

Citizens' Voices and Actions for Sustainable Development in Cambodia



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PROJECT PROGRESS

Effects (Outcomes/Use Of Output)

Outcome 1: The engagement of citizens, especially women, youth, indigenous people, and people with disabilities, in local governance is strengthened.

1. Indicator: 1.1 By the end of the project, the government at relevant level has solved 70% of CBOs' main advocacy issues (referring to one main advocacy issue per CBO at a time, as defined in advocacy action plans).

Baseline/starting point: 14%

Report 2023

By 2023, the government at relevant level has solved 62% of CBOs' main advocacy issues (referring to one main advocacy issue per CBO at a time, as defined in the advocacy action plans). Those main advocacy issues are 6 (12%) advocacy issues of all advocacy issues which were completely solved on deforestation, forest crime and encroachment, lack of fertilizer-mixing techniques, and vegetable-growing soil, and 25 (50%) advocacy issues of all 50 advocacy issues were partly solved on land disputes, no code of conduct about people living with HIV/AIDS, issues of commune administration not disclosing budget information (commune budget) to the public, issues of illegal fishery and issues of deforestation, encroachment of communities land.



Report 2024

By 2024, the government at the relevant level has solved 78% of the total of 50 issues raised by CBOs. Significantly, 3 advocacy issues were completely solved, and 5 advocacy issues were partly solved in 2024. So, in total 2023 and 2024, 9 of 50 advocacy issues were completely solved with 18%, and 30 of 50 advocacy issues were partly solved with 60%, and people benefited from 99,827 (50,511 Females) out of all 22,137 members (10,759 Females).

2. Indicator 1.2 By the end of the project, in at least 80% of target districts and municipalities (each) at least 3 civic engagement mechanisms related to public budgeting and expenditure are functioning, i.e., are taking place with diverse citizen representation and meeting minimum quality criteria.

Baseline/starting point: 24%

Report 2023

By 2023, in 40% of target districts and municipalities (each) at least 3 civic engagement mechanisms were strengthened related to budget public forums, commune council, and district dialogue meetings in 4 districts/municipalities (Serei Saophoan municipality, Mongkol Borei district in Banteay Meanchey province, and Pursat municipality, and Phnum Kravanh district in Pursat province).

Report 2024

Based on a mid-term evaluation with 33 CBO representatives, by 2024, 64% of target districts and municipalities (each) at least 3 civic engagement mechanisms related to public budgeting and expenditure were functioning in their districts. These functioning mechanisms were identified by CBO representatives from five districts from four provinces.

3. Indicator 1.3 By the end of the project, at least 50% of CBO representatives that engage with authorities have been women, youth, indigenous people, and people with disabilities.

Baseline/starting point: 30%

Report 2023

By 2023, 100% of CBO representatives that engaged with authorities have been women, youth, indigenous people, and people with disabilities.

Among 50 CBOs, there are 7 women leaders, 2 youth leaders and 34 women committee

representatives included 7 women indigenous, and 61 youth committee representatives included 19 youth indigenous and 1 youth with disability.

Report 2024

Based on the mid-term, 71% of CBO representatives that engaged with authorities have been women, youth, Indigenous people, and people with disabilities.

Outcome 2: Transparency and access to information on budgeting, procurement and ELC ESIA at national level are improved.

4. Indicator: 2.1 By the end of the project, the government has disclosed critical information to citizens about at least 4 out of 8 economic land concessions (ELCs) the project is dealing with in the target districts and municipalities.

Baseline/starting point: 2

Report 2023

By 2023, the government has disclosed critical information to citizens about at least 2 out of 8 economic land concessions (ELCs) the project is dealing with in the target districts and municipalities such as:

1. The district administration is open to information on the revenue and expenditure 2022 budget and the 2023 budget and economic land concessions to community members in Chit Borey district, Kratie province.
2. The district administration conducted the dissemination and consultation forum to disclose district budget information to community members about income and expenditure in 2022-2023 in Prasat Ballangk district, Kampong Thom province. Report on ELC forums in Kratie and Kampong Thom provinces.



Report 2024

In 2024, there was an ELC information that disclosed critical information to citizens in the Treap Kvan Pey forestry community in Kratie province. The company discloses ELC information, such as the contract and the master plan of their company, and they continue to build roads around the company. In 2023, the government disclosed critical information to citizens about at least 2 out of 8 economic land concessions (ELCs) in Kratie and Kampong Thom provinces. So, in both 2023-2024, there are 3 of 8 ELCs information that were disclosure.

5. Indicator: 2.2 By the end of 2025, at least 50% of public procurement projects in national-level focal areas (to be identified in the preparatory phase of research and advocacy work) have disclosed more information to civil society.

Baseline/starting point: 0%

Report 2023



By 2023, A total of 45% (33 out of 83) of public procurement projects in national-level focal areas (to be identified in the preparatory phase of research and advocacy work) have disclosed more information to civil society.

Those public procurement projects in four target ministries were disclosed in terms of the announcement specifications of procurement projects, and the announcement of quotation results with the name of the company who got the award and price of procurement projects only, there are not found any detail contracts. [Procurement NA levels](#)

Were there any contributing or hindering factors/developments/stakeholders, which affected the achievement of the objective? If so, how did you deal with them and how do you intend to deal with them in the future?



The Ministry of Interior released the sub-decree Number 152, 153, 154 to increase percentage of Sub-national budget (commune/Sangkat and Khan/district municipality) from around 12% to 17% in 2024 and increase around 1% more by government annual budget from 2025-2028. Significantly, the social fund and NRM/climate change budget will increase in 2024-2028 to 13%-31% of commune development budget allocation. This bold implementation, if successful, will strengthen administrative, financial, and political autonomy of the local governments and allow them to initiate and execute the development plan that responds to the needs and challenges of the local community.

Report 2024

A total of 7.06% (19 out of 269) of public procurement projects in national-level focal areas (MoEYS, MEF, MOI & MoPTW) have disclosed more information to civil society. Those public procurement projects in four target ministries were disclosed in terms of the announcement specifications of procurement projects, with the name of the company that got the award and the price of procurement projects only, there are no detailed contracts. National Procurement levels. [Procurement NA level 2024](#)

Unintended effects

Report 2023

Unintended positive effects

- Dab Bat Development Agriculture Cooperative has now the capacity to write proposals and initiate small-scale development projects to protect their community-protected agriculture. The proposal was submitted to the ADRA organization, which granted \$3,000 to implement their project activities.
- Koul Toteung Community Forestry has now the capacity to write a proposal and submit it to District administration, Commune Council, and organizations such as LWD, HOME, RED+, and Mlup Baitong getting a grant for \$5,600, for 3 lanes (2 red gravel roads 4 kilometers long, 1 white road of 2.50 kilometers and 1 canal 4 kilometers long).
- Ouchik Chey Moha Community Forestry received \$ 10 monthly support (120\$ annually) from the local authorities for patrolling the community forestry.
- Rokha Tuol Makak Community Forestry received a \$10-monthly support (120\$ annually) from the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) working group, for patrolling the community forestry and received \$500 from the commune council to dig up the land for setting a 300-mt long boundary for the community's forest.
- Samrong People with Disability Community contacted the DDSP organization in collaboration with local authorities to seek financial support for people with disabilities. As a result, the community with disabilities received financial support from DDSP and local authorities for their small businesses and provided capacity building for motorcycle repairs to 5 family members.
- Samrong Sen Chey Agricultural Community in Samrong commune, Phnom Krovanh district, Pursat Province, based on requests from CBOs, the commune councils provided land to the community to build an office (15m x 25m) in the communal land in Ou Plel village, Samrong commune, Phnom Krovanh district.

Report 2024

Positive effects

1. **Bantheay Krong Community Forestry**, located in Onlung Thnoat commune, Krokor district, Pursat Province: In 2024, the community committee carried out monthly patrols of the community forest, receiving financial support of 40,000 riels (ten dollars) for gasoline and materials from the commune party working group. However, this funding was not consistently provided every month.
2. **Chamboak Phaem Community Forestry**, located in Chher Tum commune, Krokor district, Pursat Province: In 2024, the district government working group supported the CBO in conducting monthly forest patrols. This support included 300 liters of gasoline per month and an allowance of 100,000 riels (25 dollars) per person for a six-member committee. Additionally, the Krakor District Administration granted the community conservation land covering an area of 307 hectares to help manage and protect.
3. **Prambei Mum Community Forestry**, located in Pram Bei Mom Commune, Thpong

District, Kampong Speu Province: The community received three cans of gasoline, two bags of rice, and 100 gallons of clean water from the Wildlife Friends organization for monthly patrols, as well as 10 fire extinguishers from the local authority.

4. **Toap Mean Community Forestry, located in Toap Mean commune, Thpong district, Kampong Speu province:** The community requested funds and equipment for patrols from the authorities during monthly meetings. As a result, the community received 1 liter of gasoline each time they patrolled the community forest. However, this support was not provided regularly, despite the good cooperation between the community and the authorities.
5. **The Rong Roeung Agricultural Cooperative, located in Rong Roeung commune, Thpong district, Kampong Speu province:**
 - 1. The community received land from the authorities, measuring 10 x 34 meters, for the construction of an office.
 - 2. The EM The organization provided equipment and agricultural techniques to 28 community-member households.
6. **Chronol Community Forestry, located in Thmei commune, Chet Borey district, Kratie province:** The community provided loans to its members, enabling them to earn interest to support forest patrols. Each month, the community saved 90,000 riels (twenty-two dollars and fifty cents) from the interest to fund patrol activities.
7. **Sort Srognae Community Forestry, located in Thmei commune, Chet Borey district, Kratie province:** the community received a loan of \$1500 from the RICOS organization, allowing members to borrow and earn interest to support their patrols. The community earns 70,000 riels (seventeen dollars and fifty cents) per month to fund patrol activities.
8. **Prasat Kwan Pi Community Forestry, located in Thmei commune, Chet Borey district, Kratie province:** the community received a loan of 4 million riels, allowing members to borrow and generate interest to support the community committee in refueling for patrols.
9. **B'ier Community Forestry, located in Thmei Commune, Chet Borey district, Kratie province:** The community received a loan of \$3,000 from the RICOS organization, allowing members to borrow and generate interest to support the community committee in refueling for patrols. Each month, the community saved 120,000 riels (thirty dollars) from the interest to fund patrol activities.
10. **Senmonorom Agriculture Cooperative, located in Monorom Commune, Thpong District, Kampong Speu Province:** In 2024, the EM organization provided one well and five net houses to members of the farming community.
11. **A member of the Youth Active for Society in Sambour commune, Mongkol Borey district, Banteay Meanchey province, Ms. Chat Seavmey, has been appointed as an administrative assistant in Sambour commune.**

12. **The Boeung Chang Boeung Prang Community Fishery**, located in Kleng commune, Sandan district, Kampong Thom province: the community received a water pump from the Department of Water Resources, and the community contributed to the budget for purchasing gasoline approximately 2,850 liters. They also received canal rehabilitation to bring water to the community lake, covering approximately 3,000 meters, funded directly by Kleng Commune. At the same time, the Kleng Commune Administration will continue further canal rehabilitation as part of the commune’s three-year rolling investment plan for 2025.



A. Overall Assessment, Highlights, Challenges, Lessons Learned, “Good Fit Practices”, Etc.

Report 2023

According to the project, our intervention was to contribute to igniting changes as the Ministry of Interior released the sub-decree Number 152,153,154 to increase the percentage of the Sub-national budget (commune/Sangkat and Khan/district municipality) from around 12% to 17% in 2024 and increase around 1% more by government annual budget from 2025-2028. Significantly, the social fund and NRM/climate change budget will increase from 2024-2028 to 13%-31% of the commune development budget allocation. It is good for CBOs to advocate and request those funds to support their CBOs and respond to the CBOs'

needs/issues. However, the total sub-national budget still has not increased sufficiently, so the project will continue to advocate for the government to increase the sub-national budget and monitor expenditures effectively and efficiently.

The commune and district's budget information has become public domain, after the project intervened. However, the Project needs to strongly enforce advocacy and work with the commune and district to build a culture of disclosure and more information released about local and national public procurement projects.

Report 2024

In 2024, duty-bearers in Cambodia have implemented a range of changes at different levels. Here's a breakdown of the changes by level:

National Level

- ☑ Access to Information Law: (1): The Ministry of Information set the draft Access to Information Law as one of the priority actions of the ministry's plan to move 2024 and 2025. and (2): with the representative from the government (H.E Prak Kol, Minister Attached to the Prime Minister and Deputy Minister of the Royal Government of Cambodia), and National Assembly (H.E Ty Sokun, Representative of Commission 5 of the National Assembly) showed the commitment and support the Access to Information law in Cambodia.
- ☑ Draft Law on Financial Management: Introduced to streamline financial management processes: 1) Increase OBS scores: 10 points increased in terms of budget transparency as a result of improving the content and comprehensiveness of the key 8 budget documents released publicly, especially the Executive's Budget Proposal and Pre-Budget Statement, public participation increased 2 points, while the oversight points remain the same, that requires more effort. The EU & Government represented by the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF) agreed to organize a joint launch event on 15 August. 2) The key Line Ministries have progressively prepared the Citizen Budget Book and Public Forum on the annual budget. Six ministries were mandated to prepare the citizen budget and a public forum. Five ministries had prepared the citizen budget, and four ministries had arranged the public. The pilot six ministries' budget forums: including the Ministry of Education, Youths and Sports, the Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology, the Ministry of Industry, Science, Technology & Innovation, the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans, and Youth Rehabilitation, Ministry of Rural Development and Ministry of Environment and welcome the CSOs to join these. 3) Brought 5 key inputs/requests from members/citizen to the Royal Government of Cambodia and got responses for clarification and consideration to include in the plan and future implement. And 4) Regularly engaged with the Ministry of Economy and Finance on Public Financial Management Reform, including Open Budget Surveys. On 10th June 2024, the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF) published the first citizen budget for the pre-budget statement.
- ☑ Budget Reduction: The national budget was reduced by 5.3% compared to 2023.
- ☑ Priority Policy Programs: Six key policy programs outlined, including healthcare expansion, vocational training, social assistance, informal economy integration, and agricultural support.
- ☑ Healthcare Expansion: Additional allocation of 340.4 billion riel (USD 83 million) for healthcare services.

Sub-National Level

1- Strengthening Transparency and Accountability:

- Policy Change: Introducing laws and regulations that require local governments to disclose financial information, conduct audits, and involve citizens in decision-making processes.
- Outcome: These changes ensure that local governments operate more transparently and are held accountable for their actions, leading to reduced corruption and increased public trust, and the duty-bearers, such as government officials and policymakers, who are responsible for adopting and implementing new policies, regulations, and practices to enhance transparency and accountability. These individuals and institutions need to adjust their current procedures and operations to align with the new requirements, ensuring that they operate more transparently and are held accountable for their actions.
- Ministry of Interior: This ministry is primarily responsible for overseeing local governance and ensuring that local governments operate transparently. They would be in charge of introducing and enforcing laws and regulations that require financial disclosure, conducting audits, and involving citizens in decision-making processes. (The Ministry of Interior in Cambodia has introduced several policies and initiatives in 2024 to strengthen transparency and accountability at the local government level Some key policies include: Public Administration Reform Action Plan 2024-2028: This plan focuses on key measures for public administration reform, aiming to



build a deliverable, dynamic, and resilient public administration system. <https://www.cpp.org.kh/en/details/375756>

- ☑ Financial Disclosure and Audit Requirements: Local governments are required to disclose financial information and conduct regular audits to ensure transparency and accountability in their operations, which includes involving citizens in decision-making processes to foster public trust and reduce corruption. <https://www.cambodianess.com/article/cambodias-plan-on-9-billion-national-budget-for-2024>
- ☑ Ministry of Economy and Finance: This ministry would play a crucial role in ensuring financial transparency by setting guidelines for financial disclosures, conducting audits, and managing public funds responsibly. (The Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF) in Cambodia has implemented several policies and initiatives in 2024 to ensure financial transparency and accountability. Some key policies include Budget Execution and Fiscal Discipline: The MEF has outlined detailed budget allocations, revenue sources, and expenditure plans for 2024 to ensure fiscal discipline and efficient resource allocation. This includes monitoring budget execution and ensuring that public funds are used responsibly. https://data.mef.gov.kh/datasets/pd_66a9f44d36d76b00019fe86d

2. Youth Engagement

- ☑ Policy Change: Implementing programs like “Youth for Change” that encourage youth participation in governance and community projects.
- ☑ Outcome: Such initiatives empower young people by giving them a platform to voice their opinions and contribute to decision-making, fostering a sense of ownership and responsibility towards their communities. The duty-bearers, such as government officials, policymakers, and community leaders, are responsible for adopting and implementing youth engagement programs. They need to adjust their current practices and create opportunities for youth to participate in governance and community projects.
- ☑ Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport: This ministry is primarily responsible for implementing programs like “Youth for Change” that encourage youth participation in governance and community projects. They play a crucial role in creating platforms for young people to voice their opinions and contribute to decision-making processes. (The Ministry of Education, Youth, and Sport (MoEYS) in Cambodia has been actively working on several policies and initiatives in 2024 to encourage youth participation in governance and community projects such as the Education Strategic Plan (ESP) 2024-2028: This comprehensive roadmap focuses on enhancing quality, equity, and inclusion across all levels of education.) <https://nepcambodia.org/document/education-strategic-plan-esp-2024-2028-en/>
- ☑ Ministry of Interior: This ministry may also be involved in facilitating youth engagement by providing the necessary support and resources at the local government level. (The Ministry of Interior in Cambodia plays a significant role in facilitating youth engagement by providing support and resources at the local government level. The key policies and initiatives include:
- ☑ Youth Engagement Programs: The ministry supports programs like “Youth for Change” that encourage youth participation in governance and community projects. These programs provide platforms for young people to voice their opinions and contribute to decision-making processes) <https://www.undp.org/sites/g/files/zskgke326/files/2025-02/undp-kh-report-on-youth-engagement-in-cambodia-ndc.pdf>

3. Human Development Initiatives

- ☑ Policy Change: Adopting recommendations from the Regional Human Development Report to address areas such as education, healthcare, and economic opportunities.
- ☑ Outcome: These policies help to mitigate risks and uncertainties faced by communities, leading to improved living standards, better access to essential services, and greater economic resilience
- ☑ These policy changes provide a structured framework to address the specific needs of local communities, resulting in the positive outcomes mentioned.
- ☑ In the context of Human Development Initiatives: the duty-bearers, including government officials, policymakers, and relevant ministries, are responsible for adopting and implementing the recommendations.
- ☑ Ministry of Health: This ministry focuses on healthcare policies, ensuring that communities have better access to essential health services. (Cambodia has been adapting its healthcare policies in 2024). The Royal Government of Cambodia has launched the Universal Health Coverage Roadmap 2024-2035. <https://policypulse.org/policy-inventory/royal-government-of-cambodia/9935/>
- ☑ Ministry of Economy and Finance: This ministry is involved in economic policies and initiatives aimed at improving economic resilience and living standards. (Budget Allocations and Expenditures: The ministry has outlined detailed budget allocations, revenue sources, and expenditure plans for 2024 to ensure fiscal discipline and efficient resource allocation).

Community Level

- ☑ Formalizing Partnerships: Enhancing partnerships with various organizations to improve information accessibility. Introduction of policies that encourage collaboration between local government and various organizations (e.g., NGOs, private sector, educational institutions). These policies create formal agreements and frameworks that enhance partnerships. By working together, these entities can pool resources and expertise, improving access to information and services for the community.

(Development Cooperation and Partnerships Strategy 2024 - 2028: This strategy document from the Royal Government of Cambodia highlights the principles, mechanisms, and tools for development cooperation and partnerships).

- ☑ Agricultural Support: Deployment of agricultural technical officers to commune levels to promote productivity. Implementation of policies that prioritize agricultural development, including the deployment of agricultural technical officers to local communities. These technical officers provide on-the-ground support and expertise, helping farmers adopt best practices, use new technologies, and improve productivity. This leads to increased agricultural output and better livelihoods for farmers.

Sub-Decree No. 158 dated 15 July 2024 issued by the Royal Government of Cambodia on "Procedures for the Management and Implementation of the Fund to Promote the Initial Systematic Land Registration Campaign".

This Sub-Decree, which enters into effect from the date of signing, aims to promote the completion of the ongoing initial systematic land registration campaign, setting a goal of two to four years. As part of this, the collection and recording of the cadastral land

registration fees will temporarily (from now until 31 December 2027) be assigned to and supervised by the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning, and Construction. The revenue collected will be allocated to cover the expenses and costs associated with the initial systematic land registration process and the costs for poor households.

After 31 December 2027, the capital and provincial administrations will take over supervision of the revenue collection for land registration under their jurisdiction.



The Ministry of Interior issued a letter No. 4499; dated July 26, 2024, on establishing a monitoring, control, and evaluation team on the preparation and implementation of commune and Sangkat fund projects.

- The implementation of the decision of the Ministry of Interior to establish a monitoring, control, and evaluation team on the preparation and implementation of the commune and Sangkat fund projects from 2024 onwards is to ensure transparency, and accountability, to enhance the efficiency and impact of funds in local development projects, ultimately benefiting local communities after API leads the Budget Working Group (BWG) and CPDD advocated for years as actions below. API analyzed the sub-national budget and launched the Citizen Budget Analysis App and presented the sub-national budget report 2022, 2023, and the Citizen Budget App to the National Committee for Sub-National Democratic Committee (NCDD), Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Economic and Finance, etc. We have advocated and proposed the establishment of a committee to organize, monitor, and evaluate the implementation of the commune and

Sangkat funds. API, BWG, and CPDD have facilitated members' monthly, and quarterly meetings with the government the Public Financial Management Reform Committee (PFMR), led by the Deputy Prime Minister, Minister of the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF) and co-chair with the European Union and Asian Development Bank. Both CSOs, the Government, and DPs acknowledged positive progress and an increase in the score of the Open Budget Survey (OBS) 2024. API together with BWG members attended a consultation on the macro-economic for budget law 2025 and produced a position paper and budget analysis report and recommendations to improve and increase the national budget on (Child Care & Education, Health, Social Protection spending, Sub-National Administration, Agriculture, and Natural Resources Management) and submitted to the government Ministry of Economic and Finance & National Assembly and on 13 November 2024. API contributed to improving the capacity of the members of the Budget



Working Group on budget analysis skills and advocacy, and internet censorship and budget in the economic and social rights issues across Phnom Penh and the provinces.

B. Effects With Regards To Cross-Cutting Issues

The project worked directly with women, youth, indigenous people, elderly people, ID-poor families, and people with disabilities. The project's primary target groups had the opportunity to represent the interests of their groups. Based on CBO selection criteria, the project selected a minimum of 3 people from each CBO. Priority was to select the women leaders, and a woman and a youth including indigenous people, marginal groups, and people with disabilities, as well as other representatives. The project provided equal access

to capacity building and engaged in public fora, district dialogue meetings, and other national events. In total, the project worked in partnership with 50 CBOs, 7 women leaders, 2 youth leaders, and 34 women committee representatives, including 7 Indigenous women and 61 youth committee representatives, including 19 Indigenous youth and 1 youth with disability.

API specifically targets women, youth (incl. older children), people from poor households, and those with disabilities to make their voices in local governance and advocacy for their issues heard. The project worked directly with women, youth, indigenous people, elderly people, ID-poor families, and people with disabilities. The project's primary target groups had the opportunity to represent the interests of their groups. Based on CBO selection criteria, the project selected a minimum of 3 people from each CBO. Priority was to select the women youth, indigenous people, marginal groups, and people with disabilities, as well as other representatives. The project provided equal access to capacity building and engaged in public fora, district dialogue meetings, and other national events.

CHALLENGE

A significant challenge during the Phnom Penh Internet Forum (PIF) 2024 was the limited involvement from the private sector and the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications. Their absence reduced opportunities for collaboration and hindered discussions on critical topics such as digital rights and security. The private sector's lack of engagement limited insights into improving digital literacy and access, while the Ministry's non-participation restricted dialogue on regulatory frameworks essential for the Cambodian Digital Government Policy. This challenge underscored the need for more effective strategies to engage these key stakeholders in future forums to address pressing digital issues in Cambodia.



LESSONS LEARNED

- The limited involvement of the private sector and the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications during the Phnom Penh Internet Forum 2024 highlighted the importance of early stakeholder engagement. Future forums should initiate outreach efforts well in advance to encourage participation, emphasizing the value these stakeholders bring to discussions on digital rights and security. Developing partnerships and creating incentives for involvement can foster a more inclusive environment. Additionally, improving communication strategies to raise awareness about the forum’s objectives can ensure that key players understand the significance of their contributions in addressing digital issues in Cambodia.
- Organizing workshops to engage in dialogue on the model of smart villages is to draw the attention of participants involved in the intersection with national policy. The workshop provided an opportunity for participants, including government officials, development partners, civil society, the private sector, and youth, to study and see global strategies to address rural-urban inequality and climate challenges. Participants discussed the need to test this model in Cambodia, including local solutions for rural development, climate resilience, and livelihood improvement.
- A good thing to learn is that the API has incorporated many of the topics that are the product of the API itself into the agenda of the workshop on policy dialogue on December 06, 2024. These include research reports, analysis reports, digital tools, online monitoring and evaluation systems, and demonstrations of the smart village model strategies that enable participants to know and gain more at the same time. This is also the organization’s long-term marketing strategy.

CASE STUDY

AND VIDEOS

Case Study No. 1



Treap Kwan Pi community, Thmey commune, Chet Borei district, Kratie province

The Access for All (A4A) project seeks to increase the availability of independent, evidence-based information and to help Indigenous women and other vulnerable groups to obtain and use information necessary to participate effectively in subnational budget processes and productive discussions with private companies in their communities. Although the project prioritizes support for these citizens seeking information about district budgets and economic land concessions (ELCs), the project is also committed to addressing real community needs. Therefore, the project also supports participants to strengthen and use their advocacy skills to address a broad range of concerns, which often includes threats to land and community forestry.

It's me, Khon Sophy, Pnong, and I'm 29 years old. I am a member of the Treap Kwan Pi community forestry forestry.

The Treap Kwan Pi community forestry was established in 2005, and it has 248 families in total, 178 of them are women, and its land area is 1588 hectares. It was recognized by the provincial governor and Ministry of Agriculture, forestry, and fisheries N0 492, dated October 10, 2014, and Signed agreement between community forestry and forestry administration on June 3, 2015 .

I can't wait to share with you how access to information benefits my community and me. "Being born under the Khmer rouge regime has left most of my community members illiterate, and lacking confidence". Due to their lack of knowledge, they don't fully see the benefit of acquiring adequate information. She continued to state that *"since I have joined the Access for All Project, I have noticed that I have changed a lot."*

In 2021, 9 families grabbed communal land on 9 hectares and destroyed the forest to produce charcoal kilns. She, together with her community members, reported to local authorities (LAs) to intervene on 9 families who encroaching on the community land. As a result, the families who invaded communal land quit at the beginning of 2023. She was extremely pleased to contribute to this case's success, to protect her community forestry well as to see those families stop encroaching on the community land.



Now day, just a few families produce charcoal kilns in community forestry. As a representative of community forestry *"I will always keep protecting and patrolling community forestry together with other community members even though patrolling spends our personal budget. Together, we are going to continue join commune and district meeting to request budget, raise concerns as well as to*

cooperate with NGOs partners for the whole benefit of community members, especially for the younger generation".

She continued- I'm interacting and getting close to the local authorities more frequently to prevention any encroachment and charcoal kilns. I have a lot of opportunities to effectively communicate as an outcome of all the activities which is organized by the A4A project. I can speak on behalf of my community members, and I am very confident to voice my concerns and share my own opinion when I attend public forum, and other various workshops.



"On June 27, 2023, I participated in the 2nd multi-stakeholder on "Financial Management of District Budget and public procurement" at Hor Bunny Hotel, Kratie, I requested the chief of district to allow the community representative to join monthly meetings to bring up issues. As a result, the district chief accepted my

request, and he promised to notify me and other representative community members for the upcoming meeting."

Receiving enough information, such as, budget literacy, the public procurement process, economic land concession, environmental and social impact assessment, role of local authority, right to information principles, and other additional knowledge through the A4A activities, it makes me more confident in expressing the concerns of my community to local authorities and take part in observing what local authorities are doing.

“

Access to information is extremely important to democratic discourse and openness which promotes public involvement, citizen empowerment, and government transparency and accountability” She stated.

Case Study No. 2

COMMUNITY RIGHTS AND CAPACITY IN FINDING SOLUTIONS THROUGH DISTRICT DIALOGUE MEETINGS



Dob Bath Development Agriculture Cooperative, Pursat Municipal, Pursat Province

Lacking the technique of mixing fertilizer with vegetable soil, resulting in low yields and lack of techniques for raising chickens and fish has happened since 2022 for **Dob Bath Development Agriculture Cooperative**. Community covers an area of 4 villages of 17 hectares with 68 families, in 8 committees. This issue has affected the people growing vegetables with low yields. If vegetables are grown technically, high yields can provide a lot of income for the family. This issue was reported to the agriculture department of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries, and the municipal governor, but no solution. The CBO leaders/representatives request technical support, gathering information and briefing issues, and work plan preparation for participants in public forums, monthly districts, and communes' meetings to raise issues face-to-face for finding solutions from the sub-national level. After they received training and coaching, API organized district dialogue meetings with relevant stakeholders. As a result, the community got coaching from the agriculture officer and vegetable seed from the Department of Agriculture Forestry. Fisheries and the municipal will cooperate with relevant offices and NGOs to provide training to the community on planting and raising animals as much as possible. Moreover, At the beginning of 2023 ADRA organization implemented their project located in the Kravanh district. Still, their project could not find CBOs reaching target groups, so API and Pursat municipal administration and

agriculture department cooperated and facilitated for Dob Bath Development Agriculture Cooperative to be the target group. Now, Dob Bath Development Agriculture Cooperative has received the capacity building course on the business plan, leadership, marketing plan, and agriculture techniques like using fertilizer, the demand of use pesticides, and provided administration 3,000 USD for Dob Bath Development Agriculture Cooperative as a small scale.

Case Study No. 3

THE WOMAN’S VOICE AFFECTED FAMILIES’ LIVING CONDITIONS



The **Khsetr Borey Community** is located in the project's target area, in the Khsetr Borey Village, Center Commune, Kravanh District, Pursat Province. The Community was established in 2016 with a total of 270 members, 210 of which are women. Khsetr Borey Community was established with the aim of promoting the management and protection of natural resources, contributing to poverty reduction and improving livelihoods through sustainable community non-timber forest products, with the active support of the Forestry Administration in monitoring and solving problems. Challenges in the community include patrols, crime prevention and community forest encroachment. However, issued which originated in April 2020, when PP-Mix Com intervened in the land (40 hectares) of 30 families in Khsetr Borey village, causing the villagers to lose their opportunities to conduct farming or rice production and their income to support daily life. This problem has not yet met the local authorities' intervention on behalf of the community. Until August 2021, the 30 families submitted several proposals to villages and communes' administration to solve the land encroachment in Sontre commune, Khsetr Borey village, Phnom Kravanh district, Pursat province. As a result, representatives of the company and the people involved, including commune and district authorities, met with stakeholders to try and resolve the problem. The company returned land in the amount of 6 hectares, to the benefit of 10 families. For the other remaining 34 hectares, the issue for 20 families is still unresolved.

On August 18, 2022, the land of another 20 families was encroached by a Chinese contractor, named Kul, claiming to have ownership of the land and not allowing people to do their usual rice and potato production. This problem angered the families, who submitted a request for help to the village and commune chiefs, but the local authorities did not solve it. The issue was still ongoing in 2023.



Separately, on May 23, 2023, 10 families in Khsetr Borey community, Santre commune, participated in the commune's public forum organized by API through community members at Santre commune, and attended by stakeholders, including officials of the communes and the district. On this occasion, all participants had the opportunity to raise the community's issues, so that people from Khsetr Borey Village could raise their concern related to 34 hectares of land encroached by the Chinese contractor, which affected 20 families. The villagers not only raised their grievances to relevant stakeholders at the public forum but also posted excerpts of the discussion on social media. The issue caught the attention of the head of the district governor in Phnom Kravanh district (Mr. Heng Phana), along with other relevant officials in the commune and district.



At the end of the forum, members of the working group of the district and commune, expert officials, representatives of companies and Chinese contractor, and other people involved visited the location to find facts and initiate a discussion to find a solution. At the time of the writing, the problems of these 20 families were being gradually resolved, although more time was required to mediate between the concerned people and Chinese contractors, with a solution foreseen after election day.

Ms. Seng Sokna, 36 of age, cares for a family of four members. She said that she was very happy to see action taken by district and commune officials to try and resolve the issue and return the land to their family. The land totaled 4 hectares when the company seized it in 2017. Before that, her family was able to earn a gross income of 3,000,000 to 4,000,000 riels by growing rice and tapioca. After losing their land, she and husband have had to wor

as laborers (harvest and construction) with irregular income, and sometimes nothing at all. For the past two years, for her other families whose land was grabbed by the company, it has been really difficult to make a living. So far, the company has returned only 1.5 hectares

and the family's economic situation has recovered a bit because of this partial restitution of her land.

Ms. Seng Sokna stated that if she had not accepted the 1.5 hectares of land, returned by the company, she would not have anything to plant rice and casava and little hope for the future.

Mr. Ben Born, chief of Khsetr Borey village, Sontre commune, Phnom Kravanh district, Pursat province, said: "I am very happy to see that 10 families in the village have received land back from PP-MIX, to grow their crops. The case of another 20 families whose land was grabbed by the Chinese contractor will be solved by the district governor who has promised to intervene. He said that this problem occurred in 2021 and is being resolved by the community members by submitting the cases to village and commune chiefs and through the participation in commune public fora organized by API in Phnom Kravanh district, Pursat province. He thanked API for organizing such public fora and for giving an opportunity to those families of receiving information and encouraging them to raise the issues.



Mr. Ben Born promised to follow up on the requests put forward by the 20 families with cases yet unsolved, so that the people, as well as community members living in his village or commune, can get their land back and practice plantation, because the land is life and allows to earn a living and continue their lives.

Case Study No. 4

RONG ROEUNG AGRICULTURAL COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING AFTER TRAINED BY DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

Rongroeurng Agricultural Community, which is located in Roleang Phleung village, Rong Roeung commune, Thpong District, Kampong Speu Province, received a series of training from the Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, and the Department of Commerce on the use of pesticides to meet standards. And recognition of pesticide use limits. Furthermore, the Department of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries Insects were also used to experiment



and find ways to get rid of them. It's conducted on 18 - 19 September 2023. On the other hand, Rong Roeung Agricultural Community was invited by Life With Dignity (LWD) to visit the Agriculture Community in Battambang to learn more about cultivation.

Rong Roeurng Agricultural Community was established on December 14, 2012, with 8 members, 5 females, 146 members, and 116 females. At present, there are 824 members, 651 females, 8 members, and 4 females. The Community was established to promote the economy and reduce poverty through agriculture by cultivating crops such as cucumbers, beans, and many other crops 600 kg of crops were harvested by the community per day



to supply the market in the district. In addition, the community has animal husbandries such as kitchens, ducks, etc. Membership in the Rong Roeurng Agriculture Community is conditional. As follows 1. Must be a resident of Rong Roeung commune 2. Must be a community share of 2,000 Riel(0.05USD) per share 3. Be 18 years old or older 4. There is an agreement between the community and the requesting party. After

becoming a member of the Rong Roerung Agricultural Community Members will receive benefits including dividends from the community Receive training and agricultural equipment from other institutions to approve livelihood.

At the end of 2022, the community faced the main problem Lack of cultivation techniques, and the control of pests that feed on all kinds of crops without protection, which affected the CBO members of around 21 families member because there were not enough techniques and no drugs for prevention and treatment when pests eat crops.

Through the implementation of the "Citizen's Voices and Actions for Sustainable Development in Cambodia Phase II " implemented by Advocacy and Policy Institute (API), and funded by Bread for the World (BfdW), and Dan Church Aid (DCA), representatives of the Rong Roeung Agriculture Community received training and coaching on public speaking exercises, and readiness to raise issues with the governor, district council, commune council, and relevant offices to find solutions for the community. Until August 23, 2023, the Rong Roeung Agricultural Community participated in the meeting of the District Administration with the participation of the Chairman of the District Council, the Governor, the Commune Council, and other relevant offices, organized by API. On this occasion, community representatives raised the issue of lack of planting techniques, especially the control of pests from crops.

Case Study No. 5



The community patrol stands in the middle of the community forestry located in Kol Tor Toeng Village, San Tre Commune, Phnom Kravanh District, Pursat Province.

(Pursat Province) The forestry community of Kol Tor Toeng Village is working hard to combat crime in the community forest, which is prone to frequent illegal activity, but is facing a lack of resources for regular patrols. The community forest consists of two areas, 3-4 kilometers apart.

The first area is called Prey Sleuk, which is smaller in size compared to the second area, Prey Kro Nyung Thom, which was once full of large rosewood trees. Currently, only small trees remain in the Kro Nyung Thom community forest, which is also being targeted for logging.

The community, established in 2005 in Kol Tor Toeng Village, San Tre Commune, Phnom Kravanh District, Pursat Province, has nine committees and approximately 293 members, 35 of whom are women. Due to a lack of resources to patrol the Kro Nyung Thom community forest, the forest guards have reduced patrols to once a month, and sometimes not at all.

Recently, in November, the community was reported about illegally cutting down trees for logging, but there were not enough forces or resources for patrols. The community leader, Mr. Thlan Yon said, *"There were deforestation reports. I have not been able to go. If I go alone, I am afraid for my own safety."*

Mr. Yon also called on other committee members to assist in patrols, but there were insufficient resources, particularly gasoline, to stop the crimes. He suspects that the criminals who came to clear the forest, are citizens from distant villages who are aware that the forest is a community forest.

In the past, the community has actively cooperated with authorities to suppress crimes, such as cutting down trees to make charcoal. After the perpetrators, who were community members, were caught, they were taken to the San tre Commune Hall to sign a contract promising to stop further deforestation. As a result, the criminals ceased their activities.



Mr. Thlan Yon sits and smiles talking to API in a house located in Kol Tor Toeng Village, San Tre Commune, Phnom Kravanh District, Pursat Province.

Mr. Yon is often invited to attend monthly meetings at the district and commune halls to raise the issue of crime in the community forest, but no solution has been found because there is no budget for regular patrols. The district and commune hall budgets are also allocated for road construction, rather than providing resources for rangers to patrol.

Ms. Say Sinang, a member of the Kol Tor Toeng Village Forestry Community, mentioned that she does not participate much in patrolling the forest because she is a woman, but she consistently attends monthly meetings with district and commune authorities.

Previously, the community had not dared to raise proposals or attend meetings, but after



joining the Citizen's Voices and Action for Sustainable Development in Cambodia (CASDC) project, supported by Brot für die Welt (BfdW) and DanChurchAid (DCA) and implemented by the Advocacy and Policy Institute (API) since 2022, the community has gained the courage to participate. Ms. Sinang stated, *"Before, we were afraid to attend meetings, but after joining API, we gained confidence."*

Ms. Say Sinang sits and smiles talking to API in a house located in Kol Tor Toeng Village, San Tre Commune, Phnom Kravanh District, Pursat Province.

Similarly, Ms. Mi Sokry, another community member, said that the training courses and workshops provided by API, such as those on advocacy, access to information, and dispute resolution inside and outside the courts, have been very beneficial for both her and the community.

Ms. Sokry also applied her knowledge of conflict resolution to mediate a dispute between a couple in the village, resolving the matter at the village level and avoiding court involvement.

Mr. Yon added, *“My request is for a small budget just for the patrol committee... because when I patrol alone, I am afraid, especially if they [criminals] have knives, axes, etc. I don't dare. I also want a sign to be placed on the community trees.”*

In addition to training sessions, there are various practical tools and resources that could significantly enhance the forestry community's ability to patrol and protect their forest effectively. First, having the right equipment for patrolling is essential. Access to reliable transportation, such as motorbikes or bicycles, along with sufficient fuel, would allow community members to cover large areas of forest more frequently and efficiently.



Ms. Mi Sokry sits for an interview with API in a house located in Kol Tor Toeng Village, San Tre Commune, Phnom Kravanh District, Pursat Province.

Additionally, GPS devices or mobile apps with offline mapping capabilities could help them track illegal activities with precision and report these incidents to the relevant authorities. The use of drones could also be highly beneficial, offering aerial surveillance to monitor large sections of the forest without requiring physical patrols. This would allow the community to identify illegal logging operations from a safe distance.

Communication devices such as radios, walkie-talkies, or mobile phones equipped with group communication apps would help patrolling teams stay connected, share updates, and call for assistance if they encounter dangerous situations. For continuous monitoring, installing cameras and motion sensors around vulnerable areas of the forest could capture evidence of illegal activity and deter potential offenders.

Infrastructure improvements, like placing clear boundary markers and signs around the community forest, would raise awareness and discourage illegal logging. The construction of watchtowers or small patrol stations at key entry points could also provide vantage points for monitoring the forest more effectively. These efforts could be further supported through formal partnerships with local law enforcement and forestry authorities, which would allow for quicker responses to reported illegal activities and provide the patrol members with additional legal backing.

Raising awareness in nearby villages about the importance of forest conservation and the legal ramifications of illegal logging could reduce the frequency of such activities. Additionally, mobilizing local youths or volunteers to participate in forest monitoring could

provide much-needed manpower and cultivate a sense of responsibility within the broader community.

Finally, the community would greatly benefit from securing additional funding for their patrol efforts. Exploring crowdfunding platforms or applying for grants could help the community gather resources to cover the costs of patrols and necessary equipment.

By combining these tools with regular training, the forestry community would be better equipped to safeguard their forest, ensure the continuity of patrols, and address the challenges posed by illegal activities.

Case Study No. 6

BOEUNG CHANG BOEUNG PRANG FISHERY COMMUNITY SECURES CANAL RESTORATION BY COMMUNE



Sar Mol, community leader, stood with his arms open in front of the lake located in Kleng Commune, Sandan District, Kampong Thom Province on July 12, 2024.

Boeung Chang Boeung Prang Fishery Community succeeded in persuading the Kleng commune administration to restore the canals that feed their community lakes, after facing numerous challenges such as illegal fishing and lake depletion. These issues severely impacted people's livelihoods, agriculture, and wildlife sanctuaries as well as fish resources.

This community was established with the purpose of maintaining the flooded forest, and fishing area and ensuring sustainable fishing. Located in Kar Chuor village, Kleng commune, Sandan district, Kampong Thom province, the community was founded on June 22, 2009, with the voluntary participation of the people from five villages. The Kleng Commune Administration, Sandan District Administration, Kampong Thom Provincial Authorities, and the Kampong Thom Fisheries Administration supported its establishment.

Currently, the community has 265 members (148 women), including 11 committee members (2 women). Boeung Chang and Boeung Prang, the lakes that the community relies on for fishing, agriculture, and natural conservation, cover an area of 24 hectares.

“He [the chief of Kleng commune] had a plan, he asked us [the community], and he said he would include a monthly plan for the commune to build a canal to help us,” said Sar Mol, a community leader in his 50s with a fair complexion. He expressed his happiness and admiration for the commune administration, which incorporated the community's concerns into the local development project.

Before this decision, Mol regularly attended and raised community issues at community-commune meetings organized by the Advocacy and Policy Institute (API) since 2022. Eventually, the commune administration considered these concerns and restored approximately 750 meters of the canal for the community.

Dy Sok, chief of Kleng commune, acknowledged the importance of canal restoration after coordination with the API institute and his government.

About 45 years old, Sok said, *“Once we received knowledge and feedback from the organization or government, we initiated the canal construction. It's one of the most important things for the people, helping them enjoy better livelihoods and adapt to change. That's why we decided to restore the canal to help mitigate the impacts of climate change.”*

The increasing demand for lake water for farming, exacerbated by climate change, had left the lake dry, with no drainage system in place. Illegal fishing activities, such as using electric nets, persisted when the water was shallow. The area used for dryland rice cultivation expanded from 169 hectares in 2022 to around 1,000 hectares in 2024, placing additional strain on the water resources.

Mol added, *“The lake has three conservation areas: Boeung Prang, Boeung Chang, and Boeung Robiet. These areas could support people in this commune. But this year, the lake was cut off.”*

He explained that as the number of people growing dryland rice increased, many water pumps were installed, sometimes as many as 28 machines at once. Understanding the community's need for water, he allowed the machines to be used but urged people not to over-pump, as it would affect the entire community.



Some parts of the lake were drought in Kleng Commune, Sandan District, Kampong Thom Province on July 12, 2024.



Sar Mol, community leader, spoke in front of the lake in his community, located in the Kleng Commune, Sandan District, Kampong Thom Province on July 12, 2024.

After further discussions with the commune administration, canal rehabilitation was included in the commune's three-year rolling investment plan. In 2024, the Kleng commune administration allocated a budget of approximately 400 million riels (around 99,000 USD) for canal rehabilitation to supply water to the community lake. The project involved restoring around 2,000 meters of canal, 30 meters wide and 3 meters deep, using the funds from the commune.

It is important to note that the commune fund is a national budget allocated annually for local development, including projects such as roads, ponds, dams, lakes, and schools. Sok also mentioned that the commune's three-year investment plan prioritizes construction projects that address the needs of the people.

Mol also acknowledged the coordination in the 'Citizens' Voices and Action for Sustainable Development in Cambodia' project, supported by Brot für die Welt (BfdW) and the DanChurchAid Cambodia (DCA) and implemented by the API Institute. He said, *"Initially, the commune did not engage with us very well. They did not want to hear from us, and we weren't able to attend meetings. However, after receiving funding from API, we could attend monthly meetings, and eventually, the commune started calling us to join the meetings. Sometimes, they used Telegram to notify us."*

Sok emphasized that he always welcomes participation from the community and partner organizations. *"My view is that I value partnerships. Whether their contribution is small or large, as long as we are working together, it matters," he said. "Even if the community contributes just a small amount of money or ideas, it makes a difference."*

Not only that, the community also mentioned the factors of climate change and the pumping of water in the lake to cultivate many hectares of people's dry land, making the lake shallow, and losing fish species and biodiversity.

The community also highlighted the impact of climate change and the overuse of lake water for dryland farming, which has led to shallow waters, the loss of fish species, and a reduction in biodiversity. They have asked the district administration to facilitate and help restore the lake, so it can be used as a reservoir during the dry season. The Kleng commune

administration will continue working with the community and include further restoration in its three-year rolling investment plan for 2025.

Although Mol and his community have successfully advocated for canal restoration and the preservation of natural resources, he remains committed to strengthening the youth in the community to continue their advocacy efforts.



Sar Mol (left) and Dy Sok (right) sat together in the Kleng Commune Hall located in the Kleng Commune, Sandan District, Kampong Thom Province on July 12, 2024.

“Now, I’m introducing new young people to the importance of protecting natural resources. I’ve mobilized about 5-6 young people, and they are eager to help,” he said.

Although the community currently has only a small number of young members, they represent hope for the future of the lake because they possess the necessary knowledge and skills, which are critical for the community’s sustainability.

Sok expressed his optimism, stating, *“I hope that in the future, we will continue working to restore the lake and cooperate with the community to conserve it.”*



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ADVOCACY AND POLICY INSTITUTE

ADVOCACY AND POLICY INSTITUTE

**A leading Cambodian NGO active in advocacy,
policy influencing, capacity building,
good governance and dialogue facilitation
between citizens and state actors**

The Advocacy and Policy Institute (API) is a Cambodian non-governmental organisation active in advocacy, policy influencing, good governance and civic engagement. Capacity building and dialogue facilitation are at the heart of our efforts towards democratic and sustainable development.

We have received widespread acclaim from both local and international organisations for our reliability, relevance and professionalism. Over a time span of almost two decades, API has helped institutionalise advocacy skills and has been striving to make local democratic and accountable governance a reality. To these ends, we have been conducting more than 300 training courses for over 10,000 participants affiliated with civil society and community-based organisations, local councils, media outlets, trade unions, Government institutions and the Cambodian Parliament.

API is unique in the Cambodian civil society in serving as a connector and facilitator for citizens' empowerment in their interaction with government at all levels. API has acquired first-hand experience on policy issues like access to information (A2I) through its grassroots work. Based on this vast experience, we are in the best position to make the voices of ordinary citizens count in policy-making at the national level. Here we have been trying to support government actors serve citizens according to the law and contribute to an enabling environment for citizens and civil society to express their concerns. Finally, we have been playing an important role in helping citizens understand their rights, access to information and make use of the opportunities for engagement offered by various laws and government policies.

Our programmes are guided by a human rights based approach. API serves all Cambodians and values the diversity of gender, sexual orientation and identity, (dis)ability, ethnicity, faith and political opinions. At the same time, we are especially committed to supporting the most disadvantaged in their efforts to make their voices heard.

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