

# Vouchers for Reproductive Health Care and Vulnerable Groups

## The Challenge

Despite positive developments of health indicators in recent years, Cambodia still faces one of the highest maternal (206 deaths per 100,000 life births) and infant mortality rates in the region (45 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 countrywide provision of contraceptives, and since 2011 through launching an extensive health voucher programme for reproductive health care but also new services for other vulnerable groups, such as elderly and disabled people. While a strong focus remains on reproductive health, the aspect of social health protection has become a key element of the approach.



Village meeting conducted by voucher promoter Mr. Kim Svath on May 23<sup>rd</sup> 2014. He explains the services covered and use of distributed vouchers among local beneficiaries at Angk Romeas health centre, L'ang village, L'ang commune, Dong Tong district in Kampot province.

Programme Name	Social Health Protection Programme
Commissioned by	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ)
Programme Executing Agency	Cambodian Ministry of Health
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 - 2016
Financial Scope	17 million EUR, of this: 15.5 million EUR funded by Germany and 1.5 million EUR by the Cambodian Government

## Scope of Programme

The voucher programme covers:

- safe motherhood for poor women by providing antenatal care visits at health center level, delivery and postnatal care services including special service on hospital level in case of complications of pregnancy and 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) 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 the people in need. Voucher promoters pay visits to all villages in the programme provinces. During a village meeting with the beneficiaries or face-to-face counseling the promoters 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.

## Advantage

The voucher scheme is a demand side financing mechanism. It informs the beneficiaries, such as poor households about their rights to free available health services and goods. With a voucher in hand it transfers purchasing power to them. 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. Thus, the voucher is strengthening the demand of patients who would otherwise not undergo this standardised quality treatment due to lack of financial resources and lack of knowledge on the importance and availability of quality health 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 with quality criteria for training, equipment and practices. 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 **reach** 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, reported an increase in terms of friendliness of health providers and high satisfaction with services.

## Success Factors

The success of our voucher programme stems from the special attention on promotion, monitoring activities and actively involving the local population 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.

*"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)*



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