

Resilient Urban Centres and Surrounds (RUCaS)

KNOWLEDGE EXCHANGE AND TECHNICAL TRAINING – CAMBODIA REPORT (31 JULY – 1 AUGUST 2024)

Background

RUCaS aims to improve the value generated by investment in urban infrastructure by better integrating conventional large 'grey' infrastructure (e.g. levee banks, pipelines, treatment plants, roads, railways) with nature-based solutions (e.g. wetlands, mangroves, catchment protection, green walls, multifunctional parks and transport corridors). RUCaS program outputs include case studies demonstrating application in different urban contexts and scales, as well as training in the tools and principles applied, and strategies to upscale nature-based solutions (NbS). RUCaS is being implemented across the 4 countries of the Lower Mekong sub-region and is supported by the Australian Government through the Mekong Australia Partnership regional program.

Purpose

The Knowledge Exchange and Technical Training convened stakeholders and experts from throughout Cambodia and from overseas to engage in a dialogue about using nature-based solutions to manage the impacts of urban development and climate change.

Running over 2 days, the event included the following activities:

- Review of NbS case studies, considering lessons learned on potential for application, and opportunities and challenges in upscaling
- Workshop to develop upscaling strategies and identify priorities and next steps for generating enabling conditions for NbS implementation
- Technical workshop and training on benefit–cost analysis for economists and experts from Cambodian Government ministries and universities.

Guests included:

- HE Pen Sopal, Secretary of State, Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction
- H.E. Sarun Rithea, Secretary of State for Ministry of Industry, Science, Technology and Innovation
- H.E. Yeap Malymo, Policy Director of the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation.
- Ms Faith Considine, Second Secretary for Development and Assistance, Australian Embassy in Cambodia

The event attracted 112 participants, with 54 participating in the Knowledge Exchange event and 80 participating in the technical workshop.

- 94 of the participants were from the government sector (84%). The remainder of the participants were from INGOs (6%), CSOs (5%), MDBs (3%), and the education sector (2%).
- Out of the 112 participants, 31 identified as female (28%) while 81 identified as male (72%)
- None of the participants noted support for assistance with disability needs, or requested accessibility assistance.

Outcomes

The knowledge exchange workshop discussed challenges and opportunities for implementing NBS.

Key issues identified on challenges for NbS implementation included:

- A lack of clarity in laws and regulations across sectors with regards to NbS implementation;
- Issues surrounding land tenure and implementing NbS on private land.
- Lack of buy-in from stakeholders, including government and community representatives;
- Perceived competition from real estate interests with NbS in terms of land use in urban areas, where real estate is seen to generate more revenue than NbS and so NBS is less likely to be implemented;
- Limited successful examples of NbS in Cambodia;

The following key enabling factors were identified by participants as opportunities and necessary predeterminants to advance NBS implementation.

Implementation:

- Political willingness to implement NbS across urban areas is required. This is required both at the national and sub-national level to drive uptake and implementation of NbS in urban design.
- The development of manuals/guidelines for implementation would improve uptake.
- Encouraging initial pilots of NbS to act as demonstrations, encourage upscaling of size when appetite increases.

Enabling Laws:

- Any new legislation should build on existing guidance and good practice, rather than starting anew.
- Existing legislation exists to protect up to 30% of planned developments for green space. This could be built upon and expanded.
- Incentives for the implementation of NbS could be offered for citizens and the private sector and enshrined in regulation (e.g. reduction in tariffs/tax breaks).
- Build on the already-approved environmental code.
- Enforce current regulations and good practice.
- Provide a technical portfolio of current NbS projects, and a dossier of good practice designs. This could be led by civil society organizations such as the Board of Engineers.

Choosing Options:

- Understanding the limitations of NbS will be helpful in choosing the correct design options, which are suitable for the problem at hand.
- Demonstrating appropriate applications of NbS, whether through guidelines, case studies, or other forms of visualization (as mentioned in other categories).
- Ensuring options are available which are low cost and eco-friendly.
- Provision of costing across the entire NbS lifecycle.
- Increasing the capacity and awareness of NbS in the private sector.
- Enabling training and guidance on choosing the best option.

The workshop included a process to prioritise actions - **Defining problems to be solved with NbS** was voted to be the most pressing issue.

Priorities arising



Visioning:

- Champions for visioning of NbS include government departments (MLMUPC, MOSVY, MOEYS) with their responsibilities for social welfare, urban development and education in particular making them well-suited to advocating for improved NbS visioning. Other champions include civil society, private sector employees such as architects, engineers and designers.
- Communities have a role to play in providing contexts for visioning NbS.
- Success stories need to be made publicly available, and social media is a key platform for connecting people for this aim. Success stories include projects such as UNHabitat Kep and PreyNub.
- Strong policy and political will are required to encourage ownership and public implementation of NbS

Next steps in Cambodia

The next steps are summarised below:

Action	Timing
RUCaS team to complete and publish the Battambang and Akreiy Ksatr case studies	October 2024
RUCaS to draft the upscaling strategy to be shared with Cambodian stakeholders	October/November 2024
Upscaling strategies to be shared and discussed at the Regional Conference on NBS in Bangkok	March 2025

Photos



Opening remarks from HE Pen Sophal



Opening remarks from Ms Faith Considine



Day 1



Day 2