

Project Evaluation

Cambodia: Centre for Social Development

Prepared by Jan Rudengren (September 2003)

In April 2001 the Partnership for Transparency Fund (PTF) signed a grant agreement with Centre for Social Development (CSD) in Phnom Penh in the amount of USD 11 900 for funding work with the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) to develop anti-corruption legislation. The project will finance the expenses of participants in the working group meetings on this legislation as well as 25% of the cost of the Anti-Corruption Development Seminar. The fund was transferred to CSD in May 2001.

In September 2003 Dr. Jan Rudengren, SPM Consultants, visited the office of CSD in Phnom Penh and had discussion with Director of CSD and the management group to review the project. The principal findings are summarized below.

Background

Corruption is wide spread in Cambodia and severely impedes the country's social and economic development. It hinders the development of the public trust in the government and thus building of the Cambodian state and implementation of a pro poor policy, which is the official development strategy of the RGC. Especially, in time of election vote buying by all parties are common. In 1995, the Ministry of Finance and Economy calculated that corruption cost the government at least USD 100 millions annually, a figure that most probably has critically increased.

Anti corruption traits are common at all levels and among all political parties, but there is a great gap between rhetoric and reality. Anti corruption law has been in draft since several years and in fact three different drafts have been in circulation. CSD has been plying a major role in keeping the work on the draft alive and as part of that work the proposal for funding was sent to PTF.

CSD, a leading local NGO in Cambodia, was established in June 1995 with the objective to promote democratic values and improve the quality of life of the Cambodians. The Centre is running several projects, the major ones being: Electoral Development Process, National Issues Forum, Parliamentary Watch Project, Legal Unit (which was not operation in 2003 due to lack of Funds), Research Bulletin and Anti Corruption Advocacy. CSD become a member of Transparency International in 1999.

Objective and design of the project

To address the corruption problems the original design of the project had three components: 1) Election Finance Monitoring Policies Development, 2) Anti Corruption Legislation Development, and 3) Anti Corruption Strategy

Development Seminar totalling USD 21 495. After discussions with PTF the project focused on anti corruption thus dropping the first component.

Within the two funded components the objectives where to have stakeholders' meetings for reviewing the anti corruption legislation and to organise a conference with the theme: "Building a Coalition for Transparency".

Findings on the project implementation

CSD has organised the activities according to the proposal, and the conference on Building a *Coalition for Transparency* was conducted in August 2001. The implementation of the other component has been slower than expected. A main reason, among others outside the control of the project, is that the Conference resulted in a need to revise the workplan of the working group of the anti-corruption law.

The implementation second component on anti-corruption legislation development included several working group meetings, the formation of the Coalition for Transparency - Cambodia (CTC), and one draft anti corruption law that has been submitted to the National Assembly (NA).

CSD has submitted regular updating reports to PTF on activities and financial statement, as well as a final report of the project, which ended in December 2002. By making very economic use of the funds, CSD has successfully stretched the resources to do more than was originally envisaged.

Impact of the PTF project

There are several important impacts of the project as follows:

- The seed fund of USD 11 000 has had a multiplier effect as other donors are now supporting the anti corruption project in CSD. For example Swedish Diakonia has reallocated freed-up funds in the range of USD 52 000 to this project. Other donors in the Transparency Task Force projects are DanChurch Aid, CIDA, The Asia Foundation and British Embassy.
- The Coalition for Transparency – Cambodia (CTC) was established in May 2002, which now has some 200 members. The PTF funded project gave moral support to the Coalition as well as some extra small funds like support from the World Bank for printing of the CSD-CTC T-shirt with anti corruption on environmental issues cartoons.
- The work on the anti-corruption law, which was started in 1995, was speeded up and the various drafts merged into one that was adopted by the Council of Ministers in June 2003 and submitted to the National Assembly at the same period.
- The work continues in 2003 on the anti-corruption after PTF's project was completed and there will be meeting by the working group and CTC's Assembly in the end of October 2003 to review and follow-up on the parts of CTC statute, and an anti-corruption legislation that was

not included in the draft law. Recommendations will then be sent to the NA to include these parts before the law will be passed.

- The CTC has been established and played an important role in drafting of anti corruption legislation. CTC seems to be sustainable, but it has to find a role and be able to serve as a pressure group on anti-corruption.

Problem areas

Although the PTF project has had greater positive results and impact than expected, corruption has not been reduced and the implementation of the anti-corruption law – when adopted – still is surrounded by many questions. For example the anti corruption commission is envisaged to be headed by the Prime Minister and will consequently not be an independent body from the executive branch of the Government.

Another more short-term and concrete issue is how to make the CTC vibrant and its membership to grow. There is also a need for establishing a code of conduct regarding corruption among CTC members. Presently, there is no requirement to be free from corruption among its members (as it is impossible to work in Cambodia without being corrupted), only to have a commitment to fight corruption and change the current system.

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