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**EVALUATION REPORT**



**UDF-RAP-09-315 – Deepening Local Democratic Governance through  
Social Accountability in Asia (Cambodia, Bangladesh)**

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**Disclaimer**

The views expressed in this report are those of the evaluators. They do not represent those of UNDEF or of any of the institutions referred to in the report.

**Authors**

This report was written by Marco Lorenzoni with support from Mr Sokheang Hong and Mr Ayub Ali. Mr Landis MacKellar provided quality assurance with the support of Ms Aurélie Ferreira, Evaluation and Quality Manager at Transtec. Mr Eric Tourres was Project Director at Transtec.

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## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

### *(i) Project data*

The regional project 'Deepening Local Democratic Governance through Social Accountability in Asia' ran from the 1<sup>st</sup> March 2011 to the end of March 2013 and had an overall budget of USD 375,000. This regional project was coordinated by PRIA, based in New Delhi in India and implemented in Cambodia by Silaka (based in Phnom Penh) and in Bangladesh by Prip Trust (based in Dhaka). The implementation sites were two of the six Sangkats<sup>1</sup> (administrative divisions of the Cambodian towns) of the municipality of Takhmao in Cambodia; and two of the 30 Wards<sup>2</sup> (administrative divisions of the Bengali towns) of the municipality of Rajshahi in Bangladesh.

The aim of the project was to introduce social accountability practices in the target areas through involvement of citizens from poor households and local authorities in the resolution of problems of unsatisfactory access to water and sanitation (in specific, access to household waste collection) services.

The project aimed at achieving 4 outcomes:

- **Outcome 1** - Enhanced capacities of the urban poor households to engage in regular, sustained and constructive dialogues with municipalities through monitoring and demanding quality services.
- **Outcome 2** - Enhanced capacities of municipalities to institutionalise social accountability mechanisms and to include needs of the urban poor households in planning and decision making.
- **Outcome 3** - Enhanced capacities of local civil society organizations to engage in activities that promote democratic urban local governance and enhanced linkages with practitioners of urban governance in Asia.
- **Outcome 4** - The national policies and programmes on municipal governance are informed based on the lessons learned from the project with regard to mechanisms of social accountability and participation of the urban poor households.

### *(ii) Evaluation findings*

The **relevance** of the project to Cambodia and Bangladesh was high in consideration of the conducive legal frameworks in place in both countries. The selection of the two cities however was not explained, responded to different criteria in the two countries and led to urban realities that were profoundly diverse. The selection of water and waste collection as test beds for the application of the method was sound but did not involve the local population.

The **design of the project** was affected by major flaws: the regional dimension was not justified; the implementing partners were at the same time beneficiaries of the project; improvement of access to the selected services was not regarded as an objective of the project and there has been a constant confusion between the outputs and the outcomes of

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<sup>1</sup> The Sangkats Kampong Samnanh and Prekho

<sup>2</sup> The Wards 12 and 30.

the project leading to the selection of wrong indicators.

In terms of **delivery of outputs** the **effectiveness** of the project is positively assessed; there are however doubts about the real delivery of the main activity leading to the outcome 3 in Cambodia.

In terms of **efficiency** the costs for salaries and fees; and for the organisation of the main project activities (with the exception of travels) are justified. However costs for travels were very high and in some cases significantly over budgeted.

The **impact** of the project regarding the achievement of outcomes mainly relies on behavioural changes of citizens and local authorities. The achievements in the area of capacity building of civil society organizations were limited and null when coming to the outcome 4, which unrealistically targeted to inform national policies.

Some limited but significant **medium term impacts** of the project are visible in Takhmao in terms of a wider access to water and waste collection, while the progresses in Rajshahi cannot be attributed to the project. The project failed however to trigger a mechanism of replication and institutionalisation of its participatory methods.

The project did not contribute to the achievement of its **long term development objectives**: the adoption in both countries of local democratic governance and social accountability practices; and the strengthening of south-south learning and advocacy collaboration, which cannot be assessed against **sustainability**.

### ***(iii) Conclusions***

- The idea to contribute to the process of **enhancing local democratic governance through the adoption of practices of social accountability** in Cambodia and in Bangladesh was **sound** and the **methodology** proposed by the project team was **consolidated** by several years of practice in other countries. The project idea was fully **coherent** with the **UNDEF mandate**.

- The **regional dimension** of the project was **not justified** in the project design and **under-exploited** during implementation; the implementation of the project by three partners in two different countries is certainly not a sufficient reason for making of this a regional project. There was no provision for inter-team sharing of experiences and analysis of results; as a regrettable example, it is mentioned that the implementing partners met only once at the very end of the project and never in videoconferencing.

- The **project design** was affected by **major flaws such as**: the double role played by Silaka and Prip Trust, which were at the same time implementers of the project and its beneficiaries in their role as trainees; the fact that improvement of the access to water and waste collection in the two project locations was not considered as an objective of the project led to a constant confusion in the setting and use of the outcome indicators (the grantee selected output indicators to measure outcomes.)

- In terms of **outputs** the project **delivered what promised** under its three lines of action leading to the intended outcomes 1, 2 and 4. However, the evaluators raise **serious doubts** that the **Training of Trainers** organised in **Cambodia** involved participants other than Silaka staff (as claimed by the project reports).

- **Costs** for **salaries** and **fees** were **consistent** with the project objectives and the same can be said for **extra-travel costs** related to the organisation of the main initiatives and events of the project. However, the real **impact of travels** on the project budget is **very high** (about 40%) and there are **concerns about cases of over budgeting** in travels.

- In terms of **outcomes** the major **successes** of the project are linked to **behavioural changes in citizens** participating to the social accountability experience (in both locations their participation had the effect to help them winning their resistances to address local authorities and acquiring more awareness of their rights) **and in local authorities**. The latter were appropriately motivated to participate in structured forms of dialogue with citizens in order to solve common problems. There is consensus among local authorities that this was the first time ever that they were exposed to concepts such as accountability to citizens and transparency; and understood the implication of these concepts in their daily work. Thanks to the dialogue between citizens and local authorities some successes were achieved in both project locations.

- More **limited** were the **outcomes** in terms of **capacity building of civil society organizations**, while the **objective to inform national policies** was clearly **over-ambitious** and not consistent with the project resources. The project did not make itself visible to the local donors' community and missed the opportunity to set alliances with other NGOs implementing similar initiatives.

- The project **contributed to limited but significant and positive changes in Takhmao (Cambodia)**, while changes noticed in Rajshahi (Bangladesh) seem mainly due to the adoption of local policies that were independent from the project. These changes are not however measurable as the grantee **did not update** –at the end of the project- **the baseline figures gathered during the initial survey**.

- The fact that medium term impacts in terms of access to services were limited in Takhmao is largely due to resistances from the commercial service providers; their justifications do not seem valid arguments for the refusal to widen up the service and **better-conducted negotiations could have suggested viable solutions**. This generated discouragement among some citizens involved in the project; this problem could have been by large prevented **should citizens have been coached by an expert negotiator** during the most challenging phases of the discussions with the providers.

- The **replication of the method** by citizens is **null** (the Neighbourhood Committees have been dismantled in Rajshahi at the end of the project and are not operational any longer in Takhmao), and the **same** is to be sadly said in terms of **institutionalisation** of the methods by local administration.

#### ***(iv) Recommendations***

- Applicants should develop for their proposals a **well-thought logic of intervention**; select **SMART indicators**; and set themselves **ambitious but realistic and achievable objectives**. **Funding to proposals mainly focused on activities and outputs rather than on results may be seriously questioned**. This recommendation links with the conclusion 3.
  
- Applicants applying for a **regional project should carefully justify its regional dimension**; this recommendation derives from the conclusion 2.
  
- It is recommended that the **roles of partners be clearly defined** and set in the Project Document – so as to the mobilisation of the needed expertise. Consistent resources and means to facilitate cooperation and communication between partners to ensure knowledge and know-how capitalization shall be deployed. This recommendation derives from conclusion 3.
  
- Considering the **over-budgeting issues** noticed by the evaluators, it is recommended that grantees include all travel costs under the same line of budget. This goes with the recommendation to the applicants to **double check** their financial proposal for spotting **errors of over or under budgeting**. This recommendation links with conclusion 5.
  
- Grantees should be bound to **update –at the project end- the relevant statistics / data sets of their initial baseline surveys** as to document changes over the period. This will support the assessment of effectiveness and impact as evidenced in conclusion 8.
  
- The project would have gained in quality and impact if provisions had been made for a **consistent process of coaching / mentoring during the most critical phases of its capacity building interventions**. This recommendation emerged from conclusion 9.

## II. INTRODUCTION AND DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT

### *i. The project and evaluation objectives*

The regional project “Deepening Local Democratic Governance through Social Accountability in Asia” ran from the 1<sup>st</sup> March 2011 to the end of March 2013 and had an overall budget of USD 375,000 of which USD 25,000 were retained for Monitoring and Evaluation purposes. It was coordinated by the Indian organization PRIA and implemented in Cambodia by Silaka and in Bangladesh by Prip Trust. The implementation sites were two Sangkats (administrative divisions of the Cambodian towns) of the municipality of Takhmao and two Wards (administrative divisions of the Bengali towns) of the municipality of Rajshahi.

The aim of the project was to introduce social accountability practices in the target areas through involvement of citizens from poor households and local authorities in the resolution of problems of unsatisfactory access to water and sanitation services.

The evaluation of this project is part of the larger evaluation of the Rounds, 2, 3 and 4 UNDEF-funded projects. Its purpose is to “contribute towards a better understanding of what constitutes a successful project which will in turn help UNDEF to develop future project strategies. Evaluations are also to assist stakeholders to determine whether projects have been implemented in accordance with the project document and whether anticipated project outputs have been achieved<sup>3</sup>”.

### *ii. Evaluation methodology*

The evaluation was conducted by a team composed of an international expert/team leader and two national experts from Bangladesh and Cambodia under the terms of the framework agreement between UNDEF and Transtec. In accordance with the agreed process, the evaluation aimed to answer questions across the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) criteria of *relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability*, as well as the additional criterion of *UNDEF value added* (see Annex 1).

The evaluation took place in March and April 2014, with fieldwork conducted in both Cambodia and Bangladesh during the week 7-11 April 2014. The team leader visited project sites and Silaka with the national expert while the Bengali expert visited project sites and Prip Trust in Bangladesh with remote guidance and instructions from the



**Evaluation - a group meeting with local authorities in Takhmao**

<sup>3</sup> Operational manual for the UNDEF-funded project evaluations, page 6

team leader. The stakeholders interviewed in both Bangladesh and Cambodia are listed in Annex 4.

Preliminary remote interviews were conducted before the fieldwork with the Project Manager in New Delhi and the implementing partner in Bangladesh. Internal coordination meetings were conducted remotely before, and daily during the fieldwork.

The evaluation was based on documental analysis (project documentation, literature, web search) and interviews (both individual and group interviews were conducted). In both countries the evaluators met the relevant project staff, subcontractors, beneficiaries of the project (local authorities, citizens), civil society organizations, media and staff of other international organizations financing projects in the same or similar areas of intervention.

The face-to-face interviews were organised in Phnom Penh, Takhmao, Dhaka and Rajshahi. An end-of-field debriefing was organised at the seat of Silaka with personal attendance of the Director of the organization and remote participation of the Project Manager from PRIA. The Director of Prip Trust, invited, did not join. All the evaluators attended the debriefing (Ali remotely).

### ***iii. Development context***

#### **Cambodia**

The legal framework for the implementation of the ongoing governance reform in Cambodia started with the adoption of the Law on Commune and Sangkat Administrative Management in 2002 and was followed the same year by the 1<sup>st</sup> Commune/Sangkat council elections. The Strategic Framework on Decentralization & De-concentration (D&D) adopted in June 2005, establishes the vision that further guides governance reform for the capital city, the provinces, municipalities, districts and khans. It was then followed by the adoption of the Organic Law in 2008 which outlined the roles, responsibilities, and authorities of local governance institutions. The first indirect election of the sub-national councilors (provincial and district councilors) was then conducted in 2009.

Although district councils are elected and have the legal capacity to perform own functions and manage own resources to respond to the local development plans, their performance and capacity have been limited, as functions and financial resources have not been transferred to them. Opportunities for individual citizens and civil society organizations to participate to local governance and demand transparency and accountability remain often unknown and unexploited.

In 2010 the Government adopted a ten year National Program for Sub-National Democratic Development, and the first three-year Implementation Plan with focus on the expansion of the reform and governance at the local level<sup>4</sup>. As one of the measures envisaged by the plan, One-Window Service Offices (OWSO) have been opened in some piloting municipalities and one district town. The rationale of the OWSOs is to provide citizens with a unique point of contact with the national administration ensuring better administrative

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<sup>4</sup> The National Program was one of the main achievements of the WB project 'Demand for Good Governance' (DFGG) – see footnote 13

processes, simplification and transparent fees; the first service that was delegated was the delivery of licenses and permissions; other service lines were then transferred with bilateral agreements between the concerned Ministries and the National Committee for Decentralisation and Deconcentration (NCDD)<sup>5</sup>.

Despite such impressive array of governance reforms and positive policy interventions, the democratic space and capacities of citizens to hold their governments accountable is still restricted. Though being a multi-party democracy, Cambodian politics is *de facto* bipolarized between the ruling and the opposition party.

The governance structures and processes are highly centralized and most decisions are taken by a few political leaders. The appointment of civil servants in public administration is also influenced by the political affiliations which impacts the political neutrality of the administration. The "incentive" and "sanction" mechanisms within the public administration go hand in hand with "patron-client" relations which are highly opaque and non-transparent. Therefore, it can be said that though Cambodia has adopted a number of crucial reforms in the area of governance and access to the administration and major interventions are being implemented in the area of social accountability there is still a wide space for improvement in order to move to a fully functional democratic system.

## **Bangladesh**

By its Constitution and Laws, Bangladesh is a democratic and unitary state. While the democracy in Bangladesh is on its growing stage, the Constitution recognizes to citizens main fundamental rights including equality before law, the freedom of movement, of assembly, association, of conscience, speech, and profession or occupation.

The local governance in Bangladesh is mainly exerted through the eight existing City Corporations and other local government institutions like Union Parishads, which are responsible for providing citizens with public services and support. Each City Corporation is composed of Wards (30 for the Rajshahi City Corporation) and run by the Mayor and one Councilor per each Ward, which are elected by citizens for a five-year tenure. The electoral law foresees that at least one woman shall be elected as Councilor for each three Wards.

According to national laws (and in particular the 2009 Local Government Law, the 2011 amended City Corporation Law and the 2009 Right to Information Act), these institutions are liable to be accountable to citizens and to serve them in a transparent way. The rationale of these legal provisions is to empower citizens through the promotion of transparency and accountability in the working of the public, autonomous and statutory organizations as well as in the work of other private organizations constituted or ran by the government, even if financed through foreign aid.

Social accountability of the local government institutions in the country is recognized to be ruled by a two-way approach: based on their right to access to information citizens have the recognized right to demand accountability (which can take the format of the publication of citizens charters or the provision of specific pieces of information) and to claim the provision

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<sup>5</sup> Once known as National Committee for Decentralisation and Deconcentration (NCDD) and now called National Committee for Sub-national Democratic Development is the inter-ministerial mechanism for promoting democratic development through decentralization and deconcentration reforms throughout Cambodia.

of public services. This demand side should match with the supply side, which states the obligation of the authorities and public officers to adopt democratic practices of work and to provide citizens with supports and services set by the state laws.

However, both the demand and the supply side still are faced with important challenges in order to achieve full accountability of the public institutions, and colonial legacies coupled with a highly bureaucratic administration of the City Corporations are hindrances to the full adoption of accountability practices. In the daily life, citizens still face hurdle in getting access to supports and services from the City Corporations and -at the same time- a large number of citizens are still partly or fully unaware of their rights towards City Corporations.

The objectives of promoting decentralization and citizens' participation have been included in the agenda of all recent national governments; however, the process leading to the implementation of the two crucial elements of self-governance (devolution of powers and financial autonomy of local institutions) has not started, yet.

The local democratic governance of City Corporations (including therefore Rajshahi) is still mostly dependent on the national budget and technical support to the local service providers.

Willingness of citizens to participate to the local governance and their organization is still problematic in the whole country; this is coupled with a scarce coordination and interaction between citizens and ward councilors, which often have very little contacts with their electoral base during their tenure.

### III. PROJECT STRATEGY

#### ***(i) Project strategy and approach***

The long-term strategy of the project was to contribute to the adoption in different Asian countries of local democratic governance practices through the promotion of social accountability processes to address the problem of insufficient access to basic services in poor urban areas.

In order to achieve this, the project aimed at piloting a method of work based on a structured dialogue between citizens and local authorities. This method of work relies on the use of four main tools:

1. The setting up of “Neighbourhood Committees” in the areas of intervention. The Committees, formed by citizen volunteers, are the place where household members discuss the topics of their interest and concern and formulate proposals for the concrete resolution of those aspects that they wish to redress. As understood by the evaluators, the Committees have the primary value of balancing the individual views and needs of citizens with the objective of formulating concrete proposals that are acceptable by local communities. These views are then discussed with local administrations in a common effort to redress the problems that are to be solved.
2. The adoption of Citizen Report Cards. The Cards are a monitoring tool in the hands of local communities; they serve to capture the basic elements of performance of public services with a particular attention to their quality and effectiveness. If accompanied by media coverage they can enhance transparency of the characteristics of the services and public accountability of the providers.
3. The adoption by local powers of a grievance redress system. The system –which aims at strengthening accountability of local powers- regulates the following key steps:
  - a. Modalities for lodging a complaint
  - b. Recording by local authorities of the relevant information
  - c. Identification of the possible redressing options
  - d. Management of the complaints, communication
4. The publication of Citizens’ charters. Citizens’ charters are leaflets aimed at providing citizens with key information on the access to a given service, conditions of service, and their costs.

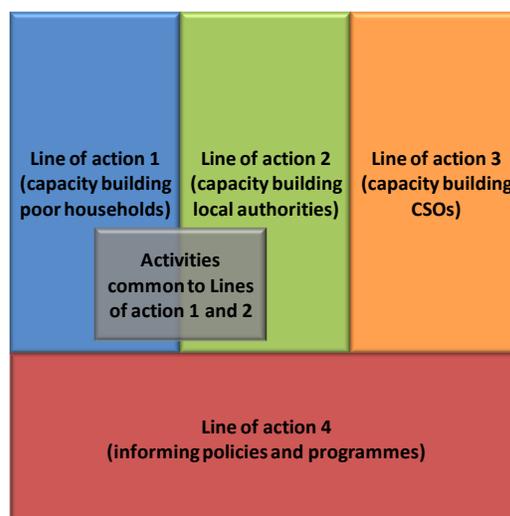
Access to water and sanitation services (in reality, access to a household waste collection service) were selected as test-beds for the application of this method. Areas of intervention were two of the six Sangkats of Takhmao in Cambodia and two of the 30 Wards of the Rajshahi in Bangladesh.

The project strategy aimed at tackling these objectives by working on four Interventions (lines of action or expected outcomes); they are:

1. Capacity building of poor urban households. This work had to imply persuasion to participate in the project, training, and coaching activities.
2. Capacity building of local authorities. As above, this work had to imply persuasion to participate in the project, training, and coaching activities.

3. Capacity building of local Civil Society Organizations. Their role was considered by the Project Document as essential for the possible replication of the method and its further take-up at a larger scale. This work had to imply training and coaching.
4. Informing of national policies and local programmes.

Retrospectively, the lines of actions 1-3 were vertical, while the 4<sup>th</sup> one was of a horizontal, cross-cutting nature. Some planned activities were instrumental to the achievement of the objectives of both the lines of action 1 and 2. The scheme in Figure 1 represents what described.



**Figure 1 - Representation lines of action of the project**

The project had to be implemented by three organisations:

- Participatory Research in India, (PRIA) is based in new-Delhi and had accumulated a 20-year experience in implementing social accountability projects in India and a few other Asian countries (not in Bangladesh and Cambodia). It can be said that PRIA was the “owner” of the method proposed; in this project its role was to guarantee the soundness of the methods of work and the overall coordination and management of the project.
- SILAKA. Based in Phnom Penh (Cambodia), Silaka was incorporated in 1997 following the participation of some of its funding members to a 1993 project<sup>6</sup> in the area of local capacity building, where they started acquiring experience in this field of action. SILAKA was in charge with local implementation in Cambodia (Takhmao).
- PRIP TRUST. Based in Dhaka (Bangladesh), PRIP TRUST was incorporated in 1996 and is active in the field of capacity building primarily of development organisations. The funding members of the organization started practicing in this field of work following their participation to the USAID-funded multi-year programme ‘Building Institutional Capacities of the Local Strategic NGOs.’ PRIP TRUST was in charge with local implementation in Rajshahi (Bangladesh).

### ***(ii) Logical framework***

The framework on the next page aims to capture the project logic, attempting at the same time to eliminate confusion between activities, intended outcomes, and impacts. It is based on the project proposal and therefore captures the sequence of activities, results, and impacts, not what the project actually did. It is against this benchmark that the evaluation is conducted. Some reconstruction has been admitted -- the set of activities defined as “Common for Interventions 1 and 2” are not defined as such in the Project Document; but the evaluators considered it appropriate to spell them out separately in consideration of their contribution to the achievement of two different sets of outcomes.

<sup>6</sup> Funded by the US-based Cambodian National Council (CNC)

Project Activities & Interventions	Intended outcomes	Medium Term Impacts	Long Term Development Objectives
<u>1) Capacity building of urban poor households</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City-wide citizens' reports on basic urban services</li> <li>• 24 trainings for women and youth citizen leaders</li> <li>• Setting up 20 Neighbourhood Committees</li> <li>• Establishment mechanisms for monitoring services</li> </ul>	Enhanced capacities of the urban poor households to engage in regular, sustained and constructive dialogues with municipalities through monitoring and demanding quality services	<u>Take-up of the method and its replication by citizens after the end of the project</u>	
<u>2) Capacity building municipalities</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 trainings for 120 councillors and officials</li> </ul>	Enhanced capacities of municipalities to institutionalise social accountability mechanisms and to include needs of the urban poor households in planning and decision making	<u>Institutionalisation of the method by local administrations</u>	Local democratic governance and social accountability practices adopted in both countries.
<u>Common for Interventions 1 and 2</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 4 interface meetings (citizens with authorities)</li> <li>• 1 Study tour to Raipur, India</li> <li>• 4 city-wide campaigns</li> <li>• 1 model citizen charter per city</li> <li>• 1 model information disclosure format per city</li> <li>• 1 model grievance redressing system per city</li> </ul>	<u>Contribution to the intended outcomes of Interventions 1 and 2</u>	<u>Better access to water and sanitation after the end of the project</u>	Strengthening of south-south learning and advocacy on participatory democratic governance and social accountability practices in urban Asia.
<u>3) Capacity building local CSOs</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training of Trainers sessions</li> <li>• 3 facilitators manuals</li> </ul>	Enhanced capacities of local civil society organizations to engage in activities that promote democratic urban local governance and enhanced linkages with practitioners of urban governance in Asia	<u>Local CSOs active in promoting the method</u>	
<u>4) Informing policies / programmes</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 8 media briefs</li> <li>• 3 policy briefs</li> <li>• 1 policy dialogue event per country</li> <li>• 1 regional policy dialogue event</li> <li>• 2 synthesis papers</li> </ul>	The national policies and programmes on municipal governance are informed based on the lessons learned from the project with regard to mechanisms of social accountability and participation of the urban poor households	<u>Further support / promotion of similar initiatives by national and local authorities</u>	

It is remarked that the logic of intervention as described in the Project Document is affected by major errors such as:

- There is a constant confusion between outputs of the project and its expected outcomes. All the Outcome indicators set in Page 6 of the Project Document are in reality Output indicators and – as such - they cannot be considered as indicators suitable for judging the achievement of the Intended Outcomes listed in the same page.

- The Project Document did not include among its expected outcomes the improvement of the access to water and waste collection services in the two urban areas selected for the intervention. By this omission, the project gave a misrepresentation of the methodology of work that it adopted, as if it was not suitable to produce any positive change at the local level. Yet, the main challenge of this project was to motivate all the involved parties to embrace and take-up the method proposed based on concrete positive changes that the project had to achieve in the two fields selected for its intervention: water and solid waste management. Consequently, the logic presented here includes this objective as the medium-term impact that is common to the Interventions 1 and 2.

## IV. EVALUATION FINDINGS

### (i) *Relevance*

The assessment of relevance should take into consideration several aspects; they are:

- *Relevance to UNDEF mandate.* There are no doubts that the project objectives well fit into the UNDEF mandate (the deepening of democracy through civic engagement).
- *Relevance to the countries selected for the intervention.* The selection of Cambodia and Bangladesh appears sound because justified by the presence in both countries of a legal framework that is conducive to the adoption of processes of local democratic governance and social accountability. This is described in the Chapter II.iii. This selection was furthermore justified by the pre-existence of partnership / collaboration agreements between PRIA and the implementing partners.
- *Relevance of the two urban areas selected for the intervention.* Takhmao and Rajshahi were indicated by the project team since the phase of the project document, but no justification of this choice is given. Retrospectively, the evaluators understood that this selection was validated by local authorities but there are doubts about their real involvement during the selection of their municipalities for the project intervention.

In reality, the selection seemed to respond to project needs that were slightly different in the two countries: in Cambodia Takhmao was privileged because of its proximity to the capital city and in the hope that the Prime Minister's residence in this municipality would have enhanced the project visibility. In Bangladesh it was decided to privilege a city that was remote from the capital because the mayor made himself available to support the project<sup>7</sup>.

How the project was selected and designed is unknown to me. Once, the Mayor had arranged a meeting with Prip Trust and invited me to participate. During the meeting I came to know that a project was going to start in my Ward. I was not aware about any preparatory assessment or need assessment with beneficiaries.

**A Ward Councilor, Rajshahi**

In both cities the project selected for its intervention not the whole territory of the municipality but two of its first-level administrative sub-divisions (Sangkats in Cambodia; Wards in Bangladesh).

It remains to be underlined that the project document summarily specifies that '*both cities are medium-sized with almost the whole array of issues of governance and service delivery that cities can be fraught with.*' In reality this statement hides some major differences between the two project locations, which are as follows:

- ✓ Distance from the Capital city: Takhmao 6 kms; Rajshahi 260 kms.
- ✓ Habitants: Takhmao 66,000; Rajshahi 850,000.
- ✓ Sangkats selected in Takmao: two of the most remote sangkats from the city

<sup>7</sup> Due to personal relations with the Director of the implementing agency

- centre (quasi-rural).
- ✓ Wards selected in Rajshahi: the ward comprising the city centre and a remote, quasi-rural ward.

The differences reported above are not sufficient reasons in themselves for criticizing the choice made by the project; however, the project should have taken care of adequately justify the validity of this selection based on the analysis of its possible impacts on the methodology of work, project organisation and budget.

- *Relevance to the needs of citizens.* The project selected access to water and sanitation services as the fields of intervention of the project. This selection is sound and well justified by the findings of very accurate baseline surveys that were conducted in both municipalities at the beginning of the intervention.

However, beneficiary citizens were not involved / consulted in the process of selection of these two areas of intervention, despite the fact that an inclusive process was expected. This missing involvement of citizens during the design phase may well be one of the causes of the initial problems reported by the Final Narrative Report for Cambodia, in particular of the “*lack of willingness on the part of citizens to participate and engage in governance issues, which is a big constraint.*”

While all project documents refer to interventions in the areas of water and sanitation, sanitation as such was not addressed by the project, which in reality focussed on access to water and solid waste management. This can be due to a semantic problem<sup>8</sup> or rather to a shifting of the focus of the project from sanitation to waste management.

- *Relevance of the methodology of the intervention.* The methodological approach to the promotion of social accountability mechanisms is sound and consolidated. PRIA has acquired over the last 20 years an undisputable experience in the implementation of this approach in India; the approach itself is consistent with the approach of similar interventions financed by other donors (WB, UNDP, EC, SIDA to name three of them), even with some differences.

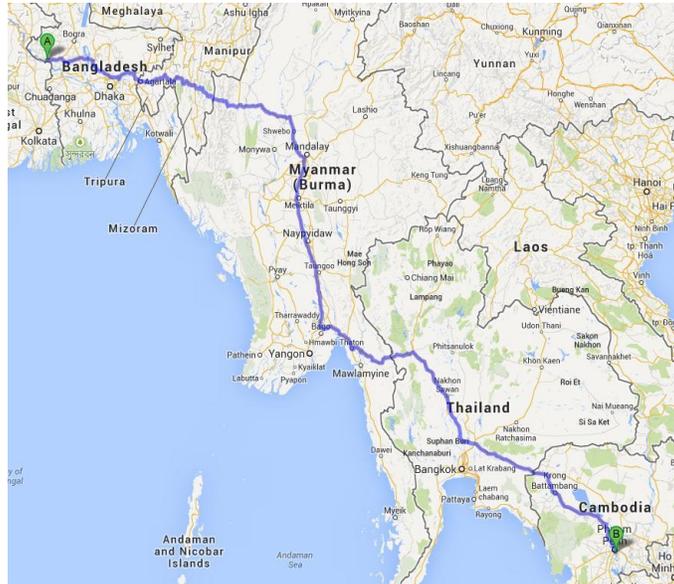
- *The regional dimension.* The relevance of the regional dimension of this intervention is not justified in the project documents and is seriously questioned by the evaluators. The implementation of the project by three partners in two different countries is certainly not a sufficient reason for making of this a regional project.

The project document made provision for final activities that aimed at taking stock from the experiences made by the two partners in their respective countries (such as the production of manuals and the organization of a regional event at the end of the project.) These are indeed useful ways of analyzing ‘ex-post’ the lessons from the project implementation in two different locations.

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<sup>8</sup> The confusion between the two terms sanitation and waste management, or the idea that solid waste management is to be included under a larger category of services that is called sanitation.

However, no provision was made for coordination activities at the time of the project implementation aimed at, e.g., agreeing on the methodology of work and the tools; exchanging practices; assessing the validity of the methodological approach and sharing lessons learnt; analyzing errors and fine tuning the methodology; etc. No face-to-face or remote meeting involving the implementing teams in both countries was called during implementation; the added value of this project in comparison with two similar projects implemented each of them in a single and different country therefore does not emerge.



**Figure 2– The two project locations**

### **Remarks on project design**

As reported above, the project adopted a methodology of work that was based on the experiences made by PRIA and that are consolidated by about 20 years of practice in the area of citizens' participation and social accountability in India. As admitted by the project partners, there is a clear link between the rationale of this project and the plans of PRIA to test their methodologies in South-eastern Asian countries where they did not yet have the chance to apply these methods. The matching between these plans and the involvement of local partners within the frame of a project that well fits into the mandate of UNDEF makes of this a win-win option from the outset, for all the involved partners.

However, apart from the phase of selection of the areas for intervention, the implementing partners were not involved in the definition of the methodology of work; this element matched with the absence of coordination between the implementing partners during implementation (see above) makes this project a rather pyramidal one and not a relation among three peers.

Further remarks about the project design will be developed under 'Effectiveness', with particular reference to the Interventions 3 (capacity building local civil society organisations) and 4 (informing national policies and programmes.)

## **(ii) Effectiveness**

*Intervention 1 - Capacity building of poor urban households.* The activities conducted under this Intervention (and briefly synthesised in the Logical framework above) were consistent with the objective of achieving its expected outcomes; all of them were conducted and the promised outputs delivered. In Takhmao, out of the 10 initial Neighbourhood Committees that were established by the project, three did not survive until the end of the project due to falling-away of the citizens initially involved. In Rajshahi on the contrary all the Neighbourhood Committees remain active until the end of the project.



**Takhmao, role playing during a training session for citizens on conflict resolution**

The same goes for the activities that were planned to contribute to the achievement of the results of both Interventions 1 and 2. Plans were changed as regards the organization of the study tour (two study tours were organized instead of one); this was reportedly agreed by UNDEF.

The comments that will be further developed under “Impacts” will question whether these activities were sufficient to achieve the expected outcomes; or additional activities would have been needed as to enhance the likelihood of achieving the expected outcomes.



**Rajshahi – orientation course for public authorities**

*Intervention 2 - Capacity building of local authorities.* Similarly, all the activities conducted under this Intervention were consistent with the objective of achieving its expected outcomes; all of them were conducted and the promised outputs delivered.

In both countries the project involved only members of the political majority ruling the local administrations at the time of the intervention (which is still the same in Cambodia, whereas in Bangladesh the ruling majority has changed after the end of the project following the last elections.)

The comments that will be further developed under “Impacts” will question whether this was a wise choice; or a different approach would have been advisable in view of ensuring medium and long-term effects of the intervention.

*Intervention 3 - Capacity building of local Civil Society Organizations.* The Intervention 3 is affected by an important ambiguity since its design, and the very carrying out of the initial training for CSOs in Cambodia is questioned.

As described in Chapter III, the project was designed as to be implemented by two implementing partners (Silaka and Prip Trust) in their respective countries. The Intervention 3 of the project had the objective to enhance the capacities of the local CSOs to ‘engage in activities that promote democratic urban governance (...) in Asia.’ The Project Document clarifies who are the local CSOs to build capacity through a Training for Trainers (ToT) scheme: Silaka, Prip Trust and other, unidentified local civil society groups.

By this provision Silaka and Prip Trust were at the same time the implementing partners of the intervention and its direct beneficiaries: a mixing of roles that would have required at least a sound justification. In particular, the project team should have explained whether the selected implementing partners were the most qualified ones to conduct the project in consideration of the fact that they had first of all to be trained to carry out their work (and that this training was paid by the budget of the project that they had to implement). Was this consistent with the timeline of the project and the need to mobilise, quickly, the needed expertise to achieve concrete results in the fields? Was not this a situation of conflict of interest? The evaluators have serious doubts about this: as discussed under “Efficiency” the project duration was sufficient to achieve its intended outcomes and would have required the availability of skilled human resources expert in social accountability practices right at the start. This would have helped in preventing errors in implementation that affected the achievement of its expected effects. Retrospectively, the project did not have available these skills from the beginning: the project reports admit that neither Silaka, nor Prip Trust were experts of conducting such projects in urban areas and that external civil society organizations had to be hired to conduct field work even if, in the case for Takhmao, the project location was only 6 kilometres away from the capital city, where Silaka is based.

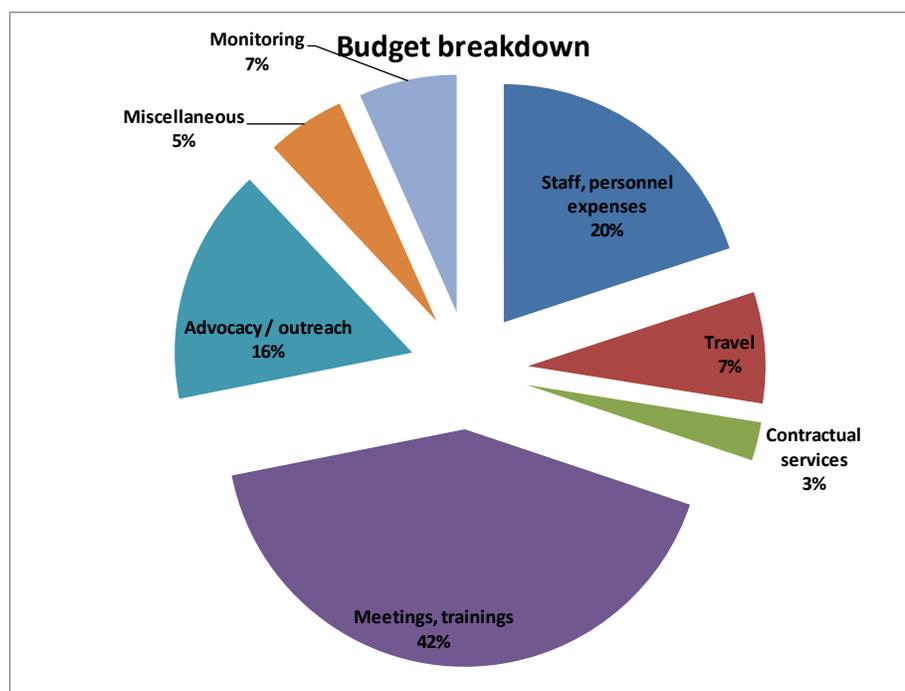
Evidence gathered during the field visit cast doubt on whether an effective ToT scheme was organized in Cambodia. In Bangladesh, by contrast, there was ample evidence that ToT did take place.

*Intervention 4 - Informing of national policies and local programmes.* The activities of this Intervention were carried out and the outputs delivered.

The comments that will be further developed under “Impacts” will question whether these activities were sufficient to achieve the expected outcomes and whether this objective was reasonable for such a small-scale project.

### ***(iii) Efficiency***

Originally designed as a two-layer project, with the central management in Delhi and the implementing partners in Phnom Penh and in Dhaka, a third layer was added below the implementing partners, with the subcontracting to further local civil society organizations of the performing of some project work. The result was a heavy and pyramidal management structure, where the upper management of the project based in Delhi was very seldom (if at all) in contact with those implementing the project at the local level.



**Figure 3 - Project budget breakdown**

The project had a cost for salaries and fees amounting to 23% of the project budget – USD 84 635, due to three main items:

- Salaries for staff and personnel expenses (20% of the project budget);
- Contractual services (3%)

Even if this cost could seem high, it is however motivated by the fact that both administrative and operational resources were included under this heading.

With the exception of travel costs (see below), individual costs for the participation of trainees to training session, for the organisation of events and for the study tours are reasonable and well justify the main budget item (Meetings and trainings ), which absorbs 156 515 USD (42% of the project budget.)

The budget for travels –which appears to be the 7% of the budget<sup>9</sup>- is in reality much higher as many travel costs are under other four budget lines, as it emerges from the analysis reported in the following table. The real travel costs of the project sum up to 150 200 USD, equalling a very high 40% of the overall project budget.

Budget item: Travels	28,400
Travels in budget item: Meetings and workshop	43,500
Travels in budget item: Trainings	8,450
Travels in budget item: Study tours	45,450
Travels in budget item: Advocacy	24,400
<b>Total</b>	<b>150,200</b>

<sup>9</sup> This refers only to the international travels for PRIA staff

Several travel costs appear clearly over-budgeted; for example, the case for the local travels and per diems for surveyors for the travel Phnom Penh to Takmao (6 kilometres, with no need for an overnight stay) budgeted at 660 USD each; for the local travels and per diems for Silaka staff for the same travel for organising campaigns (USD 300 per trip) or for designing and piloting the citizens charters, the information disclosure mechanisms and the grievance redressal mechanisms (USD 420 per trip). As a benchmark the same travel Takhmao to Phnom Penh was priced for participants to the Training of Trainers 120 USD (including travel and accommodation), with a generous 60 USD to pay just the 6 + 6 kilometres between the two locations.

We already remarked that there was an absence of coordination between the implementing partners during implementation; this is confirmed by the budget analysis, which did not contain provisions for such expenses. This missing coordination is made evident by the reading of the high quality baseline reports produced respectively by Prip Trust (for Rajshahi) and Silaka (for Takhmao) and of their informative event reports.

For all of them it is remarked that the reports prepared by Silaka are different from the reports prepared by Prip Trust: they do not follow the same formats, they do not flag the same issues, they provide different sets of data.

This is yet another element confirming that this project was not a regional project but it was rather an envelope containing two projects running in parallel with no contacts between them.

In terms of timeline, the project team had a considerably long time-to-mobilization which roughly corresponds to the 25% of the overall project duration. This factor is to be regarded as critical in consideration of the fact that the mandatory project duration (24 months) seems just-about-right to achieve the ambitious objectives of the project. This consideration would have suggested a major re-planning and redefinition of the objectives of the intervention once the field activities started; this however did not happen.

#### ***(iv) Impact***

*Enhanced capacities of the urban poor households (...<sup>10</sup>)*. There is no doubt that the project managed to involve several local households in the proposed participative processes, in both project locations. This had four concurrent effects:

- To make citizens more aware of their right to address local authorities and therefore to overcome the initial resistances that many of them had in both locations.
- To make citizens more aware of their individual and collective right to access local services such as water and solid waste management; this enhanced awareness was a motivating factor for them to embark –during the project life - in a collective, structured and continued dialogue with local authorities in order to solve the existing problems in the selected fields.

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<sup>10</sup> ... to engage in regular, sustained and constructive dialogues with municipalities through monitoring and demanding quality services

- To make citizens participating to the project more aware of the need to use clean water for daily consumption; however the (still, present) impossibility for many of them<sup>11</sup> to access clean water from their households makes of this achievement a theoretical one and the practice of using not polluted water for daily use has not stopped in absence of viable alternatives.
- Likewise, a higher awareness was achieved by some participants in the area of a proper disposal of household waste.
  - Regarding the situation in Takhmao, there is anecdotal evidence that the situation has slowly changed for the better in terms of observance of the rules on the correct packaging and disposal of the household waste in one of the Sangkats where the intervention took place (Sangkat Prekho); this is however limited to the areas served by the service provider.
  - Regarding Rajshahi, there is similar evidence suggesting that behavioural changes took place in the Ward 12, where the neighbouring committees were more active in the monitoring of the service of household waste collection during the project activities. However, as underlined during the interviews, the number of citizens that were involved in the project was minimal in proportion to the number of the habitants of the area and one cannot expect any significantly visible change from this intervention.

When the project staff shared that the objective of this project was to make elected representatives accountable to citizens I felt a bit shy. The elected councilors are elected representatives and leaders of political parties, why will they listen to our voice? I became suspicious whether we would be victim of political leaders' anger.

However, after a couple of meetings the councilors attended and shared issues and concerns that encouraged us. It was nice feeling that councilors were seating with us and sharing problems and challenges of their work with us.

**A member of a Neighborhood Committee. Raishahi**

*Enhanced capacities of municipalities to institutionalize (...<sup>12</sup>).* Similarly to what is underlined above, there is no doubt that – during the project life - the implementing partners managed to motivate local authorities to engage in a structured dialogue with the citizens in the areas that they administer. Some discrepancies are remarked in the results obtained in the two project locations:

- In Rajshahi, where the project was backed by the Mayor at that time, different officers and elected representatives were involved both at the level of City Corporation and at the level of individual Wards. The commitment of those who were involved was genuine and – as underlined by some - this was the first time ever that local authorities at different levels of the hierarchy realised that they are accountable to citizens and the implications of this. At the time of the project the local administrations adopted the practices proposed by the project and a substantial work was done, particularly in the area of planning the household waste collection service. However, interviewees underline that the project was not able to involve those departments that are in charge with the provision of water and waste collection

<sup>11</sup> See below, under 'Achievement of Medium Term Impacts'

<sup>12</sup> ... social accountability mechanisms and to include needs of the urban poor households in planning and decision making

services; reasons for this error in implementation are unknown but reverberate in the very modest Medium Term Impacts that will be discussed later on.

- Regarding Takhmao, the achievements of the project have to be seen within the framework of the legal obligations of local authorities in Cambodia to promote citizens' participation and to commit to transparency of their action following the ten year National Program for Sub-National Democratic Development that was adopted in 2010<sup>13</sup>. From this perspective, the project was welcomed by local authorities as a way to comply with their recent legal obligations and their adhesion at the local level was large; this is confirmed both by citizens and local authorities.

The work done was substantial and reveals a positive attitude towards the solution of problems that are now perceived as "common" and not only as "citizens' complains." The level of integration of the administrative structures of the municipality following the introduction of the One Window Services<sup>14</sup> and the experiences promoted by the project seems however less than could have been expected: while complaints introduced by individual citizens are received at the One Window Service, complaints and proposals coming from neighborhood committees go to the Municipal Committee, a different service. This duplication of roles reveals problems in inter-donor coordination, which will be discussed further on.

The major problem that was noticed in Takhmao was the very low involvement in the social accountability practices of the external service providers of water and waste collection services (two independent commercial businesses); this aspect will be detailed later on and had an impact on the Medium Term Impacts of the project.

*Enhanced capacities of local civil society organizations (...<sup>15</sup>)*. As discussed under "Effectiveness" the whole Intervention 3 is affected by an important ambiguity, namely the double role played by Silaka and Prip Trust both as implementing partners and as beneficiaries of the project. Consequently, this Intended Outcome (which was the expected result of the Intervention 3) has to be questioned from the perspective of the identity of the local civil society organizations that had to be empowered by the project.

It is without doubt that the implementing partners (Silaka and Prip Trust) acquired through their participation to the project new skills that make them now more qualified to perform further, similar work; for the considerations developed above, this, however, should have been considered as a positive side effect of the project and not as one of its primary effects.

Apart from the implementing partners, additional knowledge has been transferred in Cambodia to KAD, a NGO based in Takhmao that was subcontracted by Silaka to perform some field work and in Bangladesh to BUP (subcontracted by Prip Trust). KAD is however now dismantled and its key members have moved to different working activities.

Retrospectively, the second aspect of this intended Outcome (the enhanced linkages with practitioners of urban governance in Asia) appears too ambitious from two points of view:

- It had to be achieved through an end-of-project regional conference; the conference

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<sup>13</sup> The adoption of this national policy was one of the major achievements of the project 'Demand for Good Governance' (DFGG) financed by the World Bank. The project (started in December 2008 and due to end in September 2014) had a budget of 25.05 USD million and supported other major achievements in the country . (<http://www.worldbank.org/projects/P101156/demand-good-governance-project?lang=en>)

<sup>14</sup> See footnote 13

<sup>15</sup> ... to engage in activities that promote democratic urban local governance and enhanced linkages with practitioners of urban governance in Asia

was organised and had attendees from different countries (Nepal, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Philippines, Vietnam and Sri Lanka). However, the organisation of one-off event does not seem the most suitable approach to achieve such an ambitious objective, which should rather have required a series of events that could not be organised within the scarce project budget.

- Among the local civil society organizations that in theory should have been capacitated by the project only Silaka and Prip Trust participated to this conference. This is a confirmation that the project was not concerned about capacitating civil society organizations other than the project partners.

As pointed out before, this was never a true regional project in the first place; inclusion of a costly regional event is to be questioned.

*The national policies and programmes on municipal governance are informed (...<sup>16</sup>). The concept of informed policy making (or EBP – Evidence Based Approach) grew out of the Blairite New Public Management movement in the UK as a way to replace ideologically-driven politics with rational decision making<sup>17</sup>. As defined by the World Health Organization ‘Evidence-informed (...) policy-making is an approach to policy decisions that aims to ensure that decision making is well-informed by the best available research evidence. It is characterised by the systematic and transparent access to, and appraisal of, evidence as an input into the policy-making process.<sup>18</sup> This definition, initially developed in the public health field, is largely adopted in different policy fields: see as an example the following definition in the area of violence prevention: ‘Evidence Based Decision-Making is a process for making decisions about a program, practice, or policy that is grounded in the best available research evidence and informed by experiential evidence from the field and relevant contextual evidence<sup>19</sup>.’*

Was the objective to inform national policy making – as above defined - reasonable for the project? There is a huge literature that aims at exploring different methods for informing national policies and programmes with research-based evidence<sup>20</sup>; all studies imply that this is a long and well-structured process to be conducted in partnership with policymakers, not a one-shot initiative such as a conference gathering the team of one small project together with policymakers.

But this is what the project organised: the writing of two policy briefs and their presentation at two national conferences (one in each of the two countries) to national policy makers.

The project did not really inform national policies on social accountability and citizens’

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<sup>16</sup> ...based on the lessons learned from the project with regard to mechanisms of social accountability and participation of the urban poor households

<sup>17</sup> See: *Evidence-Based Policymaking: What is it? How does it work? What relevance for developing countries?* Sophie Sutcliffe and Julius Court, Overseas Development Institute, November 2005

<sup>18</sup> See: *What is evidence-informed policymaking?* Andrew D Oxman, John N Lavis, Simon Lewin and Atle Fretheim, in *Health Research Policy and Systems*, December 2009

<sup>19</sup> See the Veto violence paper ‘Understanding Evidence: Evidence Based Decision-Making’ published at [http://vetoviolenecdc.gov/evidence/docs/EBDM\\_82412.pdf](http://vetoviolenecdc.gov/evidence/docs/EBDM_82412.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> For a synthesis of different methods see <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Decision-making>. An interesting introduction to evidence-based policy making is provided by the Canadian Institute of Health Research (<http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/45245.html>) A summary of lessons from various experiences worldwide is given by INASP in the paper ‘What is the evidence on evidence-informed policy ([http://www.inasp.info/uploads/filer\\_public/2013/04/22/what\\_is\\_the\\_evidence\\_on\\_eipm.pdf](http://www.inasp.info/uploads/filer_public/2013/04/22/what_is_the_evidence_on_eipm.pdf)). making? Lessons from the International Conference on Evidence-Informed Policy Making’

participation: it rather disseminated to policymakers the results of the project. They are two different achievements and their relative scale of complexity and resource absorption are not comparable.

Based on the analysis of the resources available to the project (time, budget, skills) and on the absence of a preliminary agreement with policymakers in the two countries to embark in a process of evidence-based policymaking, the evaluators conclude that this objective was unrealistic by design<sup>21</sup> and as such destined to fail.

It remains to be added that – at least in Cambodia - the project was unknown and invisible to the major players in the area of local democratic governance and social accountability. No strategies for partnership and/or exploitation of synergies were sought for instance with the WB and its huge multi-annual programme “Demand for Good Governance”; or with other NGOs active in the same field working under SIDA and UNDP funds. The establishment of such alliances could have led to some chances for the project to contribute to inform national policies.

*Better access to water and sanitation after the end of the project*<sup>22</sup>. As discussed in III. ii this Medium Term Impact was not included in the Project Document and this is regarded by the evaluators as a major flaw in design.

The project had to devote two years in promoting social accountability in Takhmao and Rajshahi; access to water and solid waste management were selected as test beds for the application of the proposed methodology of work. One is entitled to expect changes for the better at the end of the project in the access by citizens to these services; the measuring of these changes would have represented a corroboration of the validity of the proposed methodology and a motivating factor for citizens and local authorities to further take-up the method and institutionalise it.

Specific targets (measurement indicators) could and should have been fixed during design or at least during the initial phase of the project; the base for the setting of these targets was represented by the (high quality) baseline reports developed by the project team at the beginning of the activities.

These surveys contain a wealth of good-quality quantitative and qualitative information describing the relevant situation in both cities before the beginning of the intervention. Among the most valuable data sets included in the baseline reports we mention figures representing the state of access to water and sanitation in the areas selected for the intervention, before the project start.

However, this occasion to set quantitative indicators was not exploited and the project did not update the relevant data sets at the end of the intervention to measure the changes over the period.

In such an absence the evaluators cannot measure the effects of the project in terms of its contribution to the solving of the problems of access to water and solid waste management

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<sup>21</sup> All the interviewed local authorities agreed in defining over-ambitious and unrealistic this objective.

<sup>22</sup> In the areas of the intervention

in the areas of intervention. Proxy indications are therefore given, instead; they are based on the evidence gathered in the field one year after the end of the project.

- Takhmao, Sangkat Prekho – The major progress is that the network of water pipes to individual households is now almost completed and some additional (still, not quantified) households have access to water. However, the majority of pipelines are still not in operation. Municipal authorities report that the service provider committed to complete the water provision to all villages of the Sangkat by the end of the current year (2014). These plans were made by the provider independently from the project activities; the value of the project is unanimously recognized as being a factor to speed-up the adoption and implementation of these operational plans.

Progresses in the number of households provided with access to the service of garbage collection are not sizeable, either. It is out of doubt that the provider has extended the area of its intervention; however, there are still complains from individual citizens about the non-respect of dates of service. Conditions of service (which are too expensive for some families) and the availability for some families of small unused lands did not stop the practice of open-air, non-selective burning of individual household waste; of its dumping into the river; and of dumping the garbage in whatever public road, being it served or not by the service provider.

Some villages of the Sangkat however are not yet served; the provider claims that small and not maintained roads do not allow the garbage trucks to collect waste.

- Takhmao, Sangkat Kampong Samnanh – There are a few noticeable progresses in waste collection (the area served by the provider being slightly larger), but still a large part of the territory is not served because the provider claims that the number of households willing to pay the collection fee is not sufficient to justify its investments for the widening-up the service.

Regarding water, the provider claims that the works for bringing the main pipes to the village will start once a main road (now under construction) will be finished, so that there are no progresses in relation to the baseline situation. The dangerous practice of using the highly polluted water from the river and well water (largely polluted with arsenic) does not seem to have been abandoned, in absence of viable alternatives.

- Rajshahi – The baseline situation in the two Wards was different, and in some parts of the remote Ward basic services such as access to water, sanitation, waste collection, electricity and public roads were not available.

The situation regarding the service of household waste collection has evolved over time for the better, and the local authorities have now extended the areas covered by the service throughout the whole municipality; full coverage is however not yet achieved and some areas are still not served.

Similarly, the access to water is now extended to a very large part of the municipal territory; this includes also areas where the project took place (Wards 12 and 30).

At the time of the evaluation the status of the access to the two services in intervention and non-intervention Wards is almost identical. This could bring to conclude that the contribution of the project to the solution of the problem was limited as the extension of the access to public services was part of a wider local policy targeting the whole municipality, in compliance with national laws.

It is however important to acknowledge that the project managed to achieve some relevant successes such as the dislocation of a waste deposit that was previously located close to a public school or the reconstruction of a drainage facility in the Ward 12.

While there is no doubt that there is progress both in Rajshahi and in Takhmao, the attribution of these effects to the project is a very delicate aspect, and this particularly in Rajshahi, where substantial public works have been undertaken by the local authorities independently from the work conducted by the project. The fact that the public authorities departments in charge with the provision of the services were not involved in the project activities is yet another factor suggesting that there are no visible links between the project and the improved situation.

In Takhmao the situation seems to suggest that the project contributed to the achievement of some results; additional remarks are added:

- The project played an important role as a pushing factor for the water distribution provider to adopt plans for a wider distribution.
- The distribution of water and the service of waste collection are managed by two commercial entities. The reasons for the refuse to extend their services even further are either strictly motivated by business considerations; or motivated by reasons that appear difficult to understand:
  - In the Sangkat Kampong Samnanh there is a new main road under construction; the road layout is almost finished with the exception of the tarring. The water provider reportedly claims that the main underground pipes will be installed under the road, once the road finished. Would not it be feasible, to persuade the provider instead to install the main pipes under the road before the tarring (which would allow a remarkable saving in time and budget)?
  - In the same Sangkat Kampong Samnanh the waste management provider does not extend its services because its single profit units are clusters of 100 families, out of which at least 50 should adhere to the service. In some parts of this Sangkat the number of families that could subscribe to the service does not sum to 50. This Sangkat has a shape of a rectangular triangle; its length is approximately 4.3 kilometres and its larger weight is about 1 kilometre. Would not it be feasible –in consideration of the small size of the Sangkat- to convince the provider to consider the whole Sangkat as a profit unit<sup>23</sup> and to serve the whole territory instead of some parts of it?
  - In the Sangkat Prekho the waste management provider does not serve an important portion of the territory because the roads are too narrow and badly maintained for the waste trucks to transit and collect the waste from individual households. Would not it be feasible instead to organise some collective

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<sup>23</sup> Where the large majority of the citizens adhered to the service already

waste deposits at the main crossroads (all within walking distance from the individual households) where the trucks of the provider could safely transit and collect the garbage; or to organise waste collection with wheelbarrows or small tractors?

The evidence proves that the process of negotiation with the service providers was long and extremely laborious. However, by their own admission, local communities were totally inexperienced in negotiating and mediating with for-profit service providers, which based their refuse to extend the services on the reasons summarised above. During a process of negotiation a skilled negotiator could have found the appropriate arguments for debating these justifications and find an agreement of mutual satisfaction. However, such a skilled negotiator was not available to support the claims of citizens, and these justifications became blocking factors against a wider access to public services.

What could have been done differently? To play a much more active role when negotiating with service providers, maybe with somebody that could help us to learn how to negotiate. We were not expert in negotiation, now we are the citizens, and the conditions of service were killing factors of the negotiation

**A commune councilor in Takhmao**

It seems to the evaluators that the project methodology missed to make provision for such a strategic support; as a consequence, citizens and local authorities were left with no assistance during their negotiation with the providers<sup>24</sup>. Maybe the methodology proposed by PRIA could be efficiently integrated with a process of coaching / tutoring of citizens during their first challenging negotiations; this would have a strong learning dimension and a very important motivational effect for the further embracing of the method of work.

*Take-up of the method and its replication by citizens after the end of the project.* One of the most notable results of the project is that citizens that participated to the Neighbourhood Committees in both locations admit now to be less afraid to address the local authorities and to claim their rights.

However this does not mean that the method has been taken up by citizens: all the Neighbourhood Committees in Rajshahi have been dismantled at the project end and –even if some of them still informally exist– none of the former Neighbourhood Committees in Takhmao have ever reconvened after the project end.

The project? It took so much effort for so few results...If I have a problem I would complain with the municipality on my own, they may listen to me.

**A citizen in Takhmao (with no benefits for his household after the project)**

Complaining through a Neighborhood Committee in the future? Yes, but only for a problem that is common to other citizens, otherwise I will try to set the issue individually

**A citizen in Takhmao (with benefits for her household because of the project)**

One year after the end of the intervention, the individual solution seems therefore to emerge

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<sup>24</sup> As a result and in consideration of the limited results obtained a consistent number of citizens are now skeptical about the methods proposed and declare to prefer to address their complains individually to local authorities rather than through the Neighborhood Committees.

as the preferred way for citizens to address local authorities in case of need; however, it is encouraging to remark that a few citizens met in Takhmao admit that –should they have a problem common to other citizens in the same neighbourhood- they will try to organise a Neighbourhood Committee to deal with it.

Factors that are quoted to justify the return to the ‘individual solution’ are the little changes noticed as a result of the project (Takhmao<sup>25</sup>) and the fact that the important changes that happened in Rajshahi would have happened even in absence of the project.

*Institutionalisation of the method by local administrations.* The situation is different in the two project locations, but with an important similarity.

- Independently from the project, in Takhmao as in many other municipalities in Cambodia the local authorities institutionalised forms of dialogue with citizens and promote their participation to the seating of the municipal council; even if this is done within the frame of the requirement of the National Program for Sub-National Democratic Development, a relevant part of Takhmao administrators and staff were involved in the project and –by this fact- exposed to concepts that were new for them such as accountability to citizens and transparency of the public administration. The internalisation of these concepts is an important element that supports their new duties towards citizens, and this success is directly linked with the project. However, the method proposed by the project has not been institutionalised or promoted after the project end.

It is to be remarked that the project team collaborated exclusively with the political majority ruling the Municipality of Takhmao and the medium-upper levels of the administration, which are in turn nominated by the ruling majority. Even if the majority ruling the municipality is still the same, the situation can well change in the future; this may lead to the entry in power of new leaders that were not trained to dialogue with citizens and maybe not used to concept such as accountability and transparency. This risk could have been prevented by involving in the project activities members of the opposition, as well.

Previously we had regular meetings with citizens, it was very helpful. Now with the new administration and the end of the project everything had stopped  
**A former Ward Councilor in Rajshahi**

- In Rajshahi the potential risk described above already materialised: the project was backed by the then Mayor and majority, which lost the last local elections. The new ruling majority (which at the time was not involved in the project) is not aware of the project and does not plan to institutionalise forms of civic participation / social accountability similar to those proposed by the project.

### **(v) Sustainability**

*Local democratic governance and social accountability practices adopted in both countries.* The contribution of the project to this objective is null. The practices promoted by the project had a lifecycle that coincided with the project duration and then stopped. Moreover, the project was invisible to the local donor community and to other NGOs active in the same

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<sup>25</sup> This is indeed a confirmation of the fact that the coaching of citizens during negotiation would have helped substantially in consolidating the method of work.

field of action. This does not mean that local democratic governance and social accountability practices are destined to fail in Cambodia and in Bangladesh: other and more visible activities are ongoing –in both countries- and may lead to their wide adoption.

*Strengthening of south-south learning and advocacy on participatory democratic governance and social accountability practices in urban Asia.* There is no conclusive evidence allowing to assess the contribution of the project to this objective, which appears in any case low. The project obviously did not set basis for continued cooperation between the three agencies, nor for a peer to peer network.

## V. CONCLUSIONS

*i.* The idea to contribute to the process of enhancing local democratic governance through the adoption of practices of social accountability in Cambodia and in Bangladesh is sound and the methodology proposed by the project team is consolidated by several years of practice in other countries. Both Cambodia and Bangladesh had in place a legal framework that was rightly considered conducive to the implementation of social accountability at the local level. The project idea was fully coherent with the UNDEF mandate and instrumental to the plans of the grantees to test its methodologies of work in urban areas outside India. This is discussed in Chapter IV.i.

*ii.* The regional dimension of the project is seriously questioned by the evaluators as the implementation of a project by three partners in two different countries is certainly not a sufficient reason 'per se' for making of this a regional project. This dimension is given by granted in the Project Document without any justification; the grantee did not explain what are the advantages of this project in relation to two different projects implemented each of them in a different country and mechanisms for initial discussion of the methodology, cross-fertilisation, analysis of findings, exchange of best practices and of lessons learnt in the two project locations during implementation were not planned for – nor conducted. This is discussed in Chapter IV.i.

*iii.* As discussed in IV.ii, there is a major flaw in design due to the double role played by Silaka and Prip Trust, which were at the same time implementers of the project and its beneficiaries in their role as trainees in the initial training for Civil Society Organizations. In particular, as discussed under "Effectiveness" it is remarked that in consideration of the very ambitious objectives of the project and its short duration Pria should have been able to mobilise skilled resources in both countries since the beginning of the project. This was not the case, and the implementing partners had first to be trained at the expenses of the project budget. A further major error in design was that the improvement of the access to water and waste collection in the two locations was not considered as an objective of the project. Finally, there was a major confusion in the setting of the outcome indicators (the grantee selected output indicators to measure outcomes.)

*iv.* The chapter IV.ii describes that - in terms of outputs - the project delivered what promised under three of its four lines of action; however, the evaluators rise serious doubts that the Training of Trainers organised in Cambodia involved participants (as claimed by the project reports) other than Silaka staff.

*v.* There are concerns regarding the travel costs –which from a superficial reading of the budget seem to be only the 7% of the overall financial envelope- but are in reality much higher and impact for the 40% of the overall budget. As discussed in IV.iii some of these travel costs are clearly over-budgeted.

**vi.** In terms of outcomes (see chapter IV.i) the major successes of the project –achieved in both locations- are linked to behavioural changes in citizens participating to the social accountability experience. A further area of success for the project was its ability to involve local authorities and motivating them to dialogue with citizens in order to solve common problems. There is consensus among local authorities that this was the first time ever that they were exposed to concepts such as accountability to citizens and transparency; and understood the implication of these concepts in their daily work. More limited were the outcomes in terms of enhancing capacities of civil society organizations, while the objective to inform national policies was clearly over-ambitious and not consistent with the project resources. The project did not make itself visible to the local donors' community and missed the opportunity to set alliances with other NGOs implementing similar initiatives.

**vii.** Regarding medium term impacts (see chapter IV.i), the project clearly contributed to limited but significant changes in Takhmao (Cambodia) in terms of a wider access to water and waste collection in the target locations; no clear attribution of the changes occurred in Rajshahi (Bangladesh) can be made however to the project, as these were part of a wider policy of the municipality aimed at extending the access to basic services in all the 35 Wards. These results are not measurable and have to be appreciated as proxy indications, only as the project did not update the data contained in the baseline report as to reflect the situation as it changed over the project life.

**viii.** The fact that medium term impacts in terms of access to services were limited in Takhmao is largely due to resistances from the commercial service providers; their justifications (discussed in chapter IV.i) do not seem valid arguments for the refusal to widen up the service and a well-conducted negotiation could have suggested viable solutions of mutual satisfaction. Citizens and local authorities were not adequately supported / mentored during negotiations by skilled negotiators; as a result and in consideration of the meagre results obtained, a significant number of citizens participating in the project felt discouraged and consider now that their concerns are better addressed through individual dialogue with the local administration.

**ix.** The medium term impacts of the project in terms of replication of the method by citizens are null (the Neighbourhood Committees have been dismantled in Rajshahi at the end of the project and are not operational any longer in Takhmao), and the same is to be sadly said in terms of institutionalisation of the methods by local administration. This was discussed in IV.i. As referred in IV.v, the project did not contribute to the achievement of the adoption in the two countries of local democratic governance and social accountability practices; and to the strengthening of south-south learning and advocacy practices in urban Asia. None of these long-lasting results can be assessed against sustainability criteria.

## VI. RECOMMENDATIONS

To strengthen the likelihood of similar project in the future to achieve their expected results, the evaluators recommend to UNDEF and project grantees:

*i.* To plan for success. The likelihood for a project to achieve its results starts with the design phase and a project proposal shall be accurately scrutinised in order to spot major flaws that could affect its possibility to achieve the expected outcomes. More in particular, and based on the lessons from this evaluation (ref. to conclusion iii):

- Applicants for a grant are recommended to base their proposal on a well-thought logic of intervention and to set themselves ambitious but achievable objectives; the project objectives must represent a realistic challenge, and not a killing factor for the project.
- Applicants for a grant are recommended to define a clear set of SMART<sup>26</sup> indicators of performance that are relevant to each level of the intervention; this should be an obligation for the applicants and not an option.
- UNDEF is recommended to seriously question the appropriateness of funding interventions that in their logic of intervention focus more on activities and outputs rather than on results.

*ii.* To consider the rationale and the implications of a regional intervention. As suggested by what discussed in the conclusion ii, applicants for a regional project are recommended to carefully justify its regional dimension by explaining its advantages in terms of cross-fertilisation of the national teams, coordination, sharing of lessons and errors, analysis of results and other elements as relevant. Consistently, they are recommended to set aside sufficient resources allowing regional infra-team coordination.

*iii.* To clearly define the respective roles of implementing partners and project beneficiaries and avoid promiscuity of roles; this refers to what discussed in the conclusion iii. The implementation of this recommendation should have positive repercussions in terms of efficiency and impact. Grantees are furthermore recommended to ensure that the project staff is constituted by human resources already trained and experienced in conducting activities of the same nature as those that they are supposed to conduct in the project.

*iv.* To ensure a rigorous budget control. As a consequence of what summarised in conclusion v, UNDEF is recommended to set maximum indicative budget ceiling for travel costs and to instruct applicants to include all travel costs (transport tickets and allowances) under the same line of budget. Both applicants and UNDEF are recommended to double check the financial proposal for spotting errors of over or under budgeting.

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<sup>26</sup> Simple, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic, Time-bound

**v.** Measure success. Whenever applicable, grantees are recommended to update – at the end of the project life or throughout its life as feasible - the relevant statistics / data sets of the initial baseline survey as to reflect changes over the period. This would constitute an enormous support to management and to the evaluation of the project and will allow seizing of the value of the intervention. This recommendation links with conclusion vii.

**vi.** Grantees are strongly invited to make provision for a consistent process of coaching / mentoring during the most critical phases of their capacity building interventions; this recommendation aims at enhancing the impact and the sustainability of the project and links with the conclusion viii.

## IX. ANNEXES

### ANNEX 1: EVALUATION QUESTIONS

DAC criterion	Evaluation Question	Related sub-questions
Relevance	To what extent was the project, as designed and implemented, suited to context and needs at the beneficiary, local, and national levels?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Were the objectives of the project in line with the needs and priorities for democratic development, given the context?</li> <li>▪ Should another project strategy have been preferred rather than the one implemented to better reflect those needs, priorities, and context? Why?</li> <li>▪ Were risks appropriately identified by the projects? How appropriate are/were the strategies developed to deal with identified risks? Was the project overly risk-averse?</li> </ul>
Effectiveness	To what extent was the project, as implemented, able to achieve objectives and goals?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To what extent have the project's objectives been reached?</li> <li>▪ To what extent was the project implemented as envisaged by the project document? If not, why not?</li> <li>▪ Were the project activities adequate to make progress towards the project objectives?</li> <li>▪ What has the project achieved? Where it failed to meet the outputs identified in the project document, why was this?</li> </ul>
Efficiency	To what extent was there a reasonable relationship between resources expended and project impacts?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Was there a reasonable relationship between project inputs and project outputs?</li> <li>▪ Did institutional arrangements promote cost-effectiveness and accountability?</li> <li>▪ Was the budget designed, and then implemented, in a way that enabled the project to meet its objectives?</li> </ul>
Impact	To what extent has the project put in place processes and procedures supporting the role of civil society in contributing to democratization, or to direct promotion of democracy?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To what extent has/have the realization of the project objective(s) and project outcomes had an impact on the specific problem the project aimed to address?</li> <li>▪ Have the targeted beneficiaries experienced tangible impacts? Which were positive; which were negative?</li> <li>▪ To what extent has the project caused changes and effects, positive and negative, foreseen and unforeseen, on democratization?</li> <li>▪ Is the project likely to have a catalytic effect? How? Why? Examples?</li> </ul>
Sustainability	To what extent has the project, as designed and implemented, created what is likely to be a continuing impetus towards democratic development?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ To what extent has the project established processes and systems that are likely to support continued impact?</li> <li>▪ Are the involved parties willing and able to continue the project activities on their own (where applicable)?</li> </ul>
UNDEF value-added	To what extent was UNDEF able to take advantage of its unique position and comparative advantage to achieve results that could not have been achieved had support come from other donors?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What was UNDEF able to accomplish, through the project, which could not as well have been achieved by alternative projects, other donors, or other stakeholders (Government, NGOs, etc.).</li> <li>▪ Did project design and implementing modalities exploit UNDEF's comparative advantage in the form of an explicit mandate to focus on democratization issues?</li> </ul>

## ANNEX 2: MAIN DOCUMENTS REVIEWED

- Andrew D Oxman, John N Lavis, Simon Lewin and Atle Fretheim, What is evidence-informed policymaking?, in Health Research Policy and Systems, December 2009
- Janelle Plummer and Gavin Tritt: Voice, Choice and Decision: A Study of Local Governance Processes in Cambodia, World Bank and Asia Foundation, 2013
- Rodolfo Lewanski (Regional Authority for citizens participation in Tuscany, Italy); Valutare la partecipazione: una proposta theory based e user oriented (evaluate participation, a theory based and user oriented proposal) – author’s pre-publication draft
- Sophie Sutcliffe and Julius Court, Evidence-Based Policymaking: What is it? How does it work? What relevance for developing countries?, Overseas Development Institute, November 2005
- UDF-RAP-09-315, Final Narrative Report, May 2013
- UDF-RAP-09-315, Mid-term Progress Report, April 2012
- UDF-RAP-09-315, Milestone Verification Mission Report, December 2011
- UDF-RAP-09-315, Milestone Verification Mission Report, September 2012
- UDF-RAP-09-315, Project Document, February 2011
- UNDEF, Operational manual for the UNDEF-funded project evaluations
- UNDEF, Project Proposal Guidelines
- Veto violence paper: Understanding Evidence: Evidence Based Decision-Making ([http://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/evidence/docs/EBDM\\_82412.pdf](http://vetoviolence.cdc.gov/evidence/docs/EBDM_82412.pdf))
- <http://www.silaka.org/>
- <http://www.pria.org/>
- <http://www.priptrust.org/>
- <http://www.worldbank.org/projects/P101156/demand-good-governance-project?lang=en>

## ANNEX 3: SCHEDULE OF INTERVIEWS

3 April 2014	
Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay	Director PRIA, New Delhi (phone interview)
4 April 2014	
Aroma Dutta	Director Prip Trust, Dhaka (phone + f2f interview)
6 April 2014	
Khurshid-Al- Mahmud	Cultural Worker, CSO member, Rajshahi (f2f interview)
7 April 2014	
Thida Khus	Director Silaka, Phnom-Penh (f2f interview)
F.M.A Zahid	Rajshahi University and CSO member (f2f interview)
Shariful Islam Babu	Former Panel Mayor and councilor, Ward-12, Rajshahi City Corporation (f2f interview)
Mohesh Chanda	Neighborhood Committee member, Ward No-12, Rajshahi city corporation (f2f interview)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Hong Sovanny, Silaka, Training Coordinator</li> <li>Chhay Pitou, Silaka, Project Manager</li> <li>Khiev Vuthoun, Silaka, Project Officer</li> <li>Vinh Daroath, Silaka, Trainer</li> </ul>	Silaka staff and part of the project staff, Phnom-Penh (group interview)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meas Chandet, KAD, former Director</li> <li>Roeun Veayor, KAD, former Project officer</li> </ul>	Silaka subcontractors implementing project activities, Phnom-Penh (group interview)
Nob Vy	VOD hot news, Senior news editor, Phnom-Penh (f2f interview)
Akram Hasan Millat	Executive Editor, The Daily Sonar Desh, Rajshahi (f2f interview)
Bilkis Begum	Ward Councillor Zone No-4, Rajshahi City corporation (f2f interview)
8 April 2014	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nou Sovannara, Takhmao municipal vice governor</li> <li>Keo Saray, Member of Takhmao municipal council</li> </ul>	Local authorities participating to the project, Takhmao (group interview)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Yeav Leng, Chief of Kampongsamnanh Sangkat &amp; 2 colleagues</li> <li>Chum Sinoun, Chief of Prek Ho Sangkat &amp; 2 colleagues</li> </ul>	Local authorities participating to the project, Takhmao (group interview)
Chan Sun	Chief of Takhmao One Window Service (f2f interview)
Ziaul Abedin Sheli	Secretary, Ward council office, Ward-12, Rajshahi (f2f interview)
Mahmuda Khatun	Neighborhood Committee member, Ward No-30, Rajshahi (f2f interview)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sam Samith</li> <li>Chek Kongrithy</li> <li>Vong Savoeun</li> <li>Sov Sreyrov</li> </ul>	Members of Neighborhood Committees in Takhmao, Sangkat Prek Ho (focus group)

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Moeun Sreymom</li> <li>• Chan SamAng</li> <li>• Cheam Neang</li> <li>• Mak Sophy</li> <li>• Heng Kolap</li> <li>• Chorn Sambathratha</li> <li>• Prak Monyphalla</li> </ul>	
<b>9 April 2014</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sok Makara, Star Kampuchea</li> <li>• Chab Rossekdey, Caritas</li> <li>• Khem Than, Caritas</li> </ul>	Civil society organizations, Takhmao (group interview)
Buth Chhik	Director WB project 'Demand for Good Governance' and Ministry of Interior officer <i>Cancelled at the last minute</i>
Chheav Nak	Communication Officer WB project 'Demand for Good Governance' and Ministry of Interior officer, Phnom-Penh (f2f interview)
Thol Sreyleak	Cambodian Centre for Independent Media, Phnom-Penh (f2f interview)
<b>10 April 2014</b>	
Chhor Sophal	PACT Cambodia, Director of Decentralisation and Governance, Phnom-Penh (f2f interview)
Janelle Plummer	World Bank, Senior Governance Specialist, Phnom-Penh (phone interview)
Tep Sokundara	UNDP, Governance Specialist <i>Cancelled at the last minute</i>
<b>11 April 2014</b>	
Thida Kus Kaustuv Kanti Bandyopadhyay (remotely) (Aroma Dutta could not participate)	Debriefing, Phnom-Penh

## ANNEX 4: ACRONYMS

CSO	Civil Society Organization
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
F2f	Face-to-face
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
SIDA	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
UNDEF	United Nations Democracy Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
USD	United States Dollar
WB	World Bank