Royal Government of Cambodia

National Committee
for Sub-National Democratic Development
(NCDD)

Technical Document

on

Civic Engagement

November 2014

Preface

The Cambodian government's decentralization and deconcentration reform has the objective of strengthening sub-national democratic development in Cambodia. In this regard, a decisive role is played by the councils and their sub-national administrations in the capital, provinces, municipalities, districts, khans and communes/sangkats in order to make decisions to respond to the needs of the citizens.

According to the Law of the Management of Commune/Sangkat, the Law on the Election of Commune/Sangkat, the Law on the Management of Capital, Province, Municipality, District and Khan and the Law on the Election of Capital, Province, Municipality, District and Khan Councils, the council acts as a representative for the benefit of the citizens in their jurisdiction. Both female and male citizens are entitled to participate in decision-making processes in order for their needs to be better met. Therefore sub-national administrations need appropriate mechanisms and procedures for promoting civic engagement and allowing active participation by female and male citizens in the council's decision-making processes.

Responding to this need, NCDD-S with technical support from EU SPACE has developed a Technical Document on Civic Engagement for sub-national councils. This technical document should support sub-national councils and relevant stakeholders in developing local policies and development plans to improve the livelihoods and

welfare of local citizens. This technical document includes concepts and tools to promote civic engagement, which the sub-national councils and relevant stakeholders may choose to practice depending on the real conditions in their administration. NCDD-S welcomes any constructive criticism from stakeholders.

Introduction

This Technical Document on Civic Engagement has been developed to encourage sub-national councils to get in contact with their citizens and build up a mutually trusting relationship. Civic engagement helps the councils to make informed decisions to meet the needs of the citizens.

Civic engagement is more than gathering information and listening to the feedback and recommendations of citizens. Civic engagement aims for close cooperation between sub-national administrations and citizens in decision-making and planning processes.

Gathering information is a condition for civic engagement. Without collecting information, councils can hardly be expected to know on which issues consultation and cooperation with citizens is needed. Therefore this Technical Document provides hints on information gathering as well as civic engagement.

This technical document consists of three main parts:

Part 1: Basics of civic engagement provide information on how close cooperation between the council and its constituents can be developed, the success factors for civic engagement and the process for civic engagement.

Part 2: Basics of information gathering provide hints on how to collect information as well as the sources and types of information.

Part 3: Tools for civic engagement provides tools for information gathering and civic engagement.

The Technical Document is not a set of mandatory guidelines; the councils may decide which tools they wish to use based on the conditions in their areas. They can test simple tools such as consultation with experts and stakeholders, public meetings or focus group discussions. They may also modify the tools or develop new tools to respond to their own needs and the circumstances in which they work.

Part 1: Basics of Civic Engagement

1. Definition of Civic Engagement
2. Characteristics of Civic Engagement
3. Benefits of Civic Engagement for Sub-National Administrations
4. Success Factors for Civic Engagement
5. Target Groups for Civic Engagement Processes
6. Cycle of Civic Engagement Processes

Part 2: Basics of Information Gathering

1. What is Information Gathering
2. Purpose of Information Gathering
3. Ways to Gather Information
4. Sources of Information
5. Types of Information
6. Keeping Citizens Informed

Part 3: Tools for Civic Engagement

1. Basic Tools for Civic Engagement

Appendix

Part 1: Basics of Civic Engagement

1.1 Definition of Civic Engagement

"Citizen Engagement" is defined and understood in a variety of ways by different experts and institutions.

World Bank documents have generally defined "Citizen Engagement"[1] as an activity by an individual or group, where various processes occur, which are contributed to or influenced by those individuals or groups in the process of prioritizing the issue in developing policy, or allocating and using resources to promote better public services. It means that any sort of voluntary action is civic engagement, whether in networks, associations, parties, unions, communities or community-based organizations. Therefore civic engagement is not limited to interactions between citizens and local governments. Instead, it encompasses all collective actions aimed at social, cultural, economic and political issues.

When the term civic engagement is used in this technical document, it refers to the definition put forth in the Cambodian government's 3-year Implementation Plan (IP3, 2011-2013) for the National Program for Sub-National Democratic Development (NP-SNDD 2010-2019), page 16, point 4.3.2, namely:

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[1] World Bank: Social Accountability on Public Service, 2004

- Civic engagement is an important means by which elected councilors can receive information on the needs of citizens and communities and listen and receive different comments or opinions (also controversial comments or opinions) during council deliberations and decision-making;
- Civic engagement is more than just listening to citizens, communities and stakeholders – it is also a two-way process through which councilors must explain and justify their decisions to citizens, communities and stakeholders in their jurisdiction;
- The process of civic engagement requires SNA councils to meet regularly with citizens and interest groups, NGOs and CSOs[2], as well as through public meetings, dissemination and consultative forums, as well as other forums;
- Civic engagement is key to promoting good governance and democratic accountability. Sub-national administrations must create a safe and motivated space in which citizens can act in their own interests and those of the common good without limitations or fear of discrimination.

Therefore sub-national administrations have to develop mechanisms that open up opportunities for female and

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[2] CSOs refer to association, community or group of persons, NGOs, created for the sake of protecting the economic, socio economic, science, and cultural, environmental and religious benefits.

male citizens to advise and decide on local developments. Citizens' recommendations must be taken seriously and incorporated into the decisions.

They must also regularly take accountability for how they have implemented the recommendations of the citizens or explain why these recommendations could not be put into action.

1.2 Characteristics of Civic Engagement

Civic engagement has the following characteristics:

- **Individual or group:** Civic engagement can be exercised on an individual basis or in groups, either directly or indirectly. Example: one citizen can participate in one particular social affair or even join a network, an active group, a union, a

political party or other association;

- **Voluntary:** Civic engagement is voluntary. The people have the right to decide whether they want to act, what they want to commit to, and whom they want to join together with;
- **Non-profit oriented:** Civic engagement is oriented towards the benefit of communities and not towards profit for a specific group or an individual;
- **Public interest:** Civic engagement should follow the interests of the general public. But of course personal interests, values and political convictions all come into effect among people who work towards the common good.

1.3 Benefit of Civic Engagement for Sub-National Administrations

Promotion of civic engagement is very important for sub-national administrations. There are three main reasons for promoting civic engagement in sub-national administrations:

⇒ **Civic engagement strengthens democracy**
- Because the sub-national administrations are close to the citizens and know their problems, wishes, and can respond immediately;
- Because sub-national administrations are transparent and accountable to their citizens;
- Because all segments of the population – women and men, young and old, minorities and disadvantaged – are included;

- Because increased cohesion among the people will promote the discussion of local politics, participation in elections, participation in associations, etc. These activities will strengthen the democratic process.

⇒ **Civic engagement improves policy development at the local level**
- Civic engagement will allow sub-national administrations to use their knowledge and experiences and those of local CSOs to make decisions that are correct and comprehensive;
- Comments and opinions from different sources are raised prior to SNA decisions, which can reduce or avoid conflicts;
- With comprehensive and responsive decisions to their needs, citizens might be ready to contribute both labor and resources in order to support the implementation of those decisions.

⇒ **Civic engagement strengthens trust in local management processes**
- Civic engagement provides citizens with opportunities to understand SNA policies and plans, and also to raise comments to SNA; it is a factor that strengthens the mutual trust between citizens and SNA;
- Giving opportunities to citizens to participate shows the openness of SNA, which will build trust in the honesty of SNA.

1.4 Success Factors for Civic Engagement

Civic engagement involves dealing with different comments and opinions. In order to achieve successful civic engagement, sub-national administrations, citizens, and CSOs should agree on some common approaches to participation. Good cooperation must be based on reciprocal respect, mutual understanding and a readiness to enter into critical dialogue. Sub-national administrations shall:

- **Promote understanding of the benefits and importance of participation:** SNA shall communicate honestly, openly, and equally with citizens. SNA shall provide explanations to citizens to ensure that they understand the benefits and importance of their participation;
- **Develop systems, procedures and mechanisms:** SNA shall ensure there are systems, procedures and mechanisms for civic engagement;
- **Select appropriate methodology:** to ensure good results of civic engagement, the organizer shall select methodologies that are appropriate for specific target groups and their situations;
- **Accept requests and respond:** in order to promote participation, SNA shall take female and male citizens seriously and attempt to understand their concerns and suggestions. They shall welcome all comments and criticisms. All comments and responses shall be recorded, considered and responded to; justification will be

13

provided if a citizen's recommendations cannot be taken into account;

- **Participate from an early stage:** organize participatory processes at an early enough stage so that female and male citizens have a complete opportunity to participate and influence the decisions by the SNA;
- Clearly indicate the scope and limits of issues in which people can participate.

In addition to these factors, SNA also have to consider other factors such as setting the **correct time and location** with consideration for different target groups.

Example 1:

The SNA should not

- invite teachers to a discussion about school dropouts during school hours;
- invite businesspeople during business hours;
- frequently invite famers for discussion during planting and harvesting periods;
- Etc.

When it is necessary, urgent and completely impossible to find a time when all groups can meet together, then they can first be invited separately, and there can be discussion about whether joint discussions are needed and if so, whether they are possible.

Meanwhile, SNA councils have to choose appropriate venues that enable meetings with relevant target groups.

Remark: Councils should avoid using political buildings as meeting venues.

Example 2: The municipality invites relevant citizens to attend a meeting on market hygiene management. Since the municipality hall is far away from the market, the meeting shall take place in the sangkat council office where the market is located.

- **Friendly atmosphere for citizens**

Discussions with citizens have to be conducted in a friendly atmosphere: During discussions with female and male citizens, formal procedures or excessive use of protocol should be avoided as much as possible; for instance, long welcome addresses and speeches make it difficult to join the discussion. Therefore representatives of sub-national administrations should limit their addresses to the necessary minimum so that time remains for questions, comments and alternative suggestions from citizens. Facilitators have to keep appropriate time for discussion and for relevant authorities to explain or verify on any issues raised by participants.

During discussions with participation by minority groups that use different languages (aside from Khmer), the SNA councils should make sure that translation to their language exists in order to ensure that they understand and can share their opinions.

1.5 Target Groups for Civic Engagement

In order to promote civic engagement, SNA have to consider and identify specific target groups by answering the question of which target group they want to reach and include in a specific process of providing and receiving information, consultation or cooperation. The population includes individuals and different interest groups (direct and indirect).

Target Groups	
Individuals	**Groups (CSOs)**
• Children	• Citizen initiatives
• Youth	• Women groups
• Men	• Youth groups
• Women	• Youth council
• Elderly	• Community-based groups
• Parents	• Pagoda Committee
• Vulnerable people	• Religious groups
• Businessmen	• Unions
• Farmers	• Business associations
• Others	• Parties
	• Environmental organizations
	• Other active groups

- **Individual participation**

Individual participation refers to separate activities by individuals without the structure involved in participation

by groups. It is more difficult when it comes to including female and male individuals as participants in planning and decision-making processes because individuals have different interests.

- **Participation by groups**

Participation by groups refers to structured institutions such as unions, business associations, environmental organizations, women groups or other CSOs. Generally, it's comparatively simple because they have contact persons (a chairperson, a manager or director), an address, telephone, and email. In addition, it is clear which topics interest them:

- The unions are interested in raising salaries and improving working conditions;
- The association for small and medium businesses is interested in economic promotion;
- The environmental CSOs are interested in environmental issues;

- The women groups are interested in improving the status of women in the society, etc.

Below are some examples of target groups that act for common interests:
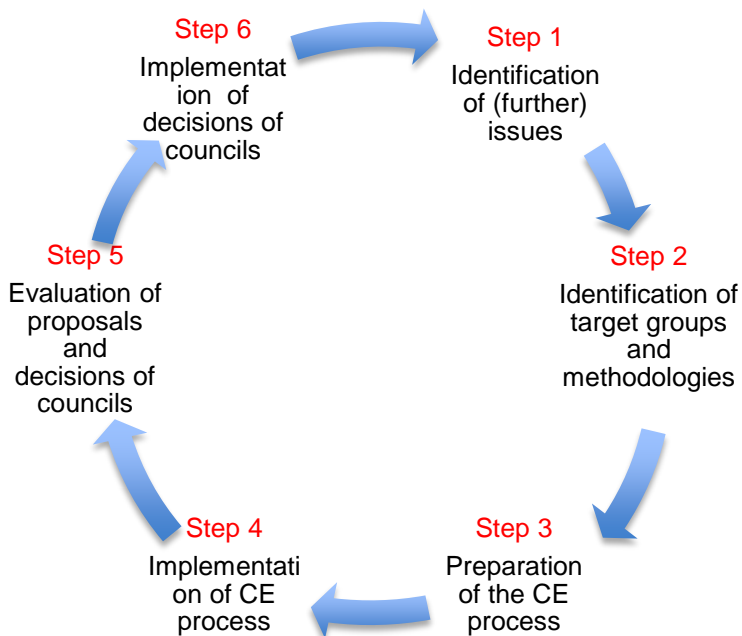
Example 1: Road reconstruction. Target groups that should be engaged are people living along the road or product transporters, students, farmers, etc.

Example 2: Education campaigns on reduction of school dropouts. The main target groups in this case are parents, guardians, teachers, students and local authorities.

Example 3: A municipality's city center should be designed so that it matches the needs of all affected stakeholders, pedestrians as well as cyclists, motorbike and automobile drivers. The target groups on this issue will be female and male residents of the city center, shop owners, the elderly, women with children, handicapped people.

1.6 Civic Engagement Process

Civic engagement is more than a one-time event. It is a process that, depending on the issue, may take a longer or shorter period of time, can take on a variety of forms, and can incorporate different target groups. Here is an overview of the process:

Step 6
Implementat
ion of
decisions of
councils

Step 1
Identification
of (further)
issues

Step 2
Identification of
target groups
and
methodologies

Step 3
Preparation
of the CE
process

Step 4
Implementati
on of CE
process

Step 5
Evaluation of
proposals
and
decisions of
councils

Step 1: Identification of issues

In order to identify an issue, the council should consider the following points.

1. Where does the issue come from?

The most important sources are the councilors themselves. Based on discussions with citizens and CSOs, they learn about the problems people are concerned about. They can bring these issues to the council meetings and make recommendations about

how solutions can be developed with people's participation. Other sources are:

- Reports of the Board of Governors, Women and Children Committee of Commune/Sangkat and Technical Facilitation Committees;
- Reports on the development plan;
- Reports from the commune and sangkat councils;
- Complaints and inquiries from citizens;
- Newspaper reports regarding citizens' livelihoods;
- Studies by governmental and non-governmental institutions.
- Etc.

Examples:

- According to a report from the Board of Governors, the number of school dropouts increased by five percent over the past year. The council wants to research the underlying causes for this and decides to focus on it in greater detail during the next council meeting;
- Some people have been complaining about poor hygienic conditions at the local market; therefore the council can discuss this, and decides to tackle this issue with citizen participation;
- The urban development office of a municipality indicates that it is necessary to take measures to organize the traffic order within the city. The council can decide to involve affected citizens

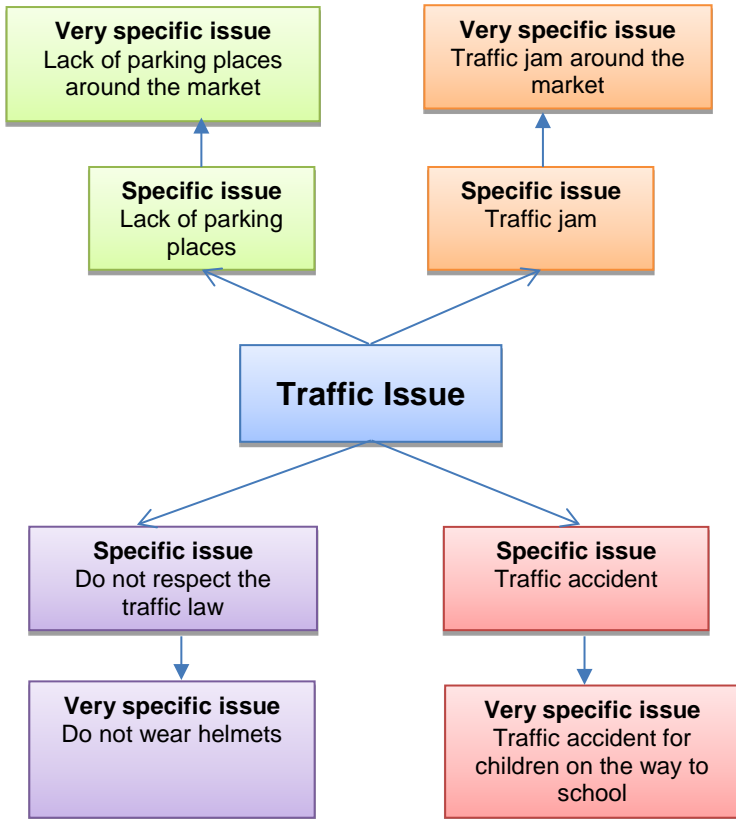and experts in the drafting of a traffic calming concept.

In case the council cannot decide which issues are the most important or urgent, the council should meet citizens, CSOs, commune/sangkat councils, etc., to collect detailed information on these issues.

2. Specify the issue

When identifying topics for civic engagement, the council should consider that the issue is not too general. In order to deal with an issue, it is necessary to narrow it down to find the root causes of the issues.

Examples

Traffic: The council wants to deal with traffic issues. In order to develop a more practical issue, the council brainstorms on the main traffic problems, such as the cause of traffic accidents and violations of the traffic law, and comes up with the following graphic:

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┌─────────────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────────────┐
│   Very specific issue   │        │   Very specific issue   │
│  Lack of parking places │        │  Traffic jam around the │
│    around the market    │        │         market          │
└─────────────────────────┘        └─────────────────────────┘
              ▲                                  ▲
              │                                  │
┌─────────────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────────────┐
│      Specific issue     │        │      Specific issue     │
│     Lack of parking     │        │       Traffic jam       │
│          places         │        │                         │
└─────────────────────────┘        └─────────────────────────┘
              ▲                                  ▲
               ╲                              ╱
                ╲          ┌──────────────┐ ╱
                 ╲─────────│ Traffic Issue│╱
                 ╱         └──────────────┘╲
                ╱                           ╲
               ╱                             ╲
              ▼                               ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────────────┐
│      Specific issue     │        │      Specific issue     │
│    Do not respect the   │        │     Traffic accident    │
│        traffic law      │        │                         │
└─────────────────────────┘        └─────────────────────────┘
              │                                  │
              ▼                                  ▼
┌─────────────────────────┐        ┌─────────────────────────┐
│   Very specific issue   │        │   Very specific issue   │
│    Do not wear helmets   │        │   Traffic accident for  │
│                         │        │   children on the way to│
│                         │        │          school         │
└─────────────────────────┘        └─────────────────────────┘
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Environment: The council wants to improve the environment in its constituency. In order to specify the topic, the council brainstorms on more practical issues and comes up with the following graphic.

```mermaid
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Specific issue Understanding about the environment is limited		**Specific issue** Rubbish management
	Environment Issue	
Specific issue Drainage of polluted water		**Specific issue** Collection of rubbish
Very specific issue Drainage of polluted water into the lake by ice factories		**Very specific issue** Collection of rubbish around the market
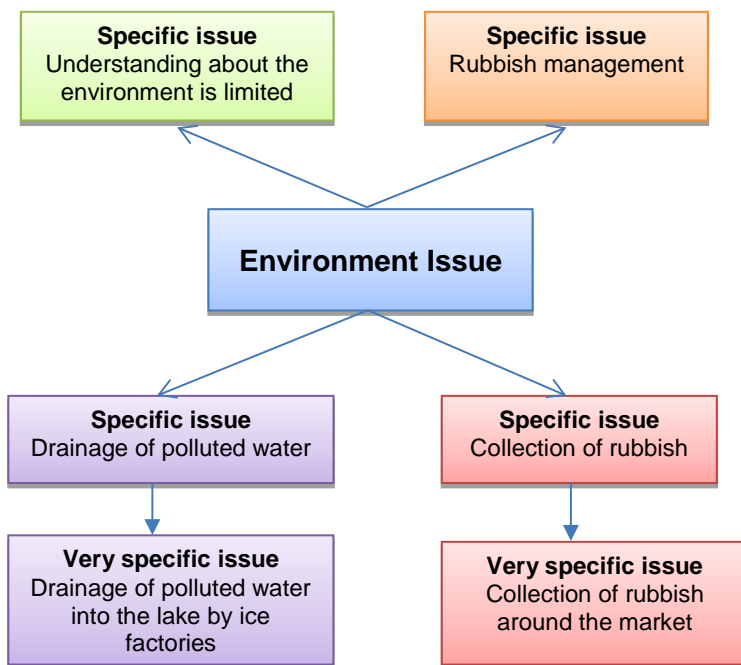
After the brainstorming, the council decides on which specific or very specific issue civic engagement activities will be organized. When deciding, the council should bear in mind that:

- The issue must meet citizens' needs;
- The issue should be realistic, and the objectives not too ambitious;
- The issue must be within its mandate.

The more specific the issue, the easier it is for the council to choose the right target group and the right tool for the civic engagement process.

Step 2: Identification of target groups and methodologies

As soon as the council has reached a decision to focus more specifically on a certain issue, the council must decide which target groups should be involved and which civic engagement tools are appropriate to the respective process.

Usually a civic engagement process starts with collecting information. No matter what the issue is, the council must first get an overview of causes and effects.

Assessments can be conducted by consulting with experts and/or citizens, and there is a wide range of tools councils can use.

Examples on identification of target groups:

School drop outs: The council decides that as a first step it will invite school directors and some teachers to an expert consultation. In addition, the parents should be surveyed on the question of why they cannot send their children to school.

Market hygiene: The council decides to invite the market's leaseholder and sellers to a meeting in order to discuss the problem together.

Traffic calming in the city center: The council decides to conduct different meetings with different target groups: first with the police and administration traffic experts, afterwards with business people, and in a third round with female and male residents of the city center.

Step 3: Preparation of the civic engagement process

After the council has identified the target groups and the methodology for civic engagement, the board of governors or appointed staff need to prepare the civic engagement process by coordinating with the chairperson of the council regarding the dates and place, secure appropriate facilities, send invitations to the citizens and experts, and inform the public as needed.

Step 4: Implementation of the civic engagement process

The council and board of governors or appointed staff conduct all of the forums, meetings or round table discussions together. The board of governors or appointed staff support the council with facilitating the forums, meetings or round table discussions to answer participant questions when needed, and write down all recommendations from the citizens and experts during the debate. Sometimes, SNA should arrange for separate note taking between requests by male and female citizens due to their different needs.

Step 5: Consolidation of proposals and council decision

The board of governors and other stakeholders summarize and consolidate all recommendations, submit them to the council for discussion, and the council decides which recommendations will be picked up and implemented. The board of governors shares information about the council's decision with all of the citizens,

experts and CSOs that participated in the civic engagement process.

Remark: In any urgent case that the board of governors can solve immediately, the board of governors can do so and then inform the council.

Step 6: Implementation of council decisions and monitoring

The board of governors and relevant stakeholders implement the council decisions and report back regularly on developments. The council has to check whether the measures that have been introduced are sufficient for addressing the problems. If needed, the council could introduce additional measures, for example, further discussion with citizens and experts.

Remark: Parallel civic engagement processes
Generally civic engagement processes don't occur one after another, but rather in parallel.

Example: A district has some issues that need discussion and consultation with citizens or stakeholders 1) 5-year development plan of district; 2) increasing number of school dropouts; 3) improving market hygiene; 4) improving traffic calming in district center, etc. In this situation, the provincial or district administration could appoint a working group to consult with parents and teachers on school dropouts or another working group to discuss or consult with business people on market hygiene, etc. Therefore, the district

administration does not need to wait for one solution to occur before further action.

Parallel civic engagement processes could function as follows:

Activities	Month											
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
Organizing workshop, forum and discussion with experts to develop 5-year development plan by involving citizens, CSOs												
Consultation on school dropouts with parents, teachers and students												
Consultation on traffic calming with different targets												
Consultation on market hygiene												

27

Part 2: Basics of Information Gathering

2.1 Concept of Information Gathering

Information gathering includes processes or activities aimed at collecting information. To ensure that the collected information responds to the needs of the councils, they must clearly identify what information is needed and who can provide the relevant information.

To successfully implement the roles and responsibilities of the council, especially to ensure the decision responds to citizens' needs, it's necessary for the council to have clear and sufficient information. In gathering information, the council should consider the following points presented by this example of child and maternal health:

- **Identifying a need for information and identifying who has the information**: before the council makes decisions on maternal health services, the council needs to collect information on the number of pregnant women, location of health centers, service provision at health centers and number of NGOs working on health issues in the area.
- **Organizing a process and tools to gather information** is a key factor; therefore the council should consider and identify specific tools before gathering information, for example through organizing a focus group discussion among

some pregnant women in the area about their health care needs and preferences.

- **Gathering the information** can be done through filling in questionnaires or through focus group discussions; notes should be taken of all answers about maternal health needs.
- **Analyzing the information**, the council has to review the information it gets and identify the root causes, solutions and impact of each solution. The council then identifies where there is consensus and reaches conclusions about the implications for council decision-making about maternal health care services.
- **Using the information:** the information is collected into a document to help councils to make decisions and bylaws (Deika), as well as plans for the implementation of council decisions.

Information gathering steps:

Identify need for information and who has it

Organize process / tools to gather information

Gather the information

Analyze the information

Use the information in decision-making
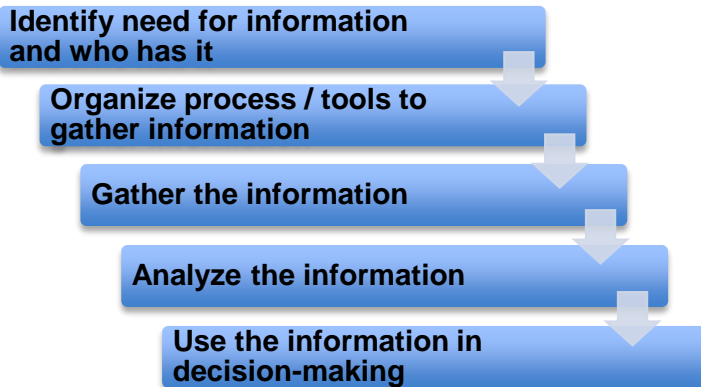
2.2 Purposes of Information Gathering

Information gathering may serve one or more of the following purposes:

- **Deepening knowledge.** When the council receives a large amount of accurate information, the council's knowledge will increase, for instance towards gathering information on better understanding how HIV/AIDS is transmitted in the area.
- **Reducing uncertainty**. When the council receives a large amount of accurate information, the council understands a certain issue more clearly. It can then confidently make a decision and avoid mistakes, for instance by having clear information about citizens' priority needs, which affect their living conditions.
- **Solving problems**. When the council receives a large amount of accurate information, the council decides on a specific issue with more responsiveness and effectiveness. For instance gathering information about agricultural land or source of water for increasing irrigation or gathering information on agricultural land and types of crops to improve the situation on insects destroying.
- **Saving time/effort.** When the council receives accurate information in a timely manner, it can make decisions quickly and effectively, for instance by learning how to provide more targeted agricultural extension services.

2.3 Tools for Gathering Information

There are countless ways and tools for gathering information from citizens and CSOs. Some methods for gathering information:

- Public meeting;
- Forum;
- Interview;
- Survey;
- Focus group discussion;
- Community outreach;
- Document or news review;
- Feedback, etc.

Selecting the right tool depends on many factors, including *what information you need, who you want to get information from, any limitations in terms of time and available funds,* and *who will be using the information.*

Remark: a council may use more than one tool to gather information about a matter.

Example: A district council is considering what extra activities for students it will prioritize next year (football team, art drawing event, traditional dance, etc.). In order to make an informed decision, the council assigns a number of interested councilors and the board of governors to gather information about which activities parents, teachers and students would like. In order to gather this information, councilors will visit a number of schools in the area to speak with teachers. At the same time, a survey will be distributed for students to express

their preferences. In addition, the board of governors will undertake several focus group discussions with parents.

2.4 Sources of Information

Councils have many reliable sources of information to help them make decisions and should make a special effort to collect evidence.

Evidence is high quality information because it shows whether a conclusion or theory is true or not.   For instance, a research study may provide evidence that building latrines in schools for girls leads not only to lower drop-out rates but also higher grades.

Useful sources of information will depend on the kind of issues that the council has to make a decision on. The administration, with direction from the council, must identify which sources have information that will be most useful to the council.

Possible sources of information include:

- **Citizens:** Citizens are most aware of their needs and wants. Citizens are aware of the obstacles to meeting those needs and it is likely that citizens know how to best overcome these obstacles.
- **CSOs:** CSOs may have valuable information about the people/members with whom they work. Some active groups, for instance, work with particular groups such as ethnic minorities and may be able to offer information about the needs and preferences of those groups. A CSO that

provides shelter to women who have suffered from domestic violence may have insights into the kind of support women facing domestic violence need. Professional associations, such as a teachers' associations, unions and association of the elderly can also provide valuable input to councils.

- **The private sector:** The private sector is a critical partner for councils since the private sector is the main engine for economic development. The private sector will have important information about the local economy, opportunities to stimulate the economy, where obstacles to economic progress lie, and how those obstacles could be addressed.

- **The council's own administration:** Council divisions/offices may already have information to assist the council in making decisions. For instance, the district planning and commune/sangkat support office may already have information about inter-commune/sangkat cooperation to inform the district council's decisions about what joint commune/sangkat activities it wants to support.

- **Council committees:** Council committees may study a matter in depth in order to inform council decision-making. A council may request active group representatives, representatives of the private sector and citizen representatives to sit on a council committee. In this way, information and

different perspectives are brought to the council through the committee.

- **Other councils:** A council may learn from the experience of other councils. For instance, a district council that wants to introduce a new maternal health service should get information from another council that introduced a similar service.
- **Local council associations**: Local council associations often gather information from their council members. This information should be shared with interested councils and their administrations.
- **Ministry line departments/offices:** Both ministry line departments/offices and councils have sector functions to implement. For instance, the department of education has education-related functions and a district council may also have education-related functions, such as to monitor teacher attendance. Ministry line departments/offices and councils should regularly share information. In their roles as representatives of the Royal Government and Ministries, governors can play a key role in ensuring that ministry line departments/offices and councils share information.

2.5 Types of Information

There are two different types of information.

- **Representative information.** This information is

gathered from a group of citizens or a segment of the public: men, women, youth, the elderly, the poorest, the disabled, ethnic minority groups, different religious groups, and other groups in the area. In these cases the composition of the respondents has to reflect the composition of either the society or the segment of the public.

Example 1: The council wants to know if the people are satisfied with its work. A group of 200 people is selected. It is composed of people mirroring the general population.

Example 2: A council wants to know about the needs of women in its constituency. To ensure a representative result for women of all ages, the administration questions a group composed of around 50 percent women under 25, 40 percent between 26 and 59, and 10 percent between 60 and 80 years of age.

- **Disaggregated information.** After gathering representative information, the information can be organized in such a way that the council can separately see the information that was provided by women from the information that was provided by men: this is referred to as gender disaggregation. By disaggregating information by gender, the needs and priorities of women are clear and the needs and priorities of men are clear. Then, in making decisions, the council can

ensure that the needs and priorities of both women and men are taken into account.

Example: A council wants to learn about the main reasons for school dropout rates. The administration disaggregates the collected information by girls and boys in order to find out if girls have different reasons for dropping out of school than boys.

A council can disaggregate information in other ways, such as by separating out information by age, by ethnic group or by rural and urban areas.

Example: A council wants to know about the needs of young and elderly citizens in its constituency. In this case the council separates the information by age.

During a public forum, a council wants to learn about priorities of citizens living in urban or rural areas. The council conducts a survey by disaggregating the participants of the forum into urban and rural area.

2.6 Keeping Citizens Informed

When gathering information, each SNA has to inform citizens and other stakeholders before and after gathering information.

2.6.1 Before collecting information

If councils wish to gather information from CSOs, councils must first be transparent and explain why they need that information and how the information will be used. In this way, citizens and CSOs are more likely to freely share information, and councils can build trust by showing that they make policies and decisions that reflect what people say and want.

2.6.2 After collecting information

Councils have to inform citizens about the result of council decisions on the issues for which the council has collected the information.

In cases where the council makes a decision that does not reflect the information the council has gathered, the council must explain why.

For instance, the majority of citizens say that they do not want to pay a fee for a particular health service. The council, however, may decide that in order to improve quality and sustainability of health services at health centers, citizens have to pay a small fee. When making this decision, the council should take care to explain its rationale to citizens so that they can accept the decision of the council.

The reports prepared for each type of information gathering should be available to the public. In the case of a research study/survey, the report should be made available as well as a summary.

Part 3: Tools for Civic Engagement

In Part 3, the TD provides a series of different tools for information gathering and civic engagement. The councils may decide which tools they want to use in order to gather and share information and to promote the participation of the citizens within their jurisdiction. With some experience all the tools can be used.

3.1 Basic Tools for Civic Engagement

Good relations between local governments, citizens and CSOs cannot be built overnight; they must grow. Citizens and CSOs need to experience that the council takes their needs and recommendations seriously. In order to ensure the participation of citizens the council must implement the following tools.

3.1.1 Continuous Information Dissemination

3.1.1.1 Purpose

The purpose of publicity work is to:

- Keep citizens informed about activities of the administration;
- Contribute to more transparency and accountability of the council and its sub-national administration;
- Motivate citizens to participate in decision-making and planning processes.

3.1.1.2 Implementation

Continuous information dissemination is not a voluntary work of the council and its administration. It is required by law. The capital, provincial, municipality, district, khan and commune/sangkat councils are obligated to publish their decisions and to grant public access to important documents, e.g. development plan, investment program budget and development projects.

The means the council uses for this purpose depend on its financial and human resources. The minimum is:

- Information board in the capital, province, municipality, district, khan and commune/sangkat hall;
- Information boards in busy areas within the communes/sangkats, khans, districts, municipalities, provinces and capital;
- Mechanism for the dissemination of information from the capital, province, municipality, district and khan to the commune and sangkat councils.

Remark: According to the law, the information displayed at the board must be maintained for at least 10 days (sub decree 215 art. 54 and 113, sub decree 216 art. 54, 111 and 172)

In addition to this, the SNA could consider **additional possibilities** for disseminating information such as:

- Information officer of capital and provincial administration;

- Dissemination of information via newspapers, radio and television;
- Production of own information materials like flyers, newsletters and posters;
- Creation of sub-national administration website;
- Talk-in programs on the radio and television;
- Other means of information dissemination.

3.1.2   Access to important council documents

3.1.2.1 Purpose

Citizens and CSOs have a right to receive the council documents aside from confidential documents related to individuals or security. The purpose of ensuring access to information is to:

- Provide citizens and CSOs the possibility to thoroughly study decisions and documents of the sub-national administration;
- Contribute to more transparency and accountability of the council and its sub-national administration.

3.1.2.2 Implementation

The Organic Law states clearly that councils shall guarantee that citizens have or receive the requested documents with payment for the cost of copy. In addition, citizens can directly view the documents on the premises of their SNA. Examples: by-laws, decisions, development plan, investment program or the reports of

the board of governors. Ensuring that citizens and CSOs have access to important council documents does not require a separate room where all documents are displayed. It is sufficient to designate a contact person in the administration, who is in charge of this service for the citizens.

3.1.3 Establish contact with CSOs

3.1.3.1 Purpose

The purpose of establishing contact with CSOs is to:

- Build trust between administration and CSOs;
- Know which services are provided by CSOs;
- Share information and experience with CSOs;
- Coordinate service delivery of CSOs and administration.

3.1.3.2 Implementation

a) List of CSOs

Before establishing the civic engagement activities, capital, provincial, municipal, district, khan, commune and sangkat council have to prepare a list of CSOs working in their area.

The council will request that the administration compile a list of CSOs in their constituency. Key information to be included in the list is:

- Name of the CSO;
- Contact person of the CSO;

- Telephone number;
- CSO's missions and activities.

Good sources for these data include:

- Sub-national administrations, especially commune and sangkat councils;
- The village chiefs;
- The line offices and line departments;
- Other stakeholders.

The administration organizes the collected data according to the following criteria:

- According to location – this provides a quick overview of which CSOs are active in which khan, district, municipality, province or commune/sangkat;
- According to sector – this provides a quick overview of the activity and mission of the CSOs. The overview shows the areas in which, for example: 1) there are initiatives against domestic violence, 2) where environmental groups are active, and 3) whether there are initiatives within the council's area that provide better support for pregnant women within the jurisdiction. (See Form 1, 2, and 3)

b) First Meetings with CSOs

After the administration has developed the overview of CSOs, the council decides which of these CSOs to invite to a council meeting. The objective of establishing contact is to learn more about the activities of the respective CSOs, listen to their concerns and comments, build a good relationship and agree on forms of cooperation.

In order to get in contact with the groups, the council has the following options:

- The council invites one or two representatives of one CSO to each council meeting to present their activities;
- The council invites representatives of all CSOs to a single council meeting to present their activities;

- The council invites representatives of CSOs according to the sector to present their activities.

Example: There are some CSOs active in the health sector in the area. The council may choose one of the three options or create new options whenever appropriate. However the council should consider that the more groups are taking part in a council meeting, the less time remains for discussing with each group.

As an alternative or addition to inviting representatives to the council meetings, the council may assign council members to visit the CSOs at their location or to meet with representatives of a CSO and to get an idea of each CSO's activities. Following the visit, the councilors report to the council on their findings.

3.1.4   Sharing important documents with CSOs

3.1.4.1 Implementation

In order to ensure exchange of information between sub-national administrations and CSOs, councils and their administrations should take the initiative in sending documents to certain CSOs that may be interested in them.

Example: The council has received research findings on domestic violence from the Ministry of Women's Affairs. It calls on its administration to send this study to the WCCC as well as to CSOs that deal with this issue.

In case the administration has limited financial resources to copy the documents, the administration may ask the

CSOs to copy on their own or to pay the actual copying costs.

In return CSOs should provide their relevant documents to the council, e.g. studies, assessments or reports. CSOs should be interested in informing their sub-national administrations about their activities and successes as well as their difficulties.

3.2 Tools for Civic Engagement

There is a wide range of possibilities for councils to get in contact with their citizens and CSOs. Councils can conduct outreach activities by inviting citizens to public meetings, meeting with experts from CSOs to gain more background information and to share experiences on social or environmental services. They can arrange discussions with youth in order to learn about the needs and concerns of the youth.

No matter which activities the councils conduct, they can be sure that they contribute to

- Building a good relationship between the council and citizens;
- Show citizens that the council cares about their ideas;
- Make informed decisions.

Here are some tools the councils can choose for their civic engagement activities.

3.2.1 Dissemination and Consultative Forum

3.2.1.1 Purpose

The purpose of dissemination and consultative forums is to provide the council with the opportunity to:

- Report and consult on its activities in the recent year and present the planned activities for the next year;
- Receive feedback on the council's performance and execution of power;
- Listen and receive requests and needs of female and male citizens.

Sub decrees 215 and 216 outline that all councils should conduct dissemination and consultative forums as follows:

- The Capital in khans;
- Provinces in municipalities and districts;
- Municipalities in their sangkats;
- Districts in their communes and sangkats;
- Khans in sangkats.

During these forums, the councils report on activities from the past year and introduce plans for the coming year. They discuss the planned projects and program with the participants, receive suggestions and comments from the people (see TD on Dissemination and Consultative Forum).

In addition to these legally mandated forums, the council can arrange additional forums at any time, for example in order to inform the female and male citizens about an urgent issue or to discuss a specific issue before making a decision.

Example 1: Following a flood, the provincial administration developed a recommendation for improved disaster management. The provincial council decided to hold a public forum prior to making the final decision in order to collect the opinions of other councils within the area, experts from CSOs and citizens.

Example 2: A district gets a One Window Service Office (OWSO). In order to introduce the administration's new services to the people, the council invites female and male citizens to a public forum. During the forum, an explanation is given of the OWSO, which services the people can receive here, and where they can complain if their service is not correctly carried out.

3.2.1.2 Implementation (see TD on Dissemination and Consultative Forum).

3.2.2   Public Meetings

3.2.2.1 Purpose

The purpose of public meetings is to:

- Listen to and discuss with citizens or a group of citizens on their situation;
- Discuss with citizens on a specific issue;

- Introduce a draft concept, draft decision or a draft by-law to citizens;
- Inform citizens about an important decision of the council.

Sub-national administrations can organize a whole range of different meetings. But at the end of a meeting, it should always be clear how the council will continue its cooperation with the participants.

3.2.2.2 Implementation of a Public Meeting

a) Before a Public Meeting
For an effective public meeting, the council should consider the following tasks:

- Identify the issue for the public meeting and the target group(s) that should be invited;
- Decide where and when the public meeting will be held and take care that the location is known to and accessible to different groups such as women, the elderly, youth, people with disabilities and others;
- Identify any information the council will provide at the meeting, e.g. a presentation to inform participants about the topic;
- Decide what method(s) will be used during the public meeting, e.g.
  - Facilitate a plenary session of question and answer/feedback;
  - Break citizens into discussion groups (either mixed groups, or separating women from men,

youth from the elderly, etc.) and then reporting to plenary;

- o Allow participants themselves to propose the topics for small group discussions.
- Identify an experienced facilitator of the meeting;
- Prepare necessary documentations and presentations (if needed);
- Prepare a plan/agenda and identify strategies to use in order to ensure that all groups such as women, men, youth, minority groups, etc. have a chance to contribute;
- Announce the public meeting in advance through various means, e.g. information board, posters, TV, radio, newspapers, commune /sangkat councils and village chiefs.

b) During the Public Meeting

During the public meeting there are activities such as:

- The chairperson of the council opens the meeting and explains the purpose of the meeting;
- The chairperson or the responsible division/office introduces the topic of the meeting;
- The facilitator tries to encourage the participants to discuss actively by asking questions, providing the opportunity to participants to share their ideas;
- The chairperson, representatives of the council and administration and the facilitator mainly listen and try not to interrupt except when the discussion goes off track;

- A minutes taker writes down all complaints, wishes and recommendations;
- At the end of the meeting, participants and the council discuss how they can remain in contact and develop their cooperation towards solving specific issues.

c) After the public meeting
- The administration summarizes the discussion, the suggestions of the citizens and the agreements (if any) and sends the report to the council;
- The council discusses the report in the next council meeting and makes decisions (if needed);
- The administration informs the public on the decision of the council.

For further information on how to organize a successful meeting, refer to page 88.

3.2.3   Consultation with Experts

3.2.3.1 Purpose

The council conducts consultations with experts for one or more of the following purposes:

- To get more background information on a specific issue;
- To get recommendations on how to solve a problem;
- To consult on a draft concept, a draft decision or a draft by-law before approval.

Councils have to address many issues – local development, health care, educational issues, and service delivery – just to name a few examples. But it is impossible to be experts on everything. Therefore councils should gather advice from experts before making important decisions.

There are two options on how to consult with experts. **Option 1:** invite experts to an ordinary or extraordinary council meeting to give an opportunity for questions from council members. (See also TD on council meetings).

Option 2: is a so-called consultation with experts, which takes place outside the council meeting. This may include female and male experts from governmental

institutions and units, CSOs, universities or research institutes.

3.2.3.2 Implementation of Consultation with Experts

a) Before the consultation with experts
- The council decides on the issue on which consultation is needed;
- Chairperson and board of governors identify who should be invited. They pay attention to ensuring gender equity;
- Chairperson includes the consultation on the agenda of the council meeting or fixes date and location for a public expert hearing outside the council meeting;
- The administration invites the experts and if needed, provides the necessary documents and information;
- The administration informs the public about the consultation meeting by different means, e.g. information board, TV, radio etc.

b) During the consultation
- The chairperson of the council explains the purpose of the consultation;
- The chairperson or the responsible division/office introduces the topic of the meeting and presents the draft program/by-law (if any);
- The chairperson invites the experts to share their opinions, to give feedback and recommendations on the draft program or by-law (if any);

- The council members and relevant officials listen and ask questions;
- All participants discuss pros and cons related to each topic;
- A notes taker records the recommendations of the experts or the participants.

c) After the consultation

- The administration develops or revises the draft decision or by-law based on the recommendations of the experts and the council;
- The council discusses the revised draft decision/by-law in one of the next council meetings;
- The council approves the draft decision or by-law;

- The administration informs the participants of the consultation session on the decision of the council.

Example 1: The agenda of the next council meeting includes the issue of school dropouts. The line office/line department will make a report on developments over the past year and suggest how the number of school dropouts can be reduced. The council decides to invite additional experts to the meeting: the director of the secondary school, the parents-teacher committee, CSOs working in the education sector, and a youth organization. The recommendations of the line offices/departments should be discussed together with these experts.

Example 2: The traffic situation in a municipality has dramatically worsened; traffic jams stretching for kilometers during rush hour are now a daily affair and the number of accidents has increased dramatically. The council has asked the administration to develop a concept for how traffic within the city can be eased and how the number of accidents can be reduced. Before the concept is presented to the council for its final decision, the council invites traffic police officers or public and transport officials to a consultation with experts and asks them to state their opinions. In order for the experts to make informed statements on the issue, they receive the concept at an appropriate time in advance.

3.2.4   Focus Group Discussions

3.2.4.1 Purpose

The council conducts the focus group discussion for one or more of following purposes:

- To gather information from a group of selected citizens;
- To learn about the needs and the complaints of a group of selected citizens.

A focus group discussion is most useful when a council has a specific issue in mind about which it would like input from citizens, or CSOs. Some focus group discussions will involve the full representative range of citizens, such as a discussion about infrastructure needs in the area that should include women and men, youth, minority groups and others so that a cross-section of the citizenry is reflected. Other focus group discussions, however, focus on specific target groups.

Example 1: A focus group discussion on accessibility needs of disabled persons would primarily include participants with disabilities. The council may partner with CSOs to identify participants for focus group discussions.

Example 2: A council may want information about what rice production services would be most useful in the area and how citizens would like those services delivered. By organizing a focus group discussion among farmers, the council should get the information it needs.

3.2.4.2 Implementation of Focus Group Discussion

a) Before the Focus Group Discussion

For an effective discussion process the council should consider the following points:

- Identify the issue for the focus group discussion;
- Identify who will participate in the focus group discussion. Ideally, a focus group discussion has no more than 12 participants. If the council wishes for feedback from more than 12 citizens, one or more additional focus group discussions should be organized. The council ensures that concerned groups as well as women, vulnerable people and minority groups are adequately represented;
- Decide where and when the focus group discussion will be held
- Consider what location will be known to and accessible for the participants. The location should provide enough space that participants can sit in a circle;
- Choose a date and time that is convenient for all participants;
- Select an experienced facilitator who can pose questions and guide the discussion so that it is lively and all participants can contribute. The council may ask a facilitator from a CSO to facilitate or co-facilitate the focus group discussion;

- Invite the participants. Participants should not be pressured to participate but, instead, should participate voluntarily;
- Give instructions for preparing a plan/agenda for the focus group discussion. The plan can include:
    o Presentation of objective and topic
    o Introduction of participants
    o Presentation of relevant documents (if any)
    o Small group discussions
    o The key questions to ask the participants
- Give instructions for preparing the budget for the focus group discussion; the council approves the budget.

b) During the focus group discussion
- The council opens the focus group discussion and explains the purpose of the meeting;
- The facilitator starts the discussion by asking the participants questions;
- Participants share their opinions and give recommendations;
- The administration takes notes of the discussion, the recommendations of the participants and the agreements (if any).

c) After the focus group discussion

- The administration summarizes the discussion and recommendations and prepares a report to the council;
- The council discusses the report during the council meeting and makes decisions as applicable.

3.2.5 Round table discussion

3.2.5.1 Purpose

The council conducts the round table discussion for one or more of following purposes:

- To consult on a draft concept, a draft decision or a draft by-law before approval;

- To discuss controversial issues and look for a compromise.

A round table discussion is an informal setting for sharing information and thoughts or for discussing controversial issues. In order to facilitate intense discussions between the sub-national administration, experts, representatives of CSOs or concerned citizens, the number of participants should not be too large. It is therefore recommended that the number of councilors and number of external guests remain limited. The round table discussion can be held in public or behind closed doors.

3.2.5.2 Implementation of round table discussion

a) Before the round table discussion

For an effective discussion process the council should consider the following points:

- Decide to hold a round table discussion;
- Set the topic, date and location;
- Decide who will be invited to the round table discussion. The council pays attention to ensuring gender equality;
- Instruct the administration to invite guests and, if needed, provide the necessary documents;
- Instruct the administration to prepare a space and seating arrangement and ensure the participants can easily discuss with each other and avoid hierarchy among the participants;
- Assign a facilitator for the round table discussion.

b) During the round table discussion

- The chairperson starts the discussions, provides an introduction to the topic and explains why the council has invited people to a round table discussion;
- Proponents of different positions present their thoughts;
- Participants during the round table discussion discuss the different recommendations and, when possible, look for alternatives or compromises;
- The recommendations and possible compromises are recorded;
- The council does not make a final decision.

c) After the round table discussion

- The administration summarizes all of the round table discussion recommendations and sends these to the chairperson of the council;
- The chairperson reports during the next council meeting on the round table discussion;
- The council discusses whether additional meetings or actions would be useful or necessary.

For further information on how to organize a successful meeting, refer to page 88.

3.2.6   Workshops

3.2.6.1 Purpose

The purpose of workshops is to develop solutions or concepts with a group of different people with different areas of expertise.

This type of workshop described here is not related to any of the steps of the planning workshop on the development plan and investment program of the sub-national administration.

A workshop is a meeting in which a group of people engages in intensive discussion, shares their knowledge and develops solutions and plans together. The number of participants should not be too big to ensure an active discussion; the duration of the workshop depends on the issue and the decision of the council.

Workshops can be used either for specific target groups (e.g. women, minorities, youth) or specific issues (e.g. environment, health, education).

Example: A council wants to improve the cleanliness of the central market. In order to collect ideas on how to make the market cleaner the council decides to organize a workshop. The council invites the leaseholder, sellers and local experts to a workshop on market hygiene.

The process of the workshop

1. Welcoming of the participants;
2. Introduction of the agenda and the objectives of the workshop;
3. Introduction of the problem (lack of hygiene in the market and other impacts);
4. Brainstorming on the main reasons for the lack of hygiene in the market;
5. Discussion in working groups on how the problems could be solved;
6. Presentation of the proposals of the working groups in the plenary;
7. Discussion about the proposals of working groups;
8. Agreement on the next steps;
9. Closing of the workshop.

For further information on how to organize a successful meeting, refer to page 88.

3.2.7 Public Disclosure

3.2.7.1 Purpose

The purpose of public disclosure is to provide citizens and CSOs with the opportunity to read and comment on draft decisions or by-laws prior to a final decision by the council.

A council's important draft documents, including the by-laws, annual budget and development plan should be disclosed in a timely manner and made visible to all citizens prior to a final decision by the council. This provides CSOs and interested citizens with the opportunity to thoroughly study the council's draft documents and provide feedback and recommendations to the council.

3.2.7.2 Implementation of Public Disclosure

a) Before the public disclosure
- The council decides on any draft document before its public disclosure;
- The council fixes the date for the public disclosure;
- The council should finish the public disclosure at least five working days prior to the final council discussions and decision;
- The administration prepares the place and documents in an office of the sub-national administration where citizens can read them;

- The administration ensures that the office where the documents are available is easy to locate (signs);
- In the room where the document is publicly available, there will be a box, paper and pencils, so that people have the opportunity to make written comments on the by-law or program;
- The administration informs the public about the start of the public disclosure in a timely manner, e.g. by using the information board at the sub-national councils and through the media.

b) During the Public Disclosure
- Citizens have access to the documents during the working hours of the administration, and the administration assigns standby staff to receive comments from the citizens.

c) After the Public Disclosure

- The administration summarizes all written comments from the citizens and informs the councils;
- The councils takes the comments of citizens and statements of the administration into consideration;
- The council approves the by-law or decision.

3.2.8   The Citizens' Consultation Hour

3.2.8.1 Purpose

The purpose of the citizens' consultation hour is to:

- Provide citizens with a non-bureaucratic possibility to get in touch with the chairperson of the council;
- Provide citizens the possibility to discuss with the chairperson of council about a matter of personnel concern;
- Build trust between the sub-national administration and citizens.

Female and male citizens have the right to communicate and interact with the members of the council. But the chairpersons of councils or individual female or male councilors are not permanently available within the administration. One way, however, to provide citizens and representatives of CSOs access to the council chairperson is the creation of a citizens' consultation hour.

3.2.8.2 Implementation of the Citizens' Consultation Hour

a) Before the citizens' consultation hour

- The council decides to introduce a citizens' consultation hour on a regular basis
- The council identifies a specific time and date e.g. every Monday from 10 until 11:30 am to meet citizens.
- The contact person is the council chairperson; if she/he is not available, the chairperson names one or two council members as his/her representative;
- The administration promotes the citizens' consultation hour by different means, e.g. on the information boards, via the commune and sangkat councils (in districts and municipalities) or khan councils in Phnom Penh or through newspapers, local radio and television stations.

b) During the citizens' consultation hour

- Female and male citizens have the right to come to the citizens' consultation hour without an appointment;
- The chairperson meets the citizens one after another; only if several citizens come together to the consultation hour, the chairperson meets the group;
- The chairperson listens to the comments, suggestions or questions of the citizens;
- The chairperson discusses with the citizens, gives advice or answers questions;

- If the chairperson cannot answer the visitor's questions, the chairperson may invite an expert from the administration to join the discussion;
- The chairperson can assign a female councilor or a female representative to meet with female citizens upon request.

c) After the citizens' consultation hour
- Chairperson and administration clarify issues that could not be answered during the consultation hour and respond to the citizens as soon as possible;
- Issues that are important for the council are put on the agenda of the next council meeting for further discussion.

3.2.9 Joint Walk through a Residential Area

3.2.9.1 Purpose

Councils could conduct a joint walk for the purpose of:

- Learning about a specific problem in a village or on a street in a commune/sangkat;
- Learning what citizens like or dislike in a commune/sangkat.

A joint walk in residential areas serves to determine what female and male residents like about their surroundings and what changes they would like to see. They can also, however, be built around a specific issue, e.g. traffic problems, environmental issues, or improving conditions for the elderly.

3.2.9.2 Implementation of the Joint Walk

a) Before the walk

- In discussion with the respective commune/sangkat council, the council decides to set up a working group including a possible number of male and female representatives to organize walks through parts of the city or commune.
- The council decides whether it should invite all segments of the population and CSOs, or if the walk should be arranged around a specific issue and therefore other specific target groups should be invited.

Example 1: The district council would like to learn what different segments of the population think about their areas. In this case, everyone is invited to the walk: young and old, men and women, businesspeople.

Example 2: The district council would like to know how children and young people view the preparation of a sports area for them. In this case, only children and young people are invited to the walk.

- The council decides on the date and meeting place for the walk;
- The administration announces the upcoming events on information boards, by radio, media and other means as well as through posters in the respective commune or sangkat.

b) During the walk
- At the start of the walk, council representatives welcome the participants and explain why they want to take this joint walk;
- Council representatives and citizens walk together through the area and take an in-depth look at the quarter. The council representatives encourage female and male participants to explain what they like about the area, what they dislike, and what improvements they would like to see.
- A working group member takes notes during the walk of what the citizens like, the improvements

they want to see, etc. At the end of the walk, the council representatives and citizens agree on next steps and how to maintain contact between citizens and the council.

- The walk should not last longer than two hours.

c) After the walk

- The working group collects the comments and recommendations from the participants and communicates them to the chairperson of the council;
- Council representatives that took part in the walk report on it during the next council meeting;
- The council discusses and decides on how the cooperation process can be continued in the near future;
- The administration informs the walk participants about the council's decision.

For further information on how to organize a successful meeting, refer to page 88.

3.2.10 Open House Day

3.2.10.1 Purpose

The council conducts the open house day for one or more of the following purposes:

- To allow the sub-national administration to display its work;

- To organize a local event for gathering and disseminating information between citizens and the administration;
- To show transparency, and increase a close relationship and trust between the administration and citizens.

A good instrument for clearly demonstrating the structure and work done by the council and its administration is the **Open House Day**.

During the open house day, female and male citizens can visit the capital, province, municipality, district, khan, speak with council representatives, ask capital, province, municipality, district, khan administration representatives questions, or look at documents related to the development of their area. In addition, during the open house day, it is also possible to offer discussions on specific issues, e.g. the situation in the schools, work on the land use plan, or problems with traffic safety. An open house day takes place once every year or every other year.

3.2.10.2   Implementation of the Open House Day

a) Before the open house day
- The council decides on the date and program of the open house day;
- Decide on the duration of an open house day e.g. from 8 am – 5 pm;
- The council instructs the administration to prepare a framework program by organizing

round table discussions, a special event for young people and a playground for children;

- The administration promotes the open house day on the information board, via commune/sangkat councils, leaflets, posters, TV, radio and other means;
- The administration prepares the divisions/offices for the public by displaying their activities and programs on flipcharts or through other means. The office for finance summarizes the council budget on a flipchart; the office for planning and commune/sangkat support provides an overview of their development plan or investment program. The OWSO provides leaflets with the services of the OWSO.

b) During the open house day

- Interested parties can come and go as they wish; there are no set times for walks;
- The chairperson and councilors are available for discussions;
- The board of governors or representatives are available for discussions;
- All divisions and offices are open for visitors aside from certain security-related areas;
- Contact persons are available in all the divisions and offices. If requested, they explain to the visitors the activities done by their division/office;
- At specific times, discussion rounds are announced on the program: e.g. discussion with the council on environmental issues, discussion with the governor about security issues, roundtable with representatives of the WCCC on domestic violence;
- Playtime is arranged for children. Teachers and educators from the local kindergarten are responsible for executing the program;
- For young people between 15 and 30, there is an event called "Youth ask – politicians answer" (see tools of youth participation);
- Representatives of the council and administration keep a record of all complaints or suggestions raised by citizens during the open house day.

c) After the open house day

- The administration summarizes all complaints and suggestions of citizens

- The administration prepares proposals for how to deal with the complaints and the suggestions of the citizens
- The chairperson puts the evaluation of the open house day on the agenda of the next meeting
- The council assesses strengths and weaknesses of the open house day, discusses the complaints and suggestions of the citizens and, if necessary, takes action.

3.2.11 Surveys

3.2.11.1 Purpose

Councils could conduct a survey for the purpose of:

- Gathering information, opinions and suggestions from female and male citizens;
- Signaling to the citizens that their opinion is appreciated by the sub-national administration.

Surveys are another way to collect opinions and suggestions from female and male citizens. Preparation, implementation and evaluation of surveys require time, human and financial resources. Nevertheless, they are a useful instrument for collecting impressions from the people, suggestions on planned projects and programs, and signaling to the people that citizen participation is important to the sub-national administration.

3.2.11.2 Types of Surveys

- **Total population survey**

For total population surveys, all affected persons are interviewed. This is of course only possible when the number of people that should be consulted is limited.

Example 1: The council of the municipality wants to know if the people are satisfied with the One Window Service Office and therefore conducts a one-month survey of the OWSO customers.

Example 2: The council wants to know what children and young people expect from the administration and therefore conducts a survey in all primary and secondary schools.

- **Representative survey (samples)**

If the council wishes to get a sense of the views of a larger population group or even the entire population, then a representative survey is conducted. This means that only a small, but representative, portion of the whole is selected.

Example 3: A district council would like to know if the people are satisfied with its work. Since a survey of everyone would be too time-consuming, a representative survey is prepared. A group of 200 people is selected. It is composed of people mirroring the general population.

3.2.11.3   Types of Questions

Surveys should be conducted using a questionnaire as laid out below.

- **The standardized questionnaire**

Standardized questionnaires provide a list of possible answers.

Example: Question: "How do you rate the district council's work over the past year?" The answers that can be marked:

Good ☐   Fairly good ☐

Weak ☐   Very weak ☐ No response ☐

Standardized questionnaires are easier to assess, but they are often not as descriptive because they don't give the respondents any chance to explain their answers.

- **Non-standardized questionnaire**

In this case, the questionnaire does not provide possible answers. The answers are not limited; the respondents can individually share their opinions.

Example: Question: "How do you rate the district council's work over the past year?"

_____

_____.

Analysis of non-standardized questionnaires is relatively time-consuming, but the results are far more meaningful, since the respondents have the opportunity to justify their answers with examples.

- **Questionnaires with standardized and non-standardized questions**

This is also a possibility and in this case, the questionnaires include both types of questions.

3.2.11.4 Carrying out surveys

The council could use different forms for conducting the surveys as follows:

- **Written survey**

For written surveys, the questionnaires are either directly distributed among the target group or they are prominently placed around an office. The respondents fill out the questionnaires and bring them either to a collection point or the questionnaires are collected directly.

Example: The OWSO questionnaires are in a prominent place in the OWSO or – even better – the staff personally hand them to the customers and ask them to fill these out. A box is placed at the OWSO exit, where the filled-in questionnaires can be deposited.

- **Oral survey**

Oral surveys take place either face-to-face or over the

telephone. The survey is conducted by interviewers and the basis for this interview is a questionnaire developed specifically for this survey. The interviewer marks down the answers of the respondents. Although the oral survey is of course not anonymous, the data can be evaluated anonymously.

- **Selecting methods**

The most applicable method depends on the survey's objective. If the focus is "only" on getting a sense of respondents' views, then a simple written survey with a short questionnaire is generally sufficient. When the focus is on gathering differentiated opinions or recommendations of the people, then more comprehensive oral surveys are needed.

3.2.12 Research Studies

3.2.12.1 Purpose

The purpose of a research study is to:

- Evaluate a specific problem in depth, e.g. find the reasons for the increasing number of school drop-outs;
- Provide the council with more accurate information on a specific issue.

3.2.12.2 Implementation

Research studies provide more extensive and scientifically accurate information. Research studies

require intensive collection of data and facts, careful assessment of the data and facts and the presentation of possible solutions.

Research studies require experienced researchers in order to be effectively undertaken. A council, therefore, may want to partner with a research organization and relevant line departments in order to undertake a research study.

Example: The district council's conflict resolution services are being under-utilized. Working together with a local research organization, the district council approves a research study and sends household interviewers out to get information about what citizens currently do to resolve conflicts, when and why they use district services, when and why they do not use district services, and what improvements could be made to conflict resolution services in the area.

3.3 Civic Engagement with Children and Youth

Cambodia is a young country. More than 52 percent of the people are under 25 years old (National Institute for Statistics, Cambodia, 2009). Therefore, sub-national administrations should focus on the voice of this group of citizens including youth councils and children councils by working together with them and listening to their concerns, suggestions and needs. The more seriously a sub-national administration promotes participation by children and young people in the development of the living space, the greater their future approval of their local government and the greater their readiness to work towards the common good.

Most of the methods that have already been described above are also appropriate for the civic engagement of children and youth, for example, the joint walk through the residential area, planning workshops, etc. However these are just designed to correspond to the needs of children or youth.

The following points provide some additional tools for engagement with children and young people.

3.3.1   Survey with Children and Youth

3.3.1.1 Purpose

The purpose of surveys with children and youth is to

- Gather information, opinions and suggestions from children and youth;

- Signal to the children and youth that their opinions are highly appreciated by the sub-national administration.

3.3.1.2 Implementation

Just like with adults, surveys are also a good means for gathering information from children and young people. They can be asked what they like about their communities, what they don't like, and what they think should be improved. In gathering information from children and youth, the following points should be considered:

- The questionnaires for children and youth must be easily understandable;
- There should be different questionnaires for male and female youth;
- The number of questions should be limited;
- Open questions should be used so children and young people can express their opinions;
- The results of the surveys must be announced to the children and young people;
- The children and youth get additional opportunities to participate in discussions regarding their communities.

3.3.2   Children and Youth Meetings

3.3.2.1 Purpose

The council conducts children and youth meetings for one or more of the following purposes:

- To provide the council with the opportunity to learn about the concerns of children and youth;
- To build trust between children and youth and sub-national administrations;
- To motivate children and youth to participate in local development.

3.3.2.2 Implementation of Children and Youth Meetings

Children and youth meetings are a good instrument for increasing the participation of children and young people in order to promote contact and dialogue between the council, administration and affected parties. The children and youth learn that their concerns are being taken seriously, and make it possible for councils and administration representatives to design child and youth-friendly policies and to avoid planning mistakes. One example is the meeting between the council and children and youth on planning for a commune, sangkat, khan, district, municipality, province, or the capital.

Meetings with children and youth, however, should be conducted in a more children and youth friendly way.

a) Before the meetings
- The council decides to conduct a children's meeting and a youth meeting;
- Children aged 8-14 years old are invited to the children's meeting; for the youth meeting they are between 15 and 30;
- All of the children and young people in a certain

area are invited and participation is voluntary;

- The council sets the topic. Children and youth, however, may raise their own topics during the meeting. Before the topic is agreed upon, the council discusses with youth organizations, parent-teacher committees and other institutions on which topics are currently important for children and young people. The topic has to match with the living situation of children and young people;
- The councils can invite representatives from the parent-teacher committee, the pagoda committee and children and youth organizations to participate during the meeting as necessary;
- The administration promotes the meeting by a variety of different means, e.g. information board, leaflets, poster, TV and radio.

b) During the meeting

- The chairperson of the council opens the meeting and explains the purpose of the meeting;
- The meeting is moderated by an adult. She/he facilitates, asks questions, translates – when necessary – the official language into language appropriate to children or youth. He/she does not, however, join the discussion;
- If possible, the children/youth sit in a circle; the adults attending the event sit outside the circle. This signals that the children/youth are the center of attention;
- Experts from the administration are available to

the children/youth; they answer questions and discuss with the children and youth how the problems can be solved. They say which recommendations they can support and what they can do to make change happen;

- The children and youth can make proposals and these can be agreed (or rejected) by the majority of the participants;
- All proposals are recorded by attending experts of the administration.

c) After the children and youth meeting:
- The experts of the administration summarize the proposals of the children and youth and develop a statement to the council;
- The council discusses the proposals and decides how to proceed with them;

- The council uses schools and youth organizations to inform children and youth on its decisions.

3.3.3 Special events

3.3.3.1 Purpose

The purpose of special events is to:

- Get in contact with youth and raise their interest in local development;
- Provide the council with the opportunity to learn about the needs of youth;
- Strengthen the understanding of democracy among the youth.

One model to draw the interest of young people in local development and build trust between the sub-national administration and youth is the special meeting "Youth ask questions - Councilors answer".

3.3.3.2 Implementation of the special event "Youth ask questions - Councilors answer"

a) Before the special event
The council:
- Decides to conduct a special event for young people. The title of the event: "Youth ask questions - Councilors answer";
- Decides which councilors shall participate and answer the questions of the youth;

- Decides where and when the special event will be held; the council considers what location will be known to and accessible for the youth;
- Selects an experienced facilitator;
- Instructs the administration to promote the special event by a variety of means, e.g. information board, leaflets, posters, TV, and radio.

b) During the special event

- The facilitator starts the event and explains the objective and process for asking the councilors questions;
- The facilitator officially welcomes the council representatives and the council members introduce themselves to the youth;

- The young people get pencils and cards for writing their questions and comments;
- Each young person can write down a question on each card that they want to ask the councilors;
- The cards are collected, sorted according to topic, read aloud and pinned to the board;
- During a subsequent break for the young people, the invited councilors have time to read through the questions on the cards and to make notes;
- The councilors explain and answer all the written questions
- If there are additional questions, they can be answered by the councilors one-by-one until the end of the event.

c) **After the special**
- The council discusses strong and weak points of the special event;
- The administration publishes a summary report on the special event by a variety of means, e.g. information board, leaflet, poster, TV, and radio.
- If there are questions that can't be answered, require detail discussion, or that need to be decided in the council meeting, the council needs to put these issues on the council meeting agenda.

3.4 Guidance for organizing a successful meeting

When councils seek people's participation, focus often is placed on organizing a meeting. These meetings can follow a variety of different objectives and a variety of different formats, including small discussion meetings as well as larger events. Still the stepwise process for organizing such meetings is similar.

To have a successful meeting the council should consider the following questions:

Question 1: What is the event's objective?

This is how it all starts. The council must determine what the objective of the event should be. Does the council want to:

- Inform the people about the council's program of work for the coming year?
- Introduce a specific project and collect citizen opinions?
- Collect expert opinions on a specific topic?
- Collect background information on a specific topic?
- Gather information about the wishes and needs of citizens in a certain part of the council's constituency?
- Incorporate citizens into the planning process?
- .....

The next questions can only be answered after the event's objective is clear.

Question 2: Who needs to be invited in order to achieve this objective?

If the council wants to collect information, the question is which people can potentially provide input:

- Citizens in a certain area?
- Experts from the administration, line departments and/or CSO experts?
- Researchers?
- Experts from another district, municipality or the province?

If the council is primarily interested in providing information to citizens, the question becomes

- Is the information of interest to most citizens?
- Is the information relevant to specific segments of the population, e.g. women, youth?
- Is the information relevant to people living in a specific area?

If these questions have been answered, then it will not be difficult to identify the target groups. The council should consider that women are represented among the participants.

Question 3: Which type of event would be best-suited for achieving the objective?

After identifying objectives and target groups the council should determine the right type of event by considering the following tips.

- Larger meetings like public forums are most suitable for disseminating information. If the council wishes to collect feedback or give participants the chance to discuss though, they should split them into small groups for a certain period of time.
- Events with fewer participants such as focus group discussions and consultations with experts are appropriate if the council is seeking to gather more background information or discuss intensively with citizens about a specific problem. Experience has shown: the smaller the group, the more likely citizens have the opportunity and the courage to speak up.

Question 4: How should the event proceed?

If the type of the event has been determined, then the next step is focused on the event's agenda and the duration. A rule of thumb: discussion sessions should not go for more than two hours. Longer events should extend for a maximum of four hours including appropriate breaks.

Question 5: What can one do in order to add variety to the event's proceedings?

This is important! Events can quickly grow boring. But there are a lot of ways to design meetings in a more interesting and entertaining manner. Here are a couple tips:

- Reduce the number of speeches to a minimum;

- Avoid long speeches;
- Use photos and graphics to visualize the contents of a presentation;
- Make sure that plenty of time remains for discussion.

It is advisable for larger events like a dissemination and consultative forum that:

- Participants periodically break off into groups. This enables more intensive discussion
- Consider short entertainment sessions during the event, e.g. with music or a video clip;
- CSOs should be invited to present on their activities using information stands; participants are given the option of visiting the CSO information stands before the event and during breaks.

Question 6: Which location is most suitable for the event?

The set of available options will generally not be very large. Nevertheless, the council should check whether:

- The room is large enough;
- The location is easily accessible for the respective target groups;
- The location has enough space/rooms for working group sessions (if needed).

Question 7: Which materials and equipment are needed?

For some events special equipment is required.

- A sound system;
- Speaker's desk;
- Fans;
- Generator;
- Laptop and LCD projector for presentations;
- Flipchart paper, pens and pin boards;
- Tables to display documents;
- Others.

In addition the council may decide to provide some written input information to the participants, such as:

- A draft concept, draft by-law or draft decision of the council;
- Some background information on a specific issue;
- A presentation that will be displayed to the participants during the meeting.

Question 8: What time would be most appropriate for participants?

This is also important: the right time for holding an event. This primarily depends on the participants who should be invited. For example: teachers may attend a meeting after school hours, and business operators will be available after working hours.

Question 9: Who can facilitate the event?

The council should select a facilitator who can ensure that the agenda is followed as planned. Even more importantly, the facilitator has to encourage participants to share their opinions, to allow people to finish their thoughts, and to stop individuals from dominating the proceedings. This is relatively simple in smaller meetings, but at larger events, the council should engage more experienced facilitators.

Question 10: How should the participants be informed/invited?

The council should consider the following means for inviting participants:

- Using a personal invitation;
- Using posters and flyers;
- Using radio and TV;
- Using mobile speaker;
- Using the information board.

A rule of thumb in this case: participants should be personally invited to smaller discussion sessions like focus group discussions, round table discussions or expert consultations. A small advertising campaign should be used to announce larger public events like public meetings in a city or a district. This can include through information boards, radio announcements, distribution of flyers, loudspeakers, etc. An announcement only on an information board is not

enough in order to make citizens aware of a public meeting.

The announcement must clearly indicate:

- The name of the organizer;
- The topic that will be addressed;
- The target group that is invited;
- Date, time and venue where the event takes place;
- The name and phone of contact persons.

Remark: Councils could organize the civic engagement activities by considering the participation of male and female citizens equitably.

Appendix

Form 1: Overview of relevant groups (Comprehensive)

No.	Name of the group	Location	Contact Person	Phone	Email	Mission	Others

Form 2: List of relevant groups (by location)

Location	Name of the group	Mission	Contact	Telephone
Commune A	Youth for Peace	Peace building and reconciliation in Cambodian society	Mr. Dara	089 773567
Commune A	UNICEF	Support to Primary School	Ms. Sothea	012 555 000
Commune B	No group doing activities			
Commune C	PADV	Domestic violence	Ms. Thida	012 444 000
Commune D	....	....	....	....

Form 3: List of relevant groups (by sector)

Sector	Location	Name of the group	Contact	Telephone
Education (Peace building and reconciliation)	Commune A	Youth for Peace	Mr. Dara	089773567
Education (Support to primary school)	Commune C	UNICEF	Ms. Sothea	012 555 000
Domestic violence	Commune C	PADV	Ms. Thida	012 444 000
Health	....	....	....	....
Environment	....	....	....	....
Rural development	....	....	....	....