Cambodia remains on track to meet its Millennium Development Goal (MDG) target of 50% access to improved rural water supplies by 2015. However, significant work remains to reach the government’s vision of 100% access by 2025.

SNV’s Level of Service approach to measuring access to water supply has revealed that quality, quantity, reliability and accessibility provide a more precise characterization than access to improved water supplies alone. In addition, recent data from a national water quality assessment highlights that only one in five rural households are actually drinking microbially safe water (WHO 2014).

In SNV’s district of implementation for the Functionality of Rural Water Supply Services Programme (FRWS), a baseline study conducted in 2013 showed that water quality and reliability were key factors contributing to only 24% of households achieving basic service levels.

District-wide Water Supply Mapping (WSM) conducted earlier this year revealed that 1,055 water supplies currently exist, of which approximately 80% are fully functional. Of the seven communes in the district, some have more water supplies than others (ranging from 90 to 301). Similarly, some communes are plagued with more well breakdowns or dry water supplies than others.

Local authorities at district and commune levels do not typically invest or plan for rural water supply, nor do citizens expect them to. Water supply has long been regarded as being in the domain of donors, NGOs, and in some cases, higher levels of government. However, in recent years self-supply has increased steadily as the cost of drilling wells has become more affordable.

Examples of activities proposed in local functionality plans

- Install additional tube wells;
- Repair existing wells with major breakdowns;
- Re-initiate water user groups at places with public supplies;
- Build capacity of local water supply agents;
- Promote household water treatment;
- Trigger households to invest in greater rainwater harvesting storage capacity;
- Rehabilitate community ponds.

Figure 1: Location of Chum Kiri district in Kampot province, Cambodia (via Google Maps)
Functionality planning in practice

One of SNV’s objectives under the FRWS programme is to demonstrate the potential of data driven decision-making to empower local governments to take ownership and responsibility for addressing water supply issues. Rural Water Supply (RWS) Functionality Planning is the process of utilizing data from water supply inventories to identify and prioritize the main issues; and to design, fund, and implement activities to address them over time.

In the Cambodia context, such RWS Functionality Plans can be institutionalized in annual investment planning activities at the commune and district levels. Local level ownership and planning aligns with the government’s efforts towards decentralization and deconcentration outlined in the National Strategic Development Plan 2014 to 2018.

From May to July 2014, officers from the Provincial Department of Rural Development (PDRD) in Kampot province and the District Office of Rural Development in Chum Kiri district met with district and commune councillors over three rounds of consultation meetings to:
1. Introduce the RWS Functionality Planning concept and identify relevant RWS issues;
2. Follow-up activity and implementation design and potential linkages to government investment plans;
3. Present, share and discuss each of the RWS Functionality Plans at a consultative workshop.

Data and evidence from previously conducted WSM activities (including maps, lists, and data tables) were used to identify and prioritize RWS issues specific to the councillors’ areas of administration. Each RWS Functionality Plan also identified proposed solutions and outlined responsibilities, budgets, and work schedules. Through this process, seven commune councils, one district council, and the PDRD office for Kampot each designed and approved RWS Functionality Plans specific to their geographical area of governance.

Since August 2014, the RWS Functionality Plans have been tied to annual investment planning efforts. The aim is that activities to improve RWS service levels will begin to be funded and implemented by local authorities and partners in 2015.

Towards the end of 2014, Water Supply Functionality Plans will undergo further revisions for 2015 based on linkages to an upcoming District Water Supply Strategy and based on outcomes from social accountability activities to be conducted in the coming months.
Background: Functional Rural Water Supply Services (FRWS) programme

Since 2009, SNV has been providing capacity building and technical assistance to local government agencies in Cambodia to implement rural sanitation and hygiene programs. In 2013, SNV began a new regional programme to improve the functionality of rural water supply services in Cambodia, Laos and Nepal.

Coverage figures for rural water supply make us hopeful, as Cambodia’s MDG target for rural water supply has been met as of 2010. However, as the Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) acknowledges, these figures can hide the reality of often unreliable, unsafe water supply and large differences in Levels of Service (LoS) and costs between socio-economic groups.

Achieving truly functional water services is a big challenge, going far beyond just coverage at a given point in time. The core components of SNV’s Functionality of Rural Water Supply Services (FRWS) Programme are summarized in Figure 2 above.

SNV in Cambodia is working closely with the Provincial Department of Rural Development (PDRD) in Kampot Province to implement the FRWS programme in one district with approximately 50,000 residents. The aim is to improve the health and quality of life of residents by increasing the number of people using drinking water supplies that meet at least a basic LoS.

Read more at: http://www.snvworld.org/en/cambodia/our-work/WASH/FRWS

For more information

To learn more about SNV and our work in Cambodia, visit our website at:
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About SNV worldwide

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.