

Strengthening Citizen Participation in Democratic Governance (SCPD) Project

Project No.UDF-CMB-07-175

Summary and Lessons Learned of Terminal Project Evaluation

This report presents the finding of the UNDEF Project “Strengthening Citizen Participation in Democratic Governance Project” the Project No.UDF-CMB-07-175, implemented from Dec 01, 2008 – Nov 30, 2010 with UNDEF funding of US\$291,000.00. The project’s overall objective was to ensure that citizens (as the electorate) are empowered to enjoy a more informative climate and democratic and demonstrate their rights to participate effectively in democratic governance. The project has formulated the following three outputs/outcomes (results) to achieve the objectives.

Project Expected Outputs – (a) – At least 10,000 direct target group participants and educated women, men, and youths including journalists, civil society activists and government officials, elected officials commune councilors have received, read and quoted COMFREL’s report and articles of the parliamentary watch and the directory of the national assembly by means of its website and emailing list, and in local newspapers, (b) – 4,000 local residents (electorates) participate in 40 forums in actively discussing and interacting with 240 elected officials including local elected councilors, and (c) – 98 one hour radio program and 20 five minute TV spot are broadcasted that reach 2.5 million audients.

Project Expected Outcomes – (a) – Accountability of elected officials to voter constituencies established, as well as National Assembly members accountable to provincial constituencies: Increased information, evidence and “voter voice” to effectively influence national elected officials’ performance and fulfillment of their electoral platform promises, (b) – Enhanced political capital, through increased popular participation in local governance and regular interaction with elected and government officials, and heightened level of practice of political participation of women, and youth along with a realization of the benefits of participation, and (c) – Empowerment of civil society and voters through increased knowledge and understanding of democratic rights, responsibilities and democratic system: Strengthen “civil society voice” and improved e-campaign in gathering of public support through the media, email list, website and publications advocating for political reforms and human rights.

Management Arrangements - For the overall implementation of the SCPD has implemented at two levels of human resource (national and sub-national levels). An important element of this management arrangement has been the ExCom members and UNDP, by providing strong links between the project at the national level and sub-national levels and serves as a highly effective mechanism for strengthening citizen to participate effectively in democratic governance. As part of the strategy to improve the skills of project staff, project relies on a combination of mentoring, coaching and facilitation, and at the sub-national levels on the capacity building and extension training of trainer. The technical support provided by UNDP is clearly crucial in keeping the whole machinery running. The project management system is intended to measure process in implementing work plans, ensure the timely delivery of project outputs/outcomes, and provide information for future project/programme plans.

Project has a democratic management structure through its monthly ExCom meeting and quarterly and annual headquarters staff meetings. The structure itself is not hindering a democratic decision-making process (which is relevant when demanding democracy from others), but the project culture is constraining ‘straightforward’ and ‘frank’ opposition to some extent. Hierarchical and relational lines of communication are in the existing project culture overriding the open management structure. The question is then whether this attitude is constraining the functioning of the project and/or staff members. This evaluation has not found strong signals that this would be the case although the diminishing staff motivation might be a result of this situation.

Project Results – (a) – The most important priority results are deployed 24 observers to monitor MPs’ field visits to their constituencies and collect the information from the other media groups. Moreover, project has produced 1,000 copies of the NA directory in Khmer and 300 copies in English, and project also conducted 4 voter benchmark workshops with 349 participants (125 female), (b) – project has conducted five two-day training sessions with 176 participants (51 female), 49 local public forums conducted on

"District and Commune Councilors and Citizens" in all provinces with 4,202 participants (1,750 female), 15 local forum groups established in 12 provinces and 20 follow-up forums in 17 provinces with 920 participants, and (c) – project has conducted a regular 60 minute radio program called "Voter Voice". Moreover, conducted a 16 minute-and-second TV educational spot on "Citizen's Participation, Commune Councilors and Women's and Children's Issues" and broadcast in 20 times on TV channels, and TV spot on "People's Right to Participating in Observing Commune Budget.

Challenges the Project Encountered - As noted in the section on design of the project, lines of authority and management structure were unclear. There was also a lack of job descriptions and confusing and overlapping duties and responsibilities with the COMFREL's core programme. No systems had ever been set up for monitoring and evaluation at the project beginning, and the vague outputs and changes in activities also complicated the monitoring process. Reporting on activities such as information dissemination was not clarified and reporting was inconsistent. Although several evaluation processes were initiated in the whole year of the project, there was throughout the project a lack of field monitoring of each activity by both UNDP and UNDEF.

Key Lessons Learned and Recommendation – Important lessons learned related to training and the production of original training material, which has to be justified and has to take several elements into consideration, most importantly high involvement of project staff throughout the capacity building process. Training is highly complex, and there are many factors which have to be considered to make it effective. This should be reflected in the way training activities are designed; further, forum material needs to be tested, feedback might need to be incorporated into a next phase or next projects. These lessons will play a significant role in guiding UNDP/UNDEF toward its goal for the implementation of next programmes and/or project phases. Learning from the experiences discussed is important for the better design, conceptualization, and formulation of future projects within and outside Cambodia. Lessons learned are drawn from the analyses presented, and where over relevant, recommendations have been given in the previous section. In light of findings, the evaluator makes the following recommendations for immediate action:

- (a) The projects should be more at the forefront working with other implementing agencies to improve democratic and good governance policies, and most importantly take a lead of the electoral reform process.*
- (b) To develop SMART indicators for public support and to measure regularly the effect of the various project activities on actual reform and human rights enforcement.*
- (c) To merge the public forum activity with the benchmark workshop component and other public event activities and scaling-up the activity to cover at least two-third of the population, to increase event frequency and to build-up from the village to province level.*
- (d) To discontinue the activity, reassess alternative options for maintaining or adjusting the activist base (consider mid-term review recommendations in this respect) and reallocate the resources to other project components.*
- (e) To follow-up on the benchmark workshops and to focus on and scaling-up to a national coverage so that results will be reported for the country as a whole. This should be linked with analyses emerging from the Government and Parliamentary Watch activities; in this way constituents can see themselves the extent to which promises are kept at the local and national scene, and*
- (f) Not only to continue but to strengthen the focus on this issue through a special mainstreaming effort in all activities.*