The Advocacy and Policy Institute (API) is a leading Cambodian capacity building organisation in the areas of advocacy, policy influencing, citizen engagement and good governance.

API is a non-profit, non-governmental organization (NGO) with the mission to serve the long term democratic and social development needs of Cambodia through empowering people to interact with their government to protect their rights and provide for their needs. Under its 4th Strategic Plan 2019-23, API particularly engages with women, youth and disadvantaged groups (i.e. the poor, people with disabilities, indigenous people and out of school children).

Current programmes focus on

- applying API’s policy influencing expertise for: improving access to public information (A2I) as key element of good governance; improving road safety in pushing for implementation of the 2015 traffic law; and advocating for the transfer of an increasing number of government functions to the local level.
- Empowering citizens, especially women, youth and disadvantaged groups, to voice their concerns and hold government accountable for their decisions and actions.
- Improving access to information and disclosure of public information on critical issues from local to national level.

API works with national and international institutions who share our values to advocate for positive and peaceful social change, and to improve the capacity and cooperation of all Cambodians. We seek to build bridges among government, citizens and the private sector, from local to national level, consistent with our goal of increasing Cambodia’s democratic space by creating more effective advocates and more responsive government institutions.

Since our original formation in 2003, API has become known for advocacy trainings to Cambodia’s civil society, the production of a broad range of publications to promote understanding of advocacy, our involvement in pushing for and contributing to the fulfillment of the government’s decentralization reforms, and our successful campaigns for a law on access to public information (A2I) and information disclosure (draft law completed in 2018), and for a road traffic law (passed in 2015). API has received widespread positive feedback.
from Cambodian and international organizations for its reliability, relevance and professionalism.

As Cambodia has changed over time, so also has API evolved to undertake new roles and functions and provide relevant support by building on past experience and expertise:

- Advocacy and the right and freedom of information training,
- Legal and policy review and analysis,
- Review and analysis on decentralization and local government initiatives,
- Demand driven curricular development and training for local government,
- Civic empowerment,
- Social accountability progress,
- Civil society networking and partnership building,
- Multi stakeholder dialogue involving the private sector for inclusive partnerships in development,
- Capacity development for partner civil society organizations, local government and local councilors (and especially female councilors) on good governance.

API has also provided consultancy services to national and international organizations including capacity development related to advocacy and related soft skills, claim lists of people with disabilities, women leadership, school governance and social accountability.

**API STRATEGIC PLAN 2019-23**

With the Advocacy and Policy Institute’s (API’s) 4th Strategic Plan for the period 2019 to 2023, API pursues the strategic goal of realizing the rights and enhancing the voices of citizens for sustainable development in Cambodia, with a focus on women, youth and disadvantaged groups, namely the poor, people with disabilities, indigenous people and out of school children. API continues to work towards this goal in striving to improve citizens’ access to public information (A2I), to enhance citizen engagement in (local) governance and monitoring of public service delivery, and to develop civil society capacities and engage itself in advocacy and policy influencing. In a rapidly changing political, economic, social and technological Cambodian context, API has chosen new strategies to meet the claims and needs of its target groups.

API has developed its 4th Strategic Plan based on reflection of the past 5-years period and extensive consultations with key stakeholders from community to national government and development partners levels, in the challenging environment of constrained space for civic and civil society engagement and decreasing international development assistance for Cambodia.

API’s strategic goal for 2023 is contributing to API’s vision of “a Cambodian nation that through poverty reduction and the protection of human rights creates a national culture of harmony with sustainable democratic, political, and economic stability”; and to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular SDG 16: “Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.”

API’s approach is human rights-based, and aims for the fulfillment of the rights of citizens, particularly of disadvantaged groups, including, but not limited to, the right to live, to participate, to assembly, to express opinion, to raise and demand, to access to public information, to fair trial, etc., guaranteed by Cambodian laws, promoted and protected in any circumstance, place and time; and for empowered citizens, especially women, youth and disadvantaged groups, who raise
their claims and concerns with government and other stakeholders, and who contribute to sustainable development in Cambodia. It is oriented towards gender equality, youth empowerment and inclusion of disadvantaged groups.

Three strategic objectives will contribute to the strategic goal. They, the problems they address, and the strategies to achieve them, are:

1) To influence policy and implementation to address the rights and needs of citizens, especially youth, women and disadvantaged groups, and secure democratic space to exercise their rights.

Responding to gaps in laws, policies and especially their enforcement, as well as a lack of civic participation in the policy-making and -monitoring process, API seeks to apply the following strategies:

- Strengthening of citizen monitoring of public service delivery, development of government plans and budgets, in the Social Accountability Framework (I-SAF) and beyond.
- Capacity strengthening of citizen representatives and CBOs, as well as their enabling environment for their sustainable engagement in local governance.
- Enhancing partnerships and actions between government, civil society and the private sector in responding to citizens’ priority needs.

2) To empower citizens, especially youth, women and disadvantaged groups, to hold government accountable for responsive, inclusive decisions and actions to improve public services and policy implementation at sub-national level.

Responding to the challenges of still mostly passive citizens, limited democratic space and persisting poor government accountability, API seeks to apply the following strategies:

- Strengthening of citizen monitoring of public service delivery, development of government plans and budgets, in the Social Accountability Framework (I-SAF) and beyond.
- Capacity strengthening of citizen representatives and CBOs, as well as their enabling environment for their sustainable engagement in local governance.
- Enhancing partnerships and actions between government, civil society and the private sector in responding to citizens’ priority needs.

3) To improve access to and disclosure of public information on critical issues.

Responding to a prevailing culture of secrecy and limitations in the disclosure of public information on critical issues, API aims to apply the following strategies:

- Improve citizen understanding of right to information and (draft) A2I law, and increase demand for public information disclosure.
- Promote understanding of the A2I law and information disclosure among government actors for sustainable improvement of practices at all government levels.
In its programmes under the 4th Strategic Plan, API continues to work in its previous rural target areas in the 7 provinces of Banteay Meanchey, Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Speu, Kampong Thom, Kampot, Kratie and Pursat, will expand into new neighbouring districts and provinces, and will especially establish a new focus on urban areas. This is a response to rapid urbanization which is mainly driven by migrating youth – and youth is the main driver of social change. Digitalization is a cross-cutting theme that will be reflected in all of API’s programmes. With most, especially young, Cambodians having gone online in recent years, new opportunities and challenges are waiting to be utilized and addressed.

Successful programmes can only be developed and delivered by an effective and sustainable organization. Hence, in support of these strategic objectives, API has formulated an organizational objective and four organizational priorities:

4) To enhance API’s organizational capacity and sustainability.

Responding to decreasing overseas development assistance to Cambodia, a more demanding legal framework and compliance requirements for civil society organizations, and the resulting need to pursue organizational excellence, API has formulated the following key priorities:

- The funding strategy is implemented successfully, and finances are managed according to international standard.
- Strengthened human resource management and development supports implementation of the strategic plan.
- Systems for planning and monitoring, evaluation, accountability and learning (MEAL) are strengthened.

API closely monitors the risks of shrinking space for civil society and for citizens to speak out which may make it more challenging to pursue its strategic goal. API seeks to mitigate the risk by building on trusted relationships with government actors at all levels and on joint advocacy efforts with civil society. To mitigate the risks of decreasing government and development partner support for good governance reforms, and decreasing ODA, API builds new alliances in its advocacy work for good governance, and explores new ways of funding its programmes.

The Strategic Plan provides strategic guidance to the organization. However, with its relatively broad scope it also allows for prioritization depending on how the context and funding opportunities evolve. It is accompanied by a high-level outcome and impact oriented Monitoring and Evaluation Framework, and is operationalized through project plans that cover the strategic areas that best correspond with the prevailing context and innovation potentials.