ICCO Identification Mission

Democratization & Peace Building in Cambodia

Final Report
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The motto of this report

The Plan
In the beginning was the Plan.

And then came the Assumptions.

And the Assumptions were without form.

And the Plan was without substance.

And darkness was upon the face of the Workers.

And the Workers spoke among themselves, saying, "This is a crock of sh*t, and it stinks."

And the Workers went unto their Supervisors and said, "It is a pail of dung, and we can't live with the smell."

And the Supervisors went unto their Managers saying, "It is a container of excrement, and it is very strong, such that none may abide by it."

And the Managers went unto their Directors, saying, "It is a vessel of fertilizer, and none may abide its strength."

And the Directors spoke among themselves, saying to one another, "It contains that which aids plant growth, and it is very strong."

And the Directors went to the Vice Presidents, saying unto them, "It promotes growth, and it is very powerful."

And the Vice Presidents went to the President, saying unto him, "This new plan will actively promote the growth and vigor of the company with very powerful effects."

And the President looked upon the Plan and saw that it was good.

And the Plan became Policy.

And that, my friends, is how Sh*t Happens.

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A close friend who used to manage a larger agricultural program in Cambodia recently sent me the above. Like many of these jokes, its meaning is in the eye of the beholder. My eye saw a good motto for this mission report because it signals the importance of plans and programs. They are not to be taken lightly because they tend to take on a life of their own. The importance of this gradually occurred to me while talking my way through the Phnom Penh development scene. I slowly realized that the addition of a lot of good intentions may indeed be ‘how sh*t happens’.

The basic message this report contains is that given the current partnerships of ICCO in Cambodia and ICCO’s current civil and political rights understanding of democratization, peace building and Human Rights, formulating a country program should be done following a process approach. Being too hasty with formulating objectives, even if the program is initially perceived as a discursive construction, is going to create serious risks of unintended consequences.

1. Introduction[1]

ICCO is one of the largest Dutch co-financing agencies, founded 40 years ago by the protestant churches, but funded by the Dutch Ministry of Development Cooperation. ICCO has been supporting Cambodia's development since 19… At present ICCO's portfolio contains mainly partnerships with Cambodian NGOs active working in the themes of Democratization and Peace Building (D&P) and Access to Basic Services. ICCO's yearly budget for Cambodia is approximately 2,2 million euro, of which 500,000 euro is Technical Assistance (mainly placement of expatriate advisors to partner organizations). About 60% of the budget is allocated for D&P. (More about ICCO's policy: see annex 2)

ICCO wishes to develop its Cambodia efforts in D&P into a more coherent program – a set of interrelated activities or projects which contribute to overarching objectives, creating a framework from which collaboration can grow. A programmatic approach to D&P in Cambodia is expected to bring higher quality in terms of analysis, learning, and results. In this programme ICCO assistance in the form of funding (Co-financing Department) and expertise (Department for Personnel Cooperation) will be supportive to the same overall-objectives. Current ICCO-supported Democratization and Peace Building activities will have a place in this programme. The expected programme will provide a framework to guide future choices on: which partners to support, and on what type of support to plan for (eg. funding, capacity building, network strengthening).

In order to provide input for such a new programmatic country strategy for Cambodia (and a new ICCO wide business plan) for 2007-2010, an Identification Mission for D&P in Cambodia has been commissioned to the Center for Advanced Study, Phnom Penh, a local research services provider.

1.1 Objectives

The objectives of this mission are:

- To reassess the Cambodian context in terms of the current actors and stakeholders in this field, including government and civil society, multi- and bilateral donors and international NGOs.
- To analyse the current needs in the area of Democratisation & Peace Building, including sub-areas of human rights, peace building, arbitration and mediation, and indigenous people.
- To give explicit attention to how ICCO support can be a progressive alternative to mainstream development support.
- To give explicit analytic attention to the position, capacities, needs, and perspectives of three target groups, youth, women and indigenous peoples.
- To give explicit attention to possible ways to not only support public benefit organizations (NGOs) but also mutual benefit organizations (associations etc.)
- To suggest areas where ICCO's funding and expertise will best match the needs of (potential) partners.
- To recommend roles that ICCO should take on in order to maintain and establish effective partnerships in Cambodia.

In order to facilitate linkage to the more general ICCO policy discussions, the mapping and analysis uses the same conceptual frame work for thinking about conflict and peace building that ICCO applies in other regional and country analyses. Annex 2 contains a summary description of ICCO's policy in general and its framework for D&P in particular.

Programs can vary in terms of their cohesiveness from providing discursive legitimacy of funding and TA (personnel) to being real integrated programs, collaboratively developed with partners, with mutually supportive objectives that can be evaluated at program level rather than partner level. Given the explicit intention to include current D&P support under the new program, the mission gives explicit attention to both short-term program possibilities, closer to the discursive pole of the continuum, and longer term possibilities, closer to the integrative pole.

ICCO usually works without field offices. The mission will give explicit attention to the relationship between ICCO's efforts to establish more meaningful and effective partnerships and its current status as an out-of-country donor.

[1] The Terms of Reference of the mission are attached as annex 1

1.2 Deliverables
These objectives translate into a report structure that addresses the following aspects:

- Context analysis
- Mapping of actors and stakeholders
- Program setup, including:
  - Objectives and strategies (based on log frame format)
  - Areas for capacity building (including suggestions for modalities)
  - Program M&E
  - Suggestions for support roles of ICCO.

The mission is not designed to produce an actual country program but only to provide input for such a program. The above structure does this by suggesting options that are framed in program format so as to be as practical as possible.

To support its suggestions this report contains an elaborate background section. In this section the results of the information collection (see below: methodology) are summarized.

1.3 Methodology of the mission
The mission made use of two sources of information: documentation and interviews with resource persons.

Documentation collected and used consisted of:

- Country analyses of the most important international and bilateral organizations
- Core academic country and/or topical analyses
- Research & policy reports relevant to the specific foci of the mission:
  - Democratization & peace building & human rights
  - Women, youths and indigenous minorities
  - Civil society
- Country programs, strategy papers of relevant other donors
- Program information of NGOs active in the sector of D&P

The mission is not aiming for a comprehensive review but a pragmatic selection: comprehensive enough to cover the broad spectrum of approaches and opinions, selective enough to be of use to those wishing to check for themselves if the original sources warrant certain interpretations. The list of documentation is attached as annex 4.

Interviews with resource persons covered the following types of informants:

- Representatives of ICCO partner organizations
- Representatives of other organizations active in the D&P sector
- Representatives of other donor organizations
- Key informants specifically knowledgeable about:
  - Cambodian socio-political development in general,
  - Civil society (associational life, NGO's),
  - Indigenous peoples

To the extent possible interviews were face-to-face. This implied a visit to Chiang Mai. Ideally field visits to the Northwest (ICCO IRDP partners in Battambang & Bantey Meanchey) and the Northeast (indigenous peoples' key informants) would have been part of this mission but time constraints prevented this. However, several core resource persons based in these provinces could be met during their visits to Phnom Penh.

Some resource persons could only be contacted through phone or e-mail (some through ICCO)

The list of interviewees is attached as annex 3. The general list of discussion topics used as a guideline for the interviews is attached as annex 7.

Interviews were conducted very much in an open ended style and categorization of what interviewees brought up was done bottom up. The approach also included the progressive testing of emerging ideas during interviews that took place during a later stage of the mission. Given this approach, most issues only emerged in some not all interviews.

The mission started with a briefing of the main consultant at ICCO HQ. This ensured proper understanding of the broader policy context of which this particular country program is going to be part and enabled discussions about the ToR (12-13/9).

A first draft, or more accurately an interim report, was presented at a debriefing at ICCO HQ (2/11). This interim report included the results of the information collection and a set of issues emerging from these that needed ICCO decisions before suggestions for program objectives were deemed feasible. The interim report outlined the implications of various decisions on program possibilities, and described their interconnections. Annex 11 summarizes these issues and outlines the decisions arrived at during the debriefing.

The decisions provided the basis for the program setup described in this final report.

1.4 Structure of the report

The report begins with a context analysis, largely based on secondary sources, but in terms of argumentative structure also informed by the key informant interviews. The context analysis is quite generic and its major aim is to point out the conceptual developments over time in country-analytic understanding. In other words the context analysis section is a broad overview of the situation, reflecting consensual informed opinion on the major issues and the best approaches. The method chosen is a bricolage of some state-of-the-art country analyses, resulting in some overall conclusions regarding the kind of objectives that an NGO donor can add value with.

The next section maps the actors and stakeholders in democratization, peace-building and human rights in Cambodia. This section includes relevant results for programming from the interviews and it also describes ICCO's current partners within the context of the other organizations active within this area. The mapping results in conclusions that are the basis for the specific objectives suggested for an ICCO program on D&P.

The last section describes the suggested program setup, including:

- Objectives and strategies (based on log frame format)
- Areas for capacity building (including suggestions for modalities)
- Program M&E
- Suggestions for support roles of ICCO.

2. Program suggestions

2.1 Context analysis

2.1.1 Introduction

By far the best overall analysis of the Cambodian situation is an unpublished[2] Overseas Development Institute (Sussex) report by Tim Conway (currently working as poverty specialist for the WB/Cambodia office) and Caroline Hughes (British academic and policy researcher) for DFID on opportunities and challenges to pro-poor policy making in Cambodia. The study's main objective was to analyze trajectories of change in state-society relations and their implications for pro-poor policy making. Indeed difficult to think up something that is more relevant to democratization, peace-building and human rights. Its overall assessment of the Cambodian situation is captured in the boxed paragraph below:

> "With both a weak state and a weak civil society, Cambodia relies heavily upon informal, patronage-based networks for the definition and pursuit of collective goals. The largest and most effective of these networks are embedded in the structures of the CPP: but the identity and interests of the CPP itself are not stable, and there are numerous other nodes of power (the military, large commercial interests) with which different interests within the CPP must sometimes cooperate and sometimes compete. The symptoms of this weakly institutionalized political system can be summarized a lack of transparency about how and why decisions are made, the irrelevance of formal mechanisms of accountability, a neglect of state functions that do not offer opportunities for rent-seeking, and a distortion to private ends of those public functions which do offer opportunities for the generation and capture of wealth. There is a pronounced short-termism to political behavior, with actors at all levels seeking to extract as much as possible in anticipation of the system – or their place in it – ending. Paradoxically, this makes the eventual collapse of the system – certainly in terms of the country's natural resource base – more likely and more immanent". (p.65)

The objective of this section is to elaborate on this and deduce the implications for development interventions targeting democratization, peace-building and human rights. This can only be done in a context analysis that is somewhat different from those normally legitimating country programs.

The process resulting in a country program for a development agency/donor does not normally follow the technocratic stages outlined in the idealized rational (linear) model of policy development: situation analysis, identification of program objectives, etc. There are many givens to deal with: always a pre-existing agency/donor agenda, often, like in this particular case, an existing set of partners receiving support, etc. This reality is reflected in the outcome of the process: the situation analyses of country programs normally read like stories the purpose of which is to post-hoc legitimate the choice of sector-specific objectives. What the actual underlying analysis looked like is sometimes explicitly referred to in an occasional paragraph, but mostly for the reader to infer[3]. Obviously, this is perfectly understandable from the perspective of the purpose such documents serve, and does not indicate that the actual analysis underlying the choices is flawed, but it does mean that the actual analysis is not shared/made public.

The main argument of this mission document is that ICCO should go slow on defining objectives that are too particular, because of the negative implications of exclusionary choices early on for possible partners, possibilities for real partnership, flexibility and innovation where it is going to be most useful, and for maximum added value. And that taking a process approach to program development is advisable. Such an argument asks for a somewhat different kind of situation analysis. It requires grounding its rationale in a more generic analysis of the Cambodian context and by pointing out the conceptual developments over time in country analytic understanding[4].

The context analysis below takes the best of some existing country analyses that are *not related to any kind of program* but are directly relevant for the democratization, peace-building and human rights agenda[5]. The approach taken here is that these represent state-of-the-art and that they can hardly be improved upon

[2] Reasons for this status are unclear but informally sharing a report that is not officially released is a popular political strategy for allowing 'sensitive' information to do its 'work' without risking blame.

[3] Country programs of ICCO 'like' donors (e.g. DanChurchAid, Diakonia, etc.) are no exception.

[4] To avoid any misunderstanding regarding the claim that is being made here: also this analysis is heavily influenced by the suggested conclusions it is meant to support. That is inherent in the development of reports like this. The conclusions themselves are as much influenced by the interviews conducted as by the documents used for this situation analysis.

[5] That is to say, not perspectives that are more indirectly related to democratization, peace-building and human rights, like economic development, although: all of these are interconnected.

by paraphrasing. We use extensive extracts from the originals to illustrate their arguments in their own words as the basis of our own analysis of what the trends and convergences are regarding the issues that are of particular interest to ICCO:

- Democratization, Peace Building and Human Rights
- Reaching the grassroots
- Women, youth and indigenous peoples
- Good donorship
- Partnership
- Adding value as an alternative to the mainstream

The annotated situation analysis that is an annex to the mapping section (2.2, Annex 10[6]) ensures that sufficient factual information of the 'usual' program situation analysis kind is available for any future country program document. This annex is an annotated extract of a just concluded DANIDA mapping of the major government and non-government actors and activities in the access to (social) justice sector which conceptually overlaps very much with the mandate of this mission[7].

2.1.2 Choice of existing country analyses

To be able to detect changes over time one has to start a generation of country analyses ago. The post 1998 era, when the procedurally successful conduct of national elections "…saw some semblance of stability return to Cambodia and donors and NGOs began to speak of a 'new window of opportunity'" (Turton, p.12) seems a sensible watershed.

The study from which the above summary description has been taken was written in 2003 for DFID. This is not a chance event. One of the donor's that takes a learning approach to country analysis and program development most seriously is DFID. Its first country program took a systematic learning lessons approach as an explicit objective. And currently DFID is at the forefront of innovative thinking regarding demand-led rather than supply-led development approaches in Cambodia.

We will thus use several DFID commissioned studies and complement them with the most recent situation analysis of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, and a draft WB analysis (closely related to DFID's programming). We are going to use these to illustrate changes over time in country analytic understanding and deduce some relevant insights for the ICCO program.

2.1.3 State of the art in 2000: DFID's sustainable livelihoods approach[8]

" Authoritarianism and corruption remain prevalent in Cambodia and the political culture is overwhelmingly one of loyalty and patronage. Power remains vested in a small number of political elites and political systems are still factional and based on personalities. The dilemma facing Cambodia is how to translate the formal checks and balances provided for in the constitution into functioning institutions. In the absence of a functioning rule of law, civil society initiatives are not well placed to check those in power…
Development efforts are still relatively 'young' in Cambodia. These efforts are gradually moving away from rehabilitation towards development, but this should not hide the fact that the country still lacks basic infrastructure and fails to provide many basic services. Little consensus has yet emerged on 'best practice' for donors working in Cambodia." (p.10)

A sustainable livelihood approach as an analytic tool to understand what this means is to organize available information in terms of implications for people and how they manage resources. "Key questions are:

- Who are the poor?
- What makes them vulnerable?
- What assets do they have?
- What is the impact of policies and institutions?
- How do the poor make a living?
- What is the outcome of the above on rural poverty levels?" (p.12-13)

[6] Annotated Situation Analysis extracted from: Supporting Access to Justice in Cambodia - Mapping of the support provided by government institutions and programs, donor agencies and civil society organizations with a view to identifying options for further DANIDA support (July 2005)

[7] The consultant is grateful to DANIDA for the permission to include this extract in the report and thereby avoid the need for a necessarily duplicating repeat exercise.

[8] This section is all based on Turton (2000)

"The activities people adopt and the way they reinvest in asset-building are driven in part by their own preferences and priorities. However, they are also strongly influenced by external structures and processes (organizations, institutions and policies). In Cambodia however the influence of external structures and policies is somewhat weaker than is the case in other countries…It seems that it is the absence or lack of centrally formulated policies and ineffective implementation, as much as any adverse or disempowering influence they have, that is the key feature of the policy environment, notably:

- The lack of a legal framework to resolve many of the issues affecting people – for instance gaps in the land law;
- Even where legislation exists, there is little evidence of effective implementation;
- An almost complete absence of public services.

As a result, donor efforts have tended to concentrate on strengthening the legislative, policy and institutional framework…Such efforts are essential for the longer-term development of Cambodia. However, donors must acknowledge that such programs will have little immediate impact on the lives of the rural poor". (p.17-18)

More than in many other countries, the complementarity of rights-based and SL [Sustainable Livelihood] perspectives are evident in Cambodia. In every sphere, the livelihoods of the rural poor are threatened by weak and non-existing social, economic, political, cultural and civil rights. This is due both to weak, inappropriate and, in many cases, non-existent legislation and the dysfunctional and corrupt nature of the judiciary. Issues of participation and empowerment are central to the realization of more secure livelihoods in Cambodia.

It is relatively easy to compile a picture of issues relating to economic, social, cultural, civil and political rights and the linkages between public institutions and civil society at central level. It is however less easy to identify the specific constraints that prevent the realization of peoples' rights at the local level and undermine peoples' livelihood strategies. One clear example is that of the weak property rights underlying the natural resource assets upon which peoples' livelihoods depend….
Both the SL approach and rights-based approach tend to focus on these key constraints. There is clearly considerable scope for attempting to achieve synergy between them." (p.25)

CONCLUSIONS
- Already five years ago DFID recognized that identifying best practice requires a learning approach.
- The (non-)functioning of the legislative, policy and institutional framework is not yet clearly understood and perceived as reflecting a lack of capacity.
- But DFID already recognizes that
  - A sole focus on strengthening these frameworks is not going to affect the lives of the rural poor quickly;
  - And that issues of participation and empowerment are central to the realization of more secure livelihoods in Cambodia
- But the interconnections between the two were not yet spelled out.
- To a great extent, the WHAT analysis sounds already contemporary but the HOW is still very vague.

2.1.4 Situation of human rights in Cambodia. Report of the Special Representative of the SG for HR in Cambodia (December 2004)
The most up to date and authoritative HR assessment of the Cambodian situation is the 2004 report by the Special Representative of the SG of the UN.

The overall assessment is quite pessimistic and strong-worded. The four basic evils of Cambodian society, identified at the beginning of the SR's mandate[9] in 2000, were: poverty, violence, corruption and lawlessness. After five years his assessment is that not much progress has been made regarding poverty reduction, strengthening pluralistic democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights: "What we are witnessing at present does not seem to demonstrate progress towards these goals, but an increasingly autocratic form of government and growing concentration of power in the hands of the Prime Minister behind a shaky façade of democracy".

The basis for this assessment is an analysis of the major developments and human rights issues of concern:

[9] Peter Leuprecht has just decided to end his mandate a couple of months early for personal professional reasons. His successor has been named already.

- Political developments
  - A new government which gives Cambodia the largest Cabinet in the world as well as a totally bloated bureaucracy
  - Systematic exclusion and persecution of the opposition party
  - Lack of successful reform and no significant reduction of poverty
- Systematic human rights violations and impunity
  - Impunity is seen as one of the most serious problems: "It has become increasingly clear that impunity is not only the result of low capacity within law enforcement institutions and of a weak judiciary. By upholding a system under which selected institutions and individuals have been allowed to breach the law and violate human rights without being held to account, those with economic and political power have been able to obtain personal enrichment and maintain vested interests….It is unlikely that technical assistance and capacity-building efforts directed at law enforcement institutions and the judiciary will produce results expected by donors unless this pattern of impunity is broken, and political decisions are made to address the problem….systematic impunity has resulted in the distorted allocation of economic resources, further perpetuating poverty. It has undermined the legal predictability and trust in the rule of law that are needed for investors, has deprived the State of revenue that is needed to deliver public services, and has damaged Cambodia's credibility and competitiveness in a global market."
- Justice sector and the rule of law
  - "Cambodia has still to develop neutral State institutions, checks on executive power, and the means to enforce rights that are guaranteed in the law and the Constitution. Many of the failures are neither accidental nor the result of neglect or incompetence. The judiciary has provided 'legal' legitimacy to abuses of power, arbitrary decision-making, and exonerating those responsible for serious human rights violations…[E]stablishing the rule of law has been a priority for donors and development agencies in Cambodia. Yet efforts have been piecemeal and ineffectual in achieving real improvement in the administration of justice in the form of improved access to justice or the development of a judiciary that is independent, impartial and free from corruption….There can be little progress in the justice sector unless political decisions for delivering reform are made at the highest levels of Government….The SR is supportive of the approach of some donor agencies and Governments focusing on the demand side of legal and judicial reform…"
- Khmer Rouge trials
- Fundamental freedoms
  - Especially restrictions on the freedom of assembly
- Land and management of natural resources
  - "If urgent measures are not taken to address the poor management and administration of land and other natural resources in Cambodia, the SR is of the view that further conflicts over the resources can be expected and might ultimately become a threat to political stability"
  - The SR is increasingly concerned that [indigenous peoples] are ever more vulnerable to land confiscation and the legal alienation of their land…"
- Housing rights and forced evictions
- Corruption and transparency
  - "Endemic corruption remains a recurring obstacle to progress in both establishing the rule of law and economic development…Corruption results in the unequal allocation of public resources exacerbating existing inequalities, and undermines the realization of a range of human rights".
- International treaty obligations.

CONCLUSIONS

- The governance situation has not improved over the last five years.
- But as opposed to five years ago, there is now a clearer recognition that:
  - Democracy is a shaky façade
  - Impunity and the absence of existence of impartial state institutions, checks on executive power, and ways to enforce legal rights is not the result of low capacity,
    - But is a political (will) problem
    - And requires demand-side approaches (an insight now much more widely shared than five years earlier).
- The content of the report reflects the importance of ESC rights

2.1.5 Understanding pro-poor political change: the policy process. Cambodia (January 2004)[10]

[10] Annex 8 gives adds a more recent situation analysis by one of the authors of this report. This assessment is actively circulated on e-mail lists of the WB, as well as confronting a visitor on the coffee table in the UNCOHCHR.

Obviously, the analysis from which the introductory quote was taken takes centre stage in this bricolage. Its importance lies in the convincing analysis it provides of WHY the system is ineffective and works the way it does. Below is an extracted version of its summary. Inserted into this summary are some boxes with passages from the main text.

"Modern Cambodian politics in the long view: internal and external forces
It is very easy for political analysis of Cambodia to fall into one of two polarized camps. The first blames Cambodia's problems on external influences, emphasizing the way in which Cambodia, as a small and poor post-colonial nation, was overwhelmed by the forces of unprincipled Cold War geopolitics in the 1970s, and has since been dominated and exploited by more powerful neighbors. The second argues that, enormous as these forces were, they should not mask recognition of the fact that there are strong threads of historical continuity in the nature of state-society relationships in Cambodia, arguably spanning pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial regimes, and that most of these persistent themes – a discourse of power which is profoundly incompatible with the principles of democracy or human rights, a weakness of formal state institutions vis-à-vis informal patronage networks – are profoundly anti-poor in nature. Long-term historical analysis, in other words, tends to encourage pessimistic, "path dependent" interpretation of Cambodian politics.

An accurate and above all policy-relevant political analysis requires recognition that both perspectives have some validity, but that neither can provide a complete explanation…many of the phenomena that structure incentives, opportunities and constraints in contemporary politics are distinctively modern, albeit reflecting elements of a historical tradition.

Post-conflict state-building, transition and contemporary political traditions
The Cambodian state was re-build, almost from scratch, in the aftermath of the massive destruction of the "Khmer Rouge" regime of Democratic Kampuchea (DK), in a context of civil war, famine and international sanctions. International intervention throughout the 1980s comprised occupation by the Vietnamese army, economic and diplomatic support by the Soviet Bloc, and sanctions and insurgency supported by China and the West. Arguably, contemporary behavior reflects attitudes shaped during this formative period.

During the 1980s the state suffered from low levels of material resources and political legitimacy. Its main rationale was to hang together and to prevent a resurrection of the DK regime. It undertook some institution building (including in the areas of health and education): but, in an atmosphere of insecurity and constrained by severely limited resources, achievements were limited. Efforts to exert discipline in the interests of policy effectiveness were secondary to efforts to promote loyalty, with the latter achieved to a great extent at the direct expense of the former. The move to a free market in 1989 opened the door to dramatic levels of corruption and a very low level of effective control over state officials by the centre…Today state officials continue to emphasize loyalty over efficiency and to promote opportunities for rent-seeking which exploit the poor, as a means to ensure the loyalty of subordinates.

Loyalty within the state apparatus is organized through networks of personal allegiance, and is these, to a great extent, which maintain the cohesion and residual effectiveness of the state apparatus. Forms of personal allegiance include political allegiances, friendships, kinship, and patron-client relations. These tie the state to the party and the civilian bureaucracy to the military. They are capable of very effective mobilization at times – for example, during election periods they are mobilized to support the campaigning of the dominant party, the Cambodian People's Party. However, they are also dependent to a significant extent upon informal flows of resources, including funds skimmed from international aid donations, "gifts" and bribes extracted from the population and foreign investors, and rents gained from illegal expropriation of natural resources such as timber and land…

Invented tradition and resistance to reform
"These resource flows are frequently described with reference to the idea of "patronage" – presumed to be an embedded practice in Cambodian culture. To an extent, the flows of resources that currently occur within the bureaucracy and military and the way that these are organized by senior officials through personal relationships with subordinates do conform to ideas of patronage that are customary throughout South East Asia. It is important to note, however, that the form of such patronage is specific to the contemporary era. In other words, the sources of these revenues emerge, not from traditional sources of wealth, but from distinctively modern ones, such as international aid, government public spending, and cross-border smuggling and trade in gems, timber and humans. The exploitative nature of these networks vis-à-vis the wider population, who are alienated from them, distinguishes these kinds of patron-client links

from those described by anthropologists such as James Scott, as legitimating unequal relations between the rich and the poor in Vietnam and Malay villages[11]. May Ebihara comments that while extensive patronage of either the customary or the invented variety was not apparent to her, in her year-long anthropological study of Svay village in the 1950s, it had certainly come into existence when she returned there in the 1990s (Ebihara, personal communication).

Arguably, it is more accurate to describe these links as 'invented tradition' – in other words, as 'responses to novel situations which take the form of reference to old situations' (Hobsbawm). Although the forms may employ customary practices in terms of etiquettes of interaction between leaders and followers, the resources at stake, the context in which they are pursued, and the relationship of these to wider society are distinctively modern….

Indeed, part of the motivating power behind these networks, and their apparent invulnerability to reform pressures over the past decade, may be their very instability. Fearful for their future in a changing environment, insiders may cling to their protectors, and seek to exploit as rapidly as possible opportunities forever viewed as potentially 'last chances', thus paradoxically shoring up networks at the expense of reform". (p.19-20)

To the extent that rent seeking functions have come to dominate state activity, the state operates directly at odds with the interests of the poor. Although some resources are ploughed back into society to elicit support for example at election time, through the building of roads and schools, this is done in a manner designed for political rather than economic effect. The personalism, populism and exploitative nature of the state apparatus mean that it not only operates in a significantly different manner from a Weberian rational bureaucracy, but that state officials will see it as being in their interest to actively resist rationalization, since rationalization limits freedom to use public positions to extract rents from the population.

Formal and informal institutions of governance

The 1993 Constitution envisaged liberal institutions of state, including an elected legislature with oversight over the executive, and the independent judiciary….The functioning of government as envisaged by the constitution has been seriously hampered by the networks of loyalty that run through the institutions of state, even though it is also likely that without these networks of loyalty, these institutions would have difficulty cohering at all…

Within the executive branch, power and influence are concentrated in informal networks. The key power relationship that underpins all others is, arguably, the relationship between the Office of the Prime Minister and senior figures in the Armed Forces. In a highly militarized society, where law is poorly enforced, the allegiance of the military remains essential to power-holders. The military is a highly entrepreneurial operation, engaged in logging, smuggling and other illegal economic activities. Protection of these activities is the key to power in Cambodia.

It is important to note, however, that the state does not operate as a rational bureaucracy in pursuit of these interests. Contending networks exist and vie for control of resources….Power and influence are fluid and move around the system as individuals rise and fall…

Approaches to donor-led reforms

Since 1998, donors have attempted to promote a far-reaching program of public sector reform, including promotion of good governance, judicial and legal reform, anti-corruption, natural resource management and demobilization within the military….The response to the reform seems to have been an attempt to preserve discretion of action necessary to facilitate the rent-seeking which supports the networks of allegiance which simultaneously sustain and constrain state effectiveness.

The political discourse of poverty and development

While there are obviously differences between and within each, the Khmer discourse of the causes and nature of poverty overlaps reasonably well with that of most donors and international NGOs. Where there are differences, these are largely to do with the degree to which it is seen that the poor could or should be agents of development in their own right: development is seen as something to be brought to the countryside from outside, by government, parties, NGOs and donors. Officials interviewed in the study regarded…participation of the unruly and ignorant poor in setting development priorities…as dangerous.

Perceptions of poverty

[11] Scott, J. (1985) *Weapons of the weak; everyday forms of peasant resistance*. New Haven: Yale University .Press.

"Explanations of poverty obtained through participatory methods tend to emphasize the role of the individual or household rather than social or economic relationships between households or groups… [T]he poor take structural factors (e.g. inadequacy of government services) as a given, and then explain (local) wealth differences primarily n terms of individual or household capabilities or trigger events that precipitate a livelihood crisis….

[Evident with the sympathetic 'liberal middle-class' view of development] there is apprehension about moving in the direction of a political or power-based analysis of poverty or engaging in micro-macro linking (as many CNGO staff are encouraged by their INGO or donor funders to do. This reflects a felt lack of familiarity with the necessary concepts, a fear of the consequences of addressing power, and a pragmatic perception that the powerful will not yield power and so it is better to work within the constraints of the system rather than to challenge them.

The less sympathetic elite perspective is one which may or may not blame the poor for their own poverty…but in either case expects deference and service from social inferiors, does not regards the poor as entitled to assistance from the rich, sees it as natural that those with power use it to protect and further their own interests, and does not assume the lives of poor and rich are of equal value or that the poor are intrinsically endowed with equal rights". (p.12-13)

Governments' role in poverty reduction was seen by government officials as problematic primarily due to a lack of state capacity, echoing views expressed widely by donors over the last ten years…

What is rarely addressed is how public expenditure decisions – at the very highest levels – prioritize military spending…and resist pressure for greater spending on social services…

…the hijacking of resources for the military, the promotion of loyalists into key military positions where they can accumulate these resources and disburse them selectively to enhance their own power has to an extent become an end in itself.
……..

Civil society, participation and representation
Anthropologists have long characterized Cambodian society as possessed of a relatively weak organizational capacity. Even in the 1960s, observers argued that collective action on bases other than kinship links tended to be intermittent and issue-specific. The horrendous experiences of the DK regime have weakened social ties further, and encouraged a certain degree of short-termism and individualism. With decollectivization, these attitudes have been given freer reign, with serious consequences for the most vulnerable members of society.

"Community" in Cambodia

"…[S]ince at least the late 1990s [there has been] considerable discussion about the existence of 'community' in Cambodia. One school of thought posits that community as a functional category – that is, as a structure framing identity and shaping collective action – is relatively 'weak' in Cambodia….

Much depends on what is meant by 'community'. Over time and with favorable circumstances ties of friendship and trust do accrete and form the basis for 'complex reciprocal relations' and 'tolerance' between rural households[12]: the result resembles Ebihara's description of village community in the 1960s, in which households were bound together not by organizational expressions of community but socially embedded, reciprocity-supporting 'institutions' of kinship, proximity and familiarity[13]. It is not however clear that this is the idealized definition of community that INGOs and donors often assume to exist in agrarian societies. To recast the debate in terms derived from contemporary social theory, Cambodia today to a greater extent than in the 1960s possesses a limited stock of social capital; there is a 'thin-ness' to Khmer civil society.

The problem with this debate is that it is sometimes regarded as pejorative to say that traditional community institutions are relatively underdeveloped. This should not be the case. In many parts of the world the problem is an *excess* of community identity and action (e.g. along lines such as caste or tribe). It should also be noted that Europeans and North Americans value lives which are relatively individualistic and free from ties (constraining as well as enabling) of traditionally-defined communities: arguably because generalized wealth and a functioning state relieves them of the need to seek security through community formations. The weakness of community is only relevant as a practical issue (the Cambodian state is poor, and community-based action would be one way to help improve the quantity and quality of resources invested in supra-household activities), not as a value judgment.

The lack of traditional templates for organizational expression of community identification and interest has implications for collective social action and the potential for citizen 'voice' in the policy process. Cambodian society at the grassroots appears to lack established, 'traditional' organizational forms which might channel demands to the state. As discussed below, civil society as a development actor then becomes associated by default with Cambodian NGOs". (p.27-28)

In the early 1990s, UNTAC and donors sought to promote the emergence of a Cambodian civil society, usually viewed as a set of formal organizations that could mobilize and represent the population and hold the government to account. A number of large, professional NGOs have duly emerged, which are effective in collecting information, promoting public awareness (e.g. voter and rights education) and conducting consultation exercises, particularly over draft policies and laws. To an extent, such NGOs have been secured a place in the policy process – although their right to be consulted on legislation and policy is still to a great extent dependent upon their international backing.

NGOs have been less successful in confronting government over issues of criminality and abuse. NGOs have been reluctant to campaign on political issues…while government appears content to receive technical advice from NGOs, they have resisted allowing NGOs to take a role as mobilizers of public opinion.

There have been efforts to institutionalize citizen participation in local planning and public sector management. Local participatory for a set up to provide input into local resource and service management (e.g. Village Health Committees and Village Forest Committees) are one example. The elected Commune Councils is another. In both cases, local people appear to have engaged enthusiastically, and to have used the new structures to press claims…

External influence and political space

…public mobilization has increased dramatically over the course of the past decade. Protests…have become common place…

…While donor-led reforms have been relatively unsuccessful in terms of rationalizing the state, donor engagement appears very successful in terms of creating political spaces in which grievances can be expressed by the poor themselves…

While the government has not yet acquiesced to this assertion, nevertheless the articulation of this position [a duty of accountability on the part of the government and a right of dissent on the account of the poor]

[12] Ledgerwood (1998), p.140

[13] Ebihara (1974), p.306

denies customary legitimacy to rent-seeking as a practice of "patronage" and places pressure on the government to find ways of bolstering its authority, as opposed to its power"

Donors
"To a great extent, it is donor engagement that creates the political spaces within which mobilization can take place in relative safety. It is the ongoing conversation between government and donors that renders the revelations of the poor, with regard to ongoing violence and abuse, embarrassing to the government.

Thus donors have become key political players in the new politics of openness in Cambodia. Although donors may be concerned at the prospects of adopting such a key role, it is nevertheless a political reality, and t is likely to continue while Cambodia remains engaged in international regimes of aid and trade, and concern over domestic practices such as respect for human rights. The challenge for donors is not only how to delegate such powers to local actors, but also how to exercise them in such a way as to maximize the opportunities for the cultivation of a vigorous
grassroots politics". (p.34)

Opportunities and recommendations
The report was written for a bilateral donor, so most of the identified government reform opportunities are not really relevant for an NGO donor. Still, of the ten recommendations, three are:

- "Provide new forms of support to the development of civil society, seeking to facilitate links between the professional NGOs and the more grassroots social protest movements. Done carefully, this could strengthen the legitimacy and negotiating power of the former, and provide the latter with strategic guidance and political protection.
- Provide consistent, sustained and flexible support to the long-term evolution of the new Commune Councils….
- Seek to further improve the individual and collective conduct of donors, exercising discipline in TA and project identification, and promoting mechanisms that improve coordination and coherence within sector policy…" (p.vii-xv)

CONCLUSIONS
- The formal institutions of the state are (indeed) a façade for another, informal system of competing networks of personal allegiances.
- The professional development discourse is somewhat acceptable to the government but grassroots political mobilization is not.
- There exist no traditional organizational forms for such mobilization, but at national level – with donor support and protection – professional NGOs have to some extent taken that role.
- At local level – within a development discourse – new organizational forms have sometimes been enthusiastically adopted.
- Nevertheless, public mobilization has increased dramatically over the course of the past decade. Although in this analysis this is still seen as an urban phenomenon.
- The challenge is now:
  - To link professional NGOs and more grassroots social protest movements.
  - To link professional national NGOs to the local CBOs
  - To provide support to the evolution of Commune Councils
- The importance of donor voice for creating and maintaining civic and political space
- The importance of getting the donor house in order

2.1.6 Draft Social development strategy paper of the WB Cambodian office (September 2005)[14]
This paper elaborates – in follow up to an earlier DFID/WB paper (see annex 8) – the ongoing thinking about demand-side approaches to increase government responsiveness to civil society voice.

"Recent years have seen strong economic growth, however, Cambodia's development agenda is daunting and the challenge is exacerbated by weak governance…Political stability has contributed to economic growth; however, strong power bases increase inequality and impede the development of better governance…Security has been increasing in recent years throughout the country; however, corruption

[14] For further background, Annex 9 gives a short summary of the options identified to support bottom-up accountability efforts in a February 2004 report for DFID and the WB that was the first explicit move towards operationalizing a demand side approach to accountability in Cambodia.

thrives in an environment where social capital and social cohesion are only slowly being rebuild after decades of war…

Over the past twelve years, there has been significant efforts to create institutions of accountability in Cambodia and to build the capacity of those who serve in them. Significant investments have been made improving the function of the courts, parliament and various watchdog agencies within the executive, yet Cambodia's Country Policy and Institutional Assessment (CPIA) scores indicate that little has been achieved in relation to transparency and accountability. One reason for the lack of progress is that these newly created or reformed institutions are not supported by the social structures which preceded (and to a great extent precipitated) their development in other countries. Thus though the institutions are being built in a formal sense, they find themselves either sidelined or undermined by endemic corruption and elite capture…Accordingly it seems that in order to enhance the responsiveness of the state to the needs of the poor, it's necessary to focus more attention on the underlying social and non-governmental structures which underpin a state.

With few effective country systems in place to exact accountability from the government, civil society has put pressure on the donors to take this role. While civil society feels powerless to demand accountability from the government themselves, there are several channels they can use to pressure donors to demand accountability from the government. The donors, including the Bank, have responded by increasing their own presence and their monitoring efforts, relying more heavily on international consultants, and applying more pressure on the government. This in turn has increased the transaction costs for delivering money to the poor, and in a country where donors contribute the majority of the development budget – it distorts the relationship of accountability between a government and its citizens. A vicious circle is established where increasing reliance on donor/government mechanisms for accountability shifts focus away from the development of country systems. In this sense donors become part of the problem rather than part of the solution…

The above analysis focuses on the lack of a social basis for accountability in Cambodia. In these circumstances, one of the key ways to increase responsiveness of he state to the needs of the poor is to support the development of constituencies – i.e.: organized interest groups – that can begin to participate in development, engage constructively with the state, and articulate a demand for better governance. Three kinds of formal and informal groups are relevant to this discussion: commune councils made up of locally-elected representatives; non-governmental organizations that can work on behalf of specific groups; and community-based organizations.

The establishment of commune councils in 2002 has opened more space for people to participate in development planning and created a formal interface between people and government institutions…The progress made in Decentralization, the new strategic framework, and future plans of the government have provided entry points for engagement on social inclusion and accountability…

Civil society organizations and NGOs can provide alternative forums to engage with the state. Cambodia's civil society has grown rapidly fueled by donor interest and NGOs increasingly engage with government service providers or parliamentarians…[A]s professional organizations which have grown in response to donor funding, few local NGOs have an active grassroots constituency and as such lack legitimacy in the eyes of the government…

The entrenched patronage system, livelihood insecurity, and low levels of trust typical of post-conflict societies have lead to a situation in which alternatives to existing power structures are limited. While associational life might be expected to fill this gap it has not done so to date. Donor or NGO projects working with communities inevitably require some form of group or association to be formed but few of these survive much beyond the life of the project. Local organizations do, however, exist, for example, in the pagoda associations which are seen in most Cambodian villages…in community natural resources management and in other forms of local self-help networks…Spontaneous group formation is also being seen in cases of disputes involving collective interests. In these circumstances…'it is often possible for village associations to obtain justice…by building a strong network of relationships with both NGOs and government officials at all levels'[15]. If this is the case then focusing on activities and institutions which contribute to the accumulation of social capital may be a fruitful way to support the more effective articulation of demand-side pressures for reform.

[15] Nee, M. & Healy, J. (2003) Towards understanding Cambodian villages beyond war. p. 113

Greater participation in public life will increase accountability and improve governance but can only be effective if citizens have the information, the forums, the tools, and feel secure enough to engage. Information is an essential tool to empower people…It needs to be made available in a form that can be understood, and then space created for balanced discussion and dialogue…

Feelings of injustice, disenfranchisement, and disempowerment can be significant contributors to conflict. Maintaining peace and stability is essential; however it s shortsighted to believe that simply suppressing complaints and debate is an effective and sustainable way to do this…There is…much work to be done to both establish an environment where people can complain without fear of retribution, and can be confident of a just resolution.
Some groups in society are especially marginalized from economic, political opportunities or access to services including women, youths, and indigenous peoples. Specific interventions may be needed to bring these groups back into the mainstream of development…" (p.1-5)

CONCLUSIONS

- After many years of heavy donor investment in institutional reform there is (indeed) no progress in the supply of good governance.
- To increase the responsiveness of the state it is necessary to focus more attention on its 'underlying social structures', by supporting the development of constituencies, through work with Commune Councils, local NGOs and CBOs. However, support needs to target foundational work:
    - To be effective this support needs to contribute to the accumulation of social capital, which in turn is a basis for the development of constituencies.
    - And needs to deal with feelings of injustice, disenfranchisement and disempowerment, which at present block the development of constituencies.

2.1.7 Conclusions

- Effective formal institutions in Cambodia are the exception rather than the rule. Public life is managed through informal networks of personal allegiances. Obviously NGOs are also part of this Cambodian reality. Supporting more or less successfully institutionalized NGOs is thus crucial for having examples around of what the push for formal institutions is all about, but also for effectiveness. Large professional NGOs have all the disadvantages of their equivalents in donor home countries, but they do deliver on a lot of what they are meant for.
- The other side of the same coin is that supporting the 'right' (network of) individual(s) is an effective way of making an impact in a society that largely functions along those lines.
- There has been a lot of stagnation and resistance to reform; at the same time some things *have* changed. And they have changed fast. Protests are one. The Pro-poor policy study still describes urban environments, i.c. Phnom Penh, are much more conducive to public voice, but over the last three years land has become such a prominent issue that the focus has changed to the rural areas (even to the extent that the HC for HR fears for political stability).
- Over the last five years, the interrelatedness of the importance of
    - ESC rights (livelihood issues) as a basis for community organizing
    - (Local) associational experience as school for democracy
    - Supporting local level claims-making
    - Using the opportunities provided by local level government (especially Commune Councils) for increasing people's influence agenda-setting and decision-making
    - Linking local level claims-making to national level advocacy
    - Linking up 'traditional' HR work and community organization based on ESC issues
- Has become more widely recognized, but the HOW to do it is still in need of much experimentation, and sharing of experiences. Whatever the focus of a donor program, it should build in space for such learning & sharing opportunities. However, lessons that *have* been learned are:
    - That a rights-based discourse of what one is doing at grassroots level does not work, while a development discourse does.
    - That community development needs an enabling approach. Many conditions for effective community mobilization are not yet in place.
- Donor coordination is essential

2.2 Mapping of actors & stakeholders and their opinions

2.2.1 A map of the relevant NGO actors and stakeholders

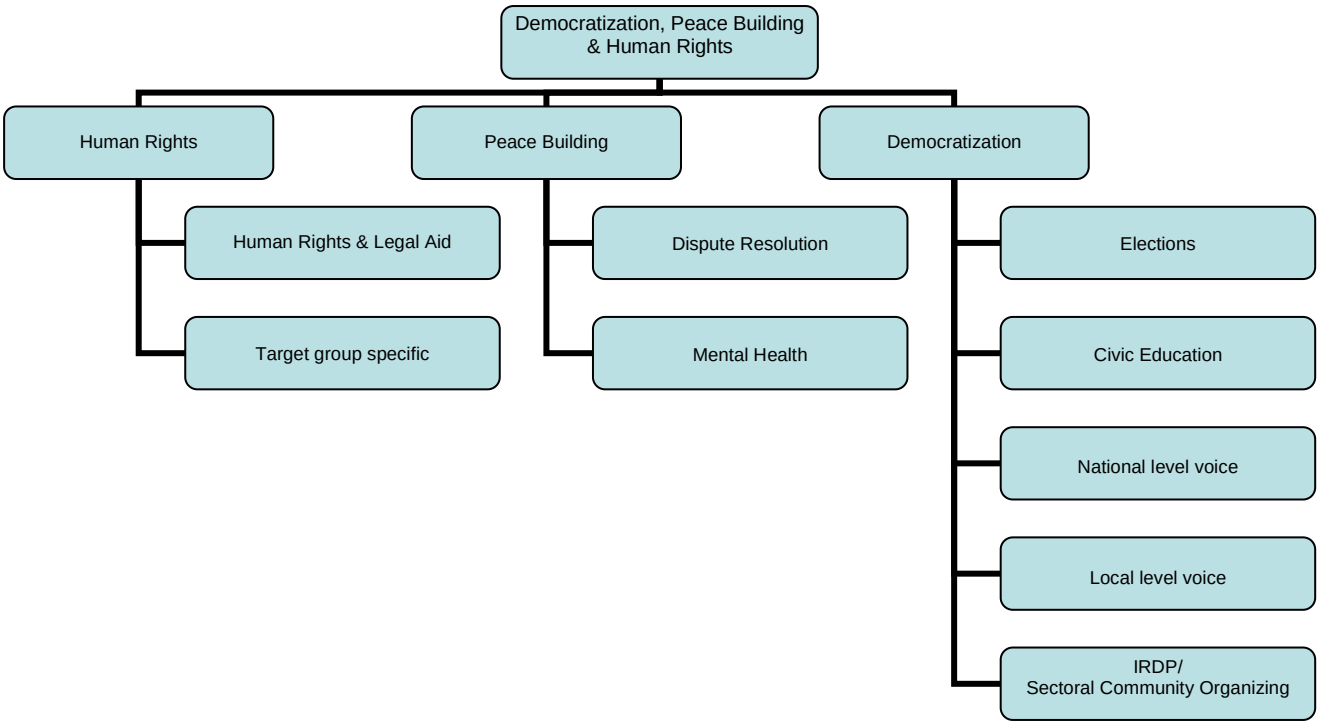
The mission was fortunate in the sense that another donor, DANIDA, had just completed a mapping of this same sector, including a narrative description of the support provided by government institutions and

programs, donor agencies and NGOs. An annotated version of this narrative is included in this report as Annex 10.

The mission's own tabulated overview is included as annex 5 and lists the donors and the NGOs they support in the thematic area of democratization, peace-building and human rights. This overview takes ICCO's current partners as a given, and for the rest limits itself to interventions that have a direct focus on civil and political rights. That means that although the table is much more exhaustive than the DANIDA narrative (which focuses on the main NGO actors only[16]) the table is not comprehensive. Especially the mapping of local level democracy building and IRDP/sectoral community organization is limited.

Figure 1 shows the categorizations used to describe the thematic area[17]:

Figure 1 Categorizations for an overview of donors and NGOs in the thematic area of Democratization, Peace Building and Human Rights



The mapping of prominent donors and their partners in the democratization, peace building and human rights field in Cambodia shows that there are a couple of donors with whom ICCO shares a fair number of partners:

[16] However, the DANIDA overview is quite comprehensive regarding the *government* agencies involved.
[17] Not included is Capacity Building/Research and Training service provision.

Donor	P&D&HR Partners	Other Partners	Total
Dan Church Aid	4	2	6
Diakonia	3	2	7
Forum Syd	1	1	
EED	2	3	5
East West management Institute (EWMI)	3		3
Oxfam GB	3		3
Christian Aid	2		2
NZAid	2	1	3
The Asia Foundation (TAF)	1		1
NOVIB	1		1
DED/ZFD	1		1

The other partners are shared but not directly covered by a civil & political rights D&P&HR program: IRDP implementing NGOs or NGO CB/service providers.

The APRODEV partners with whom ICCO shares a lot of affinities (partnership approach, etc.) are very prominent. Forum Syd (not APRODEV) and Diakonia (APRODEV), both funded by SIDA (which comes with the condition that they do not share any partners) share an office and Capacity Building TA.

2.2.2 ICCO's current partners within the thematic context

All the partners described here already have contractual relations with ICCO and receive funding and/or TA and/or other CB support. For each type of partner, suggestions are made for *potential added value* of ICCO support, i.e. suggested initiatives, approaches or linkages that ICCO can facilitate and support, which hold promise for increasing impact. The suggestions also try to build upon and strengthen ICCO's current niches and aim for implementing 'alternative to the mainstream' interventions. These suggestions are based on a mix of what partners themselves brought up during interviews, what other NGOs or donors brought up with respect to the activity field the partner is working within, and the mission consultants' own experience and expertise.

Human Rights: Human Rights and Legal Aid

Potential added value:

- Active support to 'traditional' HR partners to adapt to changing circumstances; appreciate institutionalization as a good in itself and help partners in their efforts to counter the inherent conservatism, fear of change, organizational survival focus etc, that comes with institutionalization.
- Bridging the gap between Community Development NGOs and HR NGOs. Under donor pressure, some HR NGOs are trying to include community organizing into their own program, rather than go down the more difficult but much more sensible road of linking up with established community organizers. Supporting partners in their learning-by-doing process of how to establish effective linkages is important.
- At national level: strengthening the collective voice of HR organizations; their umbrella organization HRAC is only very partly effective and current donor efforts are focusing on advocacy CB for 'their' partner organization rather than going for the big picture. The UNCOHCHR has indicated serious interest in shared networking activities in the HR sector.

Human Rights: target group specific

Potential added value:

- Domestic violence is a major issue in Cambodia and hardly effectively targeted at present. Linking ICCO partners (mental health, human rights/legal aid, and IRDP/community development) and stimulating experimentation and collective learning would add value.

Peace Building: Mental Health

Potential added value:

- From a peace building perspective, mental health is best conceptualized as a prerequisite or foundation for people's ability to constructively deal with conflict. As mental health is a prerequisite for claims-making from a democratization perspective by empowering individuals through work on trauma,

confidence-building, etc. Like in other post-conflict societies a large proportion of Cambodians has mental health problems and many initiatives, interventions fail because of this underlying problem. Linking up ICCO's mental health partners with other organizations so as to 'mainstream' more of the counseling skills necessary to be more effective in dispute resolution, community organizing and other areas, starting with other ICCO partners, is one way to increase the collective impact of ICCO supported activities.

Peace Building: Dispute resolution

Potential added value:
- Supporting successful institutionalization, especially at the stage when other donors can be expected to start loosing interest ('the job is done…'), creates added value.
- Linking up local level dispute resolution support with the counseling expertise of ICCO's mental health partners would increase impact.

National level Voice

Potential added value:
- Supporting and working with an established national voice is added value in itself.
- Involvement would certainly increase when ICCO would actually become an active member of NGO Forum
- This is also a platform for lobby donors to better coordinate, e.g. through shared analysis of important issues.
- Institutionally linking up ICCO's regional indigenous peoples partners with NGO Forum would strengthen the regional network.

Capacity Building & Knowledge management

Potential added value:
- The kind of capacity building referred to is still very much a niche in Cambodia. Whatever the focus of a donor program, it should build in space for such learning & sharing opportunities.
- Attaching an action-research component to the ICCO program, offering capacity for permanent monitoring, case studies, and data-analysis, also on behalf of ICCO's partners, can facilitate and inform the collective sharing and learning process of continuous program development that makes for good donor and partnership practice.

2.2.3 Partner options & new developments

The mission came across a couple of new developments, or sometimes even more concrete, options for new partnerships. It was beyond the mandate of the mission to explore such options, let alone come with suggestions. We thus do not offer more than a list of what came to our attention, as a 'FYI' to ICCO:

…….

2.2.4 Programming relevant opinions of (partner) organizations, donors and key informants

The opinions reported below are those that were uttered by so many informants that they can be regarded as having a broad base of support[18]. The implications of each opinion theme for the ICCO program are formulated as conclusions.

2.2.4.1 Grassroots mobilization

Cambodian discussions are very much focused on:

- The importance of supporting local level claims-making
- The importance of ESC rights as a basis for community organizing
- The importance of linking up 'traditional' HR work and community organization based on ESC issues
- The importance of linking local level claims-making to national level advocacy
- The importance of using the opportunities provided by local level government (especially Commune Councils) for increasing people's influence agenda-setting and decision-making
- The importance of (local) associational experience as school for democracy

[18] Obviously, this not to claim that there are no dissenting voices.

A underlying core issue of much of the above is that programs aiming to support community mobilization only make sense if they target livelihood (or in case of indigenous minorities to some extent identity) issues. Governance issues have to be linked with rural people's needs and local structures can only be developed through more basic activities.

The box below illustrates this by quoting the reasoning used by Forum Syd for including sustainable livelihood as an objective in its current Democracy and Human Rights program (our italics):

Forum Syd's Democracy and Human Rights Program
"The programme has four main areas: Rule of Law, Popular Participation, Women's Rights, and Sustainable Livelihood. Relating to these areas, Forum Syd has defined long-term objectives (ten-year perspective) for the Cambodian society and short-term objectives (three-year perspective) for partner organisations and their activities… The most important change on this level compared to what Forum Syd is presently doing in Cambodia is the inclusion of sustainable livelihood as an overall objective. This is a way of increasing Forum Syd's work to promote economic, social and cultural rights and the objective replaces those related to preparations for the general elections that took place earlier this year. *It also provides a sought-for opportunity to support organisations working with a grassroots perspective*."
(Application for the continuation of Forum Syd's Democracy and Human Rights Programme in Cambodia (2004– 2006)

The importance of this is not only based on the linkage between people's needs and their interest in collective action, but also on the potential for collective action that finds (local) government responsive. Programs may be phrased in terms of a rights-based approach but regarding ESC rights, on the ground, where working with (local) government is a sine qua non of effective interventions, a rights-based discourse of what one is doing does *not* work, while a development discourse *does*.

Conclusions:
- Effective work at grassroots level has to take basic livelihood issues as its entry point. When correctly facilitated, mobilization around such issues can be seen as providing democratic learning experience.
- Linking this mobilization up with both local level government and with human rights work can increase the scope and impact of such experience, even up to the national level.
- The natural partners for facilitating such mobilization are those already experienced in community organizing, usually from an IRDP rather than a sector perspective because it takes in-depth familiarity with communities to be able to effectively facilitate self-organization. That is to say human rights organizations should not try to 'go into' community organizing but 'link up' with those already doing it.

2.2.4.2 Supporting work in the province

Choosing the right partners to facilitate grassroots mobilization and then working with them needs provincial presence, even Phnom Penh is too far away, unless the partner is already very well established and big. This implies the need for a provincial intermediary. The 'quality' (trustworthy, competent, committed and visionary management) of the provincial presence is not automatically guaranteed by the 'quality' of its Phnom Penh HQ and has to be assessed. Also, HOW best to facilitate community organization is still very much a question mark, and to the extent we know what goes into good facilitation in the Cambodian context, the required soft skills are rare.

Conclusions:
- ICCO currently has one large, well established IRDP partner: CWS. This offers the opportunity for a relationship as between DCA and LWF. ICCO might consider channel some of the funding that is now given directly to local provincial NGOs through CWS[19]. By having a big partner like this operate as a kind of delegated donor for some smaller NGOs in the provinces that are 'covered' by that partner, creates a natural learning and exchange network.

[19] Regarding the ongoing (?) localization discussion within ICCO: CNGO or INGO should not be a criterion for partner choice. It is what a partner does, how a partner operates, the vision behind it and the openness to learning and change that matter. Appearances deceive. A CNGO (with or without an expat advisor) can be much less Cambodian owned and donor driven than an INGO, less committed to the target group facilitation and more interested in staying in business etc.

2.2.4.3 Partner choice

If something works well, whatever it is, whatever your program: continue with it. Giving up on something that works in a fragile environment like Cambodia is not good donorship.

It's all about trustworthy, competent, committed and visionary individuals. Make that an important, even decisive criterion for partner choices. It is individuals that make the difference. Partner with drivers of change rather than organizations that fit any predefined program.

Something closely related that we did not come across as an opinion voiced by others but is our own observation is the potential importance of informal intellectual networks. These are networks of committed, visionary and competent individuals, whose formal affiliations are to different organizations but who in their private time operate as a very informal 'think tank'. Examples are a network 'behind' ACT, a dispute resolution NGO, a network of development practitioners facilitated by VFI (see 2.3) and a network behind the potential new civic education initiative (see 2.3).

Conclusions:

- Institutionalization is a good in itself; as long as a well-established bigger partner remains open to shared learning and change, loyalty should be very high on the agenda. The importance of not throwing away what has been build up – with great investment – is substantial.
- How to support an informal network without running the risk of destroying its qualities by formalization is not easy to answer in particular cases and impossible to answer in general. In particular cases it needs careful discussions with the network itself to collectively agree upon something that can be tried out. But, however difficult it may be, the potential impact of supporting these kinds of indigenous think tanks seems promising.

2.2.4.4 Target Groups focus

A target group focus can mean different things. It can be a donor-wide strategy or the actual implementation can be decided at country level. The target groups focus can be seen as a cross-cutting issue, something that is operationalized in Cambodia e.g. for women by Diakonia (through supporting one 'strategic' partner - GAD - that is made responsible for supporting other partners in gender 'mainstreaming'), or it can be envisioned to actually concentrate most of one's support on the target group(s). It can also mean focusing on a particular issue, e.g. women and domestic violence, youth and reproductive health, or indigenous peoples and property rights.

Donor choices seem largely determined by HQ priorities. Most donors explicitly recognize this and there is not much effort to argue that targeting women, children, etc. is MORE important than other interventions. Given the needs of all 'popular' target groups, there is also plenty of scope for targeted interventions so there is not much pressure to legitimate the pre-existing choices.

ICCO does not have a particular target group approach, nor does it define its mandate in terms of a particular target group. The mission was asked to specifically look into the added value of ICCO support for women, youth and indigenous peoples in Cambodia, without any preconceived notion about how to implement possible targeting (see annex 11). One overall conclusion is that three 'target groups' is anyway one at least too many, whatever the implementation modality of the target group 'focus'.

The mission's recommendations are described below:

- In terms of target group specific partners, currently only woman are 'covered'. The existing partners and our suggestions regarding support are described in the relevant section above (2.2)
- Youth is not covered by any partner yet. Forum Syd has decided that its 2007 – 2009 program will target youth. Other like-minded donors also support specific youth organizations. Given the importance of donor coordination (see below 2.2.4.5), ICCO's choice, if budgetary room for new partners emerges, should be calibrated with other donors (either opt for complementing, overlapping or dropping of this target group because it is covered by others).
- Indigenous peoples are only covered at national level through NGO Forum for whom this is one of the focal areas – be it implicitly through their land and livelihoods program. There are interesting new developments happening, with a national indigenous peoples association in the making, local capacity building work of community leaders by Village Focus International, and a new regional initiative around indigenous peoples and protected areas, all of it involving Rattanakiri contacts of regional ICCO partners IKAP and AIPP. Plenty of opportunities for ICCO to engage more (directly) with indigenous peoples issues in Cambodia. However, in light of ICCO discussions about a REGIONAL Indigenous Peoples Program, it seems questionable if ICCO's Democratization, Peace Building and Human Rights

program is the best umbrella for engagement with IPs in Cambodia. Obviously, supporting some IP targeting partners in Cambodia under the D&P program makes for a strong anchor for a regional program.

……

2.2.4.5 Donor coordination

There are various possibilities/aspects to structuring one's program within the context of other donor programs on similar issues:

- Based on a shared analysis of needs coordination with one or more other donors about *complementary* foci, in terms of sectors, target groups or partners
- Based on a shared analysis of needs coordination with one or more other donors about *shared* foci, in terms of sectors, target groups or partners

The 'logical' starting point for donor collaboration is shared analysis. But in current practice this is best conceived as an end-of-coordination-process outcome.

In Cambodia, but probably elsewhere too, NGO donors are progressive alternatives to the bureaucratic bi-laterals and IO's in *some* respects but *not* in terms of coordination. Good practice comes from organizations like DANIDA, DFID, SIDA and the WB. Locally present NGO donors are aware of that. They are also aware that this good practice is largely based upon the local offices that make it happen.

Therefore, more intensive information exchange, coordination and exploration of collaborative possibilities than through an occasional mission is asked for. Neglecting the potential added value of coordination with like-minded donors because of the many (very real) practical problems associated with such coordination represents bad practice not good donorship. (NGO) donor opinion was unanimous that coordination is only feasible between in-country donors. The pros and cons of ICCO creating a field presence in Cambodia or regionally were discussed with partners and like-minded donors. Donors were unanimous in their wish for such a presence.

Even with country presence coordination can be expected to be a slow and cumbersome process. Diakonia and Forum Syd's current collaboration is back donor-driven, was initially strongly resented and is only now, through the positive experiences of actual collaboration, slowly becoming more programmatic. Even then, Diakonia sees the need to move their expat country representative from her regional office to the Cambodia office to further facilitate this process.

There seems to be an APRODEV HQs agreement between the core group of partners that DCA is going to take the lead in hosting field presences but it is as yet unclear what this exactly implies (DCA info).

Major donor coordination issues flagged during many conversations were:

- Decreasing the reporting, CB overlaps and (evaluation) mission burden on partner organizations.
- Increase shared learning, experimentation, and analysis, for partners and donors alike.
- Increasing the collective political voice of the donors (and thus strengthen the protection of Cambodian political space).

Conclusions:

- Paradoxically/Sadly (?) it is not a particular development issue but (NGO) donor coordination that potentially offers MOST short-term chances for ADDING VALUE.
- The material incentive structures underlying this state of affairs are obviously a given and are not going to change, but the experience of some bi-lateral and IO successes shows that explicit prioritization of coordination can make a big difference.

2.2.4.6 Partner relationships

Partnerships rather than contractual agreements around project or program outputs are very much en vogue, at least rhetorically. However, most NGOs indicated that for them partnership implies more frequent contact and working together than was common in their current donor relationships. Some were hesitant to tie the possibilities for this to in-country presence of the donor. Hesitations were based on bad experiences with unclear mandates of country reps and micro-management. "It all depends on the person", "It's not about country presence but it is about a relationship, which are grounded in face-to-face interaction and longer-term" are illustrative utterances.

Many ICCO partners equally expressed an interest in a more tangible partnership, with a person who represents ICCO. What was asked for was a donor relationship that was personal, respectful and informed enough (about Cambodian reality) to allow for open discussions about problems, failures etc. etc. There is

still a lot to learn and share amongst partners regarding the HOW. Innovation, alternatives, etc. is not so much about the WHAT but the HOW, and the extent to which the learnings, successes AND failures can be openly discussed and shared.

Other characteristics of what was widely considered real partnership were

- Room for experimentation (to explore the HOW)
- Room for flexible funding. Interventions are very often all about timing and opportunity. These cannot be log-framed before they happen. Partnership implies that at least some of the funding is provided on the basis of very general objectives and not tied to tight time frames or indicators.
- Room for changes. The situation in Cambodia is changing rapidly. Over the last three years quite basic changes have occurred. Programs with an in-build regular participatory re-assessment of priorities, approaches, etc. make most sense in such an environment. This also means that being forced to set very specific outcome/impact goals for years into the future is seen as a bureaucratic game rather than helpful support.

Conclusions:

- An ICCO program should aim to include room for experimentation, flexible funding and regular participatory re-assessment of priorities and approaches.
- Partnership should be implemented on the ground in terms of continuous shared learning and exchange of experiences about what the changing circumstances imply for partners' work, and about what makes for effective interventions.

2.2.4.7 Program development

The country strategy of ICCO will have to reconcile the portfolio of current partners with a program that makes sense and has added value. Working towards such a program should be done together with the other players, i.e. the current partners and the other prominent donors. Irrespective of all the conceptual and practical difficulties involved in 'participatory' program development, a country program should be the outcome of a process that as much as possible involves all. Not only through eliciting their views by a consultant but much more intensively. Country formulation processes of in-country donors all involve larger partner workshops. And even better practices – again more evident in the world of the bi-laterals – involve program development trajectories of a year or more.

Obviously, all of this does in no way detract from ICCO's decision-making authority. Ultimately, the partnerships are all based on temporary contractual relationships. Cambodian partners are one of the stakeholders of the ICCO program and should have a better chance to have their say, sister organizations are potential stakeholders, but ICCO itself, as the donor and manager of the program is, and that can hardly be otherwise given ICCO's accountability for the program towards its back donors, the locus of decisions.

Even, or also when the program develops towards a shared/multi-donor entity, decisions to contribute (or not), and to contribute towards what, are going to remain ICCO decisions.

Conclusions:

- This mission is based on the assumption (see annex 11) that in-country presence is in the pipeline and this implies that the initial program formulation should be discursively as flexible as possible and allow for further development in actual partnership with the organizations supported and some like-minded donors.
- The situation in Cambodia is changing rapidly. Over the last three years quite basic changes have occurred. Programs with an in-build regular participatory re-assessment of priorities, approaches, etc. make most sense in such an environment.
- This means that program formulation is best conceived as an ongoing process that includes yearly consultative stock-taking and adding a next year to the permanent 3 or 4 year country strategy.

2.2.5 Conclusions

There is quite clearly key informant support for *all* the conclusions drawn from the review of country analyses:

- The importance of safe-guarding institutionalization
- The importance of supporting (networks) of individuals
- The fast changes requiring the programmatic capacity for flexibility and adaptation
- The interrelated importance of ESC rights (livelihood issues) as a basis for community organizing, (local) associational experience as school for democracy, supporting local level claims-making, using the opportunities provided by local level government (especially Commune Councils) for increasing people's influence agenda-setting and decision-making, linking local level claims-making to national level advocacy, and linking up 'traditional' HR work and community organization based on ESC issues.
- The need for experimentation and shared learning about how to best approach the above
- The importance of donor coordination

This match can be 'read' as mutually reinforcing and it strengthens the claim for these issues to be core to an ICCO program.

On a more practical level, the interviews delivered suggestions that can directly be translated into operational recommendations for program choices:

- The natural partners for facilitating such mobilization are those already experienced in community organizing, usually from an IRDP rather than a sector perspective because it takes in-depth familiarity with communities to be able to effectively facilitate self-organization. That is to say human rights organizations should not try to 'go into' community organizing but 'link up' with those already doing it.
- By having one big IRDP partner that takes on a role as delegated donor for some smaller NGOs in the provinces that are 'covered' by that partner creates a natural learning and exchange network.
- Donor coordination should have high priority in the program. If possible, by formulating an explicit objective to this effect.
- An ICCO program should aim to include room for experimentation, flexible funding and regular participatory re-assessment of priorities and approaches.

The following foci of ICCO support/activities would represent alternatives to the mainstream:

- Donor coordination that aims for:
  - Decreasing the reporting, CB overlaps and (evaluation) mission burden on partner organizations.
  - Increase shared learning, experimentation, and analysis, for partners and donors alike.
  - Increasing the collective political voice of the donors (and thus strengthen the protection of Cambodian political space).
- Active support to 'traditional' HR but also CD partners to adapt to changing circumstances; appreciate institutionalization as a good in itself and help partners in their efforts to counter the inherent conservatism, fear of change, organizational survival focus etc, that comes with institutionalization.
- Active and flexible support to experiments on effective approaches and on the sharing of their results
- Allow for support of entities that are at the interface of government and civil society if this is a good way of supporting civil society.
- Allow for support of initiatives that support individual drivers of change at community and/or national level
- Support Capacity Building that goes beyond short-term technical training but targets critical/analytical skills, real facilitation skills, attitude change, and includes mentoring and collective learning. Support organizations that aim for collective learning.

Potential niches for ICCO support are

- HR/Legal Aid
- Mental health and peace building
- Longer-term analytic and facilitation training

2.3 Program setup

2.3.1 Objectives and strategies

The input collected (country analyses and key informant interviews) leads us to suggest:

- Attaching core importance to a process approach to program development, implying an initial program that is 'flexible' in its objectives so as to not preclude later input from stakeholders, and/or frustrate the possibility to include evolving insights and exploit opportunities for collaboration (see below).
- The importance of donor coordination and knowledge management and promoting and implementing (shared) evidence-based policy and practice (see below).

We are aware that a log-frame does have to serve multiple purposes and some of these are difficult to assess from a Cambodian perspective. The extent to which donor coordination and knowledge management can be strategic purposes, or can only be presented as objectives is donor-context specific because it is co-determined by the policy environment within which the donor is using the log-frame.

The suggestions below are thus exactly that, suggestions, and more than most other suggestions contained in this report, need a serious reality check from a Dutch perspective.

Also, log-frames are often somewhat arbitrary because reality is not very willing to be 'boxed in'. This is reflected below in several objectives being relevant to more than one strategic purpose (these are italicized). Again, what choice is preferable (leaving it like this, which would be our suggestion because there is nothing wrong with the same objective serving dual purposes, or choosing one or the other purpose as the sole umbrella) is difficult to make without taking the Dutch context into account.

Log-frame Democratization, Peace Building and Human Rights Program ICCO Cambodia

Overall Goal: A Cambodia where there is social justice and equitable participation of vulnerable citizens in the conduct of public affairs		
Strategic Purpose 1: Improved respect for, awareness of and ability to demand social justice		
Objectives	**Indicators**	**Assumptions**
1.1 Continued support to the HR and LA sector with the aim of enhancing impact		
1.2 Continued support to efforts to decrease domestic violence		
1.3 Facilitate the linkage between the HR and LA sector and community based development		
1.4 Support the strengthening of alternative dispute mechanisms		
1.5 Support the linkages of counseling and dispute resolution (incl. domestic disputes)		
1.6 Support the linkages between local demands for social justice and national level advocacy		
Strategic Purpose 2: Increased ability of vulnerable Cambodians to influence decisions affecting their lives through collective action		
Objectives	**Indicators**	**Assumptions**
2.1 Continued support to community based development with the aim of strengthening local-level claims making		
2.2 Facilitate the linkage between the HR and LA sector and community based development		
2.3 Support abilities of communities for agenda-setting and influencing decision-making by using opportunities offered by local government		
2.4 Support the linkages of counseling and facilitation of community mobilization		
2.5 Ensuring good linkage between Cambodian indigenous peoples' organizations and/or those working with them and ICCO's regional partners/program		
2.6 Support civic education		
2.7 Support 'soft skills' capacity building initiatives		

Strategic Purpose 3: Increased political influence of national level rights' advocates		
Objectives	**Indicators**	**Assumptions**
3.1 Continued support to the HR and LA sector with the aim of enhancing impact		
3.2 Continued support to other national level rights advocates with the aim to enhancing impact		
3.3 Support the linkages between local demands for social justice and national level advocacy		
Strategic Purpose 4: More policy and practice of ICCO and like-minded NGO donors and their partners is evidence-based		
Objectives	**Indicators**	**Assumptions**
4.1 Active promotion of evidence-based policy and practice amongst like-minded donors and partners		
4.2 Support informal Cambodian intellectual networks		
4.3 Support experimental interventions that promise better understanding of what works		
4.4 Facilitate partner collaboration on shared (action) research and learning		
Strategic Purpose 5: Better donor coordination		
Objectives	**Indicators**	**Assumptions**
5.1 Develop initiatives to decrease the burden of (uncoordinated) reporting, CB and missions on partners		
5.2 Develop initiatives for sharing baselines & evaluations and analyses with like-minded donors		
5.3 Develop initiatives for shared CB/TA offers		
5.4 Develop initiatives for collective donor action with the aim of increasing/protecting the political space for partners		
5.5 Become an active member of existing NGO umbrellas with the aim to promote coordination and evidence-based policy and practice		

2.3.1.2 Program management

The suggested program's success is going to be dependent upon ICCO's in-country capacity to initiate, facilitate and support, and coordinate the envisioned:

- Intensified partnerships
- Inter-partner collaboration
- Inter-donor collaboration

This requires a program manager with these objectives as the core of the ToR.

Given the donor coordination aspect, which holds most promises for short-term added value, the position should have a *formal representation* mandate; the exact division of responsibilities between the country manager position and HQ country and PSA desks, to be decided. Obviously ultimate decision-making responsibilities cannot be in the hands of a program manager.

In order to maximize opportunities for collaboration and sharing of resources, it is suggested to *not* include *direct* CB responsibility in the program manager ToR. Other suggested sister organizations have in-country CB TA at program level (Forum Syd), and ICCO has a partnership with VBNK that should be intensified rather than complicated by more across-partner TA. Obviously, *indirect* responsibility (ensuring timely and correct identification of needs, providing an enabling environment in terms of facilitating funding requests, and evaluating effectiveness) has to remain part of the ToR.

It is suggested to include a *knowledge management* mandate in the ToR. If there is added value to be had from the exchanges and shared learning with and between partners and between sister organizations, this is going to require explicit attention to knowledge management. Also, some of the further reaching donor collaboration objectives (shared baselines & evaluations, shared missions, shared analysis) are going to be easier to attain if one of the sister organizations, i.c. ICCO is going to take the lead on that aspect of the

coordination and collaboration. And knowledge management is as yet not 'covered' by any of the other sister organizations, while CB (see above), and reporting and fund raising are to some extent[20].

It is suggested to provide the program manager with some discretionary budget:

- A fund for testing out experimental field approaches
- A fund for strategic research (see below 2.3.1.3)

However, it is suggested to make these funds as much as possible shared facilities of the sister organizations, in other words, use them as both tools for donor collaboration and increase their potential scope and impact by making them multi-donor.

Infra-structural requirements for a program manager position should be kept to a minimum, operationalizing a hosting agreement with DCA from the start on the principle that any need that can be covered by a sister organization through sharing resources should be preferable over making ICCO specific arrangements. What cannot be offered by DCA should be sought from Forum Syd/Diakonia. Obviously sharing implies costs sharing but is is expected to be much more cost effective than opening a country office. Obviously, ICCO visibility should not be compromised but this a short-term and pragmatic rather than a principled issue. In the end *collective* visibility is envisioned the goal.

Possible regional involvement of the program manager should be thought through earlier rather than later. Regional collaboration, exchange, learning and exchange of expertise of ICCO field presences (and possibly TA attached to partner organizations) should be explicitly included in the ToRs of the respective program managers (Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand/Burma?). Enabling exploration of HOW to start this best, through face-to-face meetings of these program managers, and through learning from the models of others, should be budgeted for.

2.3.1.3 Program development

Both the context analysis (see 2.1.7) and the opinions gathered from NGOs, donors and other key informants imply the need for approaching program formulation as an ongoing process. The fast changing environment in Cambodia and the ongoing shared learning with partners and sister donors ask for a program with an in-build regular participatory re-assessment of priorities, approaches, etc.

From this perspective ICCO program development is best seen as a three-stage process:

- This mission report is part of the *first* stage that is going to result in an initial program formulation which should be discursively as flexible as possible – also in terms of stated strategic objectives - and allow for further development in actual partnership with the organizations supported and some like-minded donors (until an in-country program manager is in position).
- The *second* (three year stage) is about the further development in actual partnership with the organizations supported and some like-minded donors (2006-2008/2009)
- The *third* stage is the second ICCO program which is envisioned to be more of a participatory, coordinated and collaborative creature than the initial version. At this stage it is not realistic to make any statements about the feasibility of aiming for a multi-donor program for the third stage. However, as an ideal goal this should set the benchmark to aim for.

The suggested procedure for implementing this ongoing program development is to design a yearly consultative stock-taking and replacing the past year by adding one next year to ICCO's 3 year country strategy.

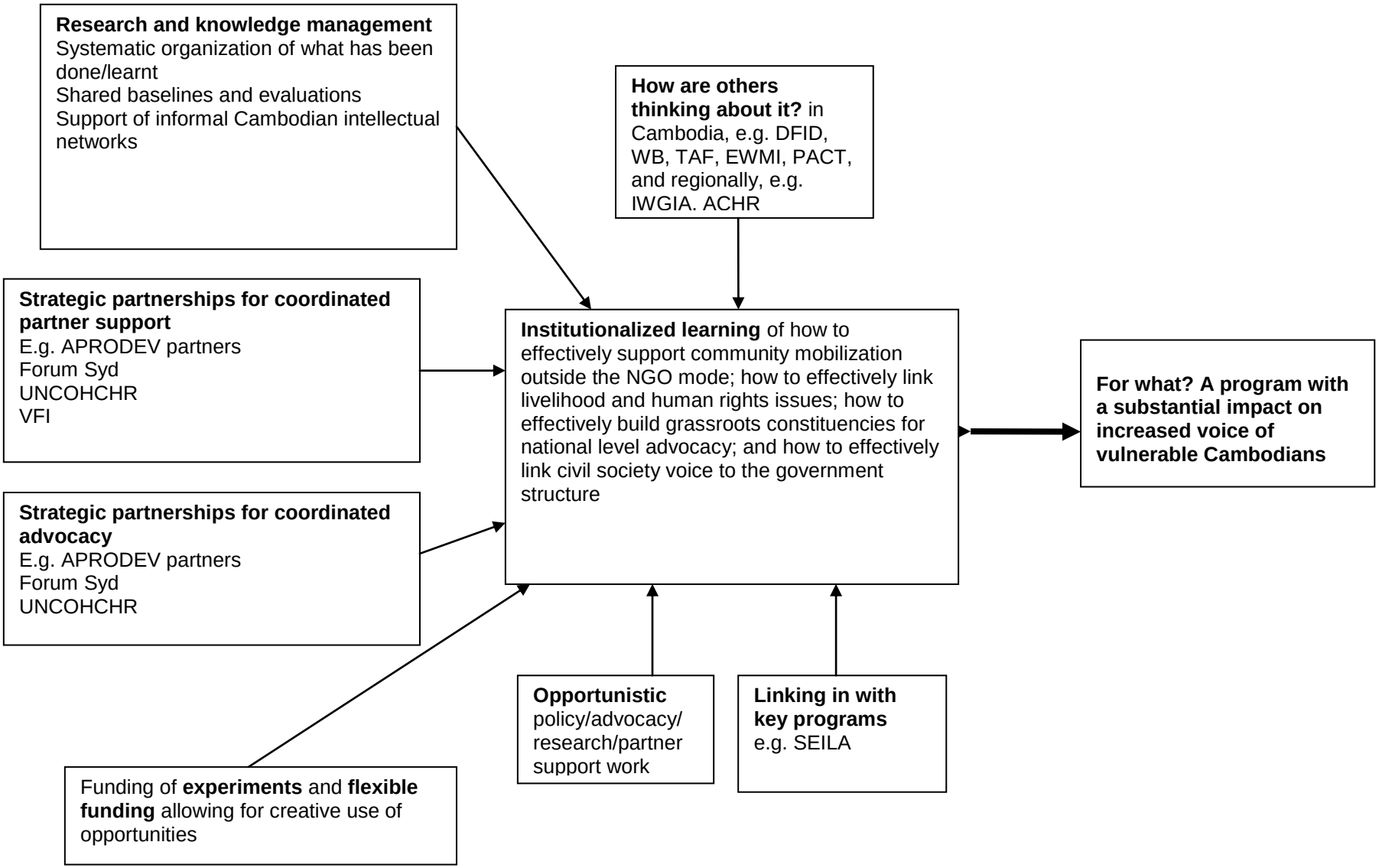
The objective is to ground ongoing program development not only on interests and needs of partners and sister organizations at any point in time but aim for collective learning based on shared evidence production and analysis. Knowledge management is thus a core ingredient of this strategy. This should be conceptualized as input into the more formal yearly stock-taking and updating process outlined above.

One practical suggestion to operationalize the 'learning network' approach is to attach an action-research component to the ICCO program, offering capacity for permanent monitoring, case studies, and data-analysis, also on behalf of ICCO's partners.

[20] DCA country rep understanding is that 'hosting' in-country representations includes initiating and facilitating coordination of shared reporting and shared fund-raising. Obviously, at present this is not yet much more than a personal interpretation because no inter-donor meetings have actually taken place, but the interest is clear.

Aiming to make this component multi-donor should obviously be high on the agenda because it is a natural hub for shared analysis and thus shared programming, the most far reaching version of donor collaboration.

Figure 2 below visualizes the core elements of a knowledge management based strategy for continuous development of a Cambodia country program.


Research and knowledge management
Systematic organization of what has been done/learnt
Shared baselines and evaluations
Support of informal Cambodian intellectual networks
How are others thinking about it? in Cambodia, e.g. DFID, WB, TAF, EWMI, PACT, and regionally, e.g. IWGIA. ACHR
Strategic partnerships for coordinated partner support
E.g. APRODEV partners
Forum Syd
UNCOHCHR
VFI
Institutionalized learning of how to effectively support community mobilization outside the NGO mode; how to effectively link livelihood and human rights issues; how to effectively build grassroots constituencies for national level advocacy; and how to effectively link civil society voice to the government structure
For what? A program with a substantial impact on increased voice of vulnerable Cambodians
Strategic partnerships for coordinated advocacy
E.g. APRODEV partners
Forum Syd
UNCOHCHR
Opportunistic policy/advocacy/ research/partner support work
Linking in with key programs e.g. SEILA
Funding of **experiments** and **flexible funding** allowing for creative use of opportunities

2.3.2 Institutional set up of the program

In preparation for closer collaboration with other in-country APRODEV partners we suggest to copy some of DCA very sensible institutional mechanisms to implement partnership and coordination.

We suggest four levels:

- ICCO program level
- In-country APRODEV sister organizations and Forum Syd
- Other APRODEV core partners
- Other networks and alliances

2.3.2.1 ICCO program level

At program level we suggest two structures:

- An Advisory Board (AB), composed of the directors all partner organizations, as a sounding board for program development, indicators to be used, etc.
- Two Thematic Platforms (TP),
  - One for Democratization, Peace Building and Human Rights, and
  - One for Livelihood Issues.

  These platforms should be more technical bodies, consisting of senior program officers from the partners, and dealing with exchange of technical know how, discussion experiments, etc. The two platforms should be linked so as to ensure the sought for exchange and collaboration between 'HR' and 'development' organizations.

2.3.2.2 In-country APRODEV sister organizations and Forum Syd

With these sister organizations actual coordination can be pursued. Important issues to deal with are:

- Shared reporting
- Shared CB support
- Shared funding (applications)
- Shared baselines & evaluations
- Shared missions
- Shared analysis
- Shared program level structures

A timeframe and the best way to implement 'shared' will have to be developed together.

2.3.2.3 Suggested Meetings

	Partners	Donors	Remarks
Advisory Board	2-3 Yearly		Directors
Thematic Platforms	4/yearly/1 day		2 meetings shared VBNK facilitation?
Lunch presentations		Monthly	
Agenda Meeting		Every 2nd Month	
Full day workshop		Half-yearly	Including CB/TA
Retraite (3 days)		Yearly	Including CB/TA

2.3.2.4 Other APRODEV core partners

With these partners 'business' is only possible when their staff visits Cambodia. With an emerging critical mass of donor coordination amongst the in-country sister organizations pressure on the others to align is going to increase. This is expected to result in at least some practical arrangements regarding reporting, CB, but hopefully more issues.

2.3.2.5 Other networks and alliances

- UNCOHCHR has expressed great interest to facilitate a network of donors funding HR organizations.
- ICCO should join the two NGO umbrella organizations: CCC and NGO Forum
- During the course of the program undoubtedly other alliances are going to offer themselves

2.3.2.6 Assumptions and Risks

This paragraph only refers to the program level assumptions and risks, not to those underlying the activities of individual partners.

The envisioned program development, intensified partnerships and exploration of inter-partner linkage possibilities, all assume the ability and willingness of partners to really engage, exchange, and collaborate. For various reasons ability may be sub-optimal, funding shortage, but also further adverse political developments (continuing increase in authoritarian measures and limitations on civic rights, e.g. through adopting a law on NGOs that has been in the pipeline for a decade now and may very well de-legalize various watchdog and grassroots mobilizing NGOs). Willingness to collaborate and share credits may also be limited[21]. Obviously, there is a fuzzy balance here between what effective program management can realistically be expected to bring about and what is definitely beyond 'social engineering'. This can only be assessed, if at all, for concrete cases of success[22] or failure. However that may be, it should be recognized that a program with objectives like this takes a gamble.

A similar risk exists regarding donor coordination. Until now, this has proven to be a very hard nut to crack. ICCO itself has ample experience with trying and being disappointed. And the experience of others fully confirms this (c.f. above Diakonia - Forum Syd efforts). NGO donors stand in a similar relationship to their back donors as their partners stand to them. Similar incentive structures which are only very partially conducive to networking, sharing etc. create similar ability and willingness constraints. The only way forward is to keep trying hard, to take an incremental approach, and convince by example. But all of this does guarantees nothing.

2.3.3 Areas for capacity building

This mission has not explicitly focused on CB needs. The suggestions below are thus *not* based on explicit questions to partner organizations about their needs. This would also not have been proper given that nearly all ICCO partners have recently participated in an ICCO funded CB needs assessment, and VBNK is currently formulating a multi-year tailored management support, OD, and training program. This implies that at least for the coming year a targeted schedule of activities is going to support partners in their ongoing CB. The suggestions below thus reflect our general assessment of CB needs, which can be expected to apply to ICCO partners as well as to others. However, this assessment *has* been informed by various interviews with donors and others.

Expert technical skills are best acquired through proper education. ICCO may consider facilitating access to Dutch scholarship opportunities for upgrading of technical/professional qualifications at regional or Dutch institutions of higher learning. Some CB needs are still of the straightforward individual technical qualification kind. Most opportunities currently advertised are for government staff. To the extent that individuals make a difference, supporting partners to fill their expert knowledge and skills gaps through facilitating application procedures for eligible and committed staff members can have a substantial impact.

Cambodia is still very 'thin' on crucial soft skills for community facilitation on the one hand, and for analysis and organizational development on the other. Although there is a lot of technical training on offer, important needs are not being addressed: longer-term programs that are a mix of CB, group therapy and coaching, for grassroots workers, mid-level management, etc. VBNK is one of the few organizations offering something in of this nature (CHART). It is suggested to develop the relationship with VBNK into a strategic partnership. Supporting the development and implementation of this *kind* of CB is in a way an enabling strategy similar to supporting mental health interventions to strengthen claims-making abilities and the potential for collective action.

With in-country program management, possibilities emerge for the development of a pool of ICCO TA expertise, which could be approached by partners for short-term limited time-investment targeted support. Nearly all TA has a strong CB mandate, but at present these individuals are exclusively attached to one partner organization. For future TA assignments, in case interest from other partners than the host organization can be foreseen in advance, some flexibility to be available to others could be build into the ToR from the start.

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[21] As it is everywhere, organizations have inherent incentives to prioritize their own survival over the potential merits of particular actions for the stated purpose of their existence. Survival is often perceived in zero-sum terms and this is a strong disincentive for investing in collective action.

[22] We mention 'success' here explicitly because the other side of the coin is that successful networking etc. should not automatically be credited to program management. In general, donor organizations – like individuals - tend to claim credit for success and attribute failure to circumstances, whatever the real causal relationship.

Such a pool has two extension possibilities:

- The most obvious one is to share a pool with sister donor organizations.
- The other is to link up regionally with other ICCO programs, and to make use of/include regional partners in the pool.

2.3.4 Program M&E

It is suggested to make program monitoring & evaluation an ongoing activity. At partner level, the ICCO representative should regularly visit partner organizations in the field, not so much to monitor but to be well-informed and better understand the constraints and opportunities of the changing Cambodian situation. These visits are also meant to assess the feasibility and possible implementation of action research ideas that emerge from AB, TP and sister organization meetings.

Actual monitoring should as much as possible be done on the basis of partner reports and evaluations should be shared with sister organizations where possible (and others funding the same partner). Ongoing monitoring of especially program linkages, progressive context analysis and good practice lessons, as well as relevant outcomes of AB, TP and sister organization discussions[23] should be reported twice yearly.

Nevertheless, no program can do without some more systematic assessments to enable HQ decision-making regarding the course of the program. Based on the expectation that the program can take off mid 2006, a mid-term internal evaluation by HQ staff for the end of 2007 and an external evaluation for end of 2008 makes sense. By end of 2008, the added value of better donor coordination and real partnership (or the absence thereof) should be evident enough for an external evaluator to suggest next steps. Also, given the fast change regarding at least some Cambodian realities, outside input in program development every three years is a healthy standard.

2.3.5 Suggestions for support roles of ICCO

At present ICCO uses various support modalities in Cambodia:

- Funding to partners
- Small grant to test the waters for potential partnership or for a particular activity
- TA to partners
- Capacity Building/Training
- Exchange visits

The variety of the ICCO 'offer' is much appreciated by partners and seen as a definite pro of ICCO as a donor. The Cambodian discussion on good donorship amongst the government, bi-laterals and IOs focuses a lot on decreasing TA proportionately to funding. However, this refers principally to donors spending 50+% of their budget on missions and in-country advisors and is not relevant for ICCO with its current 25%-75% TA/funding ratio. The availability of both support modalities certainly makes sense for Cambodia, which still has very obvious technical TA needs.

Capacity building and training, targeted OD support, supporting institutional development through exchange visits and other opportunities to build cross-organizational relationships, etc. should all remain on the menu, and be more actively promoted. It is expected that to the extent that partnerships intensify, partner organizations will become more aware of targeted short-term support possibilities, either from ICCO or through ICCO from PSO, and formulate more requests. Also, to the extent that cross-partner linkages and networking is going to materialize, the number of opportunities to use targeted short-term support possibilities will increase.

The mission suggests that ICCO consider three additional support modalities:

- The funding modality should offer the option of very flexible funding for interventions that are dependent more than most for their success on timing, adaptation to contextual changes and opportunities that cannot be foreseen. Experimentation with this modality can start on a very limited scale and a feasible ratio for funding with detailed deliverables and more open flexible funding can be established following a learning-by-doing strategy.

[23] Obviously, the standard performance reporting requirements should also be fulfilled.

- The knowledge management, action research and funding of experiments should be defined as an explicit option. In terms of budget allocation, this option should be treated cautiously. By conceptualizing this option as preferably executed on a cost-sharing, multi-donor, and possibly additional funding basis, ICCO funds can be very limited. However, what is necessary to give this option substance is to allocate sufficient in-country capacity to take the initiative.
- Under 2.3.3 an as yet not existing – low costs – support service ICCO may consider offering for Cambodian (and other) partners is mentioned: facilitating access to information about and contact with Dutch scholarship opportunities for upgrading professional/technical qualifications at regional or Dutch institutions of higher learning.