



Advocacy and Policy Institute (API)

# Annual Report 2014



P H N O M P E N H

March 2015

## Contents

Forward .....	2
1. Introducing the Advocacy and Policy Institute (API) .....	3
1.1: Our Vision, Mission and Goal .....	3
1.2. The people and resources behind our actions.....	4
1.3 The people and organisations benefitting from our work.....	4
1.4 Where we work .....	5
2. Cambodia today .....	6
3. Our activities and achievements.....	6
3.1 Capacity building: improving awareness and understanding .....	6
3.2. The Government's Deconcentration and Decentralisation process: advocating, supporting, improving and promoting local government.....	8
3.3 Public access to public information and its disclosure: preparing the way for legislation .....	11
3.4 Supporting the skills of civil society to advocate, collaborate and communicate.....	13
3.5 Our organisation's achievements.....	15
4. Our learning experiences .....	16
5. Focusing on the sustainability of our actions .....	17
6. Focusing on API's impact .....	17
7. Conclusions for 2014 and plans for the year ahead, 2015 .....	19

## FORWARD

Along with the great efforts of the Royal Government to promote local economic development and the welfare of Cambodian citizens in its National Programme for Sub National Democratic Development 2010-2019 and other reform programmes API has made positive contributions to enhancement of performance of sub-national councils and their administration for better delivery of public services and to education of citizens to exercise their rights to information. With financial supports from donors such as the Bread for the World (BfdW); DanChurchAid/ChristianAid (DCA/CA); Global Road Safety Partnership. (GRSP); The British Embassy (BE); The European Union (EU); The Open Society Foundation (OSF); The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC); USAID through The Result for Development Institute (R4D), API in partnership with concerned civil society organisations has been implementing a number of local governance supporting projects/programmes.

This publication aims to highlight major accomplishments, lessons learned and potential impacts from policy development to practices at the grassroots. For instance, the implementation of the EU financed project entitled 'Increasing Access to Public Information' (I-API) project (2013-2015), with six partners (Article 19, COWS, FACT, KBSC, MB and VSG) is a springboard to ensure the effective implementation of local governance principles. More importantly, the Government's key ministries, particularly the Ministry of Information, higher local authorities, partners, NGO networks, CBOs and youth networks highly appreciated the important input of API, as a leading organisation, to the drafting process of Cambodia's access to information legislation and to other initiatives facilitating rights, particularly the enforcement of access to information when the law adopted.

While the achievements over the past years have been impressive in laying the foundation for democratic development reforms in API's target areas, API will continue to address the remaining issues by sharing roles, integrating public input into the draft access to information legislation, strengthening the roles and responsibilities of local governments to address the needs of the poor and marginalised people.

On behalf of the Board of Directors, I would like to express our appreciation to contributing donors, the Government's concerned national and sub national institutions, in particular the Ministry of Information, Ministry of Interior, NCDD Secretariat, District/Municipal Councils, Commune/Sangkat Councils, CSO partners, communities and citizens for their time and effort for "building the capacity for change in the communities and the society". Without their active participation and cooperation it is true to say that the projects/programmes might not be able to accomplish such results.



Sinthay Neb  
*Director*



Meas Nee, PhD  
*Chairperson of the Boards*

## 1. INTRODUCING THE ADVOCACY AND POLICY INSTITUTE (API)

API is a Cambodian nonprofit and non government organisation. We work with all national and international institutions who share our values; we build bridges between governments, citizens and the private sector and we act to improve communication amongst Parliament, the Government and civil society. We encourage evidence based advocacy actions in partnership with issue based organisations and networks. We promote advocacy, pro-poor policies and public access to public information and information disclosure.

As a key partner of Parliament and local government we aim to address the needs and concerns of Cambodia's people, particularly those who are marginalised and vulnerable. In many ways, API plays a critical role in Cambodia's advance towards achieving democratisation, good governance and poverty reduction.

As a leading advocacy capacity building institution we deliver advocacy training and produce publications in Khmer and English promoting understanding of advocacy, and the Government's Decentralisation and De concentration Policy. We head the advocacy campaign for a law on public access to public information and public information disclosure.

### Our governance profile

Transparent  
Accountable  
Independent Board with  
good attendance  
Independent audit  
Internal audit  
Separate duties for Chair  
of the Board and Director

### 1.1: Our Vision, Mission and Goal

**Our vision:** A Cambodia that through poverty reduction and the protection of human rights creates a national culture of harmony with sustainable democratic, political, and economic stability.

### Our governance principles

Leadership  
Effectiveness  
Engagement  
Robust financial  
management  
Risk management

**Our mission:** To serve the long term democratic and social development needs of Cambodia through the empowerment of people to interact with their government to protect their rights and provide for their needs.

**Our goal:** To increase Cambodia's democratic space by creating more effective advocates and responsive government institutions.

## 1.2. The people and resources behind our actions

API's progress is only possible because of the dedication of our Board members, employees and volunteers, donors, partners and the interest, enthusiasm and support of people in local and national government, Parliament, civil society organisations and networks, communities and the media with whom we work. They give invaluable support allowing us to work towards our goal.

**Our partners and networks:** We collaborate with partners and networks so that we can work at local and national levels. Our partners support activities and share responsibilities for actions which would be difficult to implement singly. API's partners in 2014 included: Article 19 (A19), the Cambodian Organisation for Women's Support (COWS), the Fishery Actions Coalitions Team (FACT), the Khmer Buddhist Society in Cambodia (KBSC), Mlup Baitong (MB), the Village Support Group (VSG), the Coalition of Road Safety, and sixty Commune Councils.

API leads three and works with eight issue based civil society networks to improve knowledge and understanding about advocacy and public access to public information, to facilitate policy discussion and to implement evidence based advocacy actions. We are members of the NGO Access to Information Working Group (NGOA2IWG), The Access Initiative (TAI) in Cambodia and the NGO Working Group for Partnerships in Decentralisation (WGPD).

**Our financial support and expenses:** International donors provide the major part of our funding. We match our strategic ambitions to the available resources and by practicing sound financial policies and procedures we are able to move confidently towards our goal and vision. In 2014 we received generous funds from seven donors<sup>1</sup> for projects benefiting the Cambodian people. In addition we boost our finances with fees received for providing training to government departments, local authorities, local and international civil society organisations and networks.

**How did we spend our funds?** Our funds were used for all our activities including administration, personnel salaries and expenses and office premises. Our total expenditure for 2014 was US\$781,186 which was less than in 2013 (\$827,221), a 5.56% fall.

## 1.3 The people and organisations benefitting from our work

Our colleagues/fellow workers, local councillors, personnel from local and national government, Members of Parliament and civil society help us with our activities and by doing so are in the right place to 'learn on the job'. They support us and in return gain knowledge and useful skills.

---

<sup>1</sup> Bread for the World (BfdW); DanChurchAid/ChristianAid (DCA/CA); Global Road Safety Partnership. (GRSP); The British Embassy (BE); The European Union (EU); The Open Society Foundation (OSF); The Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC); USAID through The Result for Development Institute (R4D).



## 2. CAMBODIA TODAY

The Cambodian Government began its Deconcentration and Decentralisation Process in 2001<sup>4</sup> to establish, in theory, effective local government. In practice, councillors and officials struggle to know their roles and responsibilities and the public strive to understand what to expect from local government. There is minimal trust, negligible public participation, deep seated corruption, poor public services and in addition the public are oblivious of major decisions affecting them and how to hold decision makers accountable. People are unaware of their right to access public information, how and where to find this information and how to use it effectively. There are significant gaps in human rights and democratic processes.

The majority of people live in rural communities as subsistence farmers and fishermen. They rely heavily on natural resources and the responsiveness of local councils and civil society for their needs. Few people have had the opportunity of a good education, so many do not understand and show little interest in democracy, good governance and human rights and know what to expect from local government: there is a need to bolster public confidence. It is also necessary to interact with local government officials and councillors about public concerns and to hold them accountable.

Approximately four million Cambodians live on less than \$1.25 per day.

More than 50% of Cambodia's population are less than 25 years old<sup>5</sup> and, as a direct result of the 1970s, women head more than one fifth of households. Cambodian women have traditionally been marginalised causing gender inequality, gender based violence, gender discrimination and inadequate maternal and women's health.

## 3. OUR ACTIVITIES AND ACHIEVEMENTS

API responds to Cambodia's political and social situation by working to its name the **Advocacy and Policy Institute - building capacity**. In 2014, as in other years, the overarching method to achieve our results was through **capacity building** which encourages more awareness, understanding and knowledge and which supports our promotion of **advocacy** on local issues and national **policies**. We particularly concentrated our energies on progress towards legislation for a public access to public information law and preparing communities, civil society, local and national government for its implementation.

**3.1 Capacity building: improving awareness and understanding** is achieved by formal and direct actions (training, forums, etc.) and informally and indirectly through meetings and general discussion. Our activities included:-

---

<sup>4</sup> The Government is committed to implement the de centralisation and de-concentration framework and the National Programme for Sub-national Democratic Development 2010-2019.

<sup>5</sup> Source: the 2013 World Fact Book of the United States Central Intelligence Agency.

- 👉 Providing training courses to national and provincial civil society networks, national and local civil society, community based organisations, local and national government and politicians. Topics embraced local governance, human rights, democratic development, practical advocacy skills, environmental law and public access to public information and information management.
- 👉 Working with youth groups and built the capacity for conducting claim-list and advocating the local government on their issues, particular the health related issues.
- 👉 Producing information materials: booklets and leaflets on public service fees, drinking and driving policy, public access to public information and local government budgets. A leaflet on public access to information was distributed to every family in our target areas.
- 👉 Working with the media on national radio talk shows about the public right to public information. These were broadcast in six provinces and Phnom Penh.
- 👉 Organising national and local workshops and forums to discuss public access to public information legislation, public information disclosure and how to solve community issues.
- 👉 Jointly holding national workshops on the national budget, 'Open Government Partnership', Access to Information - 'Looking Back and Ways Forward, Adopting Access to Information Law' and 'Strengthening and Expanding Partnership for More Effective Fight against Corruption'.
- 👉 Organising the 8th National Advocacy Conference for civil society, local and national government and Parliament and a conference in partnership with the Ministry of Interior: 'Access to Information, Transparency and Effective People Participation in Local Governance' for district councillors, governors and civil society.
- 👉 Organising study visits to other communes to learn and exchange experiences and good practice on information disclosure and information management.
- 👉 Leading and joining with community based organisations and civil society networks to discuss and lobby the Government, Parliament, development partners and policy makers to identify policy gaps and provide practical recommendations for better laws and better law enforcement.
- 👉 Updating our training curriculums on policy advocacy, advocacy on HIV and AIDS, advocacy on natural resources and advocacy on good governance
- 👉 Organising partnership and reflection meetings between ourselves, local authorities, communities and partners.



**Our effective capacity building activities ensured more people had better awareness, understanding and knowledge** and this had the knock on effect of facilitating our work with local and national Government, Parliament, civil society, the media and community people to bring about positive change in democratic processes, public services and national laws. Our capacity building activities enabled such positive achievements as:-

- ➡ More people with knowledge and understanding about advocacy, democracy, local government, public access to information and Cambodia's current laws and their implementation leading to more effective advocacy campaigns on local and national issues; more public appreciation about public service fees; better understanding about advocacy, human rights and the right to public information, (particularly the Government's obligation to proactively disclose public information<sup>6</sup>); more people with the confidence and knowledge to actively participate in council planning processes and discussions<sup>7</sup> and to interact about their rights and better services; more local councils and local government officials with better understanding of their roles and responsibilities being more accountable and able to make decisions to bring about positive sustainable effects on livelihoods and public services; more community based organisations starting to use their improved skills to contribute to <sup>8</sup>community improvement plans as well as to collaborate with their councils on community issues and to elicit more positive responses from local government and Members of Parliament on land claims and forestry concerns.
- ➡ With knowledge and understanding has come improved and stronger relationships between ourselves, partners, community based organisations and local government enabling better promotion of public access to public information, accountability, transparency and actions to solve community issues.
- ➡ Our relations with the Government and Parliament are more comfortable as understanding and familiarity start to dispel suspicion and facilitate collaboration and trust. Members of the NGO Working Group Partnerships in Decentralisation (WGPD) with their new found knowledge and confidence for have found it easier to engage with development partners and the Government about decentralisation reform.

### **3.2. The Government's Deconcentration and Decentralisation process: advocating, supporting, improving and promoting local government**

Local government has been slowly evolving in Cambodia since the introduction of Commune Councils in 2002. We support councillors, public officers, civil society and communities to understand the role of local government, to improve transparency

---

<sup>6</sup> 95% of community people can describe the importance of public access to information and define their right to access this information. API-IAPI project external midterm evaluation, December 2014.

<sup>7</sup> API-IAPI project external midterm evaluation, December 2014

<sup>8</sup> Information from API's partners and local government officials.

and accountability and initiate and upgrade public services. Our activities to increase awareness, knowledge and understanding worked in parallel with the following actions:-

- 👉 Providing assistance to our target Commune Councils to supply public information and organise meetings<sup>9</sup> to distribute information.
- 👉 Supporting the Budget Working Group led by the NGO Forum.
- 👉 Organising local forums<sup>10</sup> on budget issues, producing sets of commune and district budget information for community people and making a list of public concerns about national and local budgets.
- 👉 Supporting the advocacy efforts of community based organisations to encourage local government to provide more public information, better public services and solve community issues.
- 👉 Implementing and improving civil society and local government cooperation by introducing memoranda of understanding.
- 👉 Supporting public understanding about what to expect from public services and local government officials and councillors. Encouraging councillors and officials to understand and effectively implement their roles and responsibilities.
- 👉 Supporting Svay Rieng Provincial NGO Advocacy Networks to produce advocacy plans on three urgent provincial issues about agriculture, education and unemployment.
- 👉 Jointly organising policy discussions with Senators, Members of Parliament, Members of the European Union's Parliament and Members of the German Parliament, senior government ministers and civil society on the Cambodian Government's national plans and draft laws, Cambodian civil society and human rights issues in Cambodia.
- 👉 Producing and using social accountability tools to look at preschool education and provide evidence for advocacy actions. Using these tools, especially citizen feedback surveys to assess public understanding about public access to public information and the public's satisfaction with their elected councillors.
- 👉 Collaborating to implement the Government's social accountability framework and to strengthen implementation of the Government's Deconcentration and Decentralisation process.



<sup>9</sup> A thousand to nearly five thousand community people attended.

<sup>10</sup> Ten local forums<sup>10</sup> on budget issues with over a thousand participants.

**These activities in association with capacity building achieved an overall improvement in the standards of local government in our areas:-**

- ☞ Communes have functioning transparency and accountability mechanisms; District and Commune Councils are disclosing more public information<sup>11</sup>, including that about budgets; investment plans are being implemented and people are beginning to actively participate in council planning processes and to share the challenges of putting into practice the investment plans<sup>12</sup>; feedback and complaint mechanisms are functioning as councillors and officials gain the understanding, knowledge and skills necessary to respond to constituent concerns; the new stronger links between API, partners, community based organisations and local government have resulted in the effective promotion of public access to public information, accountability, transparency and more positive actions to solve community issues.
- ☞ 378 critical community issues about natural resources and the environment, the economy, local government, security and gender raised by community based organisations and collected by API, partners and local communities were put to Commune and District Councils. 277 were solved or future action was promised, and a further fourteen solved in provincial workshops.
- ☞ 23 policy<sup>13</sup> concerns, which the provincial authority could not address, were submitted to the National Assembly, the Senate and relevant government ministries for intervention in a study visit to Parliament. Six were solved by Parliament and government ministries and the remainder are under review by the National Assembly and Senate Standing Committee.
- ☞ There are more requests from community based organisations and communities for local and national government public information forums because these provide them with direct access to public information about public administrative services, social, economic, environmental and legal frameworks.
- ☞ The partnership memoranda of understanding enabling civil society and the public to participate in government decisions and hold government institutions accountable at the local level are being effectively used.
- ☞ The social accountability tools we produced are being used in all out target areas, especially the citizen feedback surveys which are used to assess public understanding on public access to public information and public satisfaction with elected councillors.
- ☞ Local and national government ministries and Members of Parliament are more open to discussion with communities on the critical issues affecting them.



<sup>11</sup> 90% of target commune and district systematically disclose information. API-IAPI project midterm evaluation, December 2014.

<sup>12</sup> API-IAPI project external midterm evaluation, December 2014.

<sup>13</sup> These relate to such issues as the low price of rice, illegal migration, illegal fishery issues and illegal cutting down of the rain forest.

### **3.3 Public access to public information and its disclosure: preparing the way for legislation**

Cambodia is slowly progressing towards legislation for a public access to public information law. API constantly advocates for this law while working to improve awareness and understanding about the right to public access to public information and the disclosure of public information, the implications of such a law on all aspects of Cambodian life and the practical issues needing to be faced by local and national government for its implementation. In addition to providing extensive training and coaching and outreach activities we put into practice such measures as:-

- 👉 Assisting community based organisations to encourage their local government to provide more public information.
- 👉 Supporting advocacy for 'Access to Information within Disability sector' with the Cambodian Peoples Disability Organisation and supporting this organisation to produce a statement for the Ministry of Information on the needs for public information among people with disabilities.
- 👉 Encouraging Commune Councils to provide public information, providing instruction on document management and supplying suitable storage facilities for public information.



- 👉 Arranging national discussions to support parliamentary debate on a Cambodian public access to public information law.
- 👉 Producing a civil society advocacy strategy on access to information law with input from civil society and the NGO Access to Information Working Group.
- 👉 Compiling a report, publications and a DVD analysing public access to public information legislation as a way of encouraging a Cambodian law and accompanying policies. Participants at the national conference, foreign embassies, Cambodian politicians, the Ministry of Interior, and the Ministry of Information received copies of this DVD.

- 👉 Reviewing (using legal experts and supported by national and international civil society organisations) the Cambodian legal framework on access to information and information disclosure.
- 👉 Producing with the NGO Access to Information Working Group an advocacy strategy on a public access to public information law with a stakeholder analysis aimed at assisting civil society to understand their position in supporting such legislation.
- 👉 Leading the Access to Information Working Group to advocate for an access to information law with the Ministry of Information by organising ten national discussions to coordinate and support Parliament to debate this law's development.

**Public access to public information: our advocacy and capacity building achievements** are gaining increased support among the media, local government<sup>14</sup>, local and national civil society<sup>15</sup> organisations and networks for the public access to public information campaign which is seen as having a positive impact on people's working and family lives. Importantly the Ministry of Information and Parliament have started to support the development of a public access to public information law. There is more awareness<sup>16</sup> of the importance of the public right to public information particularly the Government's obligation to proactively disclose public information. Civil society has increased and improved carrying out their rights to public information projects promoting human rights and good governance.



- 👉 90% of our target commune and district information systems are easily accessible to the public and practical and user friendly with professional filing systems.
- 👉 More public information is available<sup>17</sup>, particularly on development plans and councillor roles and responsibilities and this is systematically being disclosed by local councillors and officials. Our audits show a vast increase in the number of people actively using public information for their own, their family and community's use<sup>18</sup>.

<sup>14</sup> Local government in five provinces

<sup>15</sup> Including Cambodia's development partners and United Nations agencies

<sup>16</sup> Most of the population (in our target areas) realise the importance of public access to public information and are able to define their right to access this information.

<sup>17</sup> Information on commune and district budgets was disclosed in fourteen target communes.

<sup>18</sup> 46% of the population in the target areas actively accessing public information for their own, their family or/and their community's use: API-IAPI project external midterm evaluation, December 2014

- 👉 All commune investment plans in our target areas contain activities to improve public access to public information and information disclosure at both commune and district levels.
- 👉 Our legal analysis reports, publications and policy guidelines are proving invaluable support for progressing a Cambodian public access and disclosure of public information law.
- 👉 Government ministries, politicians and development partners now recognise the scale of public support for a law on public access to public information, for instance, The Ministry of Information has signed a Memorandum of Understanding on drafting the Law on Access to Information with UNESCO.
- 👉 Government ministries and major development partners recognise the Access to Information Working Group's contributions and support for drafting the public access to information law.
- 👉 The Access to Information Working group<sup>19</sup> is officially recognised by the Ministry of Information as representing civil society in the Government Legislative Working Group for the development of an access to information law.
- 👉 The newly adopted Government Social Accountability Plan has clearly indicated that public access to public information is a priority.

### **3.4 Supporting the skills of civil society to advocate, collaborate and communicate**

Civil society plays a crucial role as a bridge between the Cambodian people and local and national government and contributes to all aspects of democratic principles and governance both locally and nationally. We support civil society to influence government decisions on community issues, to encourage improvements to national policies and to advocate for more public information from local and national government. We do this by such activities as:

- 👉 Producing draft guidelines for public and civil society's communication with local government.
- 👉 Implementing civil society's engagement with local government based on memoranda of understanding.
- 👉 Organising policy discussions between civil society networks and Senators and senior ministers, Members of Parliament, Members of the European Union Parliament and Members of the German Parliament and civil society networks on a new/amended Road Traffic Law and a drink driving policy, the Government's national strategic development plan (2014-18) and Three Year Implementation Plan, phase II, Annual NCDD Government Work Plan 2014, draft laws such as the Association and NGO Law, Cyber Crime Law, three Court Laws, the Labour Union Law and the Agricultural Land Law.
- 👉 Joining with civil society networks to visit relevant stakeholders and members of the European Union and German Parliaments in Belgium and

---

<sup>19</sup> This is lead by API

Germany to share information and discussions about the emerging civil society and its political context in Cambodia and the need to encourage the Cambodian Government to create a more enabling environment for civil society; the pressing human rights concerns in Cambodia and the importance of European NGOs, governments and assemblies to communicate with the Cambodian Government and National Assembly to be more attentive to the principles of democracy, transparency and accountability.

- 👉 Supporting the Budget Working Group led by the NGO Forum on budget issues and we jointly organised a training workshop on the national budget.
- 👉 Encouraging representatives and members of the NGO Forum (Budget Working Group) to promote and support the campaign for legislation on public access to public information and disclosure.
- 👉 Supporting advocacy for a new Road Traffic Law and legislation on alcohol use.
- 👉 Supporting civil society's advocacy strategies on four laws and a policy on Cyber Crime Law, the ILO Convention 189 promoting domestic workers rights, the Association and NGOs Law and an Access to Information Law.
- 👉 Supporting Svay Rieng Provincial NGO Advocacy Network to produce advocacy plans on three priority provincial issues about agriculture, education and unemployment.



**Our activities, supported by our capacity building activities, made possible the following achievements:-**

- 👉 Civil society was able to participate and influenced the Government's decisions on community and policy issues in all our target communes and districts.
- 👉 Advocacy campaigns on information disclosure at local and national government level are supported by the majority of civil society in our target provinces. 20
- 👉 The Government passed a new Road Traffic Law and a regulation was issued limiting alcohol promotion on the media. The Government and Parliament gave their full backing to civil society's demand for a 'Drink Driving Policy'.
- 👉 Civil society in our target areas fully supports the advocacy campaign for information disclosure at the local level<sup>21</sup>. It also participates in and

---

<sup>20</sup> API-IAPI Project External Midterm Evaluation, December 2014

influences local government decisions and holds councils accountable to address community issues.

👉 Mechanisms for the public and civil society to influence government decisions and hold government institutions accountable at local and national level have started to be practiced based on the partnership memoranda of understanding which API introduced.

👉 Civil society networks with better knowledge and skills are able to successfully implement advocacy campaigns on issues concerning land, forestry, fishery, deconcentration and decentralisation and disability, local budgets, etc.



👉 Improved communication and discussion between local and national government ministries, Members of Parliament and communities on community issues has led to positive action which include increasing in the number of public teachers in remote public schools, disclosing information to communities about a commercial contract between the Cambodian and Vietnamese Governments about imported and exported agricultural products and enforcing the laws about drug taking.

👉 Civil society and community advocacy action directly resulted in a Prakas (regulation) granting communities in two communes land to grow crops to improve their livelihood.

### **3.5 Our organisation's achievements**

We continue to be recognised as a professional, transparent and accountable organisation which is able to fully support and collaborate with its partners. Our achievements include:-

👉 We have recognition by our partners, local government in our target provinces and Parliament about our involvement in strengthening good governance and solving community issues is

👉 We completed all our main planned activities for 2014 including engaging with Parliament, supporting partners to implement activities and solving issues together with local authorities<sup>22</sup>.

👉 The Government and UNESCO confirm that API is a leading organisation in the consultation for the draft access to information law. API is a member of the Government's Access to Information Law Drafting Committee.

---

<sup>21</sup> 97% of civil society organisations. API-IAPI Project External Midterm Evaluation, December 2014

<sup>22</sup> This is based on information from the annual partnership reflection meeting with 35 staff from partners and API on 4-5 November, the Annual Stakeholder Meeting with 40 project beneficiaries (representatives of communities) on 24 November and API's annual staff retreat on 1-5 December 2014.

- 👉 The Ministry of Information issued a regulation (Prakas) prohibiting the promotion of alcohol on the media during specific times. This was one of API's policy recommendations to the Ministry in 2014.
- 👉 Due to the culmination of advocacy actions following an API public expenditure tracking survey in 2012, legislation was passed to increase the budget for early childhood education in 2015 and in the number of public teachers in remote public schools in Chet Bori.
- 👉 We made positive contributions to consultations on the Government's social accountability implementation plan 2014, the Government's Implementation Plan Phase II (IP3), Plan 2015- 2017 and the Government's Strategy 2014-2018.
- 👉 We gave input into the development of the United Nations Universal Periodic Review recommendations 'Access to Information Law for Action'.
- 👉 We attracted adequate funds to implement our planned activities.
- 👉 We were able to plan ahead for 2015 by, for instance, producing case studies in 2014 of five provinces.

#### 4. OUR LEARNING EXPERIENCES

As always we tried to learn from our experiences and challenges. Some of these were unique while others have been faced time and time again.

- 👉 Planning project activities. Due to political unrest (July 2013- July 2014), local government elections (May 2014) and the need to provide additional support to some community based organisations, local government councillors and officials we had to re plan some activities. We also needed to make an extra effort to ensure our projects encouraged the education of girls and women and gave support for them to become leaders in society.



- 👉 Blurring of roles. Some government officials are also politicians and some politicians hold government positions: this leads to instances of political discrimination. We issued a set internal rules for public forums to help create non political spaces.
- 👉 Supporting deconcentration and decentralisation and encouraging local government development often require extra activities. Some local government offices are inaccessible, in poor condition, without space and

storage and with personnel without documentation skills. We distributed filing cabinets to Commune Councils and provided training on document management. We also worked with relevant groups to implement the social accountability framework and strengthen deconcentration and decentralisation.

- 👉 Slow progress in drafting a public access to information law despite the official time frame 2014-2016 challenged our determination and advocacy actions for this law. We are patiently continuing to positively promote the passing of this law and its implementation.

## 5. FOCUSING ON THE SUSTAINABILITY OF OUR ACTIONS

By changing the minds and behaviour of people we are ensuring that our work and the results of our actions will be sustainable and will have the most impact. We realise that the more positive the results are from our work the more likely they are to change behaviour and the more likely they are to be sustainable.

- 👉 Fostering ownership of our activities supports their sustainability. As partners, civil society organisations, councillors and government officials become aware of their valuable contribution to Cambodia's Decentralisation and Deconcentration process and the campaign for public access to public information legislation they take on ownership.
- 👉 By supporting local and national government we encourage the Government's Deconcentration and Decentralisation process which in turn provides sustainability for our actions.
- 👉 By encouraging community and group (including women and youths) demand for public information we are generating a bottom up driving force for legislation on a law on public access to public information.
- 👉 We ensure our activities are sustainable by making monthly visits to the target communes and districts to follow up, monitor and reflect. Examples of best practice are exchanged.

## 6. FOCUSING ON API'S IMPACT

Assessing the impact of our activities is essential for us to know whether we have achieved what we set out to do. The difficulty is that we will not really know their impact for several years: we can just make informed guesses from the results of our work. We do know however that our sustainable results will contribute to the long term impact of our work for the good of Cambodia.

At the end of 2014 our capacity building activities were beginning to show an impact on local government:-

- 👉 Communities with better livelihoods due to improved public services, more awareness of their rights and more public participation in public decisions.
- 👉 Target commune investment plans implemented triggering more demand for public access to public information and information disclosure.

- 👉 There are improvements in local governance as local government demonstrates more transparent and accountable procedures, improved communication skills and it is better able to effectively take on its roles and responsibilities<sup>23</sup>.
- 👉 Community based organisations, local commune councils and local government are starting to work together for the good of the communities.
- 👉 With more knowledge and understanding of their roles and responsibilities community based organisations, local commune councils and local government are beginning to trust each other and are starting to work together for the good of the communities.
- 👉 The Government and Members of Parliament are starting to appreciate the role of civil society and to use the expertise of civil society organisations to support their work.
- 👉 As public bodies and civil society have better access to more complete, accurate, and timely information they are able to make decisions which are more beneficial to their communities.
- 👉 Our reputation is growing as we become recognised for our work and the way it is implemented and our professional transparent and accountable procedures.



<sup>23</sup> Community based organisations and the public considered that 97% of local government had improved.

## 7. CONCLUSIONS FOR 2014 AND PLANS FOR THE YEAR AHEAD, 2015

Evidence shows that we achieved what we planned for 2014 and a little bit more. Our achievements provide a firm foundation for 2015 which will see us:-

- 👉 Continuing to work towards our vision, mission and goal.
- 👉 Focusing more effort to improve public understanding about the right to public information<sup>24</sup> and maintaining support for the drafting and passing of public access to public information legislation.
- 👉 Encouraging effective implementation of the new 2014 laws.
- 👉 Continuing to maintain positive contributions to the Government's Deconcentration and Decentralisation process, the social accountability framework and other national policy agendas.
- 👉 Making every effort to encourage community based organisations, youth groups and Commune Councils to work together for the public good<sup>25</sup>.
- 👉 Continuing to maintain effective organisational support, to practice the principles of good governance, to remain bound by clear lines of accountability and transparency and to ensure effective management of the organisation and its resources.



---

<sup>24</sup> According to API's Information Availability Survey, 2014 it is still only 38% of the general community understand what public information is about.

<sup>25</sup> In 2014, 47% of the issues and input from Community Based Organisations were accepted by local councillors.

---

## **វិទ្យាស្ថានគន្លឹះ និងគោលនយោបាយ**

### **Advocacy and Policy Institute**

Address: Building Phnom Penh Villa #124, 2nd Floor,  
Room 206, Street 388, Toul Svay Prey 1, Chamkarmon,  
Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia

Tel: 023 213 486 / Fax: 023 213 487

E-mail: [apioffice@apiinstitute.org](mailto:apioffice@apiinstitute.org)

Website: [www.apiinstitute.org](http://www.apiinstitute.org)