

Recommendations for Providing Potable Water In Cambodian Rural Areas

From observations during the 07/14/05 – 07/29/05 Cambodian Partnership Trip

There are several methods available to provide consumable water for the residents in rural Cambodia. This is my recommendation as to the method most expedient, cost effective and least intrusive on the Cambodian people. I am convinced that we should be careful not create dependencies within the Cambodian people on the western church. Further, it is my desire, and the hopes of the team that traveled to Cambodia this year, that we empower the existing church to discover their own expressions of discipleship, worship and work. Therefore, creating businesses through micro-loans which the Cambodians could own and operate independently from our involvement would further our no-dependency on “expertise” or “money” from the West philosophy.

I will describe an overall strategy to do several things in this endeavor:

1. We should pursue providing employment to a family/families within the church. This family would become the operator of a small business set-up to provide potable water to the village and potentially to neighboring villages.
2. This plan would provide for a natural entrance into the homes of church members to provide training in maintenance of water filtration equipment and sterilization. This could be simultaneous with the church’s discipleship program in educating and caring for its member families. Additionally, this could potentially be an outreach caring for the hydration needs within the village and provide opportunities to share the good news.
3. This could also be accomplished through the creation of small local credit unions providing micro-loans to prospective business owners to buy the needed equipment to start and run their endeavors. These loans would be paid back creating monies for additional loans to be made through the village run/owned credit unions.

The Business of Water

The water filtration business would start by having the local Cambodian church identifying an honest individual who is a leader or highly respected person within the local church body. This person should have experience or be willing to obtain experience in the process of casting concrete products.

After selecting the candidate we (US church) could provide the seed monies required for the startup phase of the business. This money would be available as a small loan with which the businessman could purchase the needed molds, and tools. The loan could be repaid over a reasonable period of time thereby providing additional startup monies for other micro-enterprises (CMED - *Christian Micro-Economic Development*).

The owner/businessman would build biosand filtration units, placing them in homes or meeting places (such as the church building) and training the beneficiaries in the maintenance, use and care of the filtration equipment.

The business owner would be paid by the orders for filtration equipment from two sources:

1. Local residents and businesses would purchase units to provide potable water to their customers and employees.
2. Those purchased by the organization* that solicits donations to provide water for families in the village, church and surrounding areas.

*Note: This organization is in development with the goal to provide clean, safe water for people everywhere (in this case Cambodia). Money to accomplish this would be raised by soliciting gifts from churches, organizations and individuals. This could be through monthly commitments, one-time gifts and the like. We estimate presently each unit could be placed in a Cambodian home for \$40 US. This amount would pay the owners of the businesses for labor and associated costs, profits to expand and generate money to repay the loan. We can reassess these estimated costs later if we proceed.

Where do we go from here?

If this seems to be advantageous with the current trends of thought about ministry in and to Cambodia, then we should take steps to:

- Complete the construction of the mold in Phnom Penn
- Ask the churches to identify potential families that desire to begin businesses
- Proceed with the development of the organization that would provide seed monies and ongoing fund procurement for filter placements
- Create educational materials for those traveling to Cambodia including information about:
 - a. Avoiding Creating Dependency Issues
 - b. Biblical Christianity and Cross Cultural Issues
- Create educational materials for those living in Cambodia including:
 - a. Biblical Christianity
 - b. How to Avoid Becoming Dependent
 - c. Leadership Development
 - d. Reproducing churches and church planting
 - e. Safe Water, Filtration and Sterilization techniques
 - f. Marketplace Ethics
 - g. Financial Opportunities Through Economic Development

Sincerely, Michael Webb