

Project Final Report

Project: Getting Well Cambodia, Lotus Outreach

Project Reporting Dates: From: November 1, 2012 To: July 31, 2013

Project Leader: Mr. Ung Pola, Executive Director, COCD

Project Summary

With generous support from the Forix Foundation, Lotus Outreach has worked with COCD (Cambodian Organization for Children and Development) to begin implementing the Getting Well Cambodia Project in Phnom Kravanh district, Pursat Province. The project's goal was to construct 11 wells, two of which have been funded by the Forix Foundation. These 11 deep bore wells directly benefit 961 villagers (including 445 women and 354 children), and enhance the quality of life indirectly for thousands more in adjacent villages. LO recognizes the interrelated nature of community problems and like all of our programs, the Getting Well Cambodia program addresses issues in a holistic and integrated manner.



Building wells not only provides clean water, but is directly related to reducing the incidence of life-threatening illnesses, improving hygiene and sanitation, decreasing malnutrition and increasing school attendance, thereby improving the lives of children and communities. Furthermore, the water wells augment our existing social development program in this largely agrarian region, allowing members of community savings and loan groups (or "Self Help Groups") to use the water to support their agricultural activities, including vegetable gardening, livestock husbandry and cash crop production.

Progress

This past year, construction has been completed on 11 new water wells. The direct beneficiaries of the two Forix funded wells are approximately 150 villagers, including roughly 72 women and 50 children. The project staff met with commune councils, village chiefs, and the local villagers to conduct a Needs Assessment to determine the level of water shortage in each village. Locations without water sources and most prone to droughts were determined by mapping out any already available water sources in each target village. After conducting the geographical study and mapping out all the water sources, 11 locations in 10 villages were identified for constructing the wells. For example, in the village of Pich Ban, the villagers used a water source about 1km away from their homes before Lotus Outreach built a well locally.

Project staff then met with each of the communities to determine the number of families, including lists of applicants' households, who would use each well. The applications were not only signed by thumbprint of each household, but also by the Village Chief as a witness. Furthermore, Baseline Surveys have been conducted in the selected areas to ascertain factors such as health/wellness and education levels in order to determine to what extent the water wells will bring about positive changes in the lives of those impacted by their construction. Lastly, well Management Committees have been formed among the Water User Groups for each well. Each Management Committee consists of a Chief, Vice-Chief, and a Cashier, who are responsible for proper operation and maintenance of the wells via the collected maintenance cost from its users; seeking necessary technical support and guidance from COCD and other local vendors or authorities as needed; and maintaining necessary records like income, expenditures, meeting minutes, and other logistical information. By having locals involved with the maintenance and preservation of the water wells, we ensure the long-term sustainable use of each well.

By the end of July 2013, all 11 water wells have been drilled successfully, and all 11 have been lab tested to ensure the water is free of arsenic and other harmful chemical matters. The quality of water has been tested clear in all but one of the wells. For the village that resulted in muddy water, the construction company will re-drill and re-pipe to ensure the water is clean and safe for consumption, without any extra charge. Our local NGO partner will continue to follow up and ensure the water flow and quality remain consistent in the long run. Beyond simply constructing the wells, LO works with our local partner to install health awareness billboards at each of our well sites. The boards function to both thank our well sponsors as well as promote healthy habits like hand washing. Furthermore, we held health awareness workshops for the local villagers, attended by 225 individuals, of which 48% were women.



Staffing

Having lost much of its human resource capacity, the greatest challenges facing Cambodia's local organizations are poor management and lack of accountability. Lotus Outreach works to transfer skills and social-mindedness to our partners, encouraging a new generation of Khmer professionals to collaborate in the development of their country and shed the self-interest engendered by a generation of civil strife. Our volunteers, board members and staff are helping our partners improve their accountability through enhanced program delivery, logic models, data collection and analysis, and financial reporting.

LO has worked with COCD to develop thorough qualitative and quantitative biannual reporting mechanisms to measure the impact and success of the program. As a pre-condition for program support, our reporting requirements are defined in binding Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) agreements. The key personnel who ensure the implementation of the project and its deliverables are our Director of Field Operations (Glenn Fawcett), Country Representative (Raksmey Var), COCD Executive Director (Ung Pola), and Project Manager (Prak Vuthea). In this reporting period, no staffing needs were unmet and there were no additional personnel required.

Milestones Current

- Constructed 11 deep bore wells directly benefitting 961 villagers (including 445 women and 354 children), and enhanced the quality of life indirectly for thousands more in adjacent villages
- Met with district authorities, village chiefs, and community leaders to conduct a feasibility assessment in order to identify target villages and form initial Baseline Report
- Established Well Maintenance Committees for each water well by working with local community leaders and members
- Selected local contractors to drill 11 water wells and oversee their implementation
- Created 11 health awareness billboards with donor name and logo for each water well
- Executed hygiene awareness workshops to educate local villagers regarding hand washing practices and the avoidance of waterborne diseases
- Checked quantity of water flow and quality of well to confirm safety and consumption standards were met after each installation

Milestones Future

- Conduct follow-up visits to villages for impact assessment including villagers' understanding of hygiene practices
- Continue to follow-up with village authority figures to check on water flow and water quality factors
- Encourage well users to establish a fence around each well to protect it from the elements and animals



Opinion

Per our Director of Field Operations' report, the project's overall outcomes and impact are extremely successful and integrate well with our other projects in the region. The wells allow over 196 families to save time and money. Instead of traveling over a kilometer to fetch water on a daily basis, or to purchase water at the exorbitant cost of \$10 per month, they now have a local source. The health status of 961 villagers will improve due to clean, safe drinking water. Up to 5% of the children in the villages where we work, were not attending school regularly due to traveling long distances to fetch water. The local wells put the children back in school, and help them to attend classes regularly. The clean water source also allows the parents to generate extra income by planting vegetable gardens and by saving time. Moreover, the wells mitigate overall safety concerns, especially for children. According to UNICEF's Cambodia Accident and Injury Survey (2009), one of the top five leading causes of death in children aged 1-17 was drowning. Water pump wells are safer and prevent the risk of drowning altogether. Additionally, when children travel long distances to fetch water, they are exposed to the risk of kidnapping, sexual abuse, or human trafficking. Having a local water source decreases the likelihood of such horrific outcomes for women and children.

Some of the obstacles encountered while executing the project included: two of the wells needed to change locations because there was no water coming out in the locations that were drilled, and two of the wells needed to be re-piped. Both issues were overcome smoothly and successfully by working with our local NGO partner and the local contractors. The strengths of the project include building a sense of solidarity among the communities, as well as a marked behavior change in hygiene practices, villagers' health status, family economic status, children's education, and women and children's safety. This project integrates seamlessly with LO's counter-trafficking, women's education, and microfinancing programs.