Adapting targeted sanitation subsidies for climate vulnerable households

Water for Women is partnering with iDE to deliver Cambodia water, sanitation and hygiene scale up (WASH-SUP2) to reach an estimated 944,840 people in six provinces of Cambodia.

In 2021, this project was awarded an Innovation and Impact grant to further strengthen the use of new evidence, innovation and practice in sustainable and inclusive water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) and, in doing so, contribute to improved learning and practice globally.

Led by iDE, in partnership with Causal Design, this Innovation and Impact project aims to ensure that no one is left behind in accessing safely managed sanitation in the WASH-SUP2 project areas - home to some of Cambodia’s most at-risk communities from climate change - by adapting to contextual, environmental and climate-related challenges.

IDE’s method for generating sanitation demand is through professional sales presentations that often involve the whole family. IDE / Tyler Kozole
In Cambodia’s Tonle Sap Lake region, the health, lifestyles and livelihoods of households are tied to the lake and are significantly impacted by changes in the area’s climate and environment. Seasonal variation in water levels, heavy rainfall and sporadic flooding render most common basic sanitation technologies ineffective and unsafe in the area. Limited affordability and access to appropriate technology and services in these areas has prevented households from adopting safe sanitation.

Through this Innovation and Impact project, iDE and Causal Design are working together to prevent households currently living in challenging environments like the Tonle Sap from being left behind as the rest of the Cambodian population approaches full sanitation coverage.

To improve sanitation coverage in this area, iDE is adapting its targeted subsidy mechanism, which was piloted in 2017 under the Australian Government’s Civil Society Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) Fund, then brought to scale through the five-year Water for Women project; WASH-SUP2*, also supported by the Australian Government.

To meet the needs of vulnerable households more comprehensively, the targeted subsidy mechanism’s current eligibility criteria will be broadened beyond poverty to include additional household-level measures related to climate, socio-economic and gender vulnerability. This initiative is also refining the targeted subsidy model to be more practicable in a variety of contexts by other implementers, including government.

The project involves developing the mechanism, then testing it in a randomised controlled trial. iDE and Causal Design are conducting quantitative and qualitative analyses on the impact, cost-effectiveness, market-distortionary effects, sustainability, and scalability of the subsidy mechanism. The project is complemented by support from the European Commission, which has enabled the formative research for this activity and pre-trial market testing of products.

The goal of this Innovation and Impact project is to empower households to invest in safe sanitation and hygiene, specifically focusing on the most vulnerable.

To ensure access to safe sanitation for households in the Tonle Sap area - where there is presently some of the country’s lowest rates of water and sanitation coverage - climate-resilient products and/or services are required. Often these products and services are difficult for the most vulnerable households to afford.

This project is utilising the targeted subsidy to support these most vulnerable households around Tonle Sap Lake, and the results of the randomised control trial will inform practice going forward.

*The ‘Cambodia Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene Scale-Up Program 2.0 (WASH-SUP2)’ funded by Water for Women is part of a larger program supported by multiple donors. This larger program is known by the wider sector as ‘SMSU3: Sanitation Marketing Scale-Up Program, Phase 3’.

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The Australian aid program is investing in innovation and learning to deepen impact throughout Asia and the Pacific through the Innovation and Impact grants. By supporting partners to further their innovation and impact, we can not only improve WASH outcomes in this region, but also contribute to improved WASH policy and practice globally. Water for Women is proud to be partnering with International Development Enterprises and Causal Design in Cambodia.

Links to: Cambodia water, sanitation, and hygiene scale-up program 2.0 (WASH-SUP2)