



Learning brief
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Beyond numbers: gender outcomes of RBF in clean cooking

To achieve universal access to clean cooking by 2030 requires USD 150 billion annually¹. Results-Based Financing (RBF) is becoming the preferred instrument for clean cooking, disbursing grants based on verified sales rather than tracking outcomes like gender equality or health improvements. Evidence from Cambodia's Higher Tier Cooking Component (HTCC) shows RBF can deliver significant benefits, particularly for women.

Key recommendations

- **Track outcomes, not outputs:** Move beyond counting sales to include indicators on time saved, health, decision-making, and confidence.
- **Ensure gender responsiveness:** Recognise women as both primary users and entrepreneurs by designing incentives and monitoring tools that capture their roles.
- **Design inclusive schemes:** Tailor RBF so that women-owned micro-enterprises and low-income (IDPoor) households can access and benefit equally.
- **Strengthen learning systems:** Use surveys and field data to adapt programme design and make co-benefits more visible in reporting.

¹The World Bank Group on March 28, 2024, launched a new initiative to enhance energy security and affordability in Europe and Central Asia. <https://www.world-bank.org/en/news/press-release/2024/03/28/world-bank-group-launches-renewable-energy-initiative-to-enhance-energy-security-and-affordability-in-europe-and-central>.

RBF in HTCC Cambodia

Results-Based Financing (RBF) in the Higher Tier Cooking Component (HTCC) encourages clean cooking suppliers to go beyond “business as usual”—reaching remote areas and vulnerable groups often left out of the market. Incentives are not price subsidies but compensation for the risks and losses of being first movers.

RBF grants are disbursed only after verified results of the number of devices sold. While this ensures accountability, it means outcomes such as gender equality, health, or emission reductions are rarely captured due to cost, complexity, and payment delays.

SNV's HTCC applies RBF in five Cambodian provinces including Siem Reap, Battambang, Pursat, Kampong Speu, and Kampot. RBF incentives for electric cookstoves are set at 30% of the end-user price and at 50% for sales to IDPoor households/customers. Therefore, enterprises can offer cookstoves at lower prices while maintaining their margins and not distorting the market. The landscape analysis in 2023 shows that women are the primary cooks in most Cambodian households, making them key beneficiaries: 77–100% of devices were purchased by women, and 54% of e-cooking businesses are female-led.

To promote inclusiveness, SNV encouraged women-owned micro-enterprises and ensured low-cost devices were eligible. Incentives are verified through sales records and complemented by annual sex-disaggregated surveys. To date, the programme has supported the sale of more than 30,000 electric cookstoves.

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Results of RBF: what does the current RBF verification and monitoring data tell us?

The Cambodia HTCC RBF, like most other clean cooking programmes, has output-based targets, primarily based on the number of sales of clean cooking devices. These are verified before making RBF payments. Some of the key sex-disaggregated results, as captured by output monitoring, are as follows:

- In 2024, the number of enterprises supported under RBF was 76 (50 of these female-led). 67 of these (46 female-led) enterprises continued to remain active in the programme due to other business priorities and family commitments (Annual report 2024).
- Between 2023 and 2024, the growth in annual turnover was, on average, 141% for female-owned SMEs (\$1,849 to \$4,458), 147% for male-owned SMEs (\$2,944 to \$7,267), and 176% for SMEs with joint ownership (\$1,828 to \$5,055).
- Women-led enterprises demonstrated better sales performance than men-led enterprises, particularly in convincing customers during shop promotions. Rice cookers remain the most popular among all cooking technologies, followed by water kettles, soup pots, and air fryers. Women led SMEs accounted for 65% of total sales.

Business outcomes beyond sales numbers

In addition to the RBF financing, SNV provides business development support, exposure visits and additional support to MSMEs. The exposure visits have been particularly useful and helped SMEs to see different business models, creative marketing strategies, and collaboration between enterprises and local authorities. The long-term outcomes of RBF and other support is visible in many ways.

Improved sales and visibility

In the SME survey 2024, 92% of the SMEs reported increase in sales volumes and 86% reported higher visibility with consumers, 73% improved networking, and 71% improvement in marketing. Female-led SMEs perceived improvements in marketing and product promotion, and the growth in annual turnover between 2023 and 2024 was 141% for women.

Enhanced business operations

Most enterprises have seen improvements in business practices. As a result of business development support and exposure visits, many enterprises are mobilizing sales agents, on a profit-sharing basis. They also use creative sales strategies, including use of product displays and shop decorations, banners, leaflets, stickers, and promoting their products on social media platforms like Facebook and TikTok. Other innovations include gifts for customers (94% of business), offering discounts (97%), free deliveries (87%) and repair services (79%), attending community meetings for exposure (52%), and developing different materials for marketing. Discounts and extra gifts are nearly universal for female-led SMEs.

Leadership and confidence

Perhaps the most important outcome has been increased confidence levels of the entrepreneurs, reflected in their reporting the confidence level rising from moderate (5.8 out of 10) before the programme to high (7.8 out of 10) after. Skills such as business leadership (68%), community relationship (64%) and modern technology literacy (51%) have also seen an improvement. 79% of SMEs developed concrete business plans to expand, which shows resilience and forward-planning.

An important aspect of confidence is decision making. Nearly half of all SMEs can make the business-related decisions on their own (49%), with 68% of the female-led SMEs taking business decisions independent of their spouse. 80% of the male-led SMEs reported having discussions jointly with their spouse. Majority of the SMEs (87%) also feel that they are a valued and respected member in their community.



A woman entrepreneur in Kampot, supported by the HTCC, RBF scheme, improves her display of e-cooking appliances to be more attractive and accessible in her community.

Impact on households

Even though the HTCC programme primarily focused on interventions on the supply side, i.e. with MSMEs, several outcomes are seen at the user level. How does adoption of clean cooking translate into improvements in women's social and economic well-being, as well as that of their households? A survey conducted in Cambodia from May-July 2025 covering 400 households that have been using electric cooking consistently – 87% of which had women as the primary cooks – shows the following benefits.

RBF was the key enabling factor for households to adopt e-cooking. 31% of the end users who reported that would not have been able to buy an e-cooking product without any support were ID Poor, compared to 18% in the general population, indicating a disproportionately positive impact on ID Poor households. Moreover, over 37% would not be certain of buying the e-cooking appliances without this support.

Most households have purchased more than one e-cooking device, demonstrating its usefulness. The survey showed that on average, households own 2.3 e-cooking appliances, with 24% owning one, 37% owning two, 26% owning three, and 13% owning four or more. 95% of all e-cooking appliances are still functional according to the end users.

Households that adopted e-cooking appliances often shifted away from traditional stoves. Before the programme, 67% of end users relied primarily on firewood or charcoal as their main cooking method. In contrast, smaller proportions used liquefied petroleum gas (9% with a small LPG stove and 8% with a larger LPG stove), while 14% already had an electric stove. Today, this pattern has dramatically changed. A full 90% of respondents now consider their electric stove to be their primary cooking device, and 96% of those stoves were purchased through the HTCC programme. This illustrates not only adoption but also a clear transition in cooking behaviour towards modern energy solutions.

Convenience and time savings were the most compelling motivators for purchase. 88% of households said the most noticeable benefit of e-cooking was saving time, while 71% reported more convenient cooking and 54% highlighted the ability to complete more household chores due to time savings. Other benefits included increased family income for 43% of households, with 27% attributing this to extra time for income generation and 16% to money saved. Finally, 25% of households reported overall improvements in their livelihoods.

In Pursat, a couple transports several newly purchased e-cooking appliances on their motorbike as a new market strategy. Supported through the RBF, these appliances are now more affordable and accessible to rural households.



Lessons learned

The RBF activities in Cambodia has shown that results extend far beyond the number of devices sold. Women and marginalised households benefit not only through access to modern cooking devices but also through life-changing outcomes that improve their daily lives.

Women, who are the primary cooks in most households, report that e-cooking has reduced their workload, and improved the quality of life for themselves and their families.

Users highlighted improvements in health together with overall better living conditions.

Rather than focusing on outputs (e.g number of devices sold), it is valuable to capture outcome-level results of RBF such as improved health, time savings, or empowerment.

Evidence from the HTCC programme demonstrates the importance of including outcome indicators in RBF design. Suggested indicators include continued use of devices, time saved, how that time is used (for income, childcare, education, or rest), improved health outcomes, and enhanced confidence and agency for women.



Mrs. Prak Veasna, an entrepreneur from Kampot, demonstrates the benefits of e-cooking appliances to women in her community through her marketing campaign.

About SNV: SNV is a global development partner, rooted in the African and Asian countries where we operate. With 60 years of experience and a team of approximately 1,600 people, it is our mission to strengthen capacities and catalyse partnerships that transform the agri-food, energy, and water systems to enable sustainable and more equitable lives for all.

About the project/programme: The Higher Tier Clean Cooking (HTCC) is part of a broad initiative on Strengthening the Entrepreneurial Ecosystem for Clean Cooking. The programme is co-financed by the European Commission, the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and Danida. The programme is coordinated by RVO and operates in partnership with EnDev.

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Cover photo: Mrs. Lam Sreynang, a consumer who purchased stoves from an RBF-supported supplier, shares her positive experience after using the air fryer. Photo credit: SNV in Cambodia.

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