

After nearly two years of no visitors Cambodia began opening up in November without any quarantine restrictions to vaccinated guests. Siem Reap airport welcomed its first international flight in December.

Cambodia vaulted to second place in January, from 22<sup>nd</sup> in December, according to the latest edition of Nikkei's COVID-19 Recovery Index\* after the Southeast Asian nation declared it would start to live with coronavirus about three months ago.

The Index assesses countries and regions on infection management, vaccine rollouts and social mobility. The higher the ranking, the closer a place is to recovery, characterized by fewer infections, bigger inoculation rates and less-strict social distancing measures. The latest ranking reflects conditions as of the end of January.



Cambodia has been steadily climbing the ladder in recent months. It recorded fewer than 1,000 cases in January and saw no COVID deaths for a month.

The country's early success in managing the coronavirus, with under 500 reported cases and no deaths one year into the pandemic, was upended by a major outbreak that started in February 2021. That continued for much of last year and strained the underfunded public health system, triggering widespread lockdowns.

\* *The Nikkei COVID-19 Recovery Index, a service of Nikkei Asia Japan, ranks more than 120 countries and regions on infection management, vaccine rollouts and social mobility at the end of each month.*

Nevertheless, Cambodia pressed ahead with its inoculation drive, relying mainly on Chinese-made vaccines. By November 2021, it had surpassed its vaccination target, prompting an order for a full reopening. Later that month, Cambodia became one of the first Southeast Asian nations to exempt fully vaccinated travelers from quarantine.

According to a World Health Organization report dated Jan. 24, 2022 98.5% of Cambodia's adults and 96.8% of children aged 5 or above had received two doses, while nearly half the adult population had been given a booster shot as well. The same report said about 85% of the 43.5 million vaccine doses the country had received were purchased from or donated by China.

This successful management of COVID-19 enabled *Water for Cambodia* board members Lisa Horrocks, International Executive Director, and Dr. Chris Van Hemelrijck, Board Chairman to again journey to Cambodia. Their visit allowed them to observe the accomplishments of the past two years and to evaluate performance and local conditions. They were able to meet several local partners, visit villages where the field staff have been engaged in a major filter and latrine installation as well as meet one on one with each member of the team. Direct personal visits to Cambodia by board members to engage on a first-hand basis has formed a part of the organizational strategy from the beginning.

Among the partner meetings that Chris and Lisa always look forward to is a day touring



joint projects with the Rotarians from Pursat, a city on the West shore of Tonle Sap Lake about 5 hours drive from Siem Reap. *Water for Cambodia* has partnered with the Pursat Rotary Club on several significant projects to date. This year they visited the most recent Rotary supported endeavor located in the very remote Varin District. This undertaking is bringing over 500 filters to individual homes and schools as well as building

extraordinary healthy clean and functional latrines with hand washing stations at seven local schools. Funding for this project was provided by The Rotary Foundation and local Rhode Island based clubs from Middletown, Wakefield, East Greenwich, Nantucket plus Pursat Rotary in Cambodia.

***Water for Cambodia*** recognizes the importance of preserving and improving source water to ensuring community health and promoting personal hygiene. Elimination of open defecation, a common practice in rural Cambodia, is essential to achieving success.



Changing traditional long held community practices have often been most successful by introducing them first to the children. Thousands of families have been encouraged by their children, introduced to bio-sand filters at school, to pursue getting one for their home. Following this logic, ***Water for Cambodia*** began building latrines at schools in many communes in Siem Reap in 2017. This has resulted in a growing community demand for latrines at home and has drawn

emerging interest from the Provincial Government. Today there are nearly 450 latrines built at both schools and homes with many more planned.

The new latrines at the schools are designed to provide the first separate facilities for boys and girls that these children have experienced. Prior to this the school latrines were the “bushes out back”. Each is designed and built under the critical eye of MEAS Samley ***Water for Cambodia’s*** WASH coordinator and each includes a hand washing station. Samley brings more than ten years of experience planning and constructing water treatment and sanitation facilities to the projects.





Agriculture is a key part of Cambodia's economy... ***Water for Cambodia*** has received a donation to introduce pesticide testing to the lab's capabilities. It will enable local farmers to certify their mangos for export... a step towards improved economic health.

Most farms in rural Cambodia are not GAP (Good Agricultural Practices) certified, and farmers do not track and monitor pesticide applications adequately. ***The lack of GAP farms and monitoring means there is an extremely high likelihood the foods grown in Cambodia would test positive for trace residues and banned chemicals preventing export sales and endangering health at home.***



Currently there are no laboratories in Cambodia conducting this indispensable testing. Upon learning of this need, ***Water for Cambodia*** expressed a willingness and interest in filling this gap. This resulted in a grant to purchase the required equipment and testing kits to begin conducting GAP certification of local mango crops.



This added service will provide small local farmers the ability to certify their harvest for export. During the peak season for Mangos (May thru September) certified pesticide free fruit will bring nearly twice the price per kilogram and open greater market opportunities. Cambodian growers with certified product have a large ready market in nearby Vietnam.

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