

Progress Brief:

Cambodia's 4th and 5th Open Defecation Free Districts



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Programme-wide Open Defecation Free Status

Under SNV's Sustainable Sanitation and Hygiene for All Programme (SSH4A), Cambodia attained its 4th and 5th Open Defecation Free (ODF) districts in December 2019 and January 2020. Chum Kiri and Basedth districts, in Kampong Speu and Kampong Chhnang provinces respectively, joined Banteay Meas district in Kampong Speu province – declared ODF in 2016 and re-verified as ODF in 2019 – in ensuring that all their citizens are using a toilet. The entire SSH4A programme area – comprising these three districts, over 60,000 households, and nearly 300,000 people – has now been declared ODF! Mr. Chheorn Sothon, District Governor for Basedth noted, "We are very happy to have achieved this outcome. This achievement is a result of the high commitment of local authorities and all stakeholders in the district. We will maintain this achievement and continue to improve sanitation conditions."

The SSH4A Journey

SNV Cambodia's rural sanitation programme has been implemented using the district-wide approach

since 2012 – starting in Banteay Meas district, Kampong Speu province. In 2015, the programme was scaled to two more districts – Basedth and Chum Kiri. The journey to ODF in each district is depicted in Figure 1 – demonstrating rapid decreases in the prevalence of open defecation.

The SSH4A Approach

How have the local authorities and SNV achieved such success in such a relatively short period of time? The answer lies in SSH4A's integrated and district-wide approach, which is summarised in Figure 2. The integrated approach of governance for Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH), strengthening latrine businesses and supply chains, deployment of behavioural change communication (BCC) campaigns, and initiation of demand creation, have helped achieve a rapid and sustained decline, and eventual elimination of open defecation across all programme districts.

WASH governance: Leadership for results

Rural sanitation in Cambodia is the mandate of the Ministry of Rural Development (MRD) and its

Department of Rural Health Care. The Ministry is in charge of coordinating the sanitation sector and leading its strategy and policy, planning, institutional strengthening and monitoring. Programmatic duties are decentralised to the 25 Provincial Departments of Rural Development (PDRDs) across all 25 provinces. The Cambodian government has been decentralising sanitation service delivery to local levels – district administrative governments – through pilot initiatives that commenced in 2015. Such a decentralised approach – with the district governments playing a lead role – has been the core approach of the SSH4A programme since its inception. Leadership, local initiatives, and oversight are vital prerequisites for the many localised sanitation activities that are required to achieve broad sanitation access. Provincial levels of government are far removed from communities themselves, and commune councils do not possess sufficient authorities to initiate and lead actions in novel programmatic areas. In the Cambodian context, the district administrative governments are best placed for this leadership and duty-bearing role. However, the buy-in of the Provincial Governor has also been seen as vital towards the districts having the authorities and autonomy to successfully lead and implement sanitation activities. Additionally, the technical support provided by PDRDs and District Office of Rural Development (DoRD) is important for effective implementation and with quality.

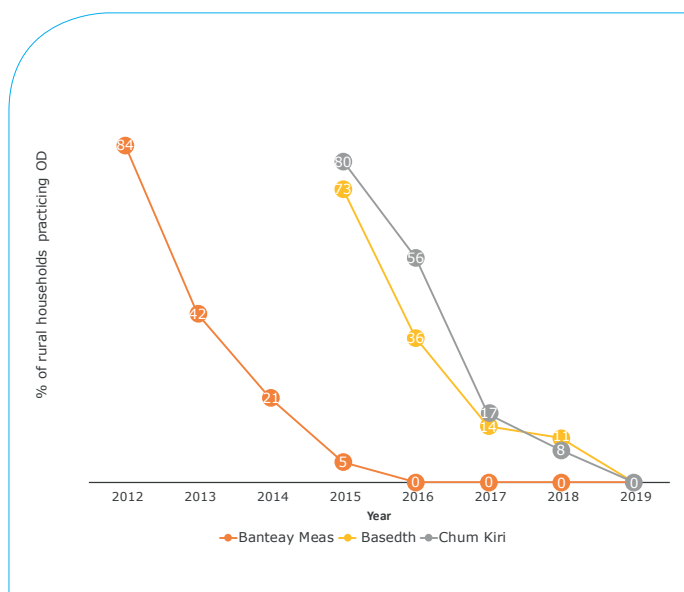


Figure 1 – Prevalence of open defecation across the SSH4A programme districts

WASH governance: Data-informed planning and execution

Planning, coordinating, and monitoring are key sub-components of the WASH governance function as part of the SSH4A programming. Quarterly sanitation monitoring is executed by Village Sanitation Focal Points (VFPs) who update village sanitation logbooks that track the number of families that own a latrine, share a latrine, or are continuing to practice open defecation. Disaggregation of sanitation coverage data by ID Poor



Figure 2 – The Sustainable Sanitation and Hygiene for All programmatic approach

status¹ helps to determine whether coverage is equitable, and to ensure that the poorest households can access latrines through targeted pro-poor support. Sanitation coverage figures are subsequently compiled and aggregated at commune and district levels. Quarterly coordination meetings bring together focal points at provincial, district and commune levels to discuss the up-to-date sanitation coverage data and plan subsequent activities. These include behavioural change events, demand creation activities with households practicing open defecation, or monitoring of private sector activities to ensure timely and quality latrine products. Under-performing communes may be motivated to engage more deeply, or learn from the good practices of other communes. Even more importantly, collective motivation and enthusiasm increase once the focal points start seeing the results emerge from their work!

¹ A nation-wide identification system for poor households to access social benefits

Hygiene behavioural change communication: Changing perceptions towards sanitation

Behavioural change communication (BCC) campaigns are amongst the preliminary activities to be implemented under SSH4A by provincial, district, commune, and village sanitation focal points. In rural Cambodian villages, open defecation has been the acceptable norm. A vital first step towards creating demand for a latrine is to recognise and appreciate the value of using one. Changing perceptions from "open defecation is normal and acceptable" to "I don't

Table 1 – Drivers and barriers to latrine uptake

Drivers	Barriers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Convenience; • Shame; • Privacy; • Desire for a clean home; and • Health improvements 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Affordability; • Desire to wait for investing in a high-end pour-flush latrine; and • Lack of time and labour for construction

want to defecate in the open anymore" is the key aim of the hygiene BCC campaign. The "how's" of changing these perceptions are best answered by first conducting formative research, which was performed by SNV in 2014. Formative research is the process of studying and understanding people's context, perceptions, beliefs, attitudes and practices. This helps to identify behavioural drivers and barriers, and BCC campaigns and messaging can, thereafter, be effectively designed. Emotional and physical drivers and barriers to using a toilet are presented in Table 1 (SNV Netherlands Development Organisation, 2014). The collective learning from SNV's experiences in Asia demonstrated that the following activities are also important: ensuring that BCC messages are clear; the target audience is well-defined; follow-up interviews with participants are completed to gauge response and effectiveness; activities are repeated and not limited to a one-time event; sanitation services (such as latrine orders and construction)

are ready to commence immediately; and BCC activities are led by confident and well-trained facilitators (SNV Netherlands Development Organisation, 2015). Campaign outreach approaches through SSH4A programming have included: integrating messaging at local pagodas, schools, and health centres; and community-wide events such as parades, school events, and celebrations connected to the annual National Sanitation Day.

Sanitation demand creation: Convincing families to spend money on sanitation

Once perceptions and sanitation-related behaviours begin to change in the community, demand for latrines increases. However, it can still be a struggle to get families to part with their hard-earned finances and purchase a latrine from the local latrine suppliers. There are always households that miss out on the BCC campaign, do not identify with it, or face some of the aforementioned physical or social barriers that prevent them from making a purchase. Demand creation is, therefore, an ongoing activity that does not end until ODF status is achieved. Commune and village focal points routinely meet with the ever-shrinking number of households that continue to practice open defecation. The messages are reiterated, and local latrine producers are brought in to make face-to-face sales pitches. If affordability constraints are significant, households may engage in pro-poor subsidy initiatives (as was made available in Chumkiri district) or may even benefit from financial support from the commune's annual social budget. Approximately 1,600 ID Poor families from across Banteay Meas and Chum Kiri districts benefited from pro-poor smart subsidies that were implemented through the SSH4A programme in alignment with MRD's National Guiding Principles on Hardware Subsidies for Rural Household Sanitation.

Sanitation supply chains: Building businesses to meet demand

Overhauling sanitation conditions requires demand creation and timely and convenient supply of

latrines to work hand-in-hand. If demand is not present, latrine businesses will not recuperate their costs and turn a profit, thereby threatening their business model. If the supply-side is not ready, then customers are likely to become disheartened and the demand potential that was created may never be fully recovered. Latrine businesses operating in rural districts are often small with limited capacities concerning accounting, inventory management, supply chains, and management.

Making the situation even more challenging, the workforce of labourers that serve as latrine installation masons are extremely dynamic due to outward migration. However, these challenges on the business-side presented opportunities for SNV, PDRDs, and district focal points to engage in supply chain strengthening activities. Throughout the course of the programme, businesses were developed, connected and coordinated with demand creation activities, and scaled.



Photo – ODF celebration in Basedth district on 5 March 2020



Photo – HE. Ouk Rabun, Minister, MRD addressing the ODF celebration in Basedth district



Photo – Meeting with HE. Ouk Rabun, Minister, MRD for ODF declaration and celebration planning



Photo – ODF celebration in Basedth district on 5 March 2020



Photo - VY Samnang, Provincial Governor, Kampong Speu addressing the ODF celebration in Basedth district on 5 March 2020



Photo – ODF celebration in Chum Kiri district on 6 March 2020

Celebrating SSH4A's ODF Achievements

On 5th and 6th March, 2020, Basedth and Chum Kiri districts held ODF celebration events, respectively, marking their achievements and the history of their sanitation journey. Mr. Long Vanchan, District Deputy of Chum Kiri noted, "I am very happy to see our district become ODF. It is unbelievable! We started with 15 per cent sanitation coverage before SNV started working in our district in 2015. And now everyone has access to a toilet." Mr. Rens Verstappen, SNV Cambodia Country Director noted, "*Basedth district has become the 5th district in the country to be declared ODF – and for that we congratulate the district administrative government, commune councillors, village committees, local latrine businesses – and most*

importantly the individual households and citizens who have collectively engaged in the mobilisation



Figure 4 – Inspecting a newly constructed Alternating Twin-Pit latrine

of people, resources, and energy to achieve something great." His Excellency Vy Samnang, Provincial Governor for Kampong Speu remarked, "In addition to Basedth district achieving ODF status, throughout Kampong Speu province we have an additional six ODF communes and 242 ODF villages. Based on the 20 per cent increase in toilet coverage in 2019, we expect that Kampong Speu will achieve province-wide ODF status by the end of 2022."

SSH4A Beyond the Finish Line: Sustaining Sanitation Gains and Safely-managing Faecal Sludge

The prospect for all three programme districts to maintain their sanitation coverage appears strong. In December 2019, Banteay Meas district was re-verified as having maintained its ODF status since 2016. The district and commune authorities across the programme area have demonstrated their commitment to sustaining their status. This has been achieved primarily through the continued monitoring of vulnerable households, such as migrant families and those that continue to use temporary dry pit latrines (of which approximately 1,500 remain, comprising 3 per cent of all toilets across the programme area). Faecal sludge management (FSM) has been an emerging part of the SSH4A programme in recent years. SNV has conducted research on customer demand, status-quo pit emptying practices, and willingness-to-pay for FSM services. SNV, in partnership with local authorities, has also trialled and promoted Alternating Twin-Pit (ATP) latrines as a safe and affordable FSM solution across the programme area (Figure 3), and executed a BCC campaign on safe FSM solutions, including pit emptying and disposal. Local authorities have indicated that safe FSM services will continue to be a priority into the future as more pits become full.

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