

The Advocacy and Policy Institute

Draft Concept Paper on Access to Information consultative meeting

2010

I. Introduction and rationale

Access to information is a necessary component in fostering a culture of human rights and increasing democratic space throughout Cambodia. It allows people to acquire Government held information and for the Government to operate with more transparency and accountability. It would empower and encourage more people to engage with the political and development process and enable the Government to become increasingly approachable and sustainable.

A former UN Secretary General, Kofi Annan, said "Information is a great democratising power, allowing us a chance to effect change and alleviate poverty."¹ The Ministry of Planning and UNDP report 2007 states: '... important is the need for much greater transparency, equal access to relevant information and genuine participation by rural people and communities in land related decisions that affect their livelihood, security and well-being'². According to the Access to Information forums, 2009, people expressed their concerns at not having access to those information provided negative effect/impact to their livelihood such as losing assets: making wrong decision, poor health, lacking of knowledge and understanding, etc. and losing the trust, confidence and good linkage between citizens and the Government. No matter information related to health, education, business, media, agriculture, or employment fields...etc, without the ability to access or generate information about these above public information, it is difficult for citizens to make decision, formulate and voice opinions, contribute to public debates, monitor local government actions, or effectively negotiate with public officials.

Cambodia currently has no Access to Information Law. As part of the Council of Ministers' (CoM) Judicial and Legal Reform work-plan, the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) committed to pass an international-standard Access to Information law by the end of 2006³. This task was assigned to government ministry MONASRI. However, as we approach the second half of 2007, no law has been passed, and RCG has agreed upon a committee to commence with the drafting of Access to Information Policy Paper/framework. While some progress

¹ Kofi Annan address to the World Bank Conference, 'Global Knowledge 1997', Toronto, Canada, 22 June 1997.

² 'Expanding Choices for Rural People: Cambodia Human Development Report 2007', The Ministry of Planning and UNDP Cambodia, 2007. p. 6

³ 2004, Government-Donor Coordination Committee Minutes of the First Meeting, Council for the Development of Cambodia Cambodian Rehabilitation and Development Board.

has been observed in the development of the Policy Framework there have not been any steps forward towards its approval even though access to information is a part of the Anti-Corruption Joint Monitoring Indicators

The Freedom of Information Working Group led by API, which was formed in 2003 with nineteen national and international organizations in cooperation with the Government, plays a particularly crucial role in addressing support for the Access to Information Law. To reach this objective, the API and the working group working in both awareness raising on Access to Information and advocate having this important law. In 2010, we are going to organise the consultative meeting on Access to Information with sectoral networks (education, media, health, labour, private and agriculture) in order to increase public access to information.

II. Objectives

The objectives of access to information consultative meetings will include:

- To develop capacity of sectoral networks, other relevant institutions about Access to information.
- To develop recommendation and identify what kind of information in different sectors needed in order to increase maximise disclosure and encourage the Government to pass a law on the Access to Information that relevant to the need of public.

III. Activities

- A training/meeting preparatory Committee will be created to oversee logistics, prepare Workshop documents, prepare invitations to participants and guest speakers, etc. Appoint a conference logistical coordinator and student volunteer.
- Invitations will be sent to selected representatives of organizations to attend.
- All training documents will be prepared and trainers/speakers will be arranged.
- Training/meeting logistics, including facilities preparation and lunch and refreshments, will be arranged.
- A final workshop report will be prepared and distributed.

IV. Participants

There will issue 60 invitations for each access to information training/workshop, with approximately 50% of women participated. Those invited will be:

- 60 representatives from Education network both in provincial and national level.

- 60 representatives from Health network both in provincial and national level.
- 60 representatives from Labour union both in provincial and national level.
- 60 representatives from Media both in provincial and national level.
- 60 representatives from Businesspeople both in provincial and national level.
- 60 representatives from Farmer association both in provincial and national level.

V. Potential Topics for consultative meetings

- ACCESS TO INFORMATION and Health sector
- ACCESS TO INFORMATION and private sector
- Role the media in ACCESS TO INFORMATION
- ACCESS TO INFORMATION and education sector
- ACCESS TO INFORMATION and agriculture sector
- ACCESS TO INFORMATION and labour union
- Argument for access to Information in Cambodia
- The draft policy framework on ACCESS TO INFORMATION in Cambodia: the nine principle of access to information it exemption.
- Case Studies related on these will be raised and group discussion will be held.

VI. Implementation Bodies

The trainings/meetings will be organized by the Advocacy and Policy Institute (API) in partnership with interested Freedom of Information Working Group members and the head of sectoral networks. A Committee will be created to oversee the preparation process.