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

EVALUATION REPORT

UDF-RAP-09-315 Deepening Local Democratic Governance through Social Accountability in Asia *(*Cambodia, Bangladesh*)*

Date: 21 July 2014

Acknowledgements

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(iv) Recommendations

Applicants should develop for their proposals a **well-thought logic of intervention;** select **SMART indicators;** and set themselves **ambitious but realistic and achievable objectives**. **Funding to proposals mainly focused on activities and outputs rather than on results may be seriously questioned**. This recommendation links with the conclusion 3.

Applicants applying for a **regional project should carefully justify its regional dimension**; this recommendation derives from the conclusion 2.

It is recommended that the **roles of partners be clearly defined** and set in the Project Document so as to the mobilisation of the needed expertise. Consistent resources and means to facilitate cooperation and communication between partners to ensure knowledge and know-how capitalization shall be deployed. This recommendation derives from conclusion 3.

Considering the **over-budgeting issues** noticed by the evaluators, it is recommended that grantees include all travel costs under the same line of budget. This goes with the recommendation to the applicants to **double check** their financial proposal for spotting **errors of over or under budgeting**. This recommendation links with conclusion 5.

Grantees should be bound to **update at the project end- the relevant statistics** / data sets **of their initial baseline surveys** as to document changes over the period. This will support the assessment of effectiveness and impact as evidenced in conclusion 8.

The project would have gained in quality and impact if provisions had been made for a **consistent process of coaching / mentoring during the most critical phases of its capacity building interventions**. This recommendation emerged from conclusion 9.

II. INTRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

i. The project and evaluation objectives

The regional project Deepening Local Democratic Governance through Social Accountability in Asia ran from the 1st March 2011 to the end of March 2013 and had an overall budget of USD 375,000 of which USD 25,000 were retained for Monitoring and Evaluation purposes. It was coordinated by the Indian organization PRIA and implemented in Cambodia by Silaka and in Bangladesh by Prip Trust. The implementation sites were two Sangkats (administrative divisions of the Cambodian towns) of the municipality of Takhmao and two Wards (administrative divisions of the Bengali towns) of the municipality of Rajshahi.

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team leader. The stakeholders interviewed in both Bangladesh and Cambodia are listed in Annex 4.

Preliminary remote interviews were conducted before the fieldwork with the Project Manager in New Delhi and the implementing partner in Bangladesh. Internal coordination meetings were conducted remotely before, and daily during the fieldwork.

The evaluation was based on documental analysis (project documentation, literature, web search) and interviews (both individual and group interviews were conducted). In both countries the evaluators met the relevant project staff, subcontractors, beneficiaries of the project (local authorities, citizens), civil society organizations, media and staff of other international organizations financing projects in the same or similar areas of intervention.

The face-to-face interviews were organised in Phnom Penh, Takhmao, Dhaka and Rajshahi. An end-of-field debriefing was organised at the seat of Silaka with personal attendance of the Director of the organization and remote participation of the Project Manager from PRIA. The Director of Prip Trust, invited, did not join. All the evaluators attended the debriefing (Ali remotely).

iii. Development context

Cambodia

The legal framework for the implementation of the ongoing governance reform in Cambodia started with the adoption of the Law on Commune and Sangkat Administrative Management in 2002 and was followed the same year by the 1st Commune/Sangkat council elections. The Strategic Framework on Decentralization & De-concentration (D&D) adopted in June 2005, establishes the vision that further guides governance reform for the capital city, the provinces, municipalities, districts and khans. It was then followed by the adoption of the Organic Law in 2008 which outlined the roles, responsibilities, and authorities of local governance institutions. The first indirect election of the sub-national councilors (provincial and district councilors) was then conducted in 2009.

Although district councils are elected and have the legal capacity to perform own functions and manage own resources to respond to the local development plans, their performance and capacity have been limited, as functions and financial resources have not been transferred to them. Opportunities for individual citizens and civil society organizations to participate to local governance and demand transparency and accountability remain often unknown and unexploited.

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processes, simplification and transparent fees; the first service that was delegated was the delivery of licenses and permissions; other service lines were then transferred with bilateral agreements between the concerned Ministries and the National Committee for Decentralisation and Deconcentration (NCDD)[5].

Despite such impressive array of governance reforms and positive policy interventions, the

III. PROJECT STRATEGY

(i) Project strategy and approach

The long-term strategy of the project was to contribute to the adoption in different Asian countries of local democratic governance practices through the promotion of social accountability processes to address the problem of insufficient access to basic services in poor urban areas.

In order to achieve this, the project aimed at piloting a method of work based on a structured dialogue between citizens and local authorities. This method of work relies on the use of four main tools:

1. The setting up of Neighbourhood Committees

Project Activities & Interventions	Intended outcomes	

The Project Document did not include among its expected outcomes the improvement of the access to water and waste collection services in the two urban areas selected for the intervention. By this omission, the project gave a misrepresentation of the methodology of work that it adopted, as if it was not suitable to produce any positive change at the local level. Yet, the main challenge of this project was to motivate all the involved parties to embrace and take-up the method proposed based on concrete positive changes that the project had to achieve in the two fields selected for its intervention: water and solid waste management. Consequently, the logic presented here includes this objective as the medium-term impact that is common to the Interventions 1 and 2.

IV. EVALUATION FINDINGS

(i) Relevance

The assessment of relevance should take into consideration several aspects; they are:

Relevance to UNDEF mandate. There are no doubts that the project objectives well fit into the UNDEF mandate (the deepening of democracy through civic engagement).

Relevance to the countries selected for the intervention. The selection of Cambodia and Bangladesh appears sound because justified by the presence in both countries of a legal framework

centre (quasi-rural).
Wards selected in Rajshahi: the ward comprising the city centre and a remote, quasi-rural ward.

The differences reported above are not sufficient reasons in themselves for criticizing the choice made by the project; however, the project should have taken care of adequately justify the validity of this selection based on the analysis of its possible impacts on the methodology of work, project organisation and budget.

Relevance to the needs of citizens. The project selected access to water and sanitation services as the fields of intervention of the project. This selection is sound and well justified by the findings of very accurate baseline surveys that were conducted in both municipalities at the beginning of the intervention.

However, beneficiary citizens were not involved / consulted in the process of selection of these two areas of intervention, despite the fact that an inclusive process was expected. This missing involvement of citizens during the design phase may well be one of the causes of the initial problems reported by the Final Narrative Report for Cambodia, in particular of the *lack of willingness on the part of citizens to participate and engage in governance issues, which is a big constraint*.

While all project documents refer to interventions in the areas of water and sanitation, sanitation as such was not addressed by the project, which in reality focussed on access to water and solid waste management. This can be due to a semantic problem[8]

However, no provision was made for coordination activities at the time of the project implementation aimed at, e.g., agreeing on the methodology of work and the tools; exchanging practices; assessing the validity of the methodological approach and sharing lessons learnt; analyzing errors and fine tuning the methodology; etc. No face-to-face or remote meeting involving the implementing teams in both countries was called during implementation; the added value of this project in comparison with two similar projects implemented each of them in a single and different country therefore does not emerge.

Remarks on project design

As reported above, the project adopted a methodology of work that was based on the experiences made by PRIA and that are consolidated by about 20 years of practice in the

partners, there is a clear link between the

(ii) Effectiveness

Intervention 1 - Capacity building of poor urban households. The activities conducted under this Intervention (and briefly synthesised in the Logical framework above) were consistent with the objective of achieving its expected outcomes; all of them were conducted and the promised outputs delivered. In Takhmao, out of the 10 initial Neighbourhood Committees that were established by the project, three did not survive until the end of the project due to falling-away of the citizens initially involved. In Rajshahi on the contrary all the Neighbourhood Committees remain active until the end of the project.

The same goes for the activities that were planned to contribute to the achievement of the results of both Interventions 1 and 2. Plans were changed as regards the organization of the study tour (two study tours were organized instead of one); this was reportedly agreed by UNDEF.

The comments that will be further developed under Impacts will question whether these activities were sufficient to achieve the expected outcomes; or additional activities would have been needed as to enhance the likelihood of achieving the expected outcomes.

Intervention 2 - Capacity building of local authorities. Similarly, all the activities conducted under this Intervention were consistent with the objective of achieving its expected outcomes;

As described in Chapter III, the project was designed as to be implemented by two

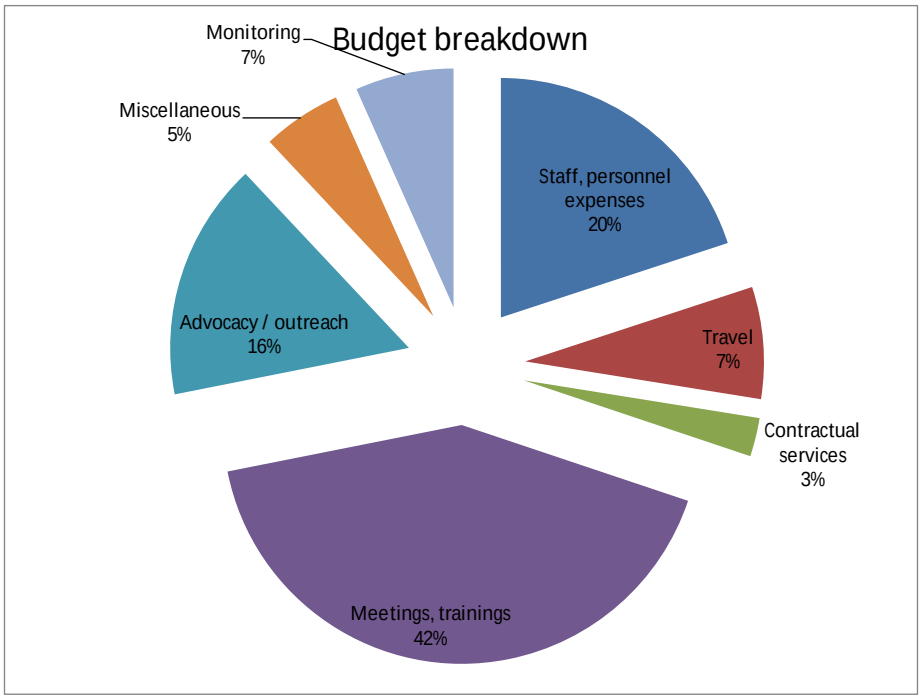

Figure 3 - Project budget breakdown

The project had a cost for salaries and fees amounting to 23% of the project budget USD 84 635, due to three main items:

Salaries for staff and personnel expenses (20% of the project budget);
Contractual services (3%)

Even if this cost could seem high, it is however motivated by the fact that both administrative and operational resources were included under this heading.

With the exception of travel costs (see below), individual costs for the participation of trainees to training session, for the organisation of events and for the study tours are reasonable and well justify the main budget item (Meetings and trainings), which absorbs 156 515 USD (42% of the project budget.)

The budget for travels which appears to be the 7% of the budget[9]- is in reality much higher as many travel costs are under other four budget lines, as it emerges from the analysis reported in the following table. The real travel costs of the project sum up to 150 200 USD, equalling a very high 40% of the overall project budget.

Budget item: Travels	28,400
Travels in budget item: Meetings and workshop	43,500
Travels in budget item: Trainings	8,450
Travels in budget item: Study tours	45,450
Travels in budget item: Advocacy	24,400
Total	**150,200**

[9] This refers only to the international travels for PRIA staff

To make citizens participating to the project more aware of the need to use clean water for daily consumption; however the (still, present) impossibility for many of them[11] to access clean water from their households makes of this

services; reasons for this error in implementation are unknown but reverberate in the very modest Medium Term Impacts that will be discussed later on.

Regarding Takhmao, the achievements of the project have to be seen within the framework of the legal obligations of local authorities in Cambodia to promote

year National Program for Sub-National Democratic Development that was adopted in 2010[13]. From this perspective, the project was welcomed by local authorities as a way to comply with their recent legal obligations and their adhesion at the local level was large; this is confirmed both by citizens and local authorities.

The work done was substantial and reveals a positive attitude towards the solution of problems that are now perceived as common and not only as

The level of integration of the administrative structures of the municipality following the introduction of the One Window Services[14] and the experiences promoted by the project seems however less than could have been expected: while complaints introduced by individual citizens are received at the One Window Service, complaints and proposals coming from neighborhood committees go to the Municipal Committee, a different service. This duplication of roles reveals problems in inter-donor coordination, which will be discussed further on.

The major problem that was noticed in Takhmao was the very low involvement in the social accountability practices of the external service providers of water and waste collection services (two independent commercial businesses); this aspect will be detailed later on and had an impact on the Medium Term Impacts of the project.

Enhanced capacities of local civil society organizations (...[15]). As discussed under Effectiveness the whole Intervention 3 is affected by an important ambiguity, namely the double role played by Silaka and Prip Trust both as implementing partners and as beneficiaries of the project. Consequently, this Intended Outcome (which was the expected result of the Intervention 3) has to be questioned from the perspective of the identity of the local civil society organizatio

was organised and had attendees from different countries (Nepal, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Philippines, Vietnam and Sri Lanka). However, the organisation of one-off event does not seem the most suitable approach to achieve such an ambitious objective, which should rather have required a series of events that could not be organised within the scarce project budget.

Among the local civil society organizations that in theory should have been capacitated by the project only Silaka and Prip Trust participated to this conference. This is a confirmation that the project was not concerned about capacitating civil society organizations other than the project partners.

As pointed out before, this was never a true regional project in the first place; inclusion of a costly regional event is to be questioned.

The national policies and programmes on municipal governance are informed (...

participation: it rather disseminated to policymakers the results of the project. They are two different achievements and their relative scale of complexity and resource absorption are not comparable.

Based on the analysis of the resources available to the project (time, budget, skills) and on the absence of a preliminary agreement with policymakers in the two countries to embark in a process of evidence-based policymaking, the evaluators conclude that this objective was unrealistic by design[21] and as such destined to fail.

It remains to be added that at least in Cambodia - the project was unknown and invisible to the major players in the area of local democratic governance and social accountability. No

in the areas of intervention.

At the time of the evaluation the status of the access to the two services in intervention and non-

waste deposits at the main crossroads (all within walking distance from the individual households) where the trucks of the provider could safely transit and collect the garbage; or to organise waste collection with wheelbarrows or small tractors?

The evidence proves that the process of negotiation with the service providers was long and extremely laborious. However, by their own admission, local communities were totally inexperienced in negotiating and mediating with for-profit service providers, which based their refuse to extend the services on the reasons summarised above. During a process of negotiation a skilled negotiator could have found the appropriate arguments for debating these justifications and find an agreement of mutual satisfaction. However, such a skilled negotiator was not available to support the claims of citizens, and these justifications became blocking factors against a wider access to public services.

It seems to the evaluators that the project methodology missed to make provision for such a strategic support; as a consequence, citizens and local authorities were left with no assistance during their negotiation with the providers[24]. Maybe the methodology proposed by PRIA could be efficiently integrated with a process of coaching / tutoring of citizens during their first challenging negotiations; this would have a strong learning dimension and a very important motivational effect for the further embracing of the method of work.

Take-up of the method and its replication by citizens after the end of the project. One of the most notable results of the project is that citizens that participated to the Neighbourhood Committees in both locations admit now to be less afraid to address the local authorities and to claim their rights.
However this does not mean that the method has been taken up by citizens: all the Neighbourhood Committees in Rajshahi have been dismantled at the project end and even if some of them still informally exist- none of the former Neighbourhood Committees in Takhmao have ever reconvened after the project end.

One year after the end of the intervention, the individual solution seems therefore to emerge

[24]

field of action. This does not mean that local democratic governance and social accountability practices are destined to fail in Cambodia and in Bangladesh: other and more visible activities are ongoing in both countries- and may lead to their wide adoption.

Strengthening of south-south learning and advocacy on participatory democratic governance and social accountability practices in urban Asia. There is no conclusive evidence allowing to assess the contribution of the project to this objective, which appears in any case low. The project obviously did not set basis for continued cooperation between the three agencies, nor for a peer to peer network.

V. CONCLUSIONS

i. The idea to contribute to the process of enhancing local democratic governance through the adoption of practices of social accountability in Cambodia and in Bangladesh is sound and the methodology proposed by the project team is consolidated by several years of practice in other countries. Both Cambodia and Bangladesh had in place a legal framework that was rightly considered conducive to the implementation of social accountability at the local level. The project idea was fully coherent with the UNDEF

vi. In terms of outcomes

VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

To strengthen the likelihood of similar project in the future to achieve their expected results, the evaluators recommend to UNDEF and project grantees:

i. To plan for success. The likelihood for a project to achieve its results starts with the design phase and a project proposal shall be accurately scrutinised in order to spot major flaws that could affect its possibility to achieve the expected outcomes. More in particular, and based on the lessons from this evaluation (ref. to conclusion iii):

Applicants for a grant are recommended to base their proposal on a well-thought logic of intervention and to set themselves ambitious but achievable objectives; the project objectives must represent a realistic challenge, and not a killing factor for the project.

Applicants for a grant are recommended to define a clear set of SMART[26] indicators of performance that are relevant to each level of the intervention; this should be an obligation for the applicants and not an option.

UNDEF is recommended to seriously question the appropriateness of funding interventions that in their logic of intervention focus more on activities and outputs rather than on results.

ii. To consider the rationale and the implications of a regional intervention. As suggested by what discussed in the conclusion ii, applicants for a regional project are recommended to carefully justify its regional dimension by explaining its advantages in terms of cross-fertilisation of the national teams, coordination, sharing of lessons and errors, analysis of results and other elements as relevant. Consistently, they are recommended to set aside sufficient resources allowing regional infra-team coordination.

iii. To clearly define the respective roles of implementing partners and project beneficiaries and avoid promiscuity of roles; this refers to what discussed in the conclusion iii. The implementation of this recommendation should have positive repercussions in terms of efficiency and impact. Grantees are furthermore recommended to ensure that the project staff is constituted by human resources already trained and experienced in conducting activities of the same nature as those that they are supposed to conduct in the project.

iv. To ensure a rigorous budget control. As a consequence of what summarised in conclusion v, UNDEF is recommended to set maximum indicative budget ceiling for travel costs and to instruct applicants to include all travel costs (transport tickets and allowances) under the same line of budget. Both applicants and UNDEF are recommended to double check the financial proposal

v. Measure success. Whenever applicable, grantees are

ANNEX 2: MAIN DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

Andrew D Oxman,John N Lavis, Simon Lewin and Atle Fretheim, What is evidence-infFr r21(o)-9d

ANNEX 3: SCHEDULE OF INTERVIEWS

3 April 2014

Moeun Sreymom Chan SamAng Cheam Neang Mak Sophy Heng Kolap Chorn Sambathratha Prak Monyphalla	
9 April 2014	
Sok Makara, Star Kampuchea Chab Rossekdey, Caritas Khem Than, Caritas	Civil society organizations, Takhmao (group interview)
Buth Chhik	Director WB Ministry of Interior officer *Cancelled at the last minute*
Chheav Nak	Communication Officer WB Ministry of Interior officer, Phnom-Penh (f2f interview)
Thol Sreyleak	Cambodian Centre for Independent Media, Phnom-Penh (f2f interview)
10 April 2014	
Chhor Sophal	PACT Cambodia, Director of Decentralisation and Governance, Phnom-Penh (f2f interview)
Janelle Plummer	World Bank, Senior Governance Specialist, Phnom-Penh (phone interview)
Tep Sokundara	UNDP, Governance Specialist *Cancelled at the last minute*
11 April 2014	

ANNEX 4: ACRONYMS

CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
F2f	Face-to-face
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
SIDA	