



Learning Brief: The first open defecation free (ODF) commune in Basedth district, Kampong Speu



Highlights of Results

In September 2016 Basedth commune was declared ODF

Over 12,000 people (2,200 households) from 22 villages in the commune live in healthy communities with access to sanitation.

Result achieved through local leadership and commitment

Sanitation and hygiene is formally on the agenda for regular commune and village meetings

Local sanitation facilitators have demonstrated their capacity and commitment and will continue to monitor results post ODF.

Access to improved sanitation is a basic human right, yet more than 60% of the rural population in Cambodia still live without a safe, sanitary toilet.¹ Sustainable Sanitation & Hygiene for All (SSH4A) is SNV's comprehensive approach to ensuring equitable access to improved sanitation and hygiene for those who need it most.

SNV, in collaboration with the Ministry of Rural Development (MRD) and Provincial Department of Rural Development (PDRD), has been implementing SSH4A in Cambodia. SSH4A supports the objectives of the Royal Government of Cambodia's National Strategy for Rural Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene 2011-2025.

In 2012, the district-wide SSH4A approach was implemented in Banteay Meas, Kampot which was declared the first ODF district in Cambodia in 2016. A district-wide approach does not mean that the entire district will immediately become ODF, but it changes the dynamics and mindset of the stakeholders, which is ultimately the key to reaching full coverage.

In 2015, SSH4A commenced in the 15 communes of Basedth district, Kampong Speu and the 7 communes of Chum Kiri district, Kampot, where at that time district access to sanitation was 27 and 20 per cent respectively.² Local governments in both districts are committed to achieving full sanitation coverage, and in September 2016 the first commune in Basedth district, Basedth commune, was declared ODF, with 100 per cent of the households in the commune having access to and using latrines.

1. The 2015 Update and MDG Assessment of the Joint Monitoring Programme (WHO and UNICEF, 2015) - access to any kind of sanitation facility (improved, shared and unimproved) was 40% in 2015.
2. Progress Brief: Basedth and Chumkiri Districts. November 2016.

This brief shares the experiences and lessons learnt from the ODF Basedth commune and reflects on the combination of enabling factors that have positively affected the improved access to sanitation and hygiene. It is based on interviews with programme partners from the PDRD and the District Department of Rural Development (DORD), the Deputy Governor of Basedth district, the Commune Council and village chiefs and focal points.

Sustainable Sanitation and Hygiene for All

SSH4A is SNV's comprehensive approach to ensuring equitable and sustainable access to improved sanitation and hygiene by supporting the delivery of districtwide rural sanitation and hygiene services. Developed since 2008, the SSH4A approach is now implemented by SNV in 15 countries and 75 districts in Asia and Africa. Lasting change is visible, with 2.7 million people having gained access to improved sanitation and hygiene practices.

The SSH4A programme integrates best practices in sanitation demand creation, sanitation supply chain strengthening, hygiene behaviour change communication, and governance, including gender and social inclusion. SNV focuses on strengthening the capacities of local stakeholders to plan, implement, monitor, and sustain sanitation and hygiene interventions.

The emphasis of the current phase of the SSH4A programme in Cambodia is on quality, equity and sustainability in scaling up a government led, district-wide approach. While ODF provides

a milestone around which leaders can mobilise, it is not the end-point. The challenge is looking beyond ODF towards the vision of the Sustainable Development Goals and universal access.

The lessons learned from the success of SSH4A are being used to reinforce scaling up of the integrated approach. Local authorities have benefitted from learning events and exchanges with their counterparts and SNV will continue to provide support and coaching to build the capacity of local stakeholders in the target districts.

Basedth commune

Before the SSH4A programme started, open defecation was common practice for around half the households in Basedth commune and people's awareness on the importance of improved sanitation and hygiene was generally low.³ Basedth commune has 22 villages, more than any other in the area, and while some villages, and village chiefs, were active in sanitation others were much less so.

Through SSH4A, community leaders and focal points have learnt how to effectively promote sanitation and hygiene. When villagers start to value the importance of having a toilet, and there was an acceptance of the social norm that each household in the commune should have a toilet, then it is easier to convince the remaining families to follow the example of the majority who had already built toilets.

The remarkable progress in the now ODF Basedth commune reflects the strength and commitment of the local leadership.



3. SNV, through the Cambodian Rural Sanitation and Hygienic Improvement Program (CR-SHIP) financed by the Global Sanitation Programme (2012-14), worked with PDRD and DORD in Kampong Speu including Basedth district however target villages were not in Basedth communes.



Basedth commune ODF celebration

As noted by Mr Van Chantha, Head of PDRD, Kampong Speu, prior to the start of SSH4A many households either had dry pits (many of which had collapsed) or had no sanitation facilities and some poorer families were not able to buy latrines. By 2016, the practice of open defecation had been successfully eliminated with most households owning and using improved (pour-flush) sanitation. Mr Van believes that the Commune Chief achieved this result through "prioritising sanitation results, allocating villages to commune council members for follow up, and allocating resources from the commune budget to support latrines for poorer households".

Mr Sok Thouch, Basedth Commune Chief⁴ states, "It was the result of hard work by the commune and village focal points, together with the Commune Council, in addressing challenges and identifying good solutions that led (to) people changing their behaviour and every household now using a latrine".

Mr. Ourm Kheang, Village Chief of Boung Theung, which was the last of the villages in Basedth commune to be verified as ODF, discussed how challenging conditions resulted in it taking more time to achieve change. When SSH4A started, access to improved sanitation was around 4 per cent. The village is remote and far from the district and commune administration (bordering on Takeo province), households are close to the forest, water is limited and rates of poverty high, however he reflects that "if you want your village to be ODF, village leaders need to pay attention to it and work hard... (and that he) used his mind and heart to make it happen".

Mr. Kheang explained: "When the programme started people didn't pay much attention (to sanitation) so I told them if they needed my help I could visit them any time but please help me now by building a latrine. I regularly visited households, helped them dig pits and find small trees to build covers. The commune also helped

provide latrines for the poorest households and I asked villagers with better income to contribute." He added that "villagers now believe having latrines helps them to be safe and secure, avoid diseases and that they don't get sick as before and are happy that the village does not have faeces all over the place anymore".

It is expected that the achievement of the first commune to achieve ODF will strongly encourage all the other communes in Basedth district to follow the example and help inform their efforts in becoming ODF. The message of Her Excellency Mrs. Teng You Ky, MRD at the ODF celebration on 27 September 2016 was that "the success in Basedth provides a good role model for other communes and districts in Cambodia ...", which was reinforced by the Provincial Governor His Excellency Ve Samnang, in suggesting that "other communes can learn from Basedth commune on how to achieve this great success".

Learning and exchange between local authorities including commune focal points and village chiefs, as well as SMEs and other key stakeholders, is a critical element of the SSH4A model. Local leaders and focal points from Basedth commune were active in seeking experiences on the success in eliminating open defecation and how to manage the challenges in the process and are now contributing to the knowledge in other target SSH4A areas as well as more broadly in Cambodia.

4. At the ODF celebration on 27th September 2016.

Key enabling factors in Basedth achieving ODF

Success requires an integrated approach that includes leadership at the district, commune and village levels which drives and supports the community's own sense of motivation and commitment to become ODF. Mr. Khut Thuch, commune focal point, attributed the achievement of Basedth in reaching ODF as "resulting from the hard work and good cooperation of all stakeholders including PDRD, district, commune, village and SNV along with the willingness of people to change their behaviour. Households with latrines were asked to share their good experiences and people were asked to assist in building latrines for poor households".

1. Local leadership committed to sanitation

- Local leaders worked together in setting goals to improve the sanitation situation in all villages in the commune.
- Commune chief and all commune council members shared responsibility for sanitation including follow up and reporting on progress.
- There was a demonstrated understanding of sanitation and hygiene issues.
- Sanitation priorities were integrated into the Basedth commune development and investment plans.
- Sanitation is a standing agenda item at the commune meetings to review progress and discuss approaches, share ideas and identify actions that respond to challenges.
- Work was coordinated and shared between commune and village committees.

2. Strong cooperation and coordinated approach

- Focal persons at all levels meet regularly to discuss progress and challenges.
- Data was collected and used to assess progress
- Community level sanitation promotions were integrated with events conducted by schools, pagodas, and health centres.
- Sanitation was linked to local regulations, for example, approval for marriage required building a latrine first.
- There was an integrated approach with sanitation marketing including building the business skills of local sanitation suppliers and local commune sales agents to help end open defecation.

3. Tailored approaches

- Each village developed its own plan based on data and motivators e.g. children visiting from Phnom Penh.
- Households that could afford to build a latrine were targeted initially.
- The Commune Council focussed efforts in promoting sanitation on villages with lower coverage and provided information on a range of latrine options.
- Collaboration with latrine sellers enabled interest free credit arrangements to encourage more villagers to buy a toilet.
- In-kind support was provided for poorer households.

Provincial Governor of Kampong Speu province attends ODF commune celebration in Basedth district



4. Regular and frequent follow up

- Village leaders developed post triggering work plans and allocated responsibilities.
- Village and commune focal points made door to door visits to convince families that did not have latrines to commit to build one.
- Community meetings are held so that those with latrines can talk about advantages and commitment to ODF.
- Families that had recently built a latrine were visited to make sure they knew how to use them or to if they had any questions or issues.

Mr. Thuch, in reflecting on the key lessons, believes it is *"important for Commune Chiefs and Councils to set a clear goal for their communities and for focal points to have and manage accurate data on households' sanitation access"*. Mr. Thuch has owned a toilet for many years and is proud of the commune's achievements, as well as his own village being the first to reach ODF. He takes his role as focal point very seriously, noting that *"regular follow up and monitoring is essential and no matter how busy focal points are they should not miss scheduled follow-ups or break commitments to villagers"*.

A key challenge faced in reaching commune wide ODF was the late adopting villages were amongst the poorest. Strategies to address this were developed including utilizing the Social Fund from the commune budget, mobilizing labour and contributions from community events such as monthly full moon celebrations.

What Next?

The increase in toilet ownership creates a range of new issues for the safe handling and management of the accumulated human waste. Behaviour change strategies are being developed to be responsive to these changing priorities and emerging issues including menstrual hygiene management and market based solutions need to be identified and supported.

For Basedth commune the focus is now on ensuring the sustainability of the ODF results through use of regulations and continuing to monitor and assess progress, as well as deepening the impact. Additionally, post-ODF strategies and plans have been developed and integrated into the local government development agendas and post-ODF workshops have been conducted in Basedth for commune and village focal points of the 33 ODF villages in the district to guide them on how to maintain good hygiene practices and keep villages clean. The messages included use of latrines, handwashing with soap, drinking safe water and keeping the houses and surroundings clean.

Local sanitation facilitators from PDRD, DORD, district, commune and village levels, schools and health centres will continue to support communities to maintain ODF status and community leaders will continue to encourage maintenance of existing facilities, upgrading of existing unimproved toilets, sharing of household facilities and safe disposal of waste.

"The future-plan for this commune will continue to encourage people to upgrade toilets, washing hands with soap after using the toilet and drink safe water". Mr. Sok Thuch, Commune Chief

Declaration of first ODF commune in Basedth



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SNV is a not-for-profit international development organisation. Founded in the Netherlands nearly 50 years ago, we have built a long-term, local presence in 38 of the poorest countries in Asia, Africa and Latin America. Our global team of local and international advisors work with local partners to equip communities, businesses and organisations with the tools, knowledge and connections they need to increase their incomes and gain access to basic services – empowering them to break the cycle of poverty and guide their own development.

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