

Perspectives of Solid Waste Management in Rural Cambodia

Summary Paper

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1 TARGET AUDIENCE

Individuals, organisations, and researchers looking to gain insight into waste characteristics and management perspectives in rural Cambodia.

2 BACKGROUND

In Cambodia, the majority of people live in rural areas where, beyond the reach of government funded municipal solid waste (MSW) services, there are limited options to manage solid waste. Local perceptions of waste management, understanding the accessibility to waste management, and common waste characteristics are necessary to understand potential ways waste in rural communities can be sustainably managed.

3 PURPOSE

To capture local perspectives of waste and provide insight for potential methods and services to manage rural waste sustainably in line with community views, resources and strengths.

4 METHOD

Data was collected from the rural Cambodian community of Koh Dambang situated on an island in the Mekong River. Participant responses, photographic evidence, observations and measurements related to waste were made. Nine residents of Koh Dambang were interviewed about their perspectives on local waste management and their waste management practices. The daily waste of two participants was separated and weighed to understand waste composition. Due to the common practice of burning waste, temperatures from a local burn pile were recorded.

5 RESULTS

Across the nine residents, a variety of different waste disposal practices were identified. All participants stated that they burn part of their rubbish, with other rubbish disposed of by dumping in the forest or burying. Waste characterisation suggests that household waste is managed by individual families, producing 0.4 kg to 1 kg of non-recyclable waste daily, comprised mostly of plastic bags, paper products and vegetation. From one waste measurement, it was found that 46% of the measured waste was burned (paper, plastic and textile), with the remaining organic waste buried. Many community members were interested in a community wide waste management plan (CWWMP) or small group waste management strategy (SGWM). A SGWM could potentially result in less visual waste build up, less time spent managing family waste, and reducing the area of environmental contamination. However, a strategy would need to consider village and district-level administration views and resourcing.