Strengthening the sanitation market system: WaterSHED’s *Hands-Off* experience

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WaterSHED’s systems approach to market-based sanitation
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Hands-off philosophy

Build a market that functions independent of traditional aid

• by practicing discipline to not create dependencies

• and always asking: who is going to do what, how and with what resources once our program has ended?
Results

The discipline is paying off. Since 2011:

• more than 200,000 pour-flush toilets have been purchased by rural customers

• generating USD 10M+ in revenue for 300 business partners

• These businesses serve 40% of Cambodia by population
Part of a stronger local system

- **1,000+** elected local officials have developed new leadership skills to drive sustained sanitation for all.
- **40%** of them are women (despite only 20% of local officials women making up less than 20% in local government).
How did WaterSHED get here?

Phase 1: Startup, Design & Piloting (2009-2011)
How did WaterSHED get here? (Cont.)


Market-based Sanitation
1 Design & Pilot

Civic Champions
2 Expansion & Maturation
Consolidation & Exit

Research phase 1
Research phase 2

Women's Empowerment
Pilot

Business Incubation & Product R&D
Scale-up
“Light”

District hybrid model

Product research & development

Pilot Economic Empowerment

Commercial launch (Vietnam)

R&D (Bangladesh)

Shelter research & development

Shelter marketing & sales

HappyTap
Child potty marketing & sales

Latrine Shelter

Child Potty

Infant & child sanitation formative research
How did WaterSHED get here? (Cont.)

Phase 3: Sustainability (2018-2020)


Market-based Sanitation

Civic Champions

Women's Empowerment

Business Incubation & Product R&D

HappyTap

Latrine Shelter

Child Potty

1 Design & Pilot

2 Expansion & Maturatio

Consolidation & Exit

3 Sustainability

Pilot

Scale-up

“Light”

District hybrid model

Expand and institutionalize in gov’t

Mainstream across programs

Product research & development

Pilot (Vietnam)

Commercial launch (Vietnam)

R&D (Bangladesh)

Launch (Bangladesh)

Shelter research & development

Shelter marketing & sales

Infant & child sanitation formative research

Child potty marketing & sales

Phase 3: Sustainability (2018-2020)
Phase 1: Startup, Design & Piloting (2009-2011) Learnings

- Encourage competition / keep barriers to entry low for new suppliers
- Work with existing best-fit businesses where possible
- Identify exit strategies for the market facilitator (in this case, WaterSHED) before implementation
Phase 2: Expansion, Consolidation, and Exit (2012-2017) Learning

Building for sustainability means recognizing that there is a local system and figuring out how to strengthen and use it - rather than creating a substitute / dependency.
Recognition is a powerful motivator; mechanisms to recognize achievement can be built into the system and thereby ensure sustained engagement of local actors.

‘Can it be institutionalized?’ as part of the system is a more nuanced question than ‘can it be scaled or replicated?’

Phase 3: Sustainability (2018-2020) Tentative Learnings
Reflections

1. Focus on obsolescence - building systems rather than delivering services
2. Leadership development for local government holds immense potential
3. Decision-making that is both research-driven and cost-conscious