

IPSTAR Delivers Telehealth Service to Rural Cambodia

Situated on the bank of the Mekong River and about 70 kilometers away from Cambodia's capital city, Phnom Penh, lies the remote village of Neak Loeurng. The village is a vital transit point between Vietnam and Cambodia – bursting with local residents, tourists and vehicles. But despite being a busy river crossing point, the village residents of Neak Loeurng face challenges in accessing medical service from the local health centers.

The Situation

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), Cambodia's health problems are among the direst in Asia – with major health threats include malaria, tuberculosis, AIDS, hepatitis B and mine accidents. In addition, over 80 percent of the population lives in rural villages, like Neak Loeurng, and health centers lack specialized physicians – a common situation that exists in most developing countries.

To provide health centers access to broadband Internet and to educational resources available online, an innovative telehealth project was implemented by using IPSTAR at the National Center for HIV/AIDS, Dermatology and STD's (NCHADS) medical center in Neak Loeurng. Being one of the most medically underserved areas in Cambodia, the health center at Neak Loeurng serves as a model on how information and communication technologies can improve the quality of health and life in rural areas.

Telehealth via IPSTAR

Telehealth is the use of electronic information to support long distance health-related education and public health administration. Although the use of telehealth is growing in the developing countries, it is still in a relatively early phase of adoption in Cambodia.

Telehealth via IPSTAR can overcome distance barriers to bring crucial information to health centers. With the installation of IPSTAR in Neak Loeurng, doctors and nurses can now use broadband Internet to access online information on illnesses, and to communicate with partners and other medical workers via email – thus enabling health workers to attain more medical knowledge.

In addition, the telehealth project definitely improves the health quality of thousands of Cambodians in Neak Loeurng. At the same time, it demonstrates a network model for a satellite-based healthcare system that can be replicated to other medical centers. The NCHADS is planning to further deploy IPSTAR to more than 50 medical centers across the country.

