

Cambodian Human Rights and Democracy Organisations

Towards the Future

John L. Vijghen

**Department for Democracy
and Social Development**

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Sida Evaluation 01/28

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Participants of the project were besides the two Swedish NGOs ten local Human Rights and Democracy NGOs. The evaluation missions, surveys and studies were carried out from April to September 2000.

Author: John L. Vijghen.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John L. Vijghen got his Masters in Social Anthropology in 1987 from the University of Nijmegen in the Netherlands. He came as volunteer to Cambodia in May 1990. In 1994 he founded the local NGO Cambodian Researchers for Development of which he was director till November 1997. Since that time he works as independent consultant for development organisations in the Southeast Asia region. He wrote several papers about Khmer rural society and is co-editor of a volume about the role of groups during the 1998 elections (forthcoming Dec. 2001). He is senior partner of Experts for Community Research (ECR). Email address: iecr@loxinfo.co.th

ANY NATION HAS THE RIGHT OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

Executive Summary

Sida, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, commissioned with support of the Swedish NGOs Diakonia and Forum Syd an evaluation of the following human rights & democracy NGOs: Khmer Women's Voice Centre, Women for Prosperity, Cambodian Institute for Human Rights, LICADHO, ADHOC, Center for Social Development, Khmer Institute for Democracy, COFFEL, COMFREL and NICFEC. The Evaluation has resulted in a Mission report of each NGO, several Study and Survey reports and two general reports. This final evaluation report contains a general discussion of the findings and draws conclusions for future support.

The methodology was based upon a participatory approach; one staff of each of the NGOs took part in the Evaluation. Together with a professional team they carried out document and field studies, several target group surveys and some special topic studies. The mission results were discussed at each NGO during a feedback workshop and delegates and leaders of the participating NGOs discussed plans for the future during several workshops with their sponsors.

Role and Relevance

The ten local NGOs all aim at democratic governance but use various means and focus on different aspects and target groups. The ten vary much in organisational structure, staff size, cover areas or methodology. Three organisations combine human rights casework, awareness raising and advocacy; three NGOs play a prominent role as 'think tank' while organising national debates; two small NGOs focus on Women issues and the three election monitoring coalitions that are founded by other local NGOs focus their aim at elections issues.

The relevance of the work of these ten local NGOs is vindicated by the findings of this evaluation. However, after ten years the NGOs should review the appropriateness of target groups, investigation and training methods and in particular awareness raising approaches. Advocacy work, despite regarded a priority is for most local NGOs a minor activity in terms of programming and resources and more attention for this aspect of the work might be needed. The lack of a strong popular base to guide and motivate the HR & democracy NGOs is an issue that needs to be addressed.

Strategies and Co-operation

Characteristic for the Cambodian human rights and democracy sector is that most NGOs apply a number of unique strategies to achieve their objectives that are shared with only a few others, while they also apply more commonly used strategies. Examples of such common strategies are: large-scale awareness training, human rights violation casework, advocacy and lobbying in various forms, and information dissemination through the publication of magazines and study reports, public statements, and forums. Examples of the more unique applications are: medical services to get access to prisoners; collaboration with government officials and civil servants to raise awareness; empowering communities to facilitate local democratic governance; training teachers or provincial NGOs to teach on human rights; strengthening leadership skills; televising national forums; employing citizen advisors; educating voters via theatre performances; and so on. Despite the fact that most NGOs developed these strategies without much consultation with others there are not many signs of redundancy. However, the approaches and strategies are not based upon a comprehensive need assessment or a general plan supported by the sector. This likely limits the overall effectiveness of the work and enhances the inherent vulnerability of the organisations.

Several NGOs co-operate well on the level of protecting victims of human rights violations or through joint public statements. However, in other fields or on an organisational level the NGOs are reluctant to co-operate.

Impact of Training & Information Campaigns

The NGOs raise awareness about human rights and democracy and feed the national debate through publication of magazines. The magazines are valued but most outside the capital where they lessen the hunger for information. However, their circulation is small and restricted to certain circles of people and don't reach a large proportion of the population. Some local NGOs use Radio and TV forums that reach a large proportion of the population but no studies indicate impact. Through awareness and skill building training courses a large part of the population and many teachers, local officials and key-persons in communities have been reached. A significant proportion of these participants spread the knowledge around in their community and some use it to improve their situation. However the effect on society seems limited especially if no attempts were made to link the knowledge and skills to local conditions.

Impact of Assistance to Victims

Three local NGOs offer civil and legal services, help victims of human rights violations to find justice or provide social and medical services to prisoners and assistance for victims of forced land evictions. The effect is limited due to the inadequate judicial system and the lack of proper law enforcement, but the NGOs encourage people and play a mediating role through forms of traditional conflict resolution that takes place outside the court system. Although the qualitative findings indicate the need for these services no firm conclusions about impact or efficiency of the operations can be drawn for lack of adequate databases or national statistics.

Impact of Monitoring of Human Rights Violations & Advocacy

An important side product of the casework and social services is information about abuses and illegal actions. The attention for the NGO reports about impunity and torture are clear evidence of the effect of that kind of monitoring. The prison monitoring caused a positive change in the prison conditions. Election monitoring probably has resulted in a more free voting behaviour. The monitoring results provide arguments for NGO advocates to promote change of conditions or improve draft laws. The press law and possibly the continuation of the debate about the Khmer Rouge trial are achievements of this advocacy. The effect on the world community to put pressure on the Cambodian government is another achievement. However, the total effect on parliament and government officials seems still limited. A reason might be that the government regards the individual NGO leaders as the advocates, and they are not regarded as representatives of the population. Another reason is the lack of a strong popular base that NGOs could mobilise to pressure lawmakers and government.

Monitoring & Evaluation

Although some organisations try their best due to lack of skills and resources most NGOs are not equipped to monitor effectively their activities or are able to assess their achievements. In one organisation external studies of two programs point out shortcomings in methodology and staff qualifications that adversely effect the results but no adequate measures were taken to improve the programs. Bi-annual evaluations were customary only at one other organisation; unfortunately the resulting recommendations were mostly neglected. Activities of the other eight NGOs were never subjected to external

public reviews. Not only has this lead to some level of presumptuousness about their efforts but it explains the general overstatement of impact and lack of understanding of the corrective purpose of the evaluation process.

International Support & Partnership

International sponsors have established a strong sector with a variety of approaches, strategies and activities that are overall seen sound and functional. But the efficiency of the local NGOs would be greatly enhanced if sponsors would commit support for long-term periods that enable good planning and preparation. One way to solve the problem of shortage of funds, keeping motivated staff and continuation of activities might be for local NGOs to enter into local partnerships. Forum Syd and Diakonia offer such relationships and the partnership meetings have an important function, although some international NGOs tend to overstate their importance a bit. The role of foreign advisors placed or financed by international NGOs is important to provide technical and organisational skills and build capacity. None of the local NGOs applies a comprehensive staff capacity building plan what hampers their development. Fortunately some sponsors support staff capacity building but both the NGOs and donors come short in the follow-up on this support.

The Role of Human Rights & Democracy in the New Millennium

The ten local NGOs are each moving ahead but driven by their old motives and methods. The NGOs and their sponsors should consider new ways to reach the goals and objectives. This will require more partnership, more co-operation, more giving up of oneself, all for the 'good of the population'. Empowerment through skill building and practical knowledge, mobilisation of people who got their democratic rights violated, teaching of children how the future should look, and joining together. The role of human rights & democracy NGOs is to advocate for change and mobilise people.

Future Development Aid for Human Rights in Cambodia

The role of future foreign development aid would be to support the local NGOs in this transition from well intended but in isolation operating organisations to become representatives of civil society. In order to find new ways and better strategies to reach the aim a comprehensive analysis of societal problems should be carried out, while local NGOs should further develop appropriate approaches and design effective strategies and tools. The second generation leadership and NGO cadre should be enabled to learn and develop their own ideas through partaking in impact studies. Sida and the Swedish NGOs should take a lead in this direction.

Acknowledgement

There are too many people, both Cambodians and expatriates, who have contributed to this Evaluation to credit all. First, without co-operation from local NGO staff and leadership and their sponsors, this Evaluation would not have achieved the results of which this report is only one part.

Five persons, all Swedes, took the initiative that resulted in this Evaluation. They also took the principle of transparency and accountability to the moral extreme of including themselves in the review. For that, they deserve thanks. Kudos also for their work to perfect the Terms of Reference, improvement of the final report, and also for their continuing support throughout the whole long process of the field missions and drafting of reports. Thanks must go to the following: Sue Daven, Sonny Ostberg, Anders Frankenberg, Anders Emanuel, and Daniel Asplund.

Eight other people, all Cambodians, fully merit the distinction of being called courageous and brave. Some two women and six men, each working at one of the eight original local NGOs invited to participate in the Evaluation, fully demonstrated that Cambodians have the able bravery to review their own work. They learned much, about twin goals of the Evaluation; furthermore, they also contributed much in the form of frank and free discussions which is the hallmark of a free, fair, and democratic society. Gratitude for these gallant Cambodians: Vann Sophat, Chum Phally, Houng Nita, Uon Heap, Kem Sambaddh, Chhor Bonnaroth, Chin Yahan and Meas Sophal.

Two other individuals, Core Members of the Evaluation Team who stayed on during the whole field work period, made the ambitious and complicated operation to review ten organisations in three months' time possible and fruitful. Thanks Lim Sidevil – and especially Thida Khus.

Six others who strengthened the Team at crucial times need mentioning. The reports they prepared were not only a basis for the end results, but were valuable in themselves. Appreciation goes to Caroline Hughes, Elisabeth Guthrie, Prom Tevy, John Marston, Ly Sareoun, and Shelley Preece.

There were five others, all Cambodians, who did their best to measure the impact of the work done by the local NGOs. Regards to Hout Sovanneary, Oeun Thearith, Bou Chamroeun, Dyna Vijghen, and Seang Cheathy. And finally, without our secretary, Kim Sopheap, the whole operation would not have been executed as smoothly as it was. Christophes M. Phillips did the proof reading. Much appreciation!

The aforementioned people and myself were the ones who conducted the Evaluation but would not have succeeded without the co-operation of all staff and leaders of the participating organisations. I hope our joint efforts will result in a stronger and more concerted drive among the human rights and democracy NGOs to work further to achieve rule of law and good governance in this country.

John Vijghen, Team Leader

Foreword

To My Colleagues and Partners,

It has been nearly one year since I had the honour to open the Capacity Building Workshop, which was the starting point for this evaluation. To bring this exercise to its end, in the form of its main report and 16 special reports, in English and Khmer, has indeed required much longer time than we had ever imagined. Possibly, this ambitious evaluative process, in reality, needed even more time – more time spent on joint preparations; this is one of the many lessons learnt from it.

I also know that all whom have taken part in the evaluation have passed through a very demanding period. This has not been a conventional evaluation, and it has certainly had its amount of problems. In short, a very qualified learning process and exercise – which also was one of the very expressed and agreed objectives. Participatory evaluations and their techniques are still in their infancy. In order to use this experience for more qualitative learning, Sida will shortly sponsor a special review of the process and the quality of the results. Irrespective of this, not only John Vijghen and his core team but all partners involved in this exercise should, in my view, be awarded a very special medal for courage, bravery, endurance, and innovation in participatory evaluations!

The national NGOs continue to make internal discussions to reflect on the findings and how to go ahead. These internal discussions and reflections are a vital part of making this evaluation into something really useful. What I find especially encouraging and inspiring is that there seems to be willingness and opportunity now to work on many issues together – a very promising sign. But it is clear that we on the donor side need more time to digest and reflect and discuss our roles and behaviour.

This evaluation is also of special and strategic importance for Sida. Sweden is currently in the process of preparing for a new country strategy to guide our development co-operation program in Cambodia from 2002 onwards. The present evaluation report provides an important input to our strategic discussions, and more specifically, on how we can support national human rights and democracy NGOs in doing an even better job, thus sharpening the relevance, effectiveness, and impact of what they are doing. Secondly, it provides guidance on how we can become even better partners.

Even in an obviously incomplete shape, this evaluation has already had an impact on the near future and the importance of co-operation; therefore influencing the focus and content of the programme proposals prepared by Forum Syd and Diakonia in close collaboration with national partners.

With the final evaluation reports now available, I hope that other partners and actors and we involved in the field of promoting democracy and respect for human rights will take the time necessary to digest and interpret the messages of the evaluation and make the best use of it in our future work.

Daniel Asplund, Counsellor
Sida Resident Representative

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See for specific reports used during the Missions and Studies the ECR reports nos. 24–30, 32–39 (see backside cover)

Glossary

barang foreigner, westerner

mehkheyol guide, temporary voluntary leader of community works

Acronyms

ADHOC	Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association
BOD	Board of Directors
CBO	Community Based Organisations
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CIHR	Cambodian Institute for Human Rights
COFFEL	Coalition for Free and Fair Elections
COHCHR	Cambodian Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights
COMFREL	Committee for Free and fair Elections
CPP	Cambodian People's Party
CSD	Center for Social Development
CSO	Civil Society Organisations
FUNCINPEC	Royalist Party
H.E.	His Excellency
HR	Human Rights
HRE	Human Rights Evaluation (project)
KID	Khmer Institute for Democracy
KWVC	Khmer Women's Voice Centre
LICADHO	Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights
LNGO	Local NGO
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NICFEC	Neutral Independent Committee for Free Elections in Cambodia
Sida	Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency
SRP	Sam Rainsy Party
TOR	Terms of Reference
UN	United Nations
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Administration of Cambodia
VDC	Village Development Committee
WFP	Women for Prosperity

1 Introduction

Foreign governments and international organisations support Democracy and Human Rights Non-Governmental Organisations financially and with advice to further the establishment of a democratic society in Cambodia. The supported local NGOs and the forms of external support need to be reviewed from time to time to see if there is progress and to assess if the applied approaches are the most appropriate to reach the goal. Sida decided to conduct such an evaluation to point the way for future change and support and commissioned an Evaluation of ten human rights and democracy Cambodian NGOs operating in the country. Before analysing role the and impact of the human rights and democracy NGOs in the next chapters we will, in this chapter, describe the evaluation process and methodology and the conditions under which the human rights and democracy NGOs operate in the country.

1.1 The Swedish democracy programme in Cambodia

1.1.1 Sida

The Country Strategy for development co-operation between Sweden and Cambodia for the period 1999–2001 states that the objectives of Sweden’s development co-operation with Cambodia during the strategy period should be:

- to promote conditions for poor men and women in the countryside in order to improve their living standards;
- to promote the emergence of the rule of law and the increased respect for human rights.

The Country Strategy also lists priority programmes. One priority being assisting the promotion of democracy, human rights and the rule of law through education, technical advice and monitoring in co-operation with COHCHR and NGOs. These objectives and priorities are reflected in the Swedish Democracy and Human Rights programme.

This programme in Cambodia includes three main parts. The Swedish International Development Co-operation Agency (Sida) initiated in 1998 two programmes giving special democracy & human rights support to Cambodian NGOs. Diakonia and Forum Syd developed these programmes. At present, it involves 20 local NGOs (Forum Syd 13, Diakonia 7). Sida has also supported the Cambodia Office of High Commissioner for Human Rights (COHCHR) since 1994. Sida’s democracy and Human Rights programme includes a core support to the Master’s Programme in Financial Economics; counselling and training for Cambodia’s Central Bank; and election counselling for the Minister of Interior activities of the Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI) with whom Sida has co-operated since 1991.

1.1.2 Forum Syd

Forum Syd is a non-religious and non-partisan Swedish NGO, an umbrella organisation since 1982 for more than 130 Swedish NGOs. Forum Syd provides development assistance through more than 400 projects in 72 countries; in Cambodia since 1993 to support local NGOs in the fields of Democracy, Human Rights, Gender, Environment and the Social Sector. Forum Syd aims to foster partnerships and networks between Swedish and local NGOs to increase the understanding about the issues facing civil societies around the world. In Cambodia 13 human rights & democracy organisations receive financial support through the Sida-Democracy program and program support through the partnership assistance. Further, Swedish Advisors placed at local NGOs through Forum Syd provide technical assistance.

1.2.2 Diakonia

Diakonia is a Christian charity founded in the 1960's in Sweden by six free church denominations to assist organisations and churches in the South. The current aim is *'that civil society shall be able to influence decision making so that democracy is reinforced and development based upon respect for the individual and the environment'*. Diakonia tries to achieve this through support to local organisations, in particular in the democracy and human rights fields. The Southeast Asia regional office in Chiang Mai, Thailand is responsible for the assistance to Cambodian local organisations through its representative office in Phnom Penh. Seven human rights & democracy organisations receive financial support through the Sida-Democracy program and program support through the partnership assistance.

1.2 About the evaluation

The Human Rights Evaluation (HRE) aimed to review the *relevance* and appropriateness of the programs, projects, and activities implemented by the 10 organisations that participated in the Evaluation. Further, *management styles*, how decisions are made within the organisations, what *visions for the future* leaders have, the capacity of the organisation and their staff, and how they *work together* and with others was the subject of the review. And finally, the Evaluation assessed the relationship between donors in general and the Swedish sponsors in particular, and the human rights and democracy organisations (See TOR in Annex 2).

Eight local organisations participated in two ways: The first through the assignment of one of their senior staff to function as NGO Evaluator in the Project Team, and second (for all ten NGOs) by allowing and facilitating an evaluation of their own organisation. The assignment of the NGO Evaluators had also the twin purpose of *capacity building*, both by learning during the evaluation process and by being able to learn how colleague organisations operate.

1.2.1 The Participants

Both Diakonia and Forum Syd are not only sponsoring but are actively supporting together some 50 partners through offering opportunities for capacity building, exchange of experience, and other forms of support – in the case of Forum Syd by placing advisors and Diakonia by organising conferences and field-visits abroad.

On 6 March 2000 these Swedish NGOs invited some of their partners to participate in a workshop for a discussion of the remit and form of the Evaluation. As a result, the following NGOs decided to take part: Khmer Women's Voice Centre (KWVC), Women for Prosperity (WFP), Cambodian Institute for Human Rights (CIHR), Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defence of Human Rights (LICADHO), Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC), Center for Social Development (CSD), Khmer Institute for Democracy (KID), and Coalition for Free and Fair Elections (COFFEL). During the Evaluation it was decided to invite the two other election-monitoring organisations, namely Committee for Free and fair Elections (COMFREL) and Neutral Independent Committee for Free Elections in Cambodia (NICFEC) to take part. However, for practical reasons, the latter two NGOs were not asked to assign one of their staff to join the HRE Team like the other NGOs.

1.2.2 Support for the Evaluation

Sida, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, finances the Democracy-programs of Forum Syd and Diakonia through which activities of the participating local NGOs are sponsored. Sida is the main sponsor of the Evaluation, with the Swedish NGOs Forum Syd and Diakonia each sponsoring 10% of the costs. These supporters of the Evaluation are interested in the specific results regarding the local NGOs, and they want to know how the relationship is between the Swedish NGOs and their local partners. They are also, and Sida in particular, interested in a general analysis of the

role, relevance and work of the ten local organisations as input to the strategic thinking of Sweden's next strategy for development co-operation with Cambodia, to be effective from January 2002 onwards.

1.3 Approach and methodology of the evaluation

It can be argued that Cambodia has now entered a phase of consolidation of democratic governance and rule of law. While local NGOs will be as important as ever for claiming human rights and deepening the democratic development, their methods and approaches must be reviewed. The aim is to learn more about the local NGOs and the impact of their activities, and what is the sustainability of the local NGOs' work. The conclusions will be important input for Sida's future strategy for democracy and human rights support in Cambodia's civil society.

The Terms of Reference explains in detail the aims, approach, and intended methodology (See Annex 2). The aims in brief were:

- To attain a deeper understanding of the *relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability* of the Cambodian NGOs' activities and their *organisational strengths & weaknesses*, in contributing to democratisation and respect for human rights in Cambodia in the long term, with a special emphasis on impact and relevance of the activities.
- To learn *what roles the Swedish NGOs have played*, in terms of funding of activities and equipment, moral support, technical advice, net-working, or other contributions, and what *forms and methods for international co-operation* can be recommended for the future.
- To contribute to a *more conscious and systematic reflection* within the concerned NGOs about the issues raised, possibly leading to the adoption of new approaches to organisational learning.

1.3.1 Participatory Approach

'The evaluations shall be guided by a participatory approach to maximise the learning generated by reflection within each organisation involved. Methods to be used could be case studies, participatory observations, surveys, and comparing NGOs.' (Terms of Reference, see Annex 2).

For the local NGOs involved, the evaluation was an occasion to mobilise staff and members for reflection on the strategies chosen to date. It was, therefore, essential that the evaluation is understood as an opportunity for *learning*. To facilitate this, the methodology was based on the participatory approach, involving one staff from eight of the participating ten NGOs in the Human Rights Evaluation (HRE) Team. Stimulation of discussions and arranging feedback meetings with the NGO management and local staff was therefore an important aspect throughout the evaluation process.

The participatory approach began with the presentation of a draft Terms of Reference (TOR) designed by Sida staff in Sweden during the workshop in March 2000. The TOR was further developed by the supporting Swedish agencies through email communication, also requesting input from the participating local NGOs. Unfortunately, none of the local NGOs responded.

The next step was the inclusion of eight NGO-Evaluators in the Evaluation Team, followed after completion of the field visits with Feedback Workshops at each of the local NGOs. Further, all participating organisations joined in two Planning Workshops following the presentation of the preliminary evaluation findings. During the final stage of the evaluation each of the ten draft reports concerning the organisations was submitted for review and consequently revised on the basis of the input and comments. Although some local NGOs complained about the burden this process placed upon their time, others were very pleased with the emphasis on participation. Simultaneously three reviewers from Sida, Forum Syd and Diakonia reviewed the two final Evaluation reports. To limit the burden it was

agreed that the various study reports would not be submitted for review to the local NGOs or Swedish agencies, but that the Team Leader would be responsible for the review.

1.3.2 The Ten Missions

The Evaluation consisted of three phases: 1) Preparation and Document Study 2) Field Missions and Studies 3) Analysis and Reporting. The HRE Core Team consisted of the Team Leader (expatriate), two Core Evaluators (Cambodian) and eight NGO Evaluators (staff of participating local NGOs). This Team was split into units of two persons to conduct a field mission at one of the ten NGOs.

During the first two months four units co-ordinated by the Team Leader conducted 4 field missions. For the following two months new NGO staff replaced the NGO Evaluators and the Team was enforced with two additional professionals. These newly composed four units conducted 6 field missions. The field missions during each stage took place simultaneously allowing for continuous exchange between the field mission units about findings, evaluation techniques, and a profound process of ongoing analysis (see for more details the Project Document ECR report no. 23).

The field missions took place during two to three weeks to review documents, to interview staff and management, to observe work-activities and meetings, to hold discussions with beneficiaries, and talks with relevant others, such as board members and donors. Further, the Field Missions conducted questionnaire surveys among staff or activists and distributed information forms to be completed by the administrations about salary scale, resource use, etc. The missions included visits to provincial offices. Each field mission was followed by 2–3 weeks of analysis and report writing.

At the end of each Mission, one – or sometimes two – feedback workshops were organised at the NGO with their staff present to discuss the draft mission report. It was left to the concerned NGO to organise the workshop and to decide who in particular would participate, though the NGO was explicitly requested to invite as many staff as possible and to arrange for small working group sessions. Also, frequent meetings with the HRE sponsors and other donors were held to obtain views and data about the relationship and perception of the sponsored activities or projects.

1.3.3 The Nine Studies and Surveys

Four surveys targeted participants of training courses, victims of human rights violations, prisoners, and readers of magazines. One study consisted of a series of seven observations of selected program activities of five local NGOs. Another study was a qualitative review of the advocacy work of six Cambodian NGOs. The third study was made by the same British researcher who conducted the three Missions at the election monitoring NGOs. She prepared a special overview report about election monitoring in Cambodia, drawing also from her previous fieldwork. Finally, a Swedish researcher made a desk study of Forum Syd and Diakonia to review the partnership situation from the Swedish perspective, with a focus on policies and procedures.

These studies and surveys commenced at the end of the first phase and continued till after the completion of the second phase. During the final month of the Evaluation, a Danish student commenced with a field study of the Citizen Advisor program implemented by KID¹. She drew from the results of the mission and observation reports, while the HRE Team leader supervised her fieldwork. Although her study was not a part of the evaluation the results of this study are therefore regarded part of the overall evaluation.

¹ 'A Research Study on The Proto-Ombudsman System' by Anne Sofie Schousboe Laursen (MA Student) intern at the Khmer Institute of Democracy, January 2001. This independent Study was conducted with full support from KID and HRE office and staff.

1.3.4 About this Report

The various Missions, Surveys, and Studies resulted in 14 work reports. These reports formed the basis for two analytical reports: the '*NGO*' report with a focus on what each of the NGOs has achieved, what commonalties they share, and in particular about the partnership with Forum Syd and Diakonia (ECR report no. 35); and this '*Study*' report that represents the Final Evaluation Report drafted with the aim to give a general overview of the human rights and democracy sector represented by the ten NGOs to provide input for future donor strategies.

This final report here presented analyses the role of the ten Cambodian human rights and democracy NGOs with a focus on strategy and the most appropriate forms of support from donors in the future.

1.4 Context of democracy & human rights work

The work and approaches of the ten reviewed human rights & democracy NGOs can- not well be understood without some idea about the situation in Cambodia. An analysis of the human rights & democracy situation from 1995 till present time would be very useful but consensus about how to interpret this situation does not exist among the local NGOs or political observers. As we will see in the following chapters, leaders of local NGOs demonstrate a different opinion about progress in terms of democratic governance, while renowned foreign scholars of Cambodian politics express opposing views².

Instead of adding yet another view, we will limit the discourse to a more general historical perspective and a rather factual overview of the year 2000 human rights & democracy situation in the country. We will begin with a paragraph about the 'reception' and 'place' of the relatively new concept of human rights as declared in the universal declaration of human rights and Cambodia's most recent constitution and of democratic principles as adopted through the signing of the Peace Agreement in Paris 1992.

1.4.1 New Concepts in Cambodia

The first constitution (1947) included human rights, but no national discussion about these rights took place before intervention by the United Nations in 1993. In practice, no human rights were ever considered during the decades prior to the terror regime of the Khmer Rouge. Of course, the very existence of that regime itself should be considered a violation of human rights. Although Vietnamese forces liberated the population from terror, this did not include protection of their human rights. The system they represented gave little freedom for those rights. After the withdrawal of the Vietnamese army, no real change in situation occurred. In fact, human rights became more neglected than before when the world watched the Vietnamese occupation. One reason for this was the deterioration of law enforcement that was more strictly enforced under the Vietnamese controlled regime. Another reason was the increasing culture of impunity of powerful and wealthy citizens and officials that was repressed under the Vietnamese. A third reason was the return of the practice of torture to terrorise citizens into compliance and silence. Perhaps not the least reason was the blatant attitude of neglecting human rights violations during the UNTAC period 'to keep the peace'. This seemed to be a vote of confidence for those who violated the rules. The message was clear: a separate set of rules was used for the rich and powerful, and their followers.

1.4.2 Historical Perspective

The combination of these reasons might seem unique in Cambodian history, but they are not. Law enforcement used to benefit the rulers, the king, the petty chieftains, the colonial powers, but rarely the people. So perhaps we should not talk about deterioration of law enforcement, but of a relapse into a

² See article in PPP January 5–18, 2001 'Kevin on Shawcross: a disservice to the country he loves', p. 12.

previous state. The report on impunity is an expression of how the local human rights NGOs analysed the situation: the problem of impunity 'is [so] deeply entrenched in Cambodia ... and '...it builds on itself: the lack of accountability by state authorities who get away with gross human rights violations encourages others to think that they too can be above the law ...' (Barber p. 7) . And further in the report on torture they write: 'The single biggest reason why torture is permitted to flourish in Cambodia into the 21st Century is the lack of accountability before the law of criminals who hold power or influence.' (Torture, p.2).

The local NGOs do see the lack of rule of law. Thus, lack of good laws and proper law enforcement are the main problems in contemporary Cambodia. But laws and law enforcement is not enough if there is corruption, impunity, inequality, political violence, and lack of good governance – in short, a lack of democratic governance.

1.4.3 Democracy in Cambodia anno 2000: The Facts

Human Rights Watch, a US based organisation that monitors human rights abuses around the globe, released a report on Cambodia with an overview of the last year³. In a very brief format, relevant 'facts' as reported by HR Watch will be presented while we will try to relate these to the work of the ten reviewed NGOs. Of course, this will be a subjective perspective, but we hope it will be useful to outline the conditions for the Human Rights & Democracy work.

Impunity

In the section on impunity the HR Watch report describes the negotiations to establish a Khmer Rouge Tribunal with an international presence. The Law has been unanimously approved by Parliament, and it only awaits the signature of the King to become fact. Although international and local NGOs criticised the agreement on several points, such as the exclusion of lower level and pardoned KR cadre, overall there is a feeling that now retribution can be found for past atrocities.

But impunity for officials remained a problem – there have been hundreds of cases, but only 9 investigated cases ever led to a conviction. This practice is well documented in the Impunity report prepared by HR & Democracy NGOs. The HR Watch overview presents a common practice to reach a financial settlement for rape cases (especially in cases of young girls) or physical assault by 'government agents' out of court as 'pressured' and increased. There is indeed an increase of such 'out of court settlements' but this is not due per se to pressure by the government⁴. In fact, many of the HR & Democracy NGO's staff actively assist families of victims if they wish to settle out of court.

The Commune Election Law has been criticised by HR & Democracy NGOs for its party-based system instead of allowing individual candidacies. They have also criticised the vote allocation formula that favours the largest parties. However, only recently, comments were made regarding the appointment of commune clerks by the government. The NGOs (and others) obviously have overlooked the potential threat of this undemocratic system of appointing the 'agent' of the State who might, in many cases, become a real power holder.

Political Violence

HR Watch reports: 'numerous incidents of violence took place against local commune leaders.' Although threat of violence is not uncommon and is often used to intimidate potential opponents, there is no sign of any organised and systematic violence. Human rights workers, according to the HR

³ Phnom Penh Post January 5–18, 2001 p. 8–9

⁴ In individual cases perpetrators might do so, but more common is that the victim's family accepts the payment as a sufficient measure for the crime. It might be, but this has never been vindicated, that people's distrust in the court system encourages the acceptance of such settlements, but otherwise settlement of conflicts out of court is a preferred traditional way of conflict resolution.

Watch report, ‘...concluded that most of these incidents were motivated at least in part by local political rivalries’. This is true in the sense that the human rights worker community *assumes* that such motivations are at the base of the conflicts’ but it goes too far to say that they ‘conclude’ as this would imply some sort of irrefutable proof. The conditions in Cambodia are that private revenge and political violence are so merged, that even the perpetrators are often not able to distinguish between them. Further, the report speaks of ‘numerous’ incidents and consequently lists three media reported cases. There are indeed more cases, but it goes again too far to imply that the cases are so many that no one could count them. The fails to rank the Cambodian situation in the region. For example, if compared with the ‘numerous’ incidents of political killing reported by the Thai media during the recent elections in Thailand one might regard the conditions in Cambodia in another light.

The lack of protection for opposition parties when mobs of people attack their offices, the reluctance to investigate violence against opposition party members, or the harassment of opposition politicians by police, are other forms of political violence. It is obvious that the ruling party is behind these actions. Human rights workers who conduct voter education were (on occasion) harassed and forbidden to conduct training courses or meetings. However, in all cases, they could continue their work after intervention from their NGOs. Do NGOs in neighbouring countries have this influence?

The ‘Kratie’ case whereby three persons were extra-judicially executed and where dozens of others seem to have ‘disappeared’ were called (by local military sources) ‘bandits’ who had died in gun battles. Human Rights NGOs made a point to investigate this case, but could not find conclusive proof of government involvement. Unfortunately, some spokesmen of the HR NGOs were a bit too quick with publicly accusing the government. The Government threatened them with legal action, but till present, no action has been taken (not regarding the killing cases and not regarding the legal action).

In another case (not reported in the HR Watch report), the government was accused of non-interference when a man was found dead outside a temple. Seemingly, he had been beaten to death on the temple grounds. Some HR NGOs accused the abbot of the temple but could not provide any evidence. Some observers feel that HR NGOs should be more cautious when publicly making accusations that are not supported by conclusive proof.

The HR Watch report mentions a number of unrelated cases of unlawful arrest and detention, ‘*lethal force against criminal suspects*’ and at least six vigilante-style mob killings ‘*in some cases with the apparent collusion of the police*’. The Report quotes a LICADHO report that ‘... one-quarter of interviewed prisoners stated that they had been tortured, threatened or otherwise intimidated’. However, the Report fails to report on LICADHO’s finding that since their monitoring work in prisons, shackling has been decreased and prison conditions improved.

Human Rights

The HR Watch report lists a number of cases that illustrates the ‘... little progress [that has been] made in reforming Cambodia’s judicial system, plagued by corruption and low-paid and poorly trained personnel.’ Notorious acquittals, like for the former Khmer Rouge commander who was involved in the killings of three tourists, or recently for the wife of a Secretary of State who was released because she only poured acid over the victims’ head without ‘the intention to kill her’ are proof of the sub-standard judicial situation.

One case of a newspaper suspension and two cases of ‘warning’ of two opposition newspapers are reported, but in all three cases it concerned insulting the King. No recent case is known of a newspaper closed for political reasons. Compare this with the actions taken in Malaysia against the media.

Ethnic Vietnamese and other minorities continued to face repression. LICADHO was forced after police and government pressure to suspend a project aimed to assist Vietnamese victims of slave

labour. The Report, however, fails to mention that the current and former opposition parties (SRP and FUNCINPEC) are among the most vocal opponents to so-called Vietnamese incursion policies through illegal immigration and that this might have had an effect on the action against LICADHO.

The Report mentions more than 6,000 cases of land evictions and forcible confiscation of land by military and civilian authorities. They rank this problem among Cambodia's most pervasive human rights problems. Indeed, the judiciary colludes with the powerful and rich. Court rulings are often in their favour. Common people are very vulnerable for these practices due to the lack of a proper system of land registration. Indeed, the recent evictions of hundreds of people from their land without any resettlement policy is proof of the lack of restraint among government officials, while the lack of parliamentary pressure to rectify this injustice is proof of the indifference among many parliamentarians.

The indigenous people in the highlands are subject to pressure and sometimes violence to sell their communal land. HR NGOs are in the forefront to assist these people. Fortunately, the draft land law to provide communal land ownership to indigenous minorities that receives a strong support from the Prime Minister and the King might correct this situation.

A lack of proper laws, besides poor or no law enforcement, hampers the fight against human trafficking for labour and sexual exploitation. The Report states: *'Powerful figures and their accomplices – many of them government officials – were usually immune from prosecution.'* This is also the case in a number of brothel owners who were accused of sexual exploitation and human trafficking. But the growing 'rule by law' instead 'rule of law' mentality of some provincial authorities is worrisome. For example, in Battambang province authorities refused to take legal action against brothel owners because 'they have the right to be treated all the same but there are too many of them to prosecute'.

The HR Watch report should not have singled out the case of a well-intended but misguided action at one ministry while not mentioning the anti-democratic aims of other ministries⁵. For example, the introduction of the commune-clerk system with its potential threat to any non-CPP party commune functionary, thereby negating the democratic character of the elections.

1.4.4 Democracy in Cambodia anno 2000: An Analysis

The Human Rights Watch Report for Cambodia in the year 2000 lists a number of violations of human rights or absence of democratic governance and lack of a proper judicial system. The report could not be exhaustive, and while many incidents are not mentioned, the most notorious ones are presented. In that sense, the report offers an overview of the most serious and 'famous' human rights & democracy violations. However, my impression is that this list covering one full year exaggerates the weaknesses of the country and only here and there highlights new positive developments. The report fails to discuss the facts in any context and even positive facts might therefore appear negative. For example, the Report print that human rights workers were prohibited by provincial authorities to conduct an information campaign. (Only) after intervention by COMFREL's central office and the Ministry of Interior they were allowed to continue. This is proof of progress (although the rejection itself is of course not democratic). I see the success of the intervention as indication of a changing attitude at the central government level. Unfortunately, not the same can be said about the provincial or lower levels.

The case of Vietnamese factory workers is an illustration of changes within the police apparatus. The municipality police raided the factory to release the workers after having received complaints about slave conditions at the factory. Only later on, higher and political levels charged these workers with

⁵ Ministry of Women's Affairs is cited in the HR Watch report to establish *'a black list system to banish suspected foreign sex offenders, whether or not they had been convicted'*.

being illegal immigrants. I prefer, looking at the whole issue to focus on the proper action taken by the lower-level police to free slave workers. They, at least were doing the correct thing.

I have lived in Cambodia for ten years and seen many changes. From this point of view – indeed a somewhat higher and securer perspective than the average Cambodian enjoys – I see progress. Although many human rights violations occurred during the year 2000, proper law enforcement remains a constraint, the judiciary is in great need of reform, and harassment of people who work for moral change is still under threat, there are improvements. I think the greatest improvement is among the general population, with civil servants as a part of that, and their growing expectation of democratic governance. I see it as a sign of progress that the Government, instead of using force, threatens Human Rights NGOs with *legal* action. Another sign of progress is that new laws are drafted with input from HR NGOs. There is surely still much wrongdoing to correct and proper democratic procedures and attitudes to establish. But I am optimistic that the Cambodian society will continue on the road to democratic governance. The Human Rights NGOs play in this process a crucial role.

In the following chapters we will see how the here described local human rights & democracy NGOs try to change this situation and what strategies are most effective. We will discuss role and relevance (chapter 2), effects and impact (chapter 3), organisational strengths and weaknesses (chapter 4), co-operation and partnerships (chapter 5), while chapter 6 tries to reach conclusions in view of the future. Although the issue of sustainability would justify a separate chapter we have chosen to include a discussion about it in each of the major themes, such as relevance, organisational development and co-operation.

2 Role and relevance of democracy & human rights organisations

Democracy was never a concept practised by Khmer rulers. It is an alien practice imported from abroad during a period that the Khmer did not have mastery over their own country. Many Cambodians still do not grasp the extent of the concept or are not aware of the implications for their own lives. However, UNTAC has left this legacy and Cambodia's powerful men will not be able to reject the qualities of freedom and representation that have become part of a new way of dealing with the present. Democracy and Human Rights' NGOs are the offspring UNTAC. They are now supporting the developing democracy and defending the human rights in a culture where the degree of impunity and corruption is high. The fresh wind brought to Cambodia by the immense world community's effort, the demise of the Khmer Rouge and the opening of the country to the region and world, gives ample opportunities to forces in civil society to further democracy at its roots and in the laws. On the other hand, the absence of alternatives to the current political leadership and lack of a profound ethical spirit among the new legislators and remaining law enforcers endangers the defenders of the new rights. In this chapter will be discussed the role and relevance of ten Cambodian NGOs and their work to achieve their objectives and reach the ultimate goal of rule of law.

2.1 Human rights & democracy promotion & protection

Three recent reports published by HR local NGOs offer insight in how they view the context in which they have to work. These reports are also proof of what they do: *Less than Human: Torture in Cambodia* (Barber 2000), *Human Rights in Action: Developing partnerships between Government and Civil Society* (Neou 1999) and *Impunity in Cambodia* (ADHOC-LICADHO-HR Watch 1999).

2.1.1 Situation Analysis

Each of the local NGOs has expressed their vision in different ways. To name some: a society where everybody has equal rights and opportunities – a prosperous, peaceful, and harmonious country, change in behaviour and morality, and the building of the civil society, and the acculturation of democratic values into Cambodian society. The visions might be expressed more articulately by some than others, but they all come down to 'good governance' based upon the principles of popular democracy, such as fair and free elections, popular representation, and an independent judiciary.

It is, therefore, no surprise to find that the leaders of the HR local NGOs are of one mind when they call for rule of law as prerequisite for a democratic nation⁶. However, they are divided about how to achieve that. Some feel that improvement of law enforcement has priority over a reform of the judiciary; others believe that proper laws need to come first, while some think that constructive engagement with the government is the best way. In fact, there are as many ideas about what is best as there are organisations.

This might be a result of what the original reasons were to initiate the local NGOs and the main work they are currently doing. Some focus on 'to teach human rights and to protect the Cambodian population from human rights violations'. They support the notion that 'an independent judiciary is one of the main conditions for a state based upon the rule of law' (Barber p.17). Several try to achieve this by confronting the government with its shortcomings, while others try to raise awareness among government leaders. ('The key question is whether the government and leaders will be able to demonstrate

⁶ Nine top leaders supported this idea during a workshop on 21 October 2000.

the political will to make existing and new laws work', (Neou p. 9) Some are concerned with empowerment of women 'to fully participate and make decisions' and choose to achieve that through means that 'ensure that voices of women are heard' or to provide them with leadership skills. Others promote public accountability and transparency through forums and debates. Development of civil society is an aim for several local NGOs, but they use different means. The election observer coalitions are mostly concerned with free and fair elections, but also they use different strategies to achieve this.

In short, what all these ten Cambodian organisations have in common is that they try to reach a situation of 'good governance and rule of law', but they do this through various means and they have different priorities based upon different views. It seems that these different views are more based upon a chosen approach than on a comprehensive problem analysis that finds consensus in the sector of human rights & democracy. For example, one document prepared by one of the local NGO leaders reads: '[human rights] are moving in the right direction' (Neou p. 4), while another document from the same period opines: '... the vast majority of the cases (...) committed by state agents remain unsolved. (Adhoc-L-HRW p.9) and the LICADHO report on torture states: 'Concerted action to combat torture is long overdue.' (Barber p. 3).

This division might also find its cause in a lack of insight into what really has been achieved. Not many local NGOs were able to monitor their work, and only a few had undergone an evaluation of their organisation and activities. Impact was mostly measured through anecdotes and often confused with performance, eg. the number of courses. The difficulty to define proper indicators and means for verification in the field of human rights and democracy has, in too many cases, resulted in no impact measurement at all. As a result, once begun, an activity went on and on unless sponsors discontinued funding. Reflection on the effect of the work was mostly out of the question.

We must conclude that many of the objectives and strategies of the ten local NGOs were not developed as a result of any analysis of the democratic situation in the country since the last national elections. They were established long ago and never really checked for effect. At most local NGOs, such a situation analysis and impact measurement was never effected. This could be the main reason for continuing as before. However, at several local NGOs, we found a document that contained a partial analysis. That, in our opinion, would justify a serious reflection on what to do next. Recommendations notwithstanding, no actual analysis appears to have been actualized.

2.1.2 Popular Support

The relevance of the work of human rights & democracy local NGOs is, for a great part, defined by the support they have among the population. In other words, do they indeed speak on behalf of the populace or a significant part of it. None of the local NGOs has a defined constituency, and there is no popular movement that could be identified as a support group. Nevertheless, there are some indications that the local NGOs are speaking for the people. Magazines with information about human rights and democracy are popular.

The three election observer coalitions have adopted methods to get ideas about the opinions of the population. This represents an attempt to give the public a say in the process of democratisation. It also limits the exclusivity concerning political parties' claims to know what their constituencies favour in terms of democracy. Another form of support might also be assumed among the people who participate in courses on human rights, or who receive assistance to fill out the forms with legal complaints, or even those who listen to debates and find truth in them. These are the beneficiaries of the work that local NGOs do, but it is not a large proportion of the population. And how many of those believe that their rights are worth taking action and suffering for? The local NGOs have ample proof of the interest of people to do something to improve the situation, but they also are aware of their lack of defence

against violations of their rights by forces within and outside the government. The problem is not only one of the violations themselves but also one of the closeness of violators. Often perpetrators and the government officials alike are neighbours, employers, or local government representatives. Many people are reluctant to defend their rights because it is a fight against their own people; not against distant politicians in the city.

Perhaps this is one reason why the powerful men seem not concerned with the activities of the human rights & democracy local NGOs. At the central political level, violence is quite 'normal' as is proved by attempts to kill opposition leader Sam Rainsy and other politically motivated killings. No perpetrators were caught. Some NGO leaders receive similar threats if they do not restrain themselves⁷. Such behaviour is even more openly demonstrated at the provincial and commune level; the fear of NGO staff when investigating cases of human rights violation is not imaginary. The Impunity report is good proof of the prevailing culture of lack of accountability for persons in power or their 'associates'. This inhibits the effect of human rights and democracy promoting NGOs.

Indeed, the activities of these NGOs do not lead to open protest against violations of their rights, except sometimes when organised during political rallies (mostly in Phnom Penh) or on a very small scale in rural communities (but mostly taking place behind closed doors). For this reason, local NGOs are cautious not to be associated with any political party, including the opposition party. For a similar reason, none of the NGOs has tapped into the potential of the labour unions because the opposition party supports these unions. None of the local NGOs has gone to the farmers to enlist their support and to try to mobilise their potential influence. The commendable activities of the Action Committee or the committee for land rights do not involve popular actions and remain a more or less legal struggle. The only activities of local NGOs that directly effect the government are the advocacy strategies. However, government officials seem to relate this advocacy with the person who advocates and less with the local NGO institution he or she represents (see NGO advocacy strategies in ECR report no. 37). The human rights and democracy NGOs assume they have the support of the population – and surveys indicate they are at least to some degree correct – but this support is not mobilised and thus not a threat to the government. So the powerful men at the central level and in the provinces are not very concerned about the local NGOs and leave them alone as long as they not become too big a nuisance.

Although there is no doubt that the human rights & democracy local NGOs have the interest of the population in mind, we find that they cannot point to a movement in the society that is their base in the same manner as, for example, a political party or the labour unions.

Despite the local NGOs are not to blame for the relatively passive attitude of the Cambodian people, it makes their position vulnerable and hampers a further development of civil society. The attempts to solicit the opinions of the population about the democratisation through forums and surveys are a good format to augment popular support.

2.2 Role of human right NGOs

The ten Cambodian non-governmental organisations here reviewed form a particular representation of the local organisations that promote, protect, or advocate for human rights and democracy in the country. They are an element of civil society that in Western democracies is taken for granted, but in Cambodia is a new phenomenon. It is, therefore, not surprising that the local NGOs do not limit themselves to one role but are often covering an area that includes many aspects of a civil society. However, each of these ten local NGOs has objectives that define the primary role they aim to play. It

⁷ Personal communication August 2000.

is on this basis that we start a discussion of their role and the relevance of their objectives and strategies.

2.2.1 Strategies for Relations with Government

There are two groups among the ten organisations that have adopted a different approach of how to work with the government. One group aims to work in ‘constructive engagement’ with the government⁸, while the other group confronts the government with its shortcomings. For some local NGOs, these ‘strategies’ have become a trademark, and they seem to cultivate this image. But, in fact, both groups are working along the same line and they have the same goals. Although some local NGOs express their concerns also at the provincial level addressing prosecutors and other officials, at the working level all local NGOs engage with departmental or provincial officials to get the work done, and we do not find the kind of confrontation we see at the national level.

2.2.2 Human Rights Violations

Two of the reviewed NGOs play a prominent role in offering assistance to victims of human rights’ violations both among the population and in prisons. This makes them also a ‘watchdog’ because via their casework they have direct access to victims and via their information network they are informed about violations. They are, therefore, well equipped to report on systematic human rights’ violations – as proved by the impunity and the torture reports. The two organisations are also providing information to the general population about human rights via training courses and regular bulletins. However, the priority remains addressing the violation of human rights. The relevance of this objective is obvious. The assistance is not only to help the victims, but also to bring violations in the open and force the judiciary to take notice. Similarly, training is needed to raise awareness and to let people know what their rights are. And the reports on systematic violations provide ammunition for advocates to promote changes or the introduction of suitable laws.

These organisations reach out to most provinces. Through their provincial offices they manage to cover more than 80% of the country. However, due to the nature of crime and their restricted resources, it is not known in how far they are successful to bring human rights’ violations to light. The increased number of complaints that the local NGOs receive is not so much an indication of more human rights violations but of more people coming forward to report on what they consider crime. Domestic violence, human trafficking, and land disputes are added to the list of crimes that these local NGOs address. Although the focus remains on violations by state officials and their impunity, the growing caseloads themselves may not be seen as an indication for more violence.

It is undoubtedly a difficult task to report adequately on human rights’ violations, but without more and more professional efforts, the local NGOs will not be able to assess the situation and the results of their own work. That the local NGOs are aware of this is proven by their efforts to improve their monitoring systems and investigative skills.

2.2.3 Awareness Raising and Capacity Building

The local NGOs and some of their supporters assume that more people come forward with their complaints as a direct result of the awareness training they and other local NGOs have conducted. This seems only partly true. The results of our victim survey indicate that many respondents did not come forward themselves but were canvassed by local NGO staff. The local network and key persons in the neighbourhood pointed the way. Indeed, the awareness training courses over a period of five or more years have reached a large number of people.

⁸ See for an interesting discourse Neou 2000.

Including the other forms of providing knowledge via radio and television, we have indications that the awareness-raising efforts reached at least two-thirds of the population who now has now some idea of their rights and know that there are local NGOs who can care and provide assistance⁹. Our training participant survey has shown that a significant proportion of trainees disseminate what they have learned in their communities. In view of this relative high rate of awareness, it seems that the NGOs have achieved what they have originally aimed at.

It might be that the local NGOs have reached the phase where activities to empower people should replace training courses that solely provide 'awareness' with only a bit of knowledge¹⁰. This does not mean per se that still many people are in need of knowledge about human rights and democracy. Respondents of the survey, for instance, indicated that their knowledge is clearly not deep rooted, and they request for much more information. But the NGOs should also review their methods.

Other strategies applied by some local NGOs show more promising results and different forms of approaching people might, at the present, be more appropriate, while also the quality of teaching methods could be improved¹¹. This would require at least more attention for the sustainability of the knowledge through more in-depth courses with more follow-up approaches. Also, efforts should be increased to facilitate the spread of knowledge by participants.

Some local NGOs act to strengthen certain groups' voices and capacity in society. They do that through training programs more aimed at skill building than increasing knowledge (although providing knowledge is also part of the program).

Another approach that has potential is the partner-training programs. In these programs, the local NGOs act as master trainers and build capacity among their partners to further the human rights and democracy programs. In some cases, those partners are civil servants, teachers, or local officials, while in other cases key-persons from local communities are the partners. A third rather innovative approach is the skill building among provincial NGOs or community-based organisations. Although some local NGOs have monitored their progress, in none of the cases could they provide results that indicated the impact they have had on their target groups. It is not that some of them did not make efforts, but without sufficient skills and financial resources, their efforts were doomed to fail. The local NGOs correctly point out that if some sponsors do not allow funds to be used for monitoring & evaluation, they will not be able to provide adequate information about their progress and impact. On the other hand, we found a few studies commissioned by sponsors that indicated the need for reflection on methodology and strategies. We did not find an indication that the local NGO in question took notice of it or that its sponsors took action¹². The Evaluation carried out a sample survey that indicated the varying achievements of the different training strategies. Most successful seems the approach where training and capacity building is directly linked with empowerment at the grassroots level.

⁹ See the report on impact ECR report no. 36

¹⁰ At CIHR a foreign advisor wrote in 1999: "Really, CIHR's present mission is about awareness-raising. Once the entire population of 11 million has been reached, once they know their human rights, once they know what standards of good governance they can reasonably expect, we need to move into the empowerment stage." ("CIHR Strategy-Concept Paper," 1999).

¹¹ Examples are the community-linked approach by KWVC or the partner organisation approach by KID, both having a greater snowball effect than the traditional large-scale one-time training course.

¹² In total we identified 3 external studies. One study was a confidential study of one of the ten NGOs kept by the donor; one study was available but not widely published and another study was kept confidential by the Local NGO. Further, we found several documents that provided information about programs or projects but these were more indicative and anecdotal papers based upon short field visits.

2.2.4 Advocacy: Analyses, Debates and Publications

A number of local NGOs play a prominent role as *'analysts'* or think tanks. They study problems in society, publish magazines, organise public debates, and speak through forums. Sometimes their products are broadcast via radio or television. Others are using public statements to draw attention to problems and to mobilise public support. All activities aimed to influence government policy and lawmakers. In that respect, most local NGOs have what we might call 'advocacy programs'. They are generally the local NGO leaders who claim the right to speak on behalf of their organisation, sometimes exclusively. Their reason for this claim is their perception that only they have the skill and position to do this properly, while they assume that their staff often doesn't have sufficient capacity for this kind of work. There is also the sensitivity of the matter. It often entails dealing with very high-level government officials. Leaders are inclined to do that themselves. However, as a consequence, the local NGO leader gives form to the institutional program or he or she is the single exponent of that program. This does not mean that the local NGO staff has no input; in a number of instances we found that staff was consulted – although the initiative is mostly taken by the leader.

As a result, government officials seem not to associate the advocates with their organisation. They are also not very much impressed by what the leaders advocate. In that sense, the local NGOs seem to overvalue their impact on the decision-makers. To avoid being associated with political parties, the organisations are very cautious not to join with activities that are politically 'stained', e.g., labour demonstrations that are often supported by opposition parties. Despite this, a number of interviewed high-level government officials have assumed a link between human rights & democracy NGOs and the opposition.

Another activity that is a form of advocacy is the dissemination of information through frequently published magazines or bulletins. Five local NGOs produce a publication and circulate it among civil servants and the population. The contents vary as much as the local NGOs vary, and the effect of these publications varies similarly. Unfortunately, no data about the impact of these publications is available except for a survey conducted during the evaluation¹³. The main conclusion of that survey is that people in the rural areas are hungry for information, but that almost half of the publications are spread in the cities where people seem less interested. The survey makes clear that these publications are relevant and that they play a role in the formation of ideas about the civil society. The survey also indicates that the local NGOs should reconsider how and where to circulate their publications.

2.2.5 Lobbying

Some organisations prefer 'lobbying' as methodology if we define this as acting more closely with the state administration to influence decision making. It is a strategy that, according to some, has got good results. But by definition it is very difficult to make impartial assessments. It is also a strategy that isolates one local NGO from others who do not believe in this method. However, this constructive engagement with government elements does not only take place on the national level. Several local NGOs practice it without much emphasis while they are dealing with ministerial or provincial departments. They have the impression that this co-operation is fruitful. The future will reveal if they are correct.

2.2.6 Free and Fair Elections

The three election observer coalitions stand a bit aside of the more regular local NGOs. Their *raison d'être* is to serve voters. They were active prior to 1998 during the election campaign to inform voters and to monitor the casting and processing of votes. Currently they are working on election laws in anticipation of communal elections¹⁴. The three coalitions represent three groups who share similar

¹³ See on impact ECR report no. 36

¹⁴ Scheduled for 3 February 2002.

mandates – although some extend their objectives more than others do. The most broadly defined mission statement reads: ‘to promote greater awareness and understanding among urban and rural Cambodians of their human and democratic rights ...’. The reason for three coalitions instead of one coalition is mainly based upon the personalities of their founders and their different ideas about appropriate strategies. The diversification allows new strategies such as theatre performances; as long as the competition remains as collegial as it is nowadays, there is no reason to doubt a lack of efficiency. In fact, the coalitions often work together to make joint statements and sometimes rally together. Further, some observers of the political situation in Cambodia think it a good idea to have more than one observer coalition according the adage ‘the whole is more than the sum’.

2.3 Poverty alleviation and good governance

A number of human rights & democracy NGOs has some form of material improvement stated in their mission statements or objectives, e.g., improvement of economic conditions, quality of life, equal opportunities, and furthering prosperity. Although they do not aim to achieve this through direct means, some have adopted strategies that indirectly lead to such improvements, such as education about economic rights, drafting labour laws, and protection of land rights. What is not explicitly said in any of the local NGO documents (but that people recognise) is the impact of efforts to achieve rule of law. There is a fear among people in some communities that without such rule of law they will lose part of their prosperity to powerful men who by force will take what they want¹⁵. In fact, what they fear is that what has been achieved over the past years through development of their communities will be lost again if the society will not achieve an adequate level of good governance. This also includes the threat that through incorporation of the so-called village development committees (VDCs) in the state organisation, the villagers will lose their recent developed local ‘good governance’¹⁶. However, it seems that the human rights & democracy local NGOs are neither aware of this relationship between good governance and community development nor the potential support they could muster. There are no indications of any discussions about this with local or international NGOs in the community development sector.

2.4 Democracy and gender quality

Five of the ten local NGOs prioritise gender equality. Their goal is ‘to encourage women’s participation (in decision-making and as candidates in elections)’ and ‘to influence legislation on women’s behalf’. They do that in different ways through empowerment and leadership skill building plus advocacy strategies. Several of the other local NGOs have programs focusing on education of women’s rights or on domestic violence that in particular harms women, and on trafficking that affects young girls. Some local NGOs have adopted internal recruitment and promotion procedures to increase their female staff and seniority. Besides the two ‘women’ NGOs, a woman heads two local NGOs among ten. The board of one election observer coalition consists exclusively of women. It seems thus that the issue of gender equality has the attention of the human rights & democracy NGOs. However, one can not avoid the impression that NGOs are generally male dominated. Gender issues seem to be isolated in the special programs and are not really part of mainstream issues. All leaders of local NGOs seem sincerely concerned about gender equality. However, some leaders express different views about how to achieve gender equality in the context of Cambodian culture.

¹⁵ Author noted this during a discussion with community representatives in a southern district of Kg. Speu.

¹⁶ Unpublished article by this author ‘Local governance under threat? – The analogy of the Indonesian Gulkar example in contemporary Cambodia’.

2.5 Conclusion

The local NGOs each view the current situation in which they work differently, and this determines approaches they choose. But all feel that they contribute to an improvement and that they have a needed role to play, often under very difficult conditions. Three statements from the three documents that recently were published seem to illustrate how these local NGOs view their roles: “We appear to have truly ‘multi-actor’ involvement for the first time” (Neou p.3). “...giving victims a voice is a vital step toward preventing scores of new torture victims____” (Barber p.112). “Offering training programs ... will be ineffective unless Cambodia’s leaders are willing to show that no one ... can be above the law ...” (Adhoc-Licadho-HRWATCH p.11). These latter two statements indicate that the local NGOs are well aware that their main role is to advocate for rule of law and good government. It is all the more surprising that some of the larger local NGOs do not use more of the resources they have at their disposal to achieve this. It is also unfortunate that their advocacy programs are often not institutionalised or do not involve a main part of the staff of the organisations.

There is no doubt that the case-work or assistance to victims of human rights violations not only lessens social problems but also functions to provide the necessary ‘ammunition’ to support advocacy activities. The recent reports on impunity and torture are the kinds of tools that advocates for change need to use to convince not only the outside world, but the lawmakers too that these methods are not tolerable. However, the relevance of large-scale awareness training programs (in view of the current awareness rate among the population and the inadequacy of the programs) to activate people is doubtful. These training strategies applied by several local NGOs are often a leftover of the UNTAC period or the result of a focus on reaching large groups of people during the lead-up to the national elections of 1998. The large-scale teacher-training program has great potential, but flaws detected during an evaluation were not addressed.

Other local NGOs apply more effective strategies, e.g., the training of partner organisations or local teachers. Yet without a link to local communities, the impact might not last. A big limitation is that they do not reach many. The success of the various training programs is that a significant proportion of the population is become aware of their rights. The failure of these programs is lack of a popular movement. This might be due to a lack of consistent and frequent reflection on what is relevant and what has effect. A consequence is that many training programs continue not on the basis of an evaluation of the program and a needs analysis but simply because they exist.

None of the ten NGOs has, after the last national elections, prepared a document with a comprehensive problem analysis of the human rights and democracy situation to assess which problems in particular require their attention. Living in the country and acquainted with its problems, they know what needs to be addressed. At least, that is what their words, actions, and approaches imply. This is surely a reality, but it does not per se give an answer to how appropriate their choices are or how timely their responses will be. The past teaches that the problems these ten local NGOs are confronting need to be solved in order to achieve a democratic society. Indeed, all these problems effect the living body of the society. Like a doctor, the local NGOs should not treat only the symptoms but cure the disease. Such is needed to relieve the pain (case-work), to instruct the patient how to avoid problems, and where to find treatment (information dissemination), to mobilise the medical team to come to the rescue (advocacy). In the end, no cure can be given if the disease is not properly identified.

In terms of use of resources, most of the work the local NGOs do is relief and symptom treatment. Some leaders seem to be aware of this and try to analyse the problems in society and define its needs, but have not yet found a cure. The problems are too big for any individual, and local NGOs need to unite – both for working together and also for planning together. This will not be an easy task; the past has shown that the local NGOs are not used to playing as a team. Hopefully the future will show that for the benefit of the patient, the Cambodian society, these local NGOs will learn to co-operate as one.

3 Impact of human rights & democracy work

The work done by human rights & democracy organisations is measured by their positive effect on the Cambodian people. Media reports and occasional field visits were, in the past, the only sources that sponsors had to assess impact and effect on the population. There exist only a few professional studies that assess specific programs. There were very few general studies to measure the achievements of the human rights & democracy NGOs¹⁷. As a result, until recently, many sponsors could not rely on any profound assessment of impact and effect to support their selection of organisations and programs that would receive their grants. Some might say that it is a task of the organisations themselves to provide suitable monitoring data. Perhaps the relative ease of getting funds without scrutiny was a reason that only feeble efforts to properly measure work efficacy were made¹⁸. On the other hand, several sponsors rejected monitoring and evaluation activities. Without funds to make assessments, no organisation could do them. The blame may thus be shared between the donor and recipient parties. Fortunately, Sida, as a main sponsor, has taken initiative to find a way out of this impasse through evaluations that include several target groups and activity studies to measure the impact of the work and effectiveness of organisations.

However, a proper and scientific measurement alone might not reveal the full picture in regard to efforts. The NGOs are not entirely able to control the effect of their work, e.g., punishment of human rights' violations. Bringing a case to court, gaining access to prisons, forcing lawmakers to listen to arguments, or mobilising the public to fend for itself are intrinsic successes. The attention drawn to the issue of the Khmer Rouge trial might turn out to be more relevant than the outcome of the trial itself. Effect and impact should, therefore, not only be measured in terms of achieving the immediate objectives, but also measured in terms of changes in opinions and mentality. This is as much an impact or 'change in reality' as is a change in law or a change in law enforcement technique.

Here we will discuss the impact of each of the three major approaches: 1) training and awareness raising; 2) assistance to and protection of victims; and 3) advocacy plus monitoring of violations of human rights¹⁹ - viewed as efforts to reach the overall goal of a democracy and respect for human rights. This discussion will be based mostly on the measurements of our surveys and studies and on the few available external studies and evaluation reports. For this reason, that topic will be limited on account of aforementioned reasons. Besides, without substantial data or more efforts than we were able to make, it is very difficult to assess what happened. The local NGOs did not keep extensive records about the past activities. Our review is thus mostly an assessment of the present. We will start with describing the constraints for the work in the context of a society emerging from war and devastation.

¹⁷ We found two general studies of recent date, the fine voter survey (Collins 2000) and the awareness survey (ADHOC 2000), the latter a good initiative despite its methodical faults. We found two evaluations of large training programs of one NGO that both were rather critical in its assessment of the achieved results. Further, we found at one NGO a series of evaluations covering 1992–1999 about the progress and achievement of this NGO but without scrutiny of programs in any depth. About the other 8 local NGOs we did not get access to any professional document that concerned impact of the activities although we are aware of some reports that are kept confidential by the sponsor. In general no reports were made easily available and in no case these reports were reviewed in-depth by the staff of the concerned local NGOs.

¹⁸ There is one local NGO that made ample efforts to include a M&E component in its programs and requested so in its funding proposals but sponsors neglected this request. Unfortunately, later on the lack of assessment data was used to discontinue the program.

¹⁹ This separation of the work in three main work fields is based upon the practice at the NGOs, except for the monitoring of human rights violations. We placed that together with advocacy because we view this as a method to provide arguments to advocate for change.

3.1 Factors and constraints for achievements

The local NGOs operate remarkably effectively if we look at what has been achieved under the strictures of a country emerging from war and devastation. The eighties started with famine, but, fortunately, no such manmade disaster has repeated itself. There is still great need and people lack many things. A majority is poor, but presently most have sufficient food to eat and a good future to look forward to. It is thus not poverty that is the main inhibitor of human rights & democracy. Rather, it is the inordinate influence of the powerful that is a cancer upon good governance and the rule of law. The replacement of this situation with democracy is the goal of the human rights & democracy NGOs (they are relevant given the situation). The three reports produced by local NGOs show how the organisations (each in their own way) manage to operate by confronting the state with abuse of its people, opposing partiality under the law, and straining to keep constructive engagement without being seen as collaborative.

One local NGO in particular is an exponent of the latter strategy. It is not the only one that is using this approach. Several NGOs are engaged in a constructive relationship with government sections. It is their philosophy that only through involvement of government workers, teachers, police and others, and confrontation with human rights' violations that behavioural change can be progressively achieved. The limit with this approach is the lack of control over who will participate and how courses will be conducted. The engagement with government officials is a difficult one because their interest is often contrary to achieving good governance. For example, one might question the sincerity of requests from police forces to receive human rights training. Although individual participants might be honestly motivated, some observers think that the officials have an ulterior motive to allow their staff to learn about the rule of law. Knowing the law means sometimes being able to find loopholes in it.

This controversial approach is followed cautiously by several local NGOs. One leader said (in regard to certain sensitive political issues) that he knew how far to go with criticising the government. Constructive engagement with the government but also confronting the government with human rights violations and undemocratic practices is 'walking a fine line'. Self-censure is sometimes frustrating, but it is also a necessary factor (*sine qua non*) to achieve set goals.

On another level, and concerning the co-operation between Cambodian human rights & democracy NGOs, we find other constraints to achievements. Each of the local NGOs focus on a specialised area – land rights, treatment of prisoners, women's issues, corruption – are examples. Each has a niche. Yet it seems also to hamper the formation of a unified sector of human rights & democracy organisations. The recent threats from the government to take action against the local NGOs following the Kratie killing investigation, are potentially ominous; therefore, unification among human rights & democracy organisations might become a matter of survival.

Another constraint is the tendency to try doing everything simultaneously. Most local NGOs start with a few activities but expand over the years without following a prescriptive and orderly plan. This might explain why so many NGOs incorporate manifold activities in their work which are both evanescent and lavish. They lack the capacity to do as much as they wish. Fortunately, partly under pressure from donors, (some) local NGOs have become aware and are discussing 'remedial' actions.

LOCAL NGO	Program Activities
8 of 10	Training on human rights
3 of 10	Protection and assistance
10 of 10	Information dissemination
6 of 10	Advocacy & Lobby
2 of 10	Monitoring of human rights violations
3 of 10	Voter education

The advocacy efforts seem to have some effect. Measurement is not easy. A limiter is that the advocacy work is very much individualised and that the main target – the government – does not always recognise the effects as an achievement from organisations. This is not facilitated by the reality that advocacy is often based upon a small popular base from which local NGOs gain support.

3.2 Impact of training and awareness raising

The impact, efficiency, and appropriateness of strategies of training programmes and awareness raising will be discussed on the basis of findings during the missions. For more detailed and NGO-specific findings we refer to the mission and study reports (see backside cover).

Awareness raising and training on human rights and democracy is done at various levels and for different target groups. Some organisations focus on grassroots levels while others target law enforcement officials, teachers, leaders, and key-persons of communities. It is evident that the different target groups require different strategies. Local NGOs have a different curriculum for each of those target groups, although the basis remains the guidelines provided by the UN Center for Human Rights. Strategies differ much more when the main objective is not to teach simply *about* human rights but practising human rights.

We can differentiate between two main categories of local NGOs: those that aim to raise awareness and increase knowledge, targeting the general population, and those that teach about human rights and how to provide a basis for skill training and empowerment targeting special groups.

3.2.1 Awareness Raising

The local NGOs with branch offices in many provinces and the two main election observer coalitions (through their access to local NGO workers) cover most of the country. In that sense, they are the most appropriate organisations. They have each their own curriculum based upon the United Nations booklets on Human Rights. This is appropriate because each has a slightly different focus, e.g. voter rights or human rights' violations. These local NGOs follow a similar mode for their implementation. They, or their counterparts, select a group of participants. They teach them for several days. In some cases they come back after a number of months for a follow-up session. The strategy is to select the proper participants according to certain criteria that differ for each local NGO. In practice and by design, village chiefs or other officials often make the selections.

Our survey addressed 326 respondents selected in four provinces: Kandal, Kampong Speu, Battambang and Kampong Cham. We found that (on average) 74% was selected by a government official, while 50% of the participants themselves belonged to local authority. The table below lists the main data.

GENDER	EFFECT	PERCEPTION		EFFECT & IMPACT	
Female	Recall HR rights as topic	Good method	Not difficult	Use knowledge	Spread knowledge among fellows
22%	70%	99%	62%	99%	30%

* Source: Training Participant Survey conducted August 2000 by the HRE project

If we take into account that half of the participants are government officials who are mostly men, we find close to half of the non-officials being females. Seventy percent recalled that human rights & democracy was the main topic during the course, and 69% answered correctly a test question. The participants perceived the teaching method as good. About two-thirds found the topics not difficult at all. However, 44% of the respondents felt that improvements were needed.

The opinion of virtually all participants interviewed was that they could make use of the knowledge gained. About one out of every three respondents reported that they often talked about what they had learned with neighbours, family, and friends. If the opinion of participants is taken as an indication for success, these courses score high. However, during the survey, the trainers were also interviewed. Twenty percent felt that their method was not so good.

Although this proportion seems not high in view of respondent tendency to reply positively, we need to take heed. Also, observations made during and after the field visits indicated that the teaching was often teacher-centred and illustration materials were not very pedagogic (small posters, complex & not so appropriate). Teachers often felt the need to divert from their regular curriculum because people had other interests. This was partly caused by the tendency of the selecting officials to include participants who had domestic or neighbourly conflicts. Naturally, those participants would have liked to discuss these problems, but they did not always fit in the curriculum.

The training sessions were aimed at increasing knowledge in order to facilitate a change of perception and attitude. To measure the result, the survey included a story about a group of people who killed a thief who had stolen a motorcycle, while another group protested this violence. Respondents were then asked to take sides as a test.

Respondents Who Said: Killing Is Wrong

Participants trained by one of reviewed NGOs	Control group: Participants trained by undefined NGO	Control group: People who never joined a training
85% said wrong	95% said wrong	79% said wrong

* Source: Training Participant Survey conducted August 2000 by the HRE project

Although the results are not conclusive for the country-wide training as a whole, (the testing was limited to a few provinces only), there seems to be a trend that more people without human rights training approve of mob-killing (21%) than those who had attended a training course (5% if trained by an undefined NGO and 15% if trained by one of the here reviewed NGOs) (see ECR report no. 36).

The local NGOs regard the follow-up refreshment session as an important means to revive the knowledge and interest of the participants. However, because it is common procedure that the local authorities (village chiefs) invite the previous participants, the result is that a significant proportion of former participants (in practice) do not participate in the follow-up.

Despite the positive perception of participants about the courses and the success in recall and spreading knowledge, this approach has demonstrated to have the following flaws:

- 1) The frequency is one time only – plus for some a follow-up after several months in the lifetime of the participants. For rural people, a course duration of two to four days is rather long as is indicated by the small percentage of the respondents who requested a longer course (6%) while 32% still would have liked to learn more about human rights. This as an indication that people would like to learn more. Yet they would not like to sit again for several days in a course.
- 2) The selection of participants is left to local authorities without effective control by the local NGO staff. It is thus not known in how far selection criteria – such as education, gender, respect and popular trust – play a role.
- 3) The teaching is often overly teacher-centred despite intentions and instructions to the contrary.

3.2.2 Skill Training and Human Rights

Local NGOs state in their respective reports often that they conduct ‘leadership’, ‘empowerment’, ‘pedagogic human rights’ or ‘democracy’ courses whereby they base skill training on knowledge of human rights and democratic principles. Most of these courses are aimed at special target groups (police, civil servants, teachers) or at specially selected participants (key-persons). Only teachers are reaching large numbers (more than 25,000). Further, each of the local NGOs has a particular way of implementing their training projects that makes comparison difficult. It is not easy to find commonalities. We will try to lift out some of the most significant examples. We will base this discourse not only on survey data (that by nature is general and superficial), but on other studies as well.

A recent external review found human rights teaching for community key-persons a number of points that needed improvement in the curriculum, the selection of the participants, and teaching methodology (Collins 1999b). Another recent external review found at the same local NGO for the teacher course more or less the same shortcomings (TAF 2000). Further, because this course is aimed at schoolteachers to facilitate teaching human rights in schools, it is essential that the school curriculum include human rights. It was said that human rights’ topics were included in the school curriculum. Ministry of Education sources denied this; we did not find human rights topics in samples of primary schoolbooks.

Two local NGOs are involved in training of trainer courses for their partners, while these partners assist in or carry out courses for local people. In one case, the master training is aimed a local civil servants and government officials. Consequently, courses are conducted in the communities where these participants have roots. The approach is aimed to address local issues and to empower people to deal with those problems. Internal reports and results of pre-testing and post-testing indicate attention is needed for follow-up. This has led to some modifications of the training.

The other master training is aimed at provincial NGOs or community based organisations (CBOs). The aim is to train their staff in order to conduct awareness-raising courses in their provinces. Although this project is innovative, lack of documentation about the implementation and progress does not enable a review of its performance. Another local NGO targets local leaders with a leadership training course for which a special curriculum was developed. Results of tests and some monitoring data as reported in the regular progress reports indicate a high degree of performance. Also, in the above mentioned, two training courses and some monitoring data is available to assess performance in terms of reaching the targeted kind and numbers. While the external reviews focused on methodology, no specific reviews were conducted to assess impact.

Similarly, although the large-scale training among teachers or community key-persons was reviewed recently, no quantitative data was collected. For such a quantitative assessment of the perception among beneficiaries of the skill training approaches, we are dependent on data collected through our survey. This survey addressed 400 respondents of this category training, including second-level partici-

pants²⁰ selected in the four provinces of Kandal, Kampong Speu, Battambang, and Kampong Cham. We found an average 79% of respondents selected by a government official, while 50% of the participants themselves belonged to the group of a local authority. The table below lists the main data found for each local NGO of this group.

Local NGO Target group	Female	Recall HR rights topic	Good method	Not difficult	Use knowledge	Spreading knowledge
Teacher training	29.4%	43.5%	97.1%	43.4%	99.2%	40.4%
Partner NGO	29.4%	77.7%	97.7%	49.4%	98.3%	22.8%
Local Empowerment	68.1%	77.4%*	100%	66%	100%	78.7%
Leadership	67.6%	81.7%**	100%	37.8%	97.3%	18.9%

* includes 41.5% gender topic

** surprisingly no respondent reported 'leadership' as one of the topics they recalled taught

Of interest is female participation. This is highest among the local NGOs that target women. Still, one out of about every three participants at the other courses is a woman. The recall of human rights as a topic at the teacher training is low compared to the general training courses, but the method was directed towards increasing the pedagogy of the teachers. Despite this, our finding is in accordance with the finding of the external study that the effect of the training method is questionable. The perception about the quality of the method is good for all, while the use of the gained knowledge scores high for all. Only the local NGO that aims at empowerment of the local community members scored very highly in the spread of the information they provide. This success was confirmed through other sources and finds its cause in the linkage of the teaching topics and the immediate interests of the participants in the context of their community (see ECR report no. 24).

3.2.3 Theatre Performances

There is one other strategy that for more than its theatrical effect deserves mentioning. One of the election observer networks has adopted the method of informing people about voting and democracy using traditional forms of popular plays. These art group performances tap into the imagination of Cambodian people.

Some recent rejections by local government officials to give permission for such performances is an indication of its effect. We do not have pertinent data to assess its impact (partly because of the freeze of the art performances during the evaluation). Any study will have difficulties to define indicators, but the reported high attendance is one measurement (see ECR report no. 29). This approach might also be useful at more regular courses.

3.2.4 Conclusion

The large-scale awareness training courses reached many government officials and women as intended. The courses are well perceived by the participants and seem to have positive impact on the knowledge of human rights. However, it might be worth examining what proportion of the in previous trained participants recall the essence of the courses to assess the need for refreshment courses.

Awareness among the population has much increased thanks to the large-scale training courses and the success of participants spreading the information. In the currently changed circumstances, local NGOs might reconsider the need for knowledge-providing courses.

²⁰ These are participants who received training from teachers trained by the NGO but not being staff.

The results of the test method using a story to test the attitudes of people who attended a human rights training and those who did not – regarding use of unlawful violence – are not conclusive. Nevertheless, it shows a trend that participants of human rights’ training are more inclined to disapprove mob killing than others. This signals the impact of general training courses.

External reports reviewed the large-scale training of teachers or community key-persons to prepare them for teaching human rights rather critically. It pointed at serious flaws in terms of methodology and selection of participants. It is difficult to see how the teacher training can achieve its main objective without human rights topics in the school curriculum. Further, our training participant survey found that for the teacher training courses, recall of human rights as teaching topic was low compared to other training programs. Still, participants perceived the method as good. They felt they could make good use of the learning. In view of the purpose that they would teach about human rights, the percentage of respondents who reported to spread the knowledge was low. But the teachers tended to spread their knowledge more than others did. However, only the course that was aimed at empowerment scored high in spreading the information. For all courses, a majority of participants perceived little difficulty in learning the topics.

We conclude that awareness training has resulted in what was aimed at. A majority of the population has been reached. In view of this, continuation of this approach needs serious review. We found that flaws in methodology, problems with the implementation, and lack of essential conditions hampered several other training approaches targeting schoolteachers, community key-persons, partner organisations in teaching about human rights, and spreading the knowledge they learned.

One approach that is special in its linkage with local communities and their needs stands out and seems very successful in preparing participants to teach about human rights and using it as a tool for addressing community problems. The percentage of female participants for all kind of courses averages 31%. In one program, the female participation is only 14%. If we exclude this low extreme, the average reaches 39% of the participants being a woman. This gender attention could be construed as an achievement in its own right.

3.3 Impact of work on human rights violations

The impact of identification, protection, and service activities in regard to human rights violations in general and for particular NGOs will be discussed. This discussion will be based on findings during the missions at several organisations, the victim and prisoner surveys, and a participant observation study. The efficiency and appropriateness of strategies will be analysed and patterns and trends that emerge discussed.

3.3.1 Social or Case-work

One form of social work is here understood as the assistance to victims of human rights violations. The assistance can be to protecting victims from violence to filing a legal complaint. It is sometimes victims of trafficking who need legal assistance or referral to shelters. The women’s programs assist girls rescued from brothels, rape victims, and victims of domestic violence. One local NGO started a special project to assist Vietnamese victims of forced labour. This project suffered from government harassment and was discontinued, but it is interesting to notice that 90% of the staff of this local NGO is in favour of helping minorities, while 57% of staff of the other local NGOs (average) feel similarly. Obviously the process itself has contributed to a change of opinion among staff of the effected NGO.

The same NGO provides assistance to victims of torture. However, the majority of the work entails helping victims starting the judicial process. Caseworkers in many cases are sometimes frustrated when the perpetrator and the victim’s family reach a financial settlement instead of following legal channels.

The two largest local NGOs here reviewed and involved in casework of human rights' violations cover the whole country with provincial branch offices – although some areas are still left-out (former Khmer Rouge territories). Despite this provincial presence, the coverage of the districts is actually still rather thin. On average, three to four staff based in the provincial capital is not able to adequately cover all districts, communes, and villages. One of these NGOs has the great advantage of an activist system. Two persons in each district volunteer to work in reporting violations, gather information, and assist with other tasks. This is a tremendous asset. Despite the current attention for this resource, an NGO would do well to cultivate this potential.

To assess the perception of beneficiaries of these programs, we conducted a small sample survey among assisted victims. The survey shows that the assisted are very pleased with the assistance. On a scale from low to high (1 to 5) they noted their satisfaction with various forms of assistance, such as legal advice and follow-up assistance with filing the complaint. For local NGO 'A', we found 52% of the respondents who scored 4 or 5; for local NGO 'B' we found 58% who scored above medium.

Level of Satisfaction

Score	1	2	3	4	5
NGO 'A'	9	6	15	19	14
NGO 'B'	0	5	18	23	9

Most respondents did not have a clear idea about what organisation did what to provide assistance. A majority of the victims did not seek directly the assistance and reached the local NGO via contact persons, e.g., human rights' activists or local key-persons. Some reported that the NGO staff was afraid of the government. Many would have liked to receive more assistance. To provide information about how the work has been done, we assigned a researcher to follow some staff while at work. She got positive impressions about the performance of the work – like the mission teams during their field visits. However, the impressions point also to a large number of cases that could be filed as less serious human rights' violations. This was also found in the annual reports that list the number of cases by crime category.

A constraint is that no objective measurement of the effect of the work has been made. The data about the number of victims only suggests how many people sought assistance; not how many people experienced a violation. The fact that indeed more people than in previous years are seeking assistance does not necessarily imply that the crime rate increased. This is a problem inherent in human rights' violation work. Needless to say, crime is by nature a hidden phenomenon. As an alternative, more consistent data about the various categories of victims who received assistance linked to the impact, e.g. cases brought to court that resulted in a legal procedure, would give an impression of the impact. Unfortunately, the data systems at both local NGOs are not suited to produce statistical information although new systems to provide such data are currently being installed. However, processing of data is complicated by changes of criteria for selecting cases in recent years plus varying definitions of HR violations used at the NGOs.

It is not possible to assess the effect that financial restrictions, including safety motivations and government harassment, have on the impact of social casework. However, financial restrictions have clearly an effect on the number and the localities of cases. It is not the limit of human resources but a rigid financial administration that – at one of the NGOs, anyway, leads to a maximum of 3 cases per month per branch office²¹. Further, due to this impecunity (and also for security reasons) staff has a tendency

²¹ The NGO explained that the budget did not allow more cases 'on average'. Although this is questionable in view of financial reserves, this would not justify such a rigid restriction and management was interested to review more flexible options, such as fixing the number of cases for a three-month period.

to choose cases not far from the office. Staff from the other NGO has this latter tendency to opt for local cases – though they enjoy a more flexible budget.

The supervision by headquarters is in both local NGOs organised separately along a methodological and an administrative-financial line. While provincial staff perceives the methodological support as too limited, they feel that the financial procedures frustrate function.

3.3.2 Citizen Advisors

Among the ten NGOs is one that is involved in social work – but of another type. The introduction of citizen advisers (ombudsmen) in rural villages is an innovative approach that started more than two years ago. The aim was to assist people through writing requests or complaints for all kinds of civil and legal matters and to advise people on what to do. Unfortunately, due to a sub-standard quality of the monitoring documentation and progress reporting it was difficult to assess the factors that effect the program. However, the results of a field study indicate that despite flaws in implementation and design, the approach itself seems appropriate as well as promising²². Currently, the concerned NGO intends to commence with a more thorough investigation to review the potential and limitations of this project.

3.3.3 Conclusion

The effect of social work or case-work regarding human rights violations is not able to be measured simply through the number of cases handled or brought to court. Its effect will be ultimately a change in behaviour, meaning good governance leading to the prosecution of criminal cases without bias.

Without reliable data, such effect can not be measured in quantitative terms. The measurement should thus take place through qualitative methods but has yet to be done. Effect is currently measured through impressions, which are generally positive, but subjective.

Beneficiaries perceive the impact of the human rights' violations' casework as satisfactory in terms of quality but insufficient in terms of the assistance provided. Both local NGOs address over one-thousand cases each year. Yet much of this work consists of legal assistance for relatively minor violations. Without data about the existing serious human rights' transgressions, the validity of this approach in cost-benefit terms can not be validated. But as long as no government agencies are able to offer victims relief and support, only local NGOs can play this role. While doing this they should improve their systems to assess the results of their work.

3.4 Impact of advocacy activities

Advocacy work is done by most of the ten local NGOs and includes a great variety of strategies ranging from publishing reports and magazines to assisting the ministry departments with drafting the law. It involves sometimes only one person while at other times groups of people are involved. Because the advocacy work stands at the centre of the human rights' work we have devoted two separate studies to this²³. Here we will focus on the major impacts and discuss general conclusions.

3.4.1 Monitoring Human Rights Violations as a Tool

Monitoring human rights' violations is an important tool for advocates to argue for change. The reports on impunity and torture could not have been compiled without the information provided by

²² One staff of the HRE project followed some citizen advisors during their work, while a Danish student conducted fieldwork in the Citizen Advisor program and drafted a report (The Ombudsman System, Anne Sofie Schousboe Laursen, Dpt of Ethnography and Anthropology, Univ. of Aarhus, Danmark 2001).

²³ The specific impact of advocacy activities in regard to human rights and democracy in general and for six NGOs in particular, the efficiency and appropriateness of strategies, and comparison of the organisations is reported in ECR report no. 37. See for the election observation coalitions ECR report no. 38.

the field staff. Although several local NGOs gather statistics about prisoners, there is one outstanding NGO that has developed a system based upon providing medical care that facilitates access to prisoners. In this manner, a mass of data about the condition and situation of prisoners is documented. Unfortunately, databases are not set up in such a way that statistical analysis is a regular process. This is a flaw that needs attention.

Another area that is monitored (but has not yet produced statistical data) is the land rights' issue. Further, despite the serious attention of a number of local NGOs no *systematic* monitoring of sexual exploitation of minors is taking place. There are other areas where proper monitoring has a function, but it is noticed that problems, despite being identified, are not prone to skill-full reporting.

3.4.2 Networking and Lobbying

One effort of NGO advocacy has clearly resulted in a revision of a draft law, namely the press law. Although the Cambodian Office for the High Commissioner for Human Rights (COHCHR) played a crucial role in this matter, local NGOs were successful through lobbying members of the National Assembly. It was the first attempt and the local NGOs learned enough from this lobbying effort that they successfully advocated for the Khmer Rouge tribunal.

The NGO Forum is another key for organising NGO advocacy. Several local NGOs are members of the NGO Forum or at least have participated in some of its working group activities. The NGO Forum has, with other local NGOs, played a key role in relation to the Commune Administration Law. A third group headed by Oxfam/UK has played a leading role in organising working group activities on the Land Law, including participation of several local NGOs. A fourth group of some 30 NGOs took the lead on draft law advocacy for an anti-corruption law. This amalgamation meets regularly. It took the role of providing technical assistance in the drafting of the law, which gave ample opportunities to lobby for various versions of the bill.

The NGO Forum took the lead in relation to a commune administration law. Three electoral monitoring groups worked in relation to the commune election law. The NGO Forum Women's Working Group actively – albeit discreetly – advocated on the issue of representation of women in the commune election law.

On another level the NGO Forum has advocated on environmental issues to which some local NGOs also have contributed. And the NGO Forum has been a key player in promoting local NGO participation in the Consultative Group meetings of international donors to Cambodia.

3.4.3 How Officials Perceived Impact

Government officials seem little aware of the impact of local NGO criticism on government policy. They are eager to express willingness to co-operate with a civil society – an accomplishment. One government official quoted Prime Minister Hun Sen as saying: “The organisations of civil society are the partner of the government.” Officials of ministries that co-operate with local NGOs were happy with the technical assistance provided and satisfied with the working relationship. The lack of skills on the side of the ministries makes partnership of this kind particularly important at this point in time. But the officials do not perceive that this relationship influences their decision-making. They view their co-operation with local NGOs in terms of achieving common goals together. The claim by local NGOs that their work with government officials gives them the opportunity to influence certain policies might be correct in certain cases, e.g., CSD preparing **for** the ministry draft law. This, however, is far from typical.

Parliamentarians were eager to show support for the concept of a civil society, while claiming the initiative themselves. H.E. Monh Sophon, head of the legal affairs commission of the National Assem-

bly, said he had sent letters to NGOs inviting them to provide input on the Khmer Rouge tribunal law. Obviously, they are now seen as relevant in the consultation process of drafting laws. However, H.E. did not feel that these local NGOs had actually made tangible impact on the Khmer Rouge tribunal process. However, he acknowledged that they had some impact on the press law and the commune election law.

The public and state officials seem oblivious to the fact that the advocates speak on behalf of their organisations. They seem also confused about the impartiality that all local NGO Advocates foster. Two high-ranking CPP officials believed that some NGOs were actually affiliated with opposition parties. One former high-ranking official viewed the problem in terms of both parties (government and NGOs) speaking different languages. Obviously, the degree to which local NGO advocacy has had impact should not be measured solely by the perception of government officials. These officials are the main target group. But their perceptions are meaningful in terms of impact measurement.

3.4.4 Actual Impact

Local NGOs achieved most through their training and awareness-raising strategies, their assistance to ministries, and their lobbying of international donors. Especially in the latter case, results of studies (such as the Impunity report) is essential, and public forums represent to some degree popular support. The forum, or public debate, is an activity that uses the electronic media. Some local NGOs are prominent in this field, and their history of debates is impressive. Unfortunately, no studies have been made to review these efforts to promote the ideas of democracy, transparency, accountability, integrity, and good governance.

In the absence of more quantitative methods, we have tried to measure impact through a qualitative study of the advocacy activities of six local NGOs (see ECR report no. 37). In Cambodia, the most effective public forum program was the National Issues Forum that was not oriented toward the specific agenda of convincing. Conversely, criticism of state policy gets more attention abroad than in country – although the government is sensitive to foreign pressure. Local lobbying is most effective when used through personal channels or conducted through a position of co-operative partnership.

Advocacy solely focusing on drafting laws implies a belief that the law will be respected. But “The law and the practice of the law are islands apart,” in the words of CSD president Chea Vannath. However, the attention for the commune election law, which has directly involved six of the ten NGOs and many other local NGOs in one way or another, is a positive development. But as the advocacy report states: “Nevertheless, NGOs will increasingly need to find ways of advocating that address actual practice as much as the formal, public statement of government position which law represents.” (ECR report no. 37).

Documented case histories, or studies of public attitudes, remain the most effective advocacy, as demonstrated by the 1999 report on impunity as well as the more recent report on torture. These reports address issues of law or practice. They attract international pressure: some people even think that the revelation of ugly facts mobilises public opinion in Cambodia and therefore must move policy-makers. The advocacy report therefore recommended placing more emphasis on basing advocacy on reports of this kind, and encouraging donors to fund relevant studies.

3.4.5 Conclusion

The advocacy report concludes that: “... often seems that the efforts of local NGOs have relatively minor impact in and of themselves...” and :”...officials and the public in general tend to remember advocacy in terms of the actions of these individuals instead of the organisations they represent...”. But major steps are being taken and advocacy has become one approach to achieve a democratic society. The impact of advocacy gains strength when international donors interfere. Consequently, Cambodian authorities tend to take the issue more seriously. However, only some local NGOs have actively participated in NGO lobbying of the Consult-

ative Group meetings. The advocacy report concludes that: “More participation in this process by local NGOs is essential.”

Many spokes(wo)men for human rights and democracy NGOs declare that advocacy, promotion for changes of undemocratic systems and the application of the rule of law are a crucial aspect of their work. It is thus surprising to notice that not so many staff of local NGOs are actually involved in advocacy work. Also, relatively few resources are directed towards this activity. It is also odd that more than half of the here reviewed NGOs have no special advocacy program.

3.5 General conclusions

Both for the organisations and for donors, it is important to be informed about the impact and effect of the work done and supported. However, progress of human rights and democracy development is by nature difficult to assess, while it is even more difficult to assess the specific contributions of one particular organisation or program. This being said, it should not mean that no efforts should be made to measure impact and to qualify the effects. Monitoring plans should be part of each project or program, and staff should be trained to measure the progress.

We find that local NGOs tend not to give proper reflection about the appropriateness of suitable monitoring and go without review of any progress to justify input. Partly this is due to the reluctance of sponsors to accept monitoring and evaluation in their budgets.

As far as impact can be assessed, we find that the awareness training programs have reached a significant proportion of the population. Furthermore, participants perceive the knowledge as useful. However, this has not caused large-scale change in behaviour. Neither has it mobilised the population – although the story-test indicates some positive change.

In view of this general inactivity, it might be worthwhile discussing the need for broad-scale approaches. Perhaps, as is indicated by some studies, the methodology and trainer core of the large-scale training programs have not the required quality to achieve more. But it might well be that providing knowledge without giving the means to change (what represents empowerment) might never lead to a mobilisation of the general population. This could be the reason that the large-scale teacher-training program has not had any clear impact. As long as the school curriculum does not include a proper human rights’ section, teachers do not have the tools and mandate to teach human rights. Among the training approaches reviewed only the training program aimed at empowerment of communities seemed to have achieved a relatively high impact, but this program is limited in scale.

The assistance of victims of human rights’ violations is a needed relief, but it belongs to the field of social welfare. In that sense, impact is measured by what beneficiaries perceive. Although the beneficiaries are satisfied with assistance, they need more help. The best way to effect human rights and democracy development is through a change of mentality and behaviour. There are indications of progress, but any direct relationship with one of the programs can not be identified. One other rather important effect of casework and other assisting activities is the resulting monitoring data that provide ammunition that advocates use to agitate for change.

The advocacy activities are at the core of the human rights and democracy work. It is encouraging that there are a few signs of impact. However, it needs much more efforts to achieve a situation of democratic governance. Perhaps more local NGOs should devote a significant part of their human and material resources to this field of work.

4 Organisational strengths & weaknesses

Precondition for achievement is the capacity of an organisation, the motivation and skills of its staff, the resources available, and the management of projects and organisation. Managers need a proper monitoring system and regular evaluations to guide their decisions. We will discuss such conditions in the local NGOs. The traditional model of Cambodian society with its hierarchical set-up, nature of patronage, and unchallenged leadership is not strange to most of the NGOs. But human rights & democracy NGOs must play a role model in civil society. An analysis on how they manage to combine these aspects is below.

4.1 Capacities of human rights & democracy NGOs

The capacity of organisations consists of various elements such as funds, staff, equipment & material, information sources, and management – to name the obvious. These elements are discussed insofar as they show commonalities and contribute to or limit the capacity of any organisation.

4.1.1 Finances

Many of the ten local NGOs experience serious financial difficulties that hamper not only their work, but especially their development²⁴. Much effort is spent for fund raising and adjustment of activities to inadequate budgets which results in inefficiency and lesser impact. Local NGOs have made a co-ordinated effort to overcome this problem but could not convince donors. One local NGO benefits from being supported through a consortium of sponsors and is the only organisation able to follow four-year work plans. Funding for a few other local NGOs is also secured for several years ahead so they can similarly plan for the future. However, most local NGOs must rely on short-term commitments.

Despite this there is no intention among the ten NGOs to join forces to consolidate their financial sources. This of course is compounded by the tendency among sponsors to prefer ‘their’ partners and to put most of their trust in personages rather than on institutions.

4.1.2 Staff

All ten NGOs value qualified and motivated staff. Some have different ideas about what qualifications are most important. Most local NGOs recruit staff who have the best skills for their specific tasks, but some especially value people who have connections and know the way to manipulate government partners.

Within the ten local NGOs, we find many qualified people who are doing a fine job. There is also a high level of loyalty, despite the heavy work agenda and relatively low salary levels. Staff is loyal to the mandate of the organisation and even more to their leaders, who are mostly seen as their patrons. It seems that many organisations value internal fealty more highly than any other characteristic; this relationship with the head of the local NGO apparently motivates an employee to do hard work, while the job itself might be of lesser importance.

Some organisations have developed policies for staff-career planning but rarely are such plans put into practice. This might be an explanation for the limited numbers of mid-level staff able to move up in the hierarchy – or the virtual absence of ‘second generation leaders’ at most of the NGOs.

²⁴ The report on Relationship between Donors and Partners remarks that not all the funds available for organisational development are used, and recommends to strengthen this component (ECR report no. 39).

4.1.3 Equipment and Material

The central offices of human rights & democracy NGOs manage well with the equipment and vehicles they possess or may use, and field staff often makes use of public transport. However, the organisations with provincial field offices often do not provide sufficient motorcycles to their staff. This hobbles work.

Sometimes a lack of radio communication compromises the safety of provincial staff. Central office management tends to neglect the need for properly functioning communication equipment and means for transportation of field staff. Computer equipment is available at every local NGO and most program staff has access to it. However, data processing is hampered by the lack of appropriate statistical computer programs and the skills to use these. Although it is not an established trend, sometimes work material is insufficiently distributed to the provinces and to provincial staff.

4.1.4 Information Sources

A number of the local NGOs have libraries or places with documentation, and some are well visited by outsiders, such as students. Some NGOs have developed special databases to document specific information, like victims of human rights' violations. Such data have been used to produce reports on impunity or torture.

Staff of the local NGOs with publication programs has worked together, yet no systems exist to exchange relevant information among NGOs. Several senior staff of the ten NGOs confirm that there is virtually no exchange with colleagues who are working on similar topics; sometimes not even with colleagues in their own organisation. Similarly, reports or documents are rarely studied. Visits to libraries are rare. The main reason given is 'busy with work', but it seems that many are not comfortable with reviewing written, abstract material. The trend of not exchanging information that concerns their own work applies also to staff within or between sections or programs.

4.1.5 Management

The ten local NGOs have management styles that vary in style and degree. Ironically,

These styles are often based upon the traditional hierarchical and patriarchal system that flourishes in Cambodian society. Four NGOs have one chief executive officer (CEO) who alone governs the organisation. Four other NGOs have a CEO under whose direction a manager is in charge of operations – only in two of these NGOs this director has considerable influence. Although two of the election observer coalitions have a director, it are members of the Board of Directors who act as CEO. This places the executive director in an awkward position and impacts the effectiveness of at least one NGO.

Management qualities of these managers and their most senior staff range from insufficient to very good. But, generally the management quality is below the standards applied at other social sector local NGOs, such as rural development. However, the visionary quality is above standard. On the basis of the evaluation findings, we prepared the following matrix of the strength of the management and the visionary qualities of the leaders for each local NGO using a scale from low to high (for confidentiality reasons the NGOs are indicated with a letter)²⁵:

Score range	low	medium	high
Management	E F H	B	A C D G I J
Vision	A G H I	B F	C D E J

²⁵ This matrix is only meant to provide an idea of the management quality of the leadership. We have qualified management in terms of efficiency and effectiveness in the fields of personal affairs, reporting, financial records, policies, and running of operations based upon the information gathered during the Evaluation. The qualification of vision is based upon the reputation of the leaders. Despite this, the qualification remains inevitably subjective.

Although the matrix is an arbitrary tool, the result demonstrated in the table above fits with the general impression donors had about the NGOs. Four of the NGOs have a structure that offers a mechanism to combine management and vision qualities more adequately – a president who is the intellectual source and a managing director who runs the organisation. In some cases this effect of course the score. For example, among the 6 NGOs assessed as relatively strong in management, half has a separation between management and visionary function. The same three organisations are considered strong in both qualities (CDJ).

A related problem is the absence of ‘second generation leaders’, those potential leaders who are able to rise through the ranks to assume a leadership position in their own organisation. There are only a few local NGOs with a number of senior staff that has the potential to grow into leaders of their own organisation in the far future. At the moment, none of the organisations would have a second generation leader ready to take over should the need arise. Most NGO leaders interviewed agreed with this analysis and felt it a problem for the future. Some local NGOs have experienced the unfortunate departure of a promising candidate to another organisation, while others have experienced such differences of opinion that the candidate left the organisation. Still others were not able to create an environment that attracted potential second-generation leaders.

4.1.6 Membership

All the ten local NGOs have expressed the opinion that they are an element of civil society. Some say that they represent the people. One way to indicate this representation is membership. Two NGOs before the 1993 elections claimed large numbers of members, but in fact those were petitioners who with their signature merely supported the mission of the organisation. These ‘members’ did not have any influence on the organisations and are not listed as voting members. Still, they at that time represented significant popular support.

Presently, only one NGO operates as an association with individual members. The employees are full members. In addition, over 300 activists in 17 provinces are a support for this NGO. The activists assist the staff with casework activities or sometimes facilitate training courses. Although they are members conform the Charter in practice they are not regarded as full members.

Three election observer coalitions are associations with local NGOs as their members and founders. However, the largest coalition has a membership that at the moment is not clearly defined, but it once consisted (at the time of founding) of hundreds of local NGOs. The members of the Board of Directors were also elected at the time of its foundation. However, the coalition functions more like a local NGO with a Board of Directors rather than as an association with an assembly as governing body. The two other coalitions are founded by a limited number of local NGOs who each are represented on its Board of Directors. They are actively involved in coalition affairs. But also these two associations act more like an NGO than an association with members.

4.2 Management structures and practices

4.2.1 Internal Structures

The ten organisations have differing internal structures and functioning, but they can be divided into three major systems: the board system, the association system, and the non-acting board system.

Five NGOs are structured according to the board system whereby the Board of Directors is the ultimate governing body. The Board appoints a director who heads the organisation and is responsible for a proper performance according to the directives of the board. The three election observer coalitions and the two all-female NGOs (that are modelled to conform to the community development sector) have such a board and director system. In the latter two, the founders act as directors. Two of the

election observer coalitions have an active board that contributes to the functioning of the coalition, while the third coalition has a board that does not function well. It is in this organisation that serious management problems have been engendered²⁶.

One organisation only is structured along an association model with an annual assembly and a three-year general assembly as its governing body. Voting members are the employees and ten percent of the activists. Voting members elect (during the general assembly) the President, who is the chief executive officer – and the Secretary-General, who is the chief managing officer. An advisory board with several founding members and a few expatriate members is called every year to offer advice.

The four other organisations have no acting governing body. Two of these local NGOs have a board of directors that appointed the executive director, but they do not meet anymore.

Although structures differ throughout the rest of the organisations, the management system is rather similar to the head of sections or programs part of the management group. In all these NGOs, the Manager is also head of the management group.

Further, we find at most of the ten NGOs procurement – financial – and/or disciplinary committees who control financial affairs or take measures in case of personal problems. None of the NGOs, except the one member association, has an organised form of personal representation; no staff is a member of a labour union.

During the Evaluation, several government officials expressed their opinion that human rights & democracy local NGOs are responsible to or influenced in their work by foreign donors. However, this is not a vindicated fact – it remains only an opinion: no donor is represented on any board. Indeed, local NGOs receive funds from foreign sponsors for the implementation of their work; agreements are purely aimed to assure accountability of the received monies.

4.2.2 Internal Democracy

Internal democracy is one aspect of human rights. It is important for local NGOs to model for civil society democracy and transparency. A code of ethics for civil society organisations was recently developed by a renowned Cambodian advocate for democracy²⁷: “A CSO is a private non-profit organisation. It is not directed by the state and is not set up to make a profit for its owner or shareholders in the market.” On the basis of this code of ethics, we have analysed the ten NGOs and tried to detect patterns and commonalities of their internal-democratic orientation²⁸.

All NGOs propagate consultation with their staff in matters that concern their organisation and the work to be done. For most local NGOs, this works well in regard to activities. There are staff meetings and other occasions to discuss strategies and plans. But there is one field where many local NGOs fail to adhere to what they preach: creating an environment that does not squelch controversial opinions and allows for open debate. Causes are the gatekeeper attitude of second or third-level managers who prevent lower-level staff to address the leadership, the disposal of staff not to oppose leadership opinions – and, in a few cases, the autocratic stance of leaders themselves. The first two causes are found among a majority of the ten NGOs. Admittedly, solid proof of the said statements is elusive.

²⁶ At press time of this report we were informed that a new Chairperson was appointed to the BOD and that remedial actions were put in motion to address the shortcomings.

²⁷ Dr. Lao Mong Hay considers NGOs one type of CSOs. See untitled KID document coded eudA210.html 03/08/2000

²⁸ See for a more extensive discourse ECR report no. 35.

We have also applied a new measurement tool designed to assess the progress of democratic achievements in emerging democracies (see below). This model has been adapted to compare NGOs²⁹. The instrument consists of a number of indicators that measure (using a five-step scale) a combination of aspects of democracy, both in the systems that exist and in the use that can be made of these systems. This tool is useful to measure progress in the future, too.

In the structural part of the model, we find that decentralisation of decision making is low where we have found more autocratic leadership attitudes. Most of the NGOs like this also score low for transparency and accountability. Some have a similar tendency even in the promotion of a vivid dialogue with staff or an attempted legitimising of the decision-making process in the eyes of staff.

INTERNAL DEMOCRACY AT TEN LOCAL NGOs Based upon a selection of the DemEsti Indicators

criteria: 1 = not at all; 3 = not enough but good start; 5 = more than enough

Indicators/NGOs	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J
Decentralised power	1	3	3	2	2	1	3	1	-	3
Transparency & Accountability	2	3-4	3-4	3	3-4	1-2	3-4	1-2	1	3
Leaders promote vivid dialogue	2	3-4	3-4	3-4	3	1-2	3	1-2	1	2-3
Legitimacy in eyes of staff	2-3	4-5	4	4	3-4	2-3	4	1-2	2-3	4
Active personnel	1	3	2	2	2	1	3	1	1	2
Relation to power	2	4	3	3	3	2	4	2	2	4
Total average*	2	3	3	3	2-3	1-2	3	1	2	3

* included here are results not shown in questions – maximum score is 5.

Three NGOs with autocratic leadership styles score low except the one that also scored somewhat higher for transparency. It is interesting to notice that this same tendency applies in the part that measures the practice or use of democratic mechanisms. In autocratically-managed local NGOs, we find that staff is less active and feels not very close to the leader.

The measurements are consistent with other findings and thus convincing. However, one must realise that the ascribed value is arbitrary³⁰. We find roughly two groups: those that score 2.5 or above and those that score 2 or below. Seven of the ten NGOs score around or more than half the maximum points in what might be interpreted as having a reasonable degree of democratic governance. Three of these NGOs did not have an active board – indicating that legitimacy is not directly subject to the board system. Three other organisations that scored more than half have no separation of overall leadership. This indicates that the separation of overall and daily management is not related to internal democracy. However, all seven NGOs with an average of 2.5 or higher have a leader who has a very good reputation among staff. Only one of the seven leaders of NGOs that score more than half the

¹ The demEsti method was developed for Diakonia by Anders Ingelstam. See for a complete discourse ECR report no. 35.

³⁰ The HRE project had indeed developed a more appropriate measurement system through a panel approach whereby members were selected representing various strata of the community. One quality of the panel members was ample understanding of the internal functioning of the organisation. The intention was to assign the NGO-Evaluators in the panel to join the Core Evaluators and during a meeting assign the points. For various reasons this could not be done. Because the method is not applied to its full extent and to avoid a kind of competition the HRE reports do not reveal the identity of the local NGOs. The purpose is mostly to demonstrate the variations among the ten NGOs and the average level.

maximum points demonstrates an autocratic attitude and this leader's organisation scores lowest among the seven. This indicates that internal democracy is a strong factor in how a staff validates its leader.

4.3 Monitoring and evaluation

Only one local NGO over the years conducted internal evaluations that were documented. Despite the fact that the evaluations would have benefited from more qualified assistance, the process itself has contributed to a better understanding of the evaluation process. The same organisation is also the only one where over a period of 8 years three external evaluations of the whole organisation took place. Unfortunately, each consequent evaluation report identifies the same constraints and problems and makes similar recommendations for improvement. Although almost every year a review took place in which senior staff was involved, not many staff could recall what the outcome was. It seems that the process always stopped when the implementation phase of the recommendations had been reached.

Several other local NGOs have undergone external professional evaluations of some or all of their programs. There was no evidence that the results had been used to make improvements and the reviews did not pertain to the whole organisation. In several cases, the reports were not circulated among staff at all, especially the reports that were rather critical. Also, we found that some donors had conducted program assessments – the results of which were not made available to the local NGO. Consequently, these NGOs were not able to learn lessons from those reviews.

Although virtually no measurement of impact of program activities takes place, monitoring of performance is common practice among the local NGOs. This consists mostly of quantified data such as the number of participants or issues of magazines circulated. Some local NGOs conducted interviews with participants about their experiences or pre-tested and post-tested their training participants. Alas, the data was in no case processed in a way that made a qualitative assessment possible. Although some local NGOs said that the results were used to adjust the program, we found no documentation that confirmed this. Others keep data files of their casework. However, no NGO could produce a statistical report that could be used to assess the quantitative impact of their work.

4.4 Organisational strengths and weaknesses: A conclusion

4.4.1 Strategies & Objectives

The local NGOs have the same overall goal of facilitating a democratic society and rule of law, but their general approaches vary. A few work more closely together with the government, while most believe in working from the outside and confronting state officials with their abuses. This represents for the sector as a whole a strength because it allows both engagement and confrontation with the government. But local NGOs tend to forget that both approaches are only operative strategies – they are not goals in themselves – and that this should not limit their co-operation.

Although the aim is the same various local NGOs have different objectives. This is a bonus for the sector as a whole if only those NGOs best suited to achieve a certain objective do the work or assist others to do it better. However, most of the ten NGOs now or in the past have tried to achieve objectives that are beyond their own competence without calling for help. This points to a practice that deserves more attention in the future, namely to continue applying old methods when the purpose has been changed. For example, if a NGO aims to increase leadership skills among government staff but for some reason changes its target group to include community leaders – not only the curriculum but also the approach needs to be revised in light of the changed circumstances.

4.4.2 Coverage

Most local NGOs have a small number of staff and few resources that limit their activities to some provinces or districts. Several of these NGOs concentrate in the same province, while some other provinces are not covered by any human rights & democracy organisations. Even the large local NGOs with their many branch offices covering almost 85% of the country are not able to reach all provinces or districts. However, these local NGOs overlap in about three-quarters of the country with NGOs who are implementing similar programs. The reasons given for this overlap might have been valid in the past, but are not anymore convincing.

Efforts to merge the offices of various local NGOs might not receive much support from staff and management. But it seems that a closer collaboration and division of tasks to work more efficiently without losing identities is feasible through sharing work premises. That would offer a solution for the increasing workload and need for resources.

The election observation coalitions do not experience such limitations because they are structured to mobilise distant and local NGOs or CBOs to increase their reach and do not need ‘people on the ground’. This ‘alternative force’ is of potential benefit: It is patent that the concentration of their own staff in the capital represents a weakness limiting their efficiency and impact.

4.4.3 Decentralisation

Two local NGOs have field offices in many provinces. Evaluators have for several years recommended decentralising the management of these offices to lift the burden from central office and to increase the autonomy of the branch offices. Perversely, we noticed a focus on a more centralised administration and strengthening of central office programs. Some other NGOs have branch offices which functions to bring activity closer to target groups. Although this has the intended result, central office staff has the tendency to keep full control, which limits decentralisation.

4.4.4 Staff

Technical skills are relatively high among staff of human rights & democracy organisations, although management skills need improvement. To facilitate the constructive engagement with the government, a local NGO applies the strategy of recruiting staff who have close links with government officials to head their programs. This becomes a danger if the links are too close and a liability if the staff member’s qualifications and experience are not sufficient. Some other NGOs might be a bit overly cautious employing former government employees.

All ten local NGOs are aware that their staff is their most valuable asset. Yet we found at no organisation that the management gives much attention to development of a comprehensive personal policy, including procedures of staff recruitment, career planning, and capacity building. The lack of application of such policies hampers the capacity building and limits the grooming of second-generation leaders.

4.4.5 Internal Democracy

In some of the ten NGOs, the leaders are (in principle) accountable for their actions to a higher body, Board of Directors, or Assembly – but rarely does a board or assembly reject the financial and programmatic proposals presented by a President or Director. In this sense, the board or assembly plays not the role of a business board of directors. The board is mostly a guardian of established practices.

The existence or non-existence of a board does not, therefore, influence practice of internal democracy. We find among local NGOs without boards sometimes more democratic practices than those with a board. The deciding factor is in the person of the leader. Most leaders of the NGOs define the need for internal democracy in terms of efficiency and management. If the organisations were simply a

temporal instrument in achieving the goal of democracy and respect for human rights – and not an element of the emerging civil society – the arguments of management and efficiency would be balanced against the achievements, and in the end of minor importance. However, all these organisations claim to be an integral part of civil society. Consequently, one would expect – and the population does – that they do as they preach or lose legitimacy. We found a tendency that mechanisms for democratic processes exist, but there is a lack of democratic practices due to management and cultural factors.

4.4.6 Finances & Administration

Important for the operation of the organisation is financial capacity. Without foreign funds, no existing human rights & democracy non-governmental organisation could operate as they do in the context of Cambodia. This reliance on foreign sources implies a dependency on foreign policies, which fail to always keep Cambodian interests at heart, and are often short-sighted and short-term. However, financial support indicates political and diplomatic support of the foreign organisations or governments.

A few of the NGOs have a good reputation of reporting to their donors, but many other NGOs are still rather weak in program and financial reporting. This is complicated by the different requirements of donors. However, the few local NGOs who manage to deal with this issue prove that a solution is mainly a matter of increasing management skills and capacity building.

4.4.7 Information Access

Not only access to, but also use of information is an important aspect of the capacity of human rights & democracy NGOs. They need to adjust their programs to the established needs in society, to find arguments for change, and to know what support they might expect from the people. However, in order to make use of existing information, the ability of senior staff to study existing foreign language material needs attention. This might be an explanation why so rarely results of previous evaluations conducted at some of the NGOs were considered for their work. The staff and management seem simply to have ignored English-language reports.

4.4.8 Management

Some chief executive officers try to combine visionary drive of the organisation with micro-managing as well – like being both the pilot and navigator on a plane. One person has to fly the plane while also finding the way. This is not always a success – the CEOs are not, in general, exceptionally talented as managers.

Regardless to how that leadership is put in practice, the management quality and vision that gives direction to the organisation are the two qualities that defines the capacity of organisations. We find the management quality below the standards applied at other social sector NGOs, such as in rural development, while the vision quality is above those standards. This phenomenon is not odd; the two qualities are not per se congruent.

4.4.9 Popular Support

Without some form of popular support, it is questionable if an organisation may call itself an element of civil society. They surely can not claim to represent part of the populace. Not being able to do so is a weakness for any human rights & democracy local NGO. Similarly, not having an activist base represents a weakness vis-à-vis the government.

Only one NGO has activists in many provinces that are a strong support for this NGO in practical terms. However, it remains questionable in how far they represent a part of the population.

In the absence of a constituency, most Cambodian NGOs derive their legitimacy from their assumption that what they do they do for the people's benefit. But in most cases what local NGOs do is based upon what motivates their leaders.

Cambodian NGOs are very dependent on the person(s) that drives them. But the past shows that they can survive without them – even going through temporary difficulties. The lack of a broad base within the organisation to support underlying ideals at several NGOs is a more serious limitation for its sustainability.

4.4.10 Problem Analysis

The dependency on driven leaders who are motivated by their past experiences might be one factor to explain why local NGOs do not base their programs and activities on a comprehensive problem analysis. In the past this might not have been an issue – the problem then was clear.

Now after elections and with a constitutional government, one might not assume that the problems are the same. Some leaders are aware of this weakness among the local NGOs – they promote addressing the causes not only the symptoms – but it seems as if NGOs are more comfortable to remain retro-active oriented.

5 Co-operation & partnerships

Local support to the Cambodian NGOs comes from its members and activists – or in rare cases from close relationships with government staff. Co-ordination and co-operation between local NGOs exists especially in addressing serious violations of human rights, in special advocacy activities, and in the existence of observation monitoring networks. 'Organisational development' includes development of the external relations and responsiveness to partner NGOs, interest groups, and the public and state actors. Here we will discuss the relationship with the government and its officials, co-operation between NGOs, (especially those with similar objectives), and what support these organisations get or expect from their 'constituencies'.

5.1 Local co-ordination and co-operation

5.1.1 Government Relations

The Prime Minister calls NGOs 'partners'. Some local NGOs describe their relationship with the government as good. In reality there is no relationship in terms of systematic contacts, co-ordination, and fluid co-operation.

The government has recently established a special body to co-ordinate the work of the local NGOs, but as yet no effect has been noticed. The member human rights & democracy NGOs tend to use the Human Rights Action Committee to confront the government with social problems that are not taken care of. This is far from a relationship. Relationships are on the level of departments, sections, and individual officials.

Two local NGOs promote a strategy of 'constructive engagement' with the government. This includes trying to change from within government structures and practices. The engagement approach is based upon building working relationships through joint projects with government sections. Other local NGOs prefer a more distant approach in dealing with the government. However, this does not seem to negatively influence development of close working relationships with departmental and provincial or district officials.

5.1.2 Local NGO Relations

All local NGOs have relationships with other NGOs through networks, committees, partnership meetings, infrequent joint projects. Not one has a close institutional affiliation with one another. Each local NGO is eager to stand on its own and make its own policies.

Unlike other sectors in development, such as the health sector with its umbrella organisation, Medicam, no efforts are made to standardise procedures for personnel affairs, finances or exchanges of information. The NGOs maintain relations via personnel contacts wherever they meet (board meetings, forums, and through networks such as NGO Forum, Human Rights or Child Rights Committee, etc.). These relationships are collegial, and aimed at information exchange and co-ordination.

The co-operation and commitment is much stronger in the Human Rights Action Committee. Here the relationship is very collegial and actions are carried out in co-operation. The chair rotates among members. The Action Committee operates at two levels: the political level in Phnom Penh and the working level in the provinces. Members are those organisations who address human rights' violations.

Another form of local NGO co-operation that functions quite well is the election observer coalitions. All NGOs (except of course the election observer organisations themselves) are a member of one – and

sometimes two of these monitoring groups. The monitoring organisations are established out of need for election monitoring and voter education, and strongly supported by the donor community. Local NGOs vary in their commitment to the coalition and each group has its own ‘patrons’.

5.1.3 Civil Society

Cambodian civil society is still undeveloped and there are only a few elements with which human rights & democracy NGOs could build-up relationships. The four most obvious ones are the business community, the media, labour unions, and the political parties. Although human rights & democracy NGOs try to avoid the impression that they side with political parties, sometimes opposition politicians join at rallies or manifestations organised by election observer coalitions to offer support. However, this does not constitute a relationship. Similarly no relationship exists with labour unions for fear of being drawn into a political struggle.

A number of local NGOs make use of radio and television to broadcast their messages: They have build-up good relations with several radio/television stations. However, this relationship remains on the technical level – it is the government who controls access to this media. As far as we could determine, no relationship exists with the press, with the journalist associations, the business community, or the chamber of commerce.

5.1.4 Regional and International Networking

Most local NGOs entertain working relationships with some regional and international networks or organisations. These relationships are mainly based upon an exchange of information and experience, but some aim at further regional co-ordination. For example, conducting studies on regional problems or addressing cross-border issues. It is the dominant leaders who entertain these relationships – although several initiatives aimed at facilitating the involvement of other staff in regional contacts are apparently fruitful.

5.1.5 Conclusions

The relationship with the government is limited to working levels and there are no mechanisms to maintain dialogue. Although the government is to some extent aware of the role that human rights & democracy NGOs play (*‘they are our partners in civil society’*) no efforts are made to create partnership. Conversely, local NGOs fail to trust the rhetoric of the government and require sincere democratic efforts before they would entertain a closer relationship. Unfortunately this lack of dialogue hampers a better understanding for what human rights & democracy organisations aim. This could account for the excessive doubt among government officials about the impartiality of human rights & democracy NGOs.

Relationships among local NGOs on the working level are good, but mostly limited to activities. Except for the election activities, there are few joint efforts to develop strategies or implement joint projects. Further, the human rights & democracy NGOs do not have relationships with the few existing other elements of civil society. The main reason is fear of politicisation.

Outside the country, the leaders maintain international and regional relationships. But more and more staff is also becoming involved in making and maintaining regional contacts.

5.2 Donor co-operation & partners

One important aspect to facilitate, initiate, or sustain the activities of the NGOs is the support given by foreign sponsors. This is done through expatriate advisors who offer training for skill building and knowledge, through financial support for the running of the organisation, and implementation of its activities, and through evaluation. In this paragraph we focus on the partnerships maintained by

Forum Syd and Diakonia with their partner NGOs, but we review also more in general the donor co-operation – including other donors who support the ten NGOs.

Forum Syd is a Swedish development NGO with an office in Cambodia operating there since 1993. Forum Syd has three major approaches to reach their goals³¹: the placement of advisors or trainers with local organisations, the granting of core project funds, encouragement of information exchanges, co-operation between local organisations, and development of the internal structures for a democratic and efficient functioning management system of their partner organisations.

Diakonia is also a Swedish non-governmental organisation, a Christian charity supported by Swedish church members. Diakonia operates from their regional office based in Thailand that covers several countries in the region, including Cambodia. One Swedish officer is part-time responsible for the Cambodian activities of Diakonia. The establishment of the Cambodian country office in 1998, with one local staff located at the Forum Syd office, makes a big difference for communication with partners, potential grantees, and other stakeholders. However, it is clear that Diakonia lacks the close ‘feeling’ for the local situation and conditions that Forum Syd is able to maintain through their frequent and extensive contacts with advisors, local NGOs, and government staff plus other development organisations. The placement of Diakonia’s office at Forum Syd’s office was, therefore, a wise move because it strengthened the already good relationship between the two Swedish NGOs and facilitates information exchange and co-operation.

5.2.1 Financial Support

A common feature found among the local NGOs – and especially among their field staff – was the unfamiliarity with the concept of donors being more significant than sponsors. The staff of local NGOs in general and some in particular do not understand well that international NGOs like Diakonia and Forum Syd have objectives that go well beyond financial support. Virtually all staff interviewed had no idea what could be expected from their international partner NGOs – including Diakonia and Forum Syd – or what criteria are applied to grant the funds.

Management of these local NGOs is generally better informed. Yet, some local NGO leaders are in doubt about the exact priorities of their donors and their reasons to grant funds in the first place.

Grantee Criteria

Until recently, sponsors in general favoured the most renowned local human rights and democracy organisations and encouraged them to apply for funds. Donors tended to select these NGOs on the basis of the reputation of the leader and good administrative reporting. Lack of proper progress reports or lack of information about the impact of the ongoing projects were no reason to reject an application, even though these were reasons to reject proposals of lesser-known organisations.

Dictatorial management styles were waived in some cases, although it was an argument to reject other NGOs. As one donor representative said: “...it is a political decision made by our government to show our concern for the political situation. They don’t like being thwarted by some trivial requirements for efficiency or effect...” One local NGO director said explicitly what a number of other leaders expressed in more diplomatic terms: “...donors are not consistent in their priorities...too much [happens] on an ad hoc basis...”

Most sponsors assess the projects or programs they intend to finance and review evaluation reports if they are aware of their existence. Such review is often the deciding factor. It is, therefore, an undesired practice among some donors and some NGOs to keep such evaluation reports confidential or avoid referring to

³¹ See for more details ECR report no. 39.

them if they are deemed negative for the NGO. Further, the lengthy process of approving funds of some large international sponsor agencies means that the criteria used for selection are sometimes based upon several years' old information. This might be detrimental to the development of the human rights & democracy sector as a whole because it gives a bad example. For instance, in one particular case, a nationwide program received a very negative review by a professional evaluator but the NGO did not take any action to reverse course. Further, one major precondition for the application of this program was still not met after several years, rendering the ultimate success doubtful. This was one of the main reasons for some donors to discontinue funding. However, it seems not a practice among bilateral sponsors to exchange experiences, something several of the sponsors with offices in the country are used to do. Despite these documented facts one agency granted millions of dollars to continue the program. Such a decision-making process does not demonstrate a consistent donor practice or would encourage other NGOs to improve their programs on the basis of evaluation findings (see ECR report no. 33).

Grantee Requirements

There is also a feeling among leaders of the local NGOs that most donors tend to focus too much on internal functioning and on administration and reporting. In their view, the local NGOs need time to develop their organisations. They feel that donors should support this development by granting time and designated funds needed to achieve the set objectives – and not trouble them with 'trivial' requests! Most donor representatives we met agreed with the need for time to develop. They did in fact grant ample time and funds. Some, however, felt that the NGOs were a bit complacent and should progress more fervently.

All the local NGOs, except one, rely on short-term funding. The result is that none really can make plans for the long term. This affects their staffing – only recruiting for short-term employment contracts – and implementation. Despite this, most NGO leaders do not think that a joint NGO effort would offer a solution. Some said: "...donors prioritise their own requirements..." and are not willing to compromise and adjust to one system and model. Some donors confirmed that a solution could not be found within the partnership because it is not they, but their own sponsors or governments who set these rules. However, most leaders and donors agree that the lack of financial security limits a comprehensive and integrated program development at NGOs and in the whole sector.

5.2.2 Forum Syd and Diakonia

Diakonia and Forum Syd grant funds to local organisations for their activities and running. Forum Syd's democracy program is 100% financed by Sida, while Diakonia gets funds from Sida and from Swedish church organisations. Diakonia's diversified funding sources makes the organisation less dependent on Sida and Sida's procedures than Forum Syd. This is an important factor that directly might affect grantees. One NGO director recalls that some years ago Sida unexpectedly cut the already granted but not yet fully disbursed funds: "...they just did not pay, although we had a contract...". Diakonia then decided to use some of their own funds to cover the deficit, so that the program could continue, but Forum Syd was not able to do this.

Another disadvantage of being fully dependent on Sida's funding is the actual period of disbursement. None of Diakonia's recipients complained about funds received too late, but several of Forum Syd's clients experienced problems. One local NGO that urgently needed funds in order to survive received funds so late that they needed to cancel activities and reduce staff salaries despite Forum Syd's efforts to assist them as best they could (See for more information ECR report no. 25.)

Policy and Criteria

Diakonia and Forum Syd apply criteria to grant funds, but decisions are subject to available information about the achievements of the local NGOs in question. In the absence of impact data, Diakonia's

and Forum Syd's staff tend to rely on the relationship they have with the grantees and impressions gained during visits.

However, both Forum Syd and Diakonia have established procedures and criteria for granting funds³². Forum Syd uses perhaps the most elaborate guidelines and formal procedures, while Diakonia's staff tends to put more trust in the personal relationships with local NGO staff and leaders.

It is clear, as also other donors acknowledges, that in the context of Cambodia and under the given circumstances, sponsors get insufficient information about impact and little information about the actual utilisation of the funds³³. Therefore, donors' staff often reaches a decision that was not based upon a rigid application of procedures. Indeed, the criteria are useful as a guideline, but as Forum Syd's former director said, in reference to the selection of a partner: "...the person of the grantee is crucial...". Although he was referring to a special case, it shows the tendency among donors in general to assess the NGO on the person of its leader. Similarly, NGO leaders tend to validate the donor organisation through its representative. The resulting personal network is a strong factor in the grant-giving decision-making process. This practice was acknowledged by Diakonia's former regional officer who said that in her decision-making, the relationship with the head of the partner NGO was very important. In view of the roles Cambodian leaders play in local NGOs, such an attitude is only politic.

However, donors in general and Forum Syd and Diakonia in particular have made efforts to use more objective criteria to assess the eligibility of granting funds. The Forum Syd 1999 annual report of the democracy program describes the attention for measurement of program impact but concludes: 'No LNGO could therefore provide clear quantitative information of the impact of their FS-supported work. Most have sought other means to evaluate their work, particularly through qualitative reports.' (p. 9). The report noted further that although efforts were made, measurement of impact through the NGO progress reports remained questionable. Diakonia relied therefore much on information gathered during partner meetings and individual conversations with leaders for their selection process. Both donors emphasise the lack and need for external program evaluations.

Although among the various donors procedures and the degree to which they are applied might differ (e.g. Swedish NGOs are more free from political pressure than some other donors), the practice of Diakonia or Forum Syd is very similar to those of most donors: they tend to select a grantee if the proposal fits in the donors' program – more on the basis of reputation of leader and his/her proven record, rather than on what the local NGO might actually have to offer. Although they are rightly cautious to take achievements measured by the NGOs for granted the practice to fall back on reputation and impressions for granting funds in fact hampers the selection of promising new initiatives.

New Partners

Forum Syd and Diakonia are very hesitant to accept a new and especially unknown entity in their partner groups. Forum Syd's former director said: "...the person of the grantee is crucial..." when talking about selection of a partner. Although he was referring to special cases where he did not find evidence that the NGO leader was trustworthy, like other donors, both Diakonia and Forum Syd have to limit their partnerships for reasons of available funding and for reasons of workload. For these reasons, as long as there is no reason to ouster a partner, newcomers will have great difficulty to become a partner. This is more the case when the applicant has not yet a proven record. These international NGOs acknowledge that this has the inevitable result that perhaps very promising initiatives and more sustainable local organisations do not get support from Swedish NGOs. Other donors tend to

³² See ECR report no. 39 for the formal criteria developed and practised by Diakonia or Forum Syd

³³ See Forum Syd's Annual Report Democracy Programme 1999, page 9.

follow a similar approach. This might explain the rather stagnant human rights & democracy NGO sector and a reluctance among the NGOs to change methodology or approach.

Despite the above mentioned constraining factors Forum Syd has sponsored some projects or activities that are no part of the partnership program. Diakonia on the other hand tend to restrict grants to its existing group of partners.

5.2.3 Technical Assistance

Expatriates recruited by the local NGOs – or placed by Volunteer Agencies – are sometimes called consultants and sometimes called advisors. These labels do not precisely explain their role. Some advisors are professional experts hired to do a particular job, while some consultants' role is to be advisors, and vice versa. In total, we found thirteen expatriates working at eight of the ten organisations. Four advisors were recruited and employed by the local NGO for a specific task. The others were mostly placed through Forum Syd. Those latter volunteers are fortunate to be backed by the extensive support program of Forum Syd; some of the others felt isolated without a support organisation. However, most expatriates working at human rights & democracy NGOs meet each other and maintain friendly relations that function to some degree as a back-up for their work.

Perceived Role

The attitude of employers and Cambodian colleagues towards the technical advisors and the appreciation of their work varies much – some ignore them and others regard them as respected colleagues. This is, of course, for a great part due to personal relationships. These can vary even in the same organisation. Technical advisors have not only an effect on the organisation using their technical skills, but also their ideas and facilitation of contacts with sponsors cause an effect. In some cases, staff felt that the advisors functioned as catalyst; in others they were seen as guardians limiting nepotism and autocratic behaviour. Perhaps not all leaders appreciated all their technical advisors as much as their staff did. Some local NGOs depend heavily on the consultant/advisor in matters of project design and monitoring, while other local NGOs underused their services. This might be due to a misunderstanding of the role of the advisor. For example, although one of the leaders was pleased with the contribution the advisors had made to his organisation, he could not be very specific about what they really did. He said: "...they worked with our staff. Ask them!"

Perceived Effect

We found that although leaders and staff of local NGOs appreciated work done by previous consultants/advisors, they could not often point out what the effect really was. We could not find documentation at the local NGOs that would indicate the work that was done by previous advisors. That made it difficult to assess the impact of their work. Although the information about advisors kept at Forum Syd is extensive, it is not a suitable source to assess efficiency and effect of the work done. The opinions of staff who worked with technical advisors might give an impression of their performance, but not about their impact. Overall, they perceived the role of the advisor as useful and his/her skills high. The appreciation of the staff who work with the advisors is best illustrated with what one staff said: "They are all *barang* ... They know a lot!"

It is unfortunate for this discourse that little information could be gathered about the real opinions held by personnel of local organisations about their relationships with advisors due to the ascribed seniority and status of foreign VIPs. However, what we gathered from staff showed respect, a good working relationship, and sometimes friendship.

Perceived Professional Quality

In the past, some placement agencies differed of opinion about the role and function of advisors with the leader of one NGO, and this dispute still lingers. This effected the relationship between these

donors and the NGO. However, despite the dispute the leader, like most NGO leaders, regards advisors as crucial elements in the process of institutional development. Those leaders perceive that the current generation of advisors combine professional experience and skills, and being able to transfer those skills to the staff. That seems not always to have been the case in the past.

Recruitment Criteria

Forum Syd's general procedure for placement of an advisor is that the local organisation makes a request for a certain job. Consequently Forum Syd selects among their candidates the most suitable person and forward the documentation to the NGO. If both parties agree on the suitability of the candidate Forum Syd starts with the recruitment process. Several leaders of local NGOs felt that some previously placed volunteers did not possess the skills and experience needed. However, the leaders' opinions about the performance and role of advisors in the organisation varied much. Friendship, professional experience, cultural sensitivity, and personality seem to be the main individual factors that define the degree of satisfaction. But it seems that perceived involvement in the selection process is another factor. Some leaders felt that without personal contact with the candidate prior to recruitment they could not really make a selection. However, despite some reservations, all these leaders admire the advisors for their motivation and willingness to come to Cambodia. But, if given a choice, they prefer recruiting the advisor or trainer directly through receiving a grant.

5.2.4 Interaction & Partner Meetings

None of the local NGOs reports problems with excessive influence by sponsors on approaches or activities, but some recall encouragement that might have been construed as influencing the NGOs' practices. Although some local NGOs resisted requests for changes made by donors, the 'your wish is my demand' attitude is a pattern found throughout most organisations, even when donors not intend to enforce the request. This pattern points to an obstacle in the relationship between donor and local NGO. Most sponsors prefer to call their grantees 'partners', but do not always grant the equality and equity that should accompany this condition. Like one local NGO director said: "...often we don't feel partner at all...[their requests are] unilateral obligations...". Expectations are high, but sponsors do not always give the means to accomplish those expectations – or the time is too short to do it properly, and it is the NGO that has to deliver, she explained. On the other hand, some donors complain about a lack of initiative from local NGOs: "...why do they not take advantage of this opportunity..." Perhaps those donors overlook the reality that the organisations deal with many sponsors, each with their own agenda and requirements.

Partners

Diakonia does not have an advisor program, but grant funds for organisations, projects/activities and capacity building. They operate through a system of partners who meet each other and Diakonia's representatives twice a year. Forum Syd follows a similar pattern to form groups of grantees. That way not only facilitates efficiency but also co-operation. One NGO director said: "...meeting with other grantees is important to exchange ideas...". However, in terms of decision-making, they are less positive. Another NGO director referred to the preliminary discussions about the evaluation itself: "...when we asked if we could refuse to participate [in the evaluation] they said 'no, there will be in any case an evaluation'. It was then that we lost commitment..."

A frustration reported by some participants of Forum Syd's partner group meetings where English is the working language was the abstract level of language used by some speakers. On the other hand some participants of Diakonia's partnership meetings where Khmer is the working language complained about the triviality of the discussions, or about speakers who held long discourses without offering much news. Senior staff instead of the leaders dominated partner group meetings without having a mandate to act on behalf of their local NGO. Diakonia's regional officer was aware about

this limitation, a reason to meet each head of the partner local NGO privately during her annual visit. It is a trend that predominantly senior staff on behalf of their NGO attends partner meetings, but both Forum Syd and Diakonia regard this as part of the participatory process to involve NGO staff. Both organisations said to have opportunities to meet the NGO's leadership individually.

5.2.5 Exchange of Experience

A third approach for development applied by Diakonia and Forum Syd, sometimes in combination (e.g. a recent trip to India), includes exchange of experiences, dialogue, training, practical tools/models transfer, and networking facilitation. Overall, local NGOs are happy to take part in the process of dialogue and exchange, but they do not view it as important as the other forms of assistance. A number of local NGOs participated in a program that included visits to projects in other countries. Some of the recently returned participants were very enthusiastic about this exchange and said they had seen many things they could apply in their own work. However, the dissemination of what they have learned might be curbed. Staff who had attended previously such exchanges or visited other projects were often not offered suitable opportunities to disseminate the new information (unless special arrangements had been made, e.g., during workshops or presentations). Now there is more attention for this requirement to make such arrangements, but it is not yet practice.

Dialogue & Tools

Some local NGO leaders feel that some donors go beyond their mandate when pushing for change, e.g. on gender or leadership style, because they disagree about the appropriateness of these strategies in the Cambodian context. However, we find that dialogue in the sense of exchange of ideas is the common denominator in all forms of 'exchange of experience, training, practical tools/models transfer, and networking facilitation'. Training and transfer of tools and models has taken place in the area of administration, finances and reporting, and to a limited extent in project monitoring. Because several organisations are active in this field, we could not directly link results to one of the Swedish donor-partners. Most local NGOs have made improvements in these fields with the help of one or another donor partner, but could not be very specific about who had done what. In general NGO staff does not apply during partner meetings gained knowledge, unless so directed by their management. For example, Forum Syd has introduced its partners to monitoring techniques but these are not yet become part of the implementation procedures. Diakonia has developed a tool with indicators to measure the level of democracy reached in any given country. This instrument was the topic of a partner meeting, but no local NGO has been instructed in its use and consequently it is not applied. Besides, the full version is rather complex for use at NGO level. The version adopted in a simpler form for this Evaluation could perhaps be used to measure progress regarding internal democracy in the future at the local NGOs by NGO staff (see ECR report 36).

Monitoring & Evaluation

Forum Syd reported that there was increasing attention given to issues of monitoring and evaluation. '[survey tools] show the LNGO understanding of the mechanisms required to assess their own work' (Forum Syd 2000 p. 9). However, despite these efforts in the area of monitoring and evaluation, the Evaluation shows that intended transfer of such skills did not take place as much as presumed, at least not in regard of the local NGOs. None of the results of testing or surveying done by any of the local NGOs was of sufficient quality or validity to be used for impact measurement.

5.2.6 Conclusion

Although donors in general have certain selection criteria, they tend to waive these for the most renowned human rights & democracy NGOs, in which case progress and impact is less taken into consideration. Other NGOs are not so favoured, and selection criteria are in these cases more strictly applied. Though both Diakonia and Forum Syd excel among the international donors, that support human

rights & democracy NGOs, in their selection and partnership practices they were (like the others) hampered in their decision-making by the lack of actual impact data or reliable information about NGO achievement.

Short-term funding prohibits the development of more-year plans and hampers the efficiency of the organisations. However, it seems that this sponsor-related structural problem can not be solved through a dialogue between local NGOs and sponsors. The donors need to address this problem with their own sponsors.

The NGO leaders perceive that professional skills of expatriate consultants/advisors have improved over the years, and local NGOs who enjoy this support appreciate it very much. Forum Syd advisors are appreciated for their motivation and skills, and local NGOs perceive that they contribute in various ways to the organisational development. However, at some local NGOs, the dependency on advisors has limited initiative and impeded staff development, especially in cases where staff workload hampers a transfer of skills. Although local NGOs are involved in the recruiting process, some NGO leaders feel that the lack of personal contact with the applicants limit validation of the most appropriate candidate. For this reason and for other practical reasons, they prefer the system whereby a local NGO does the recruitment and is the employer, while the donor sponsors the position.

The Donor-Partner group meetings arranged by Forum Syd or Diakonia in co-operation with their NGO partners are perceived by the NGOs as useful. However, it seems that Forum Syd's and Diakonia's staff seems to attach more value to and gain more benefit from these meetings than the local NGOs. Busy leaders of local NGOs often do not attend but prefer to delegate other staff to do so. Such replacement is not perceived by the sponsors as a problem, provided the delegated staff is mandated to speak on behalf of the NGO and is well prepared. This is not always the case.

Donors' selection criteria for support are based upon the effect and impact on the development of a civil society of the supported local NGOs, projects, or activities. Not only Forum Syd or Diakonia is pertinent in this view, but virtually all other donors we approached expressed this view. Most donors apply a similar method to Forum Syd's or Diakonia's to assess the eligibility of a local NGO for a grant. No systematic – and few professional assessments to measure the effects of the activities and its impact on civil society of the partners were carried out during the last five years (and likely not before). Therefore, sponsors, including Forum Syd and Diakonia, rely on other information about achievement and impact and impressions gained through field visits about the effect of the programs. In lieu of the lacking impact data they tend to place more value on financial and progress reporting, and on the existing relationship.

Both Forum Syd and Diakonia organise workshops and training sessions. They have organised exposure trips abroad to meet colleagues, and did sponsor staff to attend conferences and workshops in the country and abroad. Through partnership meetings, local NGOs are encouraged to exchange views and experiences. This is important because one lesson learnt through the participatory approach of this evaluation was that virtually no knowledge exists of how things are done at colleague organisations. They are ignorant of lessons learned. Indeed, information is shared to some extent, but colleagues are rarely offered an inside view. Similarly, learning through exposure – or training used to rarely reach colleagues at other NGOs and sometimes not even colleagues in their own organisation. But recent developments to make special arrangements for dissemination of information are an improvement.

6 Main conclusions & recommendations

In the co-operation and discussion between Forum Syd and Diakonia on one side, and the local NGOs on the other side, the issue of *legitimacy* is an important one. The leaders of the NGOs without exception consider their organisation to be an element in Cambodian's drive for a civil society. This implies that they should have a constituency that legitimises their existence and warrants their sustainability. However, none of the reviewed NGOs has a popular base or questions their own existence. It is thus a question of what role these NGOs play and what their relevance is in terms of achieving democratic governance in the country. It is also important to assess their effect and impact on society to establish if their approaches and methods need improvement.

The findings of the evaluation and the discussions with staff and management of the local NGOs has resulted in a number of recommendations for the group of NGOs to improve their work or change practices, listed below. All these recommendations were accepted by delegates of the ten local organisations, except for two – collaboration with opposition parties and merging provincial offices were rejected.

6.1 Role & relevance of human rights and democracy NGOs

The relevance of the human rights & democracy NGOs and their work is beyond doubt. Without the local human rights and democracy NGO sector as a whole and the 'sample of ten' in particular, certain aspects of democracy would not have been achieved. For example, the Press Law, the continuing process of the Khmer Rouge Tribunal, the relief for victims of human rights' abuses – or the awareness among a large proportion of the population about human rights.

The role of the organisations is in particularly crucial in the fields of advocacy, information dissemination, and monitoring of human rights' violations. The local NGOs view advocacy work as their most important strategy to achieve change – although many tend to use most of their resources for other work. However, their effect on society is hampered by adverse forces, and the need for such human rights & democracy NGOs will remain for a long time to come. Proper law enforcement and a fair judicial system are still distant goals. Elections are still marred by fraud and intimidation. People are still afraid to lose their recently gained prosperity to the powerful men that rule their lives.

Assistance to victims might be secondary to the overall aim of reaching a condition of *rule of law*, but it prepares the society for a democratic state of affairs. It supplies the information that advocates need to argue for changes. However, local NGOs are too often isolated in their efforts and they lack a *popular base* that could support their actions and keep them on track. Not much effort has been put in establishing such a popular base or in the development of genuine activists. Although human rights and democracy NGOs have demonstrated their persistence and endurance in the past ten years, without more and better organised popular support one might wonder if they would survive another decade.

We recommend the following:

1. Strengthen efforts to form a popular base and divert resources to this purpose.
2. Strengthen the advocacy work by making an institutional approach.

6.2 Effect & impact of human rights and democracy work

Human rights & democracy NGOs make the population and special groups aware of human rights through training, public forums and publications. They assist victims of human rights violations and monitor the conditions in prisons. The NGOs are instrumental for a change of government policies

and mentalities among state officials and civil servants. Their impact, however, is limited. They have had some input in the drafting of laws – the press law is an example. The advocacy work is mainly a responsibility of individual leaders and often not a genuine institutional program in local NGOs – except for the election observer coalitions that are focused on election laws.

6.2.1 Appropriate Approaches

Local NGOs have an impact on the population via their information channels (e.g. training courses, publications, and forums). They have increased knowledge and changed people's attitudes somewhat in respecting human rights and in enforcing law. Although the awareness training courses in the past achieved their objective to make a significant proportion of the population aware of their rights, it seems that this approach is less needed at the present time. The training programs aimed at special target groups to build their skills seem only to have achieved limited results (except for one training program aimed at empowering community members). Program link-ups with local trainers that address community issues appear to be the most successful.

The assistance to victims of human rights violations affects the victims and pushes the law enforcers and the judiciary to acknowledge these violations, but has little impact in terms of prosecution and sentencing of perpetrators who hide behind the protection of the state. However, the data generated through these programs are a basis for documents (such as the Impunity and Torture reports). These are valuable tools for the advocacy work.

Observers notice a change towards more accountability by the government, but the widespread awareness about human rights has not led to a widespread popular movement or other forms of broad activism. However, there are signs of a more active and restive population, such as the growing participation in political rallies and demands for improvement through demonstrations and strikes. Unfortunately, government officials (and also the media) perceive the advocates for change as individuals and not so much as representatives of institutions. This limits the effect their work may have.

6.2.2 Sustainability

None of the currently implemented programs or projects is developed on the basis of a comprehensive problem analysis that takes the current societal problems into account. This does not imply that most programs are inappropriate. It accounts for some activities to be not very effective, or less sustainable. This lack of a needs analysis or consensus about what problems and how problems need to be addressed might be due to the tendency among local NGOs to *design strategies and plan programs in isolation*, and a tendency to continue activities without serious reflection about appropriateness and effect.

An urge to maintain the organisation as a separate entity and the fear of losing identity might be another reason for the lack of close co-operation. Unfortunately, such limited co-operation hampers a sustainable approach – or at least limits the lasting effects of existing programs.

We recommend the following:

3. Base all strategic and programmatic planning on a comprehensive problem analysis and have it done in a *concerted* way with like-minded local NGOs.
4. Focus on addressing the main causes of societal problems.
5. Focus on advocacy as a main strategy to achieve rule of law and good governance; involve more staff in the design of strategies and actual implementation of advocacy activities in order to institutionalise the approaches.
6. Intensify studies, debates & publications to provide founded arguments for advocacy.
7. Review programs regularly to check for effect, appropriateness, and efficiency.

6.3 Organisational strengths and weaknesses

Although local organisations are not the most immediate and most important aspect in human rights and democracy work, they are strongly mandated to pursue rule of law and democratic government. They are instrumental in this. In this sense, it is important to examine their management structures, cultures, and resources.

6.3.1 Management Structure

A number of the local NGOs have a top management that is directing the organisation without much attention for staff participation, while others involve second and third tier managers in their decision-making processes, but encounter constraints to overcome cultural barriers which can result in confrontations. With a few exceptions, the leadership keeps a tight control over organisation. This results in efficient and effective management. This is at once a strength and a weakness; a tight management ensures stability and consistency but limits the development of activist-minded organisations. The local NGO staff performs generally well and achieves set objectives as far as possible under frequently difficult conditions. These staff members are mostly more loyal employees rather than motivated ‘activists’ – even in the case of the associative organisations where staff are members.

One major factor for such lack of driven activism might be restricted participation in the management aspects of the organisation. Many staff chose for a job in the human rights and democracy sector to sustain their livelihood. This was not because it was their vocation. However, a majority among the leaders are driven activists. One notices here and there that others follow their example.

All local NGOs have structures in place that provide staff with the mechanisms to influence decisions, although some are still under development. In that sense, some HR & Democracy NGOs are less developed than others but are gradually improving. It is the practice and not the lack of structure that often frustrates a democratic decision-making process. Three combined factors are at work: a) the ‘gatekeeper’ function of mid-level management that constricts a free flow of ideas between common staff and leadership; b) a tendency among staff not to be confrontational and not to express publicly differences of opinion with a leader’s views; c) a leadership that is not based upon democratic principles.

6.3.2 Functioning

While plans and strategies are used by all the organisations for achieving their objectives and mandates, often they are implemented without clear goals and outcomes. If clear goals and objectives do exist, the implementing staff is less aware of the implication for their work. In such cases, issues are addressed, but the reasons for doing the work or projects become lost. This effect in some cases inhibits functioning of the staff assigned to implement the tasks.

Subject to the frustrations caused by inability to influence decision-making, the internal functioning of the local NGOs varies from having few problems to being entirely problematic. Several NGOs have gone through traumatic changes. The healing process needs time.

Some local NGOs function less than optimally because of management failures, while some emerged stronger and learned through a crisis. However, in general terms, all local NGOs are functioning and performing their tasks as well as could be expected in the socio-political context of Cambodia. Unfortunately, this is not the case with most governing or supervising bodies, such as Board of Directors. They vary much in functioning and role. In fact, not many leaders are held genuinely accountable by such a body due to inactivity of the board members.

A small number of local NGOs have an adequate reporting system, while others fail to please all sponsors. The great variety in reporting formats and periods are a constraint for most local NGOs. On

most work levels, staff management skills are adequate for the given tasks. However, research, planning, and monitoring skills come up short – and not only among the lower level staff.

6.3.3 Resources

Most Staff of the local NGOs are loyal and capable to perform satisfactorily, but often are in need of continued capability building; especially when the changing circumstances demand new approaches and skills. Opportunities for such skill development are offered in varying degrees. Though subject to the NGO's policies, they are in general not high on the NGOs agenda. It is a trend that no staff career planning is effected. Yet some NGOs have such policies. This might be the reason why many local NGO staff indicated that they not get enough opportunity to enhance their potential. On the other hand, staff complains that too much training frustrates their work because no one is able to replace them.

A concern is the *lack of second generation leaders* within several organisations. Potential candidates are not always genuinely encouraged or given the chance to sharpen their leadership skills. Most human rights & democracy NGO staff don't have the same kind of 'drive' that their leaders possess; hence are not very motivated to become activists.

One aspect of the organisations, its financial resources, is essential for its continuation but also outside their direct control. And, in most cases, the funding situation does not per se reflect the performance and possible impact of the NGOs activities. Until recently, larger and well established local NGOs felt secure in being able to acquire the funding they needed, despite problems to demonstrate any actual impact from their activities. Yet change is in the air. Some leaders are now expressing a need for improved impact measurement and diversification of sponsors. Some NGOs are secure in their funding but still rely much on one sponsor. This makes them vulnerable, not only in terms of financial sustainability, but (unavoidably) also in their activity programming. A very few NGOs are in financial difficulty but seem to have sufficient 'esprit de corps' and will somehow find a way to continue.

6.3.4 Sustainability

The local NGOs have a sufficient institutional capacity to achieve their immediate objectives. However, when organisations specialise in a particular field, their results are more positive. Organisations create an overload of work if they try to address too many issues or co-ordinate many projects without the resources to do so efficiently. This results in problems for the morale of staff and the efficiency of the work. Despite this tendency, technical skills are well developed among the staff, although some work areas need further development, e.g. investigative skills.

Central offices are sufficiently equipped – though sometimes with old material, but provincial offices have often a lack of essential work or transport equipment. Administrative and financial procedures and systems are in place at most local NGOs, but in multifarious degrees of development.

There is a tendency among several local NGOs to withhold financial information from their staff. This might limit the ability for those staff to work more efficiently in their programs. Generally overall, local human rights and democracy NGOs are healthy. With proper support from abroad, they will be able to continue to function well.

We recommend the following:

8. Be clear about reasons for conducting activities through needs analyses.
9. *Organisations should be encouraged to limit projects and specialise in line with the motto, "Better to do a few things well, than many things badly".*
10. Develop further mechanisms for internal democracy and apply them consistently conform the Code of Ethics for NGOs.

11. Develop further the consultation process with staff and address the factors that curtail this process.
12. Create or develop further an active governing body (board or assembly) that has the ambition and means to hold the management and leadership accountable for their work and actions.
13. Assess staff training needs to improve staff capabilities as well as identifying their own strengths and skills, rather than taking on new staff.
14. Give staff opportunities in their own field of work to take initiatives for change and capability building.
15. Focus on the development of a second-generation leadership and develop/apply staff career-plans.
16. Focus on building a sense of *activism* among NGO staff that can serve as a model for average people. This would require giving more trust and responsibilities to staff.
17. Diversify sponsorship and find arguments for funding through proper impact measurements.

6.4 Local partnerships

Local NGOs tend to work together well on the implementation level for certain activities on a basis of need or for jointly publishing press statements. However, there is a lack of co-operation on the level of design of programs and planning of strategies.

Although at the provincial level staff and office resources are scarce, there is not much effort among local NGOs to join together in order to save resources, work more efficiently, and making ‘one fist’. Also, there are few efforts among NGOs to jointly organise training sessions for the staff, even if the kind of work is very similar.

NGOs recognise the need for creating databases to assist with their work and provide statistical data. However, they are reluctant to co-operate in this field. In terms of sustainability of their programs and organisations, further and deeper forms of co-operation need to be developed. This would strengthen their position towards the government.

We recommend these:

18. Focus on building strong lasting linkages between HR & Democracy NGOs for joint problem analysis, strategy development, capacity building, sharing branch offices and resources, and developing databases.
19. Jointly develop among local NGOs criteria for donor support and demand standardised formats and periods for reporting and other requirements.
20. Involve local NGO staff and donors in program planning and jointly design with NGOs appropriate strategies.
21. Find opportunities for joint work and training arrangements.

6.5 International partnerships

The co-operation between local NGOs and Donors is good. Most contacts that result in influencing decisions are of an individual nature and donors and local NGO heads tend to foster such contacts. However, this creates a kind of personal bond that excludes not only less well known heads of local NGOs from the circle of partners, but also emphasises the status of the local NGO head as fund raiser. A number of NGOs have established good relationships with international or regional networks or organisations that provide them with information and where they can solicit support. For some local NGO leaders, this is a fundamental strategy to gain support, while others depend more on locally based sponsor organisations.

6.5.1 Partnerships

One form of support is the partnership, a group of NGOs that receive financial and capacity building support from one particular donor and regularly meet to discuss their needs. This form of support is valued much by the participating local NGOs, though the discussions sometimes are perceived time-consuming. Forum Syd and Diakonia both have their own partnership groups. Some local NGOs take part in both and also sometimes in third partnership forms. The local NGOs perceive the partnership predominantly in terms of funding. In the case of Forum Syd, there are advisory services through the placed Advisors. Where it concerns sponsoring, both Swedish NGOs are not seen as much different from other international donors, although their partnership facilitates a good relationship.

Another form of support is through the placement or recruitment of advisors or professional consultants. Some local NGOs depend heavily on this expatriate support for their operations. The experiences with this form of support are, for most local NGOs, favourable. In the case of advisors placed through Forum Syd, most NGOs are not so aware of the continuing linkage with Forum Syd. In that sense the Forum Syd advisors are not perceived as different from other foreign advisors. However, the advisors themselves appreciate much the support they get from Forum Syd.

Another form of support is through a group of donors that sponsor one particular local NGO. This is a form that is valued by the one local NGO that benefits from it. It enables the donors to fund multi-year plans and limit reporting burdens for the local NGO.

6.5.2 Sustainability

Most local NGOs are unsure how they can achieve sustainability without this and other foreign support. They are financially fully dependent on those sources. A constraint and threat for survival is the tendency among donors to restrict their funding to one/two-year periods. Further, the individuality of local NGOs makes them vulnerable for counter-measures by the government. Their fear to be aligned with the opposition party limits joint actions with certain components of civil society, such as the labour unions. The result can be isolation. Lack of a solid popular base makes them even more vulnerable. The local NGOs function in society as a role model and are thus very vulnerable to government accusations if their own structures restrict internal consultation.

We recommend the following:

22. Thoroughly analyse and evaluate every project, programme, and section by the organisations themselves. This process should identify the strengths of the organisation and also areas where improvements can be made. It is imperative that the organisations set their own goals and time frames and be motivated toward this end. Assistance from international donors will be necessary to ensure that the organisations possess the necessary resources, tools, and skills to accomplish the process properly.
23. Establish an ongoing project that aims to assist local NGOs in the internal evaluation process through professional assistance. Current donors might consider joining forces and finances to finance such a project.
24. Encourage local NGOs to open up discussions among themselves and with donors about the above-mentioned evaluation process.
25. Conduct an ongoing assessment of the collective achievements of human rights & democracy NGOs so that the impact of their work on Cambodian society can be monitored, adjustments can be made, and trends documented.
26. Focus on a group of donors instead of individual donors to support local NGOs financially (Perhaps local NGOs joining together can better achieve objectives.)

27. Aim more efforts at developing local constituencies at the grass-roots level by cultivating beneficiaries, readers of human rights & democracy magazines, attendants at forums, and creating or extending activist groups.
28. Review opportunities to work together with other HR & Democracy NGOs and other elements of civil society such as unions, NGOs of the community development sector – or even opposition parties if the common goals are the same.
29. Review internal democratic structures and culture to improve the consultation process in the organisation in order to increase motivation of staff, to facilitate the grooming of second generation leaders, and to play a role model for government institutions and local partners.

6.6 Recommendations to sida for improved donor support

The above list of recommendations concerns mostly the local NGOs themselves or their immediate donor partners. However, on a more general level and for the human rights and democracy sector as a whole donor support might be improved. Although Sida's democracy program implemented through Forum Syd and Diakonia is perceived by recipients as overall adequate and constructive the international agencies are aware that the program could be improved. This was one of the reasons to commission the Evaluation.

6.6.1 Individual Support

For lack of a comprehensive situation analysis and an integrated Plan of Action for the democracy sector as a whole the assistance through the democracy program is given to individual NGOs that are selected for their performance and achievement. Some exposure visits abroad, the partner meeting and capacity building activities or perhaps the support to the election observer coalitions can be regarded a collective form of support. However, most support is not provided in a collective form due to the isolated nature of most NGOs' work approaches. The donors are correct to be cautious not to impose their own vision on the NGOs and to prefer that changes and co-operation develop from within the sector. However, the human rights and democracy NGO sector is in need of support to work more progressively and adequately. The donors are in the right position to assist the NGOs to overcome their petty limitations.

Sida's democracy program implemented through Forum Syd and Diakonia has the potential to guide the local human rights and democracy organisations towards improved professionalism and strengthened collaboration. Sida, Forum Syd and Diakonia could function as the *mehkeyol* (temporary leader) to lead the local NGOs through the jungle and minefields towards democratic governance in Cambodia. But like expected from a *mehkeyol* the agencies should take the lead and know the way. Standing beside the road and crying out directions will not do.

6.6.2 Advocacy a Priority

The human rights and democracy sector need to strengthen their advocacy work in order to achieve the ultimate goal. This can be done through involving more staff and resources in the advocacy work, thus institutionalise advocacy and increase activism. The fact that the government regards 'activists' a threat is not a reason to avoid becoming activist – such self-censure is detrimental to achieving democratic governance. It is the challenge for the NGOs to show courage while staying within the framework of the law and to convince the government that activists are a good element of civil society.

6.6.3 Situation Analysis and Plan of Action

The NGOs are in need of a profound and by professionals conducted situation analysis to base their plans of action on. This situation analysis should not only 'chart the waters' but point out which approaches would likely be most effective and what gaps need to be filled to achieve democratic gov-

ernance. Consequently, the NGOs should be guided to develop a sector Plan of Action with for each individual NGO a specific role to play and activity to implement. This will be not an easy process but with support and direction from donors it might be feasible.

6.6.4 Support Conditional to Progress

The above mentioned approach would be facilitated when donors would make their support conditional to progress – conform the bilateral support through ICORC. These conditions should not be regarded as an interference in internal matters; a concerted approach is more effective but only when the majority joints. The fact that the delegates of the NGOs supported strongly the recommendation to develop a ‘concerted’ approach is encouraging to pursue the matter further.

Financial support should therefore be given when there are signs that NGOs aim to meet the following conditions:

- Improvement of the internal democracy – not only structures but the practice;
- Adoption of sustainable management styles – sincere delegation of tasks and responsibilities, development of second-generation leadership;
- Strengthening of the popular support base – increase decentralisation, promote involvement and activism;
- Introduce monitoring systems to measure impact – develop M&E plans, train staff and conduct program assessments.

6.6.5 Recommendations for Sida

The local NGOs need the assistance and active guidance of the donors to accomplish this. In order to enable the NGOs to comply with the conditions and to reach their aims Sida, Forum Syd, Diakonia and others should commit themselves to the following recommendations:

- I. Carry out a profound *situation analysis* to map-out the human rights and democracy work conditions and needs, and conduct special studies to assess aspects of the human rights and democracy situation that are still little understood. The analysis should make global and regional comparisons and draw from similar studies conducted elsewhere to provide a regional and global context.
- II. Continue and institutionalise the *NGO Planning & Co-operation workshops* and assist NGOs in the preparation of a comprehensive sector Plan of Action. Alternatively groups of two or three co-operating NGOs should be given funds and guidance to organise each in its turn one of such workshops, building further on previous ones. The workshops should become a forum for NGO staff to discuss and develop sector-related approaches, plans and methods – preferably at least two times a year.
- III. Provide *special funds* to build and maintain a popular base and promote popular involvement and activism. Because this form of involvement of common people is not well understood or practised but essential for the strengthening of the sector the donors should not only provide special funds but assist in the development of the approaches and methods as well.
- IV. Appoint a *Management Consultant* to assist local NGOs in a ‘roving’ capacity and ‘on call’ to improve administrative and management procedures and practices. Most local NGOs, and in particular the senior staff is in constant need for technical support in administrative and management matters. The ‘on call’ availability of a consultant when need arises would offer cost-effective support.
- V. Increase the number of *scholarships* for potential second-generation leaders. Some NGO staff have the potential to grow into leaders of their organisation but need financial support for their families and studies.

VI. Set-up a *M&E Project Implementation Unit* to develop, install and maintain impact monitoring and evaluation systems at the local NGOs, including staff capacity building and development of national indicators to measure progress in terms of democratic governance. The Evaluation has clearly demonstrated the lack of capacity among local NGOs to assess the impact of their activities. Most programs, including the larger and well-performing ones, do not have a M&E plan with clear indicators and means for verification. Such M&E plans need to be designed, staff should be trained for the implementation and organisations need to be prepared to discuss the results. Because M&E is a rather technical process that requires the input from professionals and virtually all NGOs are in need of such services the set-up of a project unit that would service the sector seems most cost-effective. The funding would need to come from outside, preferably from donors that already support the local NGOs. However, the PIU could also conduct external evaluations commissioned by donors and in this manner reduce the extra costs.

Annex 1 Lessons learnt

The 13-person strong Team was composed of a professional core and local NGO staff. The Core Team consisted of national and expatriate professionals with extensive experience in project and organisational evaluations in Cambodia. Although none of the NGO Evaluators had extensive evaluation experience they each occupied a senior position at their organisation. The combination guaranteed an unbiased and result-oriented approach. However, this did not prohibit the members of the team from making mistakes or compensated in full for some flaws in approach and methodology. There are surely lessons to be learned and improvements to be made for a next time. The Lessons Learnt can be grouped into 1) Preparation; 2) Participatory process; 3) Methodology; and 4) Review and Reporting.

1 Design & preparation

1.1 TOR Design

Although it was the intention that the Terms of Reference would be designed in collaboration with sponsors and local NGOs, the latter did not provide much input. The first draft, prepared by Sida, was amended through a series of email messages between donors and local organisations – however, the input from local NGOs was minimal. Besides the unfamiliarity with the email ‘discussion’ mode it might be that input was minimal because NGOs did not realise that the first TOR was meant to be a discussion paper, and that the approach and process were still open for modification. A better information ‘campaign’ and some face-to-face partner meetings prior to the TOR workshop might have increased the NGO input.

1.2 NGOs Little Experience with Evaluations

Most human rights & democracy NGOs had no previous experience with external evaluations of this kind, and misunderstanding about the nature of the evaluation has, at some organisations, frustrated dialogue. Fortunately, the Team was able to mend this in the course of the evaluation. We have learned from this that a more profound discussion about the approaches and methods of the evaluation with the leadership would likely have resulted in a more constructive dialogue, although we do not have the illusion that frustrations always could have been avoided.

1.3 Core Team Recruitment

The local NGOs were not involved in or informed about the recruitment procedure or candidates, prior to the TOR workshop. This was not intentional – it was simply overlooked. Involvement of NGOs in this process would likely not have effected the selection, but might have facilitated the Evaluation. Further, the assignment of team members to conduct missions at specified local NGOs was not discussed with the concerned organisations. Two NGOs informed the Team Leader about their objection to the Mission Leader – unfortunately, after the completion of the missions. As a consequence, to avoid any possible bias, these two mission reports were co-authored by the Team Leader. A procedure for involving the NGOs also in mission assignments would have been better, although this likely would not have resulted in many re-assignments. Besides, the local NGOs let the Team know at several occasions that the participation in the Evaluation put a heavy burden on their time and attention.

1.4 NGO Evaluator Selection

The participating NGOs were at an early stage requested to select from their staff the NGO Evaluator conform a set of criteria. Unfortunately, at the inception of the Evaluation a number of NGOs had not yet made their selection or withdraw their original candidate, and some candidates did not fit in

the profile. Further, most NGO Evaluators did not volunteer, but were assigned for the task. This effected negatively the participatory and evaluation process. It might have been better to reject candidates without the required qualifications and accept only volunteers. Further, the NGOs were financially compensated for the time their Evaluators spend with the Team. However, despite formal consultant contracts many NGO Evaluators were still expected by their superiors to attend staff meetings or work for the NGO. The double burden of some NGO Evaluators clearly effected their evaluation work. It was the intention of the contractual agreement to avoid this problem, but under the given circumstances full adherence to the contract could not be enforced.

1.5 Longer Preparatory Phase

The preparation period was one month between signing contract and the first field missions. During this time an office needed to be set-up, recruitment of Core and NGO Evaluators realised, local NGOs contacted for scheduling, evaluation procedures and protocols developed and NGO Evaluators trained. Although with the excellent co-operation of all parties involved these tasks could be completed within time a longer preparation period would have resulted in a better-prepared Team and better-oriented local NGOs.

2 Participatory process

2.1 Confidentiality

The Evaluation Team included senior staff of each participating NGO. The internal process of in-depth review and frank deliberations about findings required all local NGO staff to retain a high level of confidentiality. However, not all staff could withstand the pressures placed upon them by their organisations and colleagues, and violated to some degree the ‘code of confidentiality’. We learned about this early in the Evaluation and attuned our procedures to avoid leaks. However, the problem can not be solved entirely without limiting the participatory approach.

2.2 Adverse Effect

Most NGO Evaluators could participate in the Team without ‘peer’ pressure, although some felt uncomfortable when inside information was discussed during meetings. They clearly were concerned about the impression their colleagues would get about their functioning in the Team. Two NGO Evaluators experienced problems with their superiors for perceived disclosure of ‘company’ secrets. Unfortunately, this led in one extreme case to a forced resignation. We have learned that such problems, caused by tendencies of the colleagues or superiors of the NGO Evaluators to hide perceived shortcomings, are inevitable. The process of participatory evaluation requires that all participants are sincere and accept negative results as well as positive results. However, a more profound preparation of the local NGOs about the participatory approach of the Evaluation could likely have reduced the problems. On the other hand, in view of the inexperience with the nature of evaluations, the NGO participation had perhaps better be restricted to a profound consultation process without actual involvement during the field visits.

2.3 Learning Element

The participatory approach of the Evaluation had two purposes. One purpose was to enable the organisations to take part in the decision-making process. The other purpose was to offer their participating staff a learning opportunity. This was successful for the review and discussion aspects but not all NGO Evaluators could benefit sufficiently from the methodology training and experience for lack of basic skills. A more strictly adherence to the initial selection criteria or increased training would have benefited both the NGO staff and Evaluation.

3 Methodology & professionalism

3.1 Learning versus Experience

From the outset the learning purpose of the participatory approach was expected to off-set to some extent the quality of the Evaluation. This was indeed the case during the analysis and reporting stages, but also during the fieldwork stage. We have learned that involving inexperienced people not only results in unnecessary detailed data, but also of a focus on phenomena that they experience in their own work environment. This is one explanation for an emphasis on the internal functioning and decision-making aspects during the first field missions³⁴. We have learned that not only methodological training is needed to prepare local NGO staff to participate in the Evaluation (a 3-day instruction was provided by the project). A better understanding of the ultimate aims of the process is also needed. We became aware of this during the Evaluation with the result that the second phase field missions not only benefited from gained experience during previous missions, but they focused more on data that gave better insight into patterns and trends. Despite all this, we learned (as we had expected) that the participatory approach is limiting for a professional process of data collection.

3.2 Methods & Techniques

The methods chosen for the Evaluation are rather standard and traditional – this was fortunate because none of the Cambodian members of the Team were very experienced in special methods or techniques. Besides, it was obvious that even the traditional methods were viewed suspiciously by a number of organisations. One of these techniques was a questionnaire survey among field staff to obtain their opinions about a number of issues. A special system with ballot boxes was designed to assure confidentiality. However, at one NGO the envelopes containing the questionnaire forms were opened and at another NGO names of the respondents were written on the forms – although the survey was anonymous. It was therefore obvious that in some cases staff were ‘controlled’ and that the trustworthiness of their answers might be questionable. However, this system was the most feasible method to obtain information from staff at all levels and locations. The response was overall high and the information revealing. There were several examples of misunderstanding of techniques applied during the Evaluation. However, under the given circumstances we would not change much in the application of the methods and techniques.

3.3 Team Reviews

At team discussions concerning their own organisation the NGO Evaluator was requested to confirm findings or point at flaws or misunderstandings, but not to disclose inside information. However, quite often they provided voluntarily explanations – and thus insight that otherwise not easy would have been perceived. We learned that the review and discussion aspects of the participatory approach is most useful and valuable while the data collection itself better could have been left to professionals.

4 Review & reporting

In the TOR and contract three reviewers are assigned to review the final evaluation reports. From the outset it was arranged to limit review of the mission reports to the organisations themselves during feedback workshops and consequent discussions. The mission reports were thus considered as working papers and not means to be published. However, although kept confidential and only distributed to the commissioning agencies some parts of the content of the reports became known outside the intended circle. This was one reason to upgrade the working papers into evaluation reports. The other reason

³⁴ The other explanation is that within the organisations staff was most interested to discuss the issue of internal functioning and decision-making while they were less interested to discuss the impact of the work done (partly because they do not have much information about this).

was the request from some NGOs for such upgrading and distribution of the reports. In hindsight it was an oversight of the Evaluation design and the Team Leader not to have foreseen this problem. Although all ten working papers are upgraded to evaluation reports this was a very time consuming process not anticipated. Further, our request to review subsequent upgraded drafts of the mission reports was not by all NGOs received with gratitude. Indeed, it had been better if this had been anticipated and a proper procedure and time plan could have been made.

Prior to the review of the final report an extensive outline and report structure was sent to the three reviewers for comment. The intention was to facilitate the review process and to assure that the final report would satisfy the reviewers. This did only function in part because the three reviewers (each representing one Swedish organisation) were not fully in agreement about the content and presentation of the final report. During a discussion following the first review all parties acknowledged that this represented a problem. Consequently, it was agreed that comments would be directed to the Sida reviewer to compile one comment paper. This procedure facilitated to process satisfactory for all parties involved.

5 Lessons learnt

Here we list the major lessons learnt. To improve the whole exercise it is needed to:

5.1 Preparation

- a) Improve process and procedures to involve the local NGOs in TOR design.
- b) Increase discussions prior to the evaluation about purpose and methodology.
- c) Include only volunteering NGO staff with the correct qualifications and enforce the consultant contractual agreement.
- d) Increase the preparatory period and include ample training opportunities.
- e) Include a professional translator in the Team.

5.2 Participation & Methodology

- f) Limit involvement of NGO Evaluators in the field data collection – instead increase consultation of NGO staff during analysis and review discussions. Involve Core- and NGO-Evaluators more in the final analyses and report preparations.
- g) Spread the evaluation work over a longer period, to allow more time for preparation & recruitment of female staff, for reviews, to give more attention to address sensitive issues (peer pressure) and for deeper analysis of working documents.
- h) Include follow-up planning workshops in evaluation plan.
- i) Conduct impact studies prior to field missions.
- j) Mission reports should be drafted in Khmer language to facilitate understanding by NGO staff.

5.3 Review & Reporting

- k) Define the status of field mission reports in the TOR. If these field reports are drafted in English language they should be published.
- l) Arrange that the report reviewers will reach consensus prior to forwarding their comments, suggestions and critics.

Annex 2 Terms of Reference

(Draft 3 - 3 April 2000)

1. Introduction

Forum Syd and Diakonia, two Swedish non-governmental organisations (NGOs), have provided support to local NGOs in Cambodia since 1993. Initially, the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency, Sida, extended funding to these programmes through so-called 20/80 cooperation, i.e. Diakonia and Forum Syd themselves mobilising 20 percent of the total programme budget, and Sida the remaining 80 percent.

More recently, in 1998, programmes giving special democracy/human rights support to a number of Cambodian NGOs were developed by Diakonia and Forum Syd, in cooperation with Sida. These are funded entirely by the Swedish Government (Sida). At present such democracy/human rights support is extended to 14 local NGOs by Forum Syd, and to seven NGOs by Diakonia.

This support has contributed to the impressive expansion of NGO activity in Cambodia's civil society over the recent period, which has been crucial for the on-going democratisation process. Even if this support has not been active for very long, it is considered appropriate to 'take stock' and learn what impact there is to find from the NGO activities, and what forms of cooperation between Sida, Diakonia and Forum Syd and the NGOs seem to be most worthwhile.

2. Background

The following brief account of the eight NGOs supported by Diakonia and Forum Syd is intended to give an overview understanding of the main profile, objectives and methods of the NGO. This brief presentation will also give information on the start year for the NGO, total staff and budget, and finally amount and content of Diakonia/Forum Syd support as well as other funding sources.

2.1 NGOs supported by Diakonia

LICADHO

Since 1992 LICADHO carries out investigations, documentation and dissemination of violations of human rights in Cambodia. Besides the head office in Phnom Penh, 16 provincial offices have been established, employing a total of 120 people. Activities are implemented by five departments: education & training, investigation & legal aid, medical assistance, children's rights and women's rights. The target groups of LICADHO are primarily victims of human rights violations, police, prison officials & staff, civil servants, students and monks. Training is aimed at these groups as well as the general public especially in the rural areas. In 1999-2000 Sida/Diakonia contribute SEK 1 250 000 (some 10% of total budget). Forum Syd has supported LICADHO since 1996 with advisors, i.e. 250 000 SEK per advisor and year. The total amount adds up to 1.875.000 SEK.

Center for Social Development (CSD)

CSD is active since 1995 in strengthening democratic values and help improving living standards for Cambodians. The Centre, with 18 employees, tries through training and advocacy work to expose especially issues of corruption (has e.g. started a Transparency Task Force, TTF) and stimulate public debate on socio-political issues (i.e. through its so-called National Issues Forum). Main target groups are civil servants, school children, women, low income-earners, people in rural areas, NGOs, the media,

but also the general public as such. CSD also contributes to the elections processes through participating in the NGO network COFFEL (see below). Sida/Diakonia contribute SEK 765 000 during 1999–2000, some 20 percent of its total budget. A Forum Syd advisor has recently started at CSD.

Khmer Institute for Democracy (KID)

KID was founded in 1992 to provide long-term support to the democratisation of Cambodia, and consists today of 22 staff. Its target groups are civil servants, students, teachers, politicians, and the general public. KID does not have any offices outside Phnom Penh, and works instead through other NGO partners in the rural provinces. The programme for 1999–2000 gives some focus to establishing an unofficial ombudsman system called 'citizen's advisor system', with a view to strengthen ordinary people's access to public services and justice through the justice system. KID also organises seminars, TV/radio programmes, and publishes a "Guide to Popular Participation and Local Democracy", whereby it is hoped to affect and enhance popular participation in Cambodian society. KID is also a member of the COFFEL election work. Swedish assistance during 1999–2000 through Sida/Diakonia amounts to SEK 680 000.

Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)

ADHOC is one of the earliest human rights organisations founded in Cambodia in 1992. ADHOC works in 16 provinces through four programmes: Education – human rights training for government officials, police, military and general public, monitoring – monitors human rights abuses and file complaints, women – focus on special training on women's rights and other women related programmes, advocacy – supports advocacy and lobbying activities both in Cambodia and internationally. ADHOC is actively engaged in promoting free and fair elections through their involvement with COMFREL. In 1999–2000, Sida/Diakonia contribute SEK 344,000, which is 7% of the budget.

2.2 NGOs supported by Forum Syd:

The Coalition for Free and Fair Elections (COFFEL)

COFFEL consists of 68 local NGOs collaborating to promote free and fair Cambodian elections. The Coalition has offices and coordinators in 11 provinces, but it plans to cover all the country's 23 provinces. The objective of COFFEL's participation in the local elections, planned for late 2000 or early 2001, is to carry out voter education for 80 000 people, and to train 15 000 election observers, who will monitor each step of the election, from the voter registration to counting of votes. It also plans to monitor the post election process, including the handling of complaints and the appointments of political positions, and to assess the actual policies adopted by central and local levels. Forum Syd/Sida's support to COFFEL in 1999–2000 amounts to SEK 1,2 million.

Cambodian Institute for Human Rights (CIHR)

Since 1993 CIHR carries out human rights education throughout Cambodia. Somewhat different from most other Cambodian HR organisations, CIHR does not involve itself with monitoring and reporting of violations of human rights. The CIHR programme for 1999–2000 consists of four main parts: HR education through the formal school system of Cambodia; training of civil servants in good governance; campaigning for 'culture of peace'; and media production on HR topics, through TV, radio, video, etc. CIHR is a new partner to Forum Syd since 1999, the Swedish support amounts to SEK 1 000 000 for 1999–2000.

Women for Prosperity (WFP)

WFP was started in 1994 to contribute to more influence and gender equality for the women of Cambodia, both economically to support the livelihood of their families, and politically/socially. Their work in 1999–2000 is supported by Forum Syd and Sida to promote democracy education in general and education of women in particular, to increase women's public advocacy on gender issues as well as

their participation in leadership. Key target groups are women in decision-making positions, especially on the level of vice provincial governors, provincial chiefs, commune leaders, chiefs of school districts and NGOs. The Swedish contribution is SEK 500 000 for 1999–2000.

Khmer Women's Voice Centre (KWVC)

As a concrete result of the 'National Women's Summit' in 1993, the KWVC was founded at the end of that year, as an initiative to make women and girls more conscious of their rights and gender equality. Through investigations, seminars, direct lobbying and leadership training, KWVC wants to generate public debate supporting society's equal opportunities for women in education, health care, and full legal protection. Forum Syd/Sida contributes SEK 340 000 to KWVC's activities in 1999–2000.

3. Purpose of the evaluations

It can be argued that Cambodia has now entered a phase of consolidation of democratic governance and rule of law. While local NGOs will be as important as ever for claiming human rights and deepening the democratic development, their methods and approaches must be reviewed.

Civil society plays a key role in the consolidation of democracy, but the ways to promote its sustainable vitality and constructive role are not evident. Some of the key issues to consider are the organisational development of NGOs, their internal strengths and weaknesses in terms of competence and democratic decision-making, their working methods vis-à-vis the state administration or civil society partners, long-term funding of activities including the problem of dependence on external donors and the impacts of the local NGOs activities.

This evaluation aims to look into some of those issues by evaluating a few of Diakonia's and Forum Syd's partnerships as part of their democracy & human rights programmes. For Sida, the aim is to learn more about and the impacts of the local NGOs activities as well as the sustainability of the local NGOs work. The conclusions will be important input into Sida's future strategy for democracy and human rights support in Cambodia's civil society³⁵.

For the NGOs involved, the evaluation will be an occasion to mobilise staff and members for reflection on the strategies chosen so far, based on the findings that will come out from the evaluation. It is, therefore, essential that the evaluation be understood as an opportunity for *learning*. It will be carried out based on the participatory approach, involving one representative from each concerned NGO in the evaluation teams, as well as discussions with parts of the NGO management, staff and membership throughout the evaluation process.

- The purpose is to attain a deeper understanding of the *relevance, effectiveness, impact and sustainability* of the Cambodian NGOs' activities, and their *organisational strengths/weaknesses*, in contributing to democratisation and respect for human rights in Cambodia in the long term. With a special emphasis on impact and relevance i.e. the impact and relevance of the organisations activities.
- Secondly, the purpose is also to learn *what roles the Swedish NGOs have played*, in terms of funding of activities and equipment, moral support, technical advice, net-working or other contributions, and what *forms and methods for international cooperation* can be recommended for the future.
- Thirdly, the evaluation should hopefully contribute to *more conscious and systematic reflection* within the concerned NGOs about the issues raised, possibly leading to the adoption of new approaches to organisational learning.

³⁵ Sweden will formulate a new country strategy for cooperation with Cambodia in 2001, to come into effect from 1 January 2002.

4. The assignment

4.1 Scope of the evaluation

Although the special Swedish democracy/human rights support was started in 1998, the evaluations should take an earlier date as point of departure for their observations and analyses, especially where Diakonia's or Forum Syd's so-called 20/80 support was started before. Years to be covered are from 1995 until June 2000.

4.2 Issues to be studied

- *Relevance*

Relevance says something about the appropriateness of the NGO objective vis-à-vis the democracy/human rights problems the NGO (and Diakonia, Forum Syd and Sida) has identified as most important to solve. The objectives can be relevant although it is difficult to demonstrate any impact (improvement in behaviour, attitudes, etc) so far; there could be many reasons why the NGO's work did not lead to any impact in the short term. The socio-political and institutional environment is necessary to understand, to be able to assess where the most relevant activities will be placed in the future. Maybe the NGO should change focus (e.g. new target group) or supplement today's strategy with an additional target group or objective, to improve the likelihood that real impact will be achieved?

- *Impact*

The issue of *impact* is concerned with how reality has actually changed as a result of the NGO's activities, and in what ways the problems have been demonstrably improved.

- *Effectiveness*

Effectiveness relates to how the NGO has actually done to address the identified problems. It can be analysed both regarding the *internal effectiveness* and *external effectiveness*. Regarding internal effectiveness, see also the issues under 'organisational development'

- *Roles of the NGO*

What is the *role* of the NGO? The analysis of the NGO's role, or roles, could be made along several categories³⁶, and a number of questions can be asked to assess the stated and/or actual role of each NGO:

- What have been the most prominent role characteristics of the NGO?
- To what extent were these roles chosen consciously, why, and how have they changed over the past 5 years?
- Assess the NGO's roles in relation to the issues of relevance, effectiveness and impact.

- *Sustainability*

Sustainability concerns the preconditions for sustainable work towards democracy and human rights in Cambodia. It relates mostly to the factors determining the local NGOs' possibility to perform in a long-term perspective. It has an economic dimension, it includes the role and relevance of the NGO in the future, and, not least, it is related to the acceptance and legitimacy of the NGO in the eyes of its interest groups, general public and the state.

³⁶ Such as e.g. '*watchdog*', taking a critical stand towards the state on certain issues; '*lobbyist*', acting more closely with the state administration to influence decision-making; '*media*', providing information to the Cambodian public on important issues; '*representation*', acting on behalf of certain groups in society; '*capacity support*', acting to strengthen certain groups' voice and capacity in society; '*policy analyst*', trying to affect/correct decision-making through socio-political analysis and dissemination to strengthen democratic governance or activism.

- *Organisational development*

It can perhaps be assumed that the *organisational development* of the local NGO goes hand in hand with its sustainable performance in Cambodia's civil society. 'Organisational development' is here understood in terms of development both of the internal workings (system for planning, decision-making, implementation, training, economy, etc.) and the external relations and responsiveness to partner NGOs, interest groups, the public and state actors.

- *The roles of Diakonia and Forum Syd as donors and partners*

The evaluation shall also assess and evaluate *the relationships between the eight NGOs and Diakonia and Forum Syd*. Presently, the support from the Swedish organisations takes a number of forms, to varying degrees in the respective cooperations, but in particular:

- (i) budget support
- (ii) advisor expertise
- (iii) exchange experience
- (iv) dialogue
- (v) training
- (vi) practical tools/models transfer
- (vii) networking facilitation

It is important to see how these affect the NGO, and discuss on the one hand what can be done better, and on the other what additional methods of cooperation might be of benefit to the Cambodian partner. Questions should be asked along the same dimensions as above, i.e. *relevance, effectiveness, impact, sustainability and organisational development*.

5. Methodology

5.1 Methodology

The evaluations shall be guided by a participatory approach to maximise the learning generated by reflection within each organisation involved.

As part of the preparations, the local NGOs should gather relevant studies and evaluations made of its organisation and programme, as study material for the evaluators. The two evaluation teams will have to spend a few days at the beginning of the respective evaluations, reading and discussing the material available. The choice of methodology will be defined by the evaluation team in consultation with the different NGOs. Methods to be used could be case study, participatory observations, surveys and comparing NGOs.

The evaluators shall make field visits to a few selected provinces where NGOs have offices and/or activities and interest groups. Authorities in those provinces – on province, district and commune level – should be included among interviewees even where they are not direct target/interest groups, in order to be able to assess the impact of NGO activities on the attitude and behaviour of state actors and administrators.

The eight NGOs has been divided into to two groups;

- Group 1. Licadho, Adhoc, WFP and KWVC.
- Group 2. KID, CSD, CIHR and COFFEL.

This division is an attempt to group those organisations that work in similar way and that has the same target groups (i.e. the grassroots or government officials).

The first group is more directly aimed and involved with the grassroots level while the second group operates more like a learning institute and provide training courses. However, it should be acknowledge that this division arbitrary. The main reason for this division is of a practical nature. The evaluation team is not able to organise properly an evaluation among eight organisations at the same time or to manage a very large team. Another reason for this is that there will then be opportunities during the two evaluation stages to compare the ways the local NGOs have chosen to work.

The evaluation will be undertaken in three stages.

Stage 1. Team training and fact finding of the organisations in group 1.

Stage 2. Team training and fact finding of the organisations in group 2.

The training includes reading gathered material and to discuss the whole valuation process, scopes and issues to be addressed. The evaluation team meets with the review committee, i.e. Diakonia, Forum Syd and Sida, and with staff and management of the four selected NGOs, to discuss/analyse the findings soon after completion of field work for each stage. The team leader with input from the team will thereafter write a group report about the four NGOs as one group. The report will be prepared in such a fashion that specifics of each NGO will be identifiable, and recommendations will be specific if appropriate. The two “group” reports will be aimed mainly to provide facts and findings, including comparisons between the organisations if appropriate. A more abstract analysis will take place in the third stage and resulting report. Prior to the fieldwork the Team will draft a report outline in consultation with the review committee and NGO representatives. This outline will need approval from the review committee. The outline will guide both the fieldwork and the report preparation.

Stage 3. The core team will draw more overall conclusions from the two group evaluations on the basis of the analysis and reports, and other relevant studies, and prepare a Study Report. This study report shall also present recommendations and lessons learned. The study report should also include a very brief assessment of the evaluation process as such. Which were the advantages and disadvantages of the participatory evaluation model used? Which lessons were learned and how could they be used when future evaluations are designed?

To lessen the burden for the Team and strengthen the part of the evaluation that concerns the organisational development Sida considers commissioning a Case Study to an additional external consultant. It shall be seen as a complementary component to the overall Evaluation. Although the external consultant will work independently and be fully responsible for the output and quality of work s/he will work as part of the Team under supervision by the Team Leader in order to assure the most appropriate use and timing of the case study. The Team Leader in consultation with other Core Team Members and the Review Committee will prepare a separate ToR.

Previously two capacity studies were made for Forum Syd and Diakonia respectively in Swedish language. To facilitate the Evaluation the ToR for the Case study will include the translation of relevant parts of these reports in English language.

6. Timing

The evaluation including writing and review of the three reports will be carried out in the period commencing in April with reading and other preparations, and field work starting 24 of April until the 15 of September.

7. Evaluation (team members)

This participatory evaluation will be carried out by four external consultants who will form the core during the full length of the evaluation and eight evaluators from the concerned NGO. The eight NGO representatives will be divided into two groups of four persons who will evaluate one group of NGO each. Thus, during each stage each team will consist of four external consultants and four NGO representatives.

The core team will be composed of Mr John Vijghen as team leader, Ms Thida Khus, [Mr. Lim Sidevil] and Mr Pär Sköld (Sida's regional adviser for democracy/human rights in South-East Asia). Each local NGO will have one representative to the evaluation team. The core team in consultation with the NGOs and review committee will review the suitability of the nominees in terms of experience, existing skills, capacity building and gender balance of the team.

Sida's regional adviser will not be able to participate full-time in the exercise. His role will be to reinforce the team, especially at the beginning and towards the end. To some extent he should take part in the interview work, to be able to learn from the methodology chosen and get first-hand impression from a few NGOs and their work in one or two provinces. This is necessary also to take part in analysing the material and drawing conclusions.

The NGO representatives of the two teams *should be selected* according to four main criteria: (i) good knowledge of English; (ii) experience of evaluation or assessment/studies; (iii) gender consideration in both teams; and (iv) some years experience of working in her/his NGO, preferably including some training experience. Training and/or personnel experience is an advantage, as s/he will have an important role in communicating to staff and leadership of her/his NGO the respective steps taken by the team and conclusions drawn at the end of the exercise.

8. Reporting and Distribution

The review committee (Diakonia, Forum Syd and Sida) will approve the format structure of the intended report. The two group reports will be presented after each concluded evaluation period. These drafted reports will be discussed with the review committee before finalised.

The reports shall be copied or printed by the commissioned organisation according to a Sida agreed upon format and cover. The reports shall be provided in xx hard copies to Sida, xx to Diakonia and Forum Syd, and XX to each of the NGOs concerned, as well as on 2 diskettes to each of the above, written in Word 6.0 for Windows (or in a compatible format). Further, the commissioned organisation will distribute copies of the group and study report to organisations or individuals according to a list provided by Sida, including the libraries of CCC and CDRI and others, not exceeding 30 addressees.

All reports should be written in English and not exceed 30 pages per group report and 30 pages for the study report 30 pages, except the annexes. An executive summary shall be provided at the beginning of the reports.

A final study report on findings and recommendations will be submitted to Sida not later than 15th of September. Sida will review the study report and request, if required a revision, before the end of September 2000.

Sida will consider translating the executive summary and recommendations from the evaluation report into Khmer language.

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