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MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

**PROPOSED STRATEGY FOR THE
DRINKING WATER AND
SANITATION SECTOR (WATSAN)¹**

(FOR DISCUSSION AT THE MRD PHNOM PENH ON 3 JULY 1996)

¹ Based on: "UNICEF Strategies in Water and Environmental Sanitation (Draft)"; Water and Environmental Sanitation Section, UNICEF, New York, 22 March 1995--and other strategies that are currently applied to WATSAN programmes in Cambodia.

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1. SUMMARY

The MRD's overall objective in WATSAN is to contribute to the reduction of mortality and morbidity rates in rural and peri-urban areas by supporting efforts to achieve universal access to safe water supply and sanitation services, as a basic right, and by promoting the behavioural changes essential to realize the full benefits from such services.

The MRD will continue to emphasize the expansion of services to the poor, to improve the reliability of those services, to design strategies and approaches for improved hygiene and sanitation, to support policy development, and to assist emergencies. In addition, the evolving situation suggests some new emphases in programme activities. These include:

- greater attention to sanitation and hygiene promotion, as well as to operation and maintenance in water supply.
- emphasizing communication methods, and behavioural and attitudinal change, with sanitation and hygiene education in schools as a key channel.
- greater focus on the utilization and sustainability of services, not merely on coverage.
- greater focus on cost-sharing, cost-recovery, and financing mechanisms for equity and sustainability.
- increased attention to health impact on populations and geographic areas with high prevalence of WATSAN-related disease.
- greater attention to environmentally vulnerable areas, including the poor in peri-urban areas and slums.
- attention to sustainable community based water resources management that link to national and sub-national programmes where appropriate.
- pilot research and development projects on cost-effective approaches, community participation and management, and inter-sectoral linkages, with continuous learning and dissemination of learning experiences.
- standardizing the definition of "coverage", and improving monitoring systems to include impact and process indicators, as well as coverage figures.

The WATSAN Sector has now reached a transitional point where the lessons and sound experiences of the past need to be more widely applied. *Water and Sanitation are no longer to be considered as vertical programmes for the delivery of physical services.* Greater emphasis needs to be placed on health and socio-economic benefits. Greater stress also needs to be placed on providing the knowledge, skills, tools and techniques required to generate motivation, and to develop supportive systems that enable communities and people to take decisions and make choices to help themselves.

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2. GUIDING PRINCIPLES FOR WATSAN STRATEGIES.

The following principles will be used to guide WATSAN strategy formulation:

- **Advocacy:** highlighting the needs and rights of the poor, and building political and public commitment to the adoption of appropriate policies and accelerated action.
- **Basic services:** managed by the community, they provide catalytic support to the expansion of cost-effective services by using appropriate technologies, by paying particular attention to sanitation, and by taking account of the potential for the upgrading of services by the communities themselves.
- **Capacity building:** adopting programme approaches that build capacity at all levels and in all segments of society, to ensure sustainable sector development.
- **Community cost sharing:** of capital and recurrent costs of basic levels of service, where and if possible, with recovery of full capital and recurrent costs of higher levels of services. This will generate additional resources that will extend basic services and ensure their sustainability.
- **Community management of the "water environment":** including water conservation, water quality protection, and solid and liquid waste management.
- **Gender balanced approaches:** recognizing women as key players and agents of change, and not solely as primary beneficiaries, in the context of overall efforts to empower women.
- **Intersectoral linkages:** with nutrition, the environment, and other programmes which support integrated rural development.
- **National and local goals:** defined and set in collaboration with appropriate partners at different levels and pursued through effective monitoring systems.
- **Participatory approaches:** to empowering communities and promoting their role in planning, implementing, managing, and monitoring services.
- **Partnerships:** formed and strengthened with government at all levels and with civil society, NGOs, the private sector, external support agencies, and others, ensuring co-operation and complementarity.

3. OPERATIONAL STRATEGIES.

The diversity of geographical situations, the problems that exist in those areas, and differing requirements for support from the MRD may necessitate *the development of area specific strategies which most appropriately respond to the challenges of integrated rural development goals*. These area specific strategies would support current initiatives in planning, co-ordination and resource mobilization. In all situations, a mix of essential operational strategies is called for, and the relative emphasis will depend on the situation that prevails in the geographical area under consideration. The main WATSAN operational strategies are described below:

3.1 Catalytic support to expansion of services. The MRD will continue to play a catalytic role *in the expansion of WATSAN coverage through the implementation of service delivery, but increasingly through advocacy of approaches that enable the government to act as promoter, co-ordinator and facilitator*. In supporting government programmes for service delivery, the MRD will take account of the need to co-ordinate and develop complementary approaches with other partners--NGOs, other international agencies and the private sector--so that these are mutually reinforcing. The components of the strategy for expanding coverage will include:

3.1.1 Programme preparation as the main mechanism for *developing specific and co-ordinated responses to service delivery*.

3.1.2 *Adopting a comprehensive approach in the design of programmes of service delivery* to include water, sanitation, health education, the environment, and gender balanced community participation at various stages of programme development and implementation.

3.1.3 Providing direct or catalytic support for delivering, developing and piloting methods and approaches to accelerate coverage. These services will be used to demonstrate to government, NGOs, the private sector and others *the use of proven appropriate and affordable technologies and approaches*, including the adapting of traditional methods where appropriate.

3.1.4 *Supporting the standardization of technologies* as appropriate, and the transfer of technology and experiences between Cambodia and other countries.

3.1.5 Supporting priority actions by the government and donors for *meeting the service needs of the unserved and underserved rural and peri-urban areas*, particularly those with a high incidence of water and sanitation related sickness such as diarrhoeal diseases and intestinal parasites.

3.1.6 *Supporting institutional strengthening for service delivery and capacity building of communities* to enable them to implement projects in an efficient, cost-effective and sustainable manner.

3.1.7 *Strengthening the monitoring and evaluation of service delivery, their utilization and sustainability*, including issues of cost-effectiveness and improved accountability.

3.2 Promotion of intersectoral linkages and integrated programme delivery. Maximum health and socio-economic benefits and improved cost-effectiveness can be achieved when the processes are participatory, and when interventions are co-ordinated or integrated at the planning stage and during implementation. WATSAN interventions reduce the time and energy required to collect water, especially for women and girls. Such interventions also reduce morbidity levels, raise literacy rates, and provide opportunity for capacity building in decision making, and in the management and maintenance of WATSAN services. As such, they offer *potential for mutually supportive links with other sectors*, such as nutrition and women's programmes. Taking full advantage of this potential will require that situation analyses and programme operations be more holistic, and seek these opportunities for synergy.

3.3 Capacity building. The essential pillar for the sustainability of WATSAN services is capacity building (i.e. training, and institutional strengthening) at different levels. The objective of MRD support to WATSAN is *for the national and provincial programmes eventually to be self-sustaining and render external support unnecessary*. The sustainability of programmes depends on their implementation through national institutions which are decentralized, accountable, and focused on developing community-based solutions. The MRD will continue to support institutional strengthening for rural and peri-urban services. Components of the strategy for capacity building will include:

3.3.1 Support for sector studies to identify constraints and opportunities. These studies will include an assessment of the need for capacity building;

3.3.2 Identification and training of target groups at various levels and in different areas, with special efforts to achieve gender balance. Training will include topics such as policy development and planning, institutional strengthening for delivery of services--including training of drillers, artisans, and sanitation and hygiene education personnel--community mobilization, and management at all levels from government to village committees.

3.3.3 Making water utilities, clinics and schools more accountable to communities and more responsive to people's needs;

3.4 Empowerment of communities and households through participatory approaches. While capacity building is the pillar for sustainability, empowerment is the foundation. *Empowerment overcomes the lack of human, financial and organizational resources and skills of the unserved and underserved, enabling them to make choices and decisions and to take action to help themselves*. Empowerment is, therefore, an outcome of capacity building activities, and a continuous process by which people take charge of their own development. The components of this strategy are:

3.4.1 Promoting gender balanced community participation and decision making in the planning, implementation, managing, operating and maintaining of WATSAN services.

3.4.2 Sharing and providing access to information, knowledge and skills--especially to beneficiaries--to facilitate informed decision making.

3.4.3 Saving time for women by making access to safe water more convenient.

3.4.4 *Developing a more productive work force* by raising their literacy rate and by reducing the amount of time lost due to illness.

3.4.5 *Designing a programme which promotes the mobilization of financial resources for the initial capital investment, and which allows operations and maintenance to be managed by the communities themselves.*

3.5 Advocacy and social mobilization. A key programme strategy is *to support--through information, communication and public education--policies and actions at different levels that will help the government and communities meet their goals*. Support will also be required for policy formulation relating to a number of aspects, such as: according priority to water supply and sanitation in national and provincial plans and budgets; equitable allocation of resources both within the sector and among sectors; promoting and enhancing the role of women in the sector; and strengthening the role of NGOs and the private sector. Specific aspects of this strategy include:

3.5.1 Encouraging and *supporting the establishment of National Programmes of Action (NPAs)* which will provide, inter alia, a basic framework for advocacy and social mobilization.

3.5.2 *Developing advocacy materials for, and participating in, various national and possibly international fora,* and promoting through research, documentation and dissemination the rich field experience of the various agencies that are active in the sector.

3.5.3 *Advocating for capacity building and empowerment,* to promote universal access to WATSAN programmes in a sustainable manner.

3.6 Partnerships. The importance of close complementarity and partnership is important due to complexity of operation, shortages of funds, and the need for optimal use of human resources. With the likelihood of increasing resource constraints, *it is imperative to avoid duplication, and strengthen complementarity between agencies and institutions*. This is particularly important in the development of innovative community based approaches such as those that are supported by the MRD, and in the development, field testing and promotion of affordable and appropriate technologies. WATSAN will work in partnership with other government ministries, institutions, and external support agencies, including UN agencies, NGOs, donors, and the private sector. Agencies working in traditional water resource development and protection, in sanitation and health education (including local environmental protection) will be partners. Preferred partners will be those who build the capacity of communities to better maintain, manage and sustain WATSAN services, and those who take initiatives for disparity reduction.

3.7 Resource mobilization. The scope for mobilizing both domestic and external financial resources depends crucially on the macro-economic environment. However, as has been demonstrated elsewhere, it is possible through political will and prioritization in resource allocation to *meet the needs of basic social services and overcome the worst manifestations of poverty*, even in countries like Cambodia where per capita incomes are low. Specific aspects of this strategy include:

3.7.1 *Improving cost effectiveness,* including cost reduction, as appropriate.

3.7.2 Building national and sub-national capacities in the mobilization of human and organizational resources.

3.7.3 Advocating prudent cost sharing and cost recovery, generating resources and ensuring sustainability for meeting the objectives of WATSAN. Cost recovery mechanisms should be designed in a flexible and pragmatic manner, and must be sensitive to the local conditions and implementation capacity, with regular monitoring and adjustment to the evolving socio-economic conditions.

3.7.4 Advocating additional resources from government and donors, and advocating the restructuring of the financing mechanisms for the sector. There is potential for the development of new financing mechanisms, such as rural credit schemes and revolving funds.

3.7.5 Encouraging the private sector to play an increasingly important role in service delivery. The private sector represents a largely untapped potential of resources which can help in capital mobilization, installation and implementation, capacity building and training, operation and maintenance, quality control and technology transfer, financing and commercial services, and cost effectiveness and efficiency through competition.

3.8 Community management of the "Water Environment". This important new strategy element responds to growing concerns about environmental degradation and the recognition of the role that water plays in global and local environments. Global strategies for the comprehensive management of water resources within the framework of sustainable development have been clearly articulated and in many countries national strategies are being developed. *The development of a strategy of this type for Cambodia is to be encouraged.* Related actions aim at ensuring the supply of water for drinking, food and fodder, industry, and at conserving a healthy and diverse environment. WATSAN will target the poor and serve as an entry point for community management of the "water environment" in which beneficiaries live. The MRD will *advocate for and promote the community's role in managing its water environment*, and it proposes to work closely with other partners in this new area. Elements of a strategy to be incorporated into the WATSAN Sector could include:

3.8.1 Broad public awareness campaigns to raise general concern for the "water environment".

3.8.2 Targeted educational efforts with clearly defined messages aimed, for example, at schools, women's and farmers' groups, and community associations.

3.8.3 The promotion of environmental action groups and community "water environment" councils.

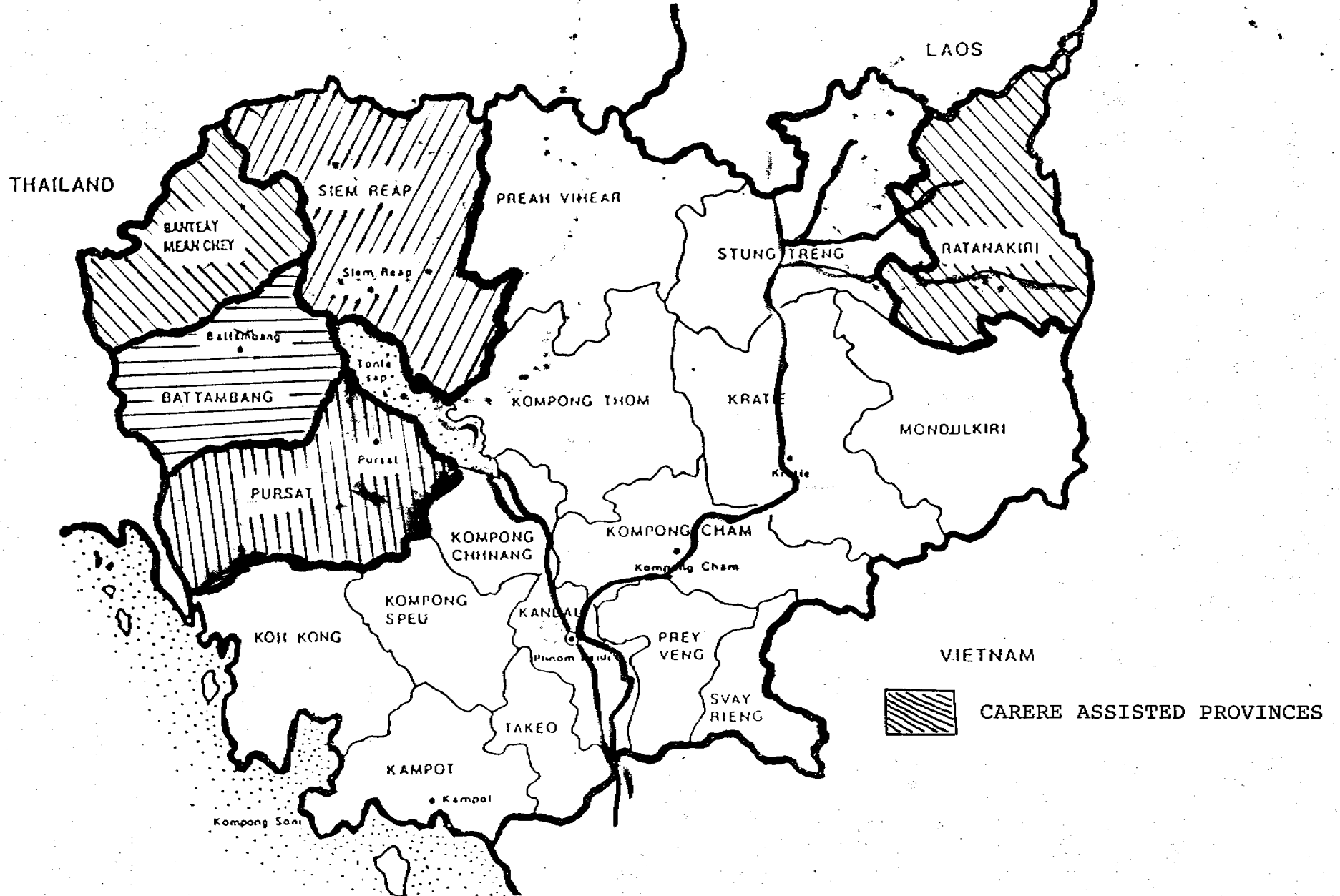
3.8.4 Community based situation analyses that identify priority issues, actions and actors.

3.8.5 Support to specific "mini projects", in addition to standard WATSAN interventions, which for example, could include conscious habitat protection and the cleaning up of ponds, or the rehabilitation and protection of wells and springs.

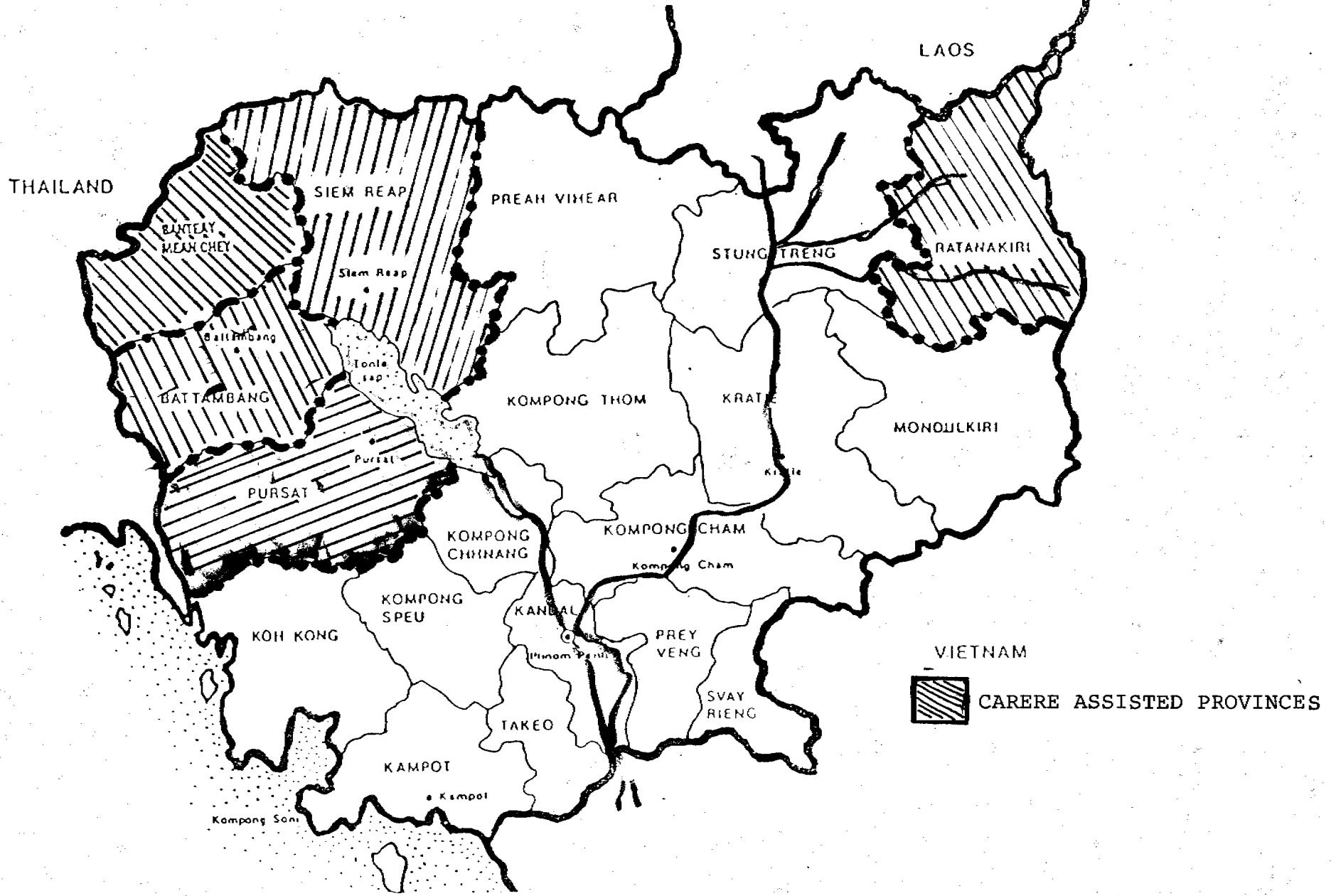
4. IMPLICATIONS FOR THE MRD.

Limited resources and the increased scope and complexity of problems demanding attention *will require an improved capacity for programme planning and evaluation processes*. Situation and policy analyses of the WATSAN Sector are needed to *assess interventions in terms of equity in access to essential WATSAN services*. Such analyses *need to highlight the link to other related sectors* such as nutrition and the environment, as well as to key epidemiological factors. *The identification of vulnerable populations* will be required, and data and information management will have to be strengthened to advocate on their behalf. New capacities will be needed for *designing projects aimed at changing behaviour*. Related activities will include training in planning, and implementation and management of WATSAN projects within the context of this new strategy.

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