

WaterSHED's system strengthening efforts contributed to significantly improved sanitation coverage in Cambodia

In 588 communes across 8 provinces in rural Cambodia, WaterSHED's system strengthening efforts have contributed to remarkably improved sanitation coverage in a way that is scaled and likely to be sustainable. WaterSHED implemented two key programmes over a decade long period from 2010 to 2021: their Hands-Off sanitation marketing programme, and the Civic Champions leadership training programme.



Commune councilors win award in Civic Champions peer competition, Takeo province, Cambodia (WaterSHED)

Full case study here

WaterSHED has demonstrated that prioritising sustainability and scale need not come at the cost of high impact numbers. The depth of performance changes achieved in leadership development, targeting and information, and ultimately in latrine affordability and sales, is remarkable.

KEY FINDINGS

1 Civic Champions provided more persuasive and accessible information for rural consumers coupled with better-targeted products for sanitation enterprises, which led **143,393 rural households to buy toilets** over a seven-year period.

OVER
140,000
RURAL HOUSEHOLDS
BOUGHT TOILETS
OVER A 7-YEAR
PERIOD

2 *Hands-Off* supported sanitation enterprises producing and selling latrines to rural households, achieving very good signs of ownership and scale. Ownership of sales and marketing were weaker, however, causing WaterSHED to reassess their approach.

3 WaterSHED pivoted their approach to the Civic Champions program and focused on developing commune leadership, hoping to leverage the motivation and engagement of local leaders to improve toilet sales in their own communes.

4 The Civic Champions programme led to improved leadership skills and there are strong, albeit early, signs of government taking up and continuing the program.

5 After the training, commune councillors began providing context specific sanitation information to rural households in their communes. Combined with better toilet pricing and product targeting, toilet sales doubled and **sanitation coverage increased from 29% to 77%** across 8 rural provinces in Cambodia.

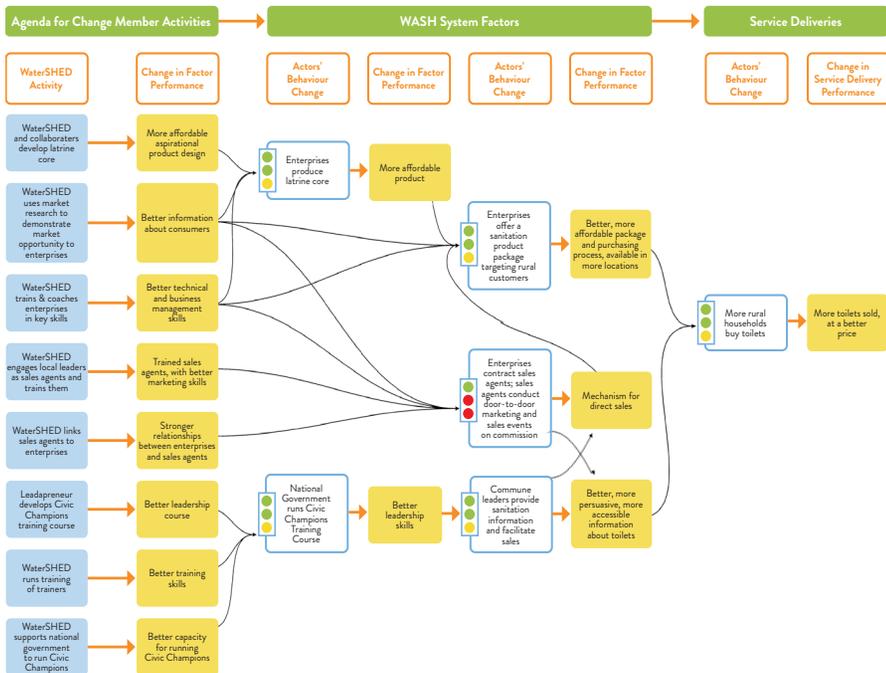
CASE STUDY FOCUS



A year before WaterSHED began implementation (2009), just under 25% of the households in Kampong Speu province owned a functioning toilet, and awareness of sanitation messages was low. WaterSHED’s theory was that the combined effect of **improved information** and **better targeting** would lead more rural consumers to purchase toilets, and hence improve sanitation coverage.

For this case, a team of consultants analysed systems changes across two types of related changes: behaviour and performance changes. Behaviour changes are highlighted in the blue boxes and describe changes to who did what, and how they did it. Performance changes are highlighted in the yellow boxes to describe what changed and how much it changed (see Figure 1).

FIGURE 1: WATERSHED THEORY OF CHANGE



WaterSHED’s theory of change with traffic light assessments of scale (top), ownership (middle), and resilience (bottom).

KEY FINDINGS - OVERALL

Enterprises that WaterSHED worked with sold 143,393 toilets to rural customers in the programme areas between January 1, 2011 and December 31, 2017. Sanitation coverage increased from 29% to 77% across 8 rural provinces from 2011 to 2020.



Small latrine supplier business in rural Cambodia supported by WaterSHED’s ‘Hands-Off’ sanitation marketing program (WaterSHED).

FINDINGS - HANDS OFF SANITATION MARKETING

Initially, WaterSHED worked with private sanitation enterprises to develop a more affordable core latrine package for customers, which WaterSHED shared with enterprises. They also supported enterprises with information about rural consumers and technical and business management skills through training, coaching, and technical advice. Local leaders were engaged as sanitation sales agents, provided with training, and linkages were made between them and the private enterprises.

As a result, enterprises in rural areas began producing and selling all the component parts needed as a single “latrine core” package that could be delivered to customers’ homes, and self-installed. Enterprises also contracted sales agents trained by WaterSHED on a commission basis, to conduct door-to-door direct marketing and run village-based sales events promoting their products.

Through Hands-Off, the ownership and scale of sanitation enterprises producing and selling latrines to rural households were very good.



SCALE

At least 394 of the enterprises WaterSHED worked with adopted the key behaviour changes (improving production, information, and targeting). Collectively, these enterprises serve roughly 40% of the population of Cambodia.²



OWNERSHIP

More than three years since WaterSHED withdrew district-based facilitation staff, suppliers are still selling the latrine core package and the supplier dropout rate is low.



RESILIENCE

If market conditions changed sufficiently in coming years (e.g., if an updated product design or new market research is produced), enterprises would need to source their resources elsewhere, and it is not clear how they would do this. However, it is unlikely that this will be needed before the sanitation market reaches saturation.

The behaviour change that improved information – enterprises promoting and selling toilets through sales agents – also reached good scale; though threats to ownership and resilience caused WaterSHED to reassess their sales and marketing roles.



SCALE

The enterprises that WaterSHED worked with incorporated promotion and sales of latrines through sales agents into their new model, alongside the behaviour changes outlined above.



OWNERSHIP

Sales agents were highly motivated; however, despite receiving training, they felt they lacked the confidence and/or skills to successfully run sales events and do door-to-door promotion of latrines alone. WaterSHED also observed that enterprises struggled to recruit, train, and manage a rural salesforce, and were heavily dependent on WaterSHED staff to play this role.



RESILIENCE

As WaterSHED trained sales agents directly, and facilitated linkages between enterprises and sales agents, there was a threat to resilience when WaterSHED was no longer available to play these roles.

FINDINGS - CIVIC CHAMPIONS

WaterSHED recognised that to mitigate the threat to sustainability of limited ownership and resilience, they would need to take a different approach to improving the information available in the system. They developed a leadership training programme for commune leaders called Civic Champions to provide them with the tools, strategies, and skills needed to promote local development. WaterSHED trained district government staff as facilitators and coaches. An innovative feature of the programme is that participants pay to secure a place on the training (USD 14-45). Over time, government staff gradually took on greater ownership of the Civic Champions programme, eventually running it themselves. The approach has been institutionalised through training of trainers, within cascading levels of government.



WaterSHED manager works with participants during Civic Champions training event in Takeo Province, Cambodia (WaterSHED).

The Civic Champions programme led to improved leadership skills among participants and there are strong, albeit early, signs of government continuing the program.



SCALE

Once the government-led iteration is complete in late 2021, a decision will be made about whether to integrate Civic Champions into the National School of Local Administration (NASLA). If the decision to integrate it goes ahead as intended, the scale will be nationwide, and all commune councillors will have the opportunity to participate in the training.



OWNERSHIP

There are strong early signs of ownership from government. Informal verbal communication suggests that NASLA sees many positive reasons for integrating Civic Champions into the curriculum long-term.



RESILIENCE

Even with WaterSHED's involvement, the facilitation cascade was not sufficient for enabling strong training skills in facilitators and coaches, so this is a potential threat to resilience. This risk is somewhat mitigated since experienced WaterSHED members have been contracted by the government to support them with technical advice and quality assurance.

After completing the programme, commune councillors began providing context specific sanitation information to rural households in their communes. Despite promising early signs, continuing ownership and resilience remain unclear.



SCALE

As of September 2019, the WaterSHED programme area had 1,097 commune councillors in 588 communes across eight provinces, and over 900 (now over 1,000⁴) of them had participated in the Civic Champions programme.



OWNERSHIP

It is unclear how much commune leaders will own their behaviour changes long after participation in Civic Champions, but encouragingly, the Scale-up evaluation reported that increased latrine uptake lasted for at least one year following the end of the training programme.⁵



RESILIENCE

The resilience of this behaviour change depends on whether the national government runs the Civic Champions training programme sustainably. If they can do so, newly elected commune councillors will continue to develop leadership skills and, if sanitation remains a priority within the training, they will apply these new leadership skills to promoting sanitation.



Group activity during Civic Champions program in Battambang Province, Cambodia (WaterSHED).

ABOUT THE CASE STUDY

You can read the full WaterSHED case study here.

Agenda for Change supports its members to deliver systems change and document and share their experiences in the water, sanitation, and hygiene (WASH) sectors. As part of that overall effort, the Global Hub contracted a team from the [Springfield Centre](#) and [Aguaconsult](#) to test and apply an approach to three cases involving Agenda for Change members. WaterSHED in Cambodia is the first case.

Further guidance on how to apply the approach, and a summary of lessons learned from the process, will be forthcoming.

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Small latrine supplier business in Battambang supported by WaterSHED's 'Hands-Off' sanitation marketing program (WaterSHED).

¹ D. Pedi and P. Touch, (2009), 'WASH Marketing Project, Kampong Speu Baseline Survey', February, 1–127.

² Jenkins, McLennan, Revell, and Salinger, 2019, 'Strengthening the sanitation market system: WaterSHED's Hands-Off experience'.

³ WaterSHED, 2020, 'From NGO-led to Government-led: Civic Champions Leadership Development Program in Cambodia'.

⁴ WaterSHED, 2020, 'Institutionalizing Novel Development Programs'.

⁵ Bartell, Jenkins, Vizintin, and Salinger, 2020, 'Civic Champions 2015-16 Scale-up Evaluation'.