

PATH in Cambodia

A longstanding commitment to better health

CAMBODIA'S HEALTH SYSTEM WAS LARGELY DESTROYED DURING THE 1970S.

Since that time, much of the health sector's infrastructure and human resources have been rebuilt, but Cambodia still lags behind other Southeast Asian countries in many key health indicators. Good-quality health services remain beyond the reach of most Cambodians.

PATH has been a partner in the country's public health efforts since 1995. We are helping to support the reconstruction of the health system and build capacity across the public, private, and civil-society sectors. Our efforts are increasing the reach of lifesaving health interventions.

PATH is an international nonprofit organization that works to improve the health of people around the world by advancing technologies, strengthening systems, and encouraging healthy behaviors. We support new health solutions through inception, development, and testing; prepare the way for the introduction of both new and proven tools in low-resource countries; and work with governments and communities to integrate and expand the solutions that are most successful.

Collaboration is the foundation of our work. In Cambodia, we collaborate with local and international partners—including government agencies, public- and private-sector health service providers, nongovernmental organizations, United Nations agencies, and community groups—to address priority health issues.

CHILDHOOD IMMUNIZATION

PATH and the Cambodian Ministry of Health have worked together since 2001 to increase access to new and underutilized childhood vaccines. We have facilitated improvements at all levels of the health system and supported the phased introduction of critical vaccines.

Our teams take a system-wide approach to improving immunization service coverage and quality. Working at the community level, we help communicate the benefits of vaccination to families. At the district level, we help health authorities develop detailed plans for increasing the number of vaccinated children—plans that also enable upper-level managers to accurately project costs and allocate resources. At the national level, we provide technical support to the National Immunization Program—for example, by helping Cambodia develop a long-term plan for the financial sustainability of immunization services. These efforts supported significant increases in the number of Cambodian children being fully vaccinated—from 40 percent in 2000 to more than 65 percent by 2005.



Photo: Philippe Blanc



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Our work on hepatitis B, which is endemic in Cambodia, illustrates our approach. Working with the National Immunization Program, we helped make a hepatitis B vaccine, long available in developed countries, available to newborns in Cambodia as well. Our team enlisted communities' support in quickly alerting health workers to births so they could reach newborns with a birth dose of the vaccine. The vast majority of Cambodian children now have access to a vaccine protecting them from mother-to-child transmission of hepatitis B and the serious illness it can cause later in life.

PATH has also worked to reduce the impact of Japanese encephalitis (JE), a leading cause of viral neurological disease in Asia. We partnered with the Ministry of Health to conduct disease surveillance and assess the need for a newly available JE vaccine. We also supported studies on disability among JE survivors and vaccine cost-effectiveness in Cambodia. The resulting data informed government decisions regarding introduction of the vaccine. Today, the new vaccine is available to children in three Cambodian provinces. To date, more than 50,000 children have been vaccinated against the disease.

REPRODUCTIVE AND CHILD HEALTH

PATH develops innovative approaches to reaching women and children with critical health interventions. For example, our public-private mix (PPM) model offers a new way to increase access to important health services. Because staff at private pharmacies are seen as some of the most accessible, discreet, and customer-oriented health providers in Cambodia, PATH works to increase their capacity. We have trained private pharmacy staff and developed referral networks to public-sector reproductive and child health services in five Cambodian provinces and the municipality of Phnom Penh. This sustainable model responds to the realities of Cambodia's citizens as well as its health care system. It also increases timely access to services for diarrhea, childhood pneumonia, unintended pregnancy, emergency and ongoing contraception, and sexually transmitted infections.

We also work with Cambodia's Ministry of Health to reduce diarrheal disease and childhood pneumonia, partnering with the public sector to address the two leading causes of death and illness among children under five. To help bring integrated approaches into widespread use, PATH is helping the Ministry of Health to update relevant policies and technical guidelines and to develop comprehensive plans for initiatives that will prevent and treat the diseases. The partnership emphasizes coordinating and scaling up new technologies; revitalizing proven interventions; preparing for the introduction of vaccines, such as those against rotavirus and pneumococcal disease; and exploring community case management.



Photo: Philippe Blanc



Photo: Heng Chhovan

Because an estimated 80 percent of Cambodia's rural population does not have access to safe water, PATH is also working in the water and sanitation field to reduce the burden of diarrheal disease. Leveraging PATH's experience with the private commercial sector, we are exploring how commercial enterprises can produce, distribute, and maintain good-quality household water treatment and storage products designed and priced for low-income families. We are also investigating ways to develop and introduce appropriate and affordable health technologies, such as a redesigned ceramic water pot. We are investigating similar approaches for the introduction of appropriate sanitation technologies.

TUBERCULOSIS, MALARIA, AND HIV/AIDS

Another critical part of PATH's work is alleviating the burden of major infectious diseases in Cambodia, including tuberculosis (TB), malaria, and HIV/AIDS. To address TB, we have been collaborating with the National Tuberculosis Program, using our PPM approach to strengthen the capacity of partners at all levels and to integrate the approach into activities and programs. The model is now implemented in 11 of Cambodia's 24 provinces. By the end of 2010, approximately 1,750 private providers, the majority of whom were pharmacy staff, were actively participating in the network of TB care providers.

Based on this success, Cambodia's National Center for Parasitology, Entomology, and Malaria asked PATH to pilot a similar effort for malaria. To help prevent and contain artemisinin-resistant malarial parasites along the Cambodia-Thailand border, we are working to improve malaria diagnosis, treatment, referrals, and data collection in the

private sector. These activities extend beyond private pharmacies, reaching private clinicians as well as informal and unregistered health care providers. The project will generate a tested and documented model, along with associated tools, to inform scale up of malaria PPM initiatives.

PATH's presence in neighboring countries, particularly Thailand and Vietnam, allows us to play a vital role in cross-border initiatives that target infectious disease. The PROMDAN project, for example, focused on HIV prevention among migrant laborers crossing from Cambodia into Thailand. During its 10-year history, this collaboration with Cambodian Women for Peace and Development provided education, family support, and advocacy that addressed the underlying issues that make migrants and their families vulnerable to HIV.

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PATH is an international nonprofit organization that creates sustainable, culturally relevant solutions, enabling communities worldwide to break longstanding cycles of poor health. By collaborating with diverse public- and private-sector partners, PATH helps provide appropriate health technologies and vital strategies that change the way people think and act. PATH's work improves global health and well-being.

Headquartered in Seattle, Washington, PATH currently works in more than 70 countries in the areas of health technologies, maternal and child health, reproductive health, vaccines and immunization, and emerging and epidemic diseases.

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