

Urgent Need for Comprehensive Waste Management Solutions in Cambodia

Paper identifies critical market failures in rural areas and explores opportunities for possible interventions

PHNOM PENH, CAMBODIA, March 8, 2024 /EINPresswire.com/ -- Cambodia urgently needs to improve the way it manages solid waste in rural areas to ensure a cleaner, healthier, and more economically sustainable future, according to a comprehensive new white paper, released by international nonprofit iDE (International Development Enterprises).



Solid Waste Management Markets in Rural Cambodia identifies critical solid waste management market failures in rural areas of the country and explores opportunities for possible interventions by iDE and relevant players in the sector. Solid waste such as plastic and food waste is generated by households, businesses and institutions, and from public places such as streets and parks.

The white paper says an absence of residential waste collection services in rural Cambodia has led to unsustainable and harmful waste disposal practices, as waste is burned, buried, or openly dumped. A large amount of waste is entering the Tonle Sap Lake, the largest freshwater lake in Southeast Asia, the paper says.

Led by iDE Cambodia and the iDE Innovation Lab, with financial support partly from the European Union, Save the Children, and iDE's Paul Polak Innovation Fund, the white paper assessed selected districts adjacent to the lake in the provinces of Kampong Chhnang, Pursat, and Siem Reap. iDE is working on solid waste management in the area, as part of the broader GREEN project.

The paper says the situation could deteriorate further as waste generation in Cambodia is expected to increase significantly, from 0.78kg (2020) to 2.13kg (2050) per person per day.

Currently, waste generated annually by households in the Kampong Chhnang, Pursat and Siem Reap is estimated at 125, 331, and 316 tons, respectively.

However, the paper describes opportunities to meet these challenges, presenting evidence of existing demand for improved solid waste management services among rural communities. The paper says a significant percentage of households want waste collection services and are willing to pay for them. Some 69 percent of all households canvassed had cash on hand and were willing to pay 10,000 riel (USD 2.50) monthly for solid waste collection services.

“Drawing on our extensive experience in catalyzing markets for agricultural and sanitation services in rural areas, we aim to apply this expertise to address the growing concern of solid waste management and make a positive impact on the lives of rural Cambodians,” said Kevin Robbins, iDE Cambodia country director.

“To improve waste management efforts across the country, we need to the public, private, and development sectors to come together to facilitate sustainable and scalable solutions.”

The paper also identifies opportunities across the SWM value chain to cope with inefficiencies and challenges at different stages, including collection, disposal, and recycling. Opportunities include investing in waste reduction and upstream initiatives, which are crucial to reduce the need for more landfills. Other opportunities include implementing collection systems that efficiently manage various material streams, including organic waste and mixed recyclables. Decentralized waste collection models would offer the potential for collection points at the commune level. It will also be critical to engage SWM workers, both in the informal and formal sectors, to increase safety and efficiency of waste collection and recycling efforts. In the longer term, there is a need to explore operational improvements and institutional arrangements for landfills to make them more efficient and sustainable.

Moreover, the white paper says women play active roles in waste management. Initiatives and programs to empower women in various roles in waste management, including waste collection, sorting, and recycling, can support them to safely and effectively contribute to waste management efforts.

Learn more about iDE’s work at ideglobal.org

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