



**PROVISION FOR POST PROJECT EVALUATIONS FOR THE UNITED NATIONS
DEMOCRACY FUND
Contract NO.PD:C0110/10**

EVALUATION REPORT



UDF-CMB-10-381 -

(Cambodia)

20 May 2014

Acknowledgements

The

Table of Contents

- I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 1
- II. INTRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT 4
 - (i) The project and evaluation objectives 4
- II. PROJECT STRATEGY 7
 - (i) Project approach and strategy 7
 - (ii) Logical framework 9
- III. EVALUATION FINDINGS 11
 - (i) Relevance 11
 - (ii) Effectiveness 12
 - (iii) Efficiency 15
 - (iv) I

appeared to have managed the project **efficiently**. It delivered complete and timely reporting to UNDEF

as API has been working on access to information issues for years. API was also one of many organizations working on this topic at the national level and coordinated closely with these efforts to avoid duplication and to help ensure a unified approach. API used **a soft approach which gained it access** to loc

II. Introduction and development context

(i) **The project and evaluation objectives**

The *People's Access to Public Information (PAPI)* project in Cambodia (UDF-CMB-10-381) was a two-year USD 200,000 project implemented by API. USD 25,000 of this was retained by UNDEF for monitoring and evaluation purposes. There was also USD 35,000 in co-funding provided by DanChurch Aid

Development Programme (UNDP) and the experts who did the baseline survey and final

There are some laws that do guarantee some rights for information or contain relevant clauses. The Constitution protects the right of freedom of expression which is considered as a precursor to the guarantee of the freedom of expression. The 1995 Press Law recognizes the right of the press to “access information in government held records.” It stipulates that a request can be made in writing, specifying the information sought and officials are to reply within 30 days. It also

III. Project strategy

(i) Project approach and strategy

With this project, API intended to address the problems of social accountability, transparency and the responsiveness of local authorities to the needs of local communities in Cambodia. Although Cambodia had started the decentralization process with the commune elections in 2002, these officials lacked an adequate understanding of their roles and responsibilities and ability to respond to community needs. API felt that it could strengthen citizen access to information and demand for accountability by strengthening the commune officials' capacity to manage public information. This would increase official responsiveness to citizen demands and improve relations with their communities. API identified three areas for improvements in these areas which it intended to address in this project. These were:

Lack of a legal framework for access to public information. Without an access to information law, citizens are unable to demand their rights since Cambodia does not have a culture or history of sharing government information with the public.

Lack of awareness and understanding of local authorities on the obligations of government to routinely make information available to the public.

Lack of capacity of local officials and civil society to disclose public information within their communities. For example, this leaves citizens without knowledge of official prices for public documents, such as birth certificates, and corrupt officials free to charge more.

By addressing these areas, API expected the project would increase citizen demands and governmental

hold information dissemination campaigns in schools and villages, and organize a media campaign through radio, television, newspapers and talk shows on access to information in a democratic society. API also intended to produce documentation on the importance of access to information to ensure transparency in reporting on the Cambodian MDGs, governance and national resource management and organize public community forums and educational materials.

Integrating access to information within the target council's administration and plans. API intended to provide equipment such as filing cabinets to improve information management, create mechanisms/tools to collect information, develop a citizen feedback mechanism, and provide technical assistance and coaching of the commune and district delivery systems, and integrate access to information in their annual communal investment plans. It also intended to support CBOs to actively engage with local communities and to participate in monthly meetings.

Increasing public dialogue and support for passage of an access to information law. API intended to do a comparative regional review on successful CSO engagement in the promotion of access to information (funded by DanChurch Aid), and contribute with CSOs and donors to advocate for a legal framework for access to information. It also intended to support the drafting of this law by providing technical support, lobbying the legislature, ministries and organizing three multi-stakeholder workshops with relevant ministries politicians, civil society and donors.

The main project assumptions for these activities were that

platforms; and ensure that project activities did not conflict with the electoral calendar. It also intended to do Memorandums of Understanding with their partners and local councils that clearly specified the roles and responsibilities of each and directly involve CBOs to ensure that they were integrated in the project.

This project was built upon a 2008 - 2010 pilot project on commune information disclosure funded by DANIDA. API took its lessons learned to develop this UNDEF-funded project that expanded activities to three additional communes and added in the national level activities to address the lack of a legal framework for access to information legal framework. The six communes assisted were: Kork Balang (from pilot), Talom (new) in Mongkol District, Banteay Meanchey province; Sethel (from pilot) and Thlork Vean (new) in Samaki Meanchey District in Kampong Chhnang province; and Svay Rompea (from pilot) and Tuol Ampel (new) in Bosrsedh District, Kampong Speu (Figure 1).

API intended to ensure sustainability by building local capacity and systems on access to information (A2I) so the councils could continue to provide public information beyond the end of the project. Integrating access to information into the commune investment plans would further ensure the sustainability of project objectives. Strengthening the capacity of CBOs participating in the project and raising the awareness in targeted communities would ensure that local authorities continued to be held responsible for improving public access to information. Assistance and advocacy on the national legislation would help to ensure the permanence for access to public information at all levels. API intended to ensure gender was addressed in the project by having at least 40 percent of the participants in its training workshops be women, and by finding joint activities with some of its NGO partners who focus on women’s issues.

(ii) Logical framework

Capacity building of local councils and CBOs to promote access to information

<p>Training needs assessment Baseline survey Develop and deliver 7 trainings Follow-up and coaching of commune and district councils</p>	<p>Strengthened capacity of local councils for information management and on access to information issue</p>	<p>Increased public information available for citizens Increased demand for more responsive services</p>	<p>Increased transparency and more accountable and responsive local governance</p>
---	--	---	--

IV. Evaluation findings

(i) Relevance

The project was directly relevant to API's mandate. API had been an advocacy and policy project started by Pact Cambodia in 2003 and continued this after it became an independent NGO in 2007. The project activities fit into API's institutional vision which is to empower people to interact with their government to protect their rights and provide for their needs⁹. API demonstrated significant intellectual capacity for the topic of access to information which is reflected in the numerous studies and strategies developed with project funding.¹⁰ It also leads the Access to Information Law Campaign Working Group comprised of about 30 NGOs.

API sees information as the

official. This increased the value for these booklets for everyone from citizens, who had not had access before to such basic information as the councilors' or police phone numbers, to the local officials and NGOs working in the area who used the data.

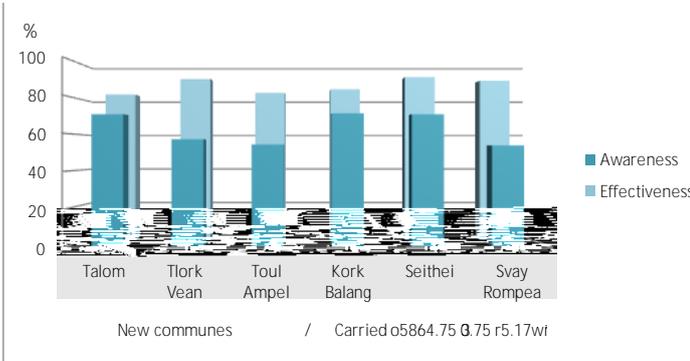
However, outside of the activities directed at the commune officials, most of the activities were designed as once or twice a year efforts that involved a limited number of villagers and almost no follow up with them afterwards. This limited the relevance of the project for the villagers to having the contact list for local officials, and the prices for some public services, but it did not help them with other pressing needs, such as who to contact for information for land issues. Land was an issue raised by the villagers interviewed in all of the communes visited and far surpassed the need for a communal contact number as they all knew where to find their local officials if needed. If this project had expanded the range of information provided in its booklets to include contact information for issues beyond the control of local officials, such as land or other issues raised by forum participants (such as violence prevention and illegal gambling), this would have significantly increased its relevance for villagers.

(ii) Effectiveness

API delivered most of the anticipated outputs and exceeded its targets in some cases according to its reporting. The effectiveness of the activities and the extent to which they contributed towards achieving the intended project outcomes is not clear, especially at the grass roots level. At the national level, there was very little political will from the ruling party for an access to information law, and analysts thought it was strategic for a project to work on the issue at the grass roots level so that the people would know they had these rights to information.

At that local level, API undertook a baseline study that gave a good picture of the communities at the start of the project, and a training needs survey that provided an excellent baseline for the level of knowledge for local officials and CBOs at the start of the project. It also undertook a project reflections report that looked at the end state of the communities. That study reported on the levels of awareness of villagers on access to information and on the perceptions of local authorities on the effectiveness of the project,

Figure 2: Level of villager awareness and local official perception of effectiveness of project



(Figure 2) but it did not compare these findings against the baseline or training study which would have provided a better idea of the actual effectiveness and impact of this project.

The reflection report did note however, a positive feedback for the project among commune officials, averaging 88 percent. This did not vary significantly between officials in the newly assisted communes and the ones that were carried over from the pilot project. Villager knowledge on access to information was lower, ranging from 53.75 percent in the carried-over commune of Svay Rompea to 93 percent in the also carried-over commune of Seithei. There was little difference between the levels of the old and new communes assisted in Kampong Speu and Banteay Meanchey, but there was a higher level of knowledge noted in

the carried-over commune in Kampong Chhang. They had an awareness level of

communal council said they had between 100 and 400 people attend their forums, API said it wanted to keep most forums to about 60 - 80 people so that they could have an opportunity to talk. These forums were by invitation only so were not open for the general public. API did do a questionnaire for

doubtful. Even though CBOs were invited to the trainings, they were not included as part of project implementation. If they had, this might have helped to increase the project's reach and effectiveness as well as contributed to more sustainable outcomes. API itself did not provide the follow up needed to turn its activities into a more synergistic program which would have increased its effectiveness and impact. Much of this was conceptual, but another part was the limited number of staff funded under the project. It also relied heavily on the volunteers and their monthly report and seemed to have undertaken limited performance monitoring of them. It was also a budget allocation issue, as less than USD 2,000 was allocated and spent for API follow up and coaching of commune and district councils.

The amount spent to develop the community pamphlets (USD 4,350 or two percent of the project budget) was an efficient use of resources. The need for a large poster to place in persons' homes is, however, debatable. Although it was only five percent of the budget, other options could have been to make small plasticized cards that could have been mass produced and more widely distributed. API produced a number of radio programs on the right to know and access to information that included dramas, spots and talk shows with invited speakers from the working group. API used an NGO radio managed by the Cambodian Center for Independent Media (CCIM), which also worked on freedom of information issues, to organize these elements. This only used five percent of the budget but provided the project with a broader reach than it could get from working in six communes. CCIM has a potential listener pool of 8.5 million people in 14 provinces, but API did not commission market information that could have indicated how many persons heard the messages and programs.

API, as an NGO that evolved from an internationally managed project, had very good reporting systems in place. It had developed forms for citizen complaints, had sign in sheets for meetings, required monthly reporting from its volunteers and kept notes of its meetings and project activities. It analyzed the results of its feedback forms from public forums and the suggestion boxes. It commissioned a baseline, training and end of project studies and had

Participating commune councilors better aware of access to information requirements and what that entails for them as public officials, and are more confident in sharing public information than other councilors in rural areas.

Some reduction in prices paid for public documents than paid by villagers in other rural communes. However, in general these prices were still negotiated, and were above the posted price.

Reduced tensions between villagers and commune officials. This was noted primarily by the commune officials themselves who felt villagers were not as quick to blame them for problems because they knew the rules better. The feedback from the forums also showed a high satisfaction rate for the roles played by commune officials, with almost 90 percent satisfied to highly satisfied and with almost 90 percent saying they had received responses to their questions posed at API events.

Increased number of phone calls to counselors from villagers. In Toul Ampel, for example, Councilors said they had never received any calls previously as no one had their number. In Svay Rupea the council said they had never gotten calls before and now got calls every week. The Doctor also reported getting more phone calls as he had also posted all the staff's photos and phone numbers on the clinic's walls.

Personal empowerment for some participants including local officials, CBO and perhaps some participating villagers.

(iv) Provide for adequate staffing for the project to ensure that there is sufficient follow up for activities and enough supervision for volunteers. This recommendation already appears to be partially fulfilled for the follow-on EU-funded project which is providing for paid persons rather than volunteers. This recommendation follows conclusions (IV) and (vi).

(v) More inclusion and consideration for villagers, and especially youth participation in future activities, especially for interactions with communal council levels. Youth are more than two-thirds of the population and should be integrated into all civic participation and democratization activities. This recommendation follows conclusions (v).

(vi) Use the same indicators measured in the baseline for the end survey so that project performance can be more accurately measured.

VIII. ANNEXES

Annex 1: Evaluation questions:

DAC criterion	Evaluation Question	Related sub-questions
Relevance	To what extent was the project, as designed and implemented 63.984 7326	

Annex 2: Documents Reviewed:

Advocacy and Policy Institute website, <http://www.apiinstitute.org/>

Advocacy and Policy Institute,

Mr. Keo Phirum

MP-Elect, CNRP Party

Annex 4 : Acronyms