

(Rattanakiri, Cambodia) Sitting inside her thatch-roofed house, 46-year-old Por Mach is busy weaving a traditional scarf.

She belongs to the Tumpoun tribe in Laaen Kren village, in Ratanakiri province's O'Chhum district. She is a farmer with six children — five daughters and one son — whose ages range from 11 to 25. Two of her daughters are married, but she still has four other children to raise.

Por Mach has been doing this singlehandedly since her husband, also a Tumpoun and a former soldier with the Royal Cambodian Armed Forces, died of tuberculosis 11 years ago.

After his death, Por Mach's family became impoverished. All her children were unemployed, and she was the only one who bore the responsibility of supporting the entire family.

Por Mach earned a living planting rice, seasonal vegetables and other crops. She also used to weave traditional Tumpoun clothes — a skill she learned from her mother when she was 13 — but her products were of poor quality, she says.

Then she joined the [Creative Industry Support Programme](#) (CISP) organized by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). CISP began functioning in her village in February 2009, organized by the [Centre d'Etude et de Développement Agricole Cambodgien](#) (CEDAC or the Cambodian Centre for Study and Development in Agriculture).

"I decided to participate in CISP because I observed that it is important for me to get professional about my weaving skills," she said, adding that it was a good opportunity for her to help preserve Tumpoun traditions and culture that have long been forgotten.

Por Mach now produces many types of Tumpoun traditional products—scarves, clothes, trousers, bags, pillows, luggage. She also designs and dyes different types of clothes and colours as tourists demand. Her two unmarried daughters have joined her in weaving products for sale to tourists.

With financial support from CEDAC, she bought her own loom with which she weaves as many as five scarves a week, earning her at least US\$50 a month in addition to her farming. "I can now produce ancient traditional scarves or clothes for sale and make more money to support my family," Por Mach said.

Since participating in CISP, she has also been able to buy a 21-inch colour television set for her family, a machine for cutting grass at her farm and other furniture for her house.

For her achievements her community chose Por Mach as a group leader in weaving clothes in Laaen Kren village. She now is busy not only producing her own items, but also working with her team members, non-governmental organisations, donors and other relevant government agencies in finding markets for their products.

To promote traditional Tumpoun items in the village, she works with her group members and others in designing the models and styles of the items they sell.

What Por Mach would like to see, though, is NGOs and donors helping Laaen Kren village establish a centre where indigenous groups like the Tumpoun could exhibit and sell their traditional products. She thinks such a centre would certainly help promote the local economy of the Tumpoun people and reduce poverty in their communities. .

As well as Ratanakiri, CISP has also been implemented in the provinces of Mondulakiri, Kampong Thom and Preah Vihear, with funding of more than US\$3 million from the [Spanish Millennium Development Goals Achievement Funds](#) (MDGF). The three-year programme ran from 2008 to 2011.

CISP was jointly established by the ILO, [United Nations Development Programme](#) (UNDP), [Food and Agriculture Organisation](#) (FAO) and the [United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organizations](#) (UNESCO).