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**LOCAL ACTION WITH INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION TO IMPROVE AND  
SUSTAIN WATER, SANITATION AND HYGIENE SERVICES**

**Building local capacity to promote sanitation:  
Vietnam and Cambodia**

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*Drawing on experience implementing market-based sanitation programs in seven countries, this paper describes iDE's insights into building local capacity to promote sanitation in two different contexts: the increasingly market-oriented planned economy of Vietnam and open market Cambodia. In both countries, iDE leverages an understanding of partner and stakeholder barriers and motivations, applies continuous coaching, and uses a variety of incentives to convert learning into practical action. With an emphasis on creating sustainable, scalable change and adapting to ever-changing market conditions, to date these two programs have facilitated the sale of almost 300,000 improved latrines to rural households.*

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## **Introduction**

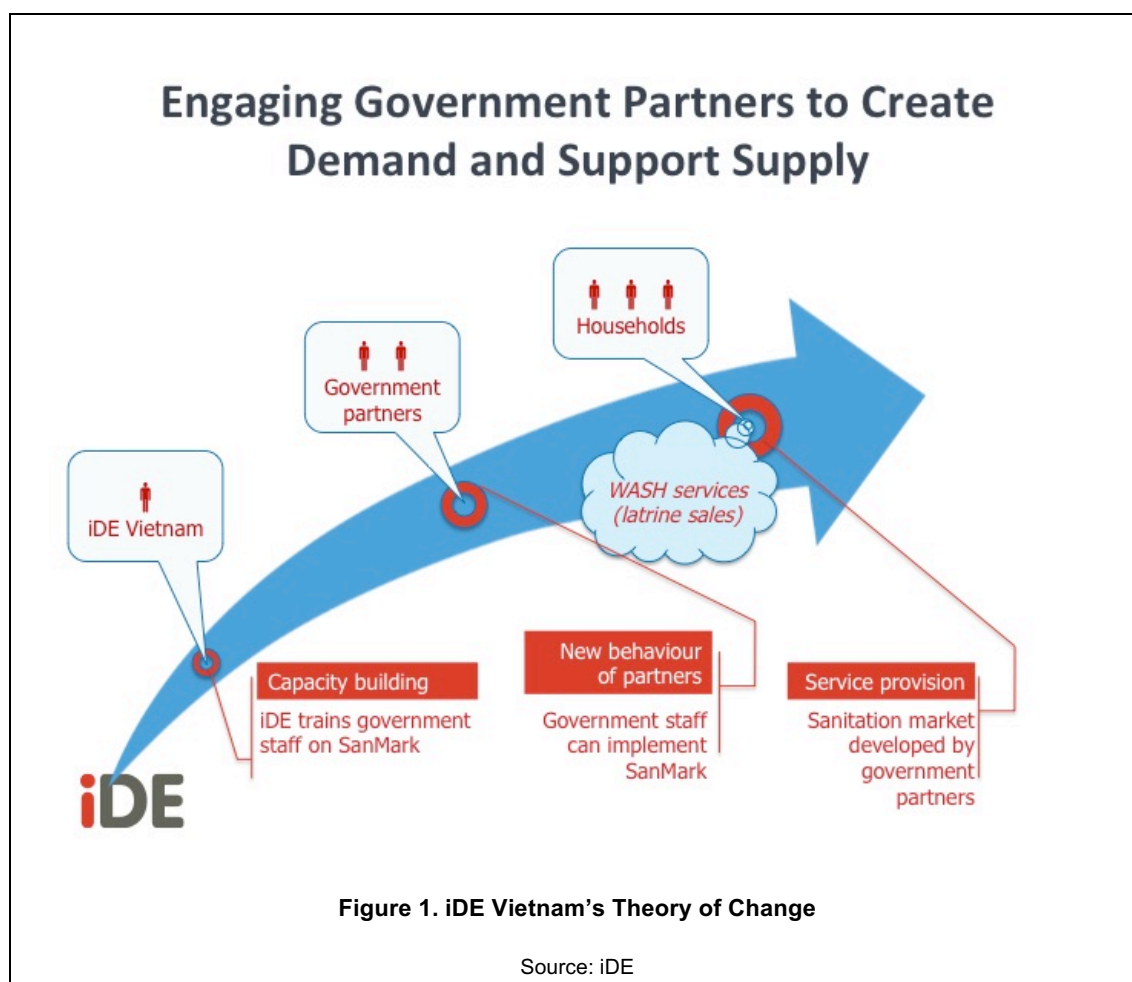
iDE implements WASH market development programming in seven countries in Africa and Asia. Market conditions, local stakeholders, and the enabling environment are different in each country. This paper describes iDE's market-based capacity building efforts in two different contexts, Vietnam and Cambodia. In Vietnam, iDE trains government partners to implement market-based sanitation programming; these partners are responsible for building demand for sanitation and hygiene among rural households and training service providers to produce and install hygienic latrines. iDE Cambodia engages directly with market actors, providing business and technical training to sanitation entrepreneurs and training local sales agents to sell hygienic latrines to rural customers. In both countries, iDE uses a strong understanding of partner and stakeholder motivations to foster a sense of local ownership over sanitation problems and solutions, then applies continuous coaching techniques to ensure that learning leads to sustainable and lasting impact.

## **Vietnam**

WHO/UNICEF statistics show that 30 per cent of rural households in Vietnam still do not have access to an improved latrine. The Vietnamese government has a strong involvement in WASH and has adopted a strategy of engaging the private sector in order to reach 100 per cent coverage by 2030. When it comes to sanitation and hygiene, rural households trust the advice and guidance provided through government entities. Therefore, iDE leverages the influence of government partners (provincial and district representatives from the Women's Union and Centre for Preventive Medicine) to increase sanitation access and hygiene in rural areas through a market-based approach called Sanitation Marketing. Under its current DFAT-funded project, iDE trains these partners on how to speak with rural households about latrines and handwashing, as well as how to engage with private sector latrine producers. In turn, these partners train staff at the commune and hamlet levels. This approach (training of trainers) creates a broad grassroots network to lead hand hygiene and sanitation promotion efforts among rural households.

Taking a market-based approach to sanitation and hygiene is very new to local government partners. While the national and provincial government staff were familiar with market-based approaches, many at the district and commune level were sceptical that households would purchase latrines without subsidy. iDE's first task was to demonstrate to government partners how Sanitation Marketing can increase adoption of hygienic latrines and achieve sanitation targets. The team developed ways to show partners that Sanitation

Marketing could be effective, including exposure visits and testimonials from partners working with other iDE projects. Additionally, many government partners wanted to increase sanitation coverage, but did not feel it was appropriate for government to be involved in latrine sales. iDE emphasised to partners the difference between traditional marketing (focused on product features) and the consultative sales approach of Sanitation Marketing (focused on solutions to customer needs) to help them feel more comfortable speaking with households and selling improved latrines.



Next, program staff identified key interventions for partners that matched the capacity and resources of government staff and were simple and effective enough to be replicated and scaled. To assess whether provincial/district partners are ready to begin training lower level staff and managing Sanitation Marketing activities, iDE uses a method developed by Whitten and Roy Partnership (WRP) called RACE™ (Results = Attitude + Competency + Effort).

#### **Attitude: Are partners willing to fulfil their roles?**

iDE identified motivations and barriers of partners that might impact their attitude while implementing activities; in the case of iDE's current project, each partner has very different motivations. For example, the Centre for Preventive Medicine has a WASH mandate from the government, while the Women's Union supports WASH because it is considered a women's issue. Similarly, it is important to understand the strengths of each partner. While the Centre for Preventive Medicine has technical expertise and is viewed as a credible source of technical information about latrines, the Women's Union has a deep reach at the commune and village level, as well as experience implementing village and door-to-door promotional campaigns.

At the same time, many partner staff initially wanted to see quick wins, not understanding that it would take time to become competent at consultative sales and promotion. To keep partners engaged, iDE

introduced per diems to support activities, encouraged regular recognition from superiors and peers, and created opportunities to demonstrate that Sanitation Marketing can have an impact (seeing is believing). High performing communes and government partner staff are regularly acknowledged and rewarded at project meetings to encourage them and their peers to remain focused in future activities. Additionally, iDE shares progress reports with higher levels of government since recognition and praise from higher-ups helps motivate partners to achieve strong results.

### **Competency: Are partners able to fulfil their roles?**

The government's traditional approach to sanitation and hygiene is to focus on health messaging. However, knowledge of health issues does not always spur action. In a 2016 survey conducted by iDE, 58 per cent of respondents had a good understanding of hand hygiene, and 69 per cent have handwashing facilities, but only 8 per cent reported washing hands frequently. In order to increase demand for improved sanitation and foster hygiene behaviour change, iDE trains government partners to focus on the user's needs, wants, and problems, rather than health messaging. Getting households to think about the convenience and status of having an improved latrine, or believing that the majority of their neighbours wash their hands, can be powerful motivators.

Additionally, the government does not typically engage with sanitation service providers (masons and concrete latrine ring producers). Nor does the government provide training on hygienic latrine designs or any kind of technical support to producers. iDE has identified producers' lack of technical knowledge as a barrier to increasing sanitation access among the poor – producers are often unaware of more affordable latrine designs or ways to upgrade existing latrines to more hygienic models, keeping prices high. To address this issue, iDE guides partners in training producers to build lower-cost latrines and select latrine technologies suitable for different climates and geographic conditions. Partners at the provincial and district level receive this training and in turn, provide training to their staff at the commune level. Recently, government partners began to use training materials developed by iDE to train producers outside iDE's project areas, indicating an opportunity for greater scale and impact.

Beyond classroom training, iDE observes partner staff while they implement activities, providing them immediate feedback on how to improve training delivery, use consultative sales skills, and focus on selling to problems that households experience, rather than health messages. In order to build lasting competence, partners spend the majority of their training time learning by doing, with iDE providing feedback and reinforcement as needed. As part of the program, provincial and district partners also provide annual refresher training to all commune-level staff, with support from iDE.

### **Effort: Are partners fulfilling their roles? Are latrine sales increasing?**

The program aims to make it easy for partners to fulfil their roles. Program staff help set annual goals, help partners define a work plan, and provide training on project management skills so partners can effectively manage their time and ensure accountability of commune-level staff. iDE also provides continuous training and coaching support to government partners for the life of the project.

Before the project began, there was no formal training for masons in rural areas – they learned from their neighbours and other masons. Today, government partners train masons in 142 communes to install septic tanks and concrete latrine rings correctly. They also advise producers on how to advertise their products and services to attract new customers. Partners are now providing additional support to low-performing government sales agents and coaching them on consultative selling.

### **Results**

In a recent interview, a government partner described how her approach to sanitation promotion changed through iDE's support and training. *"Before, when I talked about having a latrine, I would talk about having one to avoid diseases. Now, I listen more to people to know what problems they face and give them advice. I also help commune health staff with latrine promotion. We train masons and ring producers. Before, we never worked with them, let alone trained them! I learned all of this from the project!"* The latest data from iDE's Salesforce-based Management Information System shows that as of January 2017, government partners have sold over 39,000 latrines to rural customers using aspirational messages developed by iDE Vietnam. Partners also reported delivering hand hygiene education to 109,000 people under the current project.

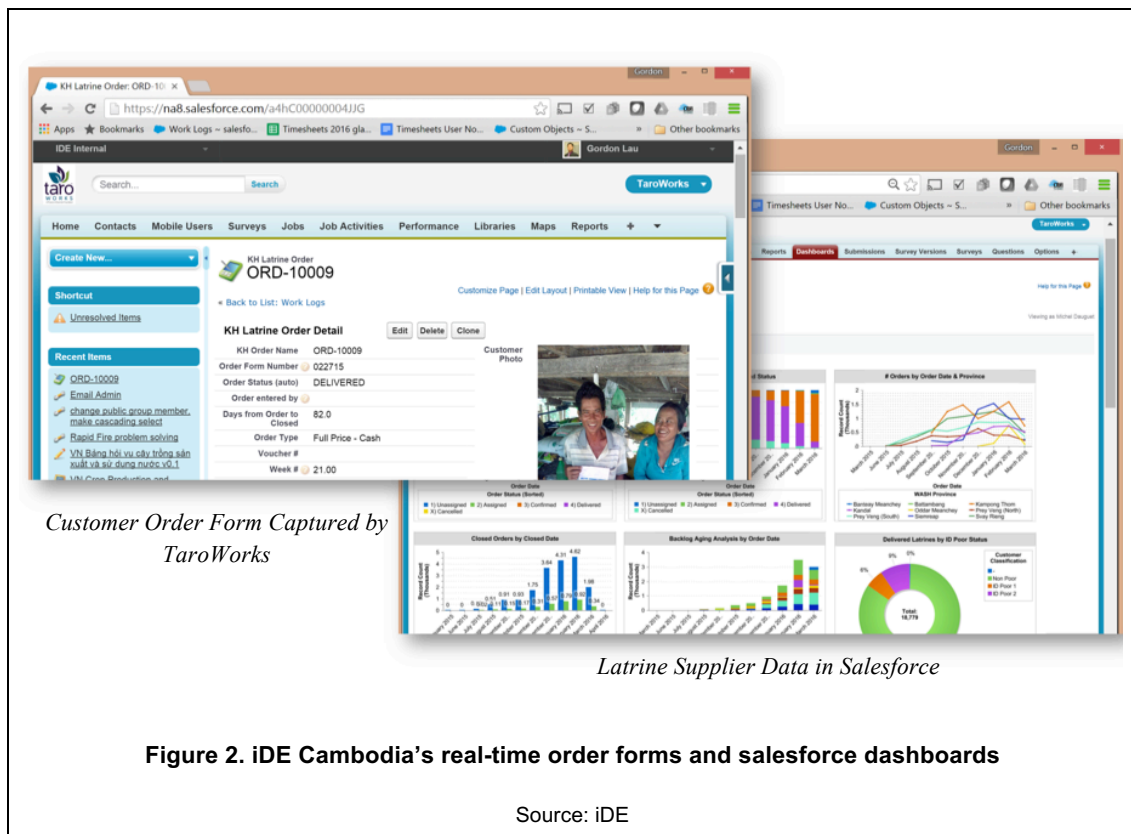
## Cambodia

In Cambodia, iDE takes a more hands-on approach to building sanitation market capacity. Through its Sanitation Marketing program, iDE Cambodia has facilitated the sale of over 250,000 latrines to rural households since 2009, with 23 per cent of current purchases being made by government-identified poor households as tracked in Salesforce. Additionally, iDE’s 2016 latrine count survey shows latrine coverage in iDE’s project areas is outpacing targets set under the Cambodian Government’s National Action Plan for Sanitation, especially important given that the WHO estimates that 70 per cent of rural Cambodians still lack access to an improved latrine. To achieve these results, iDE builds capacity of entrepreneurs (often concrete producers and masons who were not initially working in sanitation) and sales staff in rural Cambodia to generate demand for improved sanitation and supply hygienic latrines.

### Training local businesses

The program currently engages with 109 independent entrepreneurs in 7 provinces to sell and install hygienic, affordable, and aspirational latrines in rural areas. iDE also provides business skills training and advises entrepreneurs on how to engage with customers. Following the initial training, iDE Cambodia staff contact the entrepreneurs weekly to ensure latrine orders are processed in a timely manner and provide guidance to address emerging issues. Businesses analysis from the last end of project report shows that 90 per cent of active entrepreneurs are profitable.

The continuous coaching combined with real-time data from a mobile sales application feeding into a cloud database (TaroWorks and Salesforce) allows iDE to quickly identify when entrepreneurs encounter obstacles or delays. For example, sales data recently showed an increasing supplier backlog (orders placed but not yet delivered) caused by customers postponing or cancelling latrine orders before delivery to avoid having to pay the balance of the latrine cost upon delivery. However, the business owners were not taking steps to dissuade customers from postponing or cancelling their orders because they did not understand the opportunity cost of lost business. In response, iDE developed a training to strengthen the businesses’ ability to address client requests to postpone or cancel delivery. District Supply Chain Coordinators employed by iDE taught the entrepreneurs how to calculate the cost created by order cancellations and provided them a "Delivery Call Script" to use when calling clients to arrange a delivery date.



### **Sales academy**

In addition to engaging local businesses, iDE recruits and trains local sales agents to sell improved latrines. These agents receive a stipend to cover transportation expenses and earn a commission on every latrine order. Sales is a difficult job anywhere, and selling sanitation in rural Cambodia is even more challenging given that customers may not always recognise the importance of having an improved latrine or understand the impact poor sanitation can have on their health and household finances.

In 2016, iDE introduced a new concept to strengthen capacity of local sales agents – the Sales Academy. Similar to iDE Vietnam, iDE Cambodia takes a training of trainers approach to run the Academy. iDE’s partner, WRP, trained iDE’s National Sales Academy Manager and two Regional Sales Trainers. These staff are responsible for delivering weekly training to new sales agents as well as regular refresher training to existing sales agents and District Sales Leaders. To date, the Academy has trained 320 sales agents and helped decrease turnover among sales agents, since the ongoing training and coaching allows them to become competent sellers more quickly.

### **Incentives**

Because iDE is focused on developing local markets for WASH products and services, it is critical that staff think like a business, rather than a typical NGO. Operationally, iDE Cambodia takes a business approach to managing staff, using financial incentives to encourage the program team to reach and exceed targets. For example, iDE’s sales management team receives a bonus for exceeding targets for the number of improved latrines installed in a given time period. In order to hit the target, sales managers continuously coach and mentor their front-line sales agents, working through challenges and providing regular feedback to improve performance. There are similar incentives for teams supporting supply chain development.

The incentives program is constantly evolving as iDE learns how best to motivate staff to achieve results without causing unintended effects, such as sales staff prioritising bulk sales to NGOs over sales to individual households or prioritising cash sales over more complicated and time-consuming sales on credit. iDE’s monitoring and evaluation team regularly spot checks reported latrine sales and installations to guard against fraud. iDE has found that incentives, when clearly communicated and well-defined, significantly contribute to staff engagement in their roles and lead staff to exert greater effort to build capacity among the teams they oversee.

In addition to incentives for staff and commissions for sales agents, Village Chiefs are also motivated to assist with latrine sales because they receive a nominal commission on each sale, coming out of the sale’s profit margin. This commission ensures that Village Chiefs help promote upcoming sales presentations and can apply additional “social pressure” on families who have placed a latrine order but are delaying delivery and installation. iDE also provides District Sales Leaders a small amount monthly (\$10 USD) to sponsor lunch and social activities with Village and Commune Chiefs. This informal relationship is key to village-level Sanitation Marketing buy-in and is an efficient way to inform local government of program activities.

### **Conclusions and lessons learned**

The examples discussed here show how iDE has implemented programs to build local capacity to address sanitation challenges in two very different contexts – working through the government in Vietnam and directly engaging entrepreneurs and sales agents in Cambodia. Despite the differences in programmatic approach, some overall lessons have emerged from efforts to build sustainable sanitation markets and work through local stakeholders and partners.

### **Understand partner and stakeholder motivations**

Understanding barriers and motivations of partners and stakeholders is critical to designing effective capacity building efforts. While contributing to a social good may motivate government partners, iDE Vietnam has seen that government staff perceive sales as an inappropriate role for themselves; therefore, iDE emphasises the consultative nature of Sanitation Marketing and trains partners to structure sales conversations around household needs rather than product features. In Cambodia, even through entrepreneurs are aware of the lack of rural sanitation options and may be interested in helping address this issue, iDE has seen that they are more likely to offer improved sanitation products and services once they are convinced it can be profitable.

### **Foster local ownership of problems and solutions**

Sustainable change is fostered by a sense of local ownership of problems and solutions, rather than asking partners and stakeholders to follow a plan prescribed by an NGO or donor. iDE encourages local ownership by working with government staff to define annual targets for increased latrine coverage, asking sales agents to think about what they will do with increased income from sanitation sales, and helping entrepreneurs understand the time and opportunity cost of high rates of latrine order cancellations.

### **Provide continuous coaching**

iDE has learned that continuous coaching and reinforcement is necessary to make new learning a habit. By offering immediate feedback after government partner trainings in Vietnam, regular refresher trainings to sales agents through Cambodia's Sales Academy, and weekly coaching calls with Cambodian sanitation entrepreneurs, iDE continuously strengthens local capacity to address rural sanitation gaps. Moreover, through ongoing coaching, iDE is able to help government partners, sanitation businesses, and sales agents identify issues as they arise and work together to develop and implement solutions that are feasible and sustainable in the local market context.

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### **Acknowledgements**

iDE Vietnam and Cambodia drew on management concepts from the Whitten and Roy Partnership (WRP) to inform capacity building, coaching efforts, and incentives planning.

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