



Newsletter

Clean water, a human right not a luxury

WFC Newsletter Issue 17 November 2021

Water for Cambodia was one of four organizations chosen from two hundred survey respondents to speak at a major United Nations forum in July 2021 addressing Grassroots Views on Resilient Recovery Post COVID-19



Massimo MAIO

The forum was officially *a side event held as part of the United Nations High Level Political Forum (HLPF)*. The panel was sponsored by the NGO Committee for Social Development and focused on local impact and recovery post COVID-19. Participation by **Water for Cambodia** was encouraged by board member Lynne Healy a Main Representative to the UN, International Association of Schools of Social Work.

Water for Cambodia panel members addressed four key areas impacting the community that were deemed likely to increase situations of inequality. It highlighted the strategies in place to mitigate the impact of the pandemic and support those most effected. The WFC panel members are: Massimo Maio, Operations director, SAN Sophal, Project Manager and SIN Sisovann, Quality Control and Monitoring and Evaluation Officer.



SAN Sophal

The panel first addressed case load and vaccination. Cambodia saw a significant growth of cases in 2021 and has targeted vaccinating 10 million people by the end of this year. At the time of the forum 4.3 million had received at least one dose of one of the Chinese approved vaccines. Though NGOs are not considered a priority, by July the entire WFC workforce had been vaccinated except Massimo who chose to return to Italy to receive an EU approved vaccine (he is fully vaccinated). Vaccine distribution is unequal especially in areas outside cities. Priority has been given to government officials and is most readily available in Phnom Penh. Reaching the goal of 10 million vaccinated by year end will require a dramatic redirection of efforts in the rural countryside.



SIN Sisovann

The impact on livelihoods from the pandemic has been instrumental in causing a significant setback in the progress to reduce severe rural poverty. An estimated 500,000 jobs have been lost and 100,000 migrant workers have lost jobs and returned home from outside Cambodia. There is no government or outside financial assistance to soften this loss. Families in the Siem Reap area who rely heavily on the tourist industry have been especially hard hit since the country shut down in March 2020 and remains so. Households have responded by returning to their villages and reducing consumption including food and medical care as well as borrowing heavily to survive.

Access to education has suffered as families cannot afford the fees associated with school attendance and most rural children lack the means to access remote education. Fear of the virus has also resulted in people, especially young children and girls, staying at home. Finally, the panel addressed the increase in domestic violence toward women and girls exacerbated by isolation, fear, lack of jobs and lack of other social outlets.



Towards 2030: Grassroots Experiences with Inequalities



The strategies **Water for Cambodia** is employing to lower the impact of the pandemic include practicing and teaching proper COVID protocols and continuing to build and install filters bringing safe disease-free water to 3400 more households since March 2020. Continuing regular testing of installed filter performance by our laboratory staff to assure water quality. **WFC** has also moved to increase the number of latrines built and installed to fight open defecation that is endemic to the Cambodian countryside. This is one of the primary causes of bacterial contamination of water sources. Filter distribution begins the conversation about COVID awareness; but improved hygiene tactics directly address disease control. Hand washing, toilet habits and other skills necessary to preventing spread are being taught. To this end Water for Cambodia has provided more than 300 training hours to more than 18,000 people.

The report of the original survey on inequalities is available at:

<https://ngosocialdevelopment.files.wordpress.com/2020/12/2020-grass-roots-report-inequalities.pdf>

Water for Cambodia is approaching its 17th year of bringing clean safe water to thousands of family homes, schools and health centers in rural Cambodia

Water for Cambodia established its presence on the ground in Siem Reap in January 2006 by installing 30 filters purchased from HAGAR, an NGO operating in another area of the country. From that small beginning it has become a robust, independent operation widely recognized and respected for its integrity, high quality filters, professional staff and unique laboratory skills. From that first filter placed in Pouk District, **WFC** now has placed filters in all 12 districts of Siem Reap Province as well as in 13 of the remaining 24 Provinces.



The first filter installed
January 2006

The bio-sand filter was selected as the ideal means of delivering clean safe water to families in a rural undeveloped environment. It is rugged, easy to maintain with no moving parts and lasts for years (we do not yet know how many). Laboratory testing was seen as the most effective way to evidence the filter's performance. The lab became a reality in 2007 through the generosity of a supporting Rotary Club in Japan and technical support from two Universities:



That first filter still in
regular use today

Bridgewater State (Mass.) and University of Victoria (Canada). Since its inception the lab has tested water samples from about 9000 installations. This is a unique project capability and may be the largest bio-sand filter sample test data set anywhere.

Simply spreading filters around the countryside doesn't completely address the challenges they are meant to address. Group and individual training in personal hygiene methods, filter maintenance as well as safe water storage plus follow up visits have always been part of the **Water for Cambodia** regimen. UNICEF introduced a strategic initiative in 2016 identified as WASH (WAter, Sanitation and Hygiene). Its goal is: **Ensure access to water and sanitation for all by 2030**. **Water for Cambodia** embraced this concept early and began training all field staff members in WASH methods in 2017. These principles now guide all project planning and field training. WASH supports a more comprehensive view of delivering clean safe water to individual families. It encompasses water source maintenance and protection and attacks the cultural reliance on open defecation.

Water for Cambodia staff immediately began incorporating WASH methodology into all field visits, group and family training and installations. During 2017, several staff members successfully undertook the first comprehensive project to address WASH goals on a commune wide basis. This resulted in over 250 filter installations, a comprehensive WASH training schedule, 19 new or refurbished community wells and 100 latrines. In parallel with this success, other staff members embarked on a program to introduce double latrines (boys and girls) at local community schools. **Water for Cambodia** continues to grow its capabilities and adapt to the needs of the community it serves.

SCORECARD FOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE

# Bio-sand filters installed	# Wells refurbished or installed	# Household latrines installed	# Double school latrines installed
27798	41	412	10

Thank you all for helping to make this amazing accomplishment happen and please support continuing to improve lives and change the future.

Water for Cambodia has a new mailing address!!

Water for Cambodia

PO Box 5428

Wakefield, RI 02880

Please change your contacts

Please change your rolodex

Please tell your friends

Visit us at: www.waterforcambodia.org or contribute directly at

Water for Cambodia P.O. Box 5428 Wakefield, RI 02880