after a year of borrowing the capital: “at first we spent money on growing short-term vegetables; during the later period which lasted for 9 months, the model was turned into flower planting because there was great market demand for the festivity season. I and my wife carefully followed the proper techniques, which kept the harvest time to three months. After two seasons of flowers, we earned

2 million dong deducted by the initial investment of 3 million dong per harvest. This profit rate was rarely obtained before.”

For most of farmers, the reinvestment for next crop is popular; but if there is low capital rate accompanied by little profit achieved from the previous one, the people confront challenges to develop longer-term models with products of higher value. By the LIBRE's lent micro-finance, families can overcome the difficulty to get more net return and be able to secure more savings.

Mr. Hai expresses that he is the person who attends the agricultural training courses provided by ADRA project, meanwhile his wife is on the name of loan. “Telling my wife and showing her the how-to-do is what I take into action after the training. I find this is one of the most valuable content of the LIBRE project, as it helps lift up the knowledge, understanding and techniques of the farmers to operate their models more efficiently. In addition, the specific theme chosen for each session is proposed by the village, as a collective idea of the local people. As we evaluate the products staying most in need in the market, which is transferred into the good price, we the local farmers talk to the

project officers to make the knowledge update real. Apart from those, there are other topics incorporated in the tank of new knowledge delivered at local field that I find interesting but to apply to the current context, it might take more time and effort, for instance the marketing, sales and keeping the good prices strategies. Taking the example from our own experience, we have organic vegetable growing but face obstacle to compete with the other types in the market due to the ‘less attractive’ appearance of products. I and my wife however still keep our own criteria and goal to develop the products, we look forward to better utilizing the knowledge given by project in the coming time.”

Until the stage that farming households are capable of developing greater scale models, which can make good use of the loans coming from the Vietnam Bank for Social Policies, the demand of interest-free small loans that boosts saving rate, reduces risks, increases experiments with small-scale economic model is undeniably considerable in the community.





Changes come from
positive actions



*Changing the world,
one life at a time*