



**Advocacy and Policy Institute**  
**Five-Year Report 2014-2018**  
**‘Strengthening Democratic Governance (SDG)’**

# Contents

|   |    |
|---|----|
| I. Introduction.....  | 3  |
| II. API's Achievements and Challenges .....   | 5  |
| III. Annexes.....   | 11 |
| Annex 1. Organisation, vision, mission, goal and values .....                               | 11 |
| Annex 2. Summary of Five-Year Strategy: Strengthening Democratic Governance 2014-2018 ..... | 12 |
| Annex 3. Ten year achievements of API .....   | 17 |

## I. Introduction

The Advocacy and Policy Institute (API) is a leading Cambodian capacity building organization in the areas of advocacy, policy influencing, citizen engagement and good governance. API's mission is to serve the long term democratic and social development needs of Cambodia by empowering people to interact with their government to protect their rights and provide for their needs.

Since its formation in 2003, API has engaged in direct policy advocacy highlighted with two successful campaigns for a law on access to public information and information disclosure, and a new traffic law for road safety which was adopted in 2015. API has worked on building communication channels amongst members of the Parliament, national Government, local authorities and civil society organizations from community to the national level. It has received widespread positive feedback from Cambodian and international organizations for its reliability, relevance and professionalism. In November 2018, API was awarded the "CARE Partnership Award 2018" by CARE Germany-Luxemburg as an outstanding partner globally for its contribution to supporting rural communities and civil society actors in Cambodia in implementing the Social Accountability Framework, as well as for its long-term mission to build advocacy capacities. API has forged its reputation through the delivery of advocacy training courses and the production of a range of publications in both Khmer and English to promote understanding of advocacy, access to information and the Government's Decentralization and De-concentration (D&D) reforms. It has done pioneering work on public information and budget disclosure at the local level, and on enabling rights-holders and duty-bearers in local governance.

API has developed its 4th Strategic Plan based on reflections of the results achieved over the past 5-years and extensive consultations with key stakeholders from community to national government and development partners levels. It had consider the challenging environment of constrained space for civic and civil society engagement and decreasing international development assistance for Cambodia. (See Annexes B+C)

Key conclusions from reflections and consultations included:

### 1) API's uniqueness

API has established its reputation and leadership role in Cambodia's civil society by serving as a connector, facilitator and capacity builder for citizens' empowerment in their interaction with government at all levels. API has uniquely acquired knowledge of policy issues like access to information (A2I) through its grassroots work at the local level and built up capacity to influence national policy-makers in addressing these issues through national legislation. API links interventions with citizens in the communities to civil society networks and all government levels up to national policy-making – and back again, to help enable government stakeholders to serve citizens according to the law and contribute to an enabling environment for citizen and civil society engagement. API has built bridges among rights-holders (the demand-side) and duty-bearers (the supply-side), and among the diversity of Cambodians, no matter of what gender, political orientation, (dis)ability, ethnicity, faith, etc.; whilst not compromising on a Rights-Based Approach.

### 2) A2I – achievements and limitations

API has advocated for an Access to Information Law (A2I) since its establishment in 2003. The 2018 draft A2I law completed with CSO inputs facilitated by API, has not seen progress in its passing by the Council of Ministers and the National Assembly yet. Further pressure by civil society will be needed and continued lobbying will remain a priority for API. At the same time API has worked on practical citizen empowerment on their Right to Information and government capacity development on information disclosure, with a focus on the sub-national level. This work has e.g. made access of the people to basic documents easier, and has reduced corruption by making fee structures transparent. The disclosure of sub-national budgets has helped communities to understand and influence the priorities of local development. While there has been progress in A2I, transparency and the fight against corruption sub-nationally, challenges prevail at all levels due to slow progress in legal reforms and with e.g. Chinese investments in Cambodia going largely unchecked. API's consulted stakeholders agreed that, in the new phase, API should lead campaigns for disclosure of information about critical issues like public budgets, NRM/access and user rights, public-private contract

disclosure and private sector investment, building on A2I law adoption advocacy and promoting implementation, as well as current existing sectoral laws that regulate disclosure, such as the Budget Law, Organic Law (on D&D Reform), NRM Law, etc. to safeguard people's Right to Information.

### 3) Shifting target group focus to women, youth, disadvantaged groups, including in urban areas

Over 2/3 of Cambodia's population are below 35 years and still have few opportunities to express their views, participate in governance and promote better services at all levels. In spite of efforts to strengthen women's and disadvantaged group stakeholders roles, API has had a strong emphasis on working with CBOs active in the field of NRM, as well as with local councilors and officials – all of these have mostly been under the leadership of middle- and older-aged men. To respond to demographic change and strongly involve dynamic drivers of Cambodia's future economic and social development, API should change its CBO target group focus to such CBOs that are formal and informal groups of youth, women and disadvantaged groups, and other formal and informal community groups with strong women and youth leadership, including in urban areas, who advocate on one or more of the following critical sectoral issues: public social services, sub-national planning and budget, NRM access/user rights and revenue transparency, private sector investment and public-private contract disclosure.

### 4) CBO and citizen empowerment in changed political context

API has successfully supported rural communities in raising their voices and claiming their rights, e.g. through public forums and outreach activities, in spite of occasional challenges with participant selection and quality of discussions that government administration structures tried to control or influence. API also built capacities of local councilors of all political parties to engage in dialogue with citizens, to disclose public information and to become better able to respond to citizens' claims. Stakeholder consultations recommended that API should seek to facilitate the space for diverse citizens and civil society to provide systematic feedbacks to improve public services and government accountability through governance mechanisms like the Social Accountability Framework (I-SAF) and citizens' and civil society's advocacy efforts, in all target provinces, both in rural and urban areas. Active citizens and youth particularly use and benefit from digital communication technologies and social media which can be much better used to enhance participation and social accountability.

### 5) Develop policy monitoring capacities

API can look back to significant achievements in advocacy for policy formulation and adoption of e.g. the Road Traffic Law and the draft A2I Law. It has, however, not yet focused on civic participation in monitoring law and policy enforcement. So far, there is a limited citizen role, especially of youth, women and disadvantaged groups, in influencing policies and their implementation, and very poor effectiveness of law and policy implementation for the benefit of the public and especially the poor. Therefore, API should focus on supporting the voices and actions of youth, women and disadvantaged groups in influencing both policy formulation and monitoring of implementation for improvement.

### 6) Pursue new ways to address financial sustainability

Civil society organizations including API have been facing financial constraints in response to more restrictive legal frameworks, shifting development priorities of donor countries, and also limitations in the capacity of CSOs to diversify their incomes. API's stakeholders and Board of Directors agreed that API should take the opportunity to explore cooperation with the private sector programmatically and in fundraising; strengthen government, private and CSOs multi-stakeholder partnership mechanisms for resource mobilization; and maximize the potentials of its consultancy services for income generation from local and international sources.

Hence, with its 4th Strategic Plan, API continues to pursue its mission of improving citizens' access to public information (A2I) through adoption of a good A2I Law and implement current sectoral laws to disclose information on critical issues; of enhancing citizen engagement, esp. youth, women and disadvantaged groups in governance and monitoring of public service delivery, and of developing civil society capacities and supporting their actions, particularly CBOs for advocacy and policy influencing; and, in this new period 2019-2023 with a focus on women, youth and the most disadvantaged groups and networks. However, new strategies respond to the changed political, economic, social and technological contexts and to the claims and needs of the consulted target groups.