

Reaching where the water doesn't

Over 6 million Cambodians do not have access to safe water and over 8 million lack adequate sanitation facilities. That's nearly half the population, with a large majority living in poor rural areas. In Cambodia, open defecation is a common practice and many schools do not have toilets, leaving children vulnerable to infection and diseases such as diarrhoea - the second leading cause of death among children under five. Many benefits come from the availability of clean water, proper sanitation and good hygiene practices, including fewer child deaths, less disease, more productive workers and lower health costs both at an individual level and for society. We support the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the Cambodia Red Cross to provide appropriate and affordable water, sanitation and hygiene solutions in three rural provinces that have been particularly underserved.

DURATION: 2015-2020

FOCUS AREA: Access to Basic Services

COUNTRY: Cambodia

PARTNER: IFRC



CONTEXT

Cambodia has one of the lowest water supply coverages (77%) and the lowest sanitation coverage (37%) in Southeast Asia. Approximately 8 million Cambodians do not have access to adequate sanitation facilities and a large proportion of the population still practises open defecation. The most common sources of drinking water are tube wells or deeper boreholes. However, over 30% of the population regularly use unprotected wells, springs, rivers and ponds. As a result, the country suffers from high rates of diseases such as diarrhoea, intestinal worms and skin diseases, especially among children under five. Inequality of access to improved water services for households in urban and rural areas is alarmingly high and aggravated by recurrent flooding.

ACTION

IFRC programme targets 22 rural and peri-urban communities in the three vulnerable provinces of Banteay Meanchey, Kratié and Svay Rieng, where sanitation coverage is below 60% and water coverage is less than 40%.

The actions to provide appropriate and affordable water, sanitation and hygiene solutions include:

- Setting up 6 new water systems, reinstating 8 existing water systems and constructing 3 boreholes to improve access to safe, low-cost, water supplies using simple but effective technologies that communities can use and maintain themselves.
- Building, refurbishing and improving over 4,000 household latrines and providing adequate sanitation facilities in 8 selected schools, while simultaneously promoting the safe and hygienic use of these facilities to reduce the spread of water-borne diseases.
- Promoting hygiene knowledge and practices in schools, communities and individual households.

A core component of the programme is to establish community Water and Sanitation Committees (WSC) responsible for community mobilisation as well as for the management, maintenance and repair of the infrastructures, including the purchase of spare parts, hygiene promotion and community financial contributions.

EXPECTED RESULTS

- Over 18,150 people in 22 rural and peri-urban areas of Banteay Mean Chey, Kratie and Svay Rieng provinces obtain access to clean drinking water sources, enabling improvements in health and reductions in the time and effort spent handling water.
- 20,180 people acquire access to improved sanitation facilities and the targeted communities become Open Defecation Free during the three-year period.
- The 22 targeted communities and individual households change their behaviour in a way that supports hygiene knowledge and practices, become more aware and knowledgeable about water and sanitation-related challenges, are empowered to address them and see improvements in their health, wellbeing, productivity and dignity.

LONG-TERM STRATEGY

The programme is based on an integrated approach and is anchored in participatory and sustainable interventions in line with the framework of the IFRC Global Water and Sanitation Initiative 2005-2025 and with national policies and priorities for the water sector. Strong emphasis is placed on local capacity building to instil a sense of community ownership. Close coordination and consultation with local, regional and governmental stakeholders as well as with other development agencies (WHO, UNICEF) supports soil and water conservation measures (bund walls, check dams and the planting of trees) not only as protection but also to mitigate the effects of soil erosion. The decentralisation and empowerment of the Cambodia Red Cross and its volunteers is another key element in ensuring the outcomes of the programme will be sustained over time.