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# Political Competitiveness and Civil Society Assessment

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**DISCLAIMER**

The authors' views expressed in this publication do not necessarily reflect the views of the United States Agency for International Development or the United States Government.

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## Acronyms

ABA	American Bar Association
ADHOC	Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association
ADS	Advanced Democracy Seminars
ANFREL	Asian Network for Free Elections
CAS	Center for Advanced Study
CC	Commune Council
CCC	Cambodian Coordinating Committee
CCHR	Cambodian Center for Human Rights
CCLSP	Cambodia-Canada Legislative Support Program
CD	Constituency Dialogues
CEC	Commune Election Committee
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CDRI	Cambodia Development Resource Institute
COMFREL	Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia
CPP	Cambodian People’s Party
CSO	Civil Society Organization
CV	Community Volunteer
DG	Democracy and Governance
EWMI	East-West Management Institute
FUNCINPEC	<i>Front Uni National pour un Cambodge Indépendant, Neutre, Pacifique, et Coopératif</i> (National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful, and Cooperative Cambodia)
GOC	Government of Cambodia
HRP	Human Rights Party
IR	Intermediate Result
IRI	International Republican Institute
IT	information technology
KR	Khmer Rouge
LEAP	Legislative Assistance Program
LICADHO	Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights
MNA	Members of the National Assembly
MoI	Ministry of Interior
MP	Member of Parliament
NA	National Assembly
NDI	National Democratic Institute
NEC	National Election Committee
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NICFEC	Neutral and Impartial Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia
NRP	Norodom Ranariddh Party
PEC	Local level branch of the NEC
PR	proportional representation
SBO	Sample-Based Observation
SILAKA	Cambodian NGO

SO	Strategic Objective
SOW	Scope of Work
SRP	Sam Rainsy Party
TAF	The Asia Foundation
ToT	training of trainers
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
USG	United States Government
VIN	Voter Information Notice
VOD	Voice of Democracy
VRA	Voter Registration Audit
WMC	Women's Media Center
YCC	Youth Council of Cambodia

# Map of Cambodia



## **Executive Summary**

This report is an Assessment of the status of USAID/Cambodia’s Strategic Objective “Increased Competition in Cambodian Political Life”, and especially the contribution of the National Democratic Institute (NDI) and International Republican Institute (IRI) to that objective. When the Scope of Work (SOW) was initially being framed for our work, the task was intended to encompass an evaluation of the IRI and NDI programs’ efforts to promote political competitiveness in Cambodia. The SOW then changed from a formal evaluation to a strategic assessment of political competitiveness in Cambodia. Accordingly, we have not undertaken to measure the extent to which the institutes achieved their annual goals, the programs’ intermediate results, and the like. Rather, we have focused on a strategic assessment of what their initiatives have accomplished individually and collectively, and in what directions their future work might most fruitfully proceed in promoting democracy in Cambodia. The Assessment was conducted by an experienced three person team of political scientists in September—December 2008, including three weeks interviewing a wide range of local and foreign stakeholders in Cambodia.

### **General Conclusion**

Our general conclusion is that the Cambodian political system has settled into a semi-authoritarian form based on a combination of patronage, personal and familial loyalties, buttressed by a nation-wide and highly disciplined political party: the Cambodian People’s Party (CPP). The resources of the CPP have been fueled by eight years of economic growth, following a model of foreign resource exploitation through government concessions, foreign investment in the garment industry, and substantial growth in the tourist industry centered on Siem Riep and the Angkor Monuments. Cambodia has continued to receive large donor subsidies from Japan, China, the Asian Development Bank, and the World Bank, as well as USAID and other bilateral donor agencies. These subsidies, in addition to improving state revenues, have enabled the CPP dominated government to take credit for improvements in infrastructure, educational and health facilities, and some improvements in agricultural productivity. These improvements, in addition to a variety of personal incentives and rewards made available to supporters through a finely tuned system of patronage have strengthened the CPP’s dominance of the political system. In addition, for Cambodians over the age of 30 who remember the years of destructive turmoil that plagued Cambodia’s recent history, CPP has brought peace and stability. All these factors combine to give CPP a strong political basis for winning elections, even while some 40% of the Cambodian electorate give their vote to other parties. The proportional representation system used in Cambodian elections tends to inflate the margin of victory as translated into parliamentary seats, with the CPP now controlling 90 of the 123 seats in the National Assembly (NA).

In our report, we describe Cambodia as semi-authoritarian and as a “one party plus” system. Given the CPP victory in an election generally considered reasonably “free and fair”, how can one come to this conclusion? First, we cite Freedom House’s consistent ratings of Cambodia as ‘not free’, a rating that has remained constant over the last seven years. Second, the evidence we gathered about government restrictions on opposition access to media, freedom of speech and association by civil society organizations, and continued and widespread reports of manipulation of voters, especially in rural villages, supports the Freedom House ratings. One of the team member’s earlier assessment of the Rule of Law in Cambodia provided even more detailed evidence of the regime’s disregard for a ‘rule based’ polity or an effective judicial system. Rampant corruption of both the major (state contracts and concessions) and minor (police harassment)

kind is widely acknowledged by Cambodians as a fact of life. Corruption helps fuel the patronage system upon which CPP rule depends. While polling data conducted by IRI showed that most voters did not feel intimidated, the same polls also showed that 37% of the voters did not believe CPP would relinquish power if they lost the support of the electorate. Through positive rewards, patronage, and a well deserved historical reputation for maintaining control, CPP has managed to create a spirit of ‘acceptance’ among the Cambodian electorate, a spirit strongly consistent with the traditional Cambodian idea of the state as “the father”, who knows best. This, and other cultural norms supporting acceptance of social hierarchy, passivity, and respect for older people, have helped to reinforce the more ‘transactional’ nature of a political structure based on patronage and personal and familial ties. These factors, taken in their totality, have led to the appellation ‘semi-authoritarian’.

Whether the Cambodian political system will evolve from ‘semi-authoritarian’ to become more fully authoritarian a la Vietnam and China, or whether the political space for opposition and criticism that now exists will survive long enough to promote a form of politics and governance based more on competence, accountability, transparency and respect for the rule of law, is an open question. It is also the most important question for U.S. policy.

### **The USAID Program**

Our examination of the USAID Democracy and Governance program has been confined to the efforts of NDI and IRI. As such, this assessment does not address other dimensions of the U.S. effort to promote democracy and governance, such as support for Human Rights, Rule of Law, and Decentralization. Part of the reason for this more limited scope comes from USAID’s original intention to conduct evaluations of the IRI and NDI programs. The USAID decision to change the purpose to a broader Democracy and Governance (DG) Assessment means we do not ‘evaluate’ the NDI and IRI programs, although we do attempt to build on some of their accomplishments in our recommendations.

An important constraint in the USAID program needs to be recognized. Because of the violent coup in 1997 that brought the CPP to power, the U.S. Congress placed restrictions on the kind of assistance USAID could provide to the Cambodian government, essentially preventing USAID from working with government ministries other than those involved with health and education. These restrictions just recently have been lifted, permitting USAID to work more directly with the government in areas such as Rule of Law. Because of these restrictions, for nearly ten years USAID’s program was focused more on programs implemented by international and Cambodian civil society organizations (CSOs). One of the unintended consequences of this approach was to strengthen the CSO community’s ability to deliver goods and services, and to monitor human rights abuses, corruption, and poor judicial performance. The natural consequence was to create resentment and defensiveness among government agencies and leaders, especially toward ‘opponent’ organizations concerned with human rights and rule of law.

For NDI and IRI, these limitations affected especially their ability to work directly in the Parliament or engage with governmental institutions involved with elections until very recently. Moreover, the sanction policy of the U.S. Government (USG) encouraged NDI and IRI to have a ‘regime change’ rationale for their program, especially for IRI, which worked to find and improve the capacity of viable opposition parties with a view to advancing their chances of taking

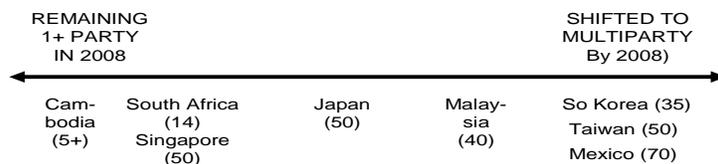
power through elections. Both NDI and IRI were forced to ‘work around’ the edges of engagement by supporting internal party reforms, youth wing development, women’s caucuses, while building CSO capacity to monitor elections and to advocate for more efficient and honest election management. Our general conclusion about these efforts is that many of them were, and are, valuable programs, which in their own right have produced positive benefits for different sets of stakeholders, but the whole has been less than the sum of the parts. Much of the reason for this lies in the absence of a coherent overarching vision and strategy on the part of USAID that would serve to coordinate, integrate and accumulate the benefits and impacts into a larger set of systemic consequences for political competitiveness in Cambodia. As noted by NDI and IRI in response to the first draft of this report, the difficulty in developing and following a coherent strategy came substantially from limitations and changes in direction imposed on them by U.S. authorities and by changing circumstances in Cambodia.

### A New Strategic Rationale

We recognize that the Political Competitiveness Strategic Objective (SO) is no longer the operational SO, but it was for much of the period under review, and it is still an important component of USAID’s new broader objective. We conclude that “Political Competitiveness” is no longer a valid objective for USAID programs, and argue for a new rationale more consistent with the new, much broader SO focused on governance. Our reasons for saying this emerge from our analysis of the various programs that NDI and IRI have mounted over the past several years. Although some might disagree, our assessment is that political competitiveness has been in structural decline since 1997, both for reasons attributable to the effective organization of patronage politics as noted above, and because of the inability of the opposition parties to transcend their differences and form an effective alternative voice to the CPP. There are limitations to how much foreign assistance can do in the murky hallways of Cambodian political decision making. At some point, more training, more technical advice, more conferences, reports and workshops face diminishing returns to impact. At some point, the decision to change is based on a calculus of political interests and power. Perhaps the best example of this is our discussion of efforts by NDI, Cambodian CSOs, and other donors such as the European Union to effect change in the National Election Commission.

We conclude that for the short to medium term, say over the next ten years, the semi-authoritarian, one party plus system will continue in Cambodia. In other countries, these systems have survived for decades, as illustrated in the following chart.

**One-plus party systems spectrum**  
Countries (& approx. years under 1+ system)



A key to the evolution of one-party plus systems is the extent to which sufficient political space and political freedom is retained to allow the development of an educated middle class, more access to information (transparency and media freedom), preservation of the freedom to associate and form organizations, and the development of parties able to project serious alternatives to the existing dominant party. This can lay the foundations for a longer term democratization process.

The preservation of some political space in the short to medium term will be largely a function of continued western donor engagement with civil society and with government. It will also depend on the extent to which the CPP continues to value and secure international benefits from the legitimacy conveyed by being an ‘elected’ party with a formal constitution and National Assembly. The implications of this for USAID strategy are significant, especially with regard to continuing to pose ‘political competitiveness’ as a strategic objective.

We propose keeping the long term goal of political competitiveness, but re-stating a Democracy Strategic Objective to read: **“Governmental and Political Accountability for Policy Performance.”** The basic premises behind this shift are three: first, there is little more that can be done directly by USAID to expand political competitiveness, although we do recommend that this issue be on the agenda of diplomatic discussions between the U.S. and Cambodian governments. Second, by holding government accountable for policy performance, the shortfalls and limitations of a corruption-based patronage system will be exposed, and become apparent to voters. Third, when policy performance rather than patronage and its lifeline, corruption, becomes the expectation of Cambodian voters, opposition parties, now frozen out of resources for patronage, will begin to realize the value of presenting a policy-based alternative to a system based on patronage. They will have a better chance of appealing to voters seeking an alternative, and will be themselves held accountable if they should succeed. Cambodian democratic politics will become more competitive through a paradigm shift in voter expectations and demands. A competitive political system that emerges in this manner will be truly owned and shaped by the Cambodian people.

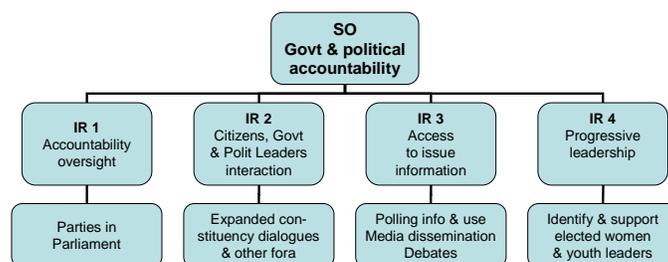
**Core Recommendations** (See Main Body of the Report for Rationale and Detailed Recommendations)

***A. The Strategic Objective in USAID Framework Format***

1. Reframe the DG Strategic Objective to read: “Governmental and Political Accountability.” Political Competitiveness is not a realistic objective, in the medium term, especially given the resources USAID is able to commit. We believe that USAID’s Cross Cutting Theme “Transparency and Access to Information” is consistent with this new objective, but argue that the Democracy side of the new Strategic Objective needs greater specificity.
2. Retain, if necessary, the overall goal of “Political Competitiveness”, but strengthen the causal linkage between the Accountability SO and this goal, recognizing that other USAID supported activities also affect the political competitiveness goal.
3. Clarify expected Intermediate Results (sub-objectives) and strengthen the hypothesized causal linkages between activities, Intermediate Results, and the SO.
4. At the Intermediate Result (or sub-objective) level, four IRs are proposed.

- a. Strengthen accountability oversight role of elected leaders in Parliament and other levels of political control.
- b. Strengthen relationship and interaction between citizens and both elected and appointed leaders and authorities.
- c. Expand and improve the quantity, quality and dissemination of policy- and issue-related information, research and analyses.
- d. Invest in progressive leadership development more attuned to government performance on a wider range of policy issues (beyond infrastructure).

A new DG strategy for supporting political competitiveness in Cambodia



***B. Political Parties and Parliament***

1. Cambodia does not have, nor is it presently moving toward, a competitive multiparty system. On the contrary, it has been moving away from such an arrangement to a one-party-dominant system, though not an exclusive one-party one. This ‘one party plus’ scheme is now quite firmly in place and can be expected to last at least a decade. But it does permit significant if constrained scope for political rights and civil liberties. Such systems in other countries have proved stable for years and even decades, and many have made the transition to real democracy. Like these others, Cambodia is not impervious to change. Accordingly, USAID should not continue to think in terms of ‘political competitiveness’, but rather should focus on ‘accountability’ as its guiding theme.
2. USAID should identify reform-minded Members of Parliament (MPs) from all parties and craft a role for them to work on policy issues; encourage and support efforts by MPs to change parliamentary rules to allow CPP back benchers and minority MPs to engage meaningfully in committee work, and to permit the latter to have access to the floor (i.e., change the “rule of 10” on introducing business). Efforts should be made to induce upper-level CPP leadership to see such reforms as a way to cultivate future leaders in their own party and allow the opposition an avenue to blow off steam, not as a threat to its own position. Additionally, political parties in Parliament should be engaged to help develop links between campaign platforms and legislative strategies, thus helping parties develop some non-patronage functions. USAID should not duplicate existing technical assistance programs provided to the NA by other donors.

### ***C. Election Management Reform***

1. USAID should discontinue efforts to promote electoral reform, though the U.S. Embassy should continue to include promoting electoral reform in the USG package of policy priorities for diplomatic discussions with the GoC. Without the GoC's commitment, there is little more USAID technical assistance can accomplish.
2. USAID should discontinue separate election monitoring efforts, but support the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) efforts if appropriate.
3. The Voter Registration Audit (VRA) is well done and shows a reasonable degree of integrity and transparency in the voter registration process. The VRA is an excellent mechanism to that end, and should be continued, if not supported by USAID, then perhaps by another donor like UNDP.

### ***D. Promoting the Role of Women***

1. USAID should expand efforts to engage women in political parties to include women appointed to government positions. There are now 274 women in government and political leadership positions. The Women's Caucus program should be expanded to include all women in positions of authority, as well as those in CSO leadership positions. As women began to emerge as business leaders, their contribution to policy dialogue and accountability discussions would be substantial.
2. Although lacking the political 'power' of males in leadership positions (all Governors are male), women have a greater interest in the 'social agenda' of health, education, domestic violence, children, and other social services issues. Developing policy dialogue around social agenda issues is a good starting point. A social agenda approach to supporting Cambodian women's leadership would also be an opening wedge for broadening the importance of public policy in these areas beyond infrastructure, as well as increasing accountability for providing services.

### ***E. Promoting the Role of Youth in Politics and Government***

1. USAID should continue, but refocus, the Youth Council of Cambodia (YCC) program. Emphasis should be on leadership identification, training and promotion. The objective should be to identify potential leaders and provide them with a variety of opportunities to expand their political awareness and capabilities. If possible, combine training, educational opportunities, with a variety of 'on the job' political experiences in Parliament, political parties and cooperating government agencies. USAID should discontinue efforts to work with party youth wings except as a by-product of youth leadership promotion activities.
2. USAID should begin discussions with the Ministry of Education to explore the possibility of introducing 'democratic participation practices' into school organization and curriculum. This should not be a classic 'civics lecture' type program. It should focus on repeated cycles of youth participation in a variety of activities designed to internalize democratic values and behaviors. USAID has experience in this kind of programming, especially in former Soviet satellites and in the Balkans.

### ***F. Media***

1. USAID should continue efforts to use radio and television as a means for increasing political participation and the dissemination of issue-related information and analyses. Recent re-

search shows that while radio is still the dominant source of information, television is increasingly important, especially among younger cohorts in urban areas. Twenty percent of Cambodia's population now lives in urban areas, a percentage that is likely to increase over the next ten years. With urbanization comes access to television and, for younger people, increased access to Internet- and cell phone-delivered information.

2. Cambodians respond well to 'competitions' as shown by the success of the IRI sponsored debates, as well as the East-West Management Institute / American Bar Association (EWMI/ABA) support for mock courts at the University. The key to effective programming is to retain the interest of the listener. These kinds of efforts to use 'entertainment' as a means for conveying politically relevant information and experience should be continued, and if possible, expanded, and suffused with the kind of policy content recommended as a central strategic theme in this report.

### ***G. Civil Society***

1. USAID should continue to promote programs using civil society intermediaries, especially at the provincial and district level. In a political accountability program, it is important to shift the capacity building emphasis toward strengthening NGO partners' ability to act independently and in concert with others on issues that matter to citizens in their regions.
2. We do not recommend a separate civil society program, but we do urge that greater attention be given to supporting interaction among and between provincial level civil society organizations engaged in political accountability programs of various kinds. NGOs working on constituency dialogue type programs should be working closely with other NGOs promoting youth leadership, as well as NGOs involved in other USAID supported programs, such as human rights and rule of law promotion. An indirect benefit of the political accountability program is to strengthen the local monitoring and advocacy capacity of NGOs at the provincial level.

### ***H. Enhancing Knowledge Based Discourse***

#### **Constituency Dialogue Program**

1. We recommend that the Constituency Dialogue (CD) program be expanded and strengthened through the gradual introduction of efforts to move the dialogues toward helping people to understand that particularistic problems, such as land disputes, are also national problems requiring better government policies and performance.
2. Because of the somewhat seamless nature of government authority and CPP political dominance, we see further scope for expanding the CDs to include district and provincial authorities, as well as party MNAs and other leaders from local and national CSOs.
3. We believe that the Dialogues are an excellent vehicle for expanding political participation and awareness, for introducing the beginnings of a sense of the collective or public good, and for moving toward a more information-based discussion about the nature of development issues that Cambodians must confront.

#### **Opinion Surveys**

1. USAID should encourage a fuller dissemination of poll data and cultivate a more sophisticated community of poll consumers. Political leaders should be encouraged to use polls to develop issue agendas and target voters. The Constituency Dialogue program would be one venue where synthesized polling data could be used to inform the discussion.

2. Esoteric statistical analysis is not required here, but rather techniques like the use of crosstabs to ascertain what kinds of voters are most concerned about what issues (e.g., farmers and land grabs, fishermen and fishing lot appropriation, small businessmen and police extortion).
3. Province-level analysis should be introduced. Sample size is not large enough to engage in great detail here, but broad trends could be detected (e.g., where does concern over land issues loom largest or least?). Oversampling of a few provinces in the next survey could serve as an experiment to test the feasibility of more detailed work in this area.
4. Successive polls could be used to detect trends (e.g., where is the radio audience increasing or being displaced by the television audience?).

### ***I. Program Management***

1. A more focused program combined with a relatively limited budget of approximately \$1.5 million per annum can be implemented by a single organization.
2. Recognizing that there may be other factors in play that would prevent USAID from moving to a ‘single organization’ program implementation model, there may be other ways to reduce overhead costs. Every effort should be made to free up as much of these funds as possible for program purposes.
3. An expanded program focused on a common strategy could well engage both party institutes, and perhaps others with experience in developing accessible issue and policy focused publications, programs, and other media formats to serve the policy dialogue and accountability objectives outlined above.

### ***J. Program Options at Higher Funding Levels***

The team was asked during exit briefings with USAID to consider what kind of programs might be pursued at higher than current levels of funding. To undertake most of what has been recommended above, properly organized into a more coherent and better coordinated program, would require a budget more at the \$5 million level than at the current level. While some recommendations require more in the way of personal and persistent qualitative contact than budget, others, such as expanding the women’s forum, developing the constituency dialogue, investing in more knowledge based policy discourse, developing a continuous and persistent engagement in a youth leadership program, and increasing the utility of public opinion polling, will require more funds than are currently available. Perhaps more important than the ‘level’ of funding is the commitment of USAID to a ten year strategic time horizon. A strategic program must have some stability of purpose, while being sufficiently flexible to be opportunistic in tactics. This requires both clarity of vision as well as skillful and well informed engagement with principal Cambodian actors and stakeholders on matters of substance.

# I. Introduction

## A. Assessment Purpose

The Political Competition and Civil Society Assessment was conducted as part of an omnibus task order for evaluations, assessments and design work between USAID/Cambodia and Checchi and Company Consulting, Inc. (Checchi). As originally designed, the study was to evaluate the USAID effort to promote political competitiveness in Cambodia, focusing mainly on the objective of institutionalizing free and fair elections through education and promoting responsible and informed political participation, and the development of better organized and effective political parties. In recent years, the principal partners in these efforts have been the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI), both of which have been active in Cambodia since the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC) period in 1993. Also involved in the first few years of the decade was The Asia Foundation (TAF), which focused mainly on support for election monitoring and voter participation. Subsequently, the study purpose was modified to one of a more general assessment of the current status of the structure of political power in Cambodia. As stated in the final Scope of Work (SOW) for this study:

*The primary purpose of the assessment is to determine the extent to which the Cambodian political system is open to various political parties to compete for voter support through well managed and fair national and local elections. The secondary purpose is to provide the USAID Cambodia Mission with recommendations for future programming regarding continued support to Cambodian electoral systems, political parties, and parliamentarians.*

USAID recommended a time frame for the study of 2001 to 2008. This period encompasses four national elections, two for Commune Counselors in 2002 and 2007, and two for Members of the National Assembly (MNAs or MPs) in 2003 and 2008. Within this time frame, the emphasis was on the period 2005 to 2008. This latter period represents a significant change in the U.S. relationship with the Government of Cambodia from one of sanctions and non-cooperation to one of engagement and support for the development of more effective Cambodian governmental institutions, including the judiciary, local government, and selected ministries.

## B. Major Questions: Scope of Work (SOW)

The final SOW asked the assessment team to address seven broad questions as follows:

*1. Status of political parties. Do Cambodian political parties organize themselves consistent with democratic practices and principles? How do political party leaders perceive their role and relationships to constituencies? How do party leaders view their relationship to governmental institutions? Is the USAID assistance strategy for political party development properly focused? To what extent and in what ways do party leaders perceive the benefits of USAID and other donor's foreign assistance? Should USAID continue to provide assistance to Cambodian political party development, and, if so, in general terms what kinds of assistance might be most useful?*

2. *Status of election "systems". To what extent are Cambodian elections well organized, and considered acceptable by international standards? What has been the role of donor community in strengthening Cambodian election systems and practices? Should USAID provide technical assistance to the Cambodian National Election Committee, and if so, what should be the major features of such assistance?*

3. *Extent to which youth and women are engaged in political competitiveness. By examining the NDI's program of working with women and IRI's program of engagement with the Youth Leadership Challenge TV Program, Youth Festivals, and support to the Youth Council of Cambodia's Advanced Democracy Training, identify the changes and/or impacts these programs have had on the intended audience. Recognizing that this is a relatively modest program, has the program demonstrated the potential, if substantially expanded, to reach a level and mass sufficient to have a positive impact on political attitudes, behaviors and institutional arrangements relevant to political competitiveness?*

4. *Extent to which civil society has effectively used advocacy to promote political competitiveness. To what extent have USAID supported programs activated local NGOs to advocate for greater political competitiveness at the grass roots level, and especially with regard to other sectors such as Labor, Human Rights and Land Tenure? To what extent has support for NGOs strengthened the role of Cambodian civil society more broadly? Is this an area where USAID assistance should continue, and if so, what general approaches would be most useful?*

5. *Extent to which parliamentarians are engaged in political competitive behavior linked to constituencies. Prior to 2007, USAID direct engagement with the Parliament has been limited to the Constituency Dialogue Program. How do parliamentarians perceive their role with regard to their constituents, their party leaders, and their own interests? Has USAID assistance had an effect on parliamentary attitudes and behaviors? Other donors have provided a variety of technical assistance to the institution of parliament, and to parliamentarians. What has been the experience of other donors with parliamentary strengthening, and is there is a complementary niche for USAID programming in the future?*

6. *Extent to which media coverage of social and political issues reflects openness and balance (competitiveness). To what extent has USAID's relatively small program contributed to competitiveness, and should USAID continue with these kinds of activities?*

7. *USAID has supported IRI to conduct political surveys the last 2.5 years. What use has been made of the findings and conclusions of these surveys, by whom and for what purposes? What effect have these surveys had with regard to increased political competitiveness? In the future, should we look at building an indigenous capacity to provide this type of information?*

## **C. Team and Field Work Approach**

### **The Team**

Because the assessment relies not only on the facts gathered, but on judgment and experience of the assembled team, it is important to demonstrate the team members' qualifications for this task. The assessment team recruited for this assessment includes the following individuals:

**Dr. Richard N. Blue**, Team Leader. Dr. Blue has been an active evaluator of USAID democracy, civil society and rule of law projects since his formal retirement from USAID. He has conducted over 30 evaluations and assessments, including four in Cambodia. Before becoming an evaluation consultant, he taught Political Science and South Asian Studies at the University of Minnesota for ten years, joined USAID in 1975, serving in many positions, including head of the USAID Office of Evaluation. After leaving USAID in 1990, he joined The Asia Foundation as Representative for Thailand, Laos, and eventually Cambodia and Vietnam. He developed the first USAID funded TAF Cambodia program of support for Human Rights and other Public Interest Civil Society Organizations in 1993.

**Dr. Harry Blair** currently serves as Associate Chair, Senior Research Scholar and Lecturer in Political Science at Yale University. Earlier he held academic positions at Colgate, Columbia, Cornell and Rutgers universities, as well as Bucknell University, where he retired as Emeritus Professor of Political Science in 2000. Over the years he has put in several stints with USAID, most recently during 1998-2002, when he worked in the Office of Democracy and Governance in Washington. Concentrating largely on civil society and local governance, he has assessed and evaluated USAID programs in the DG field in South and Southeast Asia, Eastern Europe and Latin America over the last decade and a half, both while working inside USAID and later as a consultant. His recent writing can be found on the Web at <http://pantheon.yale.edu/~hb94/index.htm>

**Dr. Lincoln Mitchell** is the Arnold A. Saltzman Assistant Professor in the Practice of International Politics at Columbia University's School of International and Public Affairs. He has published articles and reports on democracy assistance in several foreign policy journals and is the author of the forthcoming *Uncertain Democracy: US Foreign Policy and Georgia's Rose Revolution* (University of Pennsylvania Press). In addition to serving as Chief of Party for NDI in Georgia, he has worked on and evaluated democracy assistance programs in the former Soviet Union, Eastern Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Asia and the Caribbean.

### **Approach**

When the Scope of Work was initially being framed for our work, the task was intended to encompass an evaluation of the IRI and NDI programs' efforts to promote political competitiveness in Cambodia. The SOW then changed from a formal evaluation to a strategic assessment of political competitiveness in Cambodia. Accordingly, we have not undertaken to measure the extent to which the institutes achieved their annual goals, the programs' intermediate results, and the like. Rather, we have focused on a strategic assessment of what their initiatives have accomplished individually and collectively, and in what directions their future work might most fruitfully proceed in promoting democracy in Cambodia.

The team was given access to relevant project documents including NDI and IRI proposals and quarterly reports from late 2001 through 2008. Other documents were accumulated as part of our research, including the IRI public opinion polls, an NDI Institutional Capacity Assessment, and documents from participating Cambodian NGOs. These documents, plus a wide array of more academic research studies, are part of the data base for the team's findings, conclusions and recommendations.

The approach taken by the team was to conduct open ended interviews with as many Cambodian activists and leaders, as well as knowledgeable foreign observers and program leaders, as possible within the three week time frame allowed for field work. The questions used to guide the interviews were basically those presented above in the SOW, modified for the purposes of eliciting as much information as possible from each respondent. In several cases, group interviews were conducted, but there were no structured ‘focus groups’, as the assembling of homogenous groups of respondents would have required more advance planning than time constraints allowed.

Mindful of the usual bias that occurs when talking to project beneficiaries and implementers, the team sought to interview as wide a range of informants as feasible for each of the main questions.

In order to make the most efficient use of the time and experience of each team member, the team broke down the research/writing assignments as follows:

- Dr. Blue: Youth, Women, Civil Society and general contextual background in addition to overall management responsibilities.
- Dr. Blair: Elections and Utility of Political Polling
- Dr. Mitchell: Political Parties, Media and Parliament.

Of course, each team member contributed input to the others relevant to their primary responsibility. To further maximize coverage, it was essential to remove ourselves from Phnom Penh and spend as much time as possible in Cambodian provinces outside the capital city. The team split up for this task, each member visiting different provinces. This allowed us to meet with informants in five provinces over a five day period. After consultation with USAID and NDI/IRI, we selected the following provinces:

- Dr. Blue: Takeo and Kampong Cham
- Dr. Blair: Battambang and (with Dr. Mitchell) Siem Reap
- Dr. Mitchell: Kampong Thom and Siem Reap

In each province, we generally met with provincial governors, CPP and SRP party leaders, commune counselors, and CSO leaders. In Kampong Cham, Dr. Blue was able to meet with recent trainees who had participated in the Advanced Democracy Seminar, operated by Youth Council of Cambodia and supported by IRI.

Because of the need for certain protocols involving letters of request, meetings with Parliamentarians were delayed until the last few days of the team’s visit to Cambodia. Unfortunately, we were able to meet only one CPP Parliamentarian, followed by two SRP MNAs.

We hope we have brought a different perspective and way of framing USAID’s understanding of the present political arrangements in Cambodia, as well as identifying some possible avenues whereby USAID efforts might be effective in the future.

## II. Background

### **A. The Cambodian Political Context**

Cambodia's current political arrangements have deep roots in the period of the 1970s, when Cambodia was first overtaken by the Khmer Rouge (KR), and subsequently by current Prime Minister Hun Sen, backed by Vietnamese forces. Of the factions that opposed the Hun Sen/Vietnamese regime, FUNCINPEC emerged initially as a potent political force during the UNTAC period, winning the largest plurality of votes in the first free election ever held in Cambodia. The party led by PM Hun Sen, now the Cambodia Peoples Party (CPP), was second, and after some negotiations, Hun Sen became the Second Prime Minister behind Prince Norodom Rannaridh, leader of FUNCINPEC. After a violent confrontation between factional military wings in 1997, Hun Sen emerged as Prime Minister, with a junior coalition party in FUNCINPEC. This uneasy alliance continued in some form through national elections in 1998 and 2003. The outcomes of these elections were called into question because of poor election management, lack of opposition access to media, threats and intimidation by state forces. By 2008, the CPP had won 90 of the 123 seats in the National Assembly in an election generally conceded to reflect the will of the majority, in spite of some evidence of disenfranchisement of potential opposition leaders and voters. Formed by a prominent defector from FUNCINPEC, the Sam Rainsy Party (SRP) emerged as the only significant opposition, while FUNCINPEC secured only three seats. At the macro-level, the trend from 1993 to 2008 has been away from political competitiveness, in which a broad range of political actors and parties are either in government or have a realistic chance of going into government; and from diversity toward a 'one party plus' CPP-dominated regime, where elections, at best, either reign in or provide a broader mandate to the governing party, but where control of the government is never seriously at stake.

Even before UNTAC, western humanitarian and social service NGOs began operating in Cambodia, helping to form Cambodian NGOs in the process. The Paris Accords ushered in the peace keeping mission of the United Nations, while at the same time several Cambodian Human Rights organizations were formed with western support. These were followed by NGOs dedicated to promoting democratic awareness, legal defense and greater political activism in support of democratic rule. Others formed around specific issues such as the environment, and women's rights, with Khemara being one of the first in the women's rights arena. Khemara's founder, Mu Sochua, later became the first Minister of Women's Affairs and is now a leader in the SRP. Both social service and public interest NGOs have benefited greatly from a variety of institutional capacity development efforts supported by USAID and many other donors. Today, they represent a major progressive force in Cambodia, as well as a career path for younger Cambodians now coming into the professional work force. Still, all NGOs remain dependent on the flow of foreign funds, without which most would find it very difficult to survive. Needless to say, Cambodian NGOs are a critical element in efforts by foreign donors to implement programs that promote democratic values and institutions, including rule of law and open and competitive party politics and elections. Although most of the lead organizations are still based in Phnom Penh, NGOs are emerging in the provincial capitals, as well as are less formal community based organizations.

Although much of the Cambodian population remains well below the poverty line, the percentage is falling, largely as a result of eight years of robust economic growth, led by extractive concessions, the growth of a substantial garment industry, and the rapid rise of tourism centered on Siem Reap and the Angkor monuments. It is also the case that income inequality has increased, along with rampant corruption. The link between this new found wealth and the growing strength of the CPP is found in the sharply honed system of patronage practiced by the CPP leadership.

These developments since UNTAC have been the backdrop to a drama of contestation for control of the state between CPP and FUNCINPEC, the outcome of which has been the eclipse of FUNCINPEC as a political force, and the dominance of the CPP under Hun Sen.

Every drama requires a conflict to provide dramatic tension. The previous drama has been resolved, but what are the sources of conflict in the next play? Will this be a contest between the well implanted but still weak forces of democratic beliefs and principles and the more powerful forces of authoritarianism, corruption, and unbridled ‘capitalist’ exploitation of Cambodia’s physical and human resources? Will there be sufficient incentive for a victorious CPP under Hun Sen to allow a certain degree of political space necessary for the democratic impulse to survive, perhaps even grow, or will CPP move even more in the direction of China and Vietnam, permitting more or less ‘free market’ forces to operate within the authoritarian structure of a single party state? Will the CPP remain a cohesive force for some time, or will internal contradictions begin to erode its discipline and control? Is a system based on the continued allocation of patronage reinforced by personal and familial relations able to be infinitely expandable, or will it collapse under its own weight?

These questions are important, but probably not answerable at this time. And what will/should be the policy and role of the United States in the coming decade? How should the United States cooperate with the CPP/Cambodian state to advance important interests, without compromising its fundamental interests in democracy, human rights and the rule of law? These are not new issues for American diplomacy, but how they play out in the particular context of Cambodia, the Mekong Region, and the greater Asian drama will require thoughtful analysis and well informed decision making. It is hoped that this assessment will contribute to this process.

## ***B. U.S. Interests***

Discussion of U.S. interests in Cambodia can be organized into four broad phases. Phase One, encompassing the Vietnam War and its aftermath was dominated by the U.S. effort to defeat or at least contain the expansion of North Vietnamese power, first in the south of Vietnam, and later in Cambodia. In Cambodia, this meant backing whichever government or insurgent group opposed the Vietnamese, both during the war and afterwards. After the Vietnamese rout of KR forces from the major cities of Cambodia in 1979, the U.S. backed the factional armies that continued to fight the Vietnamese military and its Cambodian allies under Prime Minister Hun Sen.

Phase Two of the U.S. interest might be called the ‘end the conflict and promote a democratic Cambodia’ phase. The U.S. was instrumental in pressuring the Vietnamese to withdraw from Cambodia, and in structuring the Paris Accords. It strongly supported UNTAC and, until 1997, the effort to develop a Cambodian democratic state and society. US interests, and especially the

will of Congress, were motivated in large measure by the legacy and scars of the Khmer Rouge regime. The U.S. would do all it could to prevent the re-emergence of that kind of destructive political force, and to bring to account the KR leadership. This proved more difficult than expected, and is still not resolved, although the KR is no longer a separate political force in Cambodia.

Phase Three began when in 1997 CPP routed FUNCINPEC as the other predominant political force in Cambodia. The U.S., with many European partners, perceived this as a major setback to democratic aspirations for Cambodia. The Congress passed legislation sanctioning the Cambodian government, preventing any US foreign assistance from being used in any direct way in support of that government except with regard to humanitarian, health and educational programs. However, much U.S. foreign assistance continued through U.S. and Cambodian NGOs, both for social service and humanitarian objectives, as well as through human rights organizations. U.S. assistance began to focus its Cambodian partners on greater advocacy, and towards building a stronger constituency base in the Cambodian countryside. The hypothesis was that only a robust civil society could both deliver services and maintain sufficient political space to prevent the regime from moving toward an authoritarian state.

Phase Four could be characterized as one of ‘positive engagement’ with the Cambodian government. Beginning in the early part of this decade, several dynamics began to affect the U.S. calibration of its interests in Cambodia. The first dynamic was the impressive growth in the Chinese economy, and the consequences of that growth for the rise of Chinese influence in the Mekong region. China was already a strong supporter of the military regime in Myanmar, and was now opening up a second arena in Cambodia. The second dynamic was initiated by the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and the subsequent ‘war on terror’, a war requiring very intimate cooperation from a number of nation states, including Cambodia. The third dynamic, still evolving, was the discovery of significant oil and gas deposits off the Cambodian coast. Although less evident, a fourth factor may have been the growing realization that the CPP was here to stay, and any effort to bring it down was futile. In FY05 there began a process of incremental lifting of Congressional Restrictions, but the Congress did not drop all sanctions. Prior to FY05 USAID could work with National Level Government on Humanitarian Programs, Health and Education activities. In the FY05 legislation Rule of Law including anti-corruption activities was permitted. In FY06 specific mention of **not** supporting the Khmer Rouge Tribunal was removed but it was still unclear what could be supported. In FY07, Congress finally dropped all language restricting USAID’s work with the National level authorities. Funds from the 2007 appropriation became available in September 2007, which set off a process of restructuring the U.S. assistance program leading to a new pattern of diplomatic and U.S. assistance relationships with the Government of Cambodia; a pattern, which is still emerging in 2008 and, presumably, has been the motivating force behind the need for this assessment.

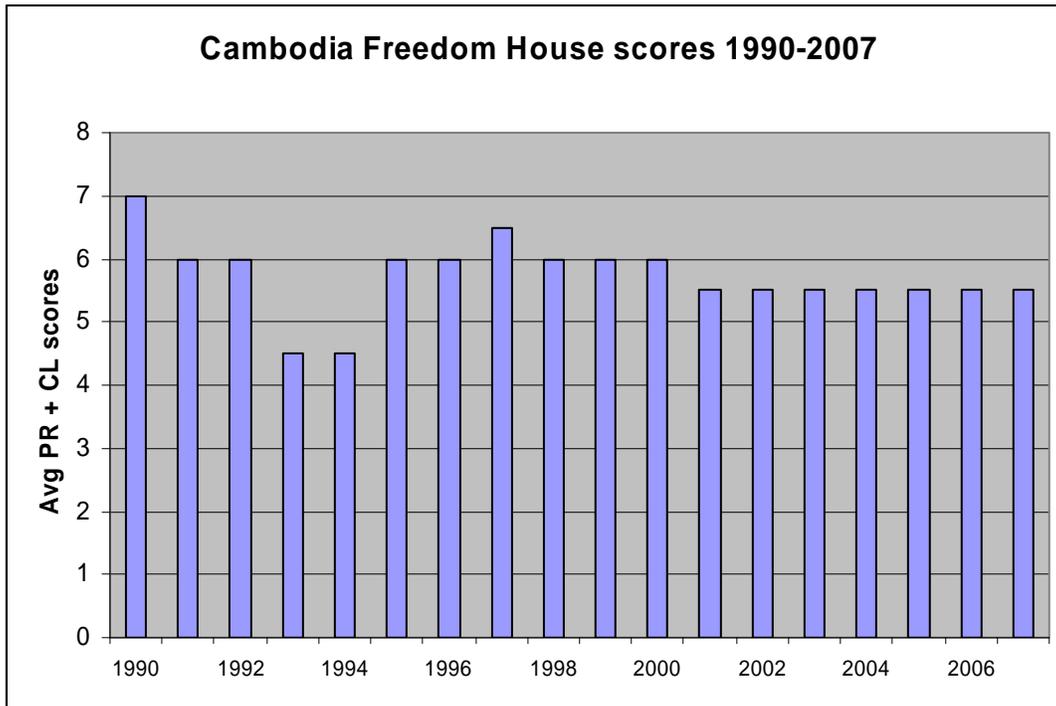
### **C. Promoting Democracy**

The challenge facing the U.S. in the next ten years is how to continue to promote democracy, protection of human and political rights, and the rule of law, while actively engaging with and seeking cooperation from the CPP/Government of Cambodia. On the negative side, many in the Cambodian NGO community fear that the U.S. will abandon or substantially reduce its support for civil society, especially those organizations seen by the regime as ‘oppositionist’, such as

human rights and advocacy organizations. They often argue that as the regime becomes less and less dependent on western donor assistance, its tolerance of opposition and open political space will diminish to the point where only ‘cooperative’ NGOs will be allowed to function.<sup>1</sup> Without outside donor support, very few of the current roster of well organized NGOs will survive, as there is no indigenous source of financial support that is not closely tied to the government. On the other hand, there remain elements in the U.S. Congress, as well as in the U.S. and international NGO community, that will continue to focus on democracy development in Cambodia, including directing financial assistance to civil society organizations.

At the outset of this task, the assessment team met with Freedom House and discussed their most recent ratings produced in 2008. These ratings are important for USAID as they represent one of the few efforts to track many countries’ progress toward, or away from freedom. The Cambodian trend line of average of Political Rights and Civil Liberties scores is presented in Chart A., wherein the higher the score, the less free the country.

Chart A.



The Cambodian political system improved significantly during the early 1990s in the UNTAC era, but then regressed badly during the turmoil of the late 1990s. Since then, there was a slight improvement but by the beginning of the present decade, the system has settled into place at the 5.5 level, which is Freedom House’s upper tier of “not free” states. Since the degree of freedom

<sup>1</sup> The US Mission view is that these fears are un-founded, mainly based on the projection that Cambodian oil and gas revenues will be insufficient to diminish substantially Cambodia’s need for foreign assistance, citing the case of Nigeria. This may be the case, but if Cambodia should succeed in becoming independent of foreign assistance from *Western Democracies*, would the current regime continue to ‘tolerate’ troublesome human rights and advocacy NGOs? Most of these groups, rightly or wrongly, believe not.

enjoyed by the population is a necessary condition for the exercise of political democracy, we will use the term “semi-authoritarian” to describe the current political regime.

We, of course, cannot be certain of the direction, in which politics will develop over the next few years, but it is useful to be prepared for a range of likely developments. It may be that the tension between a semi-authoritarian regime on the one hand, and on the other, weak opposition parties, and the ‘independent’ civil society sector will be kept under control, and the regime will continue to see that it is in their political interest to permit a degree of political space and diversity, so long as the CPP Government remains the dominant authority. However, if there were to be major political cracks in the CPP, and possibly the defection of important internal factions into an alignment with ‘democratic opposition’, the remaining CPP leadership could become more repressive in its attempt to retain power. It is also possible that such a break could herald the beginning of a real two-party system. But in the meantime, the United States must find a way to achieve a balance between its commitment to democratic development, and its other vital national interests that rely in part on cooperation with the current Cambodian government.<sup>2</sup> Whichever scenario is realized, as shown in the IRI poll of Spring 2008, 37% of those Cambodians polled hold very much to the view that CPP will not relinquish power even if it lost an election. This view is likely even more widely held by civil society leaders, who point to CPP’s behavior in 1993 and 1997 as evidence for this belief.

#### ***D. Background of the IRI and NDI Programs, FY 2002-2009***

Both IRI and NDI began programs to support democratization in Cambodia in the early 1990s and through the decade worked with political parties, electoral systems (in particular monitoring), civil society and civic education. The current era of their DG activities in Cambodia can be traced to FY 2002, when both launched new two-year programs. Over the period between FY 2002 and FY 2009, the two organizations have undertaken a broad array of activities, many of them overlapping, as shown in Charts B and C. In FY 2006, USAID and the two institutes engaged in extensive discussions aiming to separate the overlapping activities and define them clearly, as should be evident in Charts B and C.

At the outset, IRI concentrated mainly on commune councils (especially important, given the 2002 elections for those bodies), a youth program, and poll-watcher training. The commune council work continued through mid-decade, when it was taken over by PACT, which had begun a separate decentralization program (Local Administration and Reform, or LAAR) in February 2005. The youth program has become the most long-lived one in the IRI portfolio, though it has changed its focus somewhat, beginning with student groups and democracy seminars and gradually moving to a broader range of activities including youth festivals, televised youth leader debates, and more widespread civic education programs. Political party reform became a major program component in FY 2004, at first aimed at all parties but then narrowing to the SRP as the institution most amenable to internal democratization. IRI also began supporting the Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR) in FY 2004, with special attention to the Voice of Democracy radio programming. A more broad-gauge media initiative beginning in FY 2007 has worked

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<sup>2</sup> Some commentators objected to the team’s ‘speculations’ about the direction the Cambodian political system might be moving. Our position is that it is the team’s responsibility to draw inferences about possible futures, based on existing trends and our analysis and conclusions. After all, any foreign assistance program is an investment in a plausible future. Readers can, of course, disagree.

with radio programming and televised political talk shows (a novelty in Cambodia). Finally, IRI launched a series of opinion polls in FY 2007, intended to inform the public generally and to engage the political parties in using polling data.

NDI began this period in FY 2002 with a program rather similar to IRI's in supporting election monitoring, commune councils and civic education. By FY 2004, however, it had dropped the election work and civic education, moving to several new initiatives, mainly dealing with political parties. Support for women, youth and internal party reform were the chief themes now, again featuring considerable overlap with IRI's activities. In FY 2005, NDI ended its work with commune councils and began its own media program, emphasizing access to the media for parties and civil society and sponsoring broadcasts of programs designed to increase public understanding of the political sphere. In that same year, NDI undertook an intensive study of electoral reform winding up with a national workshop in 2006. Also in FY 2005, NDI began its Constituency Dialogues initiative, bringing members of the National Assembly together with their constituents on a regular basis. After FY 2005, NDI dropped the party reform effort, and in FY 2007 discontinued the youth program, so that it would focus on women only and IRI could concentrate solely on youth. Also in FY 2007, NDI ended its media support and electoral reform efforts, and began a new program to train party polling agents for the upcoming 2007 and 2008 elections. Along with this initiative, NDI also returned to the support for electoral systems that it had carried out for the 2002-03 election cycle (training monitors and party polling agents), as well as launching new activities (the Voter Registration Audit and the Sample-Based Observation exercises). Finally, in FY 2008 NDI began an effort to strengthen the National Assembly, after the U.S. Congress lifted the restrictions that it had placed earlier on working with the GOC at the national level.

In sum, IRI and NDI have both carried out a wide variety of DG programs over this period. For the first several years both institutes supported activities in similar sectors, notably election monitoring, commune councils, and youth, but in the last several years, they have effected a division of labor whereby IRI has focused on youth programs, party reform, media and opinion polling, while NDI has worked on constituency dialogues, electoral support, and women's programs.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> In the course of its development, our Scope of Work changed from a formal evaluation to a strategic assessment, and so we did not measure the extent to which IRI or NDI attained their annual goals.

Chart B.

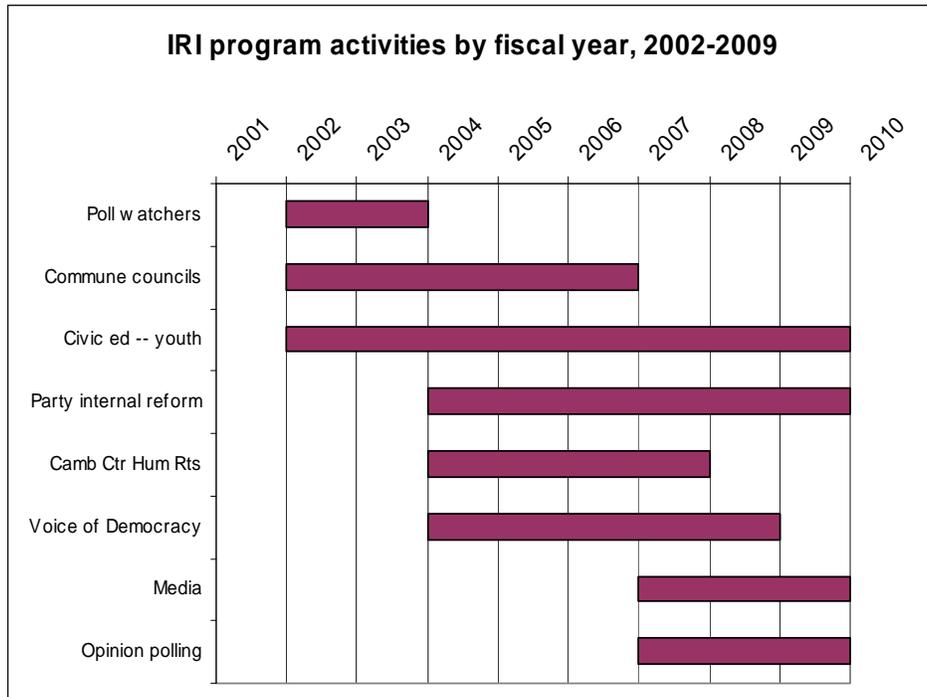
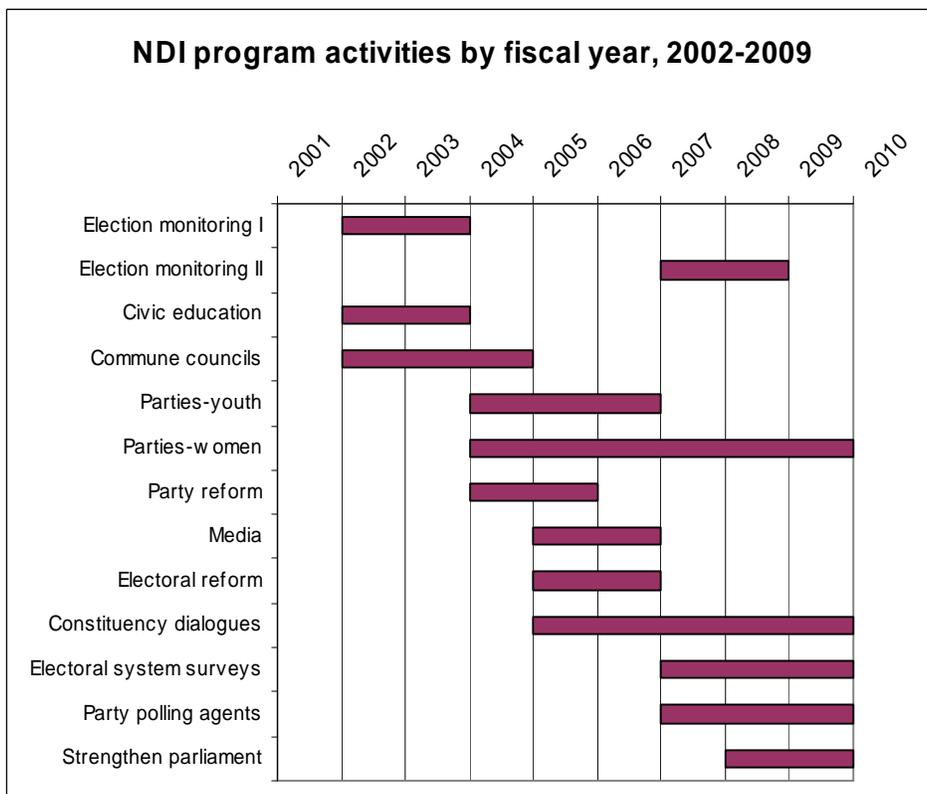


Chart C.



### **III. Findings, Conclusions and Program Recommendations**

In this section we present and analyze our findings, followed with program by program conclusions and specific recommendations. We begin with a ‘holistic’ analysis of the overall strategy pursued, or not, by NDI and IRI in support of USAID’s own strategic objective. With one exception, each section corresponds to one of the seven questions presented in the SOW.

#### **A. Analysis of Overall Thrust of NDI-IRI Objectives and Programs**

The Assessment reviews the work of NDI and IRI in Cambodia, which aimed at responding to USAID’s 2002-2005 Strategic Objective (SO) 1 “Increased Competition in Cambodian Political Life”.<sup>4</sup> In 2006, USAID reformulated its Democracy and Governance SO 3 as “Improved Political and Economic Governance.” This is, of course, a very broad strategic objective which, on its surface, does not seem directly related to democratization. It is possible to understand this SO as simply being about better governance, but that is not the way it is understood by NDI, IRI and USAID. This SO is also quite general, potentially covering a range of activities, making it very important for NDI and IRI to have strategic visions of their own to explain their choice of programs and to bring them together so that the whole is greater than the sum of its programmatic parts.

Based, on their proposal to USAID, NDI’s current program has sought to focus on the following four objectives:

- Enhance the capacity of political parties to participate in the 2007 Commune Council and 2008 National Assembly elections.
- Support local civil society groups in monitoring the 2007 and 2008 electoral processes.
- Strengthen the capacities of provincial civil society organizations to conduct advocacy and contribute to local policy development.
- Build the capacity of the national legislative branch to carry out participatory and representative governance.

All of these are worthy objectives, which in the context of a limited budget and a difficult political climate, NDI has either met, or seems likely to meet in the near future. The exception to this is the fourth objective which is not included in NDI’s current portfolio, due to restrictions set by the U.S. Congress regarding working the Cambodian government at the national level.

Less clear is the question of why these four objectives were chosen. This is a key question because it requires NDI and USAID to agree upon, and pursue, an underlying strategy that is necessary to create the synergy that is critical to a program on as limited a budget as NDI’s. The point here is not that the four objectives chosen by NDI were the wrong ones. These are all important goals. The point is that there is no clear strategy bringing this all together.

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<sup>4</sup> USAID/Cambodia “Interim Strategic Plan: 2002-2005”. This plan governs much of the period under review in this Assessment report. A broader Strategic Objective, “Improved Political and Economic Governance”, was introduced in a new strategic plan beginning in 2007. That plan identifies Cross Cutting Issues, the first of which is “Transparency and Access to Information”. This Assessment Report is fully consistent with this issue.

The programs pursued by a partner like NDI or IRI must be linked by a common strategy or vision so that NDI, in this case, can play to its institutional strength, which includes its flexibility, its ability to take advantage of opportunities that arise and, along with IRI, its unique ability to focus on the political side of democracy and governance. Absent a strategy, NDI is just implementing programs with a lot of what it has to offer potentially not being put to good use.

Much of what has been said above about NDI can be applied to IRI as well. IRI's project documents indicate that their objectives for the current project are:

- Cambodia's political parties demonstrate stronger democratic and good-governance characteristics.
- Quality independent information motivates citizens to actively protect their freedoms. The public is better informed about differences in political platforms and engages in meaningful and tolerant political discussions.
- Government and political parties will develop policies and actions influenced by labor unions and private industry.
- New opportunities will allow youths to be recognized as viable civil society and political leaders.
- The Youth Council of Cambodia will foster greater participation by youth in the democratic process and press elected officials to address issues of concern to Cambodia's youth.
- The Cambodian Center for Human Rights will provide effective advocacy for the protection of democratic rights, increase access by alternative democratic viewpoints to broadcast media, and expand public participation in the democratic process.
- IRI will conduct two polls each year including a standard set of questions. Programming issues will be incorporated as appropriate.

IRI's current portfolio does not include all these projects, but its program still includes a substantial number of projects for an effort the size of IRI's with a limited budget. Again, based on the team's observations, IRI is doing impressive work on all of these objectives, but it is not clear how or why these objectives were chosen and why they are the most important things IRI could be doing to strengthen democracy in Cambodia.

For both institutes the absence of a strategic vision creates a situation where they are overloaded with programmatic work, leaving little time to leverage any of their work or pursue opportunities and thus squandering much of the comparative advantage each brings to democracy work.

Additionally, the work itself is not well explained. For example, youth may be the critical link in democracy in Cambodia, but the explanations given for this emphasis were the somewhat obvious demographic argument about the relative youth of the Cambodian population and that these young people were more open to new ideas than older people are. While these arguments are undoubtedly empirically true, they are far from compelling, particularly given the necessarily limited scope of IRI's work with youth and the other pressing democracy related problems confronting Cambodia. This is not to say that IRI should not be pursuing work with youth, but that the rationale needs to be clear and understood and that this work has to be leveraged and clearly linked to IRI's other work and larger goals. A similar case could be made about NDI's work with election monitors or even its CD program.

It is likely that both NDI and IRI have a strategic vision for bringing their work together. Perhaps it is implied or understood by the institutes themselves, but it would be valuable to make this explicit and to link it to USAID's strategic vision. This would allow NDI and IRI to pursue a more holistic approach where their programs are linked and leveraged, both within and between party institutes. It would also make it possible for NDI and IRI to pursue other opportunities that undoubtedly would arise and fit into their strategic vision.

## ***B. Findings and Conclusions for Major Program Components***

### **1. Promoting Political Party Development**

#### **Status**

Cambodia today does not enjoy, in any meaningful sense of the phrase, a competitive multi-party system. Instead, the country is defined by a dominant party system. The dominant party is, of course, the Cambodian People's Party (CPP). The CPP has a substantial presence throughout Cambodian society and government. The CPP is physically present throughout the country with offices in virtually every neighborhood and village; has an effective system of patronage that delivers goods, government services and other necessities to the people; and is deeply embedded throughout the Cambodian government where virtually all middle and senior officials, particularly those controlling jobs, have strong ties to the party. Additionally, the CPP has at times resorted to voter fraud, intimidation, censorship and violence to remain in its dominant position.

Cambodia is, nonetheless, not yet an authoritarian, or even a one party system. These descriptions are not so much wrong as they are overly simplistic. While there are elements of authoritarianism in the CPP's style of governance, there is too much freedom and civic vibrancy for either description to fit cleanly. Correspondingly, while the CPP dominates politics, the state and society, it is not the only party in the country. Other parties exist and, to some extent, are allowed, and perhaps even encouraged, to compete in elections and even win a few seats here and there in order to maintain an ethos of legitimacy for the political system.

With regard to political parties, Cambodia might be best described as a one plus party system. Parties other than the CPP are allowed to exist, but they do not have great bearing on governance or decision making in Cambodia. CPP control of the state, a strong patronage system and, at times, extra-legal methods such as electoral fraud, reduce the impact of other parties.

The extent to which the political parties are oriented around patron-client relations in Cambodia should not be overlooked either. The CPP has a long reach into village level politics in Cambodia and builds its support by providing services and resources to citizens. Importantly, these things are not delivered by the state with the understanding that they have been delivered due to work by the party, but are frequently delivered directly by the CPP, making the patronage even more direct and party oriented. In some cases, according to some interviewees, local CPP officials use government resources not for their own personal good, but to provide direct patronage. This suggests an extremely strong and extremely party-centric degree of patronage in Cambodia. It also indicates that the governing party has strong relations with its constituents throughout most of the country.

When government is trying to do the right thing at all levels in Cambodia, it sees its work as about two things: distributing public goods and resolving disputes. The dispute resolution seems highly personal and case by case. There is little emphasis on rule of law, due process, precedent or anything of that nature. All government officials, elected and appointed, with whom we spoke described the work that they did as distributing goods, building infrastructure and the like. Representing citizens, deliberating about policies or even passing laws and legislating were largely foreign concepts to these officials, even those who were elected legislators. The disputes within government seem to be about the extent to which political loyalty is demanded in exchange for receiving services, the extent to which citizens have any input about how goods, or which goods, are distributed, and recourse citizens have if they do not like these decisions.

Other than the CPP there are several parties which are politically relevant in Cambodia; and eleven including the Sam Rainsy Party (SRP), the Norodom Ranariddh Party (NRP) the Human Rights Party (HRP) and FUNCINPEC competed in the 2008 elections. There are also numerous minor parties in Cambodia that are not represented in parliament or the commune councils and do not play a significant role in the country's politics.

The SRP and HRP are opposition parties, but it is not clear that in structure or style they are dramatically different from the CPP. The opposition parties, despite having platforms and positions on issues, remain substantially patronage oriented.

### **USAID-supported Work with Parties**

Since 2001, USAID has supported various aspects of political party development primarily through the two party institutes, NDI and IRI. This work has covered a gamut of activities – often overlapping with civil society and other programs – including public opinion polling, work with youth and women's caucuses, democratizing and decentralizing internal party structures and candidate debates. These projects, while focusing on a number of important facets of political party development, have generally been sporadic and even inconsistent in nature, as both NDI and IRI's party programs seem to have changed a good deal between 2001 and 2007.

In some cases, USAID programs, while very good, have in addition to encouraging political competition also reinforced Cambodia's strong patronage system. For example, the CD program, which is both a civic and a party program, while playing the important role of bringing MPs to the people, in many cases, according to both our interviews and the reports we have read, simply provided another opportunity for citizens to voice their problems and for MPs (almost always CPP MPs, because they had the connections) to address these problems by delivering goods, services or infrastructure. We were given almost no examples of policy questions being raised or addressed at these forums.

Polling has been done by IRI since 2006. IRI has done a total of four polls. This work has provided potentially valuable information for political parties seeking to develop messages, platforms and strategy. It has also helped provide a sense of the political environment more broadly in Cambodia to a number of non-governmental and international actors.

IRI and NDI have both worked with youth at various points between 2001 and 2007. In recent years, IRI has taken the lead in this area. IRI's youth programs have been primarily civic in na-

ture and will, accordingly, be discussed in greater depth elsewhere. However, they have also sought to strengthen youth branches of the political parties and to bring elements of internal democracy to these youth branches. NDI had done similar work earlier in the period.

NDI has been the primary organization working with women in politics. With regard to political parties, this work has consisted of campaign trainings for women as well as efforts to form a women's political caucus in the NA.

At various times between 2001 and 2007 both NDI and IRI have worked with parties on building internal democracy. While both institutes can point to some genuine success stories, there remains a great deal to be done in this area. However, greater internal democracy in Cambodia's political parties depends on political, not technical, decisions by party leadership. Internal democracy work is important, not just because of the need to democratize and decentralize these highly hierarchical parties, in which decision making for the party is made at the most senior national levels, but because it provides the institutes the opportunities to engage with and develop relationships with party leadership that can help lay the groundwork for further political party work.

Significantly, at no point during this time did either NDI or IRI have a broad, overarching political party program, which allowed for a range of interventions and programmatic flexibility, of the kind seen in many other countries around the region and elsewhere. Instead, party work often was the indirect product of another program. The youth and women's programs, for example, had a strong civil society component to them as well as the more traditional party activities described above. However, we recognize that the principal reasons why this type of broad political party program has not been implemented in Cambodia lies in funding constraints, USAID priority limitations, and political challenges of working in Cambodia. These reasons do not include a lack of initiative or vision by the party institutes.

One of the challenges facing political party work in Cambodia has been the need to work with all of the major parties, but generally in different ways. This is true in many countries, but particularly acute in Cambodia, where a competitive party system does not really exist.

For a number of years, the IRI program focused almost entirely on opposition parties. There are several dangers associated with this approach. In addition to the obvious political risk of the host government viewing the institute as aligned with the opposition, there are programmatic drawbacks to this approach as well. First, in a one party dominant system, working with only the opposition, often marginalizes the party institute. Second, there are usually legitimate opportunities within the governing party to help democratize the party, make it more responsive to voters and to build relationships with key reformers from the governing party, making work with them essential. Third, facilitating dialog between the parties at the leadership and grassroots level is important, but not possible if the governing party is not engaged. It can be difficult to build relationships with all parties simultaneously, but this is the approach and theory informing both NDI and IRI, so at this time Cambodia should not be an exception.

## **Analysis and Conclusions**

### *Status of Parties*

There are, of course, numerous factors which contribute to the failure of a competitive party system to emerge in Cambodia. These range from historical and geopolitical issues to more local and economic issues. One key reason why the CPP has been able to consolidate its rule, and may be able to hold on to power for some time is that it has delivered on a handful of basic policies which are of critical import to the Cambodian people. Another way of understanding this is that the CPP, not unlike other successful non-democratic ruling parties in the region, has established what amounts to a new social contract between the government and the people.<sup>5</sup>

While there are ample problems of governance in Cambodia including widespread corruption, growing disparities between rich and poor, rampant abuse of government power and a lack of freedom, particularly in the media arena, the CPP has been largely able to provide some key collective goods to the Cambodian people, in particular peace and stability and also infrastructure. The period of CPP rule has seen stability and economic growth that, while far from perfect, has been the best the Cambodian people have seen in quite some time. This can be partially attributed to the trauma of the Khmer Rouge period and the instability of the following decade or so which have greatly lowered the expectations which the Cambodian people have for their government, but it is still important.

Additionally, patronage systems, particularly if they are highly centralized, do not lend themselves to a great deal of political competition. There is little incentive for any voter to support an opposition that does not have the ability to dispense patronage. The exceptions are in cases when an opposition party controls a province or region and is able to dispense patronage in that area, but there are no obvious cases like this in Cambodia.

The CPP is not, however, a party that has been in power a long time. On the contrary, they have only consolidated power in the last eight years. Because of this, however, Cambodia is at an interesting crossroads. If the CPP leadership plays their cards well and, as is likely to be the case, encounters no real opposition from the international community, they should be able to further consolidate their power, continue to improve their governance and stay in power for a number of years as a strong, but non-democratic regime.

This is a likely scenario, but it is not guaranteed. There is still a prospect for strengthening democracy within Cambodia, but these opportunities would be better understood as possibilities for liberalization rather than democratization. Strengthening rule of law, reducing corruption, increasing media and other freedoms have all been important parts of USAID programming in Cambodia. These projects are all necessary components of democracy, but they are not sufficient. Missing here is the contestation or competition component, of which there is still little in Cambodia.

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<sup>5</sup> Freedom House, in 2008, gives Cambodia a score an average score of 5.5 on its two indices of political and civil freedom, making Cambodia comparable to several countries including, the Republic of Congo, Algeria, Russia and Tajikistan. For Cambodia, this score has remained unchanged for the last few years. This puts Cambodia in the category of “not free”.

### *USAID Work*

USAID supported work in Cambodia, implemented by NDI and IRI, might best be understood as a collection of programs which have in many cases been well executed and impressive, but which taken together have not made a major impact on Cambodia politics. This is not really the fault of the party institutes as some of these programs, such as the candidate debates, Constituency Dialogues or the Youth Council of Cambodia have been excellent and innovative programs. Instead, it speaks to both the difficulty of doing political party work in the limited political space in Cambodia and the lack of a cohesive vision underlying this party work.

Political party work in Cambodia has not quite been piecemeal, but it has lacked a holistic approach or an overall vision which either drove the programs or helped bring the somewhat disparate political party programs together. For example, IRI's polling program seemed to produce useful data, in which some of the political parties were interested. The polls are interesting and methodologically sound and therefore contribute an important new aspect to politics in Cambodia. However, these polls have not been leveraged to greater advantage. For example, few, if any, attempts were made to use these polls to increase the capacity of political parties to use data or think strategically in more than a superficial way. Moreover, there seemed to be no articulated reason of the linkages between the polling project and the broader democracy assistance mission, other than that polling is useful and interesting.

The emphasis on internal party democracy, shared by both NDI and IRI, was similarly not clearly driven by any strategic purpose. Again, internal party democracy is good in a democratic system, but it is not at all clear why this was emphasized in Cambodia during these years, particularly given all of the other problems facing the development of multi-party democracy.

One question that is unavoidable when looking at USAID-supported political party programs in Cambodia is the extent to which the whole is less than the sum of its parts. Strikingly absent from the Cambodian political party work has been the kind of broad NDI or IRI political party program that includes party trainings and capacity building, coalition building, party development and a consultative role, which is often seen in any countries. The absence of an overarching program has made it difficult for a whole to emerge from the disparate work of NDI and IRI either individually or together. It has also made it difficult for either NDI or IRI to think, and more importantly, act, strategically with regards to political parties. NDI and IRI have both done good work in Cambodia, but the party institutes tend to do their best work when they are given more flexibility so that they are able to take advantage of political opportunities as they arise and when they have the ability to work in different sectors *with regard to political parties*, such as campaign strategy, party platform development, parliament and the like. There is a great deal of overlap between these areas when doing party work. Being encouraged to work in all these areas makes it possible for NDI and IRI to continue to do good work and at the same time to increase their strategic relevance.

In the next few years, the challenge for USAID and the party institutes will not be to dramatically revamp programs, but to build on the programmatic successes to devise a strategy and range of programs that cleave more tightly to the body politic in Cambodia. This requires not just flexibility, as described above, but strategic thinking and a realistic vision of what impact NDI and IRI, on limited budgets in a reasonably constricted political environment, can have.

### *Conclusions*

In semi-authoritarian countries with one party dominant systems, it is not uncommon for the ruling party to enjoy a substantial amount of support, enough to win elections, even without having to resort to election fraud. However, in most cases such parties continue to resort to election fraud. This creates a sentiment voiced by donors and other international organizations that says essentially “Yes, the government is bad, but they probably would win an election anyway”. This description is probably empirically accurate with regard to Cambodia. More importantly, though, it is irrelevant when discussing questions of democracy. While Cambodia is not a democracy and the CPP is not a democratic party, it would be more accurate to describe the CPP as ‘a-democratic’ rather than undemocratic or anti-democratic. Although the CPP seems to understand the public relations value of democracy in gaining legitimacy in the international arena, on a more pragmatic level the CPP sees democracy as, at best, peripheral to its mission of providing stability and growth, albeit entirely on its terms and with little outside contestation, to Cambodia. If we are interested in democracy in Cambodia, we need to recognize this and program accordingly. This does not mean confronting the CPP or seeking to change governments, but it means recognizing that we are not as far down the path as we might think and that supporting what is simply better or more responsive governance, read patronage, is at best a necessary, but not at all a sufficient, component of the work that has to be done in Cambodia.

The major question confronting USAID with regard to political party development in Cambodia is not one of strategies, but one of goals. Cambodia is now a one-plus party system. To put it very frankly and starkly, USAID must determine whether its hope for Cambodia is that it either develops into a multi-party democracy, or into a more responsive and accountable one-and-a-half-party system. These are two very different goals. The former system is one where political power is fought over vigorously as outcomes of elections are sometimes in doubt, parties move with some frequency from government to opposition and back to government, and a range of views are represented in parliament and other legislatures. The latter is a system where there is no real question about which party will govern and elections serve to either limit or enable the power of that party.

Importantly, one does not lead linearly to the other. This might be somewhat counterintuitive as one would think that the transition from a one-and-a-half party system to a two-party system would be relatively easy, but one-and-a-half party systems can be quite stable as in South Africa, Japan or elsewhere. Moreover, supporting a multi-party system means supporting programs emphasizing contestation, while programs supporting one-and-a-half-party system tend to focus more on responsiveness and accountability exclusively.

It is important to be realistic about the scope and potential impact of USAID-supported work in Cambodia. With the DG budget likely to decrease, USAID will need to use its money in a very strategic and well focused way. Given that the goal of helping Cambodia develop a multi-party system is harder to reach, and more expensive, USAID may want to focus on helping Cambodia develop a more accountable and genuine one-and-a-half party system and structure its programming accordingly.

## Recommendations

- USAID needs to develop a cohesive vision for political party programming. The first question this vision needs to address is whether the goal of the program is to create a more accountable one-and-a-half-party system or to generate meaningful competition between parties. Importantly, achieving these two goals require different approaches. Similarly, NDI and IRI would also benefit from determining goals and vision which would make their programs more cohesive and strategic.
- Either NDI, IRI or both institutes should be given a broader political party program aimed at strengthening political parties generally. This would make it possible for them to engage with political parties on all levels. Resources would not allow such broad engagement, but the institutes should have several points of access to them and be able to both take advantage of opportunities and respond to needs which the parties articulate.
- USAID-supported political programs should continue to work with the CPP. In a country like Cambodia, party institutes that do not work with the governing party relegate themselves to the fringes of political life and party development. We recognize, and saw firsthand, the challenges of working with the CPP, but were also told that the CPP benefited from programs such as the CDs and polling. Efforts to strengthen these relationships on the part of NDI and IRI should be redoubled.
- Support programs to help political parties develop platforms. This is difficult where the major issue is essentially democracy, but differentiation between parties helps ensure the development of a more responsive and competitive political party system. There are a range of issues in Cambodia on which parties may differ, but these are not well expressed or understood. Stronger platforms would help parties strengthen themselves and may help politics develop into something other than competing patronage systems.
- USAID should explore a program working with village chiefs. Exposing village chiefs, who are a key link in maintaining CPP dominance, but largely overlooked by existing programs, to principles of democratic governance might begin to weaken CPP hegemony, particularly in rural Cambodia. Programs with village chiefs could include activities like conducting public meetings, interaction with CSOs and more general training and civic education.
- In the near future, elections are unlikely to play an important role in democratic development in Cambodia. Given the strong media control and absence of divisions between state and party, election outcomes are known in advance and primarily serve to strengthen and legitimize one party plus rule. USAID should not abandon all election support, for elections can and should be a critical factor in promoting accountability, but this should not be an important part of political party work.
- Because there are currently several legislative strengthening programs working in the NA, we do not recommend that USAID support a full fledged parliamentary program. However, parliament work is a natural and important component of political party work as parties must function well both in the electorate and in the legislature. Therefore, we recommend that one of the party institutes have a party-in-parliament program that includes party work in parliament including, but not limited to, activities like party caucuses, legislative strategy and legislative platform development.

These efforts would have a common denominator an objective of improving the policy focus and quality of political discourse. Working with parties in parliament is but one of several approaches suggested in this assessment.<sup>6</sup>

- The work that the party institutes do, as described above, keeps them somewhat on the periphery of political party work. To have a greater impact and be more at the center of this work, party programs should engage the party leadership directly. The particular programs that could help do this include ongoing coalition exercises, study trips, inter-party dialogs and the like.
- NDI and IRI do a great deal of work with women and youth within the parties. These programs, again, seem like good and effective programs, but they might be better leveraged so that they would have a greater impact and meaningfully strengthen the relationships between the party institutes and the parties. The youth and women's programs should be continued but rethought somewhat so that they can have greater impact on the parties broadly.

## 2. Electoral Systems

### Status and Trends

**The structure of voting at two levels.** Cambodia's electoral structure provides for direct popular election at two levels. First comes the National Assembly, where the 123 seats are allocated among the provinces, with each one having a number of seats based on population and ranging from at least one up to 18 in the case of the most populous province. Within each province, a rather complex Proportional Representation (PR) formula is used with an "open list" system, such that the candidates' names are listed in rank order on the ballot and winning parties in each province must award the seats they have won in that order. To put it another way, there are 24 parliamentary constituencies of various sizes in Cambodia, and each one constitutes its own PR constituency.

The other level for direct elections is the Commune Council (CC), of which there are 1621 in the whole country, varying in number between 173 in Kampong Cham province and only five in Kep province. Each CC covers one commune in rural areas or one sangat in urban zones, and has a number of councilors that varies with population but averages out at seven per commune. Again, a PR system is employed to allocate council members.

All candidates must belong to recognized political parties; independents may not run at either level. Altogether 12 parties fielded candidates for the 2007 local elections and 11 for the 2008 national elections, though only seven offered slates in both elections. The 2002 and 2003 elections were rather similar, with three larger parties in each (the Norodom Ranariddh Party had not yet then been formed) and a number of much smaller parties.

As with most elections, a multiplier effect helped the leading party, in that the CPP won a larger percentage of seats than it did votes in all four elections, as is clear in Tables A and B. For other parties, the situation was reversed, for they won more votes than seats. The effects were more pronounced in the national election than in the local elections. But compared with the single-

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<sup>6</sup> See section on Women in Politics below for another approach to this objective. These approaches are not mutually exclusive.

member constituency parliamentary systems found in Commonwealth countries and the United States, where the victorious party generally wins proportionally far more seats than votes, the multiplier effect did not seem excessive.<sup>7</sup> Even so, there were complaints from opposition parties that the allocation formula<sup>8</sup> favored the leading party (i.e., complaints about the system itself as well as more numerous complaints about the actual conduct of elections). In sum, the CPP has proved able to win a clear majority of votes in all elections except for the 2003 national election, when it won only a plurality, albeit a plurality that brought in more than twice as many votes as the next highest party. And those votes have translated into an overwhelming majority of seats.

**Table A.**  
**Commune Council elections, 2002 and 2007**  
Percentage of votes, seats and council chiefs by party

		CPP	SRP	Func	NRP	Others	Total
2002	Votes	61.0	16.7	22.1	na	0.2	100.0
	Seats	68.2	12.0	19.8	na	0.0	100.0
	Council chiefs	98.6	0.8	0.6	na	0.0	100.0
2007	Votes	60.8	25.2	5.4	8.1	0.5	100.0
	Seats	70.4	23.4	2.4	3.7	0.0	99.9
	Council chiefs	98.1	1.7	0.1	0.0	0.0	99.9

**Table B.**  
**National Assembly elections, 2003 and 2008**  
Percentage of votes and seats by party

		CPP	SRP	Func	NRP	Others	Total
2003	Votes	47.4	21.9	20.8	na	9.9	100.0
	Seats	64.6	18.6	16.8	na	0.0	100.0
2008	Votes	58.1	21.9	5.1	5.6	9.3	100.0
	Seats	73.1	21.2	1.6	1.6	2.4	99.8

In the CCs, the multiplier effect is further enhanced by the council's internal structure, in which the candidate of the party with the most seats becomes the chief, meaning that s/he<sup>9</sup> wields most of the power in the council. Thus in the 2007 election, the CPP won 60.8% of the commune

<sup>7</sup> It appears that PR systems inevitably exaggerate the seats won by larger parties and handicap the smaller parties at least a little bit, though not so much as single-member district systems (Rae 1971), so Cambodia is not unusual in this respect.

<sup>8</sup> See the section on parliamentary seats apportionment in National Election Committee, "Questions & Answers: Voting., Ballot Counting and Reporting of the Election Results" (Phnom Penh: NEC, 2008), Part V. Accessed on 20 October 2008 at <http://www.necselect.org.kh/English/Voting/2008/WEB%20Q&A%2008.07.08.pdf>.

<sup>9</sup> After the 2007 elections, 67 (or 4%) of the 1621 CCs found themselves with women as chiefs, while female council members altogether numbered 1663 or 14.6% of the total for the whole country.

council votes, which the allocation formula multiplier translated into just over 70% of the seats, but that then led to CPP gaining control of 98% of the 1621 CCs, a much larger multiplier. The individual at the head of the list for the party winning the next highest number of seats (even if it is only a single seat) becomes the 1<sup>st</sup> deputy and the third-highest party gets the 2<sup>nd</sup> deputy slot. These deputy positions are supposed to include supervision of various functions such as complaint resolution, social order and construction. After the 2007 election, the smaller parties picked up a good number of 1<sup>st</sup> deputy and 2<sup>nd</sup> deputy positions (e.g., the SRP won 963 (or 59%) of the 2<sup>nd</sup> deputy posts, but in the CCs we visited, these second- and third-level positions generally (though not always – there were exceptions) meant little, for the CPP (and the chief in particular) appeared to manage most of the council’s business by itself.

**Indirect elections at other levels.** The CCs serve as electors for three other levels of officials. Looking in one direction toward Phnom Penh, they elect (or will elect, inasmuch as the process is now being launched under the Organic Law and will go into effect in May 2009) members of the district and provincial councils (a number of communes comprise a district, and a number of districts make up a province). Looking in the other direction toward the citizenry, they choose chiefs for all the villages in their territory. Battambang, one of the provinces we visited, will illustrate the nesting of levels. The province contains 13 districts, which are divided into 96 communes, which in turn are composed of 787 villages, each with its own chief.

The most obvious result of the indirect election system is that the councils at provincial and district levels essentially reflect the composition of the CCs that elect them. If, for instance, 99 of Siem Reap’s 100 CCs are headed by CPP members and 474 of its total 668 CC members belong to the CPP, then the district and provincial councils will also be dominated by the CPP, and all the village chiefs (save in the one commune held by the SRP) will be CPP operatives. The indirect electoral system, in a word, gives the dominant party in CC elections something of a stranglehold over all levels of local governance. In particular, given that the CPP controls 1621 or 98% of the country’s commune councils, it has the right to appoint all the village chiefs in those communes. Not surprisingly, the village chiefs are generally considered to belong to the CPP.

**The voter rolls.** Cambodia has put together a complex system of voter registration, deletion and appeal. Voters initially register themselves, and annually the rolls are combed to delete names of deceased voters and those who have moved away. Then comes a six-week window during which voters can confirm their registration. If a voter finds him/herself deleted from the register, it is possible to file a form requesting reinstatement, and then there is another window before an actual election in which voters may again examine the register for their names and file complaints.

If nothing else, such a system clearly provides the grist for rumor mills to churn among opposition parties concerned about allegedly biased officials selectively deleting names of their supporters. In particular, there has been much concern that the NEC’s use of village chiefs to compile the names of voters to be deleted amounts to a blank check for discriminating against opposition party supporters, given that the chiefs in more than 98% of the country’s communes belong to the CPP. To check the validity of the voter registration lists, NDI has now twice sponsored a Voter Registration Audit (VRA).

## **USAID Support for Election Systems**

**Support for the 2007 elections.** For the commune elections, NDI worked along several fronts, quite similar to the support it provided for the following year's elections, which we focused on in much more detail, inasmuch as the later contest had occurred slightly more than two months prior to our visit. So we sum up the 2007 election support only briefly here. It consisted of the following major activities:

- Candidate debates in 30 communes in 10 provinces, which were broadcast on a number of radio stations.
- Training of Trainers (ToT) for polling agents for the four major political parties; the trainers in turn trained more than 95,000 people to be agents on election day.
- Election monitoring support for the Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL) and the Neutral and Impartial Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (NICFEC), which trained and deployed thousands of observation volunteers countrywide.

**Support for the 2008 elections.** For 2008, NDI provided support in several dimensions:

- Candidate debates. Some 22 debates between party candidates were organized in 11 provinces where more than three-quarters of Cambodians live, and a good number of these debates were televised on the state-owned network TVK as well as radio, the first time debates have been broadcast in Cambodia.
- Polling agent training. More than 300 party agents representing 10 parties received Training-of-Trainers instruction in a series of 3-day workshops. They evidently passed on what they had learned to larger numbers of polling agents, as parties were well represented on election day.
- Voter registration audit (VRA). Undertaken first in 2007 and then again in 2008 before the national election, this exercise endeavored to check the accuracy of the voter rolls by comparing the official voter lists with samples of citizens, as discussed in more detail below.
- SBO survey. On the election day itself, NDI funded a Sample-Based Observation (SBO) survey of 378 polling stations across the country to assess election mechanics (performance of officials and party polling agents, posting of results, etc.). The survey found for almost all of the items checked, performance was satisfactory in roughly 95% of cases. The only problem of significance to emerge concerned voters not finding their names on the official lists, also discussed below.

**The VRA.** The VRA, modeled on a similar exercise in Indonesia, compared the NEC voter registers with samples of citizens in three ways, as shown in Tables C and D:

- A registration list-to-people comparison, starting with the list and looking for a sample of those on it.
- A people-to-list comparison, starting with a surveyed sample of citizens and looking for their names on the list.
- A deletion list-to-people comparison, starting with the list of deleted voters and looking for a sample of those on it to see whether they were erroneously deleted.

Table C.

VRA: Checking the voter registration list against citizens: a two-way test

		Citizen is	
		On the registered voter list	Not on the registered voter list
Citizen should be	On the registered voter list	A. Correct: 85.3% (reading across); 84.1% (reading down)	B. Type II error (false negatives): 12.2%
	Not on the registered voter list	C. Type I error (false positives): 15.9%	D. Correct

Registration List-to-people survey can find those in cells A and C.

People-to-list survey can find those in cells A and B (Note: an additional 2.6% were registered voters in other communes and so should not be on two voter lists).

No way to find those in cell D (because the list contains only those registered).

Table D.

VRA: Checking the voter deletion list against citizens: a one-way test

		Citizen is	
		On the deletion list	Not on the deletion list
Citizen should be	On the deletion list (has died, moved away, etc.)	A. Correct: 84.3%	B. Type II error: False negative
	Not on the deletion list (registered to vote)	C. Type I error: False positives: 9.8%	D. Correct

Deletion list-to-people survey can find those in cells A and C.

No way to find those in cells B and D (because list contains only those deleted)

Note: An additional 5.4% of the deleted voters in the sample frame could not be determined as to status or residence.

The VRA initiative employs an excellent method for detecting what in statistics are known as Type I errors (“false positives” – including those who should be excluded) and Type II errors (“false negatives” – excluding those who should be included). The registration list-to-people survey showed that the NEC was correct in thinking that the list included a significant number of names that should be purged (15.9% in Table C), meaning that it was right to undertake the deletion exercise, while the people-to-list survey showed that many people (12.2% in Table C) who should be on the list were not. Finally, the deletion list-to-people survey showed that a good number (9.8% in Table D, which extrapolating from the sample would come to about 57,000

voters in the whole country) were erroneously purged, and that accordingly a process for reinstatement like the Form 1018 was needed to get them back on the voter rolls.

This exercise appears to have functioned well in providing a check on the NEC's performance in the 2008 election, and the fact that it found the NEC's work acceptable has conferred a kind of legitimacy that it otherwise would likely have lacked. Opposition political party members we talked with generally thought the VRA was useful, while CPP members and NEC officials were especially grateful for the seal of approval that it granted. As one NEC official put it, the VRA provided "a neutral referee" insuring the integrity of the registration system.

Since the VRA showed the NEC's work to be acceptable, it is reasonable to expect that the NEC could do an equally good job for the next election. Clearly it has the technical capacity to maintain an acceptably accurate register of voters. The real question, then, is not one of competence, but rather one of public credibility. Would the citizenry believe the NEC's work to be honest without a VRA? Doubts on this score led people from both the NEC and the CPP to say that they would very much like to have a VRA at the next election. SRP members appeared to think that the VRA is a good idea but believed it did not detect all the deleted names.

**The election of 2008.** The National Assembly election was held on 27 July 2008, and was reckoned by monitoring organizations<sup>10</sup> to have been a significant improvement over previous electoral contests. Violence was down amid a comparatively peaceful campaign period and voting day, administration in conducting the election and counting the ballots was more transparent, opposition parties did have access to state-owned as well as private television and radio outlets. Election day monitoring was impressive, with more than 70 Cambodian NGOs and over 30,000 observers involved.

Despite the improvements, the monitors generally concluded that the 2008 election fell short of meeting a number of key international standards and thus were not truly "free and fair." Though it allowed opposition parties some access to state-owned media, the CPP managed to get by far the lion's share of airtime. State property (especially vehicles) and state employees were commonly diverted to campaign purposes by the CPP. The election appeals process was handled by the NEC (and its local branches, the Provincial Election Committees (PECs) and the Commune Election Committees (CECs)) in what appeared to be a cavalier manner in many cases, with appeals summarily rejected.

The main tenor of complaint about the election, looking from our vantage point of 2½ months later, took two themes. The first concerned the Voter Information Notices (VINs), which were supposed to be delivered to each registered voter. These VINs assumed considerable importance in voters' minds, for almost half the registered voter population erroneously believed that their VIN had to be physically produced on election day in order to vote.<sup>11</sup> Village chiefs were en-

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<sup>10</sup> The most comprehensive reports came from COMFREL (2008), ANFREL (2008) and the European Union's observation mission (EU 2008).

<sup>11</sup> This finding emerged in NDI's VRA II report (page 21). The VRA survey was conducted in May 2008 (after a flawed first attempt in February), and the EU commission speculated that voter education campaigns on the part of the NEC and in the media, as well as specific information in the VIN itself must have corrected the erroneous belief among many voters between the VRA and the election in July 2008 (EU 2008: 18).

trusted with the task of distributing the VINs, and there were many charges that they selectively neglected to deliver the notices to known opposition party supporters.

A second problem lays in the opportunity to manipulate voter registration lists after the VRA had taken place. The team heard many anecdotal accounts of voters who had checked their registration, determined that everything was in order, and then showed up on election day to find their names absent from the official list. In such an event it was possible to appeal and get one's name restored to the list with a special form, giving rise to further complaints that large numbers of bogus voters had entered the rolls in this fashion.

**The SBO survey.** NDI's own SBO survey buttressed these complaints with its finding that in almost 25% of its sample polling stations, five or more citizens arrived to vote with proper identity documents but failed to find their names on the official voters' list. Unfortunately, the SBO did not record the actual number of voters thus frustrated at each polling station; it only noted whether five or more would-be voters found themselves in this situation. The absence of exact data meant that there was no accurate way to ascertain the actual incidence of citizens turned away, a fact which likely lent credence to the widespread stories and rumors. The SRP, for example, calculated that somewhere between 762,000 and 992,000 people had been disenfranchised through manipulation of the lists.<sup>12</sup>

In sum, USAID assistance appeared to the team to have contributed materially to making more relevant information available to voters (the candidate debates), to ensuring an acceptable level of transparency in voter registration (the VRA), to election-day monitoring (the polling agent ToT initiative), and to assessing the quality of election-day administration (the SBO survey). In particular, although the VRA cannot detect all kinds of voter deletions, it goes a long way in determining the integrity of official voter registration administration and creating public confidence in state ability to manage an honest election. It is an initiative worthy of inclusion in the USAID repertoire of election support tools.<sup>13</sup>

**Analysis: Role of the electoral system in the Cambodian polity.** As Cambodian politics have become steadily less competitive over the last 15 years, elections have changed their basic function. Whereas in the 1990s they served to promote real party contestation as a critical component of democratic governance, now they have come to operate largely as a plebiscitary mechanism by which the citizenry show their approval of the governing party. Theoretically the voters could also show their disapproval and vote the CPP out of office, but given the feebleness of the opposition and the absence of a free political or media environment, there is little likelihood of such an event occurring in the foreseeable future, especially if the CPP continues on its present course of consolidating its power with its strategy of guaranteeing an acceptable stability, providing patronage through both state and party, and establishing limits on the expression of

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<sup>12</sup> See [http://www.samrainsyparty.org/election\\_2008/irregularity\\_on\\_election\\_2008.htm](http://www.samrainsyparty.org/election_2008/irregularity_on_election_2008.htm) and especially [http://www.samrainsyparty.org/archives/achieve\\_08/august/080811\\_election\\_provincial\\_result.htm](http://www.samrainsyparty.org/archives/achieve_08/august/080811_election_provincial_result.htm), both accessed on 7 November 2008.

<sup>13</sup> The team understands that the Center for Advanced Study (CAS) will be presenting the VRA at a regional conference in Indonesia during the fall of 2008, which hopefully will lead to interest from other USAID missions and even the Agency's DG office in Washington.

dissenting opinions.<sup>14</sup> Opposition parties presently cannot provide patronage, have little ‘voice’ in the National Assembly, and like the media and the CSO community they labor under restrictions on their freedom of expression. Their appeal is confined largely to urban areas where these restrictions are less onerous. In such a political environment, genuine party competition cannot be a real component of Cambodia’s governance structure at the present time.

But that does not mean that elections are insignificant or that donor support for the electoral process is a waste of time and effort. Elections continue to be important for at least two reasons. First, assuming that they are reasonably transparent, they do serve a certain accountability function in that the CPP has been taking them seriously as a major component of its public face. Party members participated sincerely in NDI’s polling agent training offered, took part earnestly in NDI’s Constituency Dialogues, and involved themselves enthusiastically in the candidate debates, according to what the team learned, when they could have ignored all these opportunities and still won the election easily. The reason for this embrace has to be that the CPP’s leadership feels it needs to obtain a real electoral mandate to govern, not just the pro forma approval that it would receive in what would amount to an uncontested election. In other words, the CPP wants the legitimacy that comes from a genuine popular electoral victory, both nationally and internationally and is willing to pay the price of taking elections seriously and accounting for itself to the voters in order to obtain that legitimacy. Thus while the neo-patrimonialism that characterizes the CPP continues as the dominant mechanism keeping it atop the governance structure, electoral accountability plays a significant role here also.

A second reason to support the electoral process is that it maintains citizen awareness of other political parties, not as feasible alternatives for managing the state (at the present time, that is), but as sources of different ideas about how the state might be run. The absence of much opposition interest in policy issues makes this a harder case to argue, but hopefully over time minority party leaders will become more policy oriented. In the meantime, it is important to maintain a plurality of political voices (even if they are not credible alternatives for taking the reins of power), and transparent elections are the best way to do that.

The team believes that Cambodia’s electoral process should be supported, in particular the activities that have been unique to NDI: candidate debates and the two survey initiatives, the VRA and the SBO. But should USAID be the agency providing that support? Other donors, most notably the UNDP, have also been providing electoral system support and could perhaps fill the gap if USAID were to redirect its DG assistance. UNDP, for instance, cooperated with USAID in funding the VRA survey and could possibly take it over entirely. While the electoral process should be supported, expectations need to be realistic. Elections are not going to be a lynchpin for democratic change in Cambodia anytime soon.

Ultimately, the issue comes down to one of USG policy objectives and leverage enabling it to work toward them. If the USG is willing to aim for democratization in the long term (10 years +) and for sustaining a minimal but hopefully increasing level of accountability in the meantime, it makes sense to continue its electoral system support. Doing so will give it a seat at the table to

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<sup>14</sup> As if to confirm the improbability of the CPP’s being ousted electorally, only 40% of those surveyed in IRI’s spring 2008 poll thought the CPP would give up power if it lost the election, while 37% believed it would not do so.

engage in dialogue with the GOC concerning the very heart of the governance structure. Abandoning electoral support will mean forfeiting that place.

### Recommendations

- The VRA has been a unique and highly worthwhile USAID contribution to democratization in Cambodia and should be continued, though its cost (c. \$75-90k) may make it an expensive component in a downsized DG program. UNDP might be induced to help sponsor the exercise in part (as it did previously) or even altogether.<sup>15</sup> In any case, this would be our highest priority for electoral system support.
- The SBO also serves a valuable function in assuring election transparency and should be continued,<sup>16</sup> but this activity could also be sponsored by other donors.
- Candidate debates played a pioneer role in providing voters an opportunity through the broadcast media to see and hear those campaigning. They should be continued, but NICFEC and COMFREL should have the necessary expertise to carry on this work, possibly with some support from USAID and/or other donors.
- Training poll agents and monitors has also been valuable, but as with the candidate debates, NICFEC and COMFREL should be able to handle this work in the future, with some support from donors including USAID. We would consider them along with the candidate debates to be of lower priority than the VRA and SBO, which have been unique USAID contributions.

## 3. Electoral Reform

### Status

Over the last several years, a number of studies have focused on the electoral system and have concluded with recommendations for reform. Among these groups have been an EU Election Observation Mission in 2003, the Cambodian office of the UN High Commissioner on Human Rights in 2002 and 2003, COMFREL in 2003, an NDI-sponsored Expert Committee in 2006, and a UNDP report in 2007 written by Daniel Finn.<sup>17</sup> The latest such ventures are COMFREL's 2008 national election report and the EU's Election Observation Mission report on the 2008 election, both of which were released in October during the assessment team's visit to Cambodia.<sup>18</sup> A third recent report including reform recommendations was issued by the Asian Network for Free Elections (ANFREL) after the July 2008 contest.<sup>19</sup>

Many recommendations emerged in these reports, among which the major ones have been:

- Separating the NEC from the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and making it an independent body, or at the very least physically moving it from the MoI compound, so as to diminish the perception that it is controlled by the CPP from the MoI.

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<sup>15</sup> In addition to USAID-NDI and UNDP, the VRA was also supported by the Australian Agency for International Development (AusAID), the Canadian Agency for International Development (CIDA) and the Swedish Agency for International Development (SIDA). Some combination of these donors might also step forward to help support a VRA III exercise in the future.

<sup>16</sup> With a correction of the "over 5 voters turned away" item discussed above so that the actual number is recorded for each polling station.

<sup>17</sup> See Finn (2007: 5-9 for a good summary of these earlier reports, except for the Expert Commission.

<sup>18</sup> COMFREL (2008) and EU (2008).

<sup>19</sup> See ANFREL (2008).

- Splitting off the election complaint resolution process from the main body of the NEC so that a single unified agency would not be responsible both for administering an election and adjudicating complaints about its administration.
- Reducing the role of village chiefs in working as the NEC's main source for disseminating information about elections to voters, forwarding names for deletion from the registration list, etc.
- Establishing a minimum quota (generally 30%) for women as candidates, party officials, etc.
- Assuring equitable access for all parties to state-owned media during election campaign periods and enacting provisions for licensing electronic media to opposition parties.
- Guaranteeing freedom of speech to the media to investigate and report on all aspects of the electoral process.
- Requiring greater transparency in reporting campaign expenditures.

Some changes have taken place in NEC operations in response to recommendations. The NEC itself has been increased from five members (all CPP) to nine, with the SRP and FUNCINPEC each gaining two seats.<sup>20</sup> And the ballot counting, which had mixed boxes from several stations together before counting, was conducted by individual polling stations for the 2007 and 2008 elections. But these reforms have had in the first case no visible effect and in the second a quite possibly negative effect on election conduct. The new NEC members have not been able to affect that body's conduct, given the continuing CPP majority, and while the reformed ballot counting arguably reduced the scope for manipulating the returns (under the old system, voters could not tell if the ballots from their village were really being counted or had been replaced with bogus ballots), it increased the opportunities for intimidation in that pockets of opposition could be targeted at the village level for retribution from the dominant party.<sup>21</sup>

Some reforms may become less necessary in time as election administration improves, e.g., the UNDP's program to provide ID cards to all citizens should make elections run more smoothly and reduce opportunity for possible mischief on the part of village chiefs. Overall, though, the list stands unrealized and in all likelihood will continue to do so.

## Analysis

It is reasonable to believe that by now the major electoral reform proposals, along with the justification for them, are widely understood within the NEC in particular, the GoC in general, the major political parties, and the donor community. Indeed, the recommendations for reform coming forward after the 2008 election are in large part the same as those emerging from 2003. There is surely little need for further studies of the topic. The CPP and the state know quite well what needs to be done to make the electoral system transparent and to make elections truly free and fair. The fact that so little reform has occurred can only mean that these two overlapping in-

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<sup>20</sup> The NEC expansion was a recommendation made by the NDI-sponsored Expert Committee.

<sup>21</sup> IRI's post-election survey in 2007 found that more than 94% of respondents felt "free and safe" to vote for their favorite party, while a large majority felt either very confident (70%) or somewhat confident (another 20%) that their individual ballots were in fact secret, so it is safe to say that voters did not feel intimidated at election time. At the same time, there were many allegations that communes not electing the CPP to run their councils were short-changed in benefits afterwards. The same could have been true of individual villages not supporting the CPP in the election.

stitutions do not wish to engage seriously in reform at the present time. There may be small factions within them that would like to undertake reforms of one sort or another, but the dominant stance of the leadership is clearly that the electoral system as it now stands works well and does not require much more than minor tinkering.

Electoral reform, in short, is now a policy issue for the GoC. It is no longer one with any unexplored technical dimension. For donors, it is a diplomatic issue requiring the expenditure of a probably dwindling stock of political capital if any traction is to be gained with the GoC. How important is pressing for electoral reform, as compared with preserving stability, insuring access to oil and gas potential, or countering an increasing Chinese influence in the halls of government? These are the relevant questions to ask in judging how far to push for electoral system reform in Cambodia.

### **Recommendation**

Electoral reform is not in need of further study. If it is to be pursued (and we think it should be), it will have to be as a diplomatic effort managed from the U.S. Embassy, not as a USAID-sponsored initiative with reports and workshops.

## **4. Strengthening Parliament and the Role of MNAs**

### **Status**

Most observers with whom we spoke in Cambodia described the Cambodian National Assembly as a rubber stamp, simply approving of the policies determined by the government and the ruling party. This assessment is wrong because, as former New York City Council Member Henry Stern pointed out when asked if the New York City Council was a rubber stamp, “a rubber stamp leaves an impression.” While the Cambodian National Assembly’s new building certainly does make an impression, its work does not seem to even leave an impression.

The National Assembly is weak institutionally and politically. It does not take the lead on policy creation, nor does it in any way act as an institutional check on the government. Moreover, the National Assembly is not a center of debate or deliberation. Instead, legislation is proposed by the government and almost always moves through the Parliament quickly with little opposition, debate or even discussion.<sup>22</sup>

As is typical in a regime like the current Cambodian one, the National Assembly is constituted substantially by back benchers who have little interest in their legislative responsibilities or in democracy. Instead, these MNAs are interested in money-making opportunities, status and proximity to the true centers of political power in Cambodia which lie mostly in the executive branch of government and in the ruling CPP.

From our discussions with MPs, as well as with a range of civic and political actors and Cambodia, it became clear that when MNAs take their work seriously, their emphasis is on problem solving and patronage rather than on lawmaking, deliberation or representation. This is exacerbated by a tendency of both local and provincial officials as well as civic organizations and citi-

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<sup>22</sup> An exception reported to us underlines the point here. This was the vigorous debate provoked in the NA over proposed traffic regulations for Phnom Penh. While surely a matter of concern to urban residents with automobiles, this scarcely qualifies as an issue of grave national import.

zens' groups to understand the role of MNAs, and in fact government in general, essentially as determining what development projects will be placed where. This further demonstrates the extent to which the Cambodian political system is strongly patron-client oriented.

The National Assembly is, not surprisingly, dominated by the CPP with 90 out of 123 members belonging to the ruling party. It is not insignificant that there are only 29 members of parties other than the CPP and its allies in Parliament, because 30 members would give the opposition the ability to block some legislation. As it stands now, opposition MNAs are largely powerless in the national legislature. The primary business of the legislature is dispensing patronage, development projects and other goods and services. This patronage is delivered almost entirely through members of the ruling party. Thus while opposition party MNAs have the ability to identify and even draw attention to problems, they have almost no ability to, in the eyes of their constituents, solve problems.

Although the NA is currently not a place of great democratic activity, or a hotbed of political debate and discussion, it is still an important institution in Cambodia's structure of governance and potential path to democracy. A number of people with whom we spoke who work with parliament asserted that there were a number, albeit a relative handful, of MNAs who are interested in improving and professionalizing the MNA, making it a legitimate legislature and helping it to play a larger role in governance. Because of the tremendous potential import of the NA in the development of a more responsive and accountable, yet still largely undemocratic Cambodia, these MNAs cannot be overlooked.

### **USAID Work in the NA**

Currently, USAID does not support any programming intended to strengthen the NA. There is no legislative support program funded by USAID; and while NDI and IRI have contact with MPs through their political party programs, neither institute directly engages with Parliament. However, there are international programs in the NA as both the UNDP and the Canadian Agency for International Development (CIDA) have substantial legislative support programs with strong presences in the NA.

The UNDP's Technical Coordination Secretariat offers, not surprisingly, technical support to the NA through a Legislative Assistance Program (LEAP). The major areas, in which LEAP works, are building the technical capacity of the Parliament and its committees, supporting the NA's secretariat and providing technical coordination assistance to the NA. Specific programs offered by LEAP include study trips and trainings on a range of topics including legal analysis, IT, shorthand and strategic management.

The Cambodia-Canada Legislative Support Program (CCLSP) focuses on three areas: lawmaking activity, representation and leadership. In addition to offering trainings on a range of related topics, the CCLSP has created guidebooks and manuals for MPs and citizens. They have also taken MPs on study tours to Asia, North America and Africa and provided material support in the form of roughly 60 computers.

The programs in the NA are highly technical in nature offering a range of technical support. However, there seems to be little attention paid to the more political nature of the legislature.

MNAs are viewed through these programs as people needing to sharpen their technical skills, but the MNAs themselves tend to see their problems as political. Support for the NA that recognizes the inherently political nature of the institution appears to be largely missing.

## **Analysis and Conclusions**

### *Status*

The weakness of the NA is evidence of the weakness of Cambodian democracy. In a political system dominated by one party with very limited media freedom, it is hard to imagine that the national legislature would be a place of vibrant democratic activity. However, the NA is also weakened by the strength of the client-patron system that permeates all of Cambodia's politics.

According to the several MPs with whom we met, there is very little deliberation in the NA as most MPs, when they work at all, focus on providing specific solutions, often in the form of government or privately funded services and resources, to specific problems. This kind of work does not require a functioning legislature, understanding of issues, evidence to support a policy, or the ability to mark up a piece of legislation. Instead, it rests upon each MP having access to private money and to relationships throughout the government, generally facilitated by membership in the governing party.

While most parties understand that elections are important, there is little effort to transform the NA into a politically important institution. This transformation would mean bringing about some debate and discussion over policy, providing the opposition an opportunity to more aggressively take positions, call for investigations, etc. The NA would be strengthened even if the government party continued to dominate these disputes and ignore calls for investigations.

For the governing party, there is not yet any incentive to do this, but for the opposition there is substantial incentive. The rules of the NA, however, offer almost no rights to the opposition, with severe limitations even on the amount of time opposition MNAs may speak, so making the NA relevant politically is a significant challenge for the opposition. With advice and guidance, however, the opposition could begin to make some progress here. This would help provide some institutional breadth to Cambodia's democratic development.

### *USAID Work*

USAID has not been deeply engaged in supporting the NA, presumably because there are other international organizations that have a greater focus on the NA. But USAID should not walk away entirely from the NA, because the Agency can provide a different kind of support to the Parliament mostly through existing programs. Clearly, the NA is amply served by technical projects seeking to provide technical support and capacity building.

These programs are, however, limited by their very natures. Offering technical support to the NA is important because, according to most observers and members with whom we spoke, the NA does not function on a high technical level. Members are unfamiliar with basic legislative procedures; there are not many people who understand legal drafting; even IT ability is relatively low. However, the challenges facing the NA are not entirely or even mostly technical in nature, so technical programs will only be able to contribute to strengthening the NA in a limited way as political considerations will inevitably take over.

USAID supports the strongest and largest political party programs in Cambodia, but these programs do not engage as much as they might with the NA, because they overlook the political aspect of the legislature. There is an intersection between legislative and political party work. Most serious legislators exist at this intersection where political and technical or partisan and legislative concerns both contribute to actions and decisions in parliament. Appealing to the partisan and political sentiments of MNAs is an effective way to get them enthused about parliamentary programs, and indeed strengthening parliament. Programs that focus on legislative strategy, platform development, public hearings and other related projects, can play a key role in making parliament an engine of democratization, rather than a den of patronism.

### *Conclusions*

Currently, the Parliament is not an engine of democratization in Cambodia, nor does it play a particularly central role in governance as it is controlled by the one party and seemingly subservient to the executive branch of government. Moreover, to the extent it functions at all, it functions as a means of distributing service and goods, or more accurately, patronage, to various parts of Cambodia.

This Parliament is, to paraphrase Lyndon Johnson, the only Parliament we've got in Cambodia; and for that reason it should not be ignored entirely. If the NA functioned well, USAID's democracy and governance work in Cambodia would be far less urgent. Cambodian politicians and political parties think Parliament is important, as demonstrated by how competitive and hard fought parliamentary elections here have been. Unfortunately, the winner-take-all nature of Parliament undercuts this.

USAID should not duplicate the work of LEAP or CCLSP, which both seem to be implementing reasonably straightforward, and under the circumstances, effective, legislative strengthening programs. It would be far more valuable for USAID to support work which compliments these existing programs. This work would be best done through the party institutes and would link work in the legislature to broader political party work as described above.

The party institute work can help the NA develop into a democratic space, where there can be more deliberation and a range of political voices can be heard. This will require working with the parties both inside and outside of Parliament, and will not directly result in different political outcomes but will increase pluralism and competition in the Cambodian polity.

### **Recommendations**

- Work with the Parliament should not only emphasize constituency relations. While the connection between constituents and representatives is far from strong, this is about the only area which MPs seem to take seriously at all. Other parts of the work of the Parliament are overlooked entirely.
- Work in the NA should focus less on constituency services and more on legislative and policy issues. This can be done substantially through existing programs. For example, the CD program can move towards forums on proposed pieces of legislation or towards fact finding meetings for members of a specific committee in the NA. Debates between MPs can be narrowed to focus on only a few issues and corresponding legislation.

- The small number of MPs from all parties who are interested in working to create a stronger legislature should be identified and brought together in fora, workshops and perhaps even study trips where they can interact with each other and garner ideas from outside experts about what a national legislature can and should do. It is essential that these programs be recurring and consistently involve the same, multi-party, group of people.
- Again, perhaps working through existing political party programs, continuing to expand and define the rights of the minority in the NA is very important. Currently, the NA is completely dominated by the majority party to the point where the minority parties cannot even participate in debate in anything but a cursory way. Additionally, defining minority party rights helps lower the stakes around elections. If parties know they will have some rights if they are not in the majority, they may be more willing to accede to defeat in elections.
- Helping parties to develop their own legislative agendas would help the NA function better as well as allow parties to better define themselves and differentiate between each other. It would help opposition parties, in particular, stand for something more clear than “democracy”, “fairness” and against corruption. Development of legislative agendas would include both identifying specific policy priorities and creating corresponding proposed legislation in each of these policy areas.

## **5. Promoting the Role of Women**

### **Status**

Although the ratio of women to men was high directly after the end of hostilities in 1989-90, this ratio had declined significantly by 1998 to females making up 51.9 % of the population. However, the ratio of women to men above age 30 is dramatically tipped toward women largely reflecting the number of males killed during the periods of the KR and subsequent insurgencies. In an economy as poor as the Cambodian one, especially for the 80% of the population still making their living in rural areas, this means that women must provide a good share of the labor force, in addition to raising families, often without men in the household. These demographic differences are reinforced by the general hierarchical and male dominated political and social structure of Cambodian culture. Traditional values define women’s proper place as in the home, caring for husband and children and elderly relatives. The economic realities of Cambodia place demands on Cambodian women however, that are not matched by traditional norms. Women tend to be early school leavers, especially in rural areas, hence do not achieve the same levels of literacy and numeracy as males. As noted in the Cambodian official census report on women in 1998, women are placed by demographics and society in an inferior position, yet expected to contribute more than their share to the labor force. As the garment industry developed over the last ten or so years, more and more women have moved from impoverished rural areas to seek employment, adding an additional dynamic to the situation of older women left behind in the countryside.

### **Women in Politics and Government**

Largely due to the effectiveness of several women’s organizations, as well as pressure from the international community over issues such as economic exploitation, domestic abuse and trafficking in women, Cambodia has joined international agreements on the protection of the rights of women, and has passed legislation against discrimination in the work place, and against trafficking. It has also created a Ministry of Women’s affairs, whose first Minister emerged from the NGO community. Moreover, many of the NGOs active in advancing the cause of gender equity,

protection and advancement for women, have joined together in a network of cooperation with female members of the National Assembly to form the Women's Political Caucus. The Caucus, supported by the NDI, has taken an active role in organizing workshops, training programs and issue forums across partisan lines.

At the same time, a growing number of women's CSOs are emerging in some of the more advanced provinces. Moreover, many of the social service as well as the human rights organizations are run by Cambodian women.

As measured by the number of women in elected and governmental positions, the record indicates that women are substantially underrepresented, given their numbers and importance in the economic and social organizational life of the country. Women make up 53.5 percent of the registered electorate. Taking together women elected to commune councils in 2007, as well as those directly elected to National Assembly and indirectly to the Senate, the total number of women in elected positions was 1691, or 14.6 % of the 11, 531 positions.

Reviewing the number of women appointed to government positions, women occupy 244 of 790 or 30% of appointed positions ranging from Secretaries of State to Deputy District Governors.

Table E.  
Cambodia: Women in Elected Positions

Electoral level	Number of positions	Number of women	Percent 2008	Percent 2003
<i>Communes</i>	11,353	1662	14,6	N/A
<i>National Assembly</i>	123	20	16	19.5
<i>Senate (indirect)</i>	61	9	14.6 (2007)	13 (2005)

Sources: 1. Cambodian NGO Women for Prosperity

2. Kingdom of Cambodia National Election Committee: Number of Women elected as Communes Councils' Members for 2007 Commune Council Elections Nationwide.

Table F  
Cambodia: Women in Government Leadership Positions

Government level	Number of positions 2008	Number of Women	Percent 2008	Percent 2003
<i>Secretaries of State</i>	198	16	8	7
<i>Under Secretaries</i>	205	30	14,6	9.6
<i>Provincial-Municipal governors</i>	24	0	0	0
<i>Deputy Governors</i>	202	23	11.4	N.A.
<i>District Deputy Governors</i>	185 (districts)	169	91,3	N.A.

Note: The Province and District levels have more than one Deputy, so the actual number of deputy positions is unknown.

Source: Data compiled by Cambodian NGO, Women for Prosperity.

It should also be noted that the vast majority of these women are CPP members, especially in appointed positions. At the Commune level, 1393 of the 1661 women councilors are CPP. In the Senate, 8 of the 10 women are CPP.

Altogether, about 15% of leadership positions in the Cambodia political system are occupied by women. By any estimate, 1682 women constitute a potential force for progressive policies, especially for the Cambodian social issue agenda.

### **USAID Involvement**

NDI has been a major supporter and organizer of the Cambodian Women's Political Caucus since the 2003 election. It has provided training, study tours, and general organizational support for workshops, conferences, and media events highlighting the common concerns of women regardless of party affiliation. NDI has also provided support to NGOs dedicated to the cause of women's advancement and human rights in Cambodia. NDI's efforts, along with other donors, have helped to create a vibrant set of women leaders whose ability to work together across party and organizational lines is impressive. As part of its strategy, NDI has successfully begun to move 'ownership' of the organizational role to the Women's Caucus. Interviews with leaders of NGOs such as SILAKA and Women for Prosperity suggest that there is an abundance of management capacity in the women's network, which also includes other leading NGO organizations such as the Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC) as well as the Ministry of Women's Affairs.

### **Analysis and Conclusions**

It is obvious that Cambodian women are underrepresented in politics and government relative to their numbers and importance. Cambodia does not have a reserved seat or appointment system which would guarantee representation, so it appears that women's representation in elected positions compares well with nearby democratic countries. For example, in neighboring Thailand, in 2001 women filled 10 % of the Senate and 6% of House of Representative seats and only 6.7 % of local government elected and appointed positions.<sup>23</sup>

However, the numbers tend to mask the fact that women rarely achieve positions of real power. Note for example that there are no women Provincial Governors, and only 63 of the 1621 Communes have a woman as the Chief. Nevertheless, the political dominance of the CPP insures that most of the women who do have positions are also CPP, which provides an opportunity to strengthen potential progressive elements within the ruling party.

Based on interviews with women NGO leaders, MPs and several Deputy Governors, there is some evidence to suggest that women in leadership positions have a different view of policy priorities and needs of the Cambodian people. Women are more concerned with the social agenda of development. As one woman pointed out in an interview, the government and the CPP take pride in producing infrastructure projects throughout the country. As discussed earlier, these projects are valued by the voting population and contribute to the political dominance of CPP at election time. The respondent noted, however, that schools without good teachers, health clinics without trained personnel and medicines are of little real value. At some point these human re-

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<sup>23</sup> UNESCAP: Comparative Analysis of Role of Women in Local Government in 13 Countries. 2001.

source and management weaknesses will begin to register on the body politic, and may force government to be more competent and accountable for the delivery of social services.

### **Recommendations**

It is precisely because elected and appointed women are not, for the most part, powerful political actors in the patronage politics sense of the word that these women may constitute a potential force for a different, more policy focused and rational approach to public policy decision making in Cambodia. To make this effort more inclusive, it may be possible to expand the Women's network to include the 1661 entry point women at the Commune level. It might be possible to recruit women NGO leaders to the network, reaching out especially to those who operate health, education and women's programs. This might also provide a synergistic link between the Women's caucus and the NDI supported Constituency Dialogue program.

The NDI effort to shift ownership and responsibility to the Women's caucus and networks is the right strategy, but it should not signal a withdrawal from engagement with this sector of the political leadership class. The current difficulty of organizing any meaningful debate in the National Assembly may provide an opportunity for elected and appointed women to create an "alternative forum" to the Assembly wherein substantive issues and policy choices for the social agenda could be discussed, debated, and aired to the more general public through radio and television media.<sup>24</sup>

Lastly, efforts to expand the range and content of the Women's caucus should be an important part of a broader strategy as proposed in Section III.A. Working with women leaders to focus on broader policy issues will contribute to higher level USAID strategic objectives.

## **6. Promoting the Role of Youth in Politics and Government**

Assessing the status of youth in Cambodian politics and government is difficult, in part because the young are even more invisible than women in the Cambodian social hierarchy, and in part because they are young. The 2008 Census figures have not been released in any detail, but one can extrapolate that the 18-30 year old cohort could be as much as 30% or somewhat over 4 million of the Cambodian population of almost 14 million people. The Census figures released so far indicate that 80% of the population still lives in rural areas. Being mobile, young people do move in the direction of employment which usually means toward more urban areas. This would suggest that nearly three million young people still live in rural areas.

While official literacy rates have been steadily improving since 1998, the United Nations estimates that functional literacy is substantially lower, especially among young women in rural areas. The Cambodian National Institute of Statistics estimates that only 19% of the population completed Grade 9, the last grade before college or other advanced training. The same report

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<sup>24</sup> A Mission comment with regard to this recommendation was, "how would we quantify the impact of this over time?" A separate paper is being prepared on DG Metrics: Suggestions from the Cambodian DG Assessment. A critical recommendation will be to use polling to establish a baseline on a number of knowledge, attitude and practice dimensions referencing expected democratic norms and expectations. Disaggregated by gender, the expectation is that after some time, Cambodian women's expectations with regard to social agenda (policy) issues would begin to increase and become more specific.

states that 8000 students per year graduate from the 47 colleges and universities accredited by the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports.

Our interviews with public interest NGO leaders in Phnom Penh provide anecdotal evidence that a new leadership group is emerging. These young people grew up in Cambodia, received advanced education abroad, and are returning to challenging positions in the NGO community.

In an effort to determine the extent to which the Cambodian educational curriculum provides for civic education, a review of the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports curriculum policy guidelines does show required courses in developing a deep understanding of what it means to be a Cambodian, as well as courses devoted to moral and ethical responsibilities of good citizenship. It is difficult to extract from this the extent to which “democratic practices and values” are a regular part of the Cambodian student’s experience during his/her school years.

Evidence from interviews with IRI, NGOs and CPP leaders is largely anecdotal. There are youth wings in each of the major parties, but some observers said these were somewhat formalistic in nature, led by very senior ‘young people’, and made up of sons and daughters of party members. This is probably too cynical, but may contain an element of truth. More likely there are young people in the party youth wings who are idealistic and committed to public service.<sup>25</sup>

### **USAID-supported Programs**

Both NDI and IRI have worked with party youth wings as an entry point to internal reform, introducing democratic principles and elections for leadership, as well as providing training, workshops, competitive debate opportunities, and other incentives designed to promote deeper commitment to democratic principles and practice.

Since about 2006, IRI has taken the lead in promoting democratic learning among youth, through the holding of youth fairs, and follow-up Advanced Democracy Seminars (ADS) at the provincial level. IRI works through the Youth Council of Cambodia, one of several NGOs working to promote youth activism and participation in democratic politics and society. Meetings with Youth Council leaders as well as young graduates of IRI/YCC training programs demonstrated the enthusiasm of Cambodian participants for the program. They especially liked the opportunity to apply what they had learned in practical ways, such as ‘get out the vote’ campaigns prior to the last election.

### **Analysis and Conclusions**

Clearly the number of young people in this age group, the still low levels of education generally, and the necessity for the sons and daughters to start working early to support their families means that most of these people will not be accessed by the kind of program run by IRI. This does not detract from its value. What we learned was positive, and the enthusiasm of the young ADS graduates was compelling. It does suggest that any youth program needs to be realistic in its expectations of the transformative effect of the effort. Even among the relatively small number of a few thousand young people trained, the nature of Cambodian social hierarchy and the

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<sup>25</sup> An interview with one educated urban Cambodian 27 year old yielded an interesting statement: “I like the CPP, but I work for SRP because I think there should be an opposition.”

corrosive effect of corruption will undermine for many young people the idealism and self confidence learned through the IRI program.

Social transformation is a slow evolutionary process, especially for those without education or access to the brave new worlds of global information. However, all evolutionary changes have been led by those who chose a different path. The extent to which the IRI program is facilitating and promoting that choice is the measure of its ultimate value and impact.

### **Recommendations**

The IRI program should be continued, but refocused as a ‘democratic leadership’ program, which is, to a great extent, what it already really is. As such, USAID and IRI should consider ways to transform the participants into future leaders for Cambodia. Programmatically this means a strategy which identifies young people who show promise, and provide incentives and opportunities over a longer period of time for them to realize their potential. This might mean internships, study tours, even preferred access to education in Cambodia, or abroad. The basic objective is to promote a leadership class that not only ‘knows’ about democratic principles, but has internalized those principles and behaviors as their own and to link work with youth to broader program goals. This can only occur through iterative experiences designed to reward and reinforce both attitudes and behaviors. In other words, the objective is not to expand the ‘numbers’, but deepen the quality and longevity of the IRI democratic experience through more or less continuous stewardship.

A ‘democratic leadership’ program would not produce short term, quantifiable impact. The payoff to such an effort would be truly apparent only after 10-15 or more years, as the young leaders benefiting from it would come into senior positions in government, parties and civil society. But it is necessary to bear in mind that the Cambodian population is an overwhelmingly youthful one, while the leadership group in the CPP and other parties is still dominated by individuals whose basic political orientation was formed in a very different, unstable and violent environment of the 1970-1997 period. Over the next ten years, leadership change will begin to occur at even the highest levels. Opportunities for a younger generation of leaders who have grown up in a very different Cambodia are already emerging. A more professional set of leaders may be attracted to government if, and as, government is held accountable for greater competence and integrity. Finally, it has been 15 years since the UNTAC period ushered in the most recent phase of Cambodian history. Fifteen years of intensive and extensive engagement with the developed world have already brought about many material and institutional changes. The opportunity to help shape the nature of a new generation of emerging leadership class should not be missed.

Another strategic objective that USAID should consider is promotion of active democratic learning in the Cambodian educational system. The official curriculum already has hours devoted to national identity and ‘civics’, but respondents in Kampong Cham said that these were mainly ‘lectures’ and not all that interesting.

IRI has made some forays into the formal education system, but has not had the resources to engage more systematically. The only way to reach really large numbers of Cambodian young people is through the school system. USAID may anticipate more resources for educational pro-

gramming under the Obama Presidency, and might want to begin exploring how best to link up more general education objectives with ‘democratic education’ in the schools.

## **7. Strengthening Access to Media**

The absence of a genuinely free and open media is one of the biggest barriers to democratic development in Cambodia. There are several obstacles to media freedom in Cambodia. First, the government does not allow criticism of the ruling party or its policies in the media. This does not usually take the form of explicit censorship, although occasionally it does. Instead, there is a pervasive atmosphere of self-censorship as journalists know what they can say or publish and what will get them in trouble. Additionally, the government withholds a great deal of information and access from all but the most pro-government media outlets. At times, the government uses less subtle mechanisms to restrict media freedoms, such as arresting, beating or even killing journalists, but this is increasingly rare.

The government is also able to influence and restrict the media through economic incentives and punishment, as well as licensing. Newspapers that are sympathetic to the state are rewarded with lucrative government advertising and announcements while businesses are often discouraged from advertising in print media outlets that are more independent. A similar approach is used with advertisements on electronic media. Government control of electronic media is further strengthened by controlling licensing for radio and television stations.

Cambodia’s more general economic condition is also a barrier to information. Although electronic media are the primary way that Cambodians get their news, many people do not own televisions or radios. Literacy rates and poverty conspire to make print media all but irrelevant outside the capital as, according to IRI’s research, newspapers are the primary source of information for less than 2% of the adult population and 73% report that they do not read newspapers. Needless to say, while access to the Internet, based on anecdotal evidence, appears to be growing, it is not yet a source of news and information for any but the most elite and affluent Cambodians.

In this difficult climate, there are several independent stations, notably radio stations Beehive and 93.5 which manage to survive, albeit with difficulty, and broadcast more objective news and information. However, these stations survive in a climate of self-censorship and almost constant government harassment.

The media environment is one of the keys to the CPP’s dominance. By limiting access to information, particularly information critical of the government, as well as to information about alternatives or other political parties, the CPP is able to present their version of the news and politics of Cambodia. Voters are inundated with stories about Cambodia’s development and growth, some of which are true, so naturally they tend to see the country largely through the perspective of the ruling party. For this reason, liberalizing the media is a key precursor to improving political contestation and competition, or increasing government accountability on a broader scale.

### **USAID-supported Activities**

USAID has supported a range of media activities, both directly and through partners such as NDI and IRI. These activities have sought to make more information about politics, governance and democracy available to Cambodian citizens, primarily through electronic media.

USAID's work can be divided into two areas: support to media outlets; and programs created by NDI and IRI for media consumption. USAID has supported the Women's Media Center (WMC) and the Voice of Democracy (VoD). The WMC was started with support from USAID but has grown to have several different funders in addition to USAID. The mission of WMC is to use the media to empower women in a variety of ways. They have radio stations which reach about a third of the population and produce programs which are sold to other stations and broadcast in villages, on buses and the like.

The WMC's mission includes covering relatively benign issues such as women's health and education for girls as well as more political issues involving representation, voting and democracy. WMC seems to know the limits of what they can and cannot say and generally veers away from political discussions focusing more on less threatening issues. This is a relatively strong case of self-censorship. Moreover, the WMC receives very little cooperation from the government, even when covering topics like health and education. For example, government representatives rarely come on the station to participate in talk shows, answer questions or do interviews.

VoD, not surprisingly, addresses political issues more directly. VoD grew out of the CCHR, but is now an independent organization. VoD broadcasts two hours a day on five different radio stations reaching 15 out of Cambodia's 24 provinces and roughly two-thirds of the population. VoD cooperates with several international media organizations and broadcasts some of these programs as well. The limited data we have suggest that there is a market for programming like the VoD, as 40% of Cambodians according to IRI's poll listen to VoD and fully 25% listen to the programs regularly. This is quite impressive and indicates that there is likely room and desire for more support for independent media among the Cambodian people.

USAID has also sought to improve Cambodia's media environment by supporting NDI's and IRI's production of programs for the media. NDI's constituency dialogs have been broadcast on local radio providing citizens an opportunity to hear directly from their elected MPs. Similarly, IRI's Youth Leadership Challenge Program was an innovative and exciting program which sought to raise awareness of issues of democracy and civil society through a reality-type television program and was broadcast on national television.

## **Analysis and Conclusions**

### *Status*

The lack of media freedom is one of the primary causes of Cambodia's one party semi-authoritarian system. It is also one of the strongest pieces of evidence that can be used to demonstrate that Cambodia is not, in fact, particularly close to being a democracy. It is difficult to overstate the impact of the media environment on Cambodia's political development. Freedom of expression and access to information are bedrock principles on which democracy rests. While Cambodia has some of this freedom, it certainly does not have enough for democracy to grow or flourish. The media environment also impacts governance and the economy as information necessary for local officials, businesspeople, particularly small businesspeople to make wise decisions is not available so economic and governmental activity occurs with even more uncertainty than usual.

The data from IRI indicate that while ordinary Cambodians may not identify the absence of a free media as a problem as pressing as a number of economic, social and other issues, there is still a thirst among the Cambodian people for information. According to the IRI poll, Beehive, one of the few independent radio stations in Cambodia, is the most popular station in the Cambodia as 20.5% of respondents said it was the station they listened to most and another 10.5% identified it as their second most listened-to station. A plurality also ranked Beehive as the station which they trusted the most for news. Similarly impressive numbers regarding VoD are cited above. Additionally, more than 30% of Cambodians say they listen to Voice of America (VoA) and Radio Free Asia regularly. It is not clear how much overlap there is between these two groups.

The government uses a variety of means to restrict media, but it is not absolute in these restrictions. The fact that stations like 93.5 and Beehive exist, and that ordinary Cambodians listen to VoD, VoA and other alternative news sources indicates that there is some opening in the Cambodian media environment. It also suggests a relatively sophisticated government that knows that it should not go too far in controlling the media, and that can rely on self-censorship and poverty to limit the production and consumption of critical information.

#### *USAID Work*

USAID's work in Cambodia has helped provide information about news and about democratic principles to citizens. Programs such as VoD and WMC have been the primary way that USAID has done this. Innovative programming by NDI, and particularly IRI, has also improved the media environment, but there is little reason to think these programs have had a major impact. There have only been a few of these shows, and it is not clear how many people watch or listen to them. USAID is not alone in seeking to provide alternate media voices in Cambodia. A number of other assistance organizations, most notably the UNDP, have also provided information and news programs on a range of topics. Additionally, radio programs like VoA and Radio Free Asia have been valuable in this regard as well.

USAID's media work has clearly been positive as a substantial proportion of independent media has, or has had, support from USAID. Perhaps more importantly, these media are listened to, watched and appreciated by ordinary Cambodians as demonstrated by the data from IRI's polls. Unfortunately, these independent media outlets still represent only a small proportion of Cambodia's media. Many people cannot access any of these stations and the amount of government-controlled media dwarfs the number of independent media outlets.

It is difficult to discern the trend, in which Cambodian media is moving. One NGO leader observed that "things are getting much better." When probed about this, the response was that "We have much more freedom than we did during the Khmer Rouge". This description of media in Cambodia is damning with faint praise. Nonetheless, there is reason to believe that the trend is in the right direction as stations like Beehive and 93.5 seem somewhat established, but opposition political parties, for example, still enjoy very little media access.

Clearly USAID can, and should, continue to play a significant role in supporting diverse and independent media in Cambodia. The challenge will be for this work to have some kind of a ripple

or catalytic effect and have an impact on the media more broadly. At this time, that seems like an unlikely outcome, unfortunately.

### *Conclusions*

Almost all the civic activists, political party leaders and elected officials who are not part of the government or the governing party identified the absence of free and independent media as one of the major problems of democracy in Cambodia. This should come as no surprise to USAID, which has been seeking to improve the media situation in Cambodia for years.

USAID's support for independent stations, media NGOs, specific programs and the like has had an impact, as these media outlets are watched or listened to by a substantial number of Cambodians and, bolstered by other programs like VoA or Radio Free Asia, often provide important and independent perspectives on a range of issues. It is impossible to know for certain what Cambodia's media would look, and sound like, without these programs, but it is likely that they would be quite dismal.

For these reasons, continuing and even bolstering support for media should be a high priority for USAID. It is difficult to imagine a political party or any other program aimed at having an impact in the political sphere being successful, particularly in the short term, if the media environment gets any worse. In addition to continuing to support the kinds of programs it currently supports, other USAID media work might include more training with journalists so that they have the skills to cover topics that are political in nature without being directly and prohibitively confrontational, support for inexpensive and relatively simple print media that address political and governance issues and can be made available in provincial cities, and support for the creation of more short news items which can be sold to commercial television and radio stations.

### **Recommendations**

- Even in this difficult media climate it is useful to continue to support media-oriented NGOs. These NGOs provide some valuable information as there are many Cambodians who listen to and benefit from these programs. Because of the economic form that censorship in Cambodia takes, these outlets probably need donor money in order to survive.
- It is important that USAID recognize that the current media climate limits democratic opportunity. In a country where the media is this unfree, elections cannot be expected to be an opportunity for voters to make real choices or even to allow a referendum on the government. Elections in this context are simply affirmations of the government. Addressing the media issue should be a top priority that should inform the democracy strategy more broadly.
- Currently there is no legal protection for media outlets. Even though it is very possible that if such a law existed it would largely be honored in the breach, a legal grounding for media freedom would be valuable. Working towards a media law would be a good way for USAID-supported programs to work to strengthen the parliament and MP awareness of legislative processes as well.

## **8. Civil Society and Political Competitiveness**

It has become general wisdom that the Cambodian NGO sector, compared to the Cambodian Government, has been the most effective sector in the delivery of public services and the promo-

tion of various public goods, including those associated with citizenship and democratic rights. NGOs, especially those in Phnom Penh, are generally well organized, have active cooperative network organizations such as the almost venerable Cambodian Coordinating Committee (CCC) and NGO Forum. These organizations have substantial connections to the international NGO community and derive their resources from a variety of donors, including USAID through its implementing partners. However, it would be difficult to describe this collection of organizations as constituting something called ‘civil society’, as understood in western social science. Rather it is a superstructure of primarily service delivery organizations almost totally dependent on foreign funding along with guidance, training, and ‘protection’ to some major extent. This very dependence, while necessary, brings into question their ‘legitimacy’ as expressions of a Cambodian civil society.

Changes have been occurring that promote a more effective relationship between the Phnom Penh-based NGOs and the broader Cambodian society. Lead NGOs have moved beyond ‘educating’ the population through top-down programs toward the fostering of partnerships more supportive of local leadership and responsive to local concerns. Nowhere is this more true than in the rising level of activism in Cambodia in response to land grabbing and dislocations of ‘by right’ settlements, often in urban areas. In some instances, it appears that the elements of local level civil activism are becoming indigenous to the countryside, as evidenced by the 2008 petition drive protesting unlawful land grabbing, and signed by 42,000 Cambodians. Moreover, nearly every province now has a number of local level NGOs, the leadership of which has roots in provincial capitals and towns, rather than in the more rarified air of Phnom Penh.

At present, Cambodian NGOs can be categorized into three broad categories. The first group, and by far the most numerous, is the social and humanitarian service NGOs. These NGOs tend to belong to the CCC network. They have strong international linkages with organizations such as CARE and OXFAM. The domains in which they are most active are education, support for vulnerable classes, small scale economic development through micro-enterprise, provision of health services, including Cambodia’s successful HIV/AIDS program. The leaders of these organizations know as much as anyone about the kind of challenges and barriers to the provision of social services that exist in Cambodia, including government performance. Yet, for the most part, these NGOs stay well below the political radar screen, preferring to be left to do their humanitarian and social service work.

The second group might be called the independent engagement NGOs. Perhaps the best example of this group is the Women’s Network, in which groups such as Women for Prosperity, SILAKA, and Khemara promote the advancement of women in cooperation with the Government of Cambodia. At the same time, they strive mightily to maintain their independence, an independence which can only be sustained by their continuing reliance on external donor funding. Some of the Rule of Law and Human Rights NGOs have joined this category.

The third group, possibly the smallest in number, consists of those NGOs who advocate for human rights, anti-corruption and the advancement of the democratic principles enshrined, to greater or lesser effect, in the Cambodian Constitution. These groups are seen as “opponentist” NGOs, at least by the CPP leadership. Their pronouncements and positions tend to be derided or ignored, and their activities restricted by threats of lawsuits or more direct intimidation. Even

though there has been substantial effort by USAID and some other donors to promote ‘advocacy’ by these NGOs, their effectiveness in this regard is undercut by their lack of constituencies and, like other NGOs, their dependence on foreign donor funding. For the “opponentist” group, the dependence on foreign funding takes on a special, somewhat sinister meaning in the eyes of the regime. While not quite ‘running dogs of imperialism’, to use the old communist phrase, one gets the sense that this is how these NGOs are seen; they are agents of a foreign political agenda which opposes the current CPP regime.

### **USAID Support**

Neither NDI nor IRI have been tasked with mounting a ‘civil society’ development program in Cambodia. The relationship with their partner NGOs has been much more instrumental in nature, that is, building their capacity to carry out programs initiated by and still substantially led by NDI and IRI, such as election monitoring or youth work. This has resulted in considerable capacity building training of the usual kind: strengthening proposal writing, project implementation, and financial management. NDI has commissioned an Organizational Capacity Baseline assessment which applies widely accepted organizational norms to the assessment of NDI’s local partners. This document, along with training manuals developed by both NDI and IRI, appears to have contributed to strengthening their local partners. It is also true that both organizations have taken steps to shift program ownership and responsibility to the partner organization. In the case of the Women’s Caucus, this appears to be having some success. Finally, both U.S. organizations have made efforts to introduce what might be called ‘constructive advocacy’, by which partner organizations are trained and supported to influence government through discussion and dialogue.

Field visits to the provinces brought the team in touch with some of the local partners for NDI and IRI. Although their capacity was not a primary focus of our inquiry, one finding is that capacity varies greatly between provinces and over time depending on the flow of funds. One local NGO was basically a one man operation who could call in other helpers when funds permitted and tasks required. In other provinces, the local partner clearly operated more than one program in addition to the NDI programs. With a more diverse funding base they were also able to retain more staff and sustain whatever capacity they had developed.

### **Analysis and Conclusions**

As noted, it is important to distinguish between a civil society development program and the kinds of NGO capacity building undertaken by NDI and IRI. This is not to say that these efforts at building instrumental capacity have failed. However, it is beyond their mandate to promote and find solutions to the larger policy and financial problems facing the NGO community in Cambodia. As many NGOs informed us, the present government has threatened to pass a new NGO law which would, among other things, require all foreign NGO funding to be channeled through one or more government ministries. Such ministries would have authority to allocate resources and conduct audits. Whether this threat is real or not, the very rumor of it excites the worst fears of the NGO community, especially the ‘opponentist’ NGOs.

### **Recommendations**

Short of undertaking at this late date a more comprehensive civil society development program, USAID and its American partners have to rely on local NGOs for the kind of outreach programs

mounted by IRI and NDI. It may be possible to encourage and support greater lateral cooperation and networking between local organization such as YCC and NDI's several local partners at the provincial level. This might help to realize potential synergy between, say, the Constituency Dialogue program and the IRI democratic leadership program. For example, young people trained in the ADS program could find ways to help organize Constituency Dialogues in tandem with NDI's local Community Volunteers.

We do not recommend undertaking a more general NGO strengthening program, as the time has passed when that might have made sense in Cambodia. Cambodians have demonstrated an ability to learn when it has served their purposes, and any strengthening should be specific and demand driven. However, it may be feasible to link both NDI and IRI implementing partners with other USAID funded CSO networks. For example, those working with The Asia Foundation and the East West Management Institute are focusing on policy and rule of law issues that should be part of the substance of Cambodian political discourse. Since the number of active NGOs in provincial capitals is rather small, perhaps no more than 10 or 15 as noted by one provincial NGO leader, it may be possible to integrate a wider variety of issue oriented NGOs into the strategy of promoting a more rational and fact based public policy discourse, using NGO Fairs, Constituency Dialogues, Debates, and any other forum that can be used to promote this objective.

## **9. Enhancing Knowledge-Based Political Discourse**

### **USAID-NDI Constituency Dialogue Program**

#### **Status**

The Constituency Dialogue program initiated by NDI and implemented until recently has been functioning in various forms since its beginnings during the run up to the 2003 election. It has several components, including a Community Volunteer (CV) responsible for visiting villages in a single district. The CV's job is to discuss local problems with villagers and local chiefs, and eventually to draw up a list of questions of interest to local people with a view of presenting them to elected Members of the National Assembly (MNAs, or MPs) from that province. These questions are forwarded to Phnom Penh and NDI, which then meets with provincial MPs to schedule a Constituency Dialogue in the district. This is followed by a meeting between the CV and the MNAs to give them the questions in advance, and to discuss how the meeting will be organized, etc. Once agreement is reached, and a commune agrees to 'host' the CD, the program pays for tents, chairs and other paraphernalia as needed. The CV works with designated questioners who will read the question at the CD, with responses from all of the assembled MPs, representing all the parties who won MNA seats from that province. Government officials often attend these dialogues as observers. When the program was first started, the CPP did not allow its MPs to participate, according to interviews. However, after observing the amount of interest generated by the program at the local level, and the exposure gained by opposition MPs in the process, CPP decided that it had to get involved. So after almost two years, CPP agreed to allow their MPs to participate along with MPs from other parties. This program has been regular and repeated enough that it has become somewhat institutionalized in so far as acceptance and perceived legitimacy by the CPP and other parties. All CPP local leaders we interviewed approved of the program and thought it was quite valuable to them. Some opposition leaders told us CPP did not really like it at all, but had to participate to 'save face' and retain control.

This program when first started was perceived locally as something very new. Local party leaders told us they were not quite certain what to make of it, as the idea of ‘constituents’ being allowed to ask questions of MPs in a public forum was not widely understood or accepted. After all, subjects do not ask questions of the “father”. CVs told us that in the beginning, villagers were extremely nervous about asking a question, and many were reluctant to do it. This has changed, according to several CV respondents.

In visiting communes that had hosted the NDI Constituency Dialogue, we asked, who attends these dialogues and what kinds of issues do people want to discuss with the MPs attending. One Chief said that the only people who attended were people ‘with problems’, hastening to add that no one from his Commune attended. Other Commune chiefs said the questions usually involved local land disputes, abusive behavior by ‘unruly elements’ or, sometimes, the police, the need to pave a stretch of local road, the repair of an irrigation ditch, need for a school house closer than the existing one, and questions about securing the release of some relative put in jail for ‘wrong reasons’. The common thread of these questions was the particularistic nature of them. As reported in NDI quarterly reports, these requests were often acted upon, mostly by CPP MNAs, with letters of intervention to relevant local authorities, resulting in favorable action. While most of the interventions were small scale, some did involve something closer to what might be called more generalized responses involving the application of Cambodian laws. While at one level this demonstrates the impact of the CD program in bringing citizens into direct contact with their political representatives, another interpretation is that the CD program is simply another way of reinforcing the patronage system. This may be one reason why the CPP, after some period of resistance, agreed to allow its MPs participate in the CD program.

### **Analysis and Conclusions**

The CD program is widely regarded along with other debate forms promoted by both NDI and IRI as both innovative and very useful as a means for keeping informed about constituency needs, as well as demonstrating the power of the regime’s ability to be ‘responsive’.

The question is to what extent is the CD program simply providing another avenue for reinforcing patronage politics, and to what extent is it a vehicle for promoting government accountability and a more knowledge based medium for political discourse in Cambodia.

We believe there is already some sign that Cambodian citizens’ expectations of government, and especially MPs have begun to change, in part because of the constituency dialogues, thereby creating an opportunity for USAID to promote more accountability, and perhaps, even more attendance to the Rule of Law.

No democratic polity can separate rational discussion and debate about policy approaches advancing the public good from the natural human tendency to personalize political choices. Nevertheless, most mature democracies have sophisticated and diverse establishments which conduct and disseminate policy relevant research and recommendations, promote debates and discussions, and more or less try to force politicians to take clear policy positions. This kind of research, debate and position taking does not appear to be a major feature of Cambodian political discourse, as described in the previous paragraphs. When policy alternatives are discussed among elite groups in Phnom Penh, the regime often perceives these discussions as threats to its political dominance. No doubt within the regime, there are policy discussions, particularly

among those ministries concerned with economic growth, trade and foreign investment. Also, a cursory review of policy documents from the Ministry of Education suggests that there are thoughtful people working on educational policy. Little of this output seems to trickle down to the more general political discourse as represented by NDI and IRI's efforts to promote more dialogue.

The easy answer is that the great bulk of the Cambodian electorate is too poor, and too poorly educated to have much interest or see much utility or value in public policy discussions, when the problem is putting food on the table. There is merit to this view, but it should not be used as an excuse for not promoting a more knowledge based policy discourse between citizens, NGOs, and regime leadership, elected or appointed. As noted above, the Cambodian people are young and getting younger as infant mortality rates drop and birth rates remain higher than those in nearby countries. These young people are coming into an information rich age, with aspirations quite different from those of their parents. They will be more difficult to govern, as their expectations about the kind of government they wish to have take shape. This process is well underway in neighboring Thailand, and in China. It is a tiger that will be difficult for a creaky, patronage based system to ride. Eventually these new generations will hold their government accountable for performance on a wider variety of issues than merely paving a road or building a school.

### **Recommendations**

Find ways to gradually introduce into the Constituency Dialogue format and other debate and discussion venues more information about generalized problems facing Cambodian economic and political development. If Cambodian farmers are upset about land grabbing in their commune, find ways to link their local problem to the broader issue facing many Cambodians. This is already happening, and can be reinforced. If the local problem is police abuse, do the same. When local people begin to realize that they share a common public problem with other Cambodians, they may begin to see that particularistic solutions will not suffice in the absence of sound public policy. And if they understand that, and if government fails to deliver or persist in corrupt practices favoring the few, Cambodians may begin to understand the meaning of 'accountability', and use the constituency dialogues as a means for holding their leaders accountable.

There may be many ways to transform the political discourse from one serving the patronage system to one which furthers the public interest, through accountability and greater identification of policy related problems. Cambodian institutions such as the Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI), NGO Forum, the Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO), CCC and others do produce solid empirical research on Cambodian development issues, much of it distributed to foreign donors and Cambodian elites. When asked how big is the publication run of something like Court Watch, the numbers usually given run in the 3000 to 6000 range, indicating that the expected number of consumers of these reports is very limited indeed. CDRI is now producing two to three page Policy Briefs, which could be further refined and tailored to the needs of Cambodian citizens who might participate in Constituency Dialogues. Local problems could then be framed in national terms, with the benefit of gradually reinforcing the idea of the commonweal in Cambodia, something anathema to a patronage based system of political power. There are many other sources of good information that might be mobilized to raise the quality of public discourse. As noted below, IRI's public opinion

poll data offers a wealth of information that could be selectively used in debates, dialogues, and other fora.

## **Opinion surveys**

### **Status**

IRI's opinion surveys comprise one of the organization's flagship programs. Four have now been completed, in August 2006, January and August 2007, and February 2008. Their sample size (1000 in the first survey, 2000 in subsequent rounds) allows an error margin of 2% at a 95% confidence interval for items incorporating all respondents. The survey methodology appears to be sound,<sup>26</sup> and the results are widely disseminated. Virtually all those we met in Phnom Penh said they were familiar with the IRI surveys.

But the surveys remain to be fully utilized. CPP politicians cite high government approval ratings ("country on the right track") and point to public satisfaction with infrastructure provision, while the opposition can cite citizen concern with land issues as criticism of the government. But little more use has been made of the surveys thus far, in part because only a small portion of poll findings has been released, but also because potential consumers in the political parties and media as well as among the general public appear to lack much sophistication in understanding and using poll data.

### **Analysis and Conclusions**

Developing better use of polling data does not require any esoteric statistical manipulation, but rather techniques like simple crosstabulations, which could show what various potential constituencies are most concerned about what issues (e.g., land grabs, fishing lot appropriation, police extortion), what kinds of people favor which public sector improvements (e.g., schools vs. roads), and so on. Political leaders could use such information to craft their party platforms, and policy-oriented public figures (especially in the media) could use it to shape their thinking about suggesting new policy initiatives. Hopefully these data might help politicians begin to think more about policy issues rather than the more narrow concerns on patronage, personality, election complaints, and parliamentary maneuvering that have been their stock in trade for a long time.

An example of how the IRI opinion survey data might be employed for such purposes is shown in Table G, which uses a crosstabulation to compare occupation with answers to a question on satisfaction with the way land issues were being handled in Cambodia in 2006. The entries in Table G are then rendered into a bar chart in Chart D. The exercise yields some information that should be of considerable use to public thinkers and policymakers. It turns out that whereas it might have been supposed (certainly it was by the team) that, given the widespread expression of concern about landgrabbing, farmers would be the occupational group most unhappy about land issues, in fact they are not. Only 27% of farmers surveyed indicated dissatisfaction, while more than half the civil servants and professionals did so. This could be because the land taken is mainly urban, because farmers felt too intimidated to complain, less sophisticated respondents didn't interpret "land issues" to refer to landgrabbing, etc. Further exploration could show how

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<sup>26</sup> Some SRP officials complained that the surveys were tainted by CPP/GOC intimidation, e.g., village chiefs accompanying interviewers on their rounds. Needless to say, the team was unable to confirm or disprove the charge.

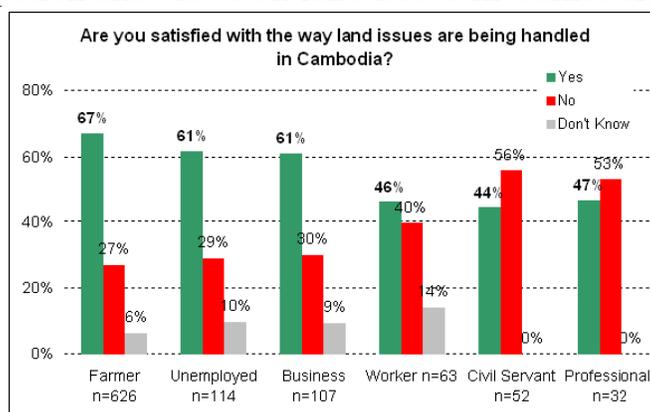
the urban/rural divide might explain some of the differences on the satisfaction question, how regional differences might account for it, income levels, and so on.

Province-level analysis could be introduced. As the survey is now constituted, the sample size in individual provinces is too small for such analysis to be statistically meaningful, but broad patterns could be detected (e.g., what is the level of concern over land issues in the rice-producing provinces collectively, in areas of major resource extraction, or industrial concessions). In future surveys oversampling could be undertaken in a few of the larger provinces as an experiment to test the feasibility of more detailed work in this area.<sup>27</sup>

**Table G.**  
Cross-tabulation for occupation vs. satisfaction on land issues handling

Occupation	Are you satisfied with the way land issues are being handled in Cambodia?			Total
	Yes	No	DK/NA	
Farmer	418	168	40	626
Unemployed	70	33	11	114
Business	65	32	10	107
Worker	29	25	9	63
Civil servant	23	29	0	52
Professional	15	17	0	32
Other	3	3	0	6
Total	623	307	70	1000

**Chart D.**  
Occupation and views on land issues in Cambodia, 2006



<sup>27</sup> If the 2008 sample of 272 respondents in a larger province like Kampong Cham were increased by about 50%, for example, it would be possible to make inferences about the province with an error margin of 5% at the 95% confidence level. In Kandal province, sample size would have to be doubled, and in Battambang increased by about 2½ times to gain the same level of confidence and margin of error. For smaller provinces, the increase in sample size needed to allow province-level analysis would be huge.

Moreover, successive polls could be used to detect trends (e.g., where is the radio audience increasing or being displaced by the television audience?).<sup>28</sup> Repeating the question on land issues (per our Table G and Chart D), for example, should prove highly useful in tracking this important public concern over time.

### **Recommendations**

- USAID should encourage a fuller dissemination of poll data and cultivate a more sophisticated community of poll consumers. Political leaders should be encouraged to use polls to develop issue agendas and target voters. The media should be encouraged to make better use of polls to inform their analysis.
- Polling results should be integrated where feasible into other USAID programs. The Constituency Dialogue program would be one venue where synthesized polling data could be advantageously employed to inform the discussion.
- Opinion surveys should be expanded to facilitate trend analysis on important issues such as landgrabbing, corruption, etc.
- Polling should be expanded on an experimental basis with oversampling in a few areas in order to explore the utility of analyzing regional differences. There is no reason to think that Cambodians think alike all over the country and every reason to think that people in different places have different concerns. Polling would be an excellent way to discern such differences and move the policy dialogue toward taking them into account.
- Surveys can usefully be employed as an evaluation tool, both to establish baselines and gauge progress. For example, provinces where the CD program is implemented could be oversampled (to get a more accurate estimation) at the outset of a program and then again a year or two later to assess impact. Likewise, useful information could also be gathered regarding women and youth programs.
- Surveys could be used to check perceptions about election conduct on a systematic basis. This has been done to some extent with the IRI polls, but could be extended. For example, it would be possible to check our speculation above about counting and publicizing results by polling station as leading to possible intimidation of voters on a village-level basis.

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<sup>28</sup> Trend analysis would of course require that the same questions be asked in successive polls, which has largely not been the case to date, as each poll has aimed at different issues to explore.

## IV. General Conclusions and Recommendations

This report has already stated our conclusions and recommendations as structured by the broad questions posed in the Scope of Work. In this final Conclusions and Recommendations section, we focus on the broader issue of program goal, strategic objective and categories of activities which reflect the more specific recommendations found in the body of this report.

### General Conclusion

Our general conclusion is that the Cambodian political system has settled into a semi-authoritarian form based on a combination of patronage, personal and familial loyalties, buttressed by a nation-wide and highly disciplined political party: the Cambodian People's Party (CPP). The resources of the CPP have been fueled by eight years of economic growth, following a model of foreign resource exploitation through government concessions, foreign investment in the garment industry, and substantial growth in the tourist industry centered on Siem Riep and the Angkor Monuments. Cambodia has continued to receive large donor subsidies from Japan, China, the Asian Development Bank, and the World Bank, as well as USAID and other bilateral donor agencies. These subsidies, in addition to improving state revenues, have enabled the CPP dominated government to take credit for improvements in infrastructure, educational and health facilities, and some improvements in agricultural productivity. These improvements, in addition to a variety of personal incentives and rewards made available to supporters through a finely tuned system of patronage have strengthened the CPP's dominance of the political system. In addition, for Cambodians over the age of 30 who remember the years of destructive turmoil that plagued Cambodia's recent history, CPP has brought peace and stability. All these factors combine to give CPP a strong political basis for winning elections, even while some 40% of the Cambodian electorate give their vote to other parties. The proportional representation system used in Cambodian elections tends to inflate the margin of victory as translated into parliamentary seats, with the CPP now controlling 90 of the 123 seats in the National Assembly (NA).

In our report, we describe Cambodia as semi-authoritarian and as a "one party plus" system. Given the CPP victory in an election generally considered reasonably "free and fair", how can one come to this conclusion? First, we cite Freedom House's consistent ratings of Cambodia as 'not free', a rating that has remained constant over the last seven years. Second, the evidence we gathered about government restrictions on opposition access to media, freedom of speech and association by civil society organizations, and continued and widespread reports of manipulation of voters, especially in rural villages, supports the Freedom House ratings. One of the team member's earlier assessment of the Rule of Law in Cambodia provided even more detailed evidence of the regime's disregard for a 'rule based' polity or an effective judicial system. Rampant corruption of both the major (state contracts and concessions) and minor (police harassment) kind is widely acknowledged by Cambodians as a fact of life. Corruption helps fuel the patronage system upon which CPP rule depends. While polling data conducted by IRI showed that most voters did not feel intimidated, the same polls also showed that 37% of the voters did not believe CPP would relinquish power if they lost the support of the electorate. Through positive rewards, patronage, and a well deserved historical reputation for maintaining control, CPP has managed to create a spirit of 'acceptance' among the Cambodian electorate, a spirit strongly consistent with the traditional Cambodian idea of the state as "the father", who knows best. This, and other cultural norms supporting acceptance of social hierarchy, passivity, and respect for

older people, have helped to reinforce the more ‘transactional’ nature of a political structure based on patronage and personal and familial ties. These factors, taken in their totality, have led to the appellation ‘semi-authoritarian’.

Whether the Cambodian political system will evolve from ‘semi-authoritarian’ to become more fully authoritarian a la Vietnam and China, or whether the political space for opposition and criticism that now exists will survive long enough to promote a form of politics and governance based more on competence, accountability, transparency and respect for the rule of law, is an open question. It is also the most important question for U.S. policy.

### **The USAID Program**

Our examination of the USAID Democracy and Governance program has been confined to the efforts of NDI and IRI. As such, this assessment does not address other dimensions of the U.S. effort to promote democracy and governance, such as support for Human Rights, Rule of Law, and Decentralization. Part of the reason for this more limited scope comes from USAID’s original intention to conduct evaluations of the IRI and NDI programs. The USAID decision to change the purpose to a broader DG Assessment means we do not ‘evaluate’ the NDI and IRI programs, although we do attempt to build on some of their accomplishments in our recommendations.

An important constraint in the USAID program needs to be recognized. Because of the violent coup in 1997 that brought the CPP to power, the U.S. Congress placed restrictions on the kind of assistance USAID could provide to the Cambodian government, essentially preventing USAID from working with government ministries other than those involved with health and education. These restrictions just recently have been lifted, permitting USAID to work more directly with the government in areas such as Rule of Law. Because of these restrictions, for nearly ten years USAID’s program was focused more on programs implemented by international and Cambodian civil society organizations (CSOs). One of the unintended consequences of this approach was to strengthen the CSO community’s ability to deliver goods and services, and to monitor human rights abuses, corruption, and poor judicial performance. The natural consequence was to create resentment and defensiveness among government agencies and leaders, especially toward ‘opponent’ organizations concerned with human rights and rule of law.

For NDI and IRI, these limitations affected especially their ability to work directly in the Parliament or engage with governmental institutions involved with elections until very recently. Moreover, the sanction policy of the U.S. government encouraged NDI and IRI to have a ‘regime change’ rationale for their program, especially for IRI, which worked to find and improve the capacity of viable opposition parties with a view to advancing their chances of taking power through elections. Both NDI and IRI were forced to ‘work around’ the edges of engagement by supporting internal party reforms, youth wing development, women’s caucuses, while building CSO capacity to monitor elections and to advocate for more efficient and honest election management. Our general conclusion about these efforts is that many of them were, and are, valuable programs, which in their own right have produced positive benefits for different sets of stakeholders, but the whole has been less than the sum of the parts. Much of the reason for this lies in the absence of a coherent overarching vision and strategy on the part of USAID that would serve to coordinate, integrate and accumulate the benefits and impacts into a larger set of

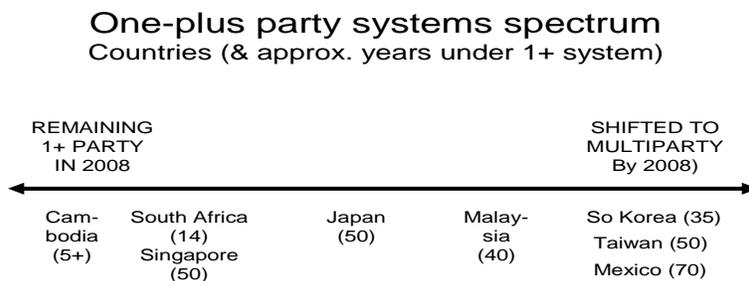
systemic consequences for political competitiveness in Cambodia. As noted by NDI and IRI in response to the first draft of this report, the difficulty in developing and following a coherent strategy came substantially from limitations and changes in direction imposed on them by U.S. authorities and by changing circumstances in Cambodia.

### A New Strategic Rationale

We recognize that the Political Competitiveness SO is no longer the operational SO, but it was for much of the period under review, and it is still an important component of USAID’s new broader objective. We conclude that “Political Competitiveness” is no longer a valid objective for USAID programs, and argue for a new rationale more consistent with the new, much broader SO focused on governance. Our reasons for saying this emerge from our analysis of the various programs that NDI and IRI have mounted over the past several years. Although some might disagree, our assessment is that political competitiveness has been in structural decline since 1997, both for reasons attributable to the effective organization of patronage politics as noted above, and because of the inability of the opposition parties to transcend their differences and form an effective alternative voice to the CPP. There are limitations to how much foreign assistance can do in the murky hallways of Cambodian political decision making. At some point, more training, more technical advice, more conferences, reports and workshops face diminishing returns to impact. At some point, the decision to change is based on a calculus of political interests and power. Perhaps the best example of this is our discussion of efforts by NDI, Cambodian CSOs, and other donors such as the European Union to effect change in the National Election Commission.

We conclude that for the short to medium term, say over the next ten years, the semi-authoritarian, one party plus system will continue in Cambodia. In other countries, these systems have survived for decades, as illustrated in the Chart E.

Chart E.



A key to the evolution of one-party plus systems is the extent to which sufficient political space and political freedom is retained to allow the development of an educated middle class, more access to information (transparency and media freedom), preservation of the freedom to associate and form organizations, and the development of parties able to project serious alternatives to the existing dominant party. This can lay the foundations for a longer term democratization process.

The preservation of some political space in the short to medium term will be largely a function of continued western donor engagement with civil society and with government. It will also depend on the extent to which the CPP continues to value and secure international benefits from the legitimacy conveyed by being an ‘elected’ party with a formal constitution and National Assembly. The implications of this for USAID strategy are significant, especially with regard to continuing to pose ‘political competitiveness’ as a strategic objective.

We propose keeping the long term goal of political competitiveness, but re-stating a Democracy Strategic Objective to read: “**Governmental and Political Accountability for Policy Performance.**” The basic premises behind this shift are three: first, there is little more that can be done directly by USAID to expand political competitiveness, although we do recommend that this issue be on the agenda of diplomatic discussions between the U.S. and Cambodian governments. Second, by holding government accountable for policy performance, the shortfalls and limitations of a corruption-based patronage system will be exposed, and become apparent to voters. Third, when policy performance rather than patronage and its lifeline, corruption, becomes the expectation of Cambodian voters, opposition parties, now frozen out of resources for patronage, will begin to realize the value of presenting a policy-based alternative to a system based on patronage. They will have a better chance of appealing to voters seeking an alternative, and will be themselves held accountable if they should succeed. Cambodian democratic politics will become more competitive through a paradigm shift in voter expectations and demands. A competitive political system that emerges in this manner will be truly owned and shaped by the Cambodian people.

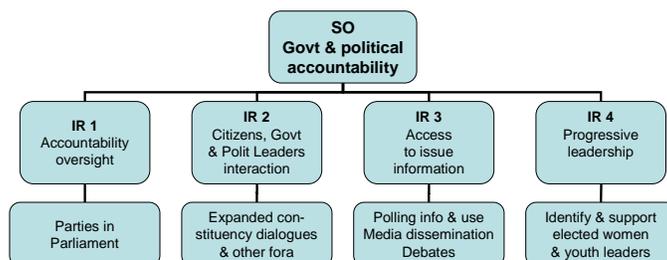
## **Core Recommendations**

### ***A. The Strategic Objective in USAID Framework Format***

1. Reframe the DG Strategic Objective to read: “Governmental and Political Accountability.” Political Competitiveness is not a realistic objective, in the medium term, especially given the resources USAID is able to commit. We believe that USAID’s Cross Cutting Theme “Transparency and Access to Information” is consistent with this new objective, but argue that the Democracy side of the new Strategic Objective needs greater specificity.
2. Retain, if necessary, the overall goal of “Political Competitiveness”, but strengthen the causal linkage between the Accountability SO and this goal, recognizing that other USAID supported activities also affect the political competitiveness goal.
3. Clarify expected Intermediate Results (sub-objectives) and strengthen the hypothesized causal linkages between activities, Intermediate Results, and the SO.
4. At the Intermediate Result (or sub-objective) level, four IRs are proposed.
  - a. Strengthen accountability oversight role of elected leaders in Parliament and other levels of political control.
  - b. Strengthen relationship and interaction between citizens and both elected and appointed leaders and authorities.
  - c. Expand and improve the quantity, quality and dissemination of policy- and issue-related information, research and analyses.
  - d. Invest in progressive leadership development more attuned to government performance on a wider range of policy issues (beyond infrastructure).

Chart F.

A new DG strategy for supporting political competitiveness in Cambodia



**B. Political Parties and Parliament**

1. Cambodia does not have, nor is it presently moving toward, a competitive multiparty system. On the contrary, it has been moving away from such an arrangement to a one-party-dominant system, though not an exclusive one-party one. This ‘one party plus’ scheme is now quite firmly in place and can be expected to last at least a decade. But it does permit significant if constrained scope for political rights and civil liberties. Such systems in other countries have proved stable for years and even decades, and many have made the transition to real democracy. Like these others, Cambodia is not impervious to change. Accordingly, USAID should not continue to think in terms of ‘political competitiveness’, but rather should focus on ‘accountability’ as its guiding theme.
2. USAID should identify reform-minded MPs from all parties and craft a role for them to work on policy issues; encourage and support efforts by MPs to change parliamentary rules to allow CPP back benchers and minority MPs to engage meaningfully in committee work, and to permit the latter to have access to the floor (i.e., change the “rule of 10” on introducing business). Efforts should be made to induce upper-level CPP leadership to see such reforms as a way to cultivate future leaders in their own party and allow the opposition an avenue to blow off steam, not as a threat to its own position. Additionally, political parties in Parliament should be engaged to help develop links between campaign platforms and legislative strategies, thus helping parties develop some non-patronage functions. USAID should not duplicate existing technical assistance programs provided to the NA by other donors.

**C. Election Management Reform**

1. USAID should discontinue efforts to promote electoral reform, though the U.S. Embassy should continue to include promoting electoral reform in the USG package of policy priorities for diplomatic discussions with the GoC. Without the GoC’s commitment, there is little more USAID technical assistance can accomplish.
2. USAID should discontinue separate election monitoring efforts, but support UNDP efforts if appropriate.

3. The Voter Registration Audit is well done and shows a reasonable degree of integrity and transparency in the voter registration process. The VRA is an excellent mechanism to that end, and should be continued, if not supported by USAID, then perhaps by another donor like UNDP.

#### ***D. Promoting the Role of Women***

1. USAID should expand efforts to engage women in political parties to include women appointed to government positions. There are now 274 women in government and political leadership positions. The Women's Caucus program should be expanded to include all women in positions of authority, as well as those in CSO leadership positions. As women began to emerge as business leaders, their contribution to policy dialogue and accountability discussions would be substantial.
2. Although lacking the political 'power' of males in leadership positions (all Governors are male), women have a greater interest in the 'social agenda' of health, education, domestic violence, children, and other social services issues. Developing policy dialogue around social agenda issues is a good starting point. A social agenda approach to supporting Cambodian women's leadership would also be an opening wedge for broadening the importance of public policy in these areas beyond infrastructure, as well as increasing accountability for providing services.

#### ***E. Promoting the Role of Youth in Politics and Government***

1. USAID should continue, but refocus, the YCC program. Emphasis should be on leadership identification, training and promotion. The objective should be to identify potential leaders and provide them with a variety of opportunities to expand their political awareness and capabilities. If possible, combine training, educational opportunities, with a variety of 'on the job' political experiences in Parliament, political parties and cooperating government agencies. USAID should discontinue efforts to work with party youth wings except as a by-product of youth leadership promotion activities.
2. USAID should begin discussions with the Ministry of Education to explore the possibility of introducing 'democratic participation practices' into school organization and curriculum. This should not be a classic 'civics lecture' type program. It should focus on repeated cycles of youth participation in a variety of activities designed to internalize democratic values and behaviors. USAID has experience in this kind of programming, especially in former Soviet satellites and in the Balkans.

#### ***F. Media***

1. USAID should continue efforts to use radio and television as a means for increasing political participation and the dissemination of issue-related information and analyses. Recent research shows that while radio is still the dominant source of information, television is increasingly important, especially among younger cohorts in urban areas. Twenty percent of Cambodia's population now lives in urban areas, a percentage that is likely to increase over the next ten years. With urbanization comes access to television and, for younger people, increased access to Internet- and cell phone-delivered information.
2. Cambodians respond well to 'competitions' as shown by the success of the IRI sponsored debates, as well as the EWMI/ABA support for mock courts at the University. The key to effective programming is to retain the interest of the listener. These kinds of efforts to use 'en-

tainment’ as a means for conveying politically relevant information and experience should be continued, and if possible, expanded, and suffused with the kind of policy content recommended as a central strategic theme in this report.

### ***G. Civil Society***

1. USAID should continue to promote programs using civil society intermediaries, especially at the provincial and district level. In a political accountability program, it is important to shift the capacity building emphasis toward strengthening NGO partners’ ability to act independently and in concert with others on issues that matter to citizens in their regions.
2. We do not recommend a separate civil society program, but we do urge that greater attention be given to supporting interaction among and between provincial level civil society organizations engaged in political accountability programs of various kinds. NGOs working on constituency dialogue type programs should be working closely with other NGOs promoting youth leadership, as well as NGOs involved in other USAID supported programs, such as human rights and rule of law promotion. An indirect benefit of the political accountability program is to strengthen the local monitoring and advocacy capacity of NGOs at the provincial level.

### ***H. Enhancing Knowledge Based Discourse***

#### **Constituency Dialogue Program**

1. We recommend that the CD program be expanded and strengthened through the gradual introduction of efforts to move the dialogues toward helping people to understand that particularistic problems, such as land disputes, are also national problems requiring better government policies and performance.
2. Because of the somewhat seamless nature of government authority and CPP political dominance, we see further scope for expanding the CDs to include district and provincial authorities, as well as party MNAs and other leaders from local and national CSOs.
3. We believe that the Dialogues are an excellent vehicle for expanding political participation and awareness, for introducing the beginnings of a sense of the collective or public good, and for moving toward a more information-based discussion about the nature of development issues that Cambodians must confront.

#### **Opinion Surveys**

1. USAID should encourage a fuller dissemination of poll data and cultivate a more sophisticated community of poll consumers. Political leaders should be encouraged to use polls to develop issue agendas and target voters. The Constituency Dialogue program would be one venue where synthesized polling data could be used to inform the discussion.
2. Esoteric statistical analysis is not required here, but rather techniques like the use of crosstabs to ascertain what kinds of voters are most concerned about what issues (e.g., farmers and land grabs, fishermen and fishing lot appropriation, small businessmen and police extortion).
3. Province-level analysis should be introduced. Sample size is not large enough to engage in great detail here, but broad trends could be detected (e.g., where does concern over land issues loom largest or least?). Oversampling of a few provinces in the next survey could serve as an experiment to test the feasibility of more detailed work in this area.

4. Successive polls could be used to detect trends (e.g., where is the radio audience increasing or being displaced by the television audience?).

### ***I. Program Management***

1. A more focused program combined with a relatively limited budget of approximately \$1.5 million per annum can be implemented by a single organization.
2. Recognizing that there may be other factors in play that would prevent USAID from moving to a 'single organization' program implementation model, there may be other ways to reduce overhead costs. Every effort should be made to free up as much of these funds as possible for program purposes.
3. An expanded program focused on a common strategy could well engage both party institutes, and perhaps others with experience in developing accessible issue and policy focused publications, programs, and other media formats to serve the policy dialogue and accountability objectives outlined above.

### ***J. Program Options at Higher Funding Levels***

The team was asked during exit briefings with USAID to consider what kind of programs might be pursued at higher than current levels of funding. To undertake most of what has been recommended above, properly organized into a more coherent and better coordinated program, would require a budget more at the \$5 million level than at the current level. While some recommendations require more in the way of personal and persistent qualitative contact than budget, others, such as expanding the women's forum, developing the constituency dialogue, investing in more knowledge based policy discourse, developing a continuous and persistent engagement in a youth leadership program, and increasing the utility of public opinion polling, will require more funds than are currently available. Perhaps more important than the 'level' of funding is the commitment of USAID to a ten year strategic time horizon. A strategic program must have some stability of purpose, while being sufficiently flexible to be opportunistic in tactics. This requires both clarity of vision as well as skillful and well informed engagement with principal Cambodian actors and stakeholders on matters of substance.

# Annex A: Scope of Work

September 23, 2008

## Political Competition and Civil Society Assessment Combined Scope of Work and Work Plan

### Introduction

The team will conduct an assessment of the status of political competitiveness in Cambodia. The primary purpose of the assessment is to determine the extent to which the Cambodian political system is open to various political parties to compete for voter support through well managed and fair national and local elections. The secondary purpose is to provide the USAID Cambodia Mission with recommendations for future programming regarding continued support to Cambodian electoral systems, political parties, and parliamentarians.

### Background

The team will take into consideration the background information and country context as outlined in the original omnibus SOW of 2006 as well as recent developments, such as the 2008 elections, etc.

### Questions

With a starting point of 2001, and using the standard of "Political Competitiveness", the team is expected to produce a more general "assessment" of:

1. Status of political parties. Do Cambodian political parties organize themselves consistent with democratic practices and principles? How do political party leaders perceive their role and relationships to constituencies? How do party leaders view their relationship to governmental institutions? Is the USAID assistance strategy for political party development properly focused? To what extent and in what ways do party leaders perceive the benefits of USAID and other donor's foreign assistance? Should USAID continue to provide assistance to Cambodian political party development, and, if so, in general terms what kinds of assistance might be most useful?
2. Status of election "systems". To what extent are Cambodian elections well organized, and considered acceptable by international standards? What has been the role of donor community in strengthening Cambodian election systems and practices? Should USAID provide technical assistance to the Cambodian National Election Commission, and if so, what should be the major features of such assistance?

3. Extent to which youth and women are engaged in political competitiveness. By examining the NDI's program of working with women and IRI's program of engagement with the Youth Leadership Challenge TV Program, Youth Festivals, and support to the Youth Council of Cambodia's Advanced Democracy Training, identify the changes and/or impacts these programs have had on the intended audience. Recognizing that this is a relatively modest program, has the program demonstrated the potential, if substantially expanded, to reach a level and mass sufficient to have a positive impact on political attitudes, behaviors and institutional arrangements relevant to political competitiveness?
4. Extent to which civil society has effectively used advocacy to promote political competitiveness. To what extent have USAID supported programs activated local NGOs to advocate for greater political competitiveness at the grass roots level, and especially with regard to other sectors such as Labor, Human Rights and Land tenure? To what extent has support for NGOs strengthened the role of Cambodian civil society more broadly? Is this an area where USAID assistance should continue, and if so, what general approaches would be most useful?
5. Extent to which parliamentarians are engaged in political competitive behavior linked to constituencies. Prior to 2007, USAID direct engagement with the Parliament has been limited to the Constituency Dialogue Program. How do parliamentarians perceive their role with regard to their constituents, their party leaders, and their own interests? Has USAID assistance had an effect on parliamentary attitudes and behaviors? Other donors have provided a variety of technical assistance to the institution of parliament, and to parliamentarians. What has been the experience of other donors with parliamentary strengthening, and is there is a complementary niche for USAID programming in the future?
6. Extent to which media coverage of social and political issues reflects openness and balance (competitiveness). To what extent has USAID's relatively small program contributed to competitiveness, and should USAID continue with these kinds of activities?
7. USAID has supported IRI to conduct political surveys the last 2.5 years. What use has been made of the findings and conclusions of these surveys, by whom and for what purposes? What effect have these surveys had with regard to increased political competitiveness? In the future, should we look at building an indigenous capacity to provide this type of information?

## **Methodology**

USAID requires an evaluation design/work plan describing how and through what methodology the assessment team will gather data responsive to the questions/issues posed in the previous section.

Given the limited amount of time available, the Mission expects that the team will conduct as thorough a review of existing documentation as possible. The Mission and its implementing partners will cooperate in providing name lists of Cambodians who have participated in the various NDI/IRI assistance programs. The team may consider other methodologies appropriate to rapid appraisals, including key informant interviews, group and focus group discussions, and possibly non-parametric mini-surveys. The team is encouraged to gather opinions and experi-

ence from Cambodians who have not participated in USAID funded assistance programs as a basis of comparison with affected clients.

In preparing the evaluation design/work plan, the team should consider the suggestion of USAID Washington's DCHA/DG Office to prepare a matrix establishing indicators, measures and data sources for each of the main questions/issues to be addressed in the assessment. These include:

1. Status of political parties;
2. Status of election 'systems';
3. Extent to which youth and women are engaged in political competitiveness;
4. Extent to which civil society has effectively used advocacy to promote political competitiveness;
5. Extent to which parliamentarians are engaged in political competitive behavior linked to constituencies;
6. Extent to which media coverage of social and political issues reflects openness and balance (competitiveness); and
7. Extent to which political opinion surveys have been useful and have contributed to competitiveness?

### **Time Frame and Deliverables**

Preparation for the Assessment will begin September 15, 2008. An assessment work plan will be submitted no later than September 24 for USAID review. Team preparation, including document review and interviews with key stakeholders in Washington, DC will be conducted September 25 through October 3. Field work will be conducted in Cambodia from October 8 to October 29 (detailed breakdown is presented in "Timeline of In-Country Work" below), followed by working draft submission by November 10. USAID commits to providing comments on this draft no later than November 17. The final draft will be submitted to USAID no later than November 30, 2008.

While in Cambodia, the team and USAID will maintain a close working relationship. The team will provide USAID with an interim progress briefing and a pre-departure final briefing outlining main findings and recommendations.

### **Report Outline**

The final report will be structured in conformance with USAID guidance and normal practice for evaluation reports as follows:

- Preface and Acknowledgements
- Glossary
- Maps (if appropriate)
- Executive Summary (no more than 5 pages)
- Introduction, Purpose of the Report and Country Context
- Methodology
- Brief Description of USAID Assistance

- Main Findings (based on the SOW questions)
- Analysis and Conclusions (including unanticipated consequences)
- Recommendations for future programming
- Annexes (SOW, names/positions of key informants, additional material as needed)

## Work Plan

This plan is subject to revision following team discussions October 1 and 2, and discussions with USAID officials on team's arrival in Phnom Penh. The purpose of the matrix is to begin the process of specifying potential indicators and data sources, as well as identifying approaches which, if practical, may increase the reliability, validity and relevance of the assessment's findings. A main consideration will be to find comparison groups where USAID activities were not present, or were at a low level as well as districts where USAID activities were at a higher level. Once levels of USAID activity are determined, a stratified random sample of voting districts will be made, using other variables of interest such as women, civil society participation levels, etc. Once the voting district sample is selected, the team will analyze reports, voting records, and responses from focus groups and key informant interviews to develop its data base, followed by analysis, conclusions and recommendations.

Indicator and Data Source Matrix

<i>Question/issue*</i>	<i>Indicator</i>	<i>Data Source</i>	<i>Note</i>
1. Pol. Parties	1. Strength of party as measured by votes 2. Strength of parties by ability to field candidates	1. Electoral trends over time. 2. Candidate lists 3. Key Informant interviews w/party leaders	
2, Election Systems	1. Extent to which elections are considered 'free and fair' by int. standards. 2. Extent to which election management meets international standards	1. Election records and observer reports 2. Key informant interviews with election officers and party leaders. 3. Random sample of district based focus groups of voters	A stratified random selection of voting districts will be undertaken to establish venues for key informant and focus group interviews. Key variables in structuring the sample will be areas/level of USAID supported competitiveness activities, voter turnout, voter choice, and youth and gender participation.
3. Youth and Women engaged	1. Percent youth and women turnout for	1. Election turnout records over time.	

	<p>elections</p> <p>2. Number of women stand for Local council and parliament elections</p> <p>3. Comparison of districts with high youth and women turnout with/without USAID program inputs</p>	<p>2. Party lists for national and local elections</p> <p>3. Focus groups (see above)</p> <p>4. Key informant interviews with Women and Youth organization leaders.</p>	
4. Civil society engaged	<p>1. Number of civil society organized election related events.</p> <p>2. Comparison of voter turnout and voter choice in districts with/without high level of civil society engagement.</p> <p>3. Attitudes among key informants about civil society effectiveness</p>	<p>1. civil society grantee reports on election related activity.</p> <p>2. Election records.</p> <p>3. Key informant interviews.</p>	
5. Parliamentarians engaged	<p>1. MP perceive their relationship to constituencies</p> <p>2. Constituents see MPs as representing their interests</p>	<p>1. Key Informant interviews of MPs,</p> <p>2. Focus group interviews in randomly selected districts.</p> <p>3. USAID activity reports</p>	
6. Media coverage balanced	<p>1. Voters rely on media as primary information source.</p> <p>2.. Voter opinion of media balance/objectivity</p> <p>3. Voter identifies media source associated with USAID activity as credible and fair.</p>	<p>1. Focus groups in selected districts.</p> <p>2. Review of public opinion polls.</p> <p>3. Key informant interviews.</p>	
7. Opinion surveys contribute	<p>1. Extent to which polling is used by party leaders and candidates</p>	<p>1. Key informant interviews.</p> <p>2. Focus group question in selected dis-</p>	

	2. Dissemination of polling data is wide-spread through media	tricts.	
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- \*1. Status of political parties;
- 2. Status of election 'systems';
- 3. Extent to which youth and women are engaged in political competitiveness;
- 4. Extent to which civil society has effectively used advocacy to promote political competitiveness;
- 5. Extent to which parliamentarians are engaged in political competitive behavior linked to constituencies;
- 6. Extent to which media coverage of social and political issues reflects openness and balance (competitiveness); and
- 7. Extent to which political opinion surveys have been useful and have contributed to competitiveness.

### **Timeline of In-Country Work**

- Sept 25 - Oct. 5
  - Document review
  - Meet with key informants in Washington DC
  - Refine initial work plan
  - Identify interpreters and logistic support assistance.
  - Travel to Phnom Penh
- October 8 - 11
  - Meetings with USAID
  - Develop Key Informant name lists in Phnom Penh
  - Assemble documents, reports, publicly available records
  - Prepare sample of voting districts
  - Work with NGO leaders to identify local/constituency key informant lists and persons who will help organize focus groups
  - Organize logistics, schedules
- October 13 - 25
  - Data collection in Phnom Penh and selected voting districts
  - Team will split into two groups to maximize coverage
- October 27 - 29
  - Prepare and provide exit briefings for USAID, US Embassy, Implementing Partners as appropriate

## Annex B: References

- Anastasia S. 2008. "The results of the Voter Registration Audit II in Cambodia," 12 June.
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- Rae, Douglas W. 1971. *The Political Consequences of Electoral Laws* (New Haven: Yale University Press).

## Annex C: Persons Interviewed

### USAID Washington

Henning, Michael	DCHA/DG/EPP
Green, Shannon	ME Coordinator
King, Blair	DG Advisor, Asia Bureau
McEnergy, Tess	DCA/DG/EPP
Ragland, Jennifer	Asia Coordinator, DG
Schulz, Keith	DCHA/DG/Gov
Winston, Deidra	Cambodia Desk Officer

### Other Washington

Freedom House	Davis, Lisa	Dy Dir Programs, Dir Rights Programs
NDI	Manikas, Peter	Dir Asia Programs
	Tated-Hazell, Raissa	Sr Program Manager, Asia
IRI	Bunton, Cynthia	Dir Asia Division
	Miller, John	Asst Program Officer, Asia Division
	Stapleton, John	Program Asst, Asia Division

### U.S. Mission, Cambodia

Chea, Sokha	Political Assistant, US Embassy
Chan, Serey	Project Management Specialist, USAID
Fenn, Roy	Governance Advisor, USAID
Hour, Phalla	Labor Assistant, US Embassy
Kenyon, Mary	Political Labor Officer, US Embassy
Lawless, Gregory	First Sec. Chief, Political-Economic Section, US Embassy
Soto, Erin	Mission Director, USAID
Randolph, Paul	Senior Democracy and Governance Officer, USAID
Vong, Socheata	Democracy and Governance Officer, USAID
Cannon, Amy	US Embassy, Political-Economic Section, Labor Specialist
Deutsch, Janet	US Embassy, Political-Economic Section

### International NGOs, Cambodian Organizations and Activists

Galabru, Kek	President, LICADHO
Hang, Chhaya	Executive Director, Khmer Institute of Democracy
Khus, Thida	Executive Director, SILAKA
Lee, Sothearayuth	Senior Program Officer, NDI
Mao, Monnivan	Member National Assembly, Kampong Cham Province
Ou, Virak	Executive Director, CCHR
Parnell, Terry	Program Manager, EWMI
Pok, Nanda	Executive Director, Women for Prosperity

Soeung, Saroeum	Senior Operations Coordinator, Cooperation Committee for Cambodia
Seng, Theary C.	Executive Director, Center for Social Development
Hean, Sokhom	Center for Advanced Study
Chhor, Sophal	Deputy Chief of Party, PACT
Im, Sophea	Deputy Executive Director, CSD
Thornton, Laura	Resident Country Director, NDI
Tucker, Stevens	Decentralization Advisor, LAAR/PACTW
Wilkinson, Sharon	Country Director, CARE
Willis, John	Resident Country Director, IRI
Yin, Bendarom	Senior Program Officer, IRI
Tep, Sinavy	YCC Provincial Representative, Kampong Thom
Thouk, Thida	YCC Provincial Representative, Prey Veng
Ngann, Nala	YCC Admin & Finance Assistant, Phnom Penh
Sok, Sibone	YCC Provincial Representative, Kompong Cham
Oeur, Sam Ath	YCC Representative, Phnom Penh
So, Chenda	YCC Admin & Finance Officer, Phnom Penh
Pheng, Saochheng	YCC Provincial Representative, Kandal
Meas, Dimanavet	YCC Provincial Representative, Kampot
Mak, Rany	YCC Provincial Representative, Pursat
Kann, Sichanto	YCC Provincial Representative, Battambang
Sot, Kin	YCC Education of Training Officer
Chea, Phong	YCC Representative, Siem Reap
Koet, Sovandy	YCC Provincial Representative, Svay Rieng
Choeun, Samphorn	YCC Provincial Representative, Kampong Speu
Hou, Sidany	YCC Advocacy & Network Officer, Phnom Penh
Mao, Pouthyroth	YCC Program Coordinator, Phnom Penh
Kuch, Buney	Acting Director, Rural Association for the Development of the Economy (RADE)
Dy, Ratha	Executive Director, Indradevi Association (IDA)
Leav, Ro Eun	Executive Director, Human Inborn Freedom Organization (Hi-Free)
Sin, Chum Bo	Vice President, National Election Committee
Arain, Aamir	Project Manager, Strengthening Democracy & Electoral Processes in Cambodia, UNDP
Koul, Panha	Executive Director, COMFREL
Porn, Vorn	Chairman, Provincial Election Committee, Battambang
Seng, Valath	Advisor to Sar Kheng, Dy Prime Minister & Minister of Interior, and Dy Chief, CPP, Battambang
Veng, Mony	Asst to Prach Chan, Chair of CPP, Battambang
Yoeut, Yo en	Director, Buddhism & Democracy Organization (BDO), Battambang
Prach, Chan	Battambang Provincial Governor
Rocum, Smithsen Chain	Program Officer, BDO, Battambang
Chea, Theara	Community Volunteer, BDO, Battambang
Mak, Deang	Commune Council chief (CPP), Thmor Kori, Battambang

Hean, Hang	1st Deputy (DRP), Thmor Kori, Battambang
Mak, Chhoong	2nd Deputy (NRP), Thmor Kori, Battambang
Pouk, Lihak	SRP Provincial Council, Battambang
Em, Savin	2nd Deputy chief, Ratanak Commune, Battambang
Chen, Saphon	Council member, Toul Taek Commune, Battambang
Dib, Sareoun	SRP Provincial Council, Battambang
Kim, Ratanak	2nd Deputy chief, Toul Taek Commune, Battambang
Sov, Chandeth	Deputy chief, SRP Battambang
Youm, Doung	2nd Deputy chief, Watkov Commune, Battambang
Houn, Chhoy	2nd Deputy chief, Takream Commune, Battambang
Pa, Buntleang	Council member, Ratanak Commune, Battambang
Bunpheng, Khan	2nd Deputy chief, Preah Sclech Commune, Battambang
Seoum, Sophy	2nd Deputy chief, Ochar Commune, Battambang
Rom, Rat	Council member, Ochar Commune, Battambang
Y, Samnang	Council member, Ochar Commune, Battambang
Houn, Chhory	2nd Deputy chief, Battambang
Ros, Sarun	KWRA, NGO Advocacy Network for Development, Battambang
Phon, Sokheng	ADOVIR, NGO Advocacy Network for Development, Battambang
Sobun, Dane	KNT, NGO Advocacy Network for Development, Battambang
Ek, Channdare	KYA, NGO Advocacy Network for Development, Battambang
Linh, Salath	ACED, NGO Advocacy Network for Development, Battambang
Pak, Sopheap	CDO, NGO Advocacy Network for Development, Battambang
Oim, Sophea	NAND, NGO Advocacy Network for Development, Battambang
Nou, Sokun	B-S, NGO Advocacy Network for Development, Battambang
Mean, Ven Somneth	Director, Human Resources & Natural Development, Siem Reap
Pa, Nguon Teang	Director, Voice of Democracy, Phnom Penh
Hübner, Katharina	Program Officer, Administration Reform and Decentralization, GTZ, Phnom Penh
Touch, Thavrith	Administration Reform and Decentralization Coordinator, Civil Society and Subnational Activities, GTZ, Phnom Penh
Keo, Phirum	Chief of Cabinet for the Party President, SRP, Phnom Penh
Kuoy, Bunruddin	Member of Parliament (SRP), Takeo Province
Ke, Sovannroth	Member of Parliament (SRP), Siem Reap Province
Oung, Setha	Deputy Chief of Cabinet for the party president, SRP
Ok, Serei Sopheak	Former Advisor to Minister of Interior, now political analyst
Eng, Chhai Eang	Secretary General, SRP, Phnom Penh
Susan, Cowley	Senior Parliamentary Advisor
Kong, Chetra	Director General, Radio FM 93.5
Bunleng Men	Field Project Manager for Cambodia-Canada Legislative Support Program (CCLSP)
Alonzo, Suson	Field Representative, American Center for International Labor Solidarity (ACILS)
Tiv, Sarayeth	Executive Director of Women Media Center
Kem, Sokha	President of HRP and MP from Kampong Cham
Thun, Saray	President of ADHOC and First Representative of COMFREL
You, Hockry	NRP Secretary General

Im, Suosdey	Chair of the National Election Committee
Mu, Sochua	SRP Deputy Secretary General
Hang, Puthea	Executive Director of NICFEC
Chem, Savay	CPP MP from Kampong Cham
Preap, Kol	Deputy Program Coordinator, PECSA, World Bank Cambodia
Sok, Sam Oeurn	Executive Director of Cambodia Defender Project (CDP)
Sam, Heang	CPP MP from Siem Reap
Hossein, Jalilian	Research Director, CDRI
Kim, Sedara	Senior Researcher, CDRI
Chhun, Chhoin	Kampong Thom Deputy Provincial Governor
Chan, Sareoun	Tipo Commune Chief from CPP
Chhay, You	Tipo Commune Councilors
Meas, Soeun	Tipo Commune Councilors from CPP
Pen, Thon	Tipo Commune Councilors from CPP
Hem, Mony Veasna	Community Volunteer from Santuk District
Suong, Phalla	CODEC (Cooperation for Development of Cambodia) Field Officer
Lok, Sambath	Permanent Member of CPP Provincial Office
Keo, Chamroeun	Assistant to MP and Chief of Legal Service Office, SRP Kampong Thom
Bun, Chan Lyla	Executive Director of CODEC
Srey, Kimchoeun	Head of CODEC Management Team
Mao, Vuthy	Siem Reap Deputy Provincial Governor
Nim, Vanson	Chief of Siem Reap Provincial Election Committee
Mornh, Sam Ean	Executive Director of VIR (Vulnerability and Illiteracy Reduction), Siem Reap
Long, Sokhom	VIR Project Officer
Lon, Mong	VIR Field Officer
My, Koin	Nokor Pheas Commune Councilors from CPP
Boy, Bon	Nokor Pheas Commune Councilors from CPP
Ith, Bron	Nokor Pheas Commune Councilors from CPP
Chuon, Pek	Nokor Pheas Commune Councilors from CPP
Sam, Sen	Deputy Chief of SRP in Siem Reap
Sok, Kimseng	Member of SRP Provincial Party Council
Nhean, Phoung Maly	Director of Rachna Satri Organization
Mean, Someth	Director of Human Resource and Natural Development (HRND)
Tao, Chhe	Takeo Provincial CPP Permanent Secretary and Provincial CPP Deputy Chief
So, Sar	Permanent Member of CPP Takeo Provincial Office
Srey, Ben	Takeo Provincial Governor
Nuon, Saren	Chief of Takeo Provincial Election Committee
Sok, Kongearoath	Admin Officer and Secretary, Takeo Provincial Election Committee
Thav, Sokun	Executive Director, Bright of Society (BSO), Takeo
Sok, Choeun Leakhena	Traing District CV, Takeo
Sieng, Sopheap	Samrong District CV, Takeo

Sok, Moniroth	Finance Officer, BSO, Takeo
Khem, Mara	SRP Takeo Provincial Representative
Phong, Pen	Rokar Khnong Commune Chief, Takeo
Chea, Sopheap	Rokar Khnong Commune Councilor, Takeo
Pho, Saroeun	Rokar Khnong Commune Clerk, Takeo
Seng, Sim	Executive Director of Nokor Phnom Community Empowerment Organization (NPCEO)
Prum, Vannaveth	NPCEO Staff
Um, Er	NPCEO Staff
Mao, Moeun	CV, Kampong Siem District, Kampong Cham
Horn, Srey Leab	NPCEO Staff
Leouk, Muy Ieng	NPCEO Staff
Chhit, Sokhon	Kampong Cham Deputy Provincial Governor
Khout, Thin	Kampong Cham CPP Deputy Provincial Representative
Som, Chandarong	Member of Provincial CPP Committee
Khong, Sung Eng	Member of Provincial CPP Committee and Kampong Cham Deputy Provincial Governor
Mao, Khlean	Member of Provincial CPP Committee, Kampong Cham
Suon, Vannleng	Deputy Chief of SRP Provincial Council, Kampong Cham
Chin, Sreng	Ampil Commune Chief from CPP, Kampong Cham
Han, Rat	Ampil First Deputy Commune Chief from CPP, Kampong Cham
Yem, Pha	Ampil Commune Councilors from CPP, Kampong Cham
Li, Chhayleng	Ampil Commune Councilors from CPP, Kampong Cham
Roth, Kimhai	Ampil Commune Councilors from CPP, Kampong Cham
You, Khoin	Ampil Commune Councilors from CPP, Kampong Cham
Muy, Vutha	Ampil Police Post, Kampong Cham
Phal, Sophea	YCC Youth Volunteer, Kampong Cham
Pal, Sopheak Chariya	YCC Youth Volunteer, Kampong Cham
Kul, Direth	YCC Youth Volunteer, Kampong Cham
Kim, Sinvanna	YCC Youth Volunteer, Kampong Cham
Yin, Marady	YCC Youth Volunteer, Kampong Cham
Pho, Sreyneang	YCC Youth Volunteer, Kampong Cham
Mak, Gofari	YCC Youth Volunteer, Kampong Cham
Mao, Khany	YCC Youth Volunteer, Kampong Cham