

Solid waste management in cambodia



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Cambodia is a country with beautiful natural resources, and also a country that is suffering from the impacts of waste generated by the modern global lifestyle. Cambodian people carelessly dispose of enormous amounts of trash in ways that are not only irresponsible but also dangerous to people's health and the environment. Their behavior represents both the lack of understanding of the impact their actions have and the lack of supportive waste disposal or recycling infrastructure. Two straightforward introductory solutions to mitigate Cambodia's appalling trash problem are educating citizens and creating an infrastructure that supports behavior change.

First, however, to control and mitigate the amount of solid waste, it would be imperative to know the amount of solid waste that is being produced daily. Without a basic understanding of wastes, the task of formulating and implementing future waste management programs and strategies would be strenuous.

The drastic increase in the human population has a direct effect on the problems in Southeast Asia (Dhokhikah and Trihadiningrum 329). Sustaining a growing economy and its population means that an enormous amount of waste is being generated all the time. More energy source, food production, and many environmental-related factors create high demands to sustain a growing population (Nguyen and Schnitzer 1983), and Cambodia is considered to be one of the poorest countries in the world. Therefore, Cambodia currently does not have the budget for efficient solid waste

management services that the community and public can share and take advantage of (Kum et al. 102).

Basic research on generated waste should be supported before coming up with a grand idea on how to conquer it. Measuring and analyzing the amount of waste being produced can both highlight the need for change, and also provide a baseline against which to calculate future waste output (Kum et al. 102). In the end, any efforts towards reducing wastes, either through waste minimization or recycling, should be organized appropriately (M. N. et al. 9). This, along with education and low-budget infrastructure changes, is the most effective technique to begin to tackle the country's waste problem.

Cambodians throw their trash out on the streets, leave it on park benches, and toss it in lakes and rivers because they do not understand the negative impact of their behavior, and because it is more convenient. This behavior is due, in part, because of cultural norms, and also because of a lack of education. In Cambodia, many attitudes and behaviors are passed down from generation to generation. The older generation is not aware of, nor have they been educated about the harmful effects of not disposing of waste responsibly. Younger generations look up to the older generation and mindlessly replicate their behavior. Also, and especially in extremely poor areas of Cambodia, people purposely dispose of their waste into open sewers, assuming that it will magically disappear with the rain and get washed away. They do not realize is that this habit clogs drains and pollutes the water. The Cambodian residents do not know how much harm they are putting themselves in by throwing their trash everywhere, creating

sanitation problems and polluting the air and water, which can be prime factors that jeopardize the health of a population.

Teaching Barry Commoner's four " laws of ecology" would be a valuable component of educating the Cambodian people. To increase awareness and motivate change, the two most important points of the four " laws of ecology" to teach would be: 1) everything is connected to everything else, and 2) everything must go somewhere (Butler).

The phrase out of sight, out of mind represents the Cambodian culture when it comes to disposing of solid waste. When Cambodians throw away their rubbish, they do not think about the consequences when it is out of sight. The minute they do not see their trash, it is completely out of their minds. Helping the Cambodian people understand that we all live on the same shared planet, the same planet that future generations will inherit could motivate a change in their behavior. Everything is connected. Most importantly, everything must go somewhere, including solid waste.

Through educational awareness programs, the younger generation of Cambodia will have a better understanding of the harmful effects that unsafe waste disposal can have on the environment and the damage it can cause both to people's health and the natural resources that they heavily depend on for survival. Environmental activists and NGOs could hold multiple workshops educating the public about solid waste management and the positive impacts of recycling. Recycling is a complicated process, but if the government, NGO partners, or environmental activists can teach the citizens

about the basics of what recycling entails, the increase in awareness could have a long-term effect on the way Cambodians perceive and handle trash.

Alternative resolutions to solid waste management in Cambodia and Malaysia utilize social and technical methods. Social approaches are shifting public behavior by bettering the community through fostering and training partnerships with decentralized solid waste management (Dhokhikah and Trihadiningrum 333). There is both a desperate need and high demand for the public to engage in lobbying for more sustainable solid waste management in Phnom Penh city (Dhokhikah and Trihadiningrum 333). The public can participate in lobbying for more efficient solid waste management through spreading the word on various social media platforms, television and radio networks, and newspaper posts to effectively increase public awareness.

However, this may not be the best strategy for the long-term goal. Solid waste as an environmental issue should be built into the education system to educate future generations about the problems and potential solutions to alleviate the problems. The government should take part in this action and initiative as soon as possible because the better and faster the younger generation is educated about this emerging environmental concern, the better the outcome will be in the future because the younger generation has the potential to change the world with their wisdom and knowledge.

Laws concerning littering and improper disposal of solid waste should be in place and punishments should be followed through on violators (Kum et al. 108). A source reduction program should be officially launched and actively

promoted because it is an approach to address waste prevention and the deviation of materials from the waste stream, and this could be a major contributing factor to a sustainable solid waste management goal (Kum et al. 108).

Given that most of Cambodia's dumpsites do not have the proper process for the separation of decaying and non-decaying wastes makes it harder for people to be responsible and take initiative to dispose of their waste correctly and in a way that will not harm the environment or affect citizens' health. Cambodia's solid waste is mostly comprised of household, office, hotels, shops, and school wastes, known as municipal solid waste (MSW) (Nguyen and Schnitzer 1984). Since Cambodia is a third world country, along with municipal solid waste, there is industrial, hazardous, and agricultural waste that contributes to Cambodia's production of solid waste.

A lot goes into implementing dumpsites in the public especially Cambodia because it is a poor country. The government must have strict regulations to ensure that its citizens are taking responsibility and it is going to be high maintenance (Nguyen and Schnitzer 1982). The people of Cambodia and Malaysia are not willing to compromise and come to an agreement with the implementation of a new landfill system close to them because they fear the negative effects that the new landfill site may leave them. For instance, litter, smell, pollution, the depletion in the worth of their homes can be contributing factors that come with the implementation of a new landfill site (Nguyen and Schnitzer 1982). It is pricey to implement environmentally friendly and responsible landfill facilities that provide convenience to the public (Nguyen and Schnitzer 1982).

A simple potential solution and one that would complement education are to put more trash cans and recycling bins in public, in company buildings, and at each house. All Cambodians must take part in responsibly and efficiently throwing away their trash and recycle for a cleaner environment and a better future. One obstacle to this is that some people may not care because they are stubborn. The government, which can be extremely influential to citizens, may not support this solution, and it would be challenging when it comes to educating the public about recycling and how beneficial it can be in the future if people take initiatives to recycle. However, local, state and national policymakers in Southeast Asian countries such as Cambodia should create regulations, policies, and programs that would be sustainable in dealing and distributing solid waste with an emphasis on recycling (M. N. et al. 7).

In addition, Cambodia's environment ministry spokesman, Sao Sopheap, said that many landfills in Cambodia do not have efficient approaches to separating decaying and non-decaying wastes (" Solid Waste." *Open Development Cambodia*).

The people in Cambodia must be made aware of the harmful impacts that garbage is having in their country, and changes must be made to promote the future health of the country's environment and population. Everyone is responsible for their trash being irresponsibly thrown everywhere.

Cambodian citizens must understand that there are consequences that come with unethical solid waste disposal.

Already, the concerns of the negative environmental impact on people's lives in Cambodia has gotten to the point where it has captured the public's attention. Some of the harmful effects of the shameful dumping of toxic and hazardous waste can grow anywhere between emissions resulting in poor air quality to water pollution (Nguyen and Schnitzer 1982). Unless changes are made, Cambodian communities will struggle to retrieve their natural resources that they heavily depend on for their livelihoods because of the limited access to clean water and a healthy environment.

Basic steps, such as widely disseminating information about sustainability, and placing more recycling and garbage bins in communities and remote areas will make the biggest impact to not only the communities that are suffering from environmental degradation but also to Cambodia as a tourist destination.

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