

CAMBODIA

Siem Reap River Case-Study

HOW IT STARTED

Siem Reap River flows through Siem Reap Province, in North-West Cambodia, and runs downstream from Siem Reap into the Tonle Sap Lake about 30km away. Along the river, although efforts were made to keep it clean near the main population and tourist section, the remaining 29km was not cared for; local residents often disposed of their household trash along the riverbanks, which would later be lost to the river during heavy rain. A group of concerned citizens learned about the Global Alert mobile app, where they can report trash hotspots in waterways, and decided to use the app to take photos and geotag the locations of trash hotspots. The initial nine hotspot locations reported, were documented to contain thousands of kilograms of trash. The reported trash included household litter, commercial trash, plastics and Styrofoam.

Once these locations were documented on the Global Alert map, it was much easier for them to have a dialogue with other stakeholders in the community, including an NGO which was willing to help bring people together to create a coordinated clean-up effort along this section of the Siem Reap River. They created a plan which included sending groups of people to each hotspot zone, along with clean-up equipment, bags for the trash, and bamboo poles to help remove some of the trash from the trees and bushes along the waterline. Later, they approached the local government, who was ready and willing to embark upon a collective clean-up effort. The government decided to contribute to the effort by providing boat support from local fishermen and trucks along the roadside of each riverbank to collect the trash at centralised pick-up points. The plan was to do this before the national Water Festival, in order to make the river clean for this event.



As a result of this momentum of interest from the community members who used Global Alert, the local government was inspired and decided to create a fine for those found dumping their trash into the riverbanks. Their plans were implemented as part of an initiative to keep the river clean for the long run.

The community continued using the Global Alert app to locate even more hotspots downriver from the initial clean-up zone and realised there were still many locations that needed to be cleaned. This inspired the creation of the Siem Reap River Celebration which gathered larger community engagement and participation to fully clean the 5km river up to the Tonle Sap Lake so that it does not get polluted when there are floods and high waters.

Thongeng	
10/25/2019	
📍 (Not Listed)	
Steward Organization Name	
Water Flow Rate	Other
Water Level	
Weather Description	Other
Location of Trash	On Land
Types of Trash	Household trash or litter, including plastics or styrofoam :
Volume of Trash (1 Bucket = 5 Gallons)	Other

WHO HELPED



The entire clean-up was organised in sections by two different local communes. Approximately 4km downstream of the main river, was cleaned by the Salakamreuk community and supported by businesses, schools, NGOs, and the City Hall.



Along with this clean-up, a plan was created to install a number of nets and catchment systems across the river at various strategic locations to prevent plastic flowing downstream. These nets were constructed by local fishermen and will be managed with the support of the government so that they can be regularly cleaned and maintained.

WHAT WAS DONE

The community cleaned the areas with 1,000 participants at first, and then with 2,000 participants. After the clean-up, a boom was set up by the government to collect any trash that may flow into the river.

Another clean-up was organised on the 7th of November, 4-5km downstream of the Tonle Sap lake where 1500 people participated, and another 4 booms were set up across the river.



RESULTS

As a result of the clean-ups, over 10,000kg of trash was collected. The collected waste was hauled and then disposed of in an appropriate manner by the government. Additionally, five booms were set up to collect plastic in the river, each managed by the local village chief and respective community. This was the first time that many stakeholder groups worked together, including local government, local villages, fishermen, monks and the park rangers. This is now an ongoing community effort which has created entire watershed collaboration, when in the past, each group operated independently or did not even focus on the issue of water cleanliness at all. They are now excited to be engaged and to be working towards a common goal, which is to keep their river, and ultimately the Tonle Sap Lake, clean.

EXPANDED REACH AND IMPACT

The entire effort and planning by the local NGO is to help support the bi-annual Water Falling Festival and Water Rising Festival, which they also created to engage lakeside villages about water appreciation and better trash management. If the river is clean upstream, it brings coordinated momentum for lakeside villages to also keep their waters clean, and not let plastic from their communities get into canals that lead to the lake and impact their fishing and tourism. Both festivals create awareness about plastic and the fact that it gets pulled to the lake when the water falls, or gets pushed back into the villages when the water rises.

Education programs were also set up to teach the community how to best gather waste and how their trash impacts the ecosystem if they did not take care of their waste.

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