

Core Programme's Documents



ANNUAL REPORT 1998

Statement of Sources and Application of Funds for the Year Ended 31 December 1998

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MESSAGE FROM THE MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE

Once again, 1998 has been a busy year for the NGO Forum and the Management Committee. Enthusiasm of members led to new initiatives and the revival of several Working Groups. Staff of the Secretariat has increased and progress was made on defining the organisational identity of the Forum. A long-term strategic plan has also been developed and mechanisms put in place to enable the Forum to respond more effectively to current events.

A significant event during the year was the appointment of a Cambodian, Yeng Virak, to the position of Deputy Representative of the Forum. Mak Sithirith also joined the staff, as Environment Coordinator. Following the AGM in April new people joined the Management Committee (MC), maintaining a composition of 4 Cambodian and 3 expatriate members.

Two new initiatives of the Forum were commenced during the year. The Information Project was primarily established to address the bias in international reporting on Cambodia prior to and immediately after the national elections. The project finally got underway in June with the recruitment of Bill Herod. Ana-Marie Clamor joined the staff in September as an Advocacy Skills Trainer, working mainly with Cambodians and Cambodian NGO members new to advocacy work.

Criteria for membership eligibility and a new fee structure were introduced at the beginning of the year to assure a degree of common purpose among member organisations and greater understanding and commitment to the goals of the Forum. Vision and Mission Statements were finalised and ratified by the membership during the year as part of the process of forming a clear organisational identity.

Development of a five year Strategic Plan has been a slow but steady process – most of the work being

undertaken by the Management Committee, with periodic input and participation from the membership. The occasion of the Annual General Meeting last year was used to identify the strengths and weaknesses of the Forum, as well as opportunities and threats. This information was used to develop broad strategies which were again taken back to the members for comment and modifications. It is expected that the Plan will be formally ratified at the AGM in 1999 and be used to inform future operational plans of the Forum and its various Working Groups.

The Forum is primarily a membership organisation involved in advocacy. There is an inherent dichotomy here, between adequately consulting with the membership and needing to respond to issues as and when they arise. In response to concerns expressed by Forum members and frustrations experienced by the Management Committee, procedures were developed to enable the Forum to respond quickly and effectively to current issues without alienating the membership from the decision-making process. This quick response mechanism was used during the year when the Forum issued statements of concern over the post-election violence and the arrest of human rights workers in Sihanoukville. A statement was also issued in support of an international tribunal to try Khmer Rouge leaders for crimes against humanity.

Much has been achieved in 1998 but there are still opportunities and plans for the Forum to take up in the coming year. With the changing nature of the Forum and an increase in Secretariat staff, the future role of a Management Committee will need to be reviewed. Advocacy training will be extended to NGO staff and others in the provinces. The Information Project will shift its focus from reproduction and dissemination of information to developing articles of a more analytical nature. There are also plans afoot to recruit a Cambodian to assist in analysing the potential impact on Cambodians of projects promoted by multi-lateral development banks.

Management Committee (from June 1998)

Robert Clarke, AFSC (Co-Chair)

Mudita Chamroeun, CIDSE (Co-Chair)

Mal Simmons, ACR (Treasurer)

Gunnar Andersen, REDDBARNA

Hok Bunthoeun, ADHOC

Tieng Sereivouth, PADEK

Touch Sarom, CWDA



MESSAGE FROM THE REPRESENTATIVE

1998 was a challenging year. In January 1998, NGO Forum had little or no financial pledges from donors, a Representative who had been in the job for just one month, over-stretched member organisations preoccupied with their own programmes, and a Management Committee trying to reconcile competing demands for responsive action and longer-term capacity building. In a year of political tensions and national elections, the NGO Forum faced the challenge of contributing to a more peaceful and just society in Cambodia and better international understanding abroad.

The NGO Forum began the year with few resources. But the Forum did have an Action Plan - An Action Plan created by the Forum's working groups in a participatory process over the course of the last year.

In 1998, as the Action Plan was put into effect, the NGO Forum became more active and more visible. Efforts to encourage Cambodian leadership began to bare fruit. The NGO Forum took stances on more issues, and was quoted in the media more frequently. Additional activities were added to the Action Plan as events unfolded. A number of new staff joined the NGO Forum secretariat, providing better capacity to coordinate activities and implement decisions of the member organisations.

While stricter expectations on member organisations led to some nominal members discontinuing their membership, NGO Forum's official membership now more closely resembles its active membership, improving the Forum's ability to reach consensus and take action. Non-member organisations continue to be encouraged to join workshops, training programmes and other activities organised by the working groups.

NGO Forum has become a dynamic focal point of discussion and debate on issues affecting the context of development in Cambodia. This debate is now dominated by Cambodians, with foreigners normally taking a peripheral role. Cambodians, from both local and international NGOs, are now the majority, and often sole, participants in many NGO Forum meetings.

The NGO Forum is dealing with issues (environment, gender, development bank practices, etc) which are new to many Cambodians. In this context, mutual learning, the clarification of values and a sharpening of analytical skills are a necessary precursor to effective action.

Yet, I believe there need be no inherent contradiction between short-term response and long term capacity building. The two can exist side-by-side, with each contributing to the success of the other. Inherent in this strategy is the belief that this country belongs to Cambodians, and that shaping Cambodia's future is the prerogative of Cambodians. Foreigners can play an important supportive role, making available the knowledge and experience they bring with them for the use of their Cambodian colleagues.

There are a number of challenges, however, that will continue to face the NGO Forum. One is the challenge of building understanding in an organisation of both Cambodians and foreigners operating in at least two languages. Another challenge is that of consensus building and responsive action in a broadly based membership organisation. A third challenge is that of maintaining organisational unity while pursuing a multi-issue agenda. These challenges are also potential strengths, giving advocacy efforts an authentic base, grounded in the experience of a wide cross-section of local and international NGOs working with communities throughout Cambodia. The lessons of 1998 need to be taken into account as we continue our Two-Year Action Plan in 1999 and prepare for a new action plan to begin the new millennium.



RESPONDING TO ISSUES OF JUSTICE AND PEACE IN 1998

In 1998, Cambodia held multi-party national elections. 1998 followed a year of civil strife in which the political parties had fought each other in the streets of Phnom Penh. The challenge for NGO Forum was to contribute to a meaningful democratic process in Cambodia at the same time as building international understanding of Cambodia abroad.

Through the activities of different working groups and actions of the members and Management Committee, NGO Forum was able to launch a multi-faceted response to the situation surrounding the elections:

The *Information Project*, launched two months before the elections, kept international partners, academics, aid agencies, diplomats and media informed of the evolving situation in Cambodia.

The *Civil Society Working Group* provided a forum for local NGOs involved in election education, monitoring and human rights to discuss and analyse the situation on the ground.

The *Women Working Group* and *Environment Working Group* together organised a one-day panel discussion with Cambodia's political parties. The parties answered questions about their policies toward women in the morning session, and questions about their environmental policies in the afternoon. The full programme was filmed in front of an audience of 220 people and broadcast on national television and national radio in the week before the election. In doing so, the NGO Forum raised the profile of these two policy areas, and generally contributed to a more open and policy-oriented election environment.

The NGO Forum, represented by the Secretariat staff and Co-Chairpersons, joined with other NGO coalitions, monks and peace activists in a "Cooperation for Peace and Non-Violence." The Forum helped organise a workshop on May 28-29 which developed short-term and long-term plans for building a peaceful civil society.

When tensions increased after the elections, the Representative released a statement, published in local Khmer newspapers, calling on the ruling party to exercise police restraint, the opposition parties to avoid fueling racist tensions, and all parties to do their utmost to solve the political deadlock. After the outbreak of street violence, NGO Forum and the Cooperation Committee for Cambodia together published a statement calling on all parties to solve their conflicts peacefully. The statement was sent to political party leaders, and a meeting was held with the Cambodian People's Party president, Samdech Chea Sim.

Tensions were diffused when the two largest parties came to an agreement allowing the formation of a new coalition government. However, two other events led to further statements being released by the Representative. One was the arrest of Licadho human rights workers in Sihanoukville following a protest over toxic waste, the other the United Nations investigation into possibilities for an international tribunal to try Khmer Rouge leaders. In 1999, the toxic waste issue will be further taken up by the Environment Working Group, while the issue of an international tribunal will be further explored by the Civil Society Working Group.

The NGO Forum has maintained a participatory, bottom-up approach, with the impetus for actions coming from the various working groups. The Representative and secretariat staff, acting in consultation with the Management Committee, have coordinated this increasingly active programme into a cohesive but multi-faceted response to the evolving situation in Cambodia.



NEW PROJECTS IN 1998

Information Project

The Cambodia Information Project began its work in June 1998 as Cambodia prepared for national

elections the following month. The project aims to provide donors, decision-makers and media timely, balanced and well-documented information to help them to understand the present needs in Cambodia. Better international understanding of Cambodia is still a much-needed prerequisite for assisting Cambodia's social, political and economic development.

The Project quickly established several inter-related networks for distributing information from or of use to the NGO community and beyond. The Project developed a computerised database of individuals and organisations throughout the world interested in Cambodian affairs. The database is searchable by country, organisation, special interest (e.g. environment, human rights), profession (e.g. diplomat, journalist, academic) and other customisable factors. Using the database, the Project developed several e-mail distribution lists and related services focussing on these target audiences. These included:

Cambodia News Digest - This weekly two-page newsletter was developed to serve those with an interest in Cambodia who did not have easy access to a steady flow of reliable general information about Cambodia. The Digest e-mail distribution list quickly grew to hundreds of subscribers in more than thirty countries and was often redistributed to other newsgroups and e-mail lists. One special edition of the Digest (on post-election violence) was reprinted in the US Congressional Record. Such exposure brought more subscribers and contributed to the expansion and usefulness of the database.

CD Index - The Project produced a weekly index to all articles about Cambodia which appeared in *The Cambodia Daily*. The *Index* was distributed in electronic form (via e-mail), so was searchable, customisable, and could be used to create a very detailed chronology. Researchers in many fields have found it to be useful. *The Cambodia Daily* kindly placed a note about the availability of the *Index* in its masthead. About 100 subscribers from around the world asked to be placed on the *Index* list during 1998.

CamNews - The Project regularly contributed items to *CamNews*, a well-established Internet newsgroup about Cambodia. *CamNews* is accessed by thousands of Cambodia specialists worldwide. While the level of the Project's contribution varied, it was one of the three major contributors and regularly accounted for about one-third to one-fifth of the content during late 1998.

CamClips - The Project developed its own daily electronic clipping service of online newspaper and wire service articles about Cambodia. Using several Internet search programs and other online services, the Project routinely processed scores of articles each day. On average, about 10% of the articles were sent on to the worldwide *CamClips* distribution list, made up of people who have requested this service. *CamClips* subscribers also receive the weekly *Digest* newsletter and the weekly *Cambodia Daily Index*. *CamClips* is much more selective than *CamNews*, provides information in a standard format and avoids duplication.

Resource files - The Project developed a database of information stored in subject-specific "resource files." These files were single computer files containing a virtually unlimited number of full-text articles or source information on particular subjects (e.g. the toxic waste incident in Sihanoukville, the arrest of two human rights workers). The files were indexed and easily searchable. These resource files were sent via e-mail to persons with a special interest in a developing crisis (human rights workers, environmental activists, journalists, attorneys, etc.).

Research assistance - The Project assisted many journalists, human rights workers, environmentalists and other specialists in gathering information and contacting relevant NGO and government offices and other sources.

Media liaison - The Project served as media liaison for a number of NGO colleagues, arranging press conferences and interviews with journalists.

IT assistance - Project staff assisted a number of NGO colleagues in installing and using Internet and e-mail programs and exchanging information electronically

Future Directions

In 1999, the Cambodia Information Project intends to create a web site, accessible to Cambodia watchers around the globe. The web site, which will be constantly updated, will be an important communication tool for the working groups, as well as providing more general information on Cambodia. The web-site will provide a means for disseminating more in-depth research and analytical pieces on issues of concern to NGOs in Cambodia.



Advocacy Skills Training Project

All NGO Forum activities are intended to build NGO capacity for advocacy, through learning together about important issues and involvement in advocacy campaigns. However, the NGO Forum found that this approach, by itself, was not sufficient. A more structured approach to advocacy training was needed.

Ana Maria Clamor, an experienced trainer and NGO worker from the Philippines, began work with the NGO Forum in mid-September 1998. Her initial task was to interview many different NGO workers in order to familiarise herself with the NGO community and to help the NGO Forum assess and improve its overall approach and strategies for advocacy work. Her findings were discussed with the Management Committee of NGO Forum, and a training programme was developed. The training programme, to get properly under way in 1999, will involve training for Forum working groups, staff and member organisations as well as other Cambodian NGO networks. The Advocacy Skills Trainer will also produce materials for advocacy training in order to assist ongoing training efforts after the project is complete.

CAMBODIA CAMPAIGN TO BAN LANDMINES

With Cambodia's signing of the Ottawa Treaty banning landmines in December 1997, the goals of the Cambodia Campaign to some extent changed in 1998. The revised goals are:

- To urge the Cambodian government to ratify the Mine Ban Treaty and to implement necessary legislation to enforce the treaty;
- To urge the government and the Cambodian people to implement and observe the terms of the Treaty by stopping the production, use, trade and stockpiling of landmines in Cambodia;
- To continue to promote the need for de-mining and assistance to landmine victims in Cambodia amongst donor countries and individuals;
- To ensure de-mined land is returned to the people.

The Campaign continued its regular activities in order to achieve these goals - monthly meetings, awareness-raising activities, hosting local and foreign journalists, and empowering the voice of landmine victims both in Cambodia and overseas. Materials such as T-shirts, banners, maps, stickers, brochures and folders were produced and used in awareness-raising throughout the country, including the ex-Khmer Rouge zones of Pailin and Phnom Malai.

Significant Events

1998 saw some major milestones in achieving the Mine Ban Treaty. In late September 1998, the fortieth country ratified the Ottawa Treaty, paving the way for the treaty to enter into force on 1 March 1999 after a six month waiting period.

While Cambodia has not yet achieved ratification of the treaty, legislation has been prepared for banning the use, trade, production and stockpiling of landmines in Cambodia. It details the process for landmine destruction, coordinated by the Cambodia Mine Action Centre, and imposes severe penalties for those found guilty of possessing or using landmines.

The Landmine Monitor

Perhaps the most significant work of the Campaign in the past year was participation in the preparation of the Landmine Monitor, which is to be released by the International Campaign to Ban Landmines in 1999. The Landmine Monitor is an international civil society initiative to collect information on whether states have been successful in achieving the terms of the Ottawa Treaty.

Cambodia's Monitor will include information on past and recent use of landmines, landmine policy and law, the destruction of stockpiles, de-mining initiatives, funding sources, inventories of services for the disabled and information on the socio-economic development of mine affected communities. The work of the Handicap International/ Cambodia Red Cross Mine Incident Database and the cooperation of the Cambodia Mine Action Centre have been vital in ensuring the success of this project.

Cambodia's Landmine Monitor will be made available on the NGO Forum web-site at www.bigpond.com.kh/users/ngoforum.

De-mined Land

In May 1998, the Campaign gathered together local and international NGOs in Battambang province to share information about the current ownership and use of de-mined land in the province. A statement from this meeting was issued and presented to the Cambodia Mine Action Centre Conference on Land Use Planning for Battambang and Banteay Meanchey provinces, June 1998.

In the statement, NGOs expressed concern that land after de-mining does not always go to the intended beneficiaries, such as internally displaced people or returning refugees. Examples include land that was confiscated by local militias or military units and land for which titles were issued to powerful individuals rather than landless families. Consequently, many people continue to live in mine fields both out of necessity and in order to protect their land from confiscation after de-mining.

The Campaign intends to submit the NGO Statement on De-mined Land to the 1999 Consultative Group Meeting on Cambodia, as an issue of ongoing concern.



Structure

The Cambodia Campaign to Ban Landmines (CCBL) is a coalition of NGOs and international organisations working together to ban landmines in Cambodia and around the globe. It is part of the NGO Forum, but is also much broader than the Forum membership. Many organisations and individuals in Cambodia have contributed to the success of the national and international campaigns.

Thanks go to those who funded the Campaign in 1998 through the NGO Forum, namely LWS, Bread for the World and all those who contributed funds in 1997. Jesuit Service Cambodia's office and staff have provided most of the office and logistical support. All work in the campaign is done on a voluntary basis and in addition to normal jobs.

In 1998, funds channelled through NGO Forum were used mainly for producing awareness-raising materials and for funding attendance at International Campaign meetings where funding was not available from other sources. International conferences included the International Campaign meeting in Ottawa in June and the Landmine Monitor meeting in Dublin in September.

Decisions are made by those who attend the monthly Campaign meetings. Everyone is welcome. Organisations, or individuals therein, which participate in, assist or liaise with the CCBL include:

Association to Aid Refugees Japan (Cambodia), ADHOC, Australian Catholic Relief, American Friends Service Committee, Cambodian Disabled Peoples' Organisation, Cambodian Red Cross, Cambodian Church Women's Association, CARE Cambodia, Church World Service, CMAC, Dhammayietra Centre,

Handicap International, HEKS, ICBL/JHP, Institute per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo, Japanese International Volunteer Centre, Jesuit Service Cambodia, Krousar Thmey, Legal Aid of Cambodia, Lutheran World Service, Maryknoll Cambodia, Metta Karuna/JS, Mines Action Group, Marie Stopes International, Norwegian People's Aid, Oxfam GB, Oxfam HK, Partnership for Development in Kampuchea, Veterans International, and Working Group on Weapons Reduction.

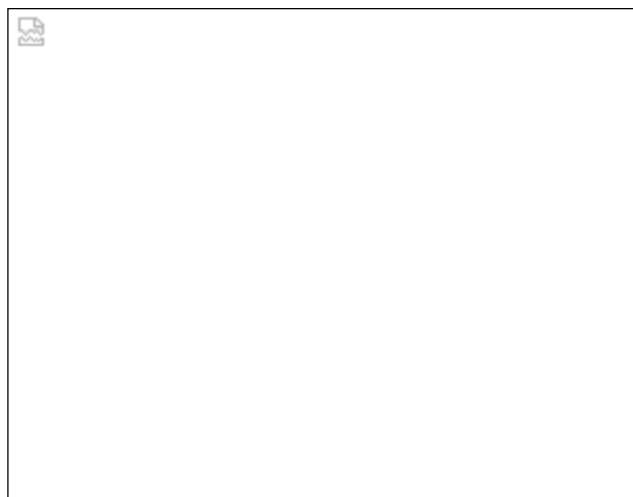
CCBL is a member of the Coordinating Committee of the International Campaign to Ban Landmines. As Chairperson of the CCBL, Sister Denise Coghlan represents Cambodia in that forum.



Future Plans

In 1999, the Campaign will continue to encourage ratification of the Ban Mines Treaty and adherence to its terms. The Campaign will continue to monitor implementation of the treaty, and hopes to undergo a more detailed study of the number and location of stockpiles.

The Campaign will continue to resource other campaigns in the region to achieve the goal of a mine-free Asia, to support initiatives in other parts of the world, and to raise funds and awareness for de-mining and assistance to victims and mine-affected communities.



CIVIL SOCIETY WORKING GROUP

As the democratic space in Cambodia started to widen in the early 1990s, local groups and organisations began emerging. Nonetheless, there were still threats to the newly formed and fragile institutions of democracy. Local NGOs involved in human rights issues often laboured under pressure -- sometimes harassment -- from government and local authorities.

It was within this context that the NGO Forum created the Civil Society Working Group in 1994. Today, the Cambodians who make up the Civil Society Working Group represent a cross-section of organisations which are trying to preserve and promote the country's fledgling democratic system, encourage the formation and empowerment of grassroots organisations, and protect vulnerable groups.

Media. In March, the group organised a workshop for NGOs and journalists on the "Role of Media in Civil Society and Relationship with NGOs". Recognising that the media is one of the pillars in a democratic society, the workshop focused on the freedom of the press in Cambodia, the responsibilities of the press, and the relationship between the media and NGOs. The invited speakers were Mr. Thun Saray, President of the human rights group ADHOC, Ms. Tyve Sarayeth, Co-Director of Women's Media

Center (WMC), Mr. Om Chandara, General Secretary of the League of Cambodian Journalists, and Mr. That Ly Hok, Co-Director of Khmer Journalist Association.

Elections. The beginning of 1998 saw the country gearing up for national elections in the midst of political uncertainty. The two main election watchdog groups, COMFREL and COFFEL, kept the Civil Society Working Group informed on developments related to voter education and election monitoring. There were reports on the evolving human rights situation and lively discussion as to whether the elections would be free and fair. Mr. Kao Kim Hourn, Director of the Cambodian Institute for Cooperation and Peace, gave an analysis of the post-election situation. Through these discussions, group members broadened their understanding of the meaning of democracy and the role of NGOs in ensuring that the rights and responsibilities of civil society are fulfilled.

Peace and Non-Violence. As the elections approached, many NGOs began to discuss the need to protect Cambodia's fragile peace. The NGO Forum joined with other NGO coalitions, monks and peace activists in a "Cooperation for Peace and Non-Violence." The Forum helped organise a workshop on May 28-29 which developed short-term and long-term plans for peace building. The workshop led to peace activities in 15 provinces in the month before the election, held in parallel with the annual Dhammayietra peace march led by the Ven. Maha Ghosananda.

Draft NGO Law. The Civil Society Working Group also participated in a round of meetings to discuss the draft NGO law. As some of the provisions are inimical to the work of local groups, the group tried to suggest counter proposals which would maintain the integrity of their work without excessive government control and interference.

Leadership. After the elections, Mr. Koul Panha, the Director of COMFREL and convenor of the Civil Society Working Group, went to the Netherlands for further study, leaving behind a leadership vacuum. For a few months, attendance at the monthly working group meetings dwindled and some of the plans remained unimplemented. Finally, the group decided that they should continue meeting and select new leaders. In December, Mr. Khoun Bunny from the local NGO, Sor Sor Trung, became the group convenor and Mr. Phan Sothea from the local NGO, Urban Sector Group, became the alternate convenor. The group's new leadership brings with it a new commitment to involve NGO workers from the provinces in the activities of the working group.

DEVELOPMENT ISSUES PROJECT

In 1998, the NGO Forum continued to host a Study Group on the Asia Development Bank and to promote discussion on the World Bank and structural adjustment issues. While NGOs wish to influence the big players in the development field, we also see the need to first clarify our own values and methods of contributing to development. This is all the more important considering that NGOs are a relatively new phenomenon in Cambodian civil society. For these reasons, in 1998, the NGO Forum decided to host a Discussion Group on Development Issues.

In addition to facilitating a number NGO groups meeting on development issues, NGO Forum staff, in particular the Representative, meet with a continual stream of funding agencies, international NGOs, development agencies, consultants and representatives of bi-lateral and multi-lateral agencies who come to the NGO Forum seeking NGO perspectives. NGO Forum staff frequently refer visitors to other NGOs implementing programmes in the sought-after subject area.

Discussion Group on Development Issues

The Discussion Group on Development Issues first met in June 1998 upon the initiative of its convenor, Mr. Toni Vendramin, Representative and Director of New Humanity. Originally called *Group on Development Assistance*, it was formed to provide a venue for NGOs to take a critical look at the models and concepts of "development" and to examine the roles that NGOs play in the "development process." The hope was for NGOs to contribute to this debate by reflecting on their own experiences and by contributing to the research done by others.

As a discussion and reflection group, critical questions -- such as the impact of development on the lives of Cambodian people and whether development is perpetuating dependency instead of promoting sustainability -- were discussed.

Sustaining interest. How to sustain the interest of participants was a critical question that confronted the group. Towards the end of the year, attendance to the monthly meetings became inconsistent, resulting in the cancellation of a few scheduled sessions. As some have mistakenly thought that the group existed to help NGOs access funding, the group in November decided to change its name to *Discussion Group on Development Issues* to prevent any further misunderstanding on the nature and function of the group.

Values. The group capped the year discussing values that are most important to the participants' respective organizations. Voluntarism, self-reliance, participation, honesty, sustainability, partnership, non-violence, respect, courage, justice, solidarity, morality, peace, cooperation, development, and democracy were among those mentioned -- values that would sustain and carry them through another year.

Study Group on the ADB

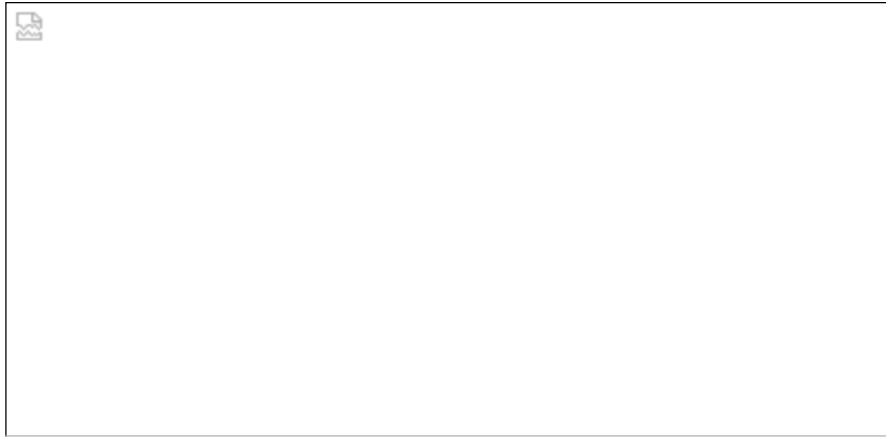
The Study Group on the ADB aims to build the awareness of NGOs of the work of the Asia Development Bank and the need for public participation in the decisions of the Bank. In 1998, the group produced two small Khmer-language newsletters and conducted two seminars involving NGOs, government officials and ADB staff and consultants. The first seminar focussed on the role of the ADB and on NGO concerns regarding the need for careful consideration of projects before incurring debts through the provision of loans. Mr Sous Someth, ADB head of mission, gave the opening address. The second workshop focussed on the need for public participation in project formulation. Deputy Directors of Department from the Ministries of Women's Affairs, Industry Mines and Energy, and Public Works and Transport all spoke on ADB-funded projects in their respective ministries. NGO speakers, Ken Fernandes and Robert Deutsch, spoke on the need for public participation in projects, with reference to experiences both in Cambodia and abroad.

World Bank Issues

In June 1998, two Cambodian women were sent to a meeting of the regional Working Group on the World Bank in Bangkok. On return, the two representatives produced a report and addressed a well-attended members meeting of the NGO Forum. There are plans for continued contact with the regional working group. In addition, NGO Forum's new Deputy Representative was sent on a training programme in multi-lateral development bank advocacy in the Philippines and a conference on upscaling and mainstreaming the participation of primary stakeholders in Washington.

Throughout 1997 and 1998, NGOs in Cambodia held a number of discussions on the idea of joining the worldwide "SAPRI", a process of consultation between NGOs, the World Bank and government on issues of structural adjustment. A core group of Cambodian NGOs expressed interest in the idea and a workshop on SAPRI in February 1998 was well attended. However, the disruption following the factional fighting in July 1997 and the pre-occupation with election monitoring and peace activities in 1998 resulted in insufficient momentum for the plans to progress.

There are now plans afoot to combine into one working group issues related to structural adjustment, the World Bank, IMF and ADB. With the likely return, in 1999, of balance of payments support tied to macro-economic and sectoral conditions, it may be the right time to step up NGO involvement in these issues. Also in 1999, the resumption of World Bank-facilitated Consultative Group donors meetings will require increased NGO involvement and participation.



ENVIRONMENT WORKING GROUP

Environment has always been high on the agenda of the NGO Forum although the working group was only formed in July 1995 following the recommendation of that year's Annual General Meeting. Prior to that, the NGO Forum was involved in a campaign led by Japanese NGOs to stop the export of hazardous pesticides to Cambodia. While opening up the country after the 1993 elections ended its international isolation, it also made Cambodia vulnerable to groups and businesses determined to reap quick profits by exploiting its abundant natural resources.

Mekong basin development, forestry and pesticides are the three major issues identified for advocacy. At present, the Environment Working Group's primary areas for intervention are information dissemination and networking. Mr. Mak Sithirith was recruited in August to be the Environment Network Coordinator, a position that encompasses the full range of environment issues of concern to the Environment Working Group. He works closely with the convenor, Ms. Ouch Phoumy of Oxfam GB.

Information sharing and training. Throughout 1998, the Environment Working Group met monthly for discussion and debate, and to hear presentations from a range of environmental experts and practitioners. Topics included monk non-formal environment education, Tonle Sap development, forestry law enforcement, community forestry and hydro-power development. In September, two Cambodians were sent on an environment study tour in Thailand.

Participation in project reviews. Development agencies are increasingly coming to the NGO Forum to request NGO feedback on development plans affecting the environment. In 1998, the Environment Working Group organised NGO participation in reviews and consultations with the regional Mekong River Commission, the Cambodian National Mekong Commission, World Bank-funded consultancies on Cambodia's forestry policy and the ADB Greater Mekong Sub-region environment technical assistance programme. NGO Forum staff had additional discussions with a number of project consultants who visited the NGO Forum office over the course of the year.

Panel Discussion. In the run-up to the 1998 elections, 22 political parties gathered in front of a live audience of 220 people in a panel discussion to answer questions regarding their environmental policies. The full programme was broadcast on national television and radio. This was the Environment Working Group's major seminar for the year.

Damming the Mekong. In the light of government and donor intentions to build dams along the Mekong River and its tributaries, the question must be asked, will they be truly beneficial to the people? This is the question that begs a clear answer for NGOs and communities concerned about probable adverse effects. The Environment Working Group has coordinated discussions between NGOs and agencies working in Kompong Speu province in the vicinity of the proposed Prek Thnaot dam.

The group is urging the government and donors to subject every dam project to a thorough

environmental impact assessment (EIA) that would encourage the participation of affected communities in the process of decision making. Questions to do with relocation, compensation, fish migration, and upstream and downstream environmental effects need to be properly answered.

Forestry. NGOs agree with international donors that Cambodia's natural resources need to be better managed and that revenues need to be directed to the national budget. However, NGOs bring an additional perspective, focussed on the need to preserve the food security and livelihoods of subsistence-based communities. NGOs in Cambodia have been spearheading support for community forestry. Local participation in the management of forests is seen as a way to ensure local subsistence needs as well as foster better forest management.

In mid-1998, the NGO Forum distributed Khmer-language translations of an influential study on the illegal logging situation. World Bank and NGO assessments indicate that, at current rates of extraction, Cambodia will be devoid of commercially-valuable timber within five years. Illegal logging, often perpetrated by the military, is also occurring in areas designated as national parks and wildlife zones. The privatisation of Cambodia's forest has led to reduced community access to forest resources essential to subsistence survival.

In 1998, a World Bank funded study recommended an expensive new military regiment for the surveillance and apprehension of illegal loggers. After some discussion, the Environment Working Group decided to oppose this recommendation on the grounds that the potential for armed conflict would be a risk to local communities and would be contrary to demobilisation and weapons reduction efforts. A number of letters were written, and a working group delegation met with both Department of Forestry officials and senior World Bank forestry advisers. The World Bank is now exploring other options in discussion with government and community groups.

Pesticides. A Sub-Working Group on Pesticides composed of 12 NGOs led by CEDAC was formed in December. The group's task is to carry out plans to gather all available information on pesticides, prepare an inventory of harmful pesticides in use in Cambodia, and campaign for an end to the use of such pesticides.

Toxic Waste. A recent controversial issue that again brought international attention to Cambodia was the discovery of toxic waste dumping in Sihanoukville by Formosa Plastics, a company based in Taiwan. Representatives of the EWG conducted a preliminary study on the social impact of this dumping in the affected communities. Two task forces were formed -- one in Phnom Penh and another in Sihanoukville -- to focus and coordinate efforts to address this issue.

WOMEN WORKING GROUP

There is a belief that Khmer women are mere followers and not leaders. But ten women, and the organisations they represent, belie this myth. They are Heng Sovuthy (CWCD), Aing Cham Roeun (NAPA), Koy Veth (KWVC), Soeung Ly Pao (CWCC), Youk Kalyann (PADV), Chhoeung Sunlay, (CWDA), Kien Sereyphal (CWDA), Tep Savery (MKD), Ek Praney (Oxfam HK), and Ros Sopheap (GAD). They spearheaded the formation of the Women Working Group in 1997 in response to the need to educate, support, train and disseminate information to promote women's self-confidence and skills. They realised that Khmer women's potentials are often not developed to the fullest due to the many obstacles that Cambodian society imposes on their gender. Through group discussions, training sessions, and various activities held each month for Cambodian NGOs, the group has been trying to do its share in developing Cambodian women.

Domestic Violence. In January 1998, members of the Women Working Group and other women's organisations met with the co-Minister of Interior to present a statement on the need for more decisive action from local authorities in support of the victims of domestic violence. Efforts were made to encourage the passage of a new law on domestic violence through the Council of Ministers for adoption in the National Assembly. The Ministries of Women's Affairs, Education, Religion and Justice were all targeted as having a role in educating the public and reducing the incidence of domestic violence.

Gender and Development. The Working Group discussed the disparity between women and men in education, employment, and decision-making powers in the family. In Cambodia, this disparity makes women more vulnerable to domestic violence and AIDS contamination. It also causes particular difficulties for physically disabled women. Two members of the group, one woman and one man, participated in the Diakonia partners' conference on gender and development in March.

Panel Discussion. The Women's Working Group was one of the Forum's most active groups that got into the thick of election fever. It organised a Panel Discussion on Women's Issues where 25 political parties vying for votes participated and presented their policies concerning women. The group published these different policies in a booklet that they distributed to seminar participants, local authorities, local and international NGOs and community groups. The panel discussion was broadcast on national television and radio in the week prior to the election.

Women's Day 1998. "A Nation's Culture is Revealed by Women" was the theme when the group celebrated the 85th anniversary of International Women's Day on March 8, 1998. Together with the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the group disseminated information on women's rights in high schools in Phnom Penh and Kandal province. Women, it appears, could provide the impetus to change the prevailing culture of violence in Cambodia.

Study Tour. Ms. Ek Sophanna, the NGO Forum's voluble Administrator, spent a month long study tour in the US where she was exposed to the various women's issues in a developed country, while at the same time building awareness of Cambodia among American women's groups. She brought back with her a richer understanding of how women's issues can be addressed and a list of contacts with many American women's organisations and networks involved in a wide range of concerns – from domestic violence to politics.

Future Directions. In 1999, the Women Working Group plans to hold a series of Advocacy Skills Training workshops for women's organisations, with assistance from NGO Forum's new Advocacy Skills Trainer. Domestic violence, HIV/AIDS, and International Women's Day activities will continue to be high on the working group agenda.

FINANCIAL STATEMENT FOR 1997

	Note	1998 US\$	1997 US\$
Sources:			
Opening ballances:		670	811
Cash in hand	3	67,549	84,762
Cash at bank		68,219	85,573
Receipts for the year:			
Grant for specific projects	4	74,265	27,827
Grants for 1998-1999 action plan	5	132,718	29,297
Membership subscriptions	6	6,590	4,295
Other income	7	581	931
		214,154	62,350
		282,373	147,923

Application:

Core costs	8	60,465	39,976
Environment project expense	9	15,524	6,314
-EIA Consultancy costs		-	7,260
Landmines project expense	10	9,560	21,914
Civil society project expense	11	5,243	2,400
Development assistance project expense	12	3,134	1,409
Advocacy skills training project expense	13	14,948	-
Women's issues project expense	14	7,910	431
Cambodia information project expense	15	27,817	-
Other expense		515	-
		145,116	79,704
Closing balances:			
Advance account		250	-
Cash in hand		1,351	670
Cash at banks	16	135,656	67,549
		137,257	68,219
		282,373	147,923



NGO FORUM MEMBERS AND SUPPORTERS IN 1998

Full Member Organisations

Agir pour les Femmes en Situation Precaire
 American Friends Service Committee
 Association Amipaix-Deca
 Association of Protection Development for Cambodia Environment
 Australian Catholic Relief
 Buddhism Development and Supporting Environment
 Cambodia Canada Development Programme
 Cambodia Women Culture Development
 Cambodian Association for Rural Development and Health
 Cambodian Health Education Development
 Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association
 Cambodian Women's Development Association
 Catholic Relief Services
 Christian Outreach
 Church World Service
 Community Aid Abroad
 Concern Worldwide

Cooperation Int'l pour le Development et la Solidarite
Culture and Environment Preservation Association
Farmers Association Kampong Speu province
Forum Syd
Health Unlimited
HEKS- Swiss Interchurch Aid
HelpAge International
Indra Devi Association
International Women's Development Agency
Japan International Volunteer Centre
Jesuit Service Cambodia
Khemara
Khmer Development and Friendship Association
Khmer Rural Development Association
Khmer Women's Voice Centre
Legal Aid of Cambodia
Lutheran World Service, Cambodia Programme
Maryknoll - Cambodia
Mennonite Central Committee
Mines Advisory Group
Mlup Baitong
Nation Prosperity Association
New Humanity
Overseas Service Bureau-Australia
Oxfam Great Britian
Partnership for Development in Kampuchea
Private Agencies Collaborating Together
Quaker Service Australia
REDD BARNA - Cambodia
Save the Children - Australia
Save the Children Fund (UK) Cambodia
Socio-Economic Development Organisation of Cambodia
Sor Sor Troung
Support Association of Khmer Teachers Families
Urban Poor Women Development
Urban Sector Group
Vicheasthan Bandosbondal Neakropkrong Kangea Aphivath
Women's Media Center of Cambodia
World Vision International - Cambodia

Associate Members [\[Top\]](#)

DanChurchAid
Don Bosco Foundation of Cambodia
U.N. World Food Programme
Istituto per la Cooperazione allo Sviluppo

Voluntary Service Overseas



Supporters in 1998

Netherlands Organisation for International Development Cooperation (NOVIB)

DanChurchAid

Oxfam Great Britain

Bread for the World

Asia Foundation

Oxfam America

Christian Aid

Diakonia

Interchurch Aid for Development Cooperation (ICCO)

Bilance

Misereor

Redd Barna

Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund (SCIAF)

American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)

Japanese International Volunteer Center (JVC)

Catholic Fund for Overseas Development (CAFOD)

Norwegian People's Aid

Friedrich-Naumann Foundation

Mennonite Central Committee

Lutheran World Service

Cooperation International pour le Developpement et Solidarite (CIDSE)

Cambodia Canada Development Programme (CCDP)

