



EMPOWERING COMMUNITIES

FOR A BETTER URBAN FUTURE

UN  HABITAT

360° COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

Our community-based approach guarantees that the community has a voice throughout the project, from planning to implementation, by having representatives in the Project Implementation Unit (PIU). The PIU is involved in making important decisions and is consulted throughout the project life cycle.



The members of the community contribute by participating in the physical and construction works, which also helps to keep the project costs low. To succeed, the project requires a contribution from the whole community. Laying a new piped water network requires a lot of trench digging, in which everyone in the community can contribute.

RAISING AWARENESS AMONG COMMUNITIES

An important part of the community-based approach is that the households

are given the means to make changes by themselves. A key is educating the people about issues related water usage and hygiene practices, and promoting basic lifestyle changes that can make a big difference in terms of overall health and well-being. The awareness raising campaigns are targetted to reach the whole community, and to ensure the inclusion of both genders, we work closely with Lao Women's Union.

Our projects also utilise a well-known UN-HABITAT tool, the Human Values-based Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Education (HVWSHE) programme, which targets children and teachers in particular.

CAPACITY BUILDING

UN-HABITAT aims to empower people with practical skills such as latrine construction. Under the different activities in the project towns, artisan training is an important element in the projects. The training focuses on construction, operations and maintenance of sanitation facilities

MEK-WATSAN

UN-HABITAT's major water and sanitation initiative, The Mekong Region Water and Sanitation Initiative (MEK-WATSAN) is based on community participation, which has proven to be cost-effective and contributes to the overall ownership and sustainability of the projects. Community contribution is often in the form of labour and provision of materials for construction also helps to reduce the overall project implementation costs.

and includes an on-site demonstration. The training of artisans will contribute to the development of enterprises at the community level. Ensuring sustainability with newly established water connections includes information on water conservation or practical lessons such as bill payment for the users.

INCOME GENERATION

An indirect outcome of the improved water and sanitation provision is the socio-economic development of the local population in the participating towns. This has been validated by an impact study of a UN-HABITAT completed project under MEK-WATSAN conducted in Xieng Ngeun in Lao PDR. The impact study clearly demonstrated the growth of local town and businesses and community investments in housing and other infrastructure, enabled as a result of the MEK-WATSAN intervention.



COMMUNITY-BASED WATER SUPPLY AND SANITATION PROJECT IN XIENG NGEUN

The project around the Xieng Ngeun district in Luang Prabang province was the first community-based water and sanitation project in Lao PDR in which the community was actively involved in all stages from project planning to implementation.

At the beginning of the project, no households in the area had piped water connection. Open defecation was widely practiced, as only a handful of households had access to a latrine. In order to attain a sustainable water supply system to eight villages in the area, resources from different pools and levels were pulled together. Implemented under UN-HABITAT's MEK-WATSAN programme, the local water utility Nam Papa provided a financial contribution and their technical expertise while the community provided labour by digging the trenches for the pipes. Representatives of the community formed a part of the Project Implementation Unit, which had responsibility for the day-to-day project implementation.

The households were able to apply for an affordable loan from the revolving fund that had been set up for purchasing materials for a latrine, and then given a full training on latrine construction. This mechanism enabled even the poorest of the households to obtain facilities for clean sanitation.

The pilot project was completed in seven months, after which eight villages had been connected with piped water network with the most households having received their own taps and latrines, that they had built and paid for by themselves. An impact study conducted showed that the lives of the people living in the area have improved in many ways since the intervention. Not only is there no need to carry water from afar or quarrel over a shared tap and scarce water anymore, but the number of diseases among the population caused by unsafe water has significantly declined. The new water supply has also opened new possibilities for small- and large scale businesses which have sprung up since the project completion, thus improving the socio-economic position of the District.

UN-HABITAT COMMUNITY-BASED WATER AND SANITATION PROJECTS

UN-HABITAT's innovative and unique working model used in their projects has been formulated to involve and empower the communities that they work with. This means that the communities are not only involved in the projects undertaken in their towns and villages, but also that the impacts of these projects will continue to show long after they have been completed.

“UN-HABITAT has provided a new approach for the delivery of water and sanitation services to the poor in the small towns in Lao PDR”

HE Sommad Pholsena, The Minister of Public Works and Transport Lao PDR

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UN-HABITAT partners in the community-based water and sanitation projects with the Department of Housing and Urban Planning (DHUP)

The United Nations Human Settlements Programme, UN-HABITAT, is the United Nations agency for human settlements. It is mandated by the UN General Assembly to promote socially and environmentally sustainable towns and cities with the goal of providing adequate shelter for all. In Lao PDR, UN-HABITAT runs two major water and sanitation programmes: “Water for Asian Cities Programme” (WAC) and the “Mekong Region Water and Sanitation Initiative” (MEK-WATSAN). Through these, UN-HABITAT seeks to demonstrate replicable and innovative approaches for providing improved access to water and sanitation, particularly for the urban poor.

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