

# Success in Urban Water Supply in Cambodia

## From Phnom Penh to the Whole Country

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Secretary of State, Ministry of Industry and Handicraft

I was appointed as the head of Phnom Penh Water Supply Authority (PPWSA) in 1993. The water loss rate was then around 72% and production capacity was only 50,000 m<sup>3</sup>/d against the demand of at least 200,000 m<sup>3</sup>/d with only 288km of old cast iron pipes. Among about 27,000 recorded customers, more than half never received water, and many of those who received water never received their bills. Staff morale was low: chemicals were often stolen and illegal connections were common. Needless to say, water quality did not meet the standard.

In such a situation, my first work was to raise 50,000 USD to buy chemical for water treatment and the Japanese Embassy kindly provided the funds that I requested. I also prepared the Master Plan together with Japanese consultants. When I left PPWSA in 2012, water supply had increased to 430,000 m<sup>3</sup>/d, and the distribution network had reached almost 2,000 km with 200,000 customers. The water was drinkable with less than 6% water loss. Staff capacity and morale had also improved remarkably.

Now in my position at the Ministry, I am responsible for the water supply for all of Cambodia. Three years of hard work with close collaboration with JICA's technical cooperation project has brought substantial achievements. Most significantly, all 13 public water utilities in major provincial cities started to obtain net profit since last year through activities such as standard setting, OJT, monitoring and information sharing. In addition, infrastructure development through Japan's financial assistance has also brought positive impact. In



terms of management, all of these utilities can now prepare annual plans and keep accounting records in accordance with the national norms.

In the meantime, we have put in place several regulations that enable the Ministry to control private water utilities in a fair and accountable manner. Two more regulations are now under preparation, which will lead to establishing the Water Supply Law, assisted by JICA.

Having said so, currently in Cambodia only 21% of the population receives piped water and the rest still rely on other sources. My goal is to provide piped water to everyone in Cambodia. So, we still need to strengthen the implementation.

On 21st July 2016, the government decided to expand the Potable Water Supply Department to become General Department. This is significant change in the management of water supply in Cambodia. I hope JICA will assist us with this process along with the current support of achieve financial autonomy for all public water utilities.

Due to the genocide from 1975 to 1979, Cambodia lost many skilled workers including those in the water sector. All water systems were once abandoned. Today's success in the urban water supply in Cambodia is the achievement of our work with support from development partners, especially from Japan. I have learned that ownership or partnership alone will not work; both are needed. I would like to work with all stakeholders and keep providing the very best know-how to my people and the generations that will follow.

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**Cover:** Children running towards water as the water supply system was developed with Japan's assistance in Siem Reap, Cambodia.  
(Photo: Kenshiro Imamura)

**Photo on pages 2-3:**  
A boy sprinkling water on a sports day in Bhutan (Photo: Kensaku Seki)



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