



Environmental Cooperation-Asia (ECO-Asia) Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Enterprise Development

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Photo: Resource Development International

Increasing access to safe water technologies, such as the ceramic water purifier shown here, is a major focus of the WaterSHED program.

BACKGROUND

According to the World Health Organization, inadequate water, sanitation and hygiene account for roughly 94 percent of the world's estimated 4 billion cases of diarrhea each year. Children under the age of five in developing countries suffer the greatest burden, accounting for most of the 1.5 million deaths caused annually by diarrheal diseases. The health and developmental effects of unsafe drinking water, inadequate sanitation and poor hygiene are not only severe, but long-lasting and puts the poor at an even greater disadvantage. For example, a recent study found that illness from poor sanitation costs Cambodia and Vietnam over \$1 billion in lost Gross Domestic Product (GDP) every year due to missed work days.

APPROACH

The Water, Sanitation and Hygiene Enterprise Development (WaterSHED) Project is a public-private partnership, a collaboration between government and private and non-government organizations. It is led by the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC) with support from the US Agency for International Development (USAID). The program is designed to bring effective, affordable water and sanitation products to the marketplace, and ultimately to individuals, in Cambodia, Laos and Vietnam. WaterSHED works with private companies to provide consumers with the water and sanitation products they want and need with the goal of bringing greater health and prosperity to the people of Southeast Asia.

WaterSHED promotes a range of water and sanitation technologies based on consumers' income level and need. To better reach underserved populations, WaterSHED provides consumers with small loans that enable them to purchase water filters and build better latrines. Private businesses are key in making these effective, affordable products available to consumers. In turn, providing consumers with access to better products and the financial means to purchase them contributes to the creation and sustainability of private enterprises.

PROGRAM OVERVIEW

With support from USAID, UNC manages the overall WaterSHED program. Its partners include the East Meets West Foundation, EnterpriseWorks/ VITA, International Development Enterprises, Lao Water Resources, Inc., Lien Aid, and the World Toilet Organization.

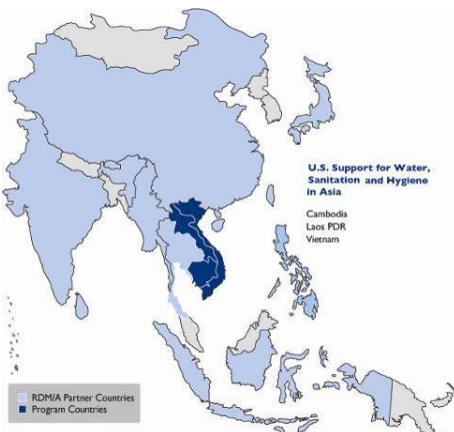




Photo: International Development Enterprises-Cambodia

WaterSHED markets water filters through retail distributors such as this small shop in Cambodia.



Photo: Lien Aid

Improving sanitation facilities has substantial benefits, including better health, education and economic growth.

WaterSHED partners have successfully marketed water, sanitation and hygiene products and services to create consumer demand, reduce the level of financial subsidy by the program, and achieve profitability. The products and services they offer include ceramic household water filters, rainwater harvesting systems, and village water supply and sanitation systems. Providing a range of options allows consumers to enter the lower end of the market and progressively trade up to more sophisticated products over time.

WaterSHED will begin by conducting in-depth consumer research and create marketing messages aimed at increasing consumer demand for the water, sanitation and hygiene products and services. WaterSHED will focus on five key areas:

- Creating consumer demand for water, sanitation and hygiene products and services
- Assessing the availability and viability of rainwater harvesting technologies
- Introducing new water and sanitation products and services
- Improving access to household water filter technologies
- Identifying barriers to financing for low-income consumers

USAID is supporting the WaterSHED program with financial and technical resources, recognizing the potential of private business to help improve access to water, sanitation and hygiene products for the poor in Southeast Asia.

PARTNERS

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill (UNC), East Meets West Foundation, International Development Enterprises, Enterprise Works/Vita, Lien Aid, and World Toilet Organization.

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