



Phany planting seedlings in a nursery at their home in Pursat District, Western Cambodia. Before joining the Caritas supported program her family only grew seasonal rice. Phany and her husband had to migrate to the city after each harvest to work in the exploitative construction industry, where they earned \$2.50 a day.

## [Watch Phany's film .](#)

Phany (par-nee), 27, lives in a village in western Cambodia. Struggling to earn a living as a rice farmer, her family experienced food scarcity and she was forced to leave her young daughter behind to take up construction work in the city. In Cambodia, where 1 in 8 people live below the poverty line\*, the search for work can often separate families.

When Phany joined a Caritas program, gaining skills in productive farming and irrigation techniques, she transformed her life. Her community learned to work together for better water management, to combat climate related drought and maintain crops year-round. Now Phany is reunited with her daughter because she can make a living in her home village. She now has enough food and income to support her family and send her daughter to school.

Phany lives with her husband and their eight-year-old daughter in a village in Kandieng district in Cambodia's Pursat province. Every day she worked hard in her rice fields but in recent years, she noticed the weather was getting hotter and her crops were suffering.

The region experiences recurrent drought and water shortages, making it increasingly difficult to grow enough food or earn a living. The irrigation system in Phany's village was old and inefficient and didn't provide enough water for crops.

"We weren't earning much income, our meals lacked nutrition," Phany says. "We had no technical skills in vegetable and animal raising, I just farmed in the traditional way. We had debt with a high interest rate."

Over 70 percent of Cambodia's population live in rural

communities. Poor farming families are the most at risk of food insecurity, and 35 out of every 1000 babies die due to malnutrition\*\*.

When Phany's daughter was two, Phany and her husband had to leave her with family in the village to find construction work in Cambodia's capital city, Phnom Penh. For five years, Phany worked long hours, carrying heavy lime and bricks. Conditions were dangerous, wages were low, and she was often paid late. But it was the only way she could provide for her daughter.

"I missed my child, I had never separated from her before. She stayed with her grandmother who was also sick," Phany says, crying. "I used to dream of staying at home raising chickens and growing vegetables."

In 2016, Phany joined the Peace and Sustainable Livelihoods program, run by Caritas Australia, in partnership with the Environment Protection and Development Organisation (EPDO). Phany learnt new farming techniques, such as a drip irrigation system, which enabled her to get a better yield from her rice crops, and to conserve water for drier periods. She also learnt how to grow vegetables and raise chickens and ducks, just like she'd dreamed. As well livelihood training, Phany's community took part in health, nutrition, hygiene and disaster preparedness training. This armed them with better strategies to cope with environmental changes.

# Phany, Cambodia

"Climate change is a problem, but the community lacked knowledge and had no strategy to deal with it," says Phlong Sokly, EPDO's Program Coordinator. "The community now thinks more about water management and adaptation to the change of season... People work better together when they need to mobilise resources for the community's common good."

Now Phany grows a wider variety of crops all year-round and is more aware of market needs. As well as rice, she grows cucumber, cabbage, and eggplant, which is expensive and brings in a good income. The family is now able to afford a small house, they have enough food and clothes and can afford to send their daughter to school. Phany has become a role model for other farmers, and her whole community is benefitting.

"I am proud that I was a farmer who had no skills and now I can earn and improve my living, share my knowledge and also improve solidarity in the family and amongst our neighbours," Phany says. "I live better than before, I'm not as tired. I can earn and live in the village, I don't need to go to city to find job."

Around 4700 people have benefitted from the program so far, including nearly 1200 families.

Sokly says Phany is an inspiration to her community. "Phany is a hardworking farmer and even though she faces a lot of challenges, she still keeps moving and learning. She persists, she has transformed herself."

Phany has achieved a lot since she first joined the program and her future looks even brighter.

**I hope I have enough money to afford my daughter's education, health treatment and to avoid being in debt," "For my family, I hope to own a plot of land to expand my vegetable and animal raising activity. For the community, I hope we have enough water for all year-round, to reduce migration to the cities, and that no one is trapped in debt.**

**Phany**

With your help, mothers like Phany can continue to uplift their communities, and provide food for their families. They can give the vital support that their children need as they embark on their education. Please donate generously today.

Sources: \* [World Bank](#) \*\* [USAID](#)



Phany helps her daughter Phally with her homework in their home in Pursat District, Western Cambodia.

# Phany, Cambodia

## 1. Read and discuss/write your responses:

- a) Identify the key challenges this community is facing.
- b) Explain how Caritas Australia and their partners in the Cambodia are empowering the Indigenous community to overcome some of these challenges.
- c) How has climate change impacted Phany's community?
- d) What have been the impacts of Phany's participation in the Caritas Australia supported program.
- e) What are two facts you learnt about poverty and injustice from Phany's story?
- f) Develop 2 questions you might ask to get a greater understanding of the challenges or the improvements in Phany's community.

**2. Climate change is having an impact on Phany and her community's food security. Complete and challenge others in the 'Our Common Home Quiz' Kahoot.**

**3. Climate change debate. Topic: Climate change most affects those who already experience poverty.** With a partner, debate this topic, but take the opposite view to your own. Use examples of Phany's story or other Caritas Australia program participants.

List your main arguments below:

## 4. Arable land and Rainfall

Explore the World Bank's data on arable land.  
<http://is.gd/P5cylT>

Describe the link between rainfall and arable land in rural Cambodia.

Describe one other trend you notice in the data.

# Phany, Cambodia

## 5. Irrigation:

Compare drip irrigation to one other system of irrigation. List three similarities and three differences.

Describe which is more appropriate for drought prone areas.

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

A drip system is a tool connected from water source/storage and bring the water to the field either from above the soil surface or buried below the surface. It sprays the water in a slow effective manner and reaches each plant's roots with the same volume of water in the same time. There are a number of materials to set up the system such as: valve, drip tubing, pipes, cover plastic, tube punch, dripper and fitting. Crops are planted between 3cm to 6cm from one another and each row is normally length between 12m to 15m (small size of farm between 300m<sup>2</sup> to 500m<sup>2</sup>).

Using a drip irrigation system can save on average 10 times the water consumption for the same size farm. Farmers water their crops 2 to 3 times day

for 5 to 10 minutes each time.

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

- Saves time and labour
- Saves water consumption and reduce weed/grass presence
- Assists with application and retention of fertilizer.

Design a drip irrigation system for your garden at school or even at home. Draw a rough sketch below.

## 6. Complete the **Problem and Solution tree**.

Select one issue that Phany and her community faced: e.g. urbanisation, climate change.

## Phany, Cambodia

Engage with the Country Study [Thinglink](#) and do some of your own research to find out the information below. Suggestions for reliable sources are included on the Thinglink and below.

<p>Predict life expectancy in Cambodia and Australia. Find out the correct answer. Does this surprise you? Why/Why not? What has changed?</p> <p><a href="https://ourworldindata.org/life-expectancy">https://ourworldindata.org/life-expectancy</a></p>	Prediction:	<p><a href="https://www.britannica.com/place/Cambodia">https://www.britannica.com/place/Cambodia</a></p> <p><a href="https://dfat.gov.au/geo/cambodia/Pages/cambodia-country-brief.aspx">https://dfat.gov.au/geo/cambodia/Pages/cambodia-country-brief.aspx</a></p>	
	Actual:	What are the official languages?	
		What is the main religion?	
<p>What is the population of Cambodia? What is the population of Australia?</p> <p><a href="https://ourworldindata.org/world-population-growth">https://ourworldindata.org/world-population-growth</a></p>	<p>Cambodia:</p> <p>Australia</p>	What system of government does the Cambodia have?	
<p>What is the poverty rate in the Cambodia?</p> <p><a href="https://data.worldbank.org/http://hdr.undp.org/en/data">https://data.worldbank.org/http://hdr.undp.org/en/data</a></p>		<p>In what region of the world is the Cambodia located?</p> <p>What direction is it from Australia?</p>	
<p>List three major factor/s affecting poverty and wellbeing (E.g. access to clean water, sanitation, education)</p>		Describe the ways Australia is connected to Cambodia. E.g. trade that occurs between the two nations, services that are exchanged, immigration, etc.	
<p>Summarise Caritas Australia's support to improve wellbeing.</p> <p>_____</p> <p>_____</p>		<p>Select two relevant Sustainable Development Goals.</p> <p>Why did you select these?</p> <p><a href="http://www.globalgoals.org">www.globalgoals.org</a></p>	

## Phany, Cambodia

**🌍 The Earth will not continue to offer its harvest, except with faithful stewardship. 🌱**

Pope John Paul II

Reflection questions:

- How does this quotation relate to Phany's story?
- What are the connotations of the term 'stewardship'. In what ways is this helpful and unhelpful in relation to caring for our common home.
- What "harvests" of the earth can you identify?

## ACT

How might you raise awareness in response to what you read and thought about in Phany's story?

What are you compelled to do? It might be a personal, group or community action. Write your thoughts and plan below.

# Phany, Cambodia

## RELIGIOUS EDUCATION THEMESACTIVITY

**Year 7 & 8: Initiation and belonging:** Explain the importance of gender equality in countries such as Cambodia. Locate a scripture reference that refers to equality.

**Year 9 & 10: Catholic Social Teachings/Human Dignity:** Watch '[CST in 3 minutes](#)' animation or read the CST definitions on page 8. Identify one CST principle and explain how it is illustrated in Phany's story. Locate two scripture references that help support this church teaching.

How can you apply this principle in your own life?

### PRAY

**Complete this prayer in your own words:**

God of all the universe. Thank you for this life giving gift of creation.

### TAKE AWAY AND SHARE

**One thing that surprised/challenged or stood out for me in this story, that I will share with others:**