

MID-TERM-REVIEW

Women-Led Output-Based Aid (WOBA) Cambodia

Water for Women Fund, Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Summary Report

October 1, 2021



Dr Lien Pham

Thrive Networks/East Meets West Foundation

Evaluation Lead

THRIVE
NETWORKS

 **eastmeetswest**

**Australian
Aid** 

 **Water For
Women**

Contents

List of Abbreviations	1
1. WOBA Project Description and Results	2
2. Mid-term Review	3
2.1. Purpose of the Evaluation	3
2.2. Methodology	3
2.2.1 <i>Evaluation approach and methods</i>	3
2.2.2 <i>Limitations</i>	4
4. Key findings and lessons learnt	5
4. Recommendations.....	9

List of Abbreviations

CC	Commune Council
CCWC	Commune Council for Women and Children
CDPO	Commune Disabled People’s Organizations
CHOBA	Community Hygiene Output-Based Aid (a previous EMW project)
CIP	Commune Investment Plan
CWA	Cambodian Water Association
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DORD	District Department of Rural Development
DRHC	Department of Rural Health Care
DPO	Disabled People’s Organization
EMW	East Meets West
FSM	Fecal Sludge Management
GESI	Gender and Social Inclusion
MRD	Ministry of Rural Development
OBA	Output-Based Aid
PDIH	Provincial Department of Industry and Handicraft
PDRD	Provincial Department of Rural Development
PWD	People with a disability
RSCC	Rural Sanitation Clean Company (name of sanitation company)
RWSSH	Rural Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene
ToC	Theory of Change
TOT	Training of Trainers
WfW	Water for Women
WOBA	Women-led Output Based Aid

1. WOBA Project Description and Results

WOBA Cambodia is a project designed and implemented by Thrive Networks /East Meets West Foundation. It has two key objectives: i) to improve rural livelihoods through increased access to equitable WASH services, especially among marginalised community members, and ii) to improve gender empowerment and inclusion of women through program implementation and decision making. It is funded by the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) through the Water for Women Fund over 4.5 years (June 2018 to December 2022) with a total budget of 3,399,630.71 Australian dollars. The WOBA Cambodia has two main implementation components:

- 3,750 poor and poor plus GESI households connect to piped water schemes – their connections will be co-financed through a competitive output-based pro-poor subsidy intervention.
- Improved access to hygienic sanitation in rural communities, with hygienic latrines constructed by 15,000 poor and 15,000 non-poor households, with 4,000 of these in the poor/GESI category; this will be complemented with a commercial sanitation intervention

WOBA Cambodia has five expected outcomes:



Guided by a theory of change that aligns with the Fund's theory of change, WOBA has three strategies which are expected to contribute to the five expected outcomes.

- Partner with district and commune government, Committees of Women and Children, and private sector WASH operators to strengthen coordination mechanisms (at all institutional levels) and private sector capacity in delivering WASH services for poor and GESI households.
- Build capacity of government partners, women in committees for women and children, women in the villages, and private sector WASH operators to implement OBA WASH services for poor and GESI households.
- Leverage partnerships with government partners, WASH authorities, Committees for Women and children, and private water operators to facilitate workshops to mainstream and advocate for gender, disability and socially inclusive approach in WASH delivery in Cambodia.

The project was implemented using a partnership structure that follows the vertical government structure (national-subnational-village), private sector sanitation suppliers and the Cambodian Water Supply Association (CWA) to administer an OBA subsidy scheme. WOBA aims to build capacity of women to lead WASH mobilisation through partnership with the Committees for Women and Children at the district and commune levels, and through female village chiefs and volunteers.

Project results by June 2021

As of June 2021, WOBA has reached almost 100% of its latrine uptake targets, 90% of its target in menstrual hygiene management training for women and girls, and 100% of its COVID-19 handwashing devices distribution. The water connection output is slower with about 33% of water connection targets achieved. Twenty-five sanitation suppliers, of which five are female, and eleven female water operators have participated in WOBA to construct latrine and connect households to piped water, and to raise public awareness about WASH and health. WOBA has partnered with the CDPO to deliver training on inclusive WASH and provide hygiene promotion and handwashing materials as part of the COVID-19 response for 45 DPOs and persons with disabilities in their DPO groups.

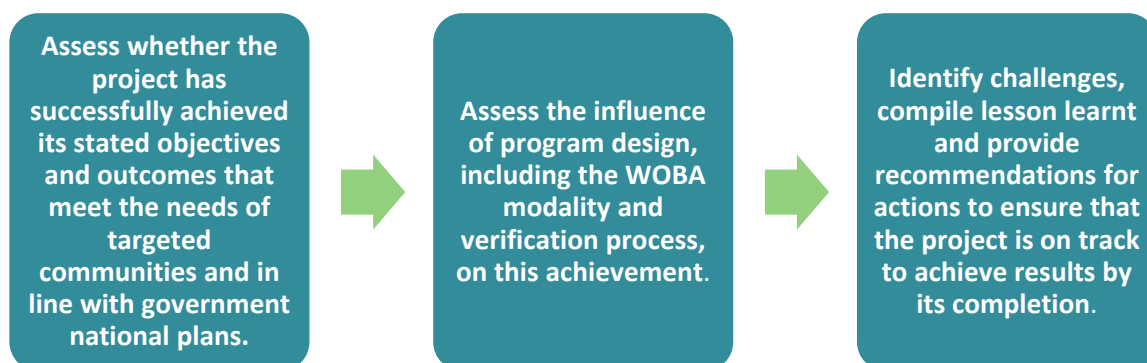
2. Mid-term Review

2.1. Purpose of the Evaluation

The mid-term review (MTR) evaluates the program's progress towards its planned outcomes and support learning by exploring the effectiveness of the strategies and activities implemented from June 2018 to June 2021. It explores some initial indications of impacts and sustainability. It provides important recommendation in the ongoing implementation of the program and progress towards the project's end-of-program outcomes.

This MTR will also aim to help lay the foundation for a strong end of term evaluation. It is intended that a better understanding the effectiveness/efficiency of the WOBA Cambodia approach would influence Thrive/EMW's programming in other WASH related areas.

The specific objectives of the MTR are:



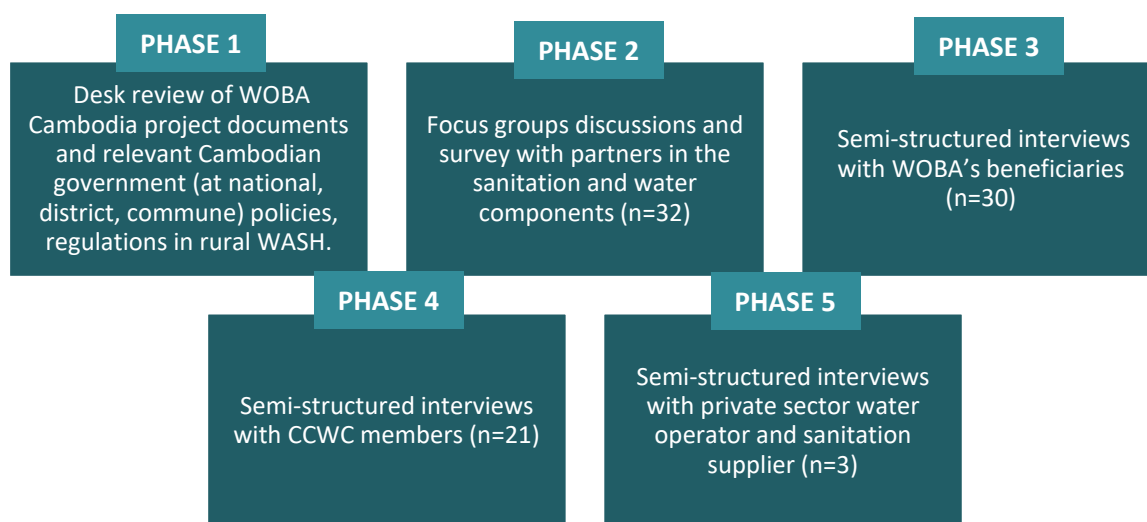
2.2 Methodology

2.2.1 Evaluation approach and methods

The MTR focused on four areas of inquiry alongside WOBA's expected outcomes: 1) partnerships and networks for systems strengthening; 2) building capacity of partners and stakeholders about OBA approach and GESI; 3) empowering women as leaders and change agents in WASH; 4) inclusive access for poor and GESI households.

The evaluation was undertaken primarily for learning purposes. The main focus of the evaluation, and this report is on how, why, and under what circumstances results were achieved. The seven key evaluation questions and their sub questions address all five evaluation criteria: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impacts, and sustainability.¹

The MTR fieldwork was conducted using focus groups with partners, interviews with the CCWC members, and households. Three provinces were visited: Prey Veng, Kratie and Pursat. There are 5 phases to collect the data in the MTR.



The evaluation also used WOBA's monitoring indicators, and reports of the CWA and CDPO to supplement the fieldwork data.

2.2.2 Limitations



Short timeline limited the number and diversity of participants in the evaluation. The scope of the evaluation was mainly on the sanitation component in three provinces due to limited travel time.



High risk of reporting bias given participants were all stakeholders of WOBA and have an inherent interest in the subsidy and incentives provided by the project.



Lack of baseline data and appropriate M&E framework, processes, tools and data to assess increased WASH coverage and changes at various levels (individual, organisation, system) as a result of WOBA.



Reliance on monitoring information provided without appraisal of EMW's M&E system risk data accuracy and reliability.

These limitations were mitigated through rigorous analysis of the field data and monitoring information using triangulation and comparative analysis of quantitative and qualitative data.

¹ Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development criteria; Development Assistance committee (DAC) criteria, Australian Department of Foreign affairs and Trade criteria

3. Key findings and lessons learnt

KEQ1: To what extent has WOBA aligned with the Cambodian government's policies in WASH in rural Cambodia? (Relevance)

Based on the review of relevant policies, namely National Action Plan I (2014–2018) and II (2019–2023) and National Strategy for Rural Water Supply, Sanitation and Hygiene 2011–2025, WOBA Cambodia's strategies, activities and outcomes align strongly with Cambodia's policies. All five themes including private sector development, multi-stakeholder approach, institutional arrangement, sector financing and cross-cutting issues of gender and social inclusion are mentioned and are the focus of the policy documents reviewed.

The policy documents reviewed suggest that the output-based aid approach is considered appropriate by the government of Cambodia. WOBA's OBA method of delivering WASH services is clearly aligned with the National Strategy's services and output indicators in the area of sanitation marketing and WOBA's triggering events at village levels, social mobilising and triggering, building onsite sanitation (pit latrines) measured by number of latrines built for eligible households.

KEQ2. To what extent has WOBA Cambodia implemented its activities in an effective and efficient way? (Effectiveness/Efficiency)

The WOBA model of implementation was based on the experience and success of EMW Cambodia's previous OBA (OBA smart subsidies) projects in sanitation and water supply, and EMW Cambodia's established relationships with the PDRDs, which assumed that government partners' capacity building for OBA had already been achieved. Partners' perceptions of EMW Cambodia's quality and validity of evidence of latrine outputs through OBA in prior projects support their belief that WOBA will have desired outcomes in rural marginalised communities.

Although there are differences between provinces in terms of the partners in charge of implementation activities, WOBA's partnership structure has enabled support from the national level of government to the subnational levels with MRD as the policy maker. Such structure is in accordance with the government political structure and thus helpful, not only for the WOBA project, but also for the MRD to achieve increased sanitation and hygiene coverage as indicated in the 2025 national action plan.

Knowledge about WOBA and how the project operates particularly in terms of the subsidy amounts, cost of latrine, financial flow varied across households in the three provinces.

It seems that the risk relating to implementation procedures particularly on partners' capacity and willingness to effective implementation have been addressed and thus implementation has reached its target for latrine uptake ahead of schedule.

The extent to which WOBA training and capacity building activities have been sufficient in addressing partners' needs was not discernible by FGD participants. Interview with the private sector operators also revealed that the training provided knowledge and implementation on improved technical latrine construction, rather than improving business and financial management skills. Given that this is one of the focusses of the National Strategy in engaging with private sector, this area could be improved much more in the remaining period of WOBA particularly on financial literacy and financial management. Issues of climate change could have been incorporated in the project to

ensure its impact and sustainability, and more education for households to raise awareness about climate change more effectively.

KEQ3. To what extent is WOBA Cambodia's approach inclusive and reaching the poor and marginalised (GESI) communities in rural Cambodia to address their WASH need? (Effectiveness/Impact)

Rural communities' WASH needs are critical. Prior to WOBA, many households did not have access to latrines. They defecated in the nearby bushes or forest including bamboo sites and in the rice paddy fields. Most villagers lived in an unclean and unhygienic environment and defecated everywhere in the public areas, and exposed to conditions that negatively impact their health such as snakebites, and most importantly it was difficult to find dry places for defecation during the rainy seasons or when floods submerged the forest sites. Their water sources for consumption are rivers, ponds, and stored rainwater, and they are highly susceptible to diseases like diarrhoea and new infectious diseases.

Despite such pressing needs, affordability remains the critical barrier for households to take up latrines and connect to piped water system. The rural poor in Cambodia typically rely on labour work or rice and crop cultivation, but most beneficiaries in the villages visited were among extremely poor and without land. They did not have money to buy latrines and prioritised saving money for rice and daily expense for their livelihoods and schooling education for children and for difficult time of flood or drought. They felt the cost of latrines was too high and they could not afford to buy one or save for latrines and piped water. WOBA provides support to households receiving Ministry of Planning's ID poor 1 and 2 cards, although those without may fall within the project's criteria of poor and socially disadvantaged, and with WASH needs and are willing to build latrine. Many households perceived that the ID poor classification system is based on discretion of the authorities and does not capture all poor households. This unfortunately has created a perception of WOBA as unequal access rather than inclusive approach. This view was also affirmed in the interviews with CCWC members.

The majority of beneficiaries interviewed felt that subsidy enables their latrine uptake and thus a critical factor in increasing improved sanitation for these communities. Partners, particular the sanitation suppliers also felt that the subsidy scheme was a critical factor in getting people to build latrines.

KEQ4. To what extent has the WOBA's approach to gender empowerment through the involvement of CCWC has resulted in greater understanding of gender issues and improved gender empowerment for CCWC and other stakeholders? (Effectiveness/Impact)

The prevalent conception of WASH as domestic work and for women's safety reinforce the gender norm that portrays women as WASH duty bearer, although these views were often expressed by men in the FDGs. The CCWC interviewees had a broader understanding about gender and social inclusion. Many felt that WOBA has enabled them to learn more about the need to support the disadvantaged communities. In the past, WASH was seen as issue of individual family, and it was generally accepted that WASH access is for those with economic means. The majority of CCWC women realised that WASH is basic need and should be accessible for everyone.

Most CCWC interviewees felt that they learnt about gender roles in WASH through different phases of the project and their learning can be transferred to the communities. However, there are those

that did not understand well about gender, which could be they were newly elected to the role and were not yet provided with relevant training.

The CCWC interviewees were motivated to work on WOBA for three reasons. First, WOBA provided opportunities for them to gain knowledge about WASH which they could use to educate villagers. Second, WOBA provided some funding for travel to the community which they could educate the villagers as part of WOBA but also to collect households concerns and integrate the concerns into the commune investment plan (CIP). Third, some were motivated by the need to support the poor and GESI communities. Despite different motivations and interests in promoting WASH into communities, most felt they were obliged to take the roles and responsibilities assigned to them by the commune chiefs. They had to follow and create their work-plan to either collaborate with development agencies, DoRD, PDRD, RSCC or conduct awareness-raising by themselves. Some CCWC interviewees raised concerns about the patriarchy of the workplace culture.

The CCWC saw themselves as agents of change in WASH through their mobilisation practices. This is because they had direct role in raising the communities' awareness of the links between WASH and health, and helped the villagers to change behaviour for example, drinking only boiled water, purified water or piped water.

In terms of being change agents for women's empowerment, most CCWC interviewees referred to improved skills and confidence to work with different people.

KEQ5. To what extent has WOBA Cambodia strengthened the capacity of national and sub-national WASH systems to implement and sustain inclusive output-based aid WASH approaches in rural Cambodia – achieved through government co-financing requirement? (Effectiveness/Efficiency/Impact)

WOBA uses the existing government structure to implement its activities, which has been effective in bringing in the relevant partners to deliver sanitation and hygiene to rural communities. Partners could work with each other because they understand the line of authority and can communicate effectively along the existing vertical administration structure. Given that the project is designed to leverage existing governance structure rather than changing it, WOBA's impact on system strengthening appears limited.

The MRD/DHRC representative confirmed a joint contribution with the PDRDs to deliver training to subnational level with the aim of raising villagers' awareness about sanitation, hygiene and clean water. This aligned with WOBA's key strategies (per ToC) on capacity building of government partners to have the required skills, capacity, and systems to implement OBA for target beneficiaries; however, without base line data or methods of assessing change at the partners' individual and organisational level in the current implementation activities, it is not possible to gauge how effective this strategy is.

The approach of co-financing by governments at the commune level leading towards institutionalisation of OBA has some challenges. Some communes could only contribute small amounts, and some could not contribute at all because there were no commune budget lines. Other factors are required to institutionalise results-based WASH services delivery which have been advocated in the National Strategy; however, the varied application of OBA across provinces, and limited information provision about the OBA process has resulted in a universal understanding of

OBA as a subsidy which is short term rather than institutionalisation of OBA as a long-term financing mechanism of WASH.

KEQ6. To what extent has WOBA effectively engaged private sector operators in delivering WASH services for the poor and GESI communities? (Effectiveness)

The private sector operators interviewed understood the subsidy schemes and were able to deliver WASH services to the poor/GESI households under these schemes. This is partly due to long term relationship they had with EMW from prior projects. The RSCC has received support of the similar subsidy scheme through EMW since 2014.

Affordability is also an issue relating to quality of latrine construction. As WOBA's latrine construction does not include support for the structure and roof, it affects the use of the latrine, particularly for beneficiaries living in challenging environment that are prone to flooding. Lack of usage has a cumulative effect on other villagers because they cannot see the value of latrine for long term use. In most visited areas, many households still depend largely on ponds, big jar water catchment from raising water as water sources. This not only affects the households but also the suppliers particularly water operator because they need ongoing demand to sustain their operation.

WOBA has engaged effectively with all three private sector operators interviewed, and in partnering with the CWA. All informants understood the WOBA project and its mode of service delivery through the subsidy scheme, which could be because they all had worked on previous projects with EMW. They were all committed to achieve their set targets of latrine construction and water connections and even contributed funding to help households that could not make payment.

Regarding training, notable outcomes were i) sanitation constructors' understanding about inclusive WASH as a result of training on building latrines for PWDs; ii) CWA's initiative to educate local authorities on water treatment and supply. Although business training was mentioned, there was no evident application of knowledge and skills in business skills and financial management.

KEQ7. What impacts (intended and unintended) has WOBA Cambodia had and how sustainable are these? (Impact/Sustainability)

From the perspectives of beneficiaries, WOBA has improved their understanding of the effects of open defecation has on human health. They have also acquired knowledge about how and when to wash their hands with soaps at the critical times. Their understanding about WASH and health has led to changed attitude toward hygiene and handwashing practices. They spoke about their awareness of wearing facemasks, social distancing, and practising sanitation and hygiene. They noted that washing hands with soaps has become a regular practice. They have used latrines regularly and felt more secure, safe, and improved privacy especially for children, girls, and females, and pregnant women.

The intended impact on having access to clean water through piped water connection is evident in terms of changed practices of drinking safe water and reduced time to fetch water from the river or other sources. Although the majority of beneficiaries reported that they used boiled, filtered water, purified water, and bottled water, which were observed across three provinces, many still used other water sources. For example, some beneficiaries in Prey Veng still drank unboiled water. The water was taken from underground (well) and stored a week in the big jars before using it. They still believed this water is safe.

At the broader level, WOBA's achievement in enabling latrine uptake has clearly contributed to latrine acceleration towards the National Strategy's sanitation target of 100% by 2025 nationwide. However, the partners agreed that WOBA is short-term implementation and to sustain the rate of

latrine take up to achieve the goal of the National Strategy, support from the local authorities through budgeting for WASH at the commune level through the CIPs is critical. Other impact of WOBA in terms of improved livelihoods are difficult to assess. For these communities, sustained improved livelihoods would require additional measures to address multiple vulnerabilities to economic shocks and climate changes as many were landless or nearly landless and relied on selling labour or rice cultivation and cash crop plantations.

There are mixed findings in relation to intended impact of WOBA on strengthening private sector to operate sustainably in rural Cambodia. Although the latrine targets have been achieved, there is little evidence to suggest that these private suppliers will operate sustainably post WOBA, or continue to provide services for the poor and GESI households. Lack of sustained co-contribution from the government is a factor that undermines private sector sustainability and institutionalisation of OBA mechanism to sustain model of delivery. The private sector operators may seem to be willing to share the cost with households during WOBA to increase customer base, but it is difficult to continue sharing cost in the long term without impacting profitability.

There are some unintended impacts. Some household's economic vulnerabilities have been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change. Some households were asked by the mobilisers to use their COVID-19 support funding from the Government to pay for the latrine. Women have also suffered more because of lost jobs, or their husbands have migrated to find employment.

4. Recommendations

M&E

- Develop and implement appropriate M&E processes and tools, appropriate for tracking GEDSI outcomes, system strengthening outcomes, and private sector outcomes alongside verification of outputs. Indicators and qualitative information should be collected at baseline, throughout implementation to allow EMW to capture and report on these kinds of outcomes (as WOBA desires) in a meaningful way and support adaptive management approaches to implementation results in a timely manner;
- Identify baseline and establish a system of data collection and reporting of latrine registration, latrine building, latrine verification, payment of latrine costs, subsidies to households and performance incentives to partners at the commune or village levels, DORD, PDRD, CCWC, RSCC, and EMW. This would ensure transparency in financial transactions and accurate recording of latrine;
- Identify baseline and establish a system of data collection and reporting of water connection registration, water connection, connection verification, payment of water connection fee, subsidies to households at the commune or village level, CWA, water operators, and EMW;
- Baseline data for latrine should be aggregated from the various MoP data and analysed to report periodically on change in coverage related to WOBA latrines construction;
- Baseline data for water should be calculated for province, not only by service area of the water schemes in WOBA. This would enable a periodical report on change in water coverage related to WOBA connections consistent with sanitation;

- Latrines constructed and water connected should be analysed and reported using disaggregated data of gender and types of GESI category at household level and number of people; and
- EMW should continue to engage with the partners institutions with the explicit intention and action plans to contributing to institutional, individual and system changes. This could involve planning and agreeing on indicators of change to be tracked and reported by partners and synthesised by EMW and feedback to partners

Information about WOBA

- Update the WOBA information package provided to households and CCWC so it has complete information about 1) WOBA project (EMW, DFAT as donor, WfW as the Fund, partners involved), 2) OBA scheme and how it operates, 3) subsidy rates and eligibility, 4) latrine costs/water connection fees/water tariff rates, 5) types of latrine that can be built/water connection availability, 6) steps involved in the WOBA processes, 7) expected costs and financial outlay, 8) benefits, and 9) timeline. The package should have standardised information (item 1 to 6) and case-by-case information (item 7 to 9);
- Use appropriate style and content in the information package that is suitable for elderly people, persons with disabilities, and illiterate people (e.g. animations, drawings, videos, or pictures);
- Deliver the information package to all CCWC members involved in the program as part of their onboarding to WOBA. This can be through creation of a video and part of onboarding mandatory documents that they have to read and deliver online; and
- Incorporate questions to test knowledge in the training video and participants must achieve a certain score to pass the WOBA knowledge test before they can start the mobilisation activities. Results of training should be part of EMW's regular monitoring and reporting process

Private sector operators' business skills, financial literacy and management

- Revise and deliver training package provided to private sector on business skills, financial literacy and financial management. Questions or test scenarios could be incorporated in the training and participants have to achieve a certain score to pass the financial knowledge and business skills test
- Conduct regular meetings with private sector operators to discuss barriers, enablers, opportunities and risks in their WOBA activities, and work with them to develop action plans to be implemented and regularly revised. Record all private sector operators (sanitation companies, masons, construction materials shops, water companies) working in WOBA.

Capacity building on climate change and adaptation

- Develop training package and workshops on climate change, adaptation measures in sanitation and water supply to all partners. The training content should be developed by climate change experts in consultation with EMW
- Deliver targeted training (online or face to face) to partners, private sector operators, CCWC and households. Assessment of skills and knowledge should be conducted for the training and part of regular EMW's monitoring process; and

- Establish initiatives for climate resilient technology in sanitation and water, and trials to promote climate resilient thinking and practical solutions. The fund can potentially be sought from WOBA's government partners to encourage sector financing in climate change contributing to system strengthening outcome 1 and 2. While the II grant attends to some issues of climate resilient technology and climate change impacts, an innovation fund can promote practical test and trialability of technologies and improve WOBA's adaptation.

Inclusive WASH

- Increase content on WASH and health delivered to households to include contamination, water related diseases, poor infrastructures, scarcity and risks relating to flood/droughts
- Continue to deliver WASH and health, hygiene information even if the households have already built latrine or connected to piped water
- Deliver education in a targeted way to ensure women can access them, for example not at the time they have to fulfil domestic duties; information on hygiene practices is not the same as information on water filters effectiveness or water testing therefore should be delivered differently; identify networks that women trust or part of to deliver information in addition to the CCWC and female volunteers
- Incorporate feedback of beneficiaries about quality of service and products, and experience of WOBA in the verification surveys and use their feedback to improve and adapt the implementation processes

Gender equality and women's empowerment

- Continue with quota for women in the CC and CCWC and look beyond number of women in a committee and their position to understand the extent that they have a voice in decisions and committee outcomes. This should be part of EMW's monitoring framework and include quantitative and qualitative indicators
- Incorporate the CCWC in the design, process and feedback at each stage of WOBA processes e.g. at baseline data, at mobilisation, at latrine verification, etc.
- Identify existing supportive structure for gender empowerment within the existing structures that WOBA leverages and facilitate discussion that includes both men and women on gender norms, barriers and advantages to CCWC and female volunteers' participation before and during a WOBA activity
- Provide leadership skills to the CCWC partners, and female water operators to promote collective leadership and support the sustainability of their WASH activities
- Maintain the level of training provided to CCWC and female volunteers and make sure it does not add to unpaid work and can include range of skills beyond WASH like business skills, conflict management, leadership, climate change, project management
- Provide access to networks or create networks if they do not exist for CCWC, female private sector operators and volunteers to share their experience and allow them to know and be part of different steps in the WASH service value chain; and
- All capacity building activities should be evaluated as part of EMW's monitoring framework and include quantitative and qualitative indicators for analysis of acquired knowledge, skills, attitude and other forms of change impact assessment. Results should be communicated back to the CCWC with follow up activities

Knowledge sharing

- Develop and disseminate learning notes and policy briefs in English and Khmer from various studies conducted by EWM (including this report), reports by CWA, CDPO, to WOBA's partners, and stakeholders, and Cambodia's WATSAN, RUSH and other WASH networks
- Develop an online knowledge hub to share updates, information and resources collected from WOBA with WOBA's partners and WASH networks in Cambodia and worldwide;
- Follow up with partners through regular meetings or survey to assess how they are using these knowledge products and what change has taken place as a result of applying these knowledge products. A good example is the application of the ADP design and technical information.