



QSA Notes

QSA and toilets

JACKIE PERKINS | QSA ADMINISTRATOR



Savy



Sen

Friends, this is the exciting news you have been waiting for – what happened about the toilets in our latest fund raising appeal? I can now tell you that with your help, a total of 30 toilets will be provided to rural communities in Kampong Thom province in Cambodia. The two communities have all received training in basic health, hygiene, and how to take care of a toilet, as for many of them, this is a new concept. This training is in addition to the permaculture training, funded by the Australian Government's Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade and QSA.

So now to answer your questions about what sort of toilet will they be. QSA's project partner, the provincial office of the Department of Women's Affairs with its director Siphon and project consultant Sithol (whom some of you may remember meeting several years ago) consulted several government

departments about toilet design and placement. The problems are that the soils in this province are generally very sandy, and also that the region regularly floods. The flooding is not usually to dangerously high levels, or for an extended length of time. In fact, the flood distributes nutrient rich silt over the land, so for agriculture, it's a bonus. However, for the matter of toilets, it is a different matter. Toilet designs relying on seepage to remove contents would be a health hazard, especially during the floods. Dry composting toilet designs, which other NGOs have tried to install, are not used by the people, as they have a strong belief that an amount of water is needed for the toilet to be effective, not as much as we require for a flushing toilet, but some water is needed.

The final design is one to be located a short distance from the house, of a squat design rather than sitting design,

with, of course, screening around it for privacy. A pipe connected to the back of the toilet takes contents into a concrete tank positioned in the ground to allow for gravity to assist. This tank, made of concrete is a box with a removable lid, to enable it to be emptied by a company operating tankers with pumps which, for a minimal fee, remove the contents for treatment at sewage works. In addition, a smaller tank to hold water is supplied close to the toilet, and a small dipper, similar in size to a very small saucepan, enables a small quantity of water to be added each time of use. It works well, and everyone is delighted.

So who will be receiving one? The communities have already decided the selection criteria. Obviously, the first criterion is for a family that does not have one already. Then they considered large families; those with an elderly member in the family living



Nan, on Jackie's right, with members of her family, and Siphon in the white hat.

there; women headed households; and families who have a member who has a disability. Here are four of those selected. Permission was given for each of the photographs taken, photo credit QSA.

Savy and Eang have five children and Eang's 70-year-old mother living with them. They are part of the permaculture training course, and have already established a very good vegetable garden which feeds the family as well as giving them some surplus produce to sell in the market.

Sen is a widow, and is not in good health. She has moved out of the home where she and her husband raised their five children, passing it to her eldest son and his family, and she lives in a smaller house built close by on the land. Sen

concentrates her energies in growing vegetables and herbs as they require less work, and also in raising chickens. She has also secured a very lucrative contract with a phone company, and has a phone tower on her land for which she receives US\$70 per month. In the photograph you can see Sen tending her lemon grass plants which are ready for harvesting, for which she will sell for about US\$0.40 per kilo.

Soleu is 25 years old, lives with her husband Chamreaun and their two sons, one at school and the other a toddler. They have no well but have kind neighbours who let them take water from their pond for irrigating their crops of spinach, lettuce, amaranth, taro and water convolvulus and for their chickens. The village chief has asked

if this family can also have a well, as they are finding life to be very difficult, and Siphon and Sithol have agreed to support them in this way.

And finally, Nan aged 72 years, married to San who is 82. Over the years, they have adopted seven children, which is quite a common situation now as parents are forced to relocate for employment, as this quite remote rural area has no employment opportunities except agriculture.

QSA and the communities in Kampong Thom are grateful for your support, helping the whole community to better general health outcomes. We will continue to fund raise for this worthwhile cause, one which really is making a difference. Contributions always welcome!

QSA is a member of the Australian Council for International Development and is a signatory to the ACFID Code of Conduct. The purpose of QSA is to express in a practical way the concern of Australian Quakers for the building of a more peaceful, equitable, just and compassionate world. To this end QSA works with communities in need to improve their quality of life with projects which are culturally sensitive, as well as being economically and environmentally appropriate and sustainable.

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Unit 14, 43-53 Bridge Road, Stanmore, NSW 2048 Australia • administration@qsa.org.au

PHONE+61 2 8054 0400 • FAX: +61 2 9225 9241 • ABN 35 989 797 918

