

Beneficiary Story No. 4 (MME Project)

The Story of Soy Soknang – Accessing Electricity In A Remote Health Center, A Complete Game Changer



Soknang fetches vaccines from the refrigerator run by solar power

Soy Soknang, 33 years old, is the deputy head of the Raing Til Health Center in Raing Til village, Raing Til commune, Kandieng district, Pursat province, at the shorelines of Tonlé Sap. At the center, he is in charge of the out-patient department. He has worked there for 11 years.

The location around the health center, that itself is situated on a hill, is seasonally inundated by the rising waters of Tonle Sap. During this period, the health centers serves many fishing communities, that live in floating villages moving closer to the hill of the health center that remains above water level, in addition to the population of the permanent village next to the health center.

In his commune, Soknang is the focal point for the project that has provided the health center with a 2.5 kWp and 10 kWh solar-powered battery system. Before there was no power. He himself remembers having proposed the solar system during consultations with the Ministry of Mines and Energy many years ago.

Interviewer: Since when do you have power here?

Soknang: In the beginning when I worked here, patients that attended the health center during night had to bring their own lamp or headlight. That was very inconvenient for them and me as well. In 2015, we received a small solar system, funded by MoH, just sufficient for a few lights. In 2017, the health center was connected to the solar system of the commune. In September 2018, the project installed the 2.5 kWp and 10 kWh solar battery system. In addition, the grid was extended to our commune in 2018, quite unexpectedly, given our remote location.

I: What has changed for you and the work at the health center since you have power?



The 2.5 kWp and 10 kWh solar-powered battery system installed at the health center

S: Overall, the capacity to receive patients has changed dramatically. The number of in-patients has changed from 50 to 300 per month. This is due not only to the power access, but also to the extension of the building and the enhanced services as a result.

In addition, we are able to use medical devices that we could not use beforehand. Such as the refrigerator for vaccine storage (see photo), lighting for the delivery room or a compressor nebulizer, used for children that suffer from breathing problems.

Particularly important is that we have power at night, so that we can much better support deliveries by night. We have up to 2 or 3 of them per month. We can also store vaccines that require refrigeration now. For instance, last month we vaccinated more than 40 babies against diseases such as tetanus, hepatitis A and B or meningitis.

I: How has the access to clean and safe water improved your services at the health center?

S: Only since 2018, we are able to operate an electrical water pump that pumps safe and clean water from a borehole to the health center. We can now offer to patients and relatives that stay overnight to wash their clothes and cook by themselves. Overall, the hygienic level of center has improved as we can sanitize and clean more often.

I: Are you also involved in operating, maintaining and repairing of the solar PV system?

S: I am the one that is in charge. I do small repairs myself and call the technician, if necessary. Overall, the health center has also really low electricity costs, that amount to only 20 USD per month, thanks to the solar PV system. We use it as often as possible, so that we can save money by not connecting to the grid.



Soknang attending to an infant patient with mother (left); Raing Til Health Center (right)

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