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**WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE SERVICES BEYOND 2015:
IMPROVING ACCESS AND SUSTAINABILITY**

**WASH and tenure security in Cambodia:
an investigation into links between urban sanitation,
infrastructure and intermediate titling**

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BRIEFING PAPER 2283

The paper looks at how urban sanitation, infrastructure and mapping was used as a vehicle for Intermediate Land Titling (ILT) and increasing tenure security. The pilot project was implemented during a period in which land tenure and eviction had become, and continues to be, a major issue in Cambodia. Especially vulnerable have been informal urban poor settlements which have largely been excluded from Government and donor titling programmes such as the World Bank's Land Management and Administration Project (LMAP). This study examines how instead of looking at titling or upgrading in isolation, it is the combination of the two aspects, together with endorsement from local authorities, that helps reinforce the other and create a more successful outcome – and possibly a template for future tenure projects in informal settlements.

Introduction

This paper reviews a two year pilot project by Cambodian NGO Sahmakum Teang Tnaut (STT) in the provincial town of Kampot in southern Cambodia. During the project WASH and other infrastructure projects were linked to a tenure security initiative called Intermediate Land Titling (ILT). The basis of the project was that instead of focussing solely on WASH or infrastructure, it was the combining of two aspects – infrastructure and tenure – that created a more robust project that built community cohesion and most significantly, helped to avoid eviction. The site was a peri-urban village on the edge of Kampot, called Daun Taok, with approximately 270 families almost exclusively Cham (Muslim) Khmer and largely employed in the fishing industry. According to UN Habitat's Slum Indicators the site qualified as a Slum in all 5 categories (water access, sanitation, tenure security, durability of housing and sufficient space) and with rumours of eviction, but no definitive Municipal order in place, it was an ideal test area for the pilot project. The site also corresponded to two of the MDG7 targets on improving the lives of slum dwellers and access to sanitation.

Daun Taok: urban sanitation, infrastructure and titling project

Aims and objectives

The aim of the project was to show that it is the combination of infrastructure and titling that provides a more profound and effective process that engages both residents and local authorities. The relevance of improved infrastructure and secure tenure as beneficial in their own right has been well established (Payne:2002). As Payne suggests, tenure systems in informal settlements usually involve complex relationships and dynamics. Therefore this paper does not suggest that infrastructure or ILTs are a 'silver bullet' solution to tenure security but that a combined process is an option for improving tenure in a more durable way.

The process:***Community mapping:***

The first stage in the project involved getting to know the physical site, the residents, local authorities and how they all interacted. To draw out local information a method called 'Photovoice' was used whereby 3 groups of 10 residents (a men's group, a women's group and a children's group) were each given a camera and invited to take a picture of one thing they liked and one they didn't like. It was a simple format but one which provided a very helpful insight into the site and how differing groups used the space in different ways. The next step was sharing this with the local authority (*Sangkat Trauey Koh*) and starting to talk about the actual mapping of the site leading to the production of ILTs. It was made clear that the local authority would be invited to be part of the mapping team and that the Sangkat chief would be asked to sign off on the ILTs only if he was happy with the final document. While mapping was carried out STT also talked to residents about ideas for small scale infrastructure projects. In this way STT was able to develop a working relation with both residents and local authority and able to provide some 'tangible' infrastructure upgrading as well as the mapping project which from the outset was a more intangible and 'mysterious' undertaking for residents. A mapping team was established with 2 STT staffers and 1 Sangkat officer who photographed each house and family and gathered basic family information. At the same time a foot survey was done of the area, marking house locations and transposed onto a scaled map (see Photograph 4).



Photograph 1.
Children's group learn how to read a map

Source: Sahmakum Teang Tnaut, March 2010



Photograph 2.
Photovoice children's group

Source: Sahmakum Teang Tnaut, Feb 2009

Urban sanitation & infrastructure:

As mapping got underway meetings were also held with the community committee to look at infrastructure options. Of primary importance to the committee were improving sanitation and upgrading the access paths into the area. Only a handful of residents had a pit latrine toilet system and most were using open defecation either in the river or nearby fields. It was agreed that STT could provide the materials while the community provided labour via a community contract. Proposals were sketched up by STT based on the committee's aims and shared with a wider body of residents to get feedback and make revisions. With a budget of around 1,500US\$ the works for the two pit latrines were completed within 3 months including a management system for the new public toilet block. The management was set up with the family living adjacent to the block (see Photo 3) who signed an agreement that, in return for a fee of 5 US cents per use, they would manage the upkeep of the toilets including cleaning and providing soap for washing hands. In addition they agreed to save some of the funds for future maintenance needs and the local deputy village chief agreed to monitor the use of the toilet block and help resolve any major issues. After 3 years the block was still in operation under this system and a helpful, if small, resource for the community. By coincidence in 2011 a UN Habitat project introduced a pit latrine programme that was taken up by a number of families and further reinforced better hygiene in the village.

In 2010 a more ambitious project was proposed aimed at creating a one metre high wall along the river edge to keep out the daily tide which washed up large amounts of garbage from the main town. Again STT provided materials with individual house owners providing labour or cash for constructing their section of wall via a signed agreement. Within a 6 month period over 80 metres of wall was installed, keeping out

daily tides and improving hygiene and the environment. Above all, the infrastructure projects facilitated an open communication between STT, residents and the Sangkat and this reassured residents about the mapping project.



Photograph 3. Community toilet block with management team

Source: Sahnakum Teang Thnaut, Jan 2010



Photograph 4. First draft of community mapping

Source: Sahnakum Teang Thnaut, Feb 2010

Titling (ILTs):

With some residents absent for long periods (working in other provinces) the door to door mapping took almost a year to complete along with the scaled map. Draft versions of an ILT were then offered to residents and the Sangkat for comment and discussion and this took a further 6 months of negotiation to create the ILT document. In addition a series of sessions were carried out with residents to help explain how to read a map and what the final ILT would mean to residents. For example, children's groups were asked to colour in maps and point out where their house was. By early 2011 all 240 ILTs had been prepared and signed by both residents and most significantly, the Sangkat leader who formally handed them out to residents in a public meeting. Each family paid 50US cents for the title and the funds were used to build a small play area for toddlers at the local school.

Reflections and lessons learnt:

Options for replication: As a pilot project over 2 years the scheme had a long time frame. This was essential in building up a strong communication with residents and local authority but it may prove difficult to replicate this if the project were scaled up considerably. However the pilot project provided enough feedback to illustrate what worked well with residents and what didn't and it is entirely possible to condense the process into a 12 month cycle. Anything shorter would begin to compromise the process and be in danger of reducing it to a simple 'mapping' exercise with a token infrastructure project tacked on the end. However with adequate staffing and training the process could be rolled out across a number of communities at the same time. Above all it is a process that meaningfully engages residents and local authorities. The basic outline of the project needs endorsement from regional authorities but with this in place there is no reason why large sections of 'informal settlements' could not be mapped in this way. Indeed the Royal Government of Cambodia recently produced a [Circular](#) encouraging such a mapping process which is underway in a few areas but has yet to be adopted widely. This process provides a simple and effective way of documenting areas – providing communities with more clarity about their situation (as a documented but not legalised landowner) and local authorities with accurate information about informal settlements making, among other things, future compensation claims far easier to adjudicate and process.

លិខិតសំគាល់ទីតាំងលំនៅដ្ឋាន និង ម្ចាស់លំនៅដ្ឋាន COMMUNITY TITLE

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លេខផ្ទះ:

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All data compiled and witnessed by Cambodian NGO Sahmakum Teang Tnaut January 2011 www.teangtnaut.org

Photograph 5. Intermediate Land Title (ILT) – Daun Taok, Kampot, Cambodia

Source: Sahmakum Teang Tnaut (STT)/ Author, Jan 2011

Lessons Learnt: During the project community involvement was very positive but hopes for catalysing a longer term community interest in generating new community projects were not realised. We learnt here a familiar lesson that the provision of donor input (albeit only materials) was a key driver but once this impetus was gone the community was unwilling (or possibly unable, due to local authority restrictions) to take on their own projects. This did not affect the pilot project but was an observation by the author in the years following the project. The other significant challenge emerged from the regional authorities. While the local Sangkat leader was very supportive of the project and signed off the ILTs, the regional authority ([Ministry of Land Management, Urbanism, Planning and Construction MLMUPC](#)) rejected the idea of community titles or ILTs and refused to allow a replication of the project in the area. A presentation about the project was also made to the German Bilateral Agency GIZ, [one of the key actors in Cambodia's Land Sector](#), but again STT was not invited to further discuss ideas or options. The lesson here was that while projects may have appeal locally they can often be stymied by higher authorities. However it is important to keep testing boundaries and, in this case, establishing a successful precedent for intermediate titling that may, at some point, be revisited. On an informal visit in 2015 it was found that residents still held their documents and saw these as a valued resource either for private sale or for negotiation with the authorities in case of eviction.

Conclusion

The pilot project has significant potential to be replicated in a way that could map hundreds of remaining informal settlements in Cambodia. It still needs fine tuning but the basics are there. The process provides an authentic tenure document (albeit not a full legal document - which is not the aim of the process) plus some additional infrastructure within the community. At its most expansive it is a process that begins to open doors within the community itself in understanding its housing rights and its ability to coordinate infrastructure upgrading itself by mobilising its own skills and finance. At its most basic it provides communities with improved infrastructure and a basic form of tenure documentation. A core aspect to this process is that it provides a 'round table' approach, drawing in ideas from and giving a voice to all stakeholders. It is open about its aims (full land titles will not be provided) and does not challenge the existing authority but engages all parties. What is also apparent is that titling alone does not engage residents as effectively as adding the infrastructure element. The project illustrated that connecting tangible benefits of WASH and other upgrading is an effective vehicle for a wider discussion about ILTs. With political will (and a fraction of the funding provided by previous programmes such as LMAP) the process could be easily rolled out across the country. Political will remains the key sticking point.

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