



ACHIEVEMENT OF OPEN DEFECATION-FREE: LESSON LEARNED ON THE SUCCESSFUL IMPLEMENTATION OF RURAL SANITATION IMPROVEMENT IN SVAY RIENG PROVINCE, CAMBODIA.

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Abstract

The lesson learned on the successful implementation of rural sanitation improvement in Svay Rieng province is one of the achievements of the completion of open defecation-free (ODF) as the first province of the Kingdom of Cambodia. This is an important historical document for Svay Rieng province that arises from hard work to promote rural hygiene for people in rural communities and to understand the importance of good hygiene habits through the practice of three good hygiene habits: the use of toilets, safe drinking water, and hand washing with soap for health. This document will be an important model for provincial administrations, specialized departments, partner organizations, and 24 other provinces to study and follow to achieve ODF in the future. The aim of this study is to demonstrate the importance of coordinating and implementing skills in water supply, sanitation, and sanitation, and to seek the technical support of the Provincial Department of Rural Development in Svay Rieng Province, cooperation with other specialized departments, municipal/district administrative, communes/sangkats, and focal points, especially in successfully leading the planning to stop open defecation at their authorities. As a result, this historic successful implementation of rural sanitation improvement on ODF in Svay Rieng Province is in response to the National Strategic Plan on Rural Water Supply and Sanitation 2014-2025 (NSP), the National Action Plan (NAP), and the Provincial Action Plan on Water Supply, Sanitation, and Rural Sanitation Phase 2 (PAP II 2019-2023) and the provincial plan to stop open defecation by 2022, and especially to show the joint responsibility in the implementation of work from the provincial level to the village level until the province has completed the open defecation-free (ODF) province.

Keywords: *Open Defecation-Free (ODF), Rural Sanitation Improvement, Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS), Rural Water Supply, Sanitation, and Hygiene (RWSSH)*

Introduction

Svay Rieng is one of the 25 capitals and provinces located in the southeast of the Kingdom of Cambodia, approximately 125 km from Phnom Penh, bordering north and west to Prey Veng province, south to Long An province, and east to Tay Ninh province of Vietnam. It has a total area of 2,966.40 km². Svay Rieng Provincial Administrative Territory is divided into 2 municipalities, 6 districts, 12 sangkats, 68 communes, and 690 villages. The main occupations that people in Svay Rieng work to earn income to support daily life are as follows: main production (58.5%), service occupation (40.8%), private sector occupation (factory workers and NGO staff) (26.1%), occupation as a laborer in agriculture and construction (6.9%), occupation as a civil servant, armed (3.2%), and handicraft (0.7%). In order to facilitate management in the geographical area of Svay Rieng province, the provincial administration has divided the geographical area of Svay Rieng province into three main areas based on the following potentials: 1) potential area 1: agricultural area (agricultural production) (food crops, rice, mixed vegetables); 2) potential area 2: the agro-industrial area (for agro-industrial crops, which is



suitable for farmers to grow rubber, sugarcane, raw materials, sugar, cashew, and potato); and 3) potential area 3: the industrial zone, which has been established as 11 special economic zones and has 247 small and large factories that are creating jobs for 94,009 people.

The aim of this study is to demonstrate the importance of coordinating and implementing skills in water supply, sanitation, and sanitation, and to seek the technical support of the Provincial Department of Rural Development in Svay Rieng Province.

Methodology

As methodology, this study was desk research which is basically involved in collecting data from existing resources from the result of several project reports implemented in Svay Rieng province. The data and results from the following projects: Community Action for Social Development (CASD), Rural Water Supply, Sanitation, and Hygiene (RWSSH), Cambodian Rural Sanitation and Hygiene Improvement Program (CRSHIP), Transfer Strategy (TS), and Accelerated Sanitation and Water for All (ASWA) were collected through in-depth reviewing and analyzed using qualitative methods.

Result and discussion

Implementation of CASD program

The Community Action for Social Development (CASD) program was implemented in Svay Rieng from 1994 to 2004 with UNICEF's assistance. It is carried out by seven specialized departments: Women's Affairs, Rural Development, Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation, Health, Education, Youth, and Sports, and Water Resources. The Provincial Department of Women's Affairs is in charge of a number of secretariats that serve as coordinating units for the CASD program's execution. According to the areas of expertise of the relevant units, each department is required to engage in project operations. The Provincial Department of Rural Development is in charge of rural water supply and sanitation. The four districts of Romeas Hek, Svay Chrum, Svay Teap, and Kampong Ror are the focus locations for the CASD program's implementation, and there are six activities to implement as follows: 1) Capacity building of provincial, district, and commune officials (activities such as technical training of officers at the provincial level in each sector, coordination, project management, monitoring, and report writing), 2) Building of physical infrastructure (supply of restrooms, wells, agricultural machinery, animal and vegetable breeding), 3) Provide children nourishment (track their weight, height, and growth), 4) Assist children and families of vulnerable children (defend children's rights and offer protection to children living in vulnerable households), 5) The Farmer Family Vegetable Garden Program (which teaches farmer families how to grow vegetables and provides them with seeds and animal breeds), and 6) Develop communes' capacity to choose and set up Village Development Committees (VDCs) in the four target districts to facilitate meetings, training, and the selection of the VDCs.

Lessons learned from the implementation of the CASD program are as follows: 1) Rebuilding the capacity of officials while the government lacks of human resources for the officers in each department to be able to coordinate the project accordingly, and 2) Providing toilet facilities to those without prior education, making them unaware of the importance of using latrines, and providing nutrition to children to ensure they receive adequate nutrients for growth will help reduce the stunting of children in rural areas. This will prevent people from using toilet materials for other purposes, such as feeding animals with drains, toilet bowls, and stair rails. Regarding the back house rate, in 2004, 10% of the province's population had access to latrines after the project was finished.



Implementation of SC-WASH program

The School-Community Water Supply, Sanitation, and Hygiene (SC-WASH) program was supported by UNICEF during 2005–2012 in four districts, such as Romeas Hek, Svay Chrum, Svay Teap, and Kampong Ror. For this program, there are several outcomes as follows: 1) Strengthening the capacity of provincial, district, and commune officials, 2) Implementing the Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS) program, 3) Water and sanitation program in schools, 4) Community Hygiene Promotion (HP), and 5) Water quality are testing for germs on the palms and kitchen utensils. The SC-WASH Program strives to educate and promote the benefits of good hygiene practices in order to inspire people to change their own behavior. Because they appreciate the need of fundamental hygiene practices, residents of the community have modified their behavior to construct toilets, store and consume safe water, wash their hands with soap, and clean their homes. To ensure the program's sustainability, the Ministry of Rural Development and UNICEF were still encouraging people to change their attitudes and quit using restrooms.

In light of the lessons and experiences gained through the execution of the SC-WASH program, the program's teachings include encouraging people to construct flush toilets or dry toilets and sanitation focal points at the commune and village levels. The community should be informed, informed, and monitored on their own. In 2012, an approximate 41% of rural Svay Rieng provincial residents have access to clean water.

Implementation of 1st Phase CRSHIP program

In order to improve the sanitation situation in Svay Rieng province in response to the National Strategic Plan on Rural Water Supply and Sanitation 2014-2025 (NSP 2014-2025), especially to raise the awareness of the people who are still low, the government should understand the importance of good hygiene practices for people living in rural communities through "the use of latrines, safe drinking water, and washing hands with soap." Seeing these challenges in the past, Plan International Cambodia (PIC) supported the first phase of the Cambodian Rural Sanitation and Hygiene Improvement Program (CRSHIP) by selecting three implementing partners as implementation partners and seeking cooperation with the Svay Rieng Provincial Department of Rural Development for technical support. The organizations that play the role of implementation partners are as follows: the Santi Sena Organization (SSO), Netherlands Development Organization (SNV), and the Cambodian Farmer Economic Development (CFED) which worked in 5 target districts: Svay Teap, Kampong Ror, Chantrea, Svay Chrum, and Romeas Hek districts, a total of 35 communes, 252 villages, and 84 target primary schools. Important procedures used in the CRSHIP are Community-Led Total Sanitation (CLTS), School-Community Water Supply, Sanitation, and Hygiene (SC-WASH), hygiene promotion (HP), and behaviors' community change (BCCs).

As lesson learned by working together on this project, everyone helped the sanitation rate in the province of Svay Rieng rise from 39% at the beginning to 78% at the end of the time frame. As a result, 154 out of 252 villages and 8 out of 35 communes in the region met the target by ceasing to practice open defecation-free (ODF).

Implementation of Transfer Strategy (TS) project

In early 2017, Plan International Cambodia initiated the Transfer Strategy (TS) project to implement a one-year TS continuation project in four target districts: Svay Teap, Kampong Ror, Chantrea, and Romeas Hek districts. The TS project period has promoted the work of improving rural sanitation



through the implementation of the TS project. Svay Teap district achieved ODF and was officially recognized as the second district after Banteay Meas district, Kampot province and the first district of Svay Rieng province. Provincial leaders as well as the Provincial Department of Rural Development have encouraged the 8 municipal and district administrations, 80 communes and sangkats, 690 villages, and partner organizations to support and accelerate the work to improve sanitation in the province so that Svay Rieng can achieve ODF in 2022.

Implementation of ASWA II project

Svay Rieng is one of the six target provinces: Svay Rieng, Kampong Speu, Takeo, Kratie, Preah Vihear, and Ratanakiri, which have been selected by UNICEF as target areas for implementation of the project "Accelerate Sanitation and Water for All Phase II (ASWA II)" from the end of 2018 to the present. According to pre-ASWA II data, 99.4% of the population has access to safe drinking water, of which 87.4% have access to safe water and 92% have access to improved latrines. In collaboration with the Svay Rieng Provincial Department of Rural Development, 5 districts were identified as the project target, such as Romduol, Svay Chrum, Chantrea, Kampong Ror, and Romeas Hek districts, with 59 communes and 549 villages. District, commune, and village authorities have educated and disseminated rural sanitation programs. Svay Rieng Provincial Department of Rural Development has received financial and material support from UNICEF to conduct sanitation education activities for the people in the target areas, such as: ODF planning meetings at the commune and district level; inspiring CLTS programs; monitoring the implementation of the CLTS program; training on data book recording and mapping of village sanitation to districts; commune and village sanitation focal points; commune-level quarterly meetings; quarterly meetings of the PWG (Provincial Working Group) and DWG (District Working Group); and capacity building of provincial committees for review, verifying villages, communes, sangkats, and cities/districts achieved ODF, broadcast a health and hygiene education program on the National FM radio station Rumduol Svay Rieng, and provided a COVID-19 disease prevention and education campaign. Sanitary pads provided to poor families to prevent COVID-19 infection include: soap, water tank, hand wash, children's books for education, children's diapers, and 21,500 boxes of sanitary pads for women.

As lesson learned by implementing this project, there are several mechanisms to achieve the ODF as follows: 1) provincial gatherings with groups and development partners to solicit assistance, 2) to assist in constructing toilets for needy individuals, municipal administration solicits assistance and mobilizes local resources, 3) to design ODF for villages, communes, and cities (outside of target areas), use the DWG working group meeting procedure, 4) the Provincial Department of Rural Development offers cities beyond the target region technical assistance, data pamphlets, and village sanitation maps.

Support mechanisms for Svay Rieng province to achieve ODF

- Establishment of technical team for PWG/RWSSH and DWG/RWSSH,

The Ministry of Rural Development has issued Instruction No. 0014/17, dated January 9, 2012, on the proposal to establish a technical working group for rural water supply and sanitation at the capital-provincial level (PWG/RWSSH). This is done in order for the work of the rural water supply and sanitation sector to grow more efficiently and responsibly from the national level to the sub-national level. The PWG/RWSSH was established in accordance with the aforementioned letter by Svay Rieng Provincial Administration, Decision No. 012/17 dated February 9, 2017. In order to improve productivity, the PWG/RWSSH working group underwent four revisions. Additionally, the Svay Rieng Provincial Administration has issued Letter No. 070/18 dated August 2018: Establishment of 8 Rural-



Urban Water Supply and Sanitation Working Groups (DWG/RWSSH) in order to be more clearly and effectively in charge of the work of rural water supply and sanitation at the municipal-district level. The PWG and DWG working groups have been using this technique to collaborate on a regular basis. In particular, they hold quarterly working group meetings to plan how to assess the growth of new latrines in 80 communes and sangkats across 8 municipalities and districts while addressing obstacles and an agreement to help Svay Rieng achieve ODF by 2022.

- Development of Provincial Action Plan on RWSSH, Phase II (PAP II, 2019-2023)

The Ministry of Rural Development has continued to roll out the second phase of the National Action Plan 2019-2023 in order to meet the objectives of the National Strategic Plan on Rural Water Supply and Sanitation 2014-2025 (NSP/RWSSH) and after the successful implementation of RWSSH Phase I, 2013-2018. Following are the developments in the work on RWSSH since this action plan's implementation: better water sources are now available to more people, up from 65% to 75%, and more people are using safe water, up from 70% to 80%. In addition, the percentage of households that wash their hands with soap has climbed from 46.5% to 60%, and the percentage of individuals who have access to better restrooms has gone from 36% to 60%. The Svay Rieng Provincial Administration has created the RWSSH plan for Phase II, 2019–2023, to encourage all municipal and district governors to continue to reach 100% ODF by 2022 successfully.

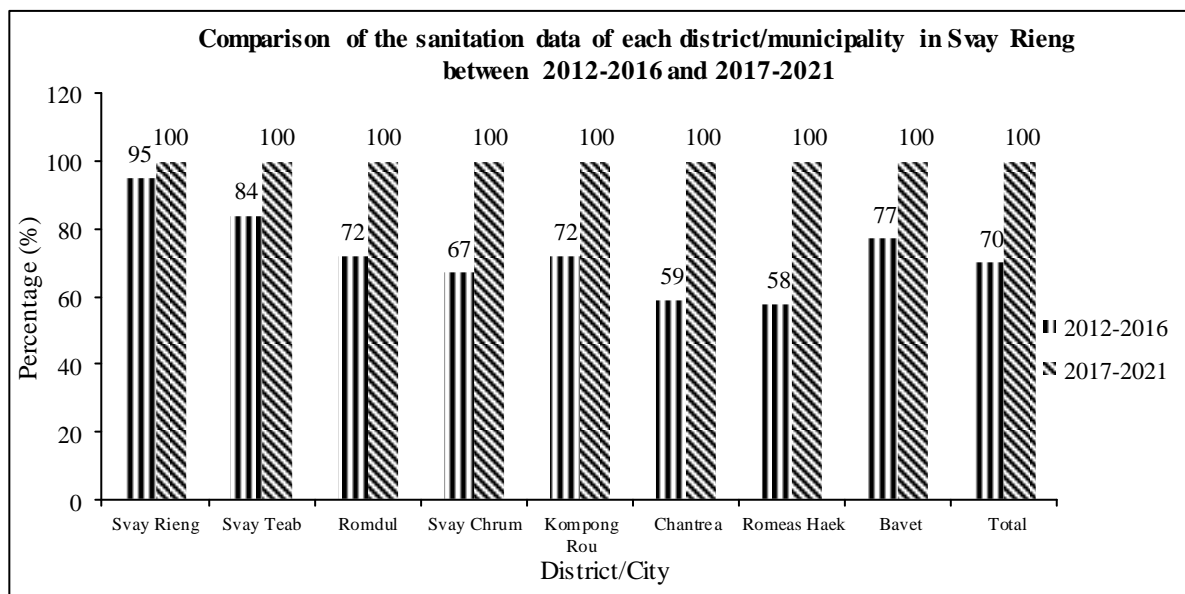


Fig. 1. Comparison of the sanitation data of each district/municipality in Svay Rieng Between 2012-2016 and 2017-2021

Concepts, factors, and experiences that result in the successful implementation of ODF throughout the province

Concepts that result in the successful implementation of ODF

The following quote has been produced: “Even if the toilets are not modern and civilized, it is better for people to practice excellent hygiene, and not to allow them to maintain their poor habits while they wait to construct a high-quality toilet (toilet villa)”.



Factors that result in the successful implementation of ODF

The factors that result in the successful implementation of ODF are as follows: 1) Svay Rieng province's geographic and demographic characteristics; 2) the accountability of all levels of authority, from provincial to local; RWSSH are seen as collaborative efforts that are accountable; and 3) a working group's ability to educate and communicate changes in people's living standards and the creation of jobs in special economic zones will determine how well the public participates.

Experiences that result in the successful implementation of ODF

- This success is responding to the National Action Plan (NAP) and the Provincial Action Plan (PAP) on RWSSH Phase II, 2019–2023, and the Provincial Plan to achieve ODF 2022.
- This success is an indicator to measure the progress of the work to improve sanitation, challenge, solve, and prepare the ODF plan at the village, commune/sangkat, municipality/district, and province.
- Sanitation focal points in villages, communes, and sangkats can keep track of and record sanitary data in books and on clear sanitation maps.
- This success is a catalyst for the people of Svay Rieng province, village chiefs, communes, sangkats, and other cities and districts to pay attention to enhancing sanitation in order to attain ODF.
- The implementation of RWSSH should get attention from all stakeholders, including the government, partner organizations, and the corporate sector. This is a collective effort and a top priority for ensuring that people have access to decent health care and reducing poverty.
- This success is to increase the knowledge and participation of the people in the work of promoting hygiene in the community through the use of toilets, safe drinking water, and washing hands with soap.
- This success is to mobilize partner organizations and the private sector to continue to support ODF sustainability.
- This success benefits the economy, tourism, environment, and dignity of the people.

Conclusion

Based on the result of the study, we can conclude that the achievement of open defecation-free: have become an important historical document for Svay Rieng province that arises from hard work to promote rural hygiene for people in rural communities and to understand the importance of good hygiene habits through the practice of three good hygiene habits: the use of toilets, safe drinking water, and hand washing with soap for health. This document will be an important model for provincial administrations, specialized departments, partner organizations, and 24 other provinces to study and follow to achieve ODF in the future. In response to the National Strategic Plan on Rural Water Supply and Sanitation 2014-2025 (NSP), the National Action Plan (NAP), and the Provincial Action Plan on Water Supply, Sanitation, and Rural Sanitation Phase 2 (PAP II 2019–2023), all stakeholders have to show the joint responsibility in the implementation of work from the provincial level to the village level until the province has completed the open defecation-free (ODF) province.

Some suggestions are made as follows: 1) Ministry of Rural Development and partner organizations are requested to continue their assistance to sustain and improve ODF in Svay Rieng province, and 2) Department of Rural Development, Municipal/District Administration, and Commune/Sangkat should assist to the construction of private toilets for the weak, the disabled, widows, the elderly, and the destitute in Svay Rieng province.



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