Project Context

The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) has implemented numerous activities aimed at enhancing government responsiveness to citizen needs by establishing a functioning sub-national system of government with elected commune councils. The organic laws establishing the decentralization agenda in Cambodia and the National Program for Sub-National Democratic Development (SNDD) 2010–2019, aim to establish a “vibrant, democratically-elected and locally accountable sub-national governance system”, supported by local budgets to empower councils and effective citizen engagement in local decision-making. The World Bank-supported Demand for Good Governance (DFGG) project (2009 to 2014) (P161950) led to a greater understanding of how non-state actors could stimulate improvement in government performance and accountability, especially at the local level.

In 2011, the RGC and Development Partners (DPs) agreed that it was vital to specifically and strategically promote social accountability within the context of local governance. Given its experience in this area, the World Bank was requested to provide technical support in developing a national social accountability strategy. The result of this support was the adoption of a Social Accountability Framework (SAF) and implementation plan (ISAF), that were subsequently incorporated into the government’s second three-year implementation plan (IP3-II for 2015-2018) of the SNDD.

It was in this context that the Bank began to prepare a project to design a detailed process and procedures and to pilot the ISAF. This design focused on coordinated and integrated government and civil society action aimed at enhanced citizen voice and social accountability in local service delivery and governance. Based on national priorities and extensive multi-stakeholder consultation, it was agreed that the project would focus on three key services which most citizens make use of at the local level: primary health, primary education and local government (i.e. Commune Council services).

The project was financed by the Japan Social Development Fund (JSDF) and was approved on September 1, 2015. Two international NGOs were chosen to implement the project, World Vision (WV) and Save the Children (SC). In addition to the funds mobilized through the JSDF, the US Agency for International Development (USAID) and the European Union (EU) also initiated projects to implement the objectives of the SAF and expand the coverage of the ISAF beyond the scope of JSDF financing by applying the same design and approach. The EU financed civil society-led, “demand-side” social accountability activities through the NGO, CARE International, while USAID financed demand-side activities through an NGO called RACHA. The implementing NGOs coordinated amongst themselves and were supported by a shared NGO Coordinator consultant. All of the Implementing Partners (IPs) used the same Operational Manual, information and communication materials and training materials that had been developed by the World Bank. On the government side, a “basket fund” financed by the EU, Switzerland and Sweden financed the “supply side” social accountability activities that were led by NCDDS. Civil society and government actors coordinated their work through an ISAF Partnership Steering Committee (PSC) co-chaired by the Ministry of Interior and an NGO representative, and with membership evenly distributed between government

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1 For more information on CARE Cambodia, visit their website here [https://www.care-cambodia.org/](https://www.care-cambodia.org/) and for RACHA, visit here: [http://www.racha.org.kh/](http://www.racha.org.kh/)
and civil society members. While there were multiple funding sources and contractual arrangements, the first phase of ISAF (2016 to 2018) was implemented as one overall program.

By the time implementation the project began in 2016, the World Bank had approved an interim, Country Engagement Note (CEN) strategy for FY16 and FY17. With new and ongoing activities in the areas of education, health, and governance, the Voice and Action (V&A) Project was included under Focus Area 2.1 of the CEN, Improving Service Delivery. Within the World Bank country strategy, the V&A project was intended to complement significant health and education sector investments in quality and equitable access to services with an effort to mobilize citizens to bring further attention to service quality issues and to help bring about improvements.

**Key Project Information**

Project ID: P146160

Implementing Agencies: Save the Children, International, World Vision International

Grant Amount: USD 4.9 MILLION

Approval Date: 01-Sep-2015

Closing Date: 31-Mar-2019

**Project Development Objective:**

The Voice & Action Project Development Objective (PDO) was to: “support the improvement of service delivery in schools, health centers and communes for rural households in selected districts in Cambodia”. This was to be achieved by local government and service providers engaging with communities (through information-sharing, open budgets, citizen monitoring and joint action planning) to improve the performance and responsiveness of the targeted services.

In terms of coverage area and target beneficiaries, the project aimed to cover ten provinces, 53 districts and 456 communes, with a total population of about 4 million people. ISAF as a whole extended beyond the project area with the other donors financing NGOs to support demand-side activities in an additional 8 provinces and 45 districts.

**Project Components:**

The project was comprised of three components:

**Component A: Access to Information and Budgets, and Citizen Monitoring** was to provide support to NGO partners to work with community volunteers in implementing ISAF information dissemination (on standards and budgets) and citizen monitoring activities in 446 communes across 48 districts of the project’s ten target provinces. In all project activities, special emphasis was placed on engaging women, youth, vulnerable households and ethnic minorities, providing these groups with a platform for their
voices to be heard in efforts to improve the quality of service delivery. Under this component, with support from local NGO partners, teams of volunteer Community Accountability Facilitators (CAFs) were to: (i) conduct community-level awareness-raising activities to empower citizens and promote budget literacy by presenting and explaining Information for Citizens (I4C) materials; (ii) lead a facilitated process of participatory citizen monitoring of commune services, health centers and primary schools, through a “community scorecard” process whereby both service users and providers were to assess performance and proposed actions for improvement; and, (iii) facilitate the preparation, dissemination and implementation of collectively agreed joint accountability action plans (JAAPs). Component A activities were to be implemented annually in alignment with the established commune/district calendar and service delivery planning and budgeting cycles.

Component B: Capacity Building and Facilitation aimed to capacitate and empower local level (state and non-state) actors to implement processes of social accountability. Specifically, the project was to: (i) create a cadre of trained local Community Accountability Facilitators (CAFs); (ii) build the capacity of local civil society partners to mentor and coach CAFs; and, (iii) provide a platform and defined process and guidelines for ongoing dialogue between government service providers and citizens. CAFs who completed the full annual cycle would receive certification and would be encouraged to continue to support the implementation of the SAF on an on-going basis.

Component C: Project Management, Monitoring and Evaluation, and Knowledge Dissemination was to support the effective management of all project activities, consistent with the defined implementation plan and detailed operations guidelines. The project was to be managed and implemented by two international NGOs based in Phnom Penh - World Vision (WV) and Save the Children (SC) - working in turn with their subnational offices and/or local NGO partners in the target provinces/districts.

Monitoring and evaluation (M&E). According to the project’s detailed M&E manual, each implementing partner was to track and report on project outputs and intermediate results on a semi-annual basis. An IE was also included in the project design, but project financing only provided sufficient to cover the costs the baseline survey. Component 3 was also to support activities aimed at ongoing learning and knowledge dissemination. The project was to conduct regular multi-stakeholder sharing and learning forums (at district, province and national level) and published learning notes.

Key Results

Over the last three years, the Voice and Action project contributed to improving and strengthening local governance practices in hundreds of communes in the country. The project aimed to support the improvement of service delivery in 659 primary schools, 334 health centers and 446 communes in 48 districts in ten provinces of Kratie, Prey Veng, Pursat, Stung Treng and Tbong Khmum, Beantey Meanchey, Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Thom, Preah Vihear, and Siem Reap.

The project had three main components: (1) Access to information, open budgets and citizen monitoring, (2) Capacity building and facilitation, and (3) Project management, monitoring, evaluation and knowledge dissemination.
**Access to Information and Open Budgets**

Information for Citizens (I4C) posters and post-ons were produced, reviewed and displayed in all target communes (446 in 2018) each year of the project, despite some delays in some cases linked to the limited resources and capacities of the supply side. Through a total of 8,931 I4C awareness-raising meetings (focusing on rights, standards and open budgets) and other activities (such as mobile kiosk events, participation in radio shows, etc.), a total of **319,285** (73% female) participants were engaged which represents 8% of the total population of the 48 targeted districts.

**Citizen Monitoring**

To ensure feedback on local service delivery, the project supported performance monitoring by citizens in the target provinces. The project conducted 758 inception meetings with local service providers (from primary schools, primary health centers and communes). **16,284** people (5,005 female) attended these meetings including **4,570** (2,309 female) Community Accountability Facilitators (CAFs) and citizens and **11,714** (2,696 female) service providers. **3,616** self-assessment meetings were conducted, involving **31,375** service providers (14,361 female). Over **6,700** community scorecard meetings were organized involving **203,148** (155,190 female) citizens.

**Joint Accountability Action Plans**

The citizen monitoring process culminated in the collective creation of annual Joint Accountability Action Plans (JAAPs) for each targeted service facility. Each year of the project, JAAPs were developed for 100% of the service providers covered by this project. A total of **33,818** participants (19,324 female) took part in the JAAP development meetings, including **11,126** government officials (3,694 female) and **20,620** citizens (14,414 female). JAAP committees were created in all communes. They organized monitoring meetings every quarter to review the progress of the implementation of the JAAP actions, identify challenges preventing progress and develop detailed activity plans for JAAP implementation. As a result, 90% of the 11,439 JAAP actions identified in 2016-2017 and 2017-2018 have already been acted on (69% implemented, 21% implementation is ongoing) while 10% are not yet implemented.

**Capacity Building**

Over the duration of the project, Save the Children International Cambodia and World Vision International Cambodia and their local NGO partners recruited and developed the capacities of 2,676 CAFs (1,707 female), 55% of them being youth (aged 16-30), and 69 of them being indigenous people (IP). During the same period, 864 CAFs (552 female) dropped out of the project, mainly because they had found a new job (52% of the cases).

Overall, the project over-achieved on its five intermediate results indicators.

- **IR1**: 76% of the citizens participating in the ISAF process were able to cite standards for schools, health centers or commune services in 2018, against a target of 50%.
- **IR2**: 74% of the citizens participating in ISAF process were able to cite expenditure changes/patterns for school, health center and commune budgets, against a target of 30%.
- **IR3**: 90% JAAP actions were implemented, against a target of 65%.
• IR4: 75% of the project’s staff and sub-grantees’ staff demonstrated full capacity to facilitate the ISAF.
• IR5: 82% of CAFs demonstrated full capacity to facilitate community-level ISAF activities.

Additionally, throughout the project, innovations and new approaches were tested and learnings were captured and will be applied to Phase II of ISAF, especially to ensure a stronger participation of men and people identified as “ID poor”. Over the last three months of the project (January to March 2019), some target provinces started to test (in 220 communes) an approach to the ISAF process that seeks to prove sustainable in the long-term by giving a stronger and more independent role to CAFs and CAF representatives at district and provincial levels (CAF Leader Network). This pilot will be sustained through World Vision funding and learnings will be captured to inform the sustainability of ISAF during Phase II.

Other Key Outcomes

Establishing a national social accountability model. ISAF is one of the most significant social accountability programs in the world, with extensive geographic coverage, multi-sector engagement, multi-donor support and a balanced sharing of responsibilities between civil society and government actors. As ISAF is situated within the broader decentralization program of the government, it represents a model for potential replication in other countries to leverage the voice of citizens and participation of civil society organizations to partner with subnational authorities to improve the quality of public services.

Leveraging additional financial resources. The $4.9 million in financing from JSDF leveraged additional funds from WV and SC’s global networks, including financing from WV Australia and SC Denmark. More importantly, the project provided the operational manuals, specific procedures and training materials for other donors to support wider geographic coverage of ISAF. USAID, EU and Oxfam provided a total of $3.5 million in grants to three different NGOs, CARE, RACHA and Star Kampuchea to implement ISAF in parallel to WV and SC by applying the exact same approach. In addition to civil society financing, NCDDS spent $2.2 million of its “basket fund” for implementing its subnational development reform program on implementation of ISAF. ADB also financed the Asia Foundation to conduct a process evaluation of ISAF in 2017. Overall, for every $1 of JSDF financing, at least another $1 in other financing was leveraged.

Institutionalizing social accountability into government systems. Over the course of project implementation a series of “guidelines” were issued by the Head of NCDDS to subnational authorities. These included: Guidelines on how to integrate JAAP activities and budget into the Commune Investment Plan; Guidelines on how to establish a JAAP Committee; and Guidelines on establishing ISAF Focal Persons at Provincial, District and Commune levels. These guidelines are complemented by the adoption of key documents by NCDDS such as the Supply Side Social Accountability Operational Manual, Supply Side ISAF Training Manual, I4C poster templates and others. Another indication of institutionalization is the fact that provincial, district and commune administrations have started to finance some activities on their own.

Integrating social accountability into the World Bank Cambodia Country Partnership Framework (CPF), FY19-FY23. Social accountability is a key feature of the CPF under the cross-cutting governance pillar. In addition to plans to scale up ISAF to a second phase of activity, other projects in the portfolio have incorporated ISAF. For example, the Water Supply and Sanitation Improvement Project includes activities
to apply ISAF to district water supply and wastewater management with the Ministry of Industry and Handicrafts and Ministry of Transport and Public Works, respectively.

Establishing a platform for scaling up and sustainability. To expand the coverage of ISAF to all rural and urban districts of the country, a second phase of ISAF (ISAF II, 2019 – 2023) has been prepared and endorsed by the NCDD chaired by the Deputy Prime Minister for the Ministry of Interior. To support this, the World Bank established a multi-donor trust fund and has received contributions from the governments of Switzerland and Germany. Grants have been provided to an NGO and the NCDDS to implement complementary activities. The focus of ISAF II is to cover the entire country, and also establish systems that will continue to operate with minimal need for external assistance.