

# Vouchers in Reproductive Health Care and for Vulnerable Groups

## The Challenge

Despite positive developments of health indicators in recent years, Cambodia still faces one of the highest maternal (250 deaths per 100,000 life births) and infant mortality rates in the region (34 deaths per 1,000 life births). Moreover, there is a high unmet need for family planning. Due to a missing country-wide insurance mechanism, most poor people cannot afford these or other basic health services. Therefore, Germany supports the Cambodian Government in its policy to strengthen social health protection, especially for the impoverished and vulnerable population.

## Our Approach

KfW supports its partner agency, the Ministry of Health (MoH), with financial contributions in the field of mother and child health, family planning, as well as reproductive health care: for ten years through the country-wide provision of contraceptives, and since 2011 through launching an extensive health voucher programme for reproductive health care as well as health services for other vulnerable groups, such as elderly and disabled people. While a strong focus is on reproductive health, the aspect of social health protection has become a key element of the approach.



Programme Name	Social Health Protection Programme
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Programme Executing Agency	Cambodian Ministry of Health (MoH)
Target Group	More than 200,000 beneficiaries, e.g. poor women of reproductive age, vulnerable population, such as elderly
Project Region	Kampot, Kampong Thom, Prey Veng, Kampong Speu and Svay Rieng
Duration	2009 – 2017
Financial Scope	16.8 million EUR, of this: 15.5 million EUR funded by Germany and 1.3 million EUR by the Cambodian Government

## Scope of Programme

The voucher programme covers:

- safe motherhood for poor women: antenatal care at health center level, delivery & postnatal care services including special service on hospital level in case of complications of pregnancy & delivery
- counselling services for family planning methods, including cost coverage for long term method provisions
- safe abortion only in combination with strict counselling on long term family planning
- treatment for children up to two years of age in case of malnutrition including growth monitoring, nutrition interventions (fortified food & cash transfers) in cooperation with UNICEF and treatment of illness episodes
- screening and treatment of cervix cancer and cataract and potentially further non-communicable diseases.

## Successful Innovation – Voucher Scheme

A voucher is a ticket consisting of several coupons which give direct access to quality services to people in need. Voucher promoters pay visits to all villages in the programme provinces. They explain for instance the danger of giving birth without professional health support and how the voucher works to assist them in

accessing free reproductive health care. Furthermore, the voucher reimburses arising costs associated with the treatment such as transportation and food since these can be prohibitively high for poor households.

*"Thanks to the voucher I received a full package of safe motherhood services from qualified staff, and gave birth to my first healthy daughter. I also received the great benefits such as transportation, food and baby package". (Mom Ea, 22 years)*



The voucher scheme is a demand side financing mechanism, transferring purchasing power to people in need. It informs the beneficiaries, such as poor households about their rights to free and quality health services and goods. To enforce this mechanism the promoters remain the contact persons for the patients during the treatment and guarantee a complete and satisfactory use of the services.

The voucher scheme improves further the quality of services by creating competition between public and private service providers. The health care facilities are selected according to a scoring system of MoH. An incentive to participate in the programme is the safe income for the operating health facility. This way equipment can be expanded and better wages can be paid to employees. Additionally, it has an effect on the transparency of the health management system at the local level as the services must be documented and costs are paid properly from our funding against delivery of redeemed vouchers.

### Implementing Agency

The implementation is carried out by MoH with support of a Voucher Management Agency (VMA). The VMA consists of an internationally experienced consultant team

and a local health service NGO. This ensures high quality of operations and effective decision making on a daily basis. The costs for this are borne by the programme.

### Benefits

During the duration of the programme,

promoters **visit** 4,738 **reaching** 253,000  
villages people.

Use of services through voucher programme:

- 42,000 antenatal care visits
- 29,000 safe deliveries in hospitals
- 53,000 interventions with long term family planning methods and safe abortions
- 50,000 screenings for cervical cancer
- 3,800 cataract eye surgeries

Through the programme clients, especially women, experience friendlier health providers and a high satisfaction with services.

### Success Factors

The success of our voucher programme stems from the special attention on promotion, monitoring and the involvement of the locals that we are targeting. And we provide incentives for the voucher promoters: For each voucher distributed, promoters receive a follow-up incentive when the receiver uses it.

The voucher scheme is aligned with further approaches and schemes within the Cambodian–German Social Health Protection Programme such as the GIZ’s Rights-based Family Planning and Maternal Health Programme.



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