

TRIP TO CAMBODIA

International Affairs Department

"No way!"

It is midnight on November 3rd at Phnom Penh International Airport. Three Japanese, including me, arrived in Cambodia after leaving Narita via Shanghai.

After applying for an arrival visa, we came to baggage conveyor belt No.2 as directed. But, most of the pieces of stuff have gone, and the belt has stopped leaving five or six pieces of unfamiliar luggage.

We started turning along the conveyor seeking our bags. "Is this a kind of joke? A human is spinning instead of a conveyor. Ha-ha," Such a worst thing that made me hesitate to talk; that joke came through my mind. "Am I going to talk with my counterpart empty-handed? With T-shirts and chinos? When can I get my stuff?"

When I almost gave up, I glanced at the following No.3 conveyor belt, which spits out the flight's luggage from Bangkok, and it was spinning around with our stuff on it.

"What happens in Vegas, stays in Vegas."

We had no idea why the "Bangkok conveyor" was rounding with Shanghai luggage, but we could not stop yelling, "Found our stuff~!!!".

My Cambodia trip started with a sigh of relief and tiredness.

We took a taxi to the hotel, anyway.

I took the TV remote control in the hotel room because I miss the noise. But the TV set does not react, and I fall asleep.

I wake up with a shower the following day to get to work.

This visit aims to find target areas available for improving sewerage and Johkasou together and collect information for a pre-feasibility study and on-site inspection. These operations are a part of AWaP*¹⁾, which JS entrusted from MLIT*²⁾.

Mr. Komatsu, who is from JS and working in Cambodia as a JICA expert, helps us to carry out these operations. We picked Svay Rieng Province as a candidate based on the opinions of Mr. Phibal, the director of MPWT*³⁾.

Svay Rieng is the province on the border with Vietnam or just into Vietnam. Svay Rieng, the capital city, is three hour drive from Phnom Penh.



A blessing of the Mekong River

On the way from Phnom Penh to Svay Rieng, there is a "Tsubasa (wing) Bridge" constructed with support by JICA. We had lunch at a restaurant our interpreter recommended by the bridge. The special of the restaurant is prawns from the Mekong River. Although called a prawn, big as a lobster, it is just a blessing of the Mekong River.

Now back to the topic.

We started looking for a candidate site where we can quickly expect wastewater quality improvement by the combined construction of sewerage and Johkasou.

Why does the integrated development of sewerage and Johkasou encourage water quality improvement? The mechanism is this.

The sewerage system gradually stretches its sewer pipeline from WWTP to upstream to fetch wastewater. It takes considerable time for the sewer system to reach the upstream regions. So the areas shall release untreated wastewater until its sewerage gets ready. So the project offers large-sized Johkasou for these areas to treat their wastewater until a sewer pipeline system becomes prepared.



A fishery in the river, a destination of untreated wastewater

So the project offers large-sized Johkasou for these areas to treat their wastewater until the sewer pipeline becomes prepared. After 10 or 15 years, when the channel reaches, the Johkasou will finish its role and pass the baton to the sewer. The project aims to achieve Target 6.3 of the SDGs adopted by the United Nations. Target 6.3 says, "By 2030, improve water quality by reducing pollution, eliminating dumping and minimizing release of hazardous chemicals and materials, halving the proportion of untreated wastewater and substantially increasing recycling and safe reuse globally."

In Svay Rieng, we inspected the hospital constructed with support by JICA, the city hall, two elementary schools, and a high school in three days. Among them, the city hall and two elementary schools with a residential area around them seem to apply to the condition of Johkasou.

Svay Rieng Province has Bavet City, one of the "special economic zones" of Cambodia. Its main street has many casinos and fancy hotels of Chinese investment. But, on the back roads, residents live in disadvantaged environments.

We had an opportunity to talk to the residents. They said they released their domestic wastewater and gray water into water channels via a housing inlet like a septic tank. The facility costs 200US\$, but they put it at their own expense because they hate poor hygiene around their houses.

When the sewerage system is ready for connection, the residents may have to pay the connection fee alone. The direct conversation with residents gave me a small ray of hope that they might be ready to pay for their life improvement. (I'm afraid the sewerage service fee is a different story.)

The principal of the elementary school we visited said as follows.

"We understand that our power contract needs to be upgraded because for Johkasou, it is no problem that the Johkasou settled at the elementary school processes neighbor household wastewater. But who will pay for the O&M costs of Johkasou? I can easily imagine that residents would oppose if they have to pay it."



"Cheers!"

The wastewater project requires many things to consider, such as awareness-raising, the explanation for residents, sewerage charges, etc., which is no easy matter.

The project in the framework of AWaP has just made its first step. During this visit to Cambodia, we could hear from different people of MPWT, Svay Rien DPWT, school principals, and residents. To achieve the Target 6.3 of SDGs, the first

purpose of the AWaP project, I renewed my resolution.

In the last of my newsletter, I would like to thank Director Phibal of MPWT, who gave us excellent help, Mr. Sovannady, who accompanied us, and Mr. Komatsu, who arranged our schedule and gave precious advice.

*1) AWaP, the Asia Wastewater management Partnership, started in July 2018 in Kitakyushu to achieve SDGs Target 6.3. Cambodia, Indonesia, Myanmar, Philippines, Vietnam, and Japan have joined. Japan Sewage Works Agency (JS) will compile the 2019 annual report that contains the status quo of wastewater management in each country. Besides, JS carries out the pre-feasibility study (FS) on integrated improvement in two municipalities. Here, integrated improvement combines sewerage, such as Johkasou, as another system.

*2) MPWT: Ministry of Public Works and Transport
DPWT: Department of Public Works and Transport