U.S. MISSION TO ASEAN

DASSATEK “AWAKENING YOUNG FARMER”

YSEALI Seeds of the Future: Project of the Month

By **U.S. MISSION TO ASEAN**



About the Project

Dassatek empowers rural Cambodian youths to have decent work and sustained economic growth through three programs:

- **Youth Develop Youth Program (YDYP)** provides capacity building training for personal development, agribusiness, and money management.
- **Agroecology Youth Program (AYP)** provides a vegetable garden apprenticeship and seed grants for garden projects.
- **Young Agripreneur Program (YAP)** assists small-scale vegetable farmers to transform themselves into small-scale vegetable farming businesses.

Dassatek’s programs aim to help rural Cambodian youths reach their full potential, regenerate natural ecosystems, and contribute to the country’s economic development.

Help us improve



Why do you care about this specific topic/issue?

Food is our most basic need, yet we lack youth participation in agriculture. This is because agriculture does not meet the needs of young people for personal development and sustained economic growth. Additionally, agriculture is a major driver of environmental degradation, including deforestation, biodiversity loss, topsoil loss, water pollution, and climate change.

However, farmers are modern-day earth warriors. With the right farming practices and food system, we can regenerate our natural resources, restore balance to our natural ecosystem and tackle climate change. Together, we can awaken to the importance of farming and living in harmony with nature.

Why did you decide to start this project?

I applied for YSEALI Seeds twice in 2021 and 2022. I was not selected back in 2021. Having worked directly with youths and farmers in an agricultural cooperative in Kampong Cham province, Cambodia, for a whole year, I got more experience and understanding of the needs and problems of youths and farmers. It gave me more confidence and allowed me to improve my application to apply again.



What are your goals for this project?

Overall Goal: To create a sustainable business that provides safe and organic vegetables to households and restaurants in Cambodia, while also providing training and support to rural youths and small-scale vegetable farmers.

Specific Objectives:

- **In 2023**, recruit 6 core youths from 4 provinces, support them to create 5 vegetable gardens and coordinate them to form a youth hub.
- **In 2024**, transform the project into a business startup that collectively produces and supplies safe or organic vegetables directly to households and restaurants in the capital city and locally.

In 2027, evolve the business to provide incubation and acceleration services to assist small-scale vegetable farmers and agricultural cooperatives in Cambodia to start-up and operate vegetable farming businesses.

How will YSEALI Seeds help you achieve your goals?

YSEALI Seeds has given us the resources to implement the idea I proposed. Through this grant, I got to spread our mission and action plan to broader audiences which has allowed our project to attract potential youths with the same mission. With this funding, we have been able to implement our mission-driven activities and make a prototype business model to launch the second phase of our project next year, transforming our project into a business startup that collectively produces and supplies safe or organic vegetables directly to households and restaurants in the capital city and locally.



What have you accomplished and implement so far?

We have:

- recruited 7 core youths from diverse backgrounds in 4 provinces with 5 sites for them to turn into diversified vegetable gardens.
- officially launched our project with representatives from the government, the U.S. Embassy in Phnom Penh, private and public sector, and a news agency.
- finished our 3-day training on personal development, “agripreneurship”, and basic money management in Phnom Penh.
- been featured by two different news agencies.
- established 9 key partnerships.
- Been selected to present our project in the Young Challenger Experience in Berlin, Germany, in November 2023.

What are the most significant lessons learned you’ve experienced so far?

Putting together a solid team is a great challenge especially in the beginning of the project. Don’t lose faith. Adhere to the vision, mission cause, and value. You will then attract the right team members. When that happens, it doesn’t mean they are going to be in with the project 100% and forever. Give them time, space, and freedom to explore, and to understand the project deeper, and decide for themselves.



What are the success stories you can share with others?

It’s a success for us when we helped some of the core youths to travel out of their village to the capital city for the first time. It’s a success for us when we see our core youths from rural areas get excited to meet other youths from other provinces or the capital city. It’s a success for us when they still want to join our program with the intention to grow despite some apprehension from some of their families. It’s a success for us when some of our youths told us that they have entrusted their children’s future and development to us despite the fact that they have just met each other. It’s a success for us to discover farmers who genuinely see the value of their work and truly support their children to work in agribusiness.