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The NGO Forum on Cambodia

Working Together for Positive Change

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The NGO Forum on Cambodia

Triennial Report 2006-2008



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The NGO Forum on Cambodia - Triennial Report 2006-2008

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The NGO Forum on Cambodia

Working Together for Positive Change



Vision

Cambodia will have a well-informed and empowered population participating in a strong and vibrant civil society, to the benefit of poor and vulnerable people in Cambodia.

Mission

The NGO Forum is made up of local and international non-governmental organisations grounded in their experience of humanitarian and development assistance to Cambodia. NGO Forum exists for information sharing, debate and advocacy on priority issues affecting Cambodia's development. NGO Forum has an important role to highlight the impact of development processes and economic, social and political changes on Cambodians.

Values

The NGO Forum believes in working together for:

- Economic and social justice
- Respect for human rights & democracy
- Gender equality
- Peace and non-violence
- Sustainable use of natural resources
- Respect for cultural diversity and
- Development with equity



Ms. Thip Yao, representative of Indigenous Rights Active Members, addressing political party representatives at a political debate organised in June 2008 by the NGO Forum on Cambodia.

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Introduction

Message from the Executive Director

It is my great honour to introduce the NGO Forum's Triennial Report for the period of 2006 to 2008, which presents our accomplishments, challenges and lessons of the past three years. The period of this report marks an important milestone in the history of the NGO Forum—the successful culmination of a localisation process that began more than five years ago, and was made possible by the support provided by Mr. Russell Peterson, the former NGO Forum Representative, as well as our members and staff.

The past three years have been a period of significant growth for the NGO Forum. We have broadened our activities to respond to emerging advocacy needs arising from conflicts over land tenure, forced resettlement and hydropower development, and from the need for transparent accounting of revenues from natural resource exploitation and aid allocation. To accommodate this growth in programming, we have doubled our staff and our annual budget. Notwithstanding the challenges associated with such growth, the NGO Forum has maintained a high level of respect among its members and partners, as well as government officials and international donors.

Among the achievements and lessons highlighted in this report are our experiences in promoting better awareness and knowledge of national budget planning and implementation; the lessons of advocating for more informed energy policy planning, especially in relation to hydropower development; and achievements in influencing government and donors to re-evaluate compensation for communities affected by infrastructure development projects.

The NGO Forum believes its role to be one of coordination and facilitation—to support information sharing and networking among

civil society organisations in order to bring the concerns of Cambodia's vulnerable and marginalised citizens to national-level decision makers. Our advocacy work is not about countering government and donor policies; it is about soliciting government and donor support on issues that civil society organisations cannot solve by themselves. We thank government leaders and international donors for their cooperation.

Over the course of 2008, the NGO Forum carried out a number of consultations with members, network participants, staff and donors to identify focus areas for the 2009-2011 Action Plan.

We also commissioned an external evaluation, which contributed to internal reflections on ways to strengthen NGO Forum's networking and advocacy efforts. The outcomes of our collective reflections have been incorporated into the recently finalised 2009-2011 Action Plan.

I would like to express my great appreciation to the Management Committee, staff members and volunteers who committed their time and effort to support the NGO Forum. Our collective achievements would not be possible without the constant support of our donor partners. We hope their commitment, support and cooperation will continue over the next three years and beyond, so that we may achieve our vision of a Cambodia in which a well-informed and empowered population participates in a strong and vibrant civil society.




Chhith Sam Ath, Executive Director

Message from the Management Committee Chair

Over the past three years the NGO Forum successfully completed its transition to a locally managed organisation. Careful planning and execution of the localisation process ensured a smooth transition, and contributed towards the NGO Forum's substantial growth during this time. The NGO Forum's new leadership has facilitated strong cooperation among NGO Forum members and partners in influencing government and donor policies to consider and respect the rights of poor and vulnerable individuals.

On behalf of the Management Committee, I am proud to see that the efforts undertaken by the NGO Forum over the past three years have made positive contributions towards economic and social justice in Cambodia, a better use of natural resources and fairer distribution of the benefits of progress. Advocacy work is challenging and slow, requiring not only technical knowledge, skills, time and resources, but also strong commitment and unwavering spirit.



NGO Forum's commitment to "practice what we preach," to be transparent, accountable, participatory, democratic and respectful of the rule of law, has earned us the respect of our many members, donors, lawmakers, government officials and the media. With their support, the NGO Forum has been able to work more effectively with government and donors to ensure that development policies and plans serve the needs of Cambodia's poor and vulnerable citizens.

NGO Forum's accomplishments of the past three years would not have been possible without the commitment, contributions and generous support of NGO Forum members, network and forum participants, donor partners and NGO Forum staff and volunteers. On behalf of my colleagues on the Management Committee, I extend our greatest appreciation to all contributors and supporters, and I affirm our renewed commitment to support the NGO Forum in the implementation of the 2009-2011 Action Plan.



**Kem Sambaddh,
Management Committee Chair**

Management Committee Members in 2006-2008

In service as of October 2008

Ms. Ith Pov	Forum Syd (Treasurer)
Mr. Kann Kall	Save the Children Norway
Mr. Kem Sambaddh	Lutheran World Federation (Chair)
Mr. Khim Channy	Oxfam Australia
Mr. Latt Ky	Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association
Mr. Mak Sithirith	Fisheries Action Coalition Team
Ms. Matharu Esther	Christian Reform World Relief Committee

Completed service prior to October 2008

Mr. Kim Sereikith	Development and Partnership in Action
Mr. Lim Phai	Urban Sector Group (Chair)
Ms. Mey Saramy	CARE International (Treasurer)
Ms. Ros Sopheap	Gender and Development
Mr. Song Kong Sith	World Vision
Mr. Tep Bunnarith	Culture and Environment Preservation Association



Our Focus

Cambodia's development challenges

Over the past fifteen years Cambodia has made major strides in rebuilding its political, economic and social infrastructure as well as its human capital. These gains notwithstanding, Cambodia remains one of the poorest countries in the region, with an estimated 30 percent of citizens living below the poverty line, 90 percent of them in rural areas. While the economy has grown at an average rate of 10 percent per annum over the past five years, the benefits of Cambodia's recent growth have not been shared equitably. Poor people are losing access to land and natural resources, while land ownership and wealth from natural resource exploitation concentrate in the hands of powerful elites.

Development Policies and Practices

Since the early 1990s, Cambodia has become highly dependent on international aid and concessional loans, and the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and the International Monetary Fund play a major role in shaping and creating the Royal Government of Cambodia's (RGC) development policies. As

the debt repayment burden on loans from international financial institutions will be born by Cambodia's future generations, it is imperative that loan funds are used efficiently and effectively. To this end, the RGC needs to embrace development policies that provide benefits to all, and to ensure that such policies are properly implemented.

Due to the large number of non-governmental organisations working in social and economic development in Cambodia, there are many NGO sectoral groups that aim to represent civil society views on health, education, natural resource management and human rights. These sectoral groups need to be able to speak with one voice in multi-sectoral development dialogues if they are to influence government and development partners' policies and practices so they serve the interests of poor and vulnerable individuals. Providing multi-sectoral input to the monitoring of the National Strategic Development Plan, the annual Cambodia Development Cooperation Forum and the monitoring of Joint Monitoring Indicators requires a highly coordinated approach, backed by data collection and analysis as well as capacity building support.

Environmental Concerns

Cambodia's natural environment has been negatively affected by recent economic development policies, which have focused on exploiting Cambodia's natural resources such as timber, minerals and fishery stocks, and converted many of Cambodia's forests into agribusiness enterprises. Deforestation causes serious problems



NGO Forum supporting anti-corruption and good governance advocacy efforts.



with land erosion and leads to loss of biodiversity. It reduces the ground's water retention capacity, making the lowlands more prone to flooding and sloped areas prone to landslides.

Regional growth in the demand for electricity has led to the development of hydropower dams in Cambodia and neighbouring countries. The area most affected by hydropower development so far is the Mekong River basin, which has experienced irregular fluctuations in water flow, water quality problems and loss of fish stocks due to damming of Mekong River tributaries in Vietnam and Laos. To meet its electricity demands, Cambodia is also planning to develop coal-fired power plants with outdated technologies.

The natural environment is also challenged by poor management of industrial waste and poor emissions controls. Although Cambodia is a signatory to the Stockholm Convention, banned pesticides including Persistent Organic Pollutants are still widely used in agriculture. Awareness of environmental issues is fairly limited among decision makers and the general population, resulting in poor enforcement of existing environmental laws and regulations. For example, Environmental Impact Assessments on proposed investment projects are usually not carried out as required by law.

Land and Livelihoods

Agriculture employs 60 percent of the total labour force and contributes to 33 percent of the GNP, which makes land one of the most important resources in Cambodia. The strengthening of the agriculture sector (within which land reform is pursued) is one of the four priority areas in the government's National Strategic Development Plan. Unfortunately, government efforts to reduce poverty through land reform have resulted in uneven distribution of benefits, discriminating against the poor and other disadvantaged groups, especially women and indigenous minorities. Lack of awareness of people's land rights has led to many cases of land grabbing by wealthy and powerful individuals. This has been especially the case in Cambodia's forested areas in the north and northeast, where large-scale economic land concessions have been awarded for agribusiness development, encroaching on the land and livelihood base managed traditionally by forest communities.



The past decade has also seen heavy investment by government and donors in infrastructure development. Unfortunately, the cost of improvements in Cambodia's infrastructure has been mostly born by poor communities living in informal settlements or without formal land titles. Many of these are being forcibly evicted and relocated to make way for new roads or urban 'development.'



Membership

Membership development

The NGO Forum on Cambodia is a membership organisation for local and international NGOs based in Cambodia. It exists for information sharing, debate and advocacy on priority issues affecting Cambodia's development.

Membership in the NGO Forum is open to all local and international non-governmental organisations that are committed to the NGO Forum's mission and vision. Member organisations must be not-for-profit and non-proselytising, and cannot be aligned with any political party. Member organisations should be committed to actively participate in the work of the NGO Forum, and be engaged in at least one of the working groups or networks facilitated by the NGO Forum. Members should also be willing to take a public stance on issues of public concern.

There are many benefits to becoming a member of the NGO Forum, including:

- Opportunity to join forces with other like-minded organisations to work towards common advocacy objectives;

- Participation in NGO Forum-sponsored functions, trainings and workshops;

- Access to publications, resources and educational materials produced by the NGO Forum; and

- Ability to vote on statements and positions taken by the NGO Forum.

At present the NGO Forum on Cambodia has 79 full members and two associate members, about ten more than three years ago. Of the 79 full members, 47 are local NGOs and 32 international NGOs. The NGO Forum is interested in broadening its membership base and welcomes enquiries from any organisations that may wish to learn about the benefits of NGO Forum membership.

Responding to members' concerns

An external evaluation of the 2006-2008 programme found the vast majority of NGO Forum members to be satisfied with the organisation's representational, information sharing and networking role. However, members recommended that the NGO Forum develop a membership directory to strengthen linkages among different member organisations, and improve the information dissemination function of the NGO Forum website. Also, members recommended that the NGO Forum engage more actively with some of its smaller and less active members, to strengthen their level of ownership, and to improve attendance and engagement in membership and network meetings.

Responding to the needs of a multi-faceted membership base is challenging, as different members have different needs and expectations of the NGO Forum. Some want the NGO Forum to play only a facilitative role, while others wish for the NGO Forum to take the lead in shaping advocacy strategies and in developing the advocacy capacity of the NGO sector, especially in the provinces. The NGO Forum is committed to ensuring that its members feel they are able to influence the NGO Forum's direction, as members give the NGO Forum its legitimacy and mandate. To this end, the NGO Forum will work over the coming year on strengthening links with various member organisations, developing a membership directory and improving the information dissemination function of the NGO Forum website.

Comments from members

Having once been a member of the NGO Forum's staff and now Country Representative of a member organisation, it is interesting for me to reflect on the importance of the NGO Forum to its members, and in particular to AFSC.

AFSC's program in Koh Kong is working with rural communities to improve livelihoods, protect the environment and solve conflicts over access to natural resources. There are three main ways that NGO Forum helps our program. Firstly, the NGO Forum provides excellent information and documentation on national policy developments and issues, in both Khmer and English – which help our staff better understand the policy and governance environment. Secondly, the NGO Forum's advocacy work helps build pressure for change at the national level. An example is advocacy on the impact of land concessions – which have robbed farmers of their land in our program area. And thirdly, the NGO Forum is partnering with us on issues that we cannot deal with alone. Most recently this has included cooperation on a study of, and advocacy on, the probable community and environmental impacts of a hydropower dam planned for Koh Kong.

With our busy program staff all located outside Phnom Penh, it has often been difficult for staff to attend meetings and contribute to discussions. We nevertheless greatly appreciate the essential role the NGO Forum plays in promoting discussion, debate and advocacy on priority issues affecting Cambodia's development.

Mr. Russell Peterson,
Country Representative,
American Friends Service Committee

The NGO Forum has been playing an active role in providing an umbrella for NGOs to come together and share experiences and information, and learn about advocacy. The Fisheries Action Coalition Team (FACT) has connected with the NGO Forum for its work in advocacy on fisheries and natural resource management in the Mekong basin and the Tonle Sap. Through the NGO Forum, our organisation is able to build connections with other NGOs who work on issues that fall outside of fisheries, but that are important and relevant to our own work. Thus, FACT is able to receive support for its advocacy efforts on fisheries issues from other NGOs – for instance, NGOs involved in the Rivers Coalition in Cambodia (RCC). This network focuses on hydropower development projects and the negative effects these can have on fisheries. Through the RCC, we are able to reinforce our own efforts by working and collaborating with NGOs from other fields.

Mr. Mak Sithirith, Executive Director,
Fisheries Action Coalition Team

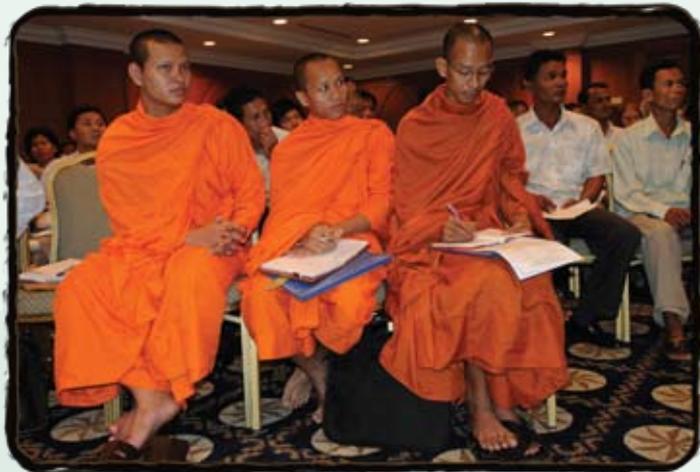
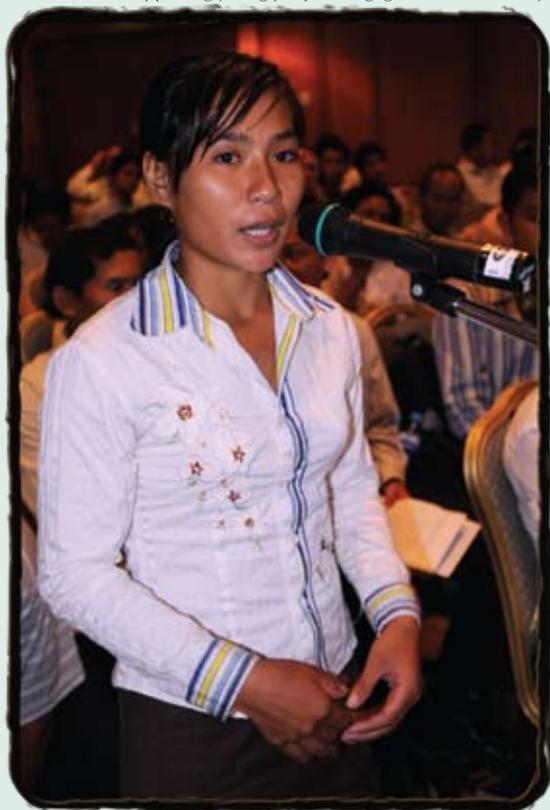
Open discussion at the Annual General Meeting, July 2008.



The NGO Forum on Cambodia has grown to be an active, relevant and constructive critical voice in the transformation and reform processes ongoing in Cambodia. Through the engagement of the NGO Forum, Cambodian civil society has been able to become an important progressive actor, broadening democratic practice and participation in the development of the country. Many organisations, informal networks and communities look to the NGO Forum as an opportunity to create strategic alliances in defence of basic rights and democratic participation.

Mr. Claudio Feo, Regional Representative,
Norwegian People's Aid

Supporting young people's engagement in advocacy.



The NGO Forum encourages engagement of the religious community.

Over the past three years the NGO Forum has collaborated strongly with its members and with other NGO networks to raise the voice of poor and vulnerable people, especially those who live in remote areas and slum communities. The NGO Forum has encouraged its members to work closely together to respond to critical, 'hot' issues, and it has strengthened communications between NGOs and the government, especially policy makers. This has helped improve our discussions and lobbying efforts.

Ms. Ros Sopheap, Executive Director,
Gender and Development for Cambodia

As 'development' in Cambodia has been largely unjust in recent years, the NGO Forum on Cambodia has helped member organisations identify priority development issues that need to be addressed. It is important to our organisation that some of these issues are focused primarily on the well-being of people at the bottom layer of society. The NGO Forum on Cambodia helps ensure that these issues remain on the national agenda.

Ms. Boua Chanthou, Director,
Partnership for Development in Kampuchea

Representation

Representing the views of the NGO community

One of the main roles of the NGO Forum is to represent the views of its members to government officials who are responsible for setting and implementing development policies, and to bilateral and multilateral donors who fund and monitor Cambodia's development programmes. In doing so, the NGO Forum aims to represent the needs and concerns of Cambodia's most vulnerable citizens—those whose homes, livelihoods, health and cultural heritage are threatened by negative impacts of unregulated development.

Over the past three years, the NGO Forum's Executive Director, Management Committee members and other senior staff have represented the NGO community's positions on development issues at high-level government and donor meetings such as the Cambodia Development Cooperation Forum, the Government Donor Coordination Committee and various sectoral Joint Technical Working Groups, which provide the mechanism for regular consultation, collaboration and cooperation among government, donor and civil society representatives. In their day to day policy advocacy efforts, the NGO Forum's Executive Director and other senior leaders

represented members' views to government officials, donors, members of the media and the general public by speaking in workshops, conferences, rallies and other public events, as well as on television and radio programmes.

NGO Forum's recent evaluation found that the vast majority of donors and government officials believe the NGO Forum to be an effective mechanism for representing the voice of the NGO community, one offering useful and relevant information to both donors and the government. The majority of donors also feel that the NGO Forum has positively influenced development policies and practices in Cambodia.

"The NGO Forum plays an extremely important role in monitoring the impact of 'development' on communities, monitoring the implementation of relevant laws and policies and informing discussions on development policies and strategies."

Office of the High Commissioner
for Human Rights, Cambodia



The Director of the NGO Forum (right) and the Director of the Economic Institute of Cambodia (left) discuss the impacts of inflation on the poor.



Publications

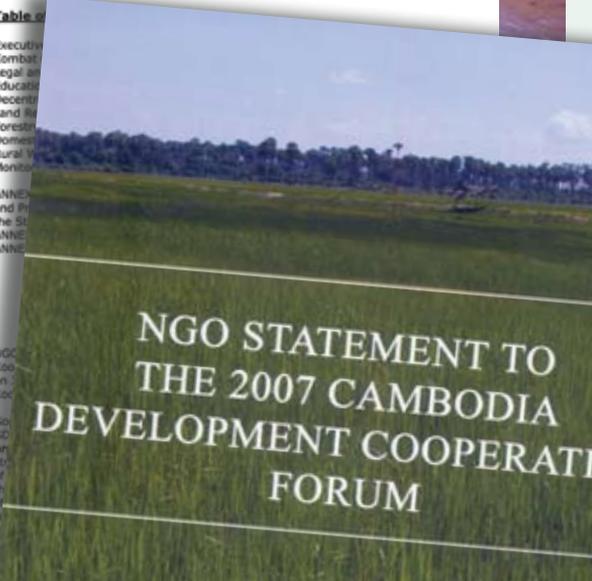
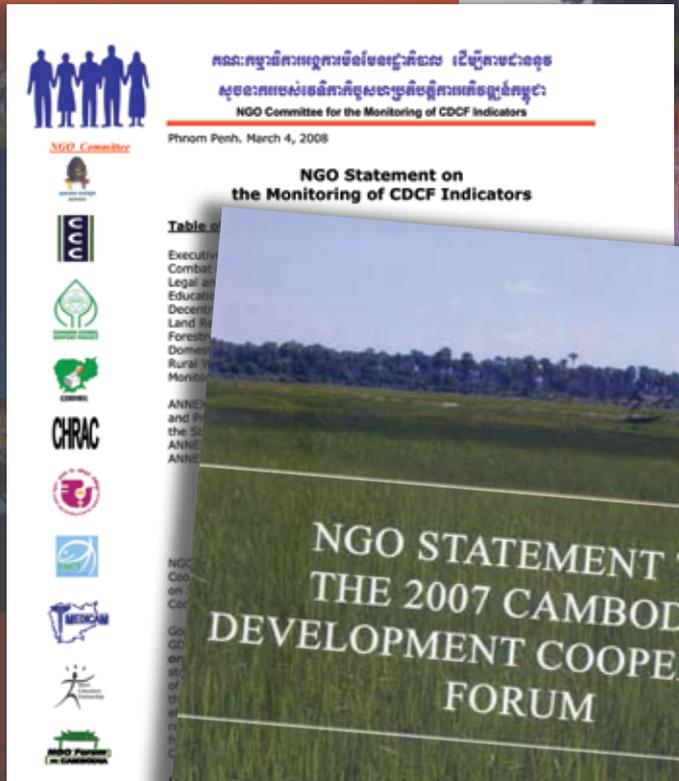
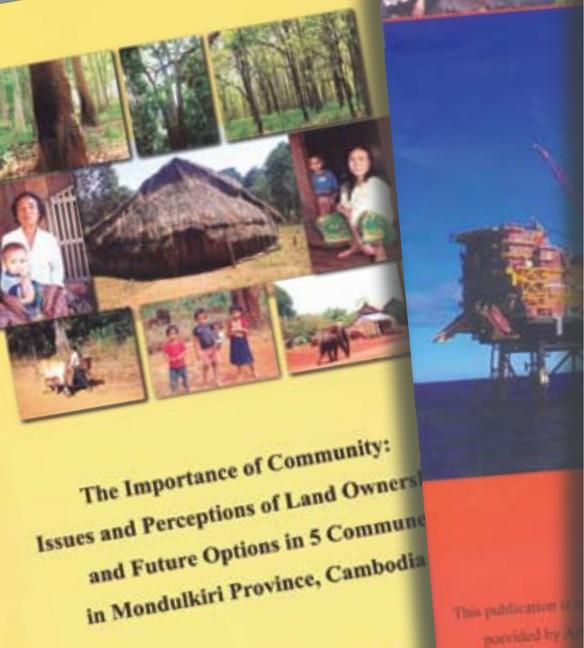
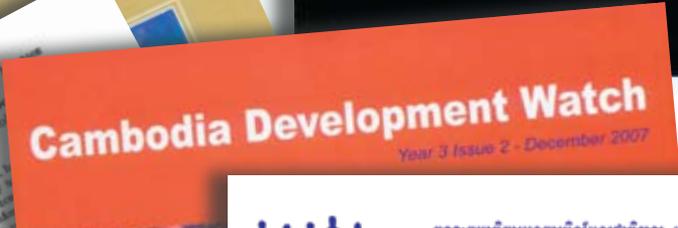
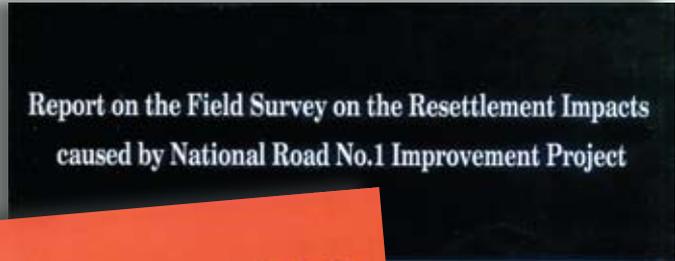
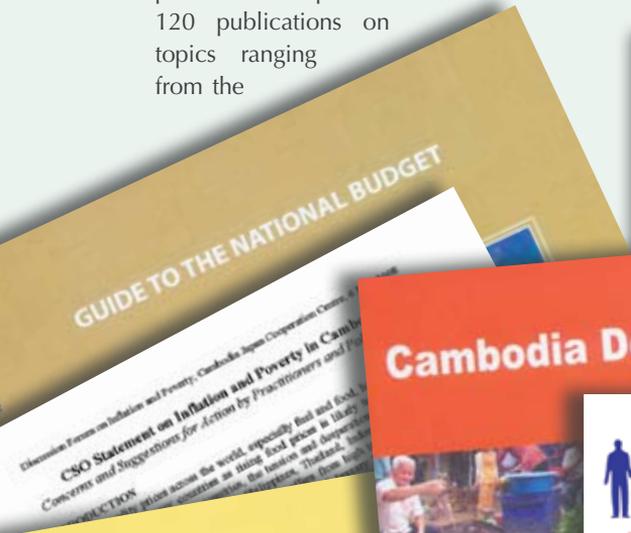
Sharing of information and resources

To support the information and advocacy needs of members and network partners, the NGO Forum produces a variety of periodicals, reports, brochures and posters on a range of development issues. In addition, NGO Forum staff searches through various media outlets for information on human rights, development and environmental issues, and distributes such information through members' listserves.

During 2006-2008, the NGO Forum produced or co-produced over 120 publications on topics ranging from the

national budget, resettlement issues, hydropower dams and the concerns of Cambodia's indigenous minority groups. The NGO Forum also coordinated the production of quarterly and annual NGO Statements and Position Papers for government-donor coordination meetings.

Most publications are available in Khmer and English. Hard copies can be obtained by contacting the NGO Forum, and many of the publications can also be downloaded from the NGO Forum website: www.ngoforum.org.kh.



Networking

The NGO Forum's facilitation role

The NGO Forum's mandate is to facilitate cooperation among non-governmental organisations and other civil society organisations (CSOs) on a range of critical development issues. To this end, the NGO Forum facilitates and supports ten different NGO/CSO networks and forums. Some of the networks and forums have been active for a long time, such as the Environment Forum, which has been operational for more than ten years. Others, like the Trade and Economic Development Network, are only a few years old. The size of each network varies by sector, as does the level of network formality. For example, the Land Action Network for Development and the Rivers Coalition in Cambodia have well-defined Terms of Reference, while other networks/forums are still quite informal.

The beginning of this reporting period coincided with the start-up of several new networks. Network development is a challenging and time consuming process, heavily dependent on mutual trust and understanding. Cognisant of the challenges involved in supporting the growth of multiple networks, the NGO Forum has continuously sought guidance on approaches to networking and network development. In late 2006, the NGO Forum commissioned a networking study, which recommended that the NGO Forum develop stronger networking links at the provincial level. Networking was also the focus of the NGO Forum's Mid-Term Evaluation, which was carried out in the second half of 2007. Reflections on these two studies as well as the recent Final Term Evaluation have led the NGO Forum to identify Network Development as a key focus area for the 2009-2011 Action Plan.

The NGO Forum would like to extend its appreciation for the collegiality, collaboration and commitment of the many organisations

(both member and non-member) who have actively participated in NGO Forum-supported networks and forums. We are also grateful to the many other NGO networks that have collaborated with the NGO Forum on multi-sectoral advocacy and other initiatives. In line with our mandate, we commit to strengthen our support to each network and forum so that it may grow in strength, capacity and level of ownership.

Networks & Forums Coordinated by the NGO Forum:

- Gender Forum (NGO/CSO network)
- Trade and Economic Development Network (NGO/CSO network)
- Environment Forum (NGO/CSO network)
- Pesticide Reduction Network in Cambodia (NGO/CSO network)
- Land Action Network for Development (NGO/CSO network)
- Resettlement Action Network (NGO/CSO network)
- Forestry and Plantations Network (NGO/CSO/CBO network)
- Indigenous Rights Active Members (network of indigenous people's representatives)
- Indigenous Minority Rights NGO Network (NGO/CSO network)

Also, the NGO Forum participates in and serves as the coordinator for the Rivers Coalition in Cambodia (NGO/CSO network), formerly known as the 3-S Working Group.

The NGO Forum welcomes enquiries from any organisations or groups interested in engaging with these networks/forums.



Featured networks

Indigenous Rights Active Members (IRAM)

The IRAM network comprises more than twenty community leaders from different indigenous communities across Cambodia. The network has its roots in a September 2004 national meeting on indigenous people's rights, which brought together over 70 indigenous people (IP) from different IP communities. The NGO Forum assists the network by supporting meetings of IP representatives regionally and nationally, and providing training and capacity building support.

NGO Forum's Mid-Term Evaluation, which focused on assessing the strengths of several NGO Forum-supported networks, found that IRAM had a very strong network culture and that its members were ready and eager to take on more responsibility for network functions. What makes for IRAM's strength and cohesion?

The answer lies in the value that IRAM members place on their membership. A discussion with IRAM members revealed unanimous agreement about the benefits that IRAM members derive from their participation. These include learning how to raise awareness about IP rights in their communities, having opportunities to voice the concerns of indigenous people to government authorities, and being able to promote awareness of IP issues in Cambodia in forums such as the UN Permanent Forum on Indigenous Issues. IRAM members appreciate the opportunity to meet with representatives of other IP communities in Cambodia, which strengthens their solidarity. "Even though we cannot be successful in all our efforts," noted one IRAM member, "we have achieved solidarity among IP groups."

Participation in the network helped IRAM members learn about their legal rights, and facilitated their contribution to discussions on the Sub-decree on the Procedures for Registration of Land of Indigenous Communities. "Our capacity

has increased as a result of our participation in the network and the support we have received from NGO Forum and other organisations," noted another IRAM member. "We can now speak on IP topics in government meetings and we can organise workshops on our own." Added another member: "We can talk to the government and the private companies about their abuse of our rights because we understand the issues. Before, our participation was just about listening, but now we speak out."

The network has grown in its strength within a relatively short period, no doubt in response to the serious nature of land and natural resource alienation in IP areas. Network members are eager to take on more responsibility. "We have strong solidarity," expressed one



IRAM member. "We are willing to work and devote our time to the cause. But we need more capacity in planning." Added another member: "We want to have a network secretariat with an office so we can handle our own activities and only receive small support from NGOs. Right now we implement activities that are proposed by the NGOs. In the future we want to have our own plans and propose these to donors to get their support. But most importantly, we want to continue to work in solidarity for the benefit of indigenous people across Cambodia."

Rivers Coalition in Cambodia (RCC)

The Rivers Coalition in Cambodia grew out of several years of efforts to bring together Cambodian and international NGOs to work on environmental and human rights issues related to hydropower development in Cambodia. Initially focused on hydropower dam projects on the Sesan River, and later on Srepok and Sekong Rivers, the coalition now focuses on hydropower development issues affecting all of Cambodia. The RCC is made up of eight core members (the NGO Forum among them), as well as eight supporting members. Many of the supporting members are internationally based and possess expertise in research and advocacy on hydropower development, environmental conservation, human rights and law. The RCC has clear Terms of Reference that outline the purpose of the network, the roles and responsibilities of individual members and the lines of decision-making and authority.

Unlike the other networks coordinated by the NGO Forum, the Rivers Coalition in Cambodia is an independent network in which the NGO Forum is a participating member. In addition to being an RCC member, the NGO Forum currently coordinates the RCC, having been requested to take on the coordination role by other RCC members in recognition of its experience in network development. "The RCC presents a good model for building consensus on specific issues," noted one RCC member, "and the NGO Forum plays an important role in ensuring that the RCC speaks with one voice."



Resettlement Action Network (RAN)

The Resettlement Action Network was established in 2002 to respond to the growing number of resettlement issues arising from Cambodia's rapid urban and infrastructure development. The network has nearly forty members, mostly Cambodian NGOs working on housing issues, urban planning and human rights.

Under leadership of the NGO Forum, RAN advocates with government agencies and donors for tenure security and appropriate resettlement policies for affected communities. RAN members work with communities to raise their awareness and knowledge of housing and land rights, and strengthen the capacity of informal community networks. To this end, RAN works closely with the Housing Rights Task Force (HRTF), a diverse group of community-based organisations united in their efforts to defend the housing rights of the urban poor in Phnom Penh and Sihanoukville. HRTF organises monthly Urban Poor Community Meetings, in which representatives from communities facing forced evictions come together to share latest information, raise issues and discuss possible courses of action. RAN participates in these meetings and provides suggestions on issues raised by community representatives. According to Ms. Bunn Rachana, HRTF's Project Officer, RAN has been very helpful to HRTF's efforts of supporting community networks in areas facing forced eviction. "HRTF has limited scope and reach," noted Ms. Bunn, "and sometimes we need support from partners like RAN. When there is an urgent problem, RAN always stands united with HRTF, especially in terms of information sharing, providing resources and joining intervention activities. In this way, RAN and HRTF are ideal partners in defending the rights of the urban poor."



Development Issues Programme

The Development Issues Programme (DIP) aims to engage the NGO sector in cooperative advocacy in order to influence government and donor policies and practices so they may benefit poor and vulnerable groups. The programme aims for a gender-sensitive and inclusive approach to development planning and implementation.

A displaced community member voices his opinions about land grabbing to political party representatives during an election debate in June 2008.



DIP included five initiatives in 2006-2008

Development Policy Project focused on multi-sectoral advocacy, primarily by coordinating the preparation and publication of annual *NGO Position Papers on Cambodia's Development*, quarterly *NGO Statements on the Monitoring of the Progress of the CG/CDCF* Joint Monitoring Indicators* and other NGO statements and reports, such as the *NGO response to the 2007 Annual Progress Report on the Implementation of the National Strategic Development Plan*.

Gender Project focused on promoting a gender sensitive approach in development policies and plans, especially in relation to economic rights. The Gender Project engaged gender focal points from local and international NGOs in raising awareness about gender mainstreaming issues and promoting gender equity in national policies as well as their own development activities. The project supported other NGO Forum initiatives in mainstreaming gender considerations into their own activities by providing training on gender awareness, women's leadership development and gender-focused advocacy.

Trade & Economic Development Project brought together NGOs and other civil society members to work on influencing trade and economic development policies so they may benefit poor and vulnerable groups. The project represented NGOs in the Technical Working Group on Private Sector Development and commissioned research on trade and economic development issues. Over the past two years, the project led NGO Forum's engagement in the establishment of the Cambodians for Resource

Revenue Transparency coalition, of which NGO Forum is a founding member. The project also led NGO Forum's efforts in raising awareness of the impacts of rising inflation on the poor, and the need for food security interventions and stronger investments in agriculture and rural development.

Budget Monitoring Project is one of the newest initiatives of the NGO Forum.

Established in late 2006, the project engaged NGOs and parliamentarians in analysing Cambodia's national budget in order to advocate for fairer allocation of government and donor resources to programmes that benefit poor and vulnerable individuals. The Budget Monitoring Project is one of the most recognised DIP initiatives and is highlighted in the feature on page 18.



Aid Effectiveness Project is the most recent DIP activity, designed with the purpose of engaging NGOs in advocating for aid effectiveness in Cambodia. It builds on past efforts of the Trade and Economic Development Project, which organised a national dialogue on aid effectiveness in preparation for the Regional Consultation on CSOs and Aid Effectiveness, which took place in Vietnam in October 2007. The Aid Effectiveness Project has developed a guide to development aid in Cambodia, and is preparing a strategy for engaging sectoral NGOs and other interested stakeholders in aid effectiveness advocacy efforts.

* Consultative Group/Cambodia Development Cooperation Forum



Programme features

Supporting Mainstreaming of Disability in Development Policies

People with disabilities are one of the most vulnerable groups in Cambodian society. They are frequently among the poorest citizens (who make up a third of Cambodia's population) and have very limited access to resources, basic social services, education, vocational training, job placement and income generation opportunities. Yet the disability sector has been largely absent from development policy planning.

"When we first met with the NGO Forum we found them to be very open and interested in Handicap International's work," recalled Lucile Papon, HI's Country Director in Cambodia. "They were very supportive of our goal to mainstream disability issues into national development policies, and used their influence with other sectoral groups to lobby for the inclusion of HI's paper in the NGO Monitoring

Statement on the NPRS. The NGO Forum staff was very helpful to us—they explained very clearly the complex process of providing input to the NPRS, and this became our entry point for engagement in policy development." Ms. Papon's sentiments are shared by Ken Ratha, HI's Project Manager for Mainstreaming Disability in Development Policies, who has welcomed the collaborative partnership that has developed



A disabled man takes a break from work on the Cambodia-Thailand border, where many people disabled by weapons of war struggle to make a living.

In 2006, the NGO Handicap International (HI) and five other local organisations, including disabled people's organisations, embarked on a project called "Making the Poverty Reduction Strategy (PRS) Inclusive." Engaging in advocacy on the PRS development and monitoring process was new territory for HI, and required the support of the NGO Forum—the focal point for civil society organisations who wish to inform the development and monitoring of the National Poverty Reduction Strategy (NPRS).

between the NGO Forum's Development Issues Programme and Handicap International. He hopes that HI's collaboration with the NGO Forum will lead to other organisations from the disability sector becoming involved in policy development efforts. While much remains to be done in mainstreaming disability issues in development planning and implementation, NGO Forum's collaboration with Handicap International has helped accomplish the first step in placing disability issues firmly on the development policy agenda.

Holding Development Partners Accountable for the Effectiveness of Aid

Historically, the actions of multilateral and bilateral donors in Cambodia have brought mixed results, marred by poor coordination, lack of respect for country ownership and expensive (and often ineffective) technical assistance. In response to the growing interest among donors to redress past problems, as articulated in the Paris Declaration, the NGO Forum and its partners have begun to engage Cambodia's donors in dialogue on aid effectiveness. In March 2007, the DIP's Trade and Economic Development Network organised the first CSO Forum on Aid in Cambodia, which invited various donors including DFID, the World Bank, JICA, USAID and the ADB to present their strategies and plans to civil society organisations. The Forum was thought to be highly effective and gave impetus for the establishment of the NGO Forum's newest project—the Aid Effectiveness Project (AFP).

The AFP has developed a guide to development aid in Cambodia, and is presently working on a strategy for engaging a wide range of civil society actors in advocacy on aid effectiveness. The AFP has also developed a position paper on harmonisation and aid effectiveness to be presented at the upcoming Cambodia Development Cooperation Forum. The main thrust of the position paper is that donors should not only support the government, but also strengthen the capacity of Cambodia's citizens to hold their government accountable



CSO Dialogue on Aid Effectiveness in Cambodia, 2007.

What is the Paris Declaration?

The Paris Declaration, endorsed in March 2005, is an international agreement to which over one hundred Ministers, Heads of Agencies and other Senior Officials committed their countries and organisations to continue to increase efforts in harmonisation, alignment and managing aid for results with a set of actions and indicators that can be tracked and monitored over time. Cambodia is a signatory to the Paris Declaration.

for aid results. The AFP has formulated the following recommendations for improving aid effectiveness in Cambodia. These were included in the *Reality of Aid Report 2008*, launched at the CSO Parallel Session of the High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness held in Ghana earlier this year.

AFP's recommendations for aid effectiveness:

1. Cambodia's Poverty Reduction Strategy must be realistic and measurable, so that government is able to track intermediate results towards long-term goals;
2. Citizens must be able to hold the government and donors to account for development results;
3. The government should be primarily accountable to its parliament and citizens, not the donor community;
4. Donors should act as facilitators of democratic governance systems in partner countries;
5. CSOs should be recognised as the government's key partners in policy processes; and
6. The government should be open to public participation and oversight.



Promoting Understanding of the National Budget

The Budget Monitoring Project (BMP) is indicative of the NGO Forum's growth over the past three years, having been identified by NGO Forum members as a new priority area. Initiated in late 2006, the BMP has become one of the most recognised and highly regarded DIP initiatives.

With technical assistance from the International Budget Project, the NGO Forum initiated the BMP by analysing the implementation of the 2007 national budget as well as the 2008 Budget Law, with focus on priority sectors such as agriculture, rural development, health and education. The analysis showed that the government was not prioritising budget allocations to sectors that were expected to contribute the most to poverty reduction. It also showed significant discrepancies between planned and actual spending, especially in line items dedicated to capital spending (investment and development programmes).



Member of parliament raising questions regarding the draft 2008 Budget Law.

parliamentarians in the review and approval of the draft Budget Law. The workshop was the first of its kind in Cambodia, engaging civil society members and lawmakers in the analysis of national budget allocations. The discussions were very constructive, as exemplified by the following comment from a Member of

Parliament: "This workshop will be echoed in the plenary sessions of the National Assembly and the Senate during the discussion of the 2008 Budget Law." Lawmakers also requested that similar workshops be organised in the future, and asked that they be scheduled with more time before

On the basis of the initial budget analysis, the BMP and the Economic Institute of Cambodia produced the *Guide to the National Budget*. The budget guide was disseminated widely to government agencies, civil society organisations, donors and academic institutions, and was so well received that the National Audit Authority requested permission to print 500 additional copies for its internal use.

The distribution of the budget guide was followed closely by a workshop on the results of the analysis of the draft 2008 Budget Law, which was organised for the specific purpose of assisting



the budget approval process, so that lawmakers can prepare for the budget plenary sessions. Unfortunately, the timing of future workshops will always be constrained by the actual release date of the draft budget law.

Although it is too soon to expect impact on national budget allocations, the project has contributed greatly to improved understanding of the national budget development and reconciliation process among government agencies and civil society organisations. This is evidenced by opposition party discourse on national budget allocations and spending during the 2008 election campaign, which was aired widely on television and radio during the one-month campaign period. It is also evidenced through greater engagement of individual ministries in the analysis of their spending patterns, and the fact that the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) has now set up a budget analysis unit in the Ministry of Economy and Finance.

The BMP will continue to analyse annual budget allocations and actual spending, and to provide technical support to parliamentarians in their own analysis of the national budget. The BMP will also advocate for the government's disclosure of capital expenditures (which go to infrastructure and social development programmes), information that is currently unavailable to the public. In addition, the NGO Forum will use its enhanced capacity in national budget analysis in its advocacy focus on transparency in accounting for revenues from oil, gas and mineral exploitation. The NGO Forum is one of five founding members of the recently established Cambodians for Resource Revenue Transparency (CRRT). The CRRT will encourage the Cambodian government to sign onto the Extractive Industry Transparency



Lawmakers at the National Stakeholders' Workshop on Pro-poorness of the Draft 2008 Budget Law.

Initiative, which seeks to create a voluntary multi-stakeholder coalition (government, private companies and civil society) to encourage disclosure of payments made by companies to the RGC as well as receipts on revenues received by the government from the extractive industries sector.

"The NGO Forum efforts at creating and disseminating information on the national budget are of very high quality and value for all. The NGO Forum positioning as a coordinating/advocacy group, with well thought-through (and not necessarily always radical) proposals is serving the NGO Forum and Cambodian citizens well."

World Bank



Environment Programme

The Environment Programme aims to engage the NGO sector in cooperative advocacy in order to influence government and donor policies and practices as well as community attitudes to ensure respect for the rights of poor and vulnerable groups who are affected by environmental issues.



The Environment Programme included three initiatives in 2006-2008

Environmental Awareness & Protection

Project (EAPP) has brought together NGOs and CSOs to work on conservation, protection and rehabilitation of natural resources and the environment. Working closely with the Environment Forum, the EAPP organised various awareness raising activities to promote knowledge and understanding of national, regional and international environmental issues. The EAPP also supported training workshops on environmental concepts and advocacy, and carried out field surveys and investigations on how development processes impact on local ecosystems and traditional livelihoods. A strong advocacy focus of the EAPP has been the Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) process and EIA guidelines, which are presently being finalised by the Ministry of Environment.

Mekong Basin Community Rights

Project (MBCRP) has focused its efforts on addressing the environmental, economic, social and cultural impacts of current and future water development projects in the Mekong basin, especially along the Sesan, Srepok and Sekong Rivers. Working mainly through the Rivers Coalition in Cambodia, the MBCRP has monitored compliance with national and regional (Greater Mekong Region) agreements and guidelines on water development projects, and lobbied relevant authorities to address unresolved negative impacts on communities and the environment. The project also worked on strengthening the capacity of affected

people's organisations to conduct needs assessments and to seek recourse from private companies and authorities.



Sharing information with farmers through the Agricultural Bulletin published by the NGO Forum.

Pesticide Reduction & Sustainable Agriculture

Project has brought together NGOs to raise awareness of pesticides and pesticide-related health and environment problems among those who work directly with farmers and pesticide sellers. Working through the Pesticide Reduction Network in Cambodia, the project has organised annual province-level workshops on pesticide awareness, developed and distributed educational materials, produced radio talk shows and collaborated closely with the National Integrated Pest Management Programme on a variety of pertinent initiatives. The project has advocated with the Ministries of Agriculture and Environment for the implementation of regulations on banned substances as outlined in the Stockholm Convention on Persistent Organic Pollutants, to which Cambodia is a signatory.



Programme features

Young People Set a Model for Democratic Discourse

Are economic land concessions and hydro-power development good for Cambodia? What is more important—development or conservation? Are public institutions more effective than local communities in managing and protecting natural resources? These and other thought-provoking questions have been debated by university students in televised Environment Debates since 2005. They have provided opportunities to students like Doung Chanthy, Heng Limheang, Lim Srey Sros and Chan Vanrorn (pictured on the next page from left to right) to analyse different issues of environmental protection and resource conservation, discourse on controversial topics and share their knowledge and ideas with friends, families and television viewers nationwide.

The idea of the Environment Debates originated with the Environment Forum members, who saw it as an opportunity to engage young people in analysing the environmental and social impacts of development. The NGO Forum sought partnership with the Ministry of Environment (MoE) to organise such debates, but there was reluctance at first to embark on such partnership due to concerns that the debates may result in televised criticisms of government policies, especially in relation to hydropower development.

Three years onwards the Environment Debates have set a standard for respectful, democratic discourse on critical issues facing Cambodia, so much so that others have used the model to organise similar debates on other issues of concern. The Prime Minister has referred to them as an example to be followed by political party candidates in the run-up to the 2007 Commune Council elections.

For Srey Sros, Vanrorn, Chanthy and Limheang, the debates have provided opportunities to learn about current issues facing Cambodia with the guidance of MoE and NGO Forum experts, to hone their research, analysis and debating skills, and to share their ideas and knowledge with television viewers. Students in economics, law, tourism and English literature at prestigious universities such as the University of Cambodia (UC), the Royal University of Law and Economics (RULE) and Build Bright University (BBU), the young debaters got involved for various reasons. These included the desire to learn about the environment so they could serve their people and their country, and the opportunity to engage with senior government officials who would otherwise be out of reach to university students. “My friend had been in the debate in the past, and he told me about the benefits of learning about the environment and how one can help,” said Chanthy, tourism student at BBU. “As a student of tourism, I know that protecting the environment is important for my country. If we preserve Cambodia’s environment, this can mean future revenues from tourism.”

“In preparing for the debates, we developed more confidence in showing our ideas,” explained Limheang, law and English literature student at UC and RULE. “We also had to learn presentation and time management skills, with only four minutes to present our argument, and just one minute to ask questions of each other.”

Being assigned a ‘pro’ or ‘con’ position through a lottery system challenged to students to learn about the complexity of the issues they were debating, explained Srey Sros, law student at UC. “My topic was global warming, and I

had to debate against my personal opinion on this issue. But when you are forced to think about the other side it helps you learn about the complexity of the problem. You try to understand both the pros and the cons of the debate positions.”

in the Environment Debates become more involved in environmental issues. For example, the University of Cambodia now offers a course on the environment, which has drawn interest from UC students after the debates.



However, the students are also aware of the limits of televised debating. “Having a debate on television is not enough,” expressed Vanrorn. “We also need to go to local areas and speak to people directly about the law and the environment. Many people in rural areas do not have TV, and even if they do, they prefer to watch it for entertainment.” Srey Sros feels that the debates should also be open to students from the provinces, not just Phnom Penh. “In

All four students feel strongly that the experience has changed their outlook and personal stance on environmental issues. They are much more aware of the need to conserve water, protect forests and properly dispose of rubbish. “When people do not know about environmental issues, they feel it is not their problem,” explained Vanrorn, recent graduate of RULE and currently training as a Royal Professional Clerk. “When we learn about the environment, we realise it is our collective problem.”

Phnom Penh we have many opportunities to get involved in interesting activities, but in the provinces the opportunities are limited.”

The students agree that the debates have had an impact on people’s awareness and practices. “When people watch the debates they learn how to protect the environment,” noted Chanthly. “For example, the debates help them learn about the need to stop illegal fishing.” Also, students from universities that participate

The four debaters hope to stay involved in environmental protection activities. They want to do more research on environmental and social issues, teach others about the environment and even aspire to hold leadership positions in which they can make a difference. “There are many problems in Cambodia,” concluded Limheang. “We cannot solve all of them at once, but we can start by working on the most critical environmental issues.”



Shaping Hydropower Development Processes in the Lower Mekong Region

Since the early 2000s, members of the Rivers Coalition in Cambodia (RCC) have lobbied tirelessly with Cambodian and Vietnamese authorities and their donors to promote trans-boundary cooperation and investigate the impacts of Vietnam's hydropower dams on downstream reaches of the Sesan and Srepok Rivers. In 2005, following years of pressure exerted by civil society and donors, Environmental Impact Assessments (EIAs) of hydropower projects on the Srepok and Sesan Rivers were finally carried out. However, the EIA reports were not initially disclosed to the public.

In response to civil society pressure to release information on the EIAs, the first of the reports (on the Srepok EIA) was released in November 2006. With its release the Cambodian and Vietnamese authorities agreed to hold a stakeholder consultation with civil society and affected community members in January 2007. To prepare for the consultation, RCC organised meetings with community members to share the contents of the EIA and to prepare representatives

to voice their concerns at the consultation. The RCC and its international partners also carried out a technical review of the EIA, which was presented at the stakeholder consultation.

The consultation was a milestone in the history of advocacy efforts on hydropower development in Cambodia, as it marked the first time that affected community members were able to speak about the negative impacts of upstream dams with Vietnamese officials and the Srepok's dam developer, Electricity of Vietnam (EVN). The workshop resulted in many commitments by key players, including promises made by EVN's Vice President to find solutions, address damages and build a re-regulating dam to minimise hazardous flows. In addition, a commitment was made to hold a public review of the Sesan EIA.

Following the Srepok EIA consultation, the RCC sent numerous letters to all concerned parties requesting follow-up information, including the schedule for the workshop on the Sesan EIA. Unfortunately, the Sesan EIA workshop turned out differently than expected. The government did not invite affected community members, and the RCC received notice of the workshop just one week prior. Community leaders issued statements urging that the workshop be postponed, and when there was no response, the NGOs decided to boycott it.

In spite of the disappointment of the Sesan EIA workshop, the RCC recognises that progress has been made. After years of building dams without adequate impact assessments, donor and civil society pressure has encouraged Vietnamese and Cambodian governments to carry out EIAs on existing and planned hydropower projects. In the view of the RCC, the Srepok and Sesan EIA reports are important because they document and acknowledge the suffering experienced by downstream communities. In addition, the advocacy efforts of the RCC have helped rekindle political will to address the impacts of Vietnam's dams, as indicated by the recent renewal of bi-lateral discussions on hydropower development on Sesan and Srepok Rivers.



“Buddhism teaches us that one tree equals one life.” Thus explains Venerable Sear Pheara as to why he became involved in the Buddhist Association for Environment and Development (BAED), an association of Buddhist monks from StungTrang district of Kampong Cham province. Venerable Sear Pheara was schooled in the Buddhist tradition, which places great emphasis on protecting the natural environment. His education encouraged him to value the river and the forests that define his community.

BAED was established between 2002 and 2003 by a group of monks who were concerned about the rapid pace of deforestation in Kampong Cham province and beyond. The monks began organising tree planting activities and spreading information about the importance of conservation and environmental protection among community members. They also offered non-formal education classes in literacy and basic computer skills. Resources were scarce however, limited to the small contributions the association received from local authorities and private donors. Also, limited experience with environmental activism and the association’s relative isolation brought various challenges.

In 2006, BAED was invited to join the Environment Forum, and a year later the association joined the Rivers Coalition in Cambodia (RCC). Membership in the Environment Forum and the RCC brought new ideas and encouragement to the association. Network members visited BAED and provided ideas for ways to expand its environment programme beyond the core tree planting activities. “The support was immensely helpful,” noted Venerable Sear Pheara. “Our association may have closed down if it hadn’t been for the hope and support provided by network members.”

Sear Pheara feels that monks’ participation in environmental education and advocacy is very important. He believes that community members are more likely to listen to advice offered by monks than that provided by lay people (NGO workers), making environmental outreach more successful. Also, government officials are more likely to respond favourably to environmental protection initiatives if religious leaders are involved.



After more than five years, BAED’s work in environmental education is beginning to pay off. In the past, when the association organised tree planting activities, not many people joined in. But now there are so many individuals who want to help that sometimes BAED can’t utilise them all. Also, the monks used to do most of the organising for environmental education activities, but now villagers

are actively involved, especially women.

Venerable Sear Pheara appreciates the NGO Forum’s efforts in coordinating networks that help people with community experience connect with other organisations, and communicate with government leaders at the national level. “If it hadn’t been for the support provided by the Environment Forum and the RCC,” noted Sear Pheara, “our association would not have moved forward. I appreciate the knowledge and respectful attitude of the NGO Forum staff, and I hope that our association will continue to benefit from the support available through the networks.”

BAED is quite strong now, and has just moved its office from the district to the provincial capital. Whether small or large, the association will continue to move forward with its environmental education and activism work, assured of the support of the Environment Forum and the RCC.



Land and Livelihoods Programme

The Land and Livelihoods Programme (LLP) aims to engage the NGO sector in cooperative advocacy in order to influence government and donor policies and practices to ensure respect for the rights of poor and vulnerable groups who are affected by land issues.

The Honourable Katsuhiko Shinohara, Ambassador of Japan to Cambodia, consulting with affected villagers along National Road No. 1.



LLP included five initiatives in 2006-2008

Land Issues Project brought together organisations involved in the Land Action Network for Development (LAND) to monitor the government's Land Management and Administration Project and disseminate information about the land titling process and the role of cadastral commissions. Together with provincial LAND members, the project organised community forums to raise community members' understanding of the 2001 Land Law, and assisted with conflict resolution efforts, which included emergency assistance to land grab victims. The project has sought to influence public discourse on land reform and poverty reduction, and publicised land conflict issues through the media.

Resettlement & Housing Rights Project

focused its efforts on protecting the rights of people living in informal settlements and those affected by infrastructure development projects (such as road building). The project worked with NGOs engaged in the Resettlement Action Network to strengthen their capacity to lobby and advocate for tenure security and appropriate resettlement policies, increase affected community members' awareness and knowledge of their rights and strengthen the capacity of community/informal networks to advocate on their own behalf.

Forest Livelihoods & Plantations Project brought together NGOs and community-based organisations working on forest livelihood issues to support communities living in or near forest concession and plantation areas whose forest-based livelihoods have been affected by

agribusiness development projects. Working through the Forestry and Plantation Network, the project supported affected community representatives to prepare petitions and statements to government and aid agencies, helped raise awareness of the importance of sustainable natural resource management and linked local advocacy efforts to national and regional advocacy initiatives.

Indigenous Minority Rights Project

focused on strengthening the capacity of indigenous minority groups to advocate for their rights to land and natural resources. The project supported the development of a national network of indigenous people's representatives (IRAM, which is highlighted on page 12) and strengthened IRAM's capacity through workshops

and training programmes. In cooperation with the Indigenous Minority Rights NGO Network, the project raised awareness about indigenous people's rights, both nationally and internationally, and advocated with donors and responsible government departments for the establishment of collective land titles for indigenous community lands, as stipulated in the 2001 Land Law.

Land Information Centre

(LIC) was established in

January 2007 as a separate initiative under the Land and Livelihoods Programme to support the data collection and dissemination needs of the four projects and networks working within the LLP on land, resettlement, forestry and indigenous minority rights issues. See page 31 for a spotlight on the LIC.



Programme features

Resettled Families on the Road to Fairer Compensation

The Resettlement and Housing Rights Project coordinates civil society organisations to support individuals who have been affected by resettlement and relocation, so they are fairly compensated. While fair compensation is difficult to achieve in Cambodia's rapidly changing economic environment, the efforts of the NGO Forum and the Resettlement Action Network (RAN) have resulted in *fairer* compensation for many communities. Among these are the communities living along Highway One (also known as National Road No. 1), which runs from Phnom Penh to the Cambodia-Vietnam border.

Plans for the construction of Highway One were drawn up in the late 1990s under the ADB's *Greater Mekong Subregion: Phnom Penh to Ho Chi Minh City Highway Project*. The project was designed in two stages. The first stage—the portion of the highway between Neuk Leung town and the Vietnam border—was built in 2001-02 with a loan from the ADB. The second stage—the portion between Neuk Leung and Phnom Penh—began construction in 2005 with grant funding from the Japanese government. The second stage is currently awaiting the start of its final phase.

Families affected by the first stage of the project (approximately 1,000 households) were forced to leave their homes in 2000-01, even though a relocation site was not provided until 2003. Many of the families received no compensation for lost land and only partial compensation for their structures. There was also no compensation for lost livelihood opportunities. On average, villagers received only about 30% of what they should have received had ADB's Policy on Involuntary Resettlement been applied. Forced

to leave their homes and livelihoods without adequate advance compensation, many families took loans to pay for moving expenses and house rental. Loans were taken from moneylenders at exorbitant rates of interest, pushing affected households into a spiral of debt.



In 2002 the NGO Forum and another NGO coalition developed a report on the situation of families affected by the road construction project, and presented the findings to the ADB and the Cambodian government. The report called on the ADB to comply with its internal policies by assessing the resettled villagers' situation and providing additional compensation.

Responding to civil society pressure, the ADB audited the project in 2004, and confirmed the problems that were identified in the 2002 NGO report. The ADB also recommended that the Interministerial Resettlement Committee (IRC, the responsible government authority) re-compensate affected households. The IRC provided re-compensation to the affected families in 2006, but the level of compensation was still not in line with ADB's Policy on Involuntary

Resettlement, as it did not account for the level of debt incurred in the period of 2000-06, nor the foregone livelihood opportunities.

To put pressure on the government and the ADB to resolve these outstanding issues, the NGO Forum and other RAN members organised for a representative from one of the affected communities to travel to Japan and the Philippines to meet with high-level ADB officials. The Japan visit was facilitated by the Japanese NGO Mekong Watch (member of RAN), which was able to advocate with the Japanese government, the largest stakeholder in the ADB.

The advocacy efforts resulted in the recent approval of a new livelihood assistance programme for families affected by the first stage of the Highway One project, which is to be funded by the ADB with a grant from the Japanese government. The design of the new livelihood assistance programme recognises that the initial project was inadequate in its resettlement planning and implementation, and as a result, many affected households find themselves in perpetual debt due to loans taken out during the relocation process, compounded by the absence of reliable livelihood opportunities. In addition, RAN's advocacy efforts have ensured better planning and implementation of other ADB-funded infrastructure development projects in Cambodia, such as the reconstruction of National Roads No. 5, 6 and 7.

Advocacy efforts continue on the second stage of the project, known as the National Road No. 1 Improvement project, which has affected approximately 4,000 households thus far. Compensation provided in this stage of the project has been less than that provided in the first stage, in part because the

second stage is being funded through a grant from the Japanese government, rather than a loan, with the responsibility for compensation resting with the Cambodian government. RAN conducted a survey in 2007 to assess the impacts of resettlement on the communities affected by the second stage of the project, and found these to be similar to the impacts experienced by the communities affected in the first stage. The findings were publicised with the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), the IRC and relevant ministries of the Cambodian government. The report drew the attention of the Japanese government, which sent a six-member delegation to Cambodia in August 2008 to investigate the resettlement situation along the JICA-funded section of the highway. RAN organised a visit for the Japanese delegates to the affected communities, and facilitated a meeting with community representatives. Presently, RAN is advocating with JICA to delay the start of the final phase of the project until such time when outstanding claims from affected families have been resolved. Furthermore, RAN is advocating that JICA develop a clear resettlement and compensation plan before starting the final phase of the project, so that families that are still to be relocated receive a fair compensation.

Japanese Ambassador to Cambodia
visiting a community along National Road No. 1.



Successes and Stalemates in Public Consultation

Cambodia's economy has been experiencing a decade of unprecedented growth, fuelled partly by investments in infrastructure development. The cost of this growth has been predominantly born by people whose land and livelihoods stand in the way of road construction, agribusiness development and natural resource exploitation. To help mitigate the negative impacts of development on vulnerable individuals, the NGO Forum and its civil society partners have been focusing over the past two years on influencing the formulation of two important legislative orders: the *Sub-decree on Land and Property Acquisition and Addressing the Socio-Economic Impacts Caused by State Development Projects* (the Resettlement Sub-decree) and the *Sub-decree on the Procedures of Registration of Land of Indigenous Communities*. With both legislative orders the NGO Forum and its civil society partners have been successful in facilitating far-reaching public consultations involving affected communities, NGOs and academic experts, in spite of very restrictive conditions placed upon the consultative process by relevant authorities. Unfortunately, it is not yet clear what influence, if any, the comments and recommendations provided by the public and NGOs have had on the development of the two sub-decrees.

The Resettlement Sub-decree was initiated in early 2005 as part of the Asian Development Bank's (ADB) technical assistance (TA) to the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) to enhance the government's resettlement legal framework. The terms of ADB's TA required consultation with affected individuals and with civil society organisations, in order to ensure broad agreement on the government's resettlement policy and sub-decree.

Two years later, in May 2007, a limited number of NGOs was invited to a one-day workshop in which the government and the ADB formally unveiled the first draft of the sub-decree. The workshop initiated a two-week period (later extended to three weeks) during which

stakeholders could submit written comments on the first draft of the sub-decree. While these comments were to feed into the development of a second draft, which was to be open for public consultation, the invitation to the workshop specified that the government had no obligation to consider, much less integrate, any submitted comments.

In spite of the very short time frame provided, the NGO community organised a technical review of the first draft, which resulted in the submission of nine substantive concerns. The concerns pointed out critical flaws that needed to be addressed for the sub-decree to be compliant with Cambodian and international law, as well as ADB policies.

A second draft of the sub-decree was released by the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF) in November 2007. Despite its length and complexity, MEF permitted only two months for public consultation, which meant that the consultative process had to take place in the middle of the harvest season. Nevertheless, the NGO Forum and its partners managed to carry out national, provincial and community-level consultations involving no fewer than 7,000 individuals in 190 villages across 11 provinces and municipalities. The collated results were presented to the MEF and other key players in a public forum held in early January 2008.

As of October 2008, in spite of numerous follow-up efforts with the MEF, there is no indication



of whether any of the comments provided by affected community members and civil society representatives were accepted. Discussions with the ADB indicate that a third draft of the sub-decree was finalised and submitted to the appropriate office at the Council of Ministers for final approval. Unfortunately, the public was not allowed to review nor comment on this final version.

The experience of the Resettlement Sub-decree echoes in the more recent consultative process on the *Sub-decree on the Procedures of Registration of Land of Indigenous Communities*. Since 2001, the NGO Forum has been advocating for the development of a sub-decree to define the framework by which indigenous communities can register their lands, as stipulated in the 2001 Land Law. The General Secretariat of the Council of Land Policy (GS-CLP) finalised a draft of the sub-decree in early 2008 and circulated it for comments to NGOs and development partners, with less than two months provided for consultation. In spite of the short timeframe, the NGO Forum coordinated two separate consultations on the draft sub-decree: a legal consultation involving UN legal experts and the Indigenous Minority Rights NGO Network, and a community consultation with more than 100 indigenous people's representatives. The NGO partners felt that the consultative process was a success, as it afforded the opportunity for indigenous people's representatives to provide informed comments on the draft sub-decree, and united a range of legal and human rights NGOs. Unfortunately, in spite of repeated follow-up efforts, there is no indication of whether the coordinated input has been considered by the authorities. The GS-GLP has decided that further work on the sub-decree will have to wait until pilot registration of three indigenous villages in Ratanakiri and Mondolkiri provinces is complete. The adoption of the sub-decree is a Joint Monitoring Indicator for land sector donors and the government. It is also a binding indicator for the Poverty Reduction and Growth Operation Programme.

Spotlight on the Land Information Centre

The Land Information Centre (LIC) was established in January 2007 to coordinate systematic collection of data on land and natural resource management issues in order to initiate an informed public debate on the administration and management of land, forests and other natural resources in Cambodia.

The LIC's mandate is to meet the data collection and management needs of NGO Forum members and associated networks. The LIC offers the following services:

Data management: LIC collects, manages and reports on key data requested by LLP projects and networks to support their advocacy efforts. This includes the Land Dispute Database, Economic Land Concessions Database and other background information data sets.

Investigation: Skilled and experienced investigators are available to assist with reporting on land, resettlement, natural resource and indigenous people's rights issues. Investigation officers have excellent contacts with key NGOs and local authorities to assist in the collection of reliable data.

Research: LIC assists LLP projects and associated networks to design and carry out research on specific topics in support of LLP advocacy efforts. LIC support covers the lifecycle of research project development from scoping, field research, analysis and final reporting. An experienced researcher is available to assist in research design and implementation.

Resource documentation: The LIC collects, catalogues and stores key resource materials on land and natural resources, including legislation documents and media reports. The centre searches daily for media articles on relevant topics, and summarises and reports on these to LLP networks.

The LIC welcomes enquiries from members and associates who are interested in accessing LIC services.

In August 2008 the villagers of Ta Kor village in Kampot province celebrated victory as the provincial governor ruled in their favour on an eight month-long land dispute. The decision paved the way for the resumption of the land registration process that had been halted earlier in the year.



Royal Palace, the Ministry of Environment and Forestry Administration.

At the start of 2008 the commune chief received an order from authorities in Phnom Penh to halt the land registration process in preparation for reforestation. The community lodged a complaint with the commune chief, and sought assistance from Human Rights Vigilance of Cambodia (Vigilance), the focal organisation for the Land Action Network for Development (LAND) in Kampot province. Vigilance presented the case to the national LAND network, which decided to take immediate action to support the villagers. In March network members provided training on land rights and conflict resolution to the affected villagers, and invited commune, district and provincial authorities to hear the villagers' concerns. The officials asked the villagers to remain calm, and promised to communicate their concerns to superiors in Phnom Penh.

Harnessing the Support of Local Authorities

When there was no response by June, LAND decided to approach local authorities once again. The network began with the commune council, as it had learned in the past that cases often get stuck at the commune council (CC) level due to lack of information. The commune chief was very responsive to the concerns of the affected villagers, and committed himself to help in their case. Next, LAND organised a discussion with the district governor, where the network presented the community's position and relayed the CC's support. Hearing the CC's position on the case, the district governor pledged his own commitment to support the villagers. With these commitments of support, LAND assisted the villagers to prepare a petition to the provincial governor, who holds the power to decide on land issues in areas covered by the government's Land Management and Administration Project. The governor followed up with the commune council and the district governor's office, and with the confirmation of their support, decided to rule in favour of Ta Kor villagers.

Lessons from the Ta Kor Case:

Conflict resolution efforts require close coordination with local authorities. Even if they are not able to decide on cases themselves, local authorities can facilitate the resolution process, as they are well aware of the *history* and *culture* of the conflict.

NGOs have a role to play in helping local councils and district offices understand their responsibility for solving the problems of landlessness. Once aware of their responsibilities, local authorities are more willing to find a workable solution.

NGOs should motivate communities to believe in the possibility of change, and help affected communities develop the confidence to advocate on their own behalf.

Reflections

NGO Forum's localisation process

The NGO Forum's localisation process began in 1996, when a local Management Committee (MC) took over the oversight of the NGO Forum from the former, internationally-based Steering Committee. With this move the NGO Forum became oriented towards the needs and interests of organisations based in Cambodia, especially the emerging local NGO community.

When the former expatriate Representative joined the NGO Forum in 1997, the MC was led primarily by foreigners. It was expected then that the NGO Forum would become locally managed within a few years' time. By 2000 the NGO Forum had a fully Cambodian Management Committee, but the committee was reluctant to push for full localisation until it could be confident that the organisation was fully prepared for such transition. At that time the NGO Forum did not have its by-laws, nor finance or personnel policies. A lot of organisational development work began to take place to strengthen the organisation internally.

In 2004 the departure of the then Deputy Representative forced open the question of when the NGO Forum should transition to local leadership. The MC decided to use this opportunity to try to recruit a local Director, with the stipulation that the selected individual would work for a year as Deputy Representative, and following promotion to full directorship, she or he would receive temporary advisory support from the former Representative. Chhith Sam Ath was recruited in January 2005 as the Deputy Representative, and following a successful trial period, he assumed the position of Executive Director a year later. To assist him in the management of a growing and increasingly more complex organisation, in December 2005 the Management Committee recruited Ngy San for the position of Deputy Director.

The NGO Forum's localisation process included a number of important preparatory steps and considerations. One of these was of the need to limit growth during the transition. In spite of this consideration, the NGO Forum grew rapidly during this period in response to growing demands, which led to strains on staffing. This has confirmed the lesson that organisations should try not to grow too much during localisation, as it is important to adjust to leadership change before expanding focus or programmes.

The following aspects of the NGO Forum's localisation process contributed to a successful transition:

- A clear vision and plan for the localisation process, including a plan for leadership succession.

- Strong and engaged board/management committee.

- Internal policies and management systems in place to support the new director in management duties, especially with regards to personnel and financial oversight.

- Clear selection criteria and transparency in the recruitment process for a local director.

- Engagement of staff and other stakeholders (i.e. membership) in the transition process.

- Consideration of candidates who had previously demonstrated leadership and commitment to the organisation.

- Engagement of the selected leader for a trial period with clear performance criteria.

- Sufficient transitional support provided over a period of one to two years.



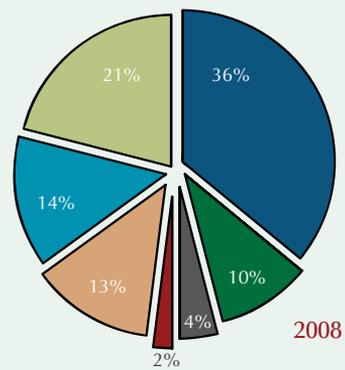
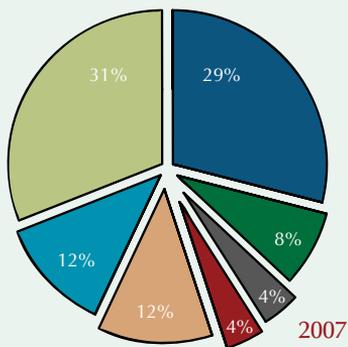
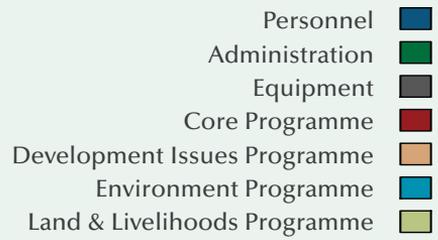
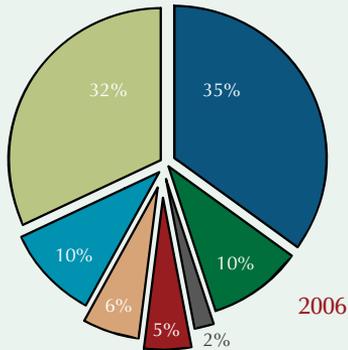
Financial Report

Statement of Source and Application of Funds

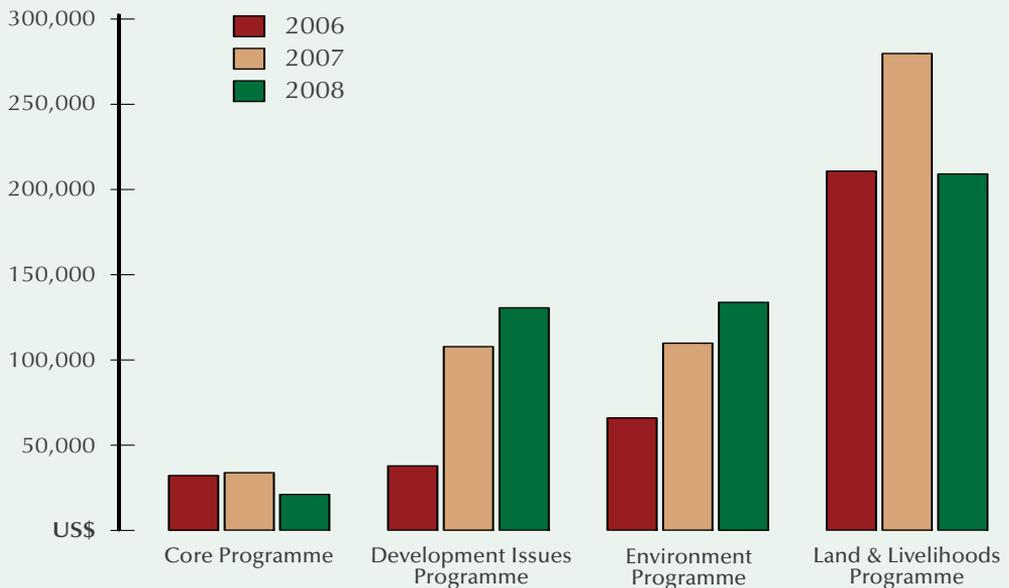
Source of Funds	Year 2006	Year 2007	Year 2008 ¹
	US\$	US\$	US\$
Opening Balances			
Cash in bank	177,769	265,158	295,236
Cash on hand	804	330	903
Advance account	0	0	0
Subtotal	178,573	265,488	296,139
Receipts			
Grants - Whole Action Plan ²	202,844	288,564	386,601
Grants - Core Programme	7,742	14,470	0
Grants - Development Issues Programme	123,160	82,710	135,493
Grants - Environment Programme	50,931	57,232	60,663
Grants - Land and Livelihoods Programme	286,859	417,499	365,495
Membership fees	7,300	8,080	8,500
Other receipts	74,707	95,070	43,026
Subtotal	753,543	963,625	999,779
TOTAL	932,116	1,229,113	1,295,919
Application of Funds			
Expenses			
Coordination & Support Costs			
Personnel and benefits	228,775	273,281	347,959
Administration	69,422	77,273	104,021
Equipment	12,674	37,137	43,155
Programme Activity Costs			
Core Programme ³	32,938	34,625	21,562
Development Issues Programme	38,784	110,605	134,075
Environment Programme	67,653	112,738	137,272
Land and Livelihoods Programme	216,382	287,315	214,696
Subtotal	666,628	932,974	1,002,740
Closing Balances			
Cash in bank	265,158	295,236	292,325
Cash on hand	330	903	853
Advance account	0	0	0
Subtotal	265,488	296,139	293,178
TOTAL	932,116	1,229,113	1,295,919

1. Figures for 2008 represent actual receipts and expenses for Jan-Sept, and projected receipts and expenses for Oct-Dec.
2. NGO Forum's Whole Action Plan covers all annual programme and support costs. Donor partners are encouraged to support the WAP rather than individual programmes.
3. The Core Programme category includes costs pertaining to representation, membership and network development, publications and overall coordination of the NGO Forum on Cambodia.

Distribution of Costs



Programme Activity Costs over Three Years



Member Organisations

NGO Forum
members as of October 2008

Local NGOs

Association of Protection Development for Cambodia Environment
Banteay Srei
Buddhism for a Progressive Society
Cambodia Women Culture Development
Cambodian Farmer Economic Development
Cambodian HIV/AIDS Education and Care
Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)
Cambodian Labour Organisation
Cambodian League for the Promotion & Defence of Human Rights (LICADHO)
Cambodian Rural Economic Development Organisation
Cambodian Sanitation and Recycling Organisation
Cambodian Women's Development Association
Cambodian Youth Development
Centre d'Etude et de Developpement Agricole Cambodgien (CEDAC)
Christ for Development Kampuchea
Community Legal Education Center (CLEC)
Cooperation for Development of Cambodia
Culture and Environment Preservation Association (CEPA)
Development and Partnership in Action (DPA)
Farmer Livelihood Development Organisation
Fisheries Action Coalition Team (FACT)
Gender and Development for Cambodia (GAD/C)
Healthcare Centre for Children
Human Rights Vigilance of Cambodia
Human Resource and Rural Economic Development Organisation
Indigenous Community Support Organisation
Indra Devi Association
Institute to Serve Facilitators of Development (VBNK)
Khemara
Khmer Community for Agricultural Development
Khmer Farmers Association
Khmer Women's Voice Centre
Legal Aid of Cambodia
Media Khmer Development Organisation
Mlup Baitong
National Prosperity Association
Organisation for Assistance of Children and Rural Women
Partnership for Development in Kampuchea
Project Against Domestic Violence
Prom Vihear Thor Organisation

Socio-Economic Development Organisation of Cambodia
Sor Sor Troung
Urban Poor Women Development
Urban Sector Group
Violence Against Women and Children of Cambodia
Phnom Srey Association for Development
Womyn's Agenda for Change

International NGOs

ActionAid International Cambodia
Action on Disability and Development
American Friends Service Committee
Australian Catholic Relief
CARE International
Catholic Relief Services
Christian Outreach for Relief and Development (CORD)
Christian Reformed World Relief Committee (CRWRC)
Church World Service
Community Forestry International
Concern Worldwide
Deutsche Welt Hunger Hilfe - German Agro Action
Enfants et Développement
Forum Syd
Groupe de Recherche et d'Echanges Technologiques
Health Unlimited
HelpAge International
Japan International Volunteer Centre
Jesuit Service Cambodia
Lutheran World Federation (LWF)
Maryknoll Cambodia
Mennonite Central Committee
Norwegian People's Aid
Oxfam Community Aid Abroad
Oxfam Great Britain
PACT Cambodia
Plan International Cambodia
Save the Children - Norway
Swiss Interchurch Aid
Wild Aid
World Vision International - Cambodia
World Wildlife Fund for Nature

Associate Members

DanChurchAid
Oxfam America

Donor Partners

Donors who supported
the NGO Forum efforts in 2006-2008

Action Aid International Cambodia
Broederlijk Delen
Catholic Fund for Overseas Development
(CAFOD)
Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
Christian Aid
DanChurchAid
Development and Peace (Caritas Canada)
Diakonia
European Union
Interchurch Organisation for Development
Co-operation (ICCO)

Misereor
Norwegian People's Aid (NPA)
Oxfam America
Oxfam Australia
Oxfam Great Britain
Scottish Catholic International Aid Fund (SCIAF)
Trocaire
USAID through East West Management
Institute (EWMI)
World Vision International - Cambodia

The donors listed above provided significant financial support to the NGO Forum's programmes over the past three years. In addition, many other organisations contributed to specific events or initiatives organised by the NGO Forum. We would like to extend our greatest appreciation to all our donors and supporters, large and small, who contributed to our work through financial support, technical assistance and, most importantly, active participation.



Anticipating a better future, community members share a common goal - a fairer Cambodia for all.

The NGO Forum Staff

As of October 2008

Mr. Chhith Sam Ath	Executive Director
Mr. Ngy San	Deputy Executive Director
Mr. Ngo Sothath	Development Issues Programme Coordinator
Mr. Chhan Paul*	Development Policy Project Officer
Mr. Chea Kim Song*	Budget Monitoring Project Officer
Ms. Ky Nimol	Gender Project Officer
Mr. Kum Kim*	Aid Effectiveness Forum Project Officer
Ms. Ly Pichadaroat*	Economic Development Policy Project Officer
Mr. Gijs Koop	Development Issues Programme Advisor
Mr. Bun Chantrea*	Environment Programme Coordinator
Ms. Seng Sothira*	Environment Project Officer
Ms. Men Vannavy	Pesticide Reduction & Sustainable Agriculture Project Officer
Mr. Tonn Kunthel	Mekong Community Rights Project Officer
Ms. Caroline Sayers*	Environment Programme Advisor
Ms. Ame Trandem*	Mekong Basin Community Rights Project Advisor
Mr. Hep Sokhannaro	Senior Researcher
Mr. Khan Chantharo	Research & Documentation Officer
Mr. Sim Dara	Investigation Officer
Mr. Khiev Chan	Investigation Officer
Mr. Pen Raingsey	Resettlement & Housing Rights Project Officer
Ms. Srey Sras Panha	Indigenous Minority Rights Project Officer
Ms. Megan MacInnes	Land & Livelihoods Programme Advisor
Ms. Vath Samnang	Administrative Officer
Mr. Pinn Thearith*	Human Resource Development Officer
Mr. Thou Chhunleap	Administrative Clerk
Ms. Sek Mala	Finance Officer
Ms. Han Sodany	Accountant
Ms. Cheav Sivkheng*	Cashier
Mr. Nov Piseth*	Information Technology Officer
Mr. Phourn Yu	Information & Communication Officer
Mr. Prak Ratha	Messenger/Driver
Mr. Meas Ronn	Messenger/Driver
Ms. So Sareab	Cleaner

* Joined the NGO Forum in 2008

Departed in 2006-2008

	2008
Mr. Andy Kervell	Land Information Centre Advisor
Mr. Cheam Mony	Land & Livelihoods Program Coordinator
Mr. Kong Piseth	Information Technology Officer
Mr. Kuon Vannsy	Aid Effectiveness Forum Project Officer
Mr. Mech Sokhan	Land Issues Project Officer
Mr. Ou Sivhuoch	Budget Monitoring Project Officer
Mr. Saing Chanhang	Trade & Economic Project Officer
Mr. Sam Chanthy	Environment Project Officer
Mr. Sou Sontara	Forest Livelihoods & Plantation Project Officer
	2007
Mr. Ek Siden	Development Issues Programme Coordinator
Mr. Ek Yothin	Indigenous Minority Rights Project Officer
Mr. Heov Kim Sreng	Environment Programme Coordinator
Mr. Khun Bunnath	Land & Livelihoods Programme Coordinator
Mr. Long Lun	Investigation Officer
Mr. Moeun Lin	Administrative Officer
Mr. Ros Khemara	Trade & Economic Project Officer
Mr. Russell Peterson	Senior Advisor
Mr. Seng Sovathana	Environment Programme Coordinator
Ms. Tan Sokhom	Forest Livelihoods & Plantation Project Officer
Mr. Than Rithy	Resettlement & Housing Rights Project Officer
Mr. Touch Sokha	Land & Livelihoods Programme Coordinator
	2006
Ms. Katrin Seidel	Land & Livelihoods Programme Advisor
Mr. Keo Chamroeun	Trade & Economic Project Officer
Ms. Kol Leakhana	Resettlement & Housing Rights Project Officer
Ms. Lam Saoleng	Environment Programme Coordinator
Mr. Ouk Kimleng	Environment Programme Coordinator
Ms. Tim Sopheap	Gender Project Officer

Working Together for Positive Change



The NGO Forum Staff Retreat, July 2008