

# Engaging Stakeholders to Improve Water Security in Cambodia's Stung Chinit Basin

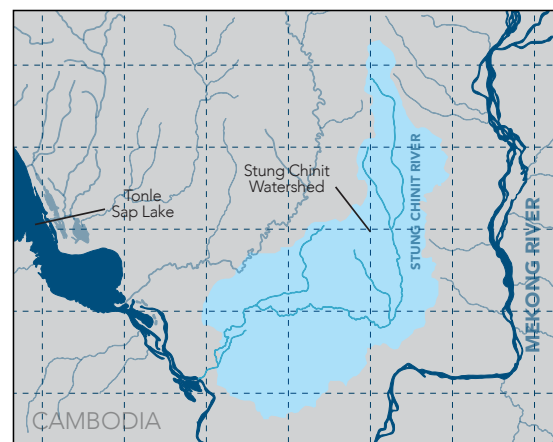
## A WATER SECURITY CASE STUDY



### Challenge: Protecting water resources and livelihoods in Cambodia's Stung Chinit Basin

Cambodia's Stung Chinit basin, located primarily in Kampong Thom Province, is home to more than 500,000 people, with nearly 30 percent living in poverty. The Stung Chinit River is a major tributary of the Tonle Sap Lake, the country's largest and most important lake for water supply, food security, biodiversity, and economic activities. Agriculture and fishing are key sources of income for basin residents, with rice accounting for 80 percent of crop production, and many smallholders also producing cash crops.

Increasing use of agrochemicals, land use changes, and climate change are contributing to declining water quality and depletion of water supplies, threatening health and livelihoods and creating conflicts among water users throughout the basin.







WSI CHAMPIONS RECEIVE TRAINING ON COMMUNITY ORGANIZING, KAMPONG THOM PROVINCE, APRIL 2018

## Intervention: Engaging stakeholders through the Water Security Improvement process

In 2017 the USAID-funded Sustainable Water Partnership (SWP) initiated a four-year activity in the Stung Chinit basin to build resilience to growing water security risks using SWP's stakeholder-driven [Water Security Improvement \(WSI\) process](#) (Figure 1). The WSI process is built on the premise that effective stakeholder engagement is necessary to ensure that local water security dynamics are thoroughly understood, water user needs are equitably addressed, and water security actions are sustainable over time. This case study examines how SWP successfully engaged stakeholders at each stage in the WSI process, resulting in the creation of a Strategic Action Plan reflecting the water security priorities of all stakeholders in the basin.

FIGURE 1: SWP'S WATER SECURITY IMPROVEMENT PROCESS



## Water Security Stakeholder Analysis

When SWP began working in the Stung Chinit basin, water resource management efforts were focused on irrigated agriculture. The WSI process provided a framework for broadening this focus by involving a more diverse group of stakeholders and water users. Under Step 1 of the WSI process, SWP conducted an inventory of water security stakeholders in the basin (Table 1). SWP conducted focus groups and interviews to understand stakeholder perceptions of the availability of, access to, and safe use of water for health, livelihoods, and ecosystems in the basin. This analysis revealed several key stakeholder groups in the basin who had been under-represented in water resource management efforts. For example, downstream community fishing groups depend on a sufficient volume and quality of water in streams to support fishing.

## Local Water Security Champions

To facilitate equitable representation of community-level stakeholders and ensure consideration of a broad range of water user needs in the WSI process, SWP launched a local WSI champions initiative. Thirty community and commune leaders, including 17 women, identified through the stakeholder analysis were invited to participate in water security training and represent their community or commune in WSI meetings. SWP provided trainings on leadership, community development, project planning and management, budgeting and financial management, and conflict resolution. The trainings built the capacity of the champions to help guide the subsequent steps in the WSI process, including assessing water risks and planning and implementing water security actions. SWP profiled [three women leaders](#) who used their training to speak up about agrochemical pollution and sanitation problems in their communities.

**TABLE 1. STAKEHOLDER INVENTORY OF THE STUNG CHINIT WATERSHED**

COMMUNITY-BASED WATER USER GROUPS		PRIVATE SECTOR WATER USER GROUPS		WATER SECTOR INSTITUTIONS	
NAME	QUANTITY	NAME	QUANTITY	LEVEL OF GOVERNMENT	QUANTITY
Farmer Water User Committees	12	Private Water Operators	11	National Ministries	8
Community Forestry Groups	11	Economic Land Concessions	6	Provincial Departments	7
Muslim communities	2				
Community Fishery Groups	14	Rice Mills	8	Stung Chinit River Basin Management Committee	53 members (provincial line departments, district commune and community representatives)
Agricultural Cooperatives	23	Family-run rubber plantations	18	Kampong Thom Districts	4
Water-Related Civil Society Organizations	4	Industrial Agriculture Plantations (rubber, cashew, acacia)	13	Kampong Thom Communes	30



## Engaging Stakeholders In A Water Risk Assessment

Under Step 2 of the WSI process, SWP worked closely with stakeholders on a water risk assessment that included a seasonal water quality survey, biodiversity evaluation, water balance calculation, and Water Evaluation and Planning (WEAP) model for the basin. SWP conducted a basin-wide household Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) survey on stakeholder capacity, interests, and vulnerabilities related to water security and water resource management. SWP also organized a series of workshops to solicit stakeholder inputs to the WEAP model (Box 1). The workshops helped stakeholders understand the causes and impacts of water security risks and increased their knowledge of basin hydrology. The workshops also allowed stakeholders to identify and prioritize upstream, midstream, and downstream water risks for future intervention.

## Assisting Stakeholders to Prepare Water Security Plans of Intervention

Under Step 3 of the WSI process, SWP assisted the WSI champions to form working groups around the priority water security risks they had identified:

- Upstream Environmental Degradation
- Agricultural Pollution
- Irrigation and Reservoir Management and Operation
- Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene (WASH)

SWP and the WSI champions recruited additional members from across the basin to participate in the working groups, including government officials from the provincial, district, and commune levels, as well as representatives of Farmer Water User Communities, Community Forestry groups, and Community Fishery groups. Each working group held a series

### 1. STAKEHOLDER PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPING A WATER EVALUATION AND PLANNING MODEL

SWP and the Stockholm Environment Institute (SEI) brought together local leaders and provincial authorities for training on Robust Decision Support, an analytical framework which helps groups identify robust strategies to meet goals in the face of critical uncertainties. SEI used the current and future vulnerabilities and risks identified by stakeholders in this training to create a WEAP model for the Stung Chinit basin. SWP then trained central government decision-makers to use the WEAP model to evaluate the current and future vulnerabilities of water resources in the watershed.



THE WASH WORKING GROUP OF THE SC-RBMC BRAINSTORMS ON WATER SECURITY RISKS DURING TRAINING ON ROBUST DECISION SUPPORT, KAMPONG THOM PROVINCE, DECEMBER 2018

of workshops to draft and validate Plans of Intervention, which detailed proposed water security interventions, timelines, and budgets to address the key water security risks. The Plans prioritized 'quick-win,' community-level projects which could show results within two to three months using a relatively small budget (approximately US \$2,000). The quick-win projects, including 20 water security and WASH awareness-raising and clean-up events in communes across the basin, increased stakeholder buy-in by countering the widespread view that water security interventions would be expensive and time consuming. The Plans of Intervention also included larger, one to three year interventions such as gray and green infrastructure; policy, regulatory, and institutional improvements; and social and behavioral change.

## Stung Chinit River Basin Management Committee

After working together to identify water security risks and develop interventions to address them, there was general consensus among stakeholders that the basin needed a centrally coordinated water security platform. The Vice-Governor of Kampong Thom province actively supported the formation of a basin-wide platform because he saw the benefit of continuing to integrate input from a broad range of stakeholders. SWP facilitated the creation of the Stung

Chinit River Basin Management Committee (SC-RBMC), which was signed into law by the governor of Kampong Thom province in April 2019. The SC-RBMC's role is to establish basin management guidelines, investigate and report on priority and emerging water security risks, and communicate their actions and findings to the general public. The SC-RBMC is coordinated by a Secretariat of provincial government leaders, which is responsible for daily operations. Members include representatives of district and commune authorities, non-governmental organizations, Farmer Water User Communities, community forestry groups, and community fishery groups, who participate in working groups and regular meetings of the SC-RBMC.

With support from SWP, a Task Force selected by the Secretariat led the development of the Strategic Action Plan (SAP) in consultation with the SC-RBMC members and the Secretariat. SWP facilitated three workshops with the Task Force to discuss the objectives, prepare the final outline, agree on priority actions, and validate the final draft. The SAP presents targeted actions, many of which came from the working group Plans of Intervention, that can be implemented to help improve water security and climate resilience in the basin. It outlines actions to strengthen the capacity of the SC-RBMC and its members, identifies potential funding sources, and defines monitoring and evaluation procedures.



SWP CAMBODIA'S STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SPECIALIST PRESENTS TO THE SC-RBMC ON PLAN OF IMPLEMENTATION ACHIEVEMENTS, KAMPONG THOM PROVINCE, APRIL 2019

## Lessons Learned

SWP's emphasis on stakeholder engagement throughout the WSI process in the Stung Chinit basin yielded strong local buy-in and participation. Key lessons learned about stakeholder engagement include:

Stakeholder engagement benefits from a focus on specific problems. The four working groups formed around priority water risks in the Stung Chinit effectively channeled stakeholder inputs into action plans.

Identifying and training local water security champions is an effective way to increase gender equality and social inclusion in the WSI process. Skills training and mentoring provided to WSI champions in the Stung Chinit basin boosted their confidence participating in WSI meetings at every step of the process, enabling them to be active participants. As a result, the basin SAP includes water security priorities representing a wide range of stakeholders.

Implementing low-cost, "quick-win" water security activities builds trust among stakeholders and can motivate replication. The WASH awareness-raising and clean-up events implemented by the WASH working group were replicated by the Stung Chinit East FWUC and the Baray District Administration, mobilizing hundreds of people.



### ABOUT THIS SERIES

This case study is part of a series of products of approaches under the Water Security Improvement (WSI) process. This series is produced by USAID's Sustainable Water Partnership (SWP) activity and can be found here: [www.swpwater.org](http://www.swpwater.org).

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