

Strengthening Performance, Accountability and Civic Engagement (SPACE) of Democratic Councils in Cambodia

Overview

The EU SPACE Programme for *Strengthening Performance, Accountability and Civic Engagement of Democratic Councils in Cambodia* supports the implementation of the Ten Year National Programme on Sub-National Democratic Development 2010-2019 (NP-SNDD).

The NP-SNDD aims to strengthen both the institutions of local democracy and the capacity of sub-national administrations. It aims at establishing systems and capabilities that make (i) Councils accountable to citizens and able to articulate local development policies and (ii) executive and administrative structures accountable to Councils and able to effectively implement such policies. Both, the 2008 Organic Law and the 2010 NP-SNDD emphasise sub-national Councils as institutions of political representation that are responsible to establish, promote and sustain democratic development, changing the nature of accountability within a unified State, moving away from centralized, bureaucratic control to one of autonomous SNAs subject to democratic accountability. Democratic accountability is at the core of this arrangement.

With the March 2010 SPACE Programme Memorandum, three EU Member States and the European Commission Delegation, in accordance with the *EU Code of Conduct on the Complementarity and Division of Labour in Development Policy*, have been brought together in a single mechanism in their support to strengthening sub-national democratic development, engaging with the NP-SNDD. EU SPACE is a milestone in improving aid effectiveness and the first tangible output of the EU division of labour exercise that began in Cambodia in 2008 following the *Accra Agenda for Action*.

The joint EU SPACE Programme has been designed to address 3 key challenges in SNDD reform which had weakened citizen voice & democratic accountability:

- development partner fragmentation;
- gaps in the NP-SNDD and a limited focus of existing operational technical assistance on service delivery/operational issues; and
- limited deliberative space of systems and structures.

The overall objective of EU SPACE is to support national and sub-national agencies to jointly develop structures, procedures and capacities enabling them to be more responsive to citizens. That means to support the strengthening of deliberative (or political) space through which elected representatives can take

meaningful decisions and be held accountable for these decisions by citizens. This programme is expected to improve the lives of ordinary Cambodians by contributing to the goal of citizens and the state engaging in constructive and inclusive dialogues about development choices, rights and services and citizens increasing their sense of citizenship.

To achieve that overall objective, EU SPACE delivers in the following 5 Output areas:

- 1. EU RGC Dialogue and Mission:** Support design of multi-donor program approach to implement the NP-SNDD;
- 2. Approaches to Democratic Accountability:** Policy Advise on strengthening voice and oversight;
- 3. Models for Civic Engagement:** Strengthening councils for civic engagement in target areas (2 provinces) to support voice and oversight;
- 4. Awareness:** Strengthening Civil Society Engagement;
- 5. Strengthening Responsiveness:** Functional Assignment for the sub-national level;

Focus of the joint EU approach is the development of systems of democratic accountability through elected Councils. The implementation of EU SPACE has achieved notable results – particularly with regard to the fact that the aspect of democratic decentralisation has been integrated into the Plan to Implement the First Three Years of the NP-SNDD (IP3), explicitly stating that sub-national Councils are democratically accountable to citizens and the sub-national administration is accountable to elected Councils.