

## Concept Note

### Workshop to promote effective NGO governance and good relationships between Boards and Executive Directors

Thursday and Friday, 16-17 October 2014  
CKCC, Phnom Penh

#### I. Introduction

In Cambodia, substantial contributions are made by civil society to the sustainable development of the country. In 2012, civil society organisations (CSOs) implemented around 4,000 projects, which provided benefits to 1.3 million people (this is a conservative estimate), primarily through work in the education, health and agriculture sectors. CSOs dispersed funds of approximately US\$ 600-700 million, and directly employed around 43,000 people<sup>1</sup>. However, many important challenges are currently faced by CSOs in Cambodia which potentially affect the participation and contribution of civil society to the development of Cambodia. Some of these challenges are related to civil society's own functioning such as lack of coordination, poor governance, donor dependency, and lack of accountability to beneficiaries<sup>2</sup>.

In terms of governance, around 88% of local NGOs and 93% of INGOs have a board of directors. Most boards are quite small, with an average size of six members and in general, boards meet three times a year. Boards of international NGOs are normally larger and meet more frequently than boards of local NGOs<sup>3</sup>.

The Capacity Development Needs Assessment for Civil Society in Cambodia conducted by CCC in early 2013 confirms that many civil society organisations experience poor internal governance given that some of their board members are not active and communication between the board and the management is limited. This affects the effectiveness and efficiency of the organisation and ultimately, negatively impacts the performance of the whole organisation.

Results of a National Survey in Cambodia conducted by Suárez and Marshall<sup>4</sup> similarly found poor communication between boards and management. Around 20 % of organisational leaders did not know who and how many members were on their board or how frequently the board met. This lack of awareness suggests that governance may be one of the larger capacity challenges for civil society organisations.

Many interventions have been made to address these issues. One among these is the self-certification system, managed by the Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC) which aims to strengthen standards of governance among NGOs. This Governance and Professional Practice (GPP) Certification System is based on a Code of Ethical Principles and Minimum Standards for NGOs, developed through a large scale participatory process. More than 100 NGOs in Cambodia have engaged with GPP. Only some of these NGOs, around 47 %<sup>5</sup>, had clear terms of reference for their board. GPP has learnt that some board members have limited capacity to advise or govern their organisations while some organisations have limited or conflicting understandings

<sup>1</sup> Research on CSO contributions to the development of Cambodia 2012 conducted by CCC

<sup>2</sup> Vision 2018 and Governance Hub Program 2014-2018, this is CCC Program

<sup>3</sup> Suarez, D., & Marshall, J. (2012). Capacity in the NGO Sector: Results from a National Survey in Cambodia. VOLUNTAS: International Journal of Voluntary and Nonprofit Organizations, 20(1).

<sup>4</sup> ibid

<sup>5</sup> The individual NGO assessment for voluntary certification system by NGO GPP team, unpublished report

about the roles and responsibilities of the board and the management team. In some instances, conflicts of interest diminish the accountability and transparency of decision making and also potentially restrain the growth of organisations. Even when clear terms of reference are in place, this does not guarantee that boards function well.

In recognition of the serious challenges of governance for civil society organisations, a group of five NGOs including Southeast Asia Development Program (SADP), Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC), Action Aid Cambodia (AAC), Cord and Danmission have cooperated to co-organise a two day workshop for board members and management staff of GPP applicant NGOs as well as for the partners of SADP, AAC, Cord and Danmission. The purpose of this event is to promote mutual understanding, communication and the effective performance of both boards and management staff among participating organisations.

## **II. Objectives**

- To promote common understanding of governance among civil society organisations – this will include promoting understanding of the collective nature of governance and exploring the differences between management and governance
- To provide opportunities for participants to reflect, feedback, and discuss the roles and responsibilities of governing boards
- To identify and document tips or good practices for NGO governance and as well as action plans to improve NGO governance in Cambodia.
- To assist GPP applicant NGOs to prepare submissions to NGO GPP with regards to the functionality of the boards.

## **III. Expected outputs**

- Participant NGOs have improved understanding of governance, and the roles and responsibilities of boards
- Participant NGOs are able to explain and differentiate between management and governance and describe the collective nature of governance
- Good local practices of boards and management are identified and compiled for sharing with others
- Ways forward are identified for applicant NGO to continue the NGO GPP certification process.

## **IV. Participants**

The workshop will be offered to maximum of 70 participants:

- CCC will invite 30 people from NGOs applying for certification with GPP
- Action Aid Cambodia will invite 10 people from among their partners
- SADP will invite 10 people from among their partners
- Cord will invite 10 people from among their partners
- Danmission will invite 10 people from among their partners

The participants will come from both local and international NGOs and opportunity will be given for both Phnom Penh-based and provincial NGOs to participate in the event.

## V. Method

The two day workshop will be conducted on 16-17 October 2014 at CKCC, Royal University of Phnom Penh, Russian Federation Blvd, Phnom Penh. To promote the relevance and practicability of the workshop, all sessions will be facilitated in an interactive and participatory manner. Diverse experiences will be captured, presentations will be minimal, time for sharing will be prioritised, and solutions and positive ideas will be actively sought. This means that the workshop will combine short thematic presentations on key topics, small group discussions, brainstorming, reflection and panel discussion. Facilitators, guest speakers and resource persons will be from local and international NGOs and/or freelance consultants who hold extensive experience in governance, professionalism and accountability and who are recognised as having well-functioning boards and management.

The workshop will be in Khmer only. Participants without sufficient Khmer language skills should bring their own interpreter.

## VI. Agenda of the workshop

Time	Agenda
<b>Day 1: Thursday 16 October 2014</b>	
07:30-08:00	Registration
08:00 – 08:05	National Anthem
08:05 – 08:20	Orientation to the objectives of the workshop
08:20 – 08:30	Welcome and opening remarks
08:30 -08:45	Session 1: Developing a common understanding of governance
08:45 -09:30	Table discussion on what they understand best and what do they want to learn more
09:30 –10:00	<b><i>Coffee break</i></b>
10:00 –11:00	Session 2: Small group discussion a. Thinking about NGO governance in Cambodia, what works well? b. Thinking about NGO governance in Cambodia, what would you most like to improve?
11:00 –12:00	Report back and discussion
12:00 -01:30	<b><i>Lunch</i></b>
01:30 -01:45	Session 3: Presentation on roles of governing authority
01:45 -03:00	Small group reflection/sharing. Which roles of your organisation’s governing group could be improved? And how?
03:00 -03:30	<b><i>Coffee break</i></b>
3:30 -03:45	Session 4: Presentation on <u>responsibilities</u> of governing groups/boards.
03:45 -04:50	Small group reflection/sharing
04:50 -05:00	Wrap up day one

<b>Day 2: Friday 17 October 2014</b>	
08:00 – 08:10	Recap day one
08:10 – 08:25	Session 5: Panel presentation of tips/good practices
08:25 -09:30	Small group discussions: tips or good practices for NGO Governance
09:30 –10:00	<b><i>Coffee break</i></b>
10:00 –11:00	Session 6: Small group discussions. Action planning
11:00-12:00	Session 7: Key stakeholders in promoting governance reform in Cambodia
12:00 -01:30	<b><i>Lunch</i></b>
01:30 -02:15	Report back from facilitator
02:15 -02:45	Where to next?
02:45 -03:15	<b><i>Coffee break</i></b>
03:15-04:40	<b>Panel discussion:</b> <u>Presentation1</u> : GPP code’s response to the board’s role <u>Presentation 2</u> : Importance of GPP standards for strengthening the governance of NGOs
04:40-04:45	Evaluation
04:45-05:00	Conclusion and closing of the workshop