Sanitation for a Better Cambodia:
The Cambodia Rural Sanitation and Hygiene Improvement Program (CR-SHIP)
Message from the Country Director

Regionally and globally, Cambodia has comparatively low levels of access to basic sanitation and hygiene in rural areas. Lack of access is widely recognized as a cause for the spread of disease and economic loss for countries. In Cambodia, diarrhoea is indeed a major factor for the country’s child death, which remains relatively high, despite significant decrease to 54 deaths per 1000 live births in 2013. The country’s economic loss attributed to lack of sanitation reaches $448 million USD annually. The recuperation of that loss could make a significant change in the lives of Cambodia’s poor, if properly invested.

The issue is not an insurmountable one, when approached correctly. Positive behaviour change is key to sustain improved rural sanitation. Without mutual support and intimate cooperation with communities, government and local partners, lasting behaviour change will be difficult to attain. The communities are untapped resources. If they are empowered and well informed, they begin to understand the importance of changing their behaviour and the implications those changes can have on their health and their financial stability. Studies show that every dollar invested in improved sanitation can bring nine-fold return through health-related cost savings and improved productivity.

As a proponent of child-centred community development, Plan International Cambodia values community approaches to improving outcomes for children. After a decade of operation in Cambodia, Plan is recognized for its work in promoting improved sanitation and hygiene in rural areas, especially among the most marginalised groups. Building on strengths, Plan’s programs empower communities to become drivers for change. Plan’s early adoption and strength in implementing Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) led to its selection as the Executing Agency to implement the Cambodian Rural Sanitation and Hygiene Improvement Program for the Global Sanitation Fund.

The program strategically targets areas in five provinces with rates of less than 50 percent access to sanitation. For the first two and a half years of the program, implementation of CLTS activities took place in 1,517 target villages and about 20 percent of them have been declared open defecation free. Hygiene messages were disseminated to 392,082 villagers. These activities have contributed significantly to the current push of improved basic sanitation among Cambodian rural population from 28 percent in 2011 to 43 percent in the target provinces.

The program relies on its partnerships with the Water Supply & Sanitation Collaborative Council/Global Sanitation Fund (WSSCC/GSF) team, communities, civil society and non-profit organizations, and government to implement and realize its goals. I would like to thank them for their continued commitment and support to the program. I would also like to thank our dedicated staff members, who have worked tirelessly ensuring the program’s success.

Supriyanto
Country Director
Plan International Cambodia
Overview

Approximately 8.1 million Cambodians do not have access to adequate sanitation facilities, according to 2012 estimates of the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Program (JMP) for Water Supply and Sanitation. The JMP report also suggests that open defecation rates are around 72 percent. Access to adequate sanitation is one of the most critical issues affecting rural development in Cambodia. With a majority of the country’s 14.86 million people residing in rural areas, improving rural sanitation coverage is essential to transforming the lives, improving economic outcomes and reducing poverty rates.

To address this issue, the Cambodian government set its own Millennium Development Goal of providing access to improved sanitation to 30 percent of the rural population by 2015. The Cambodian National Policy on Water goes one step further, aiming to reach 100 percent of people by 2025.

Among the variety of approaches applied to achieve these goals is CLTS, which was first introduced in Cambodia in 2004. In 2006, CLTS was implemented on a larger scale by Plan International Cambodia and UNICEF. CLTS is a subsidy-free approach that mobilizes entire communities through “triggering” behavior change, motivating households to undertake their own evaluation of sanitation issues and initiate efforts to become open defecation free (ODF). The triggering process involves a variety of activities that force communities to directly confront the rarely discussed issue of open defecation and its consequences.

Plan was an early adopter of the model globally as it complements Plan’s Child Centered Community Development (CCCD) approach, which focuses on engaging children and their communities as active partners in achieving development goals. The CLTS approach is highly-regarded in Cambodia for improving sanitation behaviors in rural communities and has since been adopted by the majority of the government’s partners.

Partnering for Change through the Global Sanitation Fund

In 2010, Cambodia was selected as a focus country for programs to improve access to sanitation and hygiene by the Global Sanitation Fund (GSF) – an initiative of the Water Supply and Sanitation Collaborative Council. GSF partners work closely with government sanitation and hygiene programs and other water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) stakeholders to implement transformative programs focused on
three core principles: national leadership; targeting poor and unserved communities; and ensuring interventions are people-centered, community-managed, and demand-driven.

In Cambodia, the rural sanitation and hygiene sector is supported by the Ministry of Rural Development’s Department of Rural Health Care as well as sub-national level governments and non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The GSF and the Cambodian government established a National Coordinating Mechanism through the Ministry of Rural Development that includes other relevant ministries; Cambodian WASH coalition members; international and national NGOs; civil society and the private sector. This coordinating mechanism designed the Cambodian Rural Sanitation and Hygiene Improvement Program (CR-SHIP).

**The Program**

CR-SHIP, a five-year program which began in 2011, promotes sustainable practices of consistent use of latrines, hand-washing with soap and drinking safe water. The program further develops local capacity in Kampong Cham, Kampong Speu, Takeo, Svay Rieng and Kandal, provinces where sanitation coverage is below 50 percent.

The CR-SHIP partnership, led by Plan as the Executing Agency, includes sub-grantees selected from government agencies, local authorities, local and international NGOs, and individuals or private firms with experience and competence in the sector. The program promotes sanitation and hygiene behavior change through five effective approaches: CLTS, school and community water, sanitation and hygiene (SC-WASH) and sanitation marketing, behavior change communication (BCC), and information, education and communication materials. In combination, these five pillars distinguish the GSF model in Cambodia. Multi-faceted, multi-stakeholder and comprehensive in nature, the program catalyzes large-scale demand for sanitation, improves hygiene practices and helps to organize supply chains that provide technology and services at the community level.

Now in its third year, CR-SHIP spans 1,517 villages in the five targeted provinces. The program reached 148,400 people through the construction of 31,500 household latrines, and 826,500 people through the dissemination of key hygiene messages.

As the Executing Agency for CR-SHIP, Plan is responsible for the overall management of the program, leveraging its expertise in WASH to provide technical support and project oversight. Plan engaged Commune Councils with specific roles and responsibilities, including a key role in open defecation free verification, management of sanitation marketing activities, coordination with sub-grantees and Provincial Departments of Rural
Taking Control of Her Family’s Health

Ty Sina lives with her three children in Chamkar Andong commune of Kampong Cham Province, approximately 130km north of Phnom Penh. She lives the typical life of a villager there, making her livelihood on farming rice and other crops throughout the year, which provide sufficient income for her to send her children to school. Until recently she was a typical villager in another way, by practicing open defecation. This year things changed, when CESVI, a CR-SHIP sub-grantee, targeted Chamkar Andong as part of the program.

“In the past, my family was unaware of the importance of sanitation and hygiene,” said Ty Sina. “After meeting with staff from CESVI, we realized the value and that was when we decided to build our own latrine.” Ty Sina’s decision stemmed from the CESVI workshop she attended, and was also influenced by local authorities, with whom the Ministry of Rural Development has been intervening, and by the efforts of other NGOs in the region. These influences provided her with the knowledge, and motivation to dedicate precious resources to build a household latrine for her family, and she is not the only one. Out of 302 households in Chamkar Andong commune, 290 households constructed latrines and are properly using and maintaining them.

Improving access to sanitation is only one benefit of CESVI’s presence in Chamkar Andong. In addition to a rise in latrine construction and use, there was an increase in access to safe drinking water. CESVI program activities utilized behavior change communication messages to promote sanitation as well as drinking clean water and practicing good hygiene behaviors. Ty Sina has taken these messages to heart and now all of her children drink only filtered or boiled water at home and at school. She hopes to spread the message to others in her community to pass on what she has learned. “I saw students who were drinking water from the pond behind the school. It’s a common practice, but one I am hoping to change.”
Development. Capacity building for the sub-grantees is essential to the program, ensuring effective project implementation and long-term sustainability of results.

Program Achievements

The focus on CLTS, SC-WASH and BCC approaches of the CR-SHIP program have proven effective in increasing access to sanitation and improving adoption of key hygiene behaviors. Communities are exposed to CLTS activities through a range of actors, including sub-grantee staff, village leadership, Village Development Committee members, local Commune Council and government representatives. These actors facilitate a process with communities to understand the consequences of poor sanitation and begin to transform their sanitation and hygiene behaviors. As a result, households are making commitments to invest in and build their own latrines. Teachers conduct SC-WASH activities that educate children on healthy behaviors and encourage them to act as agents for change in their families.

The program’s second focus is the building of local capacity in Cambodia to provide high quality and sustainable sanitation solutions. Plan worked with the National Center for Health Promotion to develop manuals and train sub-grantees and local government on effective CLTS, SC-WASH and sanitation marketing implementation. Hands-on trainings were staged to strengthen the capacity of all implementers. Throughout the duration of the program, CLTS facilitation training for all stakeholders will be consistently promoted.

The development of the BCC strategic plan and toolkit created materials tailored to the Cambodian context. A consultant company called 17 Triggers, through a collaborative process with inputs from sub-grantees and NCM, conducted background research, field testing of materials, and trigger mapping to determine the most effective messaging for sanitation and hygiene. The finalized BCC tool was translated into a Khmer version, and all sub-grantees were trained on its use.

The Ministry of Rural Development was selected as a sub-grantee to develop a Rural Sanitation and Hygiene Monitoring and Evaluation System that will be linked to the national M&E system. A contextual analysis was conducted that identified existing system structures as well as gaps that need to be addressed. The contextual analysis report examined all relevant issues from the structure, partnerships, human capacity, policies and plans to infrastructure and data use that would be necessary in supporting a sustainable M&E system in Cambodia.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Indicators</th>
<th>Results as of Dec 2013</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>People living in ODF environments</td>
<td>206,114</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People washing their hands with soap</td>
<td>330,608</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People using improved toilets</td>
<td>558,515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People living in GSF targeted areas</td>
<td>1,271,571</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People reached by hygiene messages</td>
<td>826,500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities triggered</td>
<td>1,517</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communities declared ODF</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Learning from Challenges

Learning from the implementation processes, thereby identifying strengths, weaknesses and improving the quality and effectiveness of the program is critical to CR-SHIP. Plan, with support from the National Coordinating Mechanism, regularly facilitates sub-grantees to define common challenges and lessons learned to be shared across their projects. Through this process, the program identified the following issues to prioritize for improvement:
Summary of Sub-Grantees:

In the first two years, CR-SHIP increased access to sanitation, built capacity in both civil society organizations and local government and made progress toward the long-term sustainability of the Cambodian sanitation sector through advocacy and the development of a monitoring and evaluation system. This progress in implementation has been driven by 10 sub-grantees, managing 12 sub-grants, which constitute the backbone of the program. They are comprised of a diverse range of local and international NGOs as well as the Cambodian government. Within the five target provinces of CR-SHIP, sub-grantees are working in a majority of districts, specifically focusing on villages where sanitation coverage is below 50 percent. In these provinces, eight of the sub-grantees focus on sanitation and hygiene promotion through CLTS, SC-WASH, and information, education and communication approaches, while two utilize sanitation marketing to strengthen the local private sector market to respond to increased demand.

The first round of sub-granting led to the recruitment of one large and six small grantees, focusing all projects in the 10 districts of Kampong Cham, five districts in Svey Rieng, and four districts of Takeo. The second round brought two new grantees into the program and awarded additional resources to an existing grantee, extending implementation into Kandal and Kampong Speu and providing further coverage in Takeo and Kampong Cham. Additionally, the Ministry of Rural Development has been awarded two sub-grants, for advocacy and monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system development, to be implemented nationally. All sub-grantees are supported and monitored by Plan as the Executing Agency for CR-SHIP. The Executing Agency supports sub-grantee capacity building to ensure effective facilitation and promotes dialogue and learning amongst sub-grantees to strengthen the sector.

Sub-grantee Profiles:

**Cesvi**

Cesvi is a non-profit organization committed to working in partnership with beneficiaries toward global solidarity. Under CR-SHIP, Cesvi was awarded a two-year grant to conduct sanitation and hygiene promotion in Cheung Prey and Chamkar Leu Districts of Kampong Cham Province. In implementing this grant, Cesvi conducts hygiene and sanitation promotion through school events, public meetings and night cluster events in villages. Cesvi staff members conduct rapid visits in target communities as well as follow up on latrine construction and ODF verification status to ensure the uptake of sanitation and hygiene practices in villages.

**Cambodia Farmer Economic Development** (CFED) is a non-profit organization established in Cambodia in 1997 with the purpose of assisting in the socio-economic development of the rural poor in Svey Rieng province. CFED is implementing a two-year grant as part of CR-SHIP with a focus on capacity building of local stakeholders and government, while introducing sanitation and hygiene promotion in villages through the CLTS approach. Recently completed activities have included dissemination of hygiene promotion messages in villages through Commune Councils and a quarterly meeting on CLTS to reflect on achievement, challenges and lessons learnt from implementation.

**CHED or the Cambodian Health Education Development** organization works to improve the quality of health for Cambodians. The organization focuses on working with government and by strengthening community capacity and structures to ensure that health activities benefit the whole of society, especially the poor and most vulnerable. Through the implementation of the Sanitation and Hygiene Promotion Project under CR-SHIP, CHED aims to target rural communities in Kampong Cham and increase access to sanitation and motivate behavior change in communities. In order to do so, CHED conducted CLTS activities and regular follow up in communities as well as SC-WASH activities in schools.

**iDE Cambodia** was selected to implement a grant to facilitate and strengthen the latrine market in Kandal. As an organization in Cambodia, iDE aims to develop livelihood opportunities for its beneficiaries, the poor and rural households in Kandal province, through the use of market-based approaches that also integrate the private-sector and government. Via the CR-SHIP program, iDE promotes sanitation marketing to increase sanitation access by facilitating connections between consumers and producers and strengthening the capacity of entrepreneurs. iDE trained latrine business owners in effective sales techniques, while recruiting sanitation teachers to motivate communities and conduct group sales presentations, thus increasing both supply and demand for sanitation.
Nak Akphivath Sahakum (NAS) is a local non-profit organization established in Kampong Cham with the goal of improving the quality of life for the poorest, most vulnerable parts of Cambodian society. By employing the CLTS and SC-WASH approaches and integrating with local government offices, NAS aims to improve sanitation access in 134 target villages in two districts of Kampong Cham Province. The organization’s staff members engaged local Commune Councils in conducting village level CLTS triggering activities, worked with school teachers to educate students on the importance of sanitation and hygiene and supported local government officials from the Provincial Department of Rural Development (PDRD) to follow up and monitor improvement in rural sanitation conditions.

The local non-profit organization, RainWater Cambodia (RWC), was established with the goal of improving health conditions in Cambodia through improving access to clean drinking water and sanitation. RWC leveraged previous expertise in rural WASH projects to expand its operation into Kampong Cham Province for the CR-SHIP program where it works to end open defecation practices while increasing access to sanitation. Following initial CLTS triggering activities, the RWC staff members follow up with communities working to eliminate open defecation. The organization continues to promote positive WASH behaviors through education campaigns as well as regular meetings to keep local stakeholders engaged in the project.

The Promotion Practical Sanitation and Hygiene for a Better Life Project was proposed as a two-year project by Santi Sena Organization (SSO) under the CR-SHIP program. SSO is a local NGO founded as a Buddhist monks organization with the intention of working for peace, social justice, livelihood improvement and environmental preservation. The organization’s project for CR-SHIP works to engage with local communities to promote and improve sanitation and hygiene behaviors for better health and living conditions. Project activities have been coordinated with district authorities and those authorities are supported by SSO in their responsibilities to work with local communities to improve sanitation conditions. Through the project’s activities, an increasing number of households have committed to construct their own latrine facilities, improving access to sanitation for all household members.

The Netherlands Development Organisation (SNV) works in Cambodia to improve access, coverage and quality of basic services based on the real needs of communities. SNV Cambodia partners with communities, local government and the private sector to promote access to sanitation and improved hygiene practices. Under CR-SHIP, SNV Cambodia has been awarded a three-year grant. The organization is focused on sanitation demand creation through CLTS, sanitation marketing, value chain development and behavior change communication strategies to achieve the CR-SHIP goals. In the past year, SNV targeted 708 villages over the five provinces of CR-SHIP contributing to a significant reduction in open defecation and an increase in household sanitation facilities.

The organization Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Enterprise Development (WaterSHED), works to strengthen sanitation markets, while bringing appropriate and affordable water and sanitation products to Southeast Asia and Cambodia. The Rural Equity and Change (REACH) project is a two-year grant under the CR-SHIP program, which focuses on improving the enabling environment for local sanitation markets by strengthening supply chains and increasing demand for services. WaterSHED develops and trains sales agents and supports the establishment of sanitation businesses to meet the growing demand for sanitation services created as a result of CR-SHIP program activities.

Under the CR-SHIP program the Cambodian Department of Rural Health Care (DRHC), part of the Ministry of Rural Development, was selected to implement two key sub-grants: advocacy and M&E. These two grants are essential to the long-term sustainability of the activities conducted under CR-SHIP and the improvement of sanitation in Cambodia. Under the advocacy sub-grant, the ministry proposed the development and implementation of an advocacy strategy for sanitation and hygiene to organize consistent support, both financial and political, for the sector. Under the M&E sub-grant, the Ministry will establish a national M&E System for the sector in Cambodia to monitor the progress of the rural water supply, sanitation and hygiene strategy.
Achieving the goals of increasing access to sanitation and eliminating the practice of open defecation require substantial behavior change in communities. In some cases, awareness, education and community buy-in are not enough to achieve lasting change. Often rural communities face additional challenges that present a barrier to change, such as lack of resources or a poor geographical environment for existing technologies.

Access to credit for rural sanitation and hygiene improvement is difficult to obtain. This statement is particularly true for the poorest segments of rural communities. Micro-finance institutions largely focus on profit-oriented activities, such as small business development. Plan will conduct a study on existing micro-finance institution models offering financing for sanitation, which will examine currently applied models (such as those utilized by sub-grantees WaterSHED and iDE among others in related programs) and present recommendations to the National Coordinating Mechanism for a viable model to be adopted.

In some geographic regions prone to flooding, challenges to adopting sanitation technology have become apparent. The pour-flush and dry pit latrines that are typically promoted frequently fail in flooding conditions. Demand for these latrines has generally been low as community members are reluctant to maintain them considering the known risks of failure. The program recognizes the need to study technologies suited to these environments in order to improve sanitation access in all target communities.

Limitations in the CLTS approach. The approach focuses on the goal of achieving ODF status, which typically uses a binary measure – open defecation or open defecation free – to determine a community’s sanitation status and practices. Reality is much more complicated. Behavior change takes time and communities may make progress toward the goal, but receive no recognition for their accomplishments until the threshold of “ODF status” is achieved. Plan responded to stakeholder demand and developed a survey tool to collect data on targeted villages that are in the process of achieving ODF status, but currently remain non-ODF.

Independence from hardware subsidies is key. CR-SHIP places value on the necessary contribution from households to mobilize their own resources to improve sanitation facilities, leading to sustained behavior change as households and communities commit to their own solutions. Prior hardware subsidy approaches have proven to be unsuccessful, not scalable, and in conflict with the CLTS approach, fostering a culture of dependency and diminishing community action toward sustainable sanitation outcomes.

Long-term sustainability is achieved through extensive and intensive engagement with the national government. Plan is supporting the Ministry of Rural Development with its internal advocacy efforts to create a supportive environment for WASH within the national level ministries and promote the sector’s need for greater budgetary support through councils and the Finance Ministry. Additionally, the MRD, supported by Plan, UNICEF, WSP, and WSSCC/GSF, is working to establish an M&E system for the project, which will link with the national M&E system and serve as an important contribution to the sector.

Going Forward

In the remaining two and a half years of CR-SHIP, Plan and sub-grantees will continue to work towards the goal of improving access to sanitation and proper hygiene behaviors by refocusing efforts in target communities. At the end of 2013, Plan recruited sub-grantees for nine new sub-grants on sanitation and hygiene promotion. While focus on achieving ODF will be the priority, Plan will further the research on the ODF process and ODF progress status during that process.

The second focus of the CR-SHIP program, developing local capacity for sustained sanitation and hygiene improvement, will increase in urgency during the remaining years of the program. Capacity building, particularly of local and national government, will ensure long-term sustainability of program achievements. Particularly important are the Ministry of Rural Development grants for advocacy and M&E which will increase support, resources, learning and accountability for the rural WASH sector in Cambodia.
Changing the Community

Meas Nith felt uneasy when the officials from the Ministry of Rural Development (MRD) came to her house and discussed sanitation issues. “I felt ashamed since many people in my village had built their own latrines and I still went into the rice field to defecate,” said Meas Nith. The 62-year-old farmer had lived without a latrine at home since she was born, as was normal in her village.

Things have change since she participated in hygiene and sanitation workshops conducted last year by SNV, a Dutch Development NGO and sub-grantee under the Cambodia Rural Sanitation and Hygiene Programme (CR-SHIP). SNV covers 101 villages in Takeo, Svay Rieng, Kampong Cham, Kandal and Kampong Speu provinces in Cambodia. The success of the project means the boom of latrines in the target area, including one built by Meas Nith. She no longer has to worry or be embarrassed about the place she defecates and her field is no longer contaminated. “Having my own latrine also makes things easier when my relatives or my daughter’s friends visit my house,” she said. Since the project started 13,346 additional households have built new toilets in SNV’s target areas. This is not the only level of impact from the work done by SNV. CR-SHIP has also created a side job for Louen Ken, Doung village chief. Since the project started in his village, he has become a supplier of latrine rings, helping 124 of 155 households in his village to build their own toilets. “They are able to budget income from farming rice and family members that send back remittances from their work in garment factories to support the latrine construction,” says Louen Ken. In September 2013, those households with latrines were certified and received ODF certificates from the government authorities.

At the local government level, Ses Sovan, a Rural Development Officer has been working with SNV since 2012. He coordinates monthly meetings about sanitation and hygiene and facilitates latrine training and installment, encouraging poor families to set up savings groups and use shared toilets. “The success of this program depends on the commitment of the local authorities. I promise that by 2014, we will have ODF for the whole Trea commune,” he said. SNV and CR-SHIP understand the value of engaging these government members to support sanitation improvement. Through building their capacity and commitment the impact of the CR-SHIP project will achieve long-term sustainability.
Plan International Cambodia

Implementing programs in Cambodia since 2002, Plan International is headquartered in Phnom Penh, with field offices in Kampong Cham, Siem Riep and Ratanakiri provinces. The organization has an operating budget of more than $20 million annually, through which it implements programs benefiting more than 600,000 children and reaching nearly 80,000 families in almost 600 communities. In addition Plan Cambodia collaborates with partners such as the World Food Programme (WFP), the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the Global Sanitation Fund (GSF) on projects in a total of 11 additional provinces across Cambodia. It also supports the NGO Coalition on the Rights of the Child (NGO-CRC) and conducts advocacy that extends from the local to national levels.

Plan Cambodia promotes a child-centered community development (CCCD) approach to development which works in partnership with communities to facilitate development while improving children’s lives. Through its community managed projects approach, Plan supports building Commune Councils’ capacity for participatory planning, learning and project design and through financial support on micro-projects. Plan Cambodia is among the few international NGOs in Cambodia that engage Commune Councils as key strategic partners, strengthening their organizational capacity in order to help them effectively address issues in their communities, particularly those related to women and children. Plan Cambodia adopted this model in response to its experience with Cambodian government decentralization and de-concentration reform to strengthen elected Commune Councils to be more responsive to the needs of rural people.

Plan’s top priorities include striving to increase primary school completion rates, raising sexual and reproductive health awareness among adolescents, and reducing maternal and infant mortality rates.