



Royal Government of Cambodia

**National Committee for Sub-National  
Democratic Development ( N C D D )**

**Strategic Plan**

**on  
Social Accountability  
For  
Sub-National Democratic Development**

## PREFACE

The introduction of decentralization and deconcentration (D&D) reform policy indicates the strong commitment of the Royal Government of Cambodia and constitutes an important step forward in the local governance reform process in Cambodia which aims to strengthen democracy, to promote economic growth and social development, and to effectively contribute to poverty reduction.

*The Law on Administrative Management of Commune/Sangkat and the Law on Administrative Management of Capital, Provincial, City, District and Khan* provide legal foundations for operating sub-national democratic reform. These have provided the legal impetus for the establishment of councils through elections at each sub-national level which now play a role as local democratic governing bodies. In this regards, each sub-national council must be primarily and directly accountable to their citizens to ensure transparency and to promote people's participation and also must essentially focus on the voice and needs of men, women and vulnerable groups in making decisions about the allocation, use and management of resources as well as about the provision of public services, administrative services, economic and social development in their local communities.

Social accountability is an important instrument that contributes towards the strengthening of local democratic governance. For this reason, NCDD has prepared a strategic plan on social accountability for sub-national democratic development as a road map for all relevant stakeholders in implementing social accountability under the National Program for Sub National Democratic Development.

The strategic plan highlights the vision, objectives, expected outputs and key principles of social accountability. It also describes five main strategies that all relevant stakeholders must adhere to in order to work together for its successful implementation.

On behalf of NCDD, I would like to extend my profound thanks to all development partners and civil society organizations for their active participation in developing the *Strategic Plan on Social Accountability*. I also strongly hope and believe that, guided by this strategic plan, all ministries, institutions, Sub-National Administrations, development partners, civil society organizations, communities, and citizens will continue to cooperate in preparing detailed action and budget plans that reflect the principles of social accountability in order to ensure the achievement of Sub National Democratic Development reform objectives.

Simultaneously, and again on behalf of NCDD, I warmly welcome your constructive feedback to further improve the *Strategic Plan on Social Accountability for Sub-National Democratic Development*.

**Phnom Penh, July 11, 2013**  
**Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Interior**  
**and Chairman of NCDD**  
*Signature and stamp*

**Sar Kheng**

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## I. INTRODUCTION

The *Law on Administrative Management of Commune/Sangkat*, the *Law on Administrative Management of Capital, Provincial, City, District and Khan*, and the *National Programme for Sub-National Democratic Development* require re-structuring and functioning of a sub-national administration management structures and systems based on the principles of local democratic governance. Accountability is an important principle among these.

So far, efforts in strengthening accountability under the framework of sub-national democratic development reform have focused primarily on political and administrative accountability. However, social accountability, which is an important element of democratic accountability or accountability between the elected councils and citizens, has not yet been clearly defined under the National Program.

In order to address this gap, the National Committee for Sub-National Democratic Development (NCDD) has developed this Strategic Plan on Social Accountability for Sub-National Democratic Development. It has done so in consultation with civil society organizations and relevant stakeholders. This document identifies key strategies, specific activities, and roles and responsibilities of government institutions, development partners, and civil society organizations in implementing social accountability activities under this strategic plan.

## II. VISION

The *Strategic Plan on Social Accountability* focuses on the strengthening of partnerships between Sub-National Administrations and citizens, promoting the empowerment of citizens, and enhancing accountability of Sub-National Administrations (SNAs) aiming for a more effective

implementation of the sub-national democratic development reform process.

### III.OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED RESULTS

#### A. Objectives

Social Accountability in the sub-national democratic development reform process aims to empower citizens and local communities, particularly women, youth and disadvantaged groups, to strengthen the allocation and use of budgets and the delivery of local public services through improved access and use of information and citizen-led monitoring of budgets and the performance of Sub-National Administrations.

#### B. Expected results

The development and implementation of the *Strategic Plan on Social Accountability* is expected to achieve the following results:

- ✓ A change in, or response from, Sub-National Administrations as a result of its interaction with citizens and/or citizen representatives.
- ✓ Improved capacity of citizens (women and men) and their representative organizations to engage with SNAs in enhancing democratic accountability.

Meanwhile, the strategic plan on social accountability also expects to contribute towards the following benefits:

- ✓ More effective, equitable, and accountable service delivery and allocation of resources.
- ✓ Local communities and citizens, especially women and youth as important actors contributing for changes, are more empowered, as citizens and collective groups, enabling them to understand their rights and responsibilities and to engage with SNAs.

- ✓ Social capital is enhanced and trust between community members and between citizens and the SNAs is improved which will lead to greater social cohesion and will promote both local social development and economic growth.

## IV. STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

### A. Scope

The scope of this social accountability strategic plan covers all aspects of participatory decision-making and local actions within the jurisdictions of SNAs. The scope of this plan also covers all aspects related to the formulation of development plans, investment programs, the delivery of services, resource allocation, and the development and implementation of regulations. Since these decisions and the delivery of these services impact on women and men differently, it is important that practices are gender-sensitive.

Social accountability is the process of constructive engagement between citizens and Sub-National Administrations and is an integral element of governance arrangements through which public decision-making and action takes place. It includes all those activities in which citizens and their representatives can advocate for their interests (voice) and check the performance of councils, administrative officials, and service providers as they make, implement and enforce public decisions relating to rights, regulations, local investment/resources and service delivery.

Social accountability also adds value to political and administrative accountability. By providing mechanisms through which citizens can engage directly with councils (politicians) and government officials, it contributes to the improved functioning of overall governance. In general social

accountability differs from both political and administrative accountability in that it is exercised through direct engagement between citizens (or their representatives) and councils, administrative officials and service providers. Though the councils set the direction for local development, both social and political accountability ensure councils remain in touch with citizens.

Social accountability requires the establishment of clear and effective mechanisms for engagement between a dual set of actors: citizens' groups, and the Sub-National Administrations that are responsive and accountable to citizen.

- ✓ “Citizens groups” are non-state actors; they require adequate capacity to implement this strategic plan. Overall, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), community-based organisations (CBOs) and other private sector representatives at local level have an important role to ensure popular and active participation of citizens in local governance. Civil society organizations (CSOs) constitute the means through which citizen engagement can be mobilized and collective processes established. Citizen groups, in particular women, youth and vulnerable groups also will contribute to support the women, youth and vulnerable groups in playing an important role to succeed the implementation of social accountability.
- ✓ Responsive and Accountable SNAs refer to administrations which are capable and able to identify and respond to the needs and priorities of all citizens, including women, men, youth, minorities, and disadvantaged groups in their jurisdiction. These administrations not only require democratic representation, where citizens have a chance to vote for their representatives on the basis of their contribution to

public decision making and oversight and their track record in improving development outcomes, they also require discretion over the allocation of funds/resources and the means to implement and the powers to enforce participatory decisions.

Overall, the development of the interface between these two actors lies at the heart of the social accountability processes. The interface arrangements – the procedures and mechanisms of engagement – describe how social accountability interventions will be governed and implemented. The effectiveness of these mechanisms depend on a number of other factors, such as, setting up facilitating mechanisms to ensure participation, access to information, and identification of different needs at local levels. The accountability of local administrations to citizens depends critically on public access to information especially related to the performance of public affairs and decision-making of the local administrations.

## **B. Principles of Social Accountability**

The development of the strategic plan on social accountability for Sub-national democratic development is based on 7 key principles:

### **1. Citizen-led priorities**

Citizens will determine their priorities. Citizens' concerns might include, health and education services, NRM, environment, agriculture, etc.

### **2. Local level**

The focus of activities is at the local level where citizen engagement, dialogue and solution are about local issues only.

### **3. Constructive engagement**

Social accountability activities will take a constructive approach based on collaboration rather than confrontation, to achieve intended results.

4. **Commitment**

Sub-National Administrations and Line departments at sub-national level will commit to meaningfully participate in social accountability activities with citizens and their representatives.

5. **Partnerships**

Efforts will explicitly establish and strengthen partnerships between Sub-National Administrations and non-state organizations and among non-state organizations.

6. **Inclusiveness**

All interventions will take into account, target, and make efforts to empower, elicit the participation of, and address the different needs of citizens including women, youth and traditionally vulnerable groups such as poor people and ethnic minorities.

7. **Addressing systemic gaps**

The framework will tackle some of the ‘missing middle’ – the gaps in citizen engagement and also aim to change the scope and substance of the interface between citizens and Sub-National Administrations.

**C. Elements of the Social Accountability**

Because social accountability takes place at the interface between citizens and Sub-National Administrations, it is conceptualized with: a supply side, a demand side, and a mechanism to link and support these (the interface).

- ✓ **The DEMAND SIDE** consists of the broad spectrum of different categories of citizens and CSOs who, using social accountability tools and instruments,

constructively engage (have dialogue with) Sub-National Administrations and service delivery agencies to improve their performance.

- ✓ **The SUPPLY SIDE** describes state actors' roles in social accountability. National government has a responsibility to facilitate social accountability by establishing processes, rules, standards, and regulations, while Sub-National Administrations and service delivery agencies are responsible for engaging with citizens and their representatives.
- ✓ **Support at the INTERFACE** describes the mechanism/vehicles that are put in place to link citizens to Sub-National Administrations.

#### **D. Strategies**

The Social Accountability framework adopts five main **strategies** to achieve the above objectives as follows:

- Strategy 1:** Improve transparency and access to and use of information on standards, budgets and performance
- Strategy 2:** Introduce facilitated citizen-led monitoring and reporting of Sub-National Administrations' performance and basic service delivery.
- Strategy 3:** Improve citizens' budget literacy
- Strategy 4:** Engage actors and build skills to facilitate the citizens' engagement and social accountability processes
- Strategy 5:** Gather lessons learnt from local interventions and translate these into government policy and improved CSO practices



## **Strategy 1**

### **Improve transparency and access to and use of information on standards, budgets and performance**

Information is a crucial instrument to promote genuine civil engagement. Simultaneously, dialogue and consultation should be based on information, data, and evidence. Without information it is unlikely that citizens can engage in the strengthening and improvement of Sub-National Administrations' performance.

In this regard, NCDD-S and other ministries and public organizations will develop a planned and targeted program of activity specifically focused at enhancing public disclosure of accessible information. This information includes: standards, budgets, and service delivery performance. Sub-National Administrations will be strengthened to understand and implement public disclosure requirements. Guidelines/regulations will define:

- ✓ What information is to be made available to whom
- ✓ What simplified formats and templates will be used to ensure information is readily understood
- ✓ How the information should be made accessible (i.e. its means of dissemination - noticeboards, brochures, posters, public meetings, internet, newspaper, radio, TV, etc.)
- ✓ How to ensure that, whenever possible, data is disaggregated by gender
- ✓ How to ensure accountability in the provision of information (who is accountable for ensuring the information is made available as directed, and what sanctions would be levied should information not be provided accurately and completely)

Sub-National Administrations and agencies that provide services at the local level will provide information to citizens on service delivery standards which includes the level and quality of services; they will post standard information including budget and disbursement at Communes, Sangkats, Districts, Municipalities, health centers, and schools. NCDD-S and other involved ministries will work together to prepare instructions to Sub-National Administrations and local service providers on simplified information templates which citizens can easily understand.

Although information will be provided in an accessible form, citizens, especially disadvantaged groups, will need to be supported to use the information. CSOs will be supported to work with women, men, youth and other citizens to ensure they are accessing the information they are entitled to, that they understand the information, and that they have the capability to use the information for giving comments to Sub-National Administrations.

## **Strategy 2**

### **Introduce facilitated citizen-led monitoring and reporting of Sub-National Administrations' performance and basic service delivery**

This strategy focuses on citizen engagement through performance monitoring and feedback on Sub-National Administrations' performance. Monitoring processes will be initiated by citizen groups at local level on a voluntary basis which differ from the existing mechanisms that are often considered mandatory. The emphasis on monitoring introduces *active* roles for community members, and will enable a reflection on performance compared with standards, and will focus on identifying the steps that can be taken by Sub-National Administrations and basic service providers to improve their performance. The citizen-led monitoring on the performance of

SNAs and service delivery agencies will empower women, youth and all citizens with information to feed into development planning and investment programming processes in subsequent years.

This regard, the citizen-led monitoring process requires real participation of the concerned stakeholders and the information related to annual performance such as service standards, budgets/expenditures, and outputs of SNA and service provider agencies shall be shown in the citizen-led monitoring process. This process will be designed to ensure active participation of citizens, and to ensure meaningful and equitable engagement of women, youth and disadvantaged groups. In some cases Sub-National Administrations will be direct service providers and in others Sub-National Administrations will only play an oversight role. When engaging service providers, the advocacy and oversight function of key Sub-National Administrations will be strengthened. Sub-National Administrations provide a natural bridge between the citizens who elected them and other Line Departments providing services in their jurisdiction.

The scope of these monitoring and reporting activities should enable women, youth and other citizens to engage in the priority issues that matter most to them.

On the other hand, the necessary tools should be adopted to ensure the process of citizen – led monitoring. In the context of Cambodia, CBOs will carry out annual multi-sector community monitoring so citizens can learn about the strengths and weaknesses of different functions and services. Through this process, communities and CBOs will also undertake in-depth monitoring on any sector-specific issue they choose, for instance in-depth monitoring of health and education.

### **Strategy 3**

#### **Improve citizens' budget literacy and strengthen their inquiry of budgets**

This strategy focuses on the support of CSOs in raising the awareness of citizen groups on the allocation, use and management of financial resources of SNAs and service delivery agencies. Together with the improved transparency of budgets described in Strategy 1, efforts on the demand-side will be made to improve citizens' demand for financial information (budgets, revenues and expenditures) and to promote participation in issues of financial management. CSOs will implement activities to improve citizens' budget literacy not only to check on financial management practices, but also to generate understanding/voice around the opportunities to prioritize and influence the allocation of funds of Sub-National Administrations

In order to promote "budget work", a collaborative approach will be vital. State actors will develop simplified financial management, budget, and expenditure templates for councils. Non-state actors bring practical experience of what works at the grass roots. Based on this collaboration, a clear format and process which documents the allocation and use of funds will be incorporated into legislative documents. Meanwhile, Sub-National Administrations capacity to use these instruments will be supported as well.

### **Strategy 4**

#### **Engage actors and build skills to facilitate citizen engagement and social accountability**

In order to establish effective engagement between Sub-National Administrations and citizens it is essential that citizens are organized; the formation of new citizen groups and/or the support to existing ones is envisaged. Citizen groups provide an important vehicle and safe space for voice and for raising

citizen's priority needs. Capacity building of citizen groups to engage with Sub-National Administrations is, therefore, a key strategy to promote citizen participation in social accountability.

With this regard, technical support will be provided to Sub-National Administrations so that they are capable of carrying out social accountability activities. Sub-National Administration officials' capacity in communicating and cooperating with non-state actors, including CBOs and other CSOs, in the promotion of social accountability will also be improved.

Likewise, non-state actors' support in facilitating and implementing social accountability interventions is vital. A detailed activity plan including the specific roles of non-state actors and the capacity development needs for non-state actors in supporting their work on social accountability will be developed.

### **Strategy 5**

#### **Gather lessons learnt from local interventions and translate these into government policy and improved CSO practice**

Given the local level platform for this social accountability initiative, it is essential to learn what is successful and what isn't successful, and to ensure that those lessons are understood and shared. This will be a critical supporting dimension to the strategies outlined above. A learning component will ensure simple innovations which are used in local situations and in specific communities can be promoted and applied elsewhere and ensure that government policy and regulations regarding transparency and accountability are responsive to issues and successes achieved.

A learning environment is critical for social accountability interventions. It will be important to strengthen the local to national level platform of CSO learning and monitoring, to initiate joint forums for reflection and feedback on de facto

practices, and to create processes to apply this feedback to policy and practice by both government and civil society. To this end, the NCDD will need to be clear how it intends to manage and promote the pillar of learning around social accountability how it will undertake a lesson learning approach.

In order to monitor and evaluate the expected results, a broad M&E arrangement is envisioned, including the following:

- ✓ Implementation monitoring will track which interventions were implemented, by who, when, and what their costs were.
- ✓ Monitoring will track changes induced, for both women and men, as a result of social accountability activity.
- ✓ Evaluation will look at changes in community empowerment, governance, social equity and service delivery caused by social accountability interventions. In order to do this, indicators in each of these main areas will have to be collected before and after the social accountability intervention.

The secretariat of NCDD will cooperate with relevant ministries and stakeholders in order to ensure the collection of lessons learnt and monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of social accountability interventions for democratic development at the sub national level.

## **V. ACTION PLAN AND FINANCIAL RESOURCES**

To ensure the achievement of objectives and expected results of this strategic plan, stakeholders will develop action plans and annual budgets for these strategies. The NCDD Secretariat shall ensure action plans and budgets for state actors will be prepared and integrated into the IP3 Annual Work Plan and Budget.

The NCDD Secretariat will also cooperate with relevant development partners to ensure support to Annual Plans and

Budgets for support to the demand site of this strategic plan which will be implemented by NGOs.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The development and implementation of this *Strategic Plan on Social Accountability for Sub National Democratic Development* reflects the commitment of the Royal Government of Cambodia to continue promoting democratic development at sub national level. This strategic plan addresses gaps in the National Program and identifies key strategies for implementing social accountability, which is one of the most important principles of local democratic governance.

The development and approval of this strategic plan reflects also the efforts and constructive partnership between the Royal Government of Cambodia, development partners, and civil society in the implementation of this important strategic plan.

This strategic plan provides an important roadmap and the foundation for all stakeholders to develop their detailed action plans and budget and specific intervention programs. The successful implementation of this strategic plan will significantly contribute to the accomplishment of the goals of the democratic development reform at sub-national level, ensuring local development, improved social service delivery and other administrative services with democratic participation, transparency and accountability; responding to the needs of citizens and effectively contributing to poverty reduction.

## ANNEX: SUMMARY OF 5 STRATEGIES AND KEY ACTIONS FOR IMPLEMENTATION OF THESE STRATEGIES

Strategies	Citizens and CSO Actions	Government Actions
<p><b>1. INFORMATION: Improve transparency and access to and use of information on standards, budgets, and performance</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Build awareness/capacity and facilitate citizens to better understand, access, and demand information from Sub-National Administrations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop regulations and processes governing the disclosure of information to the public by SNAs, line departments, and offices,</li> <li>• Develop capacity of all SNAs to understand and implement disclosure requirements</li> <li>• Enforce and monitor whether information requirements are being adhered to</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. MONITORING: Introduce facilitated citizen-led monitoring and reporting of local performance and service delivery</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish regular community monitoring of community and SNAs performance and service delivery.</li> <li>• Enable citizens and SNAs council to monitor and oversee service delivery of line department and offices (e.g. health, education, water/sanitation, NRM)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop and strengthen monitoring instruments for National level.</li> <li>• With citizens, develop and publicize service delivery standards</li> <li>• Incorporate and enable community-led monitoring and reporting procedures and mechanisms for SNAs as part of the annual cycle.</li> <li>• Develop and establish SNAs oversight</li> </ul>



		functions and procedures in local services
<b>3. BUDGET WORK: Improve citizens' budget literacy and strengthen their understanding and knowledge of budgets</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implement programs to improve citizens' literacy on SNA budgets.</li> <li>• Develop and implement participatory budget analysis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop simplified financial management, budget and expenditure templates for councils to improve citizen access to information</li> <li>• Develop and establish community-led financial monitoring procedures and mechanisms for SNAs as part of their annual cycle.</li> </ul>
<b>4. FACILITATED ENGAGEMENT: Engage state and non-state actors and build skills to facilitate the engagement and social accountability process</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Engage and build capacity of NGOs in support of the three strategies above</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop the capacity in SNAs (e.g. community development workers/mobilisers) to support citizens and to identify participating NGOs.</li> </ul>
<b>5. LEARNING: Learn lessons from local interventions and translate these into government policy and improved CSO practice</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a platform of CSO learning and monitoring.</li> <li>• Collaborate and prioritize an active M&amp;E program</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish forums for reflection and feedback on de facto practices, and apply this feedback to the development of policy and regulatory instruments. Collaborate on an active M&amp;E program.</li> </ul>