



CITIZEN ENGAGEMENT FOR SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY IN SOCIAL PROTECTION



TABLE OF CONTENTS

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM BEFORE PROJECT STARTED	3
THE OBJECTIVE OF PROJECT	3
RESULTS	4
Outcome #1: Strengthened capacity of citizen	4
Outcome #1: Strengthened capacity of citizen	4
Outcome #2: Improved access to information about social protection	6
Outcome #3: Poor and vulnerable groups' service feedback	7
Outcome #4: Produce technical guideline	8
Project Activities 2019-2024	8
LESSONS LEARNED	11
CHALLENGES	12

STATEMENT OF PROBLEM BEFORE PROJECT STARTED

Phnom Penh, including Khan Saensok, experiences rapid and uncoordinated urbanization, leading to challenges like limited job opportunities, large-scale migration due to low farm incomes, and strains on basic social services. Issues such as inadequate housing, sanitation, public transport, and safety concerns are prevalent. While the official 2015 poverty rate for Phnom Penh was stated as 1.08%, with Khan Saensok at 0.83%, the urban poor, estimated around 9.5% by the ID Poor assessment, face fluctuating incomes and poor living conditions, concentrated in peripheral areas. Khan Sen Sok is a residential area for many disadvantaged groups including migrant workers, indigenous people, people with disabilities, and LGBTQI+ individuals, who often work in the informal sector and face employment insecurity.

Furthermore, there are limited capacities among Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and disadvantaged citizens to engage in local development and service monitoring. Groups like women and youth have limited social protection and awareness of their rights. Implementing the I-SAF in Khan Sen Sok faces challenges due to a lack of prior collaboration on social accountability and citizen participation among stakeholders, and unlike rural areas, urban citizen participation is not clearly embedded in local governance policies.

Objective of API Strategic Plan 2019-23: To fulfill rights and enhance voices of citizens for sustainable development in Cambodia.

THE OBJECTIVE OF PROJECT

- Strengthened capacity of citizen and CBO representatives and service providers on social accountability and social protection, and related rights of service users, in order to improve social protection, public administrative and social service quality.
- Improved access to information about social protection and public services for vulnerable groups in urban areas.
- Poor and vulnerable groups' service feedback and voices on social protection service delivery and needs are heard and responded to through the Social Protection I-SAF mechanism.
- Produce technical guideline on I-SAF for Social Protection.

Funding for Project: 199,788 EUR donated by VOICE and 240,166.27 Dolars by Oxfam.

Target areas for Project: 6 Sangkhat (Phnom Penh Thmey, Ou Baek K' am, Kraing Thnung, Teuk Thla, Kork Khleang and Khmuonh) and 1 Khan Saensok, Phnom Penh.

RESULTS

Outcome #1: Strengthened Capacity Of Citizen And CBO Representatives And Service Providers On Social Accountability And Social Protection, And Related Rights Of Service Users, In Order To Improve Social Protection, Public Administrative And Social Service Quality.

- One hundred and eighteen Community Accountability Facilitators (CAFs) were trained between 2019 and 2024, with a projected 70% successfully implementing social accountability initiatives across six Sangkats in Khan Saen Sok. Female CAFs have proven crucial in facilitating the implementation of ISAF activities, developing valuable facilitation and leadership skills within their teams. Collaboration between male and female CAFs has fostered effective idea exchange, ensuring smooth activity execution. Notably, young female CAFs have demonstrated increased self-esteem through their engagement with predominantly male counterparts and supply-side stakeholders. Furthermore, they have actively participated in training sessions and policy dialogues alongside other API project participants, broadening their perspectives and knowledge.



- In Phnom Penh's Khan Saensok, encompassing six Sangkats (Phnom Penh Thmey, Ou Baek K'am, Kraing Thnung, Teuk Thla, Kork Khleang, and Khmuonh), significant progress has been observed. Fifty-three service providers, including 21 females, have received specialized training. This training has demonstrably enhanced the capacity of authorities within the six Sangkats and Khan Saensok to address social protection and social accountability. Notably, officials now demonstrate improved listening skills and a deeper understanding of the needs of vulnerable populations. Furthermore, authorities actively engage and fully participate in all project activities, indicating a strong commitment to its objectives.

The impact of this enhanced capacity is evident in the improved delivery of public services. Sangkat and Khan Saensok officials now provide services to citizens, particularly vulnerable groups, with greater efficiency and a more approachable demeanor. This positive change is exemplified by the experience of a person with blindness, who stated, "After the project intervention, Khan Saensok prioritized people with disabilities and provided immediate services, eliminating the previous three-day waiting period." This testimonial underscores the project's success in streamlining service delivery. Moreover, Sangkat and Khan authorities have demonstrated a heightened responsiveness to the immediate needs of vulnerable groups. They are now proactively addressing critical requirements, such as the issuance of ID poor cards, disability identification documents, and risk cards. Additionally, they have implemented tangible improvements to accessibility, including the construction of building ramps for people with disabilities and the provision of other essential support. This proactive approach reflects a significant shift towards inclusive and equitable service provision.



Outcome #2: Improved Access To Information About Social Protection And Public Services For Vulnerable Groups In Urban Areas.

- Across all six Sangkats and Khan Saensok, these service providers have consistently delivered public services in a manner characterized by friendliness, timeliness, transparency, and accountability. This commitment to quality service is clearly illustrated by tangible improvements in accessibility. Specifically, Sangkat Krang Thnong and Sangkat Kork Khleang have constructed ramps to facilitate access for people with disabilities. Furthermore, Krang Thnong Primary School has also implemented similar accessibility measures by building ramps. This proactive approach not only benefits individuals with disabilities but also fosters a more inclusive and welcoming environment for the entire community. These infrastructure improvements demonstrate a clear commitment to equal access and reflect a broader shift towards prioritizing the needs of vulnerable populations within the region. The positive impact of these changes highlights the effectiveness of the training and capacity-building initiatives undertaken in these areas.



- The local administrations of Khan Saensok and the six Sangkats demonstrated a strong commitment to implementing the I-SAF mechanism independently. This dedication signifies their ownership and proactive approach to enhancing local governance and service delivery. Their commitment to self-implementation not only ensures the sustainability of the I-SAF mechanism but also fosters a sense of accountability and

empowerment within the community. This independent implementation highlights a significant step towards building local capacity and strengthening the relationship between the administration and its citizens. Furthermore, this commitment reinforces their understanding of the importance of transparency and accountability in local government."

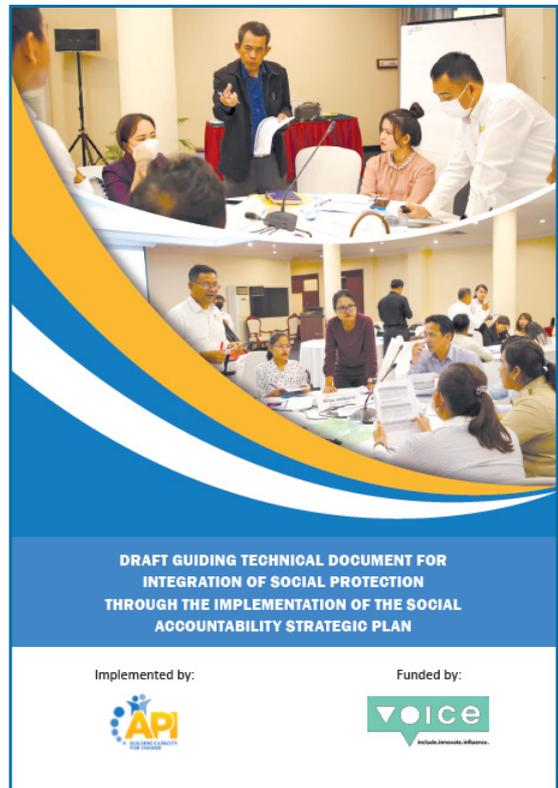
Outcome #3: Poor And Vulnerable Groups' Service Feedback And Voices On Social Protection Service Delivery And Needs Are Heard And Responded To Through The Social Protection I-SAF Mechanism.

- Service providers have demonstrated a strong commitment to implementing the Joint Accountability Action Plan (JAAP), evidenced by consistently high completion rates. Specifically, they achieved 96% completion in 2020, followed by 94% in both 2021 and 2022. While there was a slight decrease to 79% in 2023, a robust recovery resulted in a 93% completion rate in 2024. This sustained high level of implementation indicates a dedicated effort to fulfilling the obligations outlined in JAAP.
- 714 poor families receiving ID poor cards and 1,060 family risk cards, 550 poor students receiving primary school scholarships, 418 people with disabilities received disability cards in 2023 and 2024, and a total of 800 poor families have been receiving monthly food aid and assistance since 2019.



Outcome #4: Produce Technical Guideline On “I-SAF For Social Protection

- A comprehensive technical guideline on I-SAF (Integrated Social Accountability Framework) for Social Protection has been developed and formally recognized by the National Committee for Sub-National Democratic Development (NCDD). This recognition signifies a significant milestone in establishing standardized procedures for implementing social protection programs through social accountability mechanisms. The NCDD Secretariat expressed strong support for this detailed technical documentation, acknowledging its crucial role in promoting effective and transparent social protection initiatives.
- The Secretariat's endorsement highlights the document's potential to enhance the delivery of essential services to vulnerable populations. Furthermore, they have agreed to engage in further discussions regarding the technical guidelines. These discussions will facilitate the refinement of the document, ensuring its practical applicability and alignment with evolving national policies and local needs. This collaborative approach underscores a commitment to strengthening social protection systems through robust accountability frameworks, ultimately fostering greater equity and inclusivity within communities.



Project Activities 2019-2024

1. Deliver training to the supply sides by including digital I-SAF App to local-administrative.

2 training courses and Epic Arts-Performance were provided with supplies-side in 2019 and 2022. There are 53 (21 Females) attended the training. The training conducted for building the capacity of Khan and Sangkhat social accountability officers on the social accountability implementation of the strategic plan and social accountability practice, increase knowledge and integrate social protection into the process of implementing social accountability plans of the State, Khan, Sangkat, Health Center and Primary School and performance on social protection to supplied side.

2. Deliver training to demand sides by including digital I-SAF App to CAFs.

API delivered 13 times of training for demand-side (CAFs). These trainings were focused on I4C and community scorecard refreshers, I-SAF cycle, and social protection. The training has conducted in 2029-2024. There were 118 participants including 56 females attended the courses. CAFs applied facilitation skills to demonstrate I4C dissemination package, community scorecards practice in classes properly and confidently.

3. Conduct I4C dissemination meeting with citizens.

API cooperated with Khan Saensok and 6 Sangkat to conduct 42 times of I4C disseminations and community scorecard to 2,353 participants including 1,244 females in Khan Saensok. At the end of I4C dissemination beneficiaries were able to describe their rights to access public services, standards, performances, and disclosure of budget information at Khan/district administration, Sangkat/commune, health centres and primary schools.

4. Conduct door to door dissemination.

API conducted door to door dissemination by CAFs. There were 2,220 Citizen Information Booklets distributed for Khan Saensok, Sangkat Teuk Thla, Sangkat Kork Khleang and Sangkat Khmuonh.

5. Conduct community digital scorecards with citizens.

API facilitated with Khan Saensok and 6 Sangkat to conduct 62 times of community scorecard to 1,491 participants including 813 females in Khan Saensok. 4 service of Khan/district administration, Sangkat/commune, health centres and primary schools were scored by citizens and citizen suggestion's activity includes social protection activities were raised by vulnerable group to service provider to improve public service better.

6. Conducted service provider self-assessment.

We conducted 77 service provider self-assessment meetings with sub-national administrations in Khan Saensok. We engaged 1386 service providers (including 739 females) from the target areas of six Sangkats, 10 primary schools, six health centers, and Khan Saensok to participate in the self-assessment. This meeting provided service providers with the opportunity to evaluate their performance against a set of service-specific assessment criteria, some of which were prioritized by citizens. They also suggested actions for improving social protection-related services across various sectors, including

Khan administration, Sangkat administration, health centers, and primary schools. As a result, proposed actions, along with specific actions on social protection services, were identified and prioritized by 21 sub-national administrations to enhance public and social protection services.

7. Interface meeting dialogues between right holder groups to improve social service and social protection services

The project organized interface meeting dialogues between right-holder groups' representatives and service providers in Khan Saensok, with a total of 1,015 participants (including 497 females). These meetings involved six Sangkats—Phnom Penh Thmey, Ou' Baek Kaom, Krang Thnong, Teuk Thla, Kork Khleang and Khmuonh –and Khan Saensok, where discussions were held between service providers and recipients on the proposed activities. As a result, 7 Joint Action Plans on the Social Accountability Framework were developed for implementation in 2020-2025. These plans, covering Khan Saensok, Sangkat Ou' Baek Kaom, Phnom Penh Thmey, Krang Thnong, Teuk Thla, Kork Khleang and Khmuonh included social protection activities.

8. JAAP committee meeting.

We conducted 5 meetings on the progress of the implementation of the joint accountability action plan (JAAP) with 51 keys stakeholders, (19 female; 37%). The meeting will be conducted to follow up on JAAP implementation of local administration in Khan Saensok.

9. Public forum with vulnerable groups.

15 public forums were conducted with total of 949 participants (515 are females). The main questions, suggestions, and issues related to social protection were raised to service provider at Sangkat Ou' Bae Kaom, Krang Thnong, Phnom Penh Thmey, Teuk Thla, Kork Khleang and Khmuonh. As a result, the authorities responded and clarified all questions and suggestions immediately. Some issues related to requests for ID Poor cards, PWD cards, risk cards, and support for poor people and people with disabilities were addressed.

10. Support to Right holders group leaders attend local council monthly meeting.

API supported and coordinated CAFs and CBOs representatives to attend monthly meetings of Sangkat and Khan Committees for Women and Children Affairs Committees. There are 19 CAFs (6=F) attending the meetings. They learned the processes of meetings, ways to tackle issues, and or responses to challenges and questions raised by participants. CAFs suggested ID poor, risk card for vulnerable group in Khan, Sangkat Phnom Penh Thmey, Krangkhoung and Khmounh.

LESSONS LEARNED

- Accordingly, there are many resources at Khan and Sangkat level which are different from rural areas. Therefore, implementing urban ISAF is different from rural ISAF as the individual services are responsible for the data entry and not the ISAF focal person at Khan/district level.
- Urban CAFs wanted to gain experience rather than other incentives. They want to learn more about social work. However, the project could not reach the marginalized groups such ID poor, LGBTIQ to volunteer for community work. Though in this step, we do not pilot on master CAFs, but some CAFs could lead and active.
- Urban ISAF: The participants in the urban I4Cs dissemination are different from the rural areas ones where mostly women attended. But in the urban area there were around 50% of male participants.
- The village leader is a key person to mobilize citizens and sometimes they are not interested in learning about social accountability. For the next implementation, village leaders need to be included in the training of ISAF in order to raise awareness and take part in social accountability.
- The Khan Administration and One Window Service Office (OWSO) also disseminated information to citizens to raise awareness about budget, performance and service at Khan. Furthermore, the Office of Citizens Ombudsmen mainstreamed one new complaint mechanism to citizens which could provide feedback about supply side service provision, particularly OWSO service provision.
- Community Scorecard should be invited to service users of each service to attend to provide feedback. Door-to-door scorecard with citizens could be reached out the whole Sangkat. The data would be applied strongly in the interface meeting to improve supply side performance.
- It would be good if applying ICT for self-assessment as some of the service providers did not dare to assess the criteria and make sure they could provide critical feedback.
- There is not clearly stated in any Prakas or regulations to integrate the role of Chief of Citizens Ombudsmen to function in Implementing of Social Accountability Framework.
- Citizens Ombudsmen Office should play active and neutral roles in facilitating self-assessment, community scorecard and interface meeting at Khan Level.
- API organized a public forum to promote social services to citizens, especially vulnerable groups, has provided many opportunities and benefits to citizens and can respond to them immediately.
- Having assistants for people with disabilities can help facilitate people with disabilities in many ways, including travel and learning.
- Increasing communication with project stakeholders to provide information or updates on project work to each other, making work implementation better.

- Coaching and conducting preparation meetings with CAFs to role play on presenting the I4C package, discuss, and divide responsibility before letting them to support and lead in the project activities are good methods to ensure the quality of project implementation.
- API maintained good communication and cooperation with stakeholders, especially relevant officials in Khan, Sangkat, health centers, and primary schools. It resulted in cooperation in mobilizing beneficiaries to be involved in project activities.

CHALLENGES

- The COVID-19 issue is still identified as the main challenge for us to implement our activities. And after Covid19 eased, there was short time left for project implementation, which resulted in the project achieving only significant activities, particularly focusing on the inclusion of the most vulnerable target groups in the I-SAF process.
- Most of the recruited CAFs are freshman and need more time to coach on understanding sectorial and governance aspects. Therefore, the supply side should play an active role in dissemination.
- Urban citizens are more serious or careful in the interview after dissemination. They felt afraid to interview with CAFs after dissemination.
- Supply still think that the budget information is secret information and is not willing to disclose. Moreover, budget information is the technical term that needs more capacity to citizen.
- The first community scorecard in urban areas is so sensitive for supply side (closely monitor). For example, there are some police who monitor the process of community scorecard in Sangkat Teuk Thla. And the proposed selection criteria in the community scorecard related to software development is difficult while some citizens often raised about infrastructure.
- The culture of providing open feedback face to face higher service providers to improve service in urban area has not been practiced and empowered, identifying courageous citizens' rep. is a challenge.



វិទ្យាស្ថានគំរូមតិ និងគោលនយោបាយ
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.

CONTACT US

Phnom Penh Villa, #26, 2nd Floor, Room 206, Street 388,
Sangkat Toul Svay Prey 1, Phnom Penh, Kingdom of Cambodia.

Tel: +855 23 213 486/ +855 99 288 800

-  www.apiinstitute.org
-  www.facebook.com/APIInstitute
-  www.youtube.com/@apiinstitute981