

# Building Inclusive Climate Resilience: Perspectives of WASH Enterprises and Marginalised Households in Rural Cambodia

Partner: Thrive Networks

Country: Cambodia

Poor and vulnerable people and WASH enterprises who live and operate in Cambodia's rural areas experience all types of climate hazards, which have increased due to climate change. Floods affect latrine use and FSM effectiveness, leading to contamination of the environment and restricted access to latrines. Flooding also results in hazardous materials (e.g. pathogens, pesticides, nitrates, slurry and dung, animal carcasses) polluting the water sources, such as dug wells or stored rainwater, which many poor and disadvantaged families use. Drought affects water quality even in piped water systems and exacerbates shortage of water for those without piped water connection.

In addition to health impacts, these climate-related hazards harm the livelihoods of households living in rural areas by reducing crop yields, increasing pests, diseases and crop damage, and disrupting access to food. This has led to migration, particularly by men, to look for alternative employment, and women shifting from agricultural work to selling goods in the market.

## Building climate resilience through inclusive WASH interventions for all

Thrive Networks is carrying out a two-phase research project under a Water for Women I&I grant. The first phase assesses the impacts of climate change on access to and use of WASH services among marginalised households living in challenging environments. The activities include:

- Surveys of marginalised households and village chiefs to identify experiences related to climate hazards, vulnerabilities and adaptation responses, and the influence of sociodemographic characteristics on these experiences
- Narrative interviews with households and village chiefs, small and medium enterprises, policymakers, and health, WASH and climate change experts to elicit stories of climate-related events and share observed impacts and responses to water quality and quantity and access to and functionality of sanitation products



The effects of floods in Dang Tong village, Prasat commune, Kampong Trabek district, Prey Veng province, Cambodia.

- Capturing photos and video of the local landscape, environment and weather to combine with the participants' narratives of climate hazards.

The second phase investigates the potential role, willingness and capacities of private sector WASH operators to provide climate-resilient WASH products that can help these households to adapt to climate change impacts. The activities include:

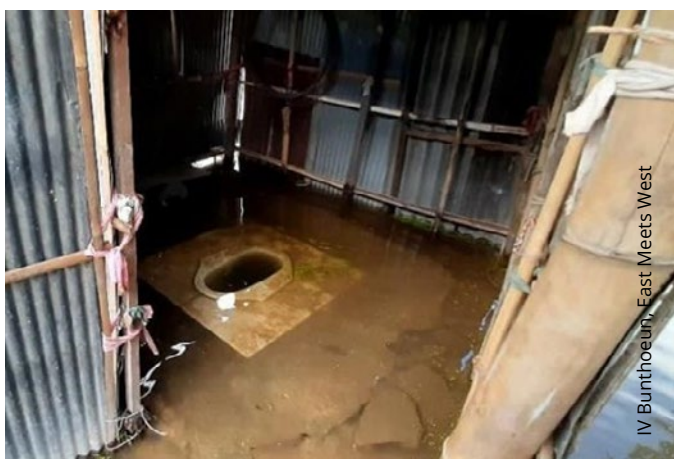
- Scenario-based field trials with WASH enterprises and households to test a set of adaptation scenarios
- The presentation of 20 hypothetical scenarios to participants, asking them to decide if they will invest in climate-resilient WASH products (yes/no) and then rank them in terms of investment preferences. Additional information about the enterprises' characteristics – such as climate change exposure, perceived responsibility for adaptation, neighbourhood relations and institutional environment – is collected through a follow-up questionnaire
- Analysing the research results to identify similarities or differences between scenarios and the characteristics of enterprises and households and their influences on decisions about investment in climate-resilient WASH products.

## Towards transformation: focusing on gender equality and social inclusion in support of climate resilience for all

The research focuses on marginalised households' lived experiences of climate hazards. Thrive Networks will examine the relationships between characteristics of marginalisation such as wealth, gender, age, disability, and cultural conditions (including gender norms) and experiences of climate hazards and adaptation responses.

The research explores the motivations and needs of WASH enterprises in delivering resilient WASH products and services for marginalised communities. It will provide evidence about the types of finance options and WASH products that the enterprises prefer and consider feasible to deliver.

Sharing findings from the research, lessons learned and recommendations and guidelines will have two impacts. First, it will strengthen the evidence base for policymakers, government agencies, enterprises and households to invest in climate-resilient WASH systems.



The effect of floods on a household latrine, Dang Tong village, Prasat commune, Kampong Trabek district, Prey Veng province, Cambodia.

Second, it will provide insights into resilient thinking and adaptive capacities and how they could be enhanced in inclusive ways within Cambodia's marginalised communities.

## Critical results for critical times: how inclusive WASH is contributing to more climate-resilient outcomes

The costs of supplying resilient WASH products are high and a critical barrier for the poor and disadvantaged households to access these adaptive measures. Enterprises thus encounter the tension between return on investment and social accountability in making decisions about providing resilient WASH services to these households. This research will uncover what it means for enterprises to see the value proposition, have the ability (financial and technological), and willingness to contribute towards collective adaptation for marginalised communities in rural Cambodia.

In addition, the research will provide and share evidence about the inherent link between sustainability, innovation, and inclusion in strengthening climate resilience for inclusive WASH in the following ways: understand how the climate vulnerabilities and resources of marginalised households and enterprises can be better accommodated and adaptive capacities enhanced (sustainability); understand which conditions enable private sector providers to deliver resilient WASH services for marginalised communities (innovation); understand the effective levers that policy makers can adopt, based on evidence, to ensure that inequality is not exacerbated by climate change through equitable adaptation measures in WASH (inclusion).

## Links

[Water for Women – Cambodia WOBA](#), [Thrive Networks](#), [Water for Women](#)