



Report on Constituency Dialogues in Cambodia

Covering the Program Period of
January to September 2010



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NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

The National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI or the Institute) is a nonprofit, nonpartisan, nongovernmental organization that has supported democratic institutions and practices in every region of the world for more than two decades. Since its founding in 1983, NDI and its local partners have worked to establish and strengthen political and civic organizations, safeguard elections, and promote citizen participation, openness and accountability in government.

Democracy depends on legislatures that represent citizens and oversee the executive, independent judiciaries that safeguard the rule of law, political parties that are open and accountable, and elections in which voters freely choose their representatives in government. Acting as a catalyst for democratic development, NDI bolsters the institutions and processes that allow democracy to flourish.

Build Political and Civic Organizations: NDI helps build the stable, broad-based and well-organized institutions that form the foundation of a strong civic culture. Democracy depends on these mediating institutions to be the voice of an informed citizenry, and to link citizens to their government and to one another by providing avenues for participation in public policy.

Safeguard Elections: NDI promotes open and democratic elections. Political parties and governments have asked NDI to study electoral codes and to recommend improvements. The Institute also provides technical assistance for political parties and civic groups to conduct voter education campaigns and to organize election monitoring programs. NDI is a world leader in election monitoring, having organized international delegations to monitor elections in dozens of countries, helping to ensure that polling results reflect the will of the people.

Promote Openness and Accountability: NDI responds to requests from leaders of government, parliament, political parties and civic groups seeking advice on matters from legislative procedures to constituent service. NDI works to build legislatures and local governments that are professional, accountable, open and responsive to their citizens.

International cooperation is key to promoting democracy effectively and efficiently by conveying the message to new and emerging democracies that while autocracies are inherently isolated and fearful of the outside world, democracies can count on international allies and an active support system. Headquartered in Washington D.C., with field offices in every region of the world, NDI complements the skills of its staff by enlisting volunteer experts from around the world, many of whom are veterans of democratic struggles in their own countries and share valuable perspectives on democratic development.

NDI in Cambodia

Since 1992, NDI has aided democratic activists in Cambodia through work with civic groups and political parties, the adoption of political party codes of conduct, the development of women's caucus and youth wings in parties, and electoral support initiatives. The Institute's current programs in Cambodia seek to enhance the capacity of citizens and political parties to participate more effectively in the political process. The Institute works with local civil society groups to organize constituency dialogues that bring together citizens and parliamentarians to discuss local issues of concern. NDI also plans to organize candidate debates and conduct voter registration audits for the upcoming local and national elections.

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NDI REPORT ON CONSTITUENCY DIALOGUES IN CAMBODIA

January to September 2010

I. BACKGROUND

In Cambodia, the relationship between parliamentarians and their constituents is underdeveloped. Citizens rarely enjoy opportunities to express their views or advocate reforms to their elected representatives, and legislators do not regularly visit their constituencies to report on their activities and programs. Although individual Members of the National Assembly (MNAs) have made efforts to conduct outreach visits and meetings on their own or through their political parties, they continue to face time constraints, limited facilities at the local level, and a lack of an effective mechanism for constituents to communicate with them. Because of such limited interaction, citizens have a narrow understanding of the role of parliament or its legislative, representative, and oversight responsibilities, and elected parliamentarians have limited knowledge of their constituencies and fall short in representing the needs and interests of their voters.

To provide an avenue for such interaction, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI or the Institute) has organized multiparty constituency dialogues (CDs) open to elected representatives in the National Assembly (NA) from all political parties since 2004. These dialogues enhance MNAs' knowledge of and relations with their constituency and educate citizens on the roles and responsibilities of an MNA in a democratic society. Another important goal of the program is to increase citizens' understanding of their political options, as there are limited opportunities for them to hear alternative viewpoints and policies from non-ruling parties.

Building on this foundation, in October 2009 NDI began a five-year, USAID-funded program titled *Accountability in Governance and Politics* (AGAP). From January to September 2010, NDI held 24 constituency dialogues in the 12 Cambodian provinces with multiparty representation¹ in the National Assembly: Banteay Meanchey, Battambang, Kampong Cham, Kampong Chhnang, Kampong Speu, Kampong Thom, Kampot, Kandal, Kratie, Prey Veng, Siem Reap, and Takeo. The CDs were held twice a year in each province, each time in different communes and villages.

The constituency dialogue format is similar to that of a town hall meeting, and between 300 and 1000 citizens attend each dialogue. Members of the National Assembly are seated at a table in front of the participants and offer brief opening remarks to the audience. Participants then voice their concerns about local issues, raise questions directly to members of the National Assembly, and request that actions be taken to resolve problems in their community. MNAs use the opportunity to update citizens on the activities of the legislature and government and provide other information relevant to their constituents. The dialogues encourage two-way communication and are unscripted, allowing for often challenging questions and demands from citizens. Two radio stations – FM90 and FM93.5 – broadcast CDs across the country. Media coverage expands the reach of the program by ensuring a wider audience and generating requests for more events.

¹ Cambodia has a proportional, party-list system with multiple-member, province-based constituencies. Some provinces have a single MNA.

The CD program is a multiparty event, and each activity involves representatives from both the ruling party and the opposition. From 2004 to March 2008, three major political parties – the Cambodian People’s Party (CPP), the Sam Rainsy Party (SRP), and FUNCINPEC² – were invited to participate in the constituency dialogue program. With two new parties, the Human Rights Party (HRP) and Norodom Ranariddh Party (NRP)³, gaining seats in the 2008 elections, five parties have now participated. The forum thus provides a unique opportunity for policy debate and highlights the distinctions between legislators in different parties and their approaches to local concerns. Local authorities such as commune councilors, village chiefs, and district and provincial officials are often present at CDs, and in 2010, at the request of the parties, the Institute began providing them an allotted time to speak at the dialogues as well.

NDI has a local partner in each province⁴. These civil society organizations play a pivotal organizational and logistical role in planning for and implementing the CDs, as well as monitoring their impact. The local partners determine the village where the CD will be held, liaise with the local authorities, and manage the event logistics. In addition, NDI has community volunteers (CVs) in each province who help mobilize citizens in advance of the event. Two weeks prior to each dialogue, the CVs and the provincial partners conduct small group discussions with approximately 35 residents in order to gather feedback on the problems facing the community. NDI then briefs participating MNAs about these issues to help prepare them for the dialogue. In addition, an NDI advance team travels to the CD site a few days before the event to meet with local authorities and community groups, to introduce the concept of the CD program and secure their support. During these discussions, NDI staff members describe the objective of the CDs, the importance of holding multiparty events, the concept of accountability, and the representative function of MNAs. Local officials have an opportunity to ask questions and share any concerns they might have about the event.

NDI developed a code of conduct for MNAs, participants, and NDI staff moderators participating in the CD program. The code specifies such items as the allotment of speaking time, appropriate and inappropriate topics for discussion, and the rules regarding audience participation. The aim is to ensure equity and neutrality and foster constructive dialogue. The code can be used to clarify misunderstandings, confusion about the CD process, and/or allegations of bias. It also serves to prevent verbal attacks and personal insults during the dialogues. This method of preventing and resolving disputes was agreed to by the five political parties represented in the program.

² FUNCINPEC is an acronym for the National United Front for an Independent, Neutral, Peaceful, and Cooperative Cambodia. It represents the party name in French, “Front Uni National pour un Cambodge Indépendant, Neutre, Pacifique, et Coopératif.”

³ The NRP changed its name to the Nationalist Party (NP) in 2009.

⁴ Indradevi Association (IDA) in Kandal province, Organization To Develop our Village (ODOV) in Prey Veng, the Nokor Phnom Community Empowerment Organization (NPCEO) in Kampong Cham, the Vulnerably and Illiteracy Reduction organization (VIR) in Siem Reap, the Khmer Farmer Development (KFD) in Banteay Meanchey, the Village Support Group (VSG) in Battambang, Bright of Society Organization (BSO) in Takeo, Cooperation for Development of Cambodia (CoDec) in Kampong Thom, Ponlok Sangkom Kampuchea (PSK) in Kampong Speu, Community Capacity for Development (CCD) in Kampong Chhnang, and Kampuchea Women’s Welfare Action (KWWA) in Kratie. NDI worked solely with community volunteers in Kampong Speu province.

NDI regularly reviews the code with the parties to ensure its relevancy and make modifications, if necessary.

Following each CD, NDI develops a monitoring chart, outlining the issues raised and the actions proposed by each MNA. NDI regularly communicates with parliamentarians to follow their progress in fulfilling pledges made during the CDs. Concurrently, NDI's local partner organizations visit the villages where dialogues were held to monitor any changes that may have taken place as a result of the CDs. All results and initiatives are recorded and reported back to the communities. This tracking is essential in promoting accountability by providing citizens with the information needed to judge the performance of their representatives.

NDI also conducts focus groups prior to and following each CD to capture qualitative information and evaluate the effect of the CD program on people's knowledge, attitudes, and practices. Prior to each CD, NDI convenes a group of 10 to 12 participants who have never before attended an NDI dialogue. Focus group questions explore participants' knowledge and attitudes about the National Assembly, MNAs, and multiparty democracy, as well as practices and expectations regarding community problem-solving. The focus group lasts for approximately one hour and is moderated by an NDI staff person. Following the CD, the same group of people re-assembles and responds to a similar set of questions in an attempt to capture any changes. NDI also holds group interviews with local officials following the CD to gather their input and perspectives on the dialogue and lessons learned.

The constituency dialogue program has fostered an understanding among the Cambodian public of the link between local problems and the responsibilities of elected officials. The dialogues have provided an opportunity for MNAs to further strengthen relationships with their constituents and respond to the public's requests and needs. In addition, by showcasing the differences between political parties, citizens have had the opportunity to learn more about their MNAs' diverse opinions, affiliations, and platforms and are more aware of their political options. In many cases, the CDs have resulted in concrete actions by participating lawmakers that have directly impacted the communities in which they were held, including the resolution of land disputes and fulfillment of infrastructure and agricultural needs.

II. CONSTITUENCY DIALOGUES⁵

Key Issues

NDI noted a general sense of frustration with the direction of the country's development as expressed by Cambodians attending the constituency dialogues from January to September 2010. Participants described constant inequity with regard to land, law enforcement, government services, and provision of justice. Across provinces, people reported that those with money and influence received different treatment than those without. One participant in Kampong Thom straightforwardly asked an MNA whether development in Cambodia was only for the rich and powerful or if it was meant to be for everyone. On several occasions participants expressed dissatisfaction with political parties and MNAs, particularly with regard to un-fulfilled campaign promises and slow progress on development issues. One woman angrily asked if the government built roads "for the country or for the ballot." Basic infrastructure and development requests were raised repeatedly, and there was a pervasive sense of impatience. On several occasions participants reported they lacked enough food to feed their families.

A significant majority of issues raised concerned land disputes. In one Siem Reap CD, all 14 participants who spoke during the dialogue described a land conflict. In Battambang, seven of the 10 citizens who asked questions at one CD also raised land conflicts as their main concern. Across the 12 provinces, Cambodians described how they were suffering due to battles over land, and all too frequently reported the negative involvement of local authorities in their plight. In some instances, people had traveled great distances to be heard by representatives of the National Assembly, as neither the authorities nor the courts were solving their problems in their own communities.

Conflicts described usually involved a group of families displaced by a concession to a private company. Dialogue participants often criticized the country's concession policies, demanding explanations for why companies, often foreign ones, appeared to be favored over citizens. They rejected the argument that these concessions brought employment to Cambodians, pointing out that workers were often foreign. In many cases, the families claimed to have official titles and rights but were forced off their land by more powerful people with the help of local officials and, often, the police or the military. In several provinces people described violent acts, including the burning of their homes. A Kratie participant pleaded with the MNAs, asking how a family could fight a company that had bulldozers when they had only their hands. In other cases, citizens had been displaced from their land but had not received due compensation from the government or companies involved. Moreover, CD attendees repeatedly described the difficulty in obtaining titles for their property due to demands for bribes from local officials.

Across the 24 public forums, people's frustration and lack of patience with the continued conflicts over land was clear. One participant from Kampong Thom angrily stated to the MNAs and the audience that "people may be uneducated but they are not

⁵ The opinions expressed by participants and MNAs during the proceedings of the constituency dialogues do not necessarily reflect those of NDI. This report serves to summarize their remarks, concerns and impressions.

stupid and do not appreciate being treated as such.” A woman in Siem Reap pointedly asked why land in Cambodia was only for rich people. One man from Prey Veng said he was suicidal due to the threats he had received from local authorities to sell his land. Given that CD participants were overwhelmingly farmers, land seizures and conflicts were taking a toll on their livelihood and ability to provide for their families.

In general, MNAs from the same party gave similar responses on land issues and demonstrated party discipline by adhering to a unified party message and position. Cambodian People’s Party representatives defended the government’s concession policies, arguing they were needed for the country’s development. They also encouraged people to take their conflicts to local authorities or the courts. They argued that people often did not understand the land law, and several CPP MNAs read directly from the law during the CD. CPP MNAs also requested that citizens obtain their proper titles to avoid conflicts, but they did not clearly address the repeated problem of corruption when people attempted to secure these titles. Opposition MNAs generally criticized the concessions, particularly those with 99-year leases and those to foreign companies. They argued that land should be preserved for Cambodian farmers and that land titling must be improved and implemented without corruption. They also alleged that poor farmers could not receive justice in the courts or a resolution through the local government if they were in conflict with a rich and powerful person. Both CPP and opposition MNAs pledged to investigate the land cases raised at the events.

The other commonly raised issues at the CDs were corruption and the generally unequal application of the law. Participants at every CD described how local authorities: demanded bribes for the provision of services such as family books and national identification cards; set up illegal checkpoints; extorted money; and unevenly enforced the law depending on the wealth and power of the individuals involved. Fishermen in particular described the unequal enforcement of the law with regard to fishing methods and tools such as electric shocking, in which local authorities allowed rich or influential people to use illegal methods but not the average citizen. The same was reported for logging and the depletion of natural resources, with participants describing how powerful and connected people could violate the law with impunity. Multiple participants reported the lack of justice and rule of law. One participant in Prey Veng asked why Cambodia had so many laws but such poor enforcement. Taking issues to court was not an option for many participants, who described how the courts demanded money from them and always ruled in favor of the richer or more connected person and not on the merits of the argument.

Overall, CPP MNAs did not respond in detail to these complaints other than to say that such activities were illegal and rare, rule of law was enforced fairly throughout the country, and the courts were independent and not corrupt. Opposition MNAs, however, would agree with participants’ concerns and described the need for tougher action against corruption and for an independent judiciary. They put forward several recommendations, such as prohibiting judges from being members of political parties. Both ruling and opposition MNAs encouraged participants to provide them with details of specific corruption cases so they could investigate.

In addition to land conflicts and corruption affecting people’s livelihood, participants described how poor irrigation systems and lack of water were sending them further into poverty. Requests for canals, ponds, and irrigation technology were

overwhelming at the dialogues in 2010. At one Banteay Meanchey dialogue, there were eight irrigation-related requests. Participants across the 12 provinces also complained about the high price of agricultural inputs – fertilizer and gasoline – and the decreasing price of Cambodia’s agricultural products. They cited the lack of a market for their goods, as well as unethical monopolies of brokers, as part of the reason why they were unable to pay off their debts. Many participants asked MNAs to describe their party’s specific agricultural policies and proposed solutions.

Infrastructure needs were also consistently raised across the 24 dialogues. Participants repeatedly requested roads, schools, health centers, and electricity. Many inquired about the direction of development for the country more broadly, and asked the MNAs to describe their vision and policies for development.

In general, CPP representatives responded consistently to agriculture and development concerns. Many first pointed out how the country was more developed and better off than it had been under the Pol Pot regime, and how people should appreciate the fact that the CPP had to “build the country up from scratch.” Frequently, CPP MNAs listed the number of schools, health centers, or even motorcycles in the area to demonstrate that achievement, often using the words “CPP” and “government” interchangeably. They also repeatedly referred to the need for patience, quoting the Prime Minister, “development happens at frog’s leaps” (i.e. slowly). They encouraged citizens to participate in commune council meetings to help set development priorities. In response to complaints about high prices and lack of markets for Cambodian products, ruling party representatives explained that Cambodia adhered to free market principles and could not interfere with pricing.

Opposition SRP and HRP MNAs frequently described the large amount of donor aid and loans to Cambodia for development and questioned the government’s practical use of these funds to benefit the people. They also emphasized the burden that debt would have on the country’s economy. SRP representatives repeatedly explained that their party had requested increased budget line items for agriculture, education, and healthcare. They also suggested that the government should indeed interfere with free market pricing by subsidizing gas and other agricultural inputs, as well as setting a higher price for rice. In addition, they stressed their proposals to increase training and technology for farmers in order to improve output. Opposition members encouraged people to participate in the development of the country and help oversee government spending. Several suggested that the Khmer Rouge’s genocidal regime was not a particularly challenging yardstick by which to compare current development.

Partisan issues emerged during some of the dialogues. People often asked MNAs to describe the appropriate date to mark the country’s independence. The ruling party recognizes January 7, 1979, when the Vietnamese overthrew the Khmer Rouge regime, as the official date. Opposition parties, however, advocate for celebrating the anniversary of the Paris Peace Accords, October 23, 1991, as the start of true independence and peace. Often participants became very heated about this issue. In Kampot, for example, one participant shouted at the opposition MNA about the matter. The MNAs, for the most part, did not belabor the issue or engage in lengthy discussions but did briefly defend the merits of one date versus the other.

There were many questions related to the demarcation of Cambodia's border with Vietnam. In late 2009, SRP leader Sam Rainsy went to Svay Rieng province upon the request of a group of farmers who claimed that their land had been encroached upon by Vietnam and border posts had been placed on their property. When visiting the area, Sam Rainsy and the villagers removed the border posts in a symbolic gesture, and the party also posted maps on its website detailing the loss of Cambodian land. The removal of posts and publicizing of maps sent the party leader into self-exile and resulted in a 12-year jail sentence in absentia. CD participants asked MNAs to explain the matter, and in one case in Kampot, a participant accused Sam Rainsy of inciting civil war. In response to these questions, the ruling party MNAs usually criticized Sam Rainsy and argued that no land had been lost to Vietnam. SRP MNAs defended Sam Rainsy's actions and asked why the government focused only on protecting the border with Thailand and not the one with Vietnam. In almost all instances MNAs argued their positions calmly and professionally.

Overall, the concerns raised by citizens in 2010 were largely similar to those brought up in NDI's previous year of dialogues. Land matters are still at the forefront of people's minds, and corruption and problems with local authorities make daily life difficult for the average Cambodian. Given the central role farming plays in the vast majority of people's lives, agricultural improvements and irrigation are desperately needed. These issues were taken seriously by the participating MNAs. While some actions have been taken, long-term policy solutions have not been addressed in the legislature.

Preparations and Training

In late 2009, NDI held an evaluation workshop with Members of the National Assembly, provincial partners, and community volunteers to review the constituency dialogues held from October 2008 to August 2009 under a previous USAID-funded program. The workshop provided an opportunity for participants to share their experiences and identify lessons learned and best practices in organizing CD events. This feedback was essential in designing the next series of constituency dialogues from September 2009 through September 2014 under the AGAP program.

In preparation for constituency dialogue programming under the new USAID grant, NDI reviewed its relationships with all provincial partners, selecting new partners in Banteay Meanchey, Kampong Speu, Prey Veng, and Battambang, and identifying partners in two new program provinces, Kratie and Kampong Chhnang. NDI then conducted several meetings with its provincial partners to discuss workplans and preparations for the dialogues. The Institute held refresher training sessions on organizing small group discussions, logistical preparations, communicating with local officials, and post-CD monitoring techniques for its partners.

As part of its ongoing capacity-building for local partners, in June 2010, NDI organized a two-day training workshop for provincial NGOs and community volunteers. The workshop sessions covered financial reporting and policies, the roles and responsibilities of NGO partners and CVs, organization of small group discussions, and report writing. The training aimed to strengthen the capacity of the 22 NGO and CV participants (13 women) in order to implement the CD program more effectively.

Prior to each dialogue, NDI's local partners held small group discussions in the commune to talk about key concerns with citizens. NDI then used the information gleaned during these conversations to inform MNAs' preparations for the CD. From January to August 2010, a total of 851 participants (372 women) attended 24 small group discussions.

Proceedings

A total of 11,646 citizens (5,104 women) and 39 national legislators⁶ attended the 24 constituency dialogues. The following are province-by-province (in alphabetical order) summaries of the main points raised by citizens and highlights of the MNAs' responses at each CD. The speaking order at the CDs was determined by a lottery prior to the event. Specific details about participants' remarks, such as precise land dispute areas, requests for wells, roads, hospitals and other improvements, and complete responses of MNAs are available in NDI's individual CD reports upon request.

A. Banteay Meanchey

In cooperation with provincial NGO partner Khmer Farmer Development (KFD), NDI held two constituency dialogues in Banteay Meanchey.

Sras Raing CD

NDI held the first CD in Sras Raing in Sras Rainsey Pagoda, Sras Raing village, Sras Raing commune, Mongkol Borei district on May 2, 2010. CPP MNA Pal Sam Oeurn and SRP MNA Yont Tharo participated in the event. Attending the CD were 507 people (249 women), including the deputy provincial governor, the director of the provincial electricity department, the director of the provincial National Assembly outreach office, four provincial staff members, five provincial councilors, the district chief, 15 district councilors and district staff members (including one woman), two commune chiefs, six commune councilors (including one woman), 26 village chiefs or vice-chiefs, the district chief of police, and seven other district or commune police officers.

During the opening remarks, CPP MNA Pal Sam Oeurn suggested that participants should avoid harsh words and raise only the "right" issues during the dialogue. He described the National Assembly as a bridge to the government, emphasizing its representative function but also listing legislative and oversight responsibilities. MNA Pal added that MNAs could oversee the local authorities, but did not have the right to make decisions on local issues or dismiss local officials from their posts. SRP MNA Yont Tharo described the importance of multiple parties for the functioning of a democratic state, adding that the SRP did not always criticize but spoke out only when the government acted incorrectly. He encouraged people to inform the MNAs about their problems.

⁶ Several MNAs attended more than one CD during the year. Two members of Cambodia's Senate replaced MNAs at the CDs.



NDI's moderator speaks during a constituency dialogue in Sras Raing commune, Mongkol Borei district, Banteay Meanchey province on May 02, 2010.

Fourteen CD participants spoke during the dialogue, including five women. Four of them specifically requested infrastructure improvements to roads and canals, and greater access to electricity. Participants also described problems with crime and youth gangs and requested additional police protection to increase security in their communities. One participant requested help in stopping illegal electric fishing methods in three communes and reported being threatened by other fishermen. Two participants also described unequal enforcement of taxes on motorcycles by local authorities. Farmers complained about the lack of a competitive market for their products and the low prices offered by brokers, rendering them unable to pay off their loans. Participants also complained of inflation and asked the government to control the price of goods, highlighting the cost of fuel in particular. In addition, unemployment was raised during the CD, with one participant describing the difficulties faced by Cambodians forced to travel to Thailand for work, often illegally.

SRP MNA Yont Tharo acknowledged the economic impact of poor roads affecting farmers' ability to transport crops and encouraged the local authorities to request funds from the national government. He also reminded local authorities, especially the commune councils, of their responsibility to enforce weight limits and other regulations to maintain the roads. On youth gangs, MNA Yont advocated greater engagement from teachers, parents, local authorities, and police as a way to educate children to be good citizens. He also called upon local authorities to take action against crime and illegal fishing activities and fairly enforce tax policies, and to respond to requests for improved canals. Responding to concerns about employment, he reminded the audience that increasing employment was the third main policy goal of the SRP, and noted the government could be doing more to create jobs.

In response to agricultural concerns, MNA Yont explained that the SRP raised the issue of the low market price for Cambodian products in the National Assembly and had asked the government to help find more profitable markets and provide better training to farmers to increase the quality of rice to sell in foreign markets, especially

ones that demanded organic rice. He described how the Thai government educated farmers in modern farming techniques to increase productivity. MNA Yont also argued that the government should be providing low interest rate loans to farmers. In addition, he questioned the current government policy of providing economic land concessions to Vietnamese-owned companies when so many Cambodian farmers needed land for farming.

CPP MNA Pal Sam Oeurn described the government's "rectangular strategy" as evidence that infrastructure, including roads, was a high priority. In response to concerns about illegal fishing practices, he emphasized that the Prime Minister demanded local authorities to take action. He also encouraged the participants to establish a fishing cooperative. He expressed his support for better civic education to reduce youth gangs, but also asked local authorities to explain what actions had been taken so far.

MNA Pal argued that there was no solution for the low price of rice because Cambodia implemented free market policies. He added, however, that the provincial commercial assemblies were responsible for finding better markets for agricultural products but that diplomatic problems with Thailand and the economic crisis had impacted their effectiveness. On employment, he emphasized government efforts to attract foreign direct investment and to provide vocational training, describing projects with unemployed factory workers. He reminded participants that the role of the MNA was to bring concerns to the government, and local authorities should respond to the concerns raised.

The deputy provincial governor, Sar Chamrong, explained that the Asian Development Bank (ADB) provided US \$1.1 million to build canals, and the provincial government also had plans for road construction. The deputy governor reported that he had already requested additional police for each district to replace those sent to the border during heightened tensions with Thailand. He also promised to create a committee to control illegal immigration from Vietnam in the province.

The deputy police chief of Mongkol Borei district described his support for both tougher police enforcement and increased education by the community to address youth gangs. He also explained the limited police presence as a result of increased forces on the Thai border and asked people to help report illegal activities. Afterward, the head of the provincial electricity department described obstacles of supply, distribution, and pricing of electricity and the need for help from private companies to provide electricity. He expressed shame that among countries in Asia, only Laos had less access to electricity than Cambodia.

Bos Sbov CD

NDI's second CD in Banteay Meanchey was held outside the Bos Sbov commune office in Bos Sbov village and commune, Preah Net Preah district on September 18, 2010. CPP MNA An Som, SRP MNA Yont Tharo, and FUNCINPEC Senator Chea Kim⁷ participated in the event. A total of 723 participants (321 women) attended, including five provincial councilors, one deputy district governor, one district

⁷ The FUNCINPEC MNA was unable to attend the CD.

councilor, two commune chiefs, nine commune councilors (one woman), six district and commune police officers, 51 village chiefs and vice chiefs (five women), two CPP staff, two SRP staff, and two FUNCINPEC staff.

In his opening remarks, CPP MNA An Sum stated that he was happy to talk with citizens and describe the country's development achievements under Hun Sen, adding that the international community recognized Cambodia's leadership in this area. FUNCINPEC Senator Chea Kim described the formation of the Senate, explaining that it served as a liaison between the National Assembly and the government and provided oversight and recommendations. SRP MNA Yont Tharo explained that SRP was the non-ruling party and therefore had a role to play in overseeing the government, adding that oversight was essential because "if money was spent on something, the people needed to know that they received the quality for which they paid."

Most of the issues raised by participants at this dialogue involved requests for infrastructure, particularly related to irrigation for farming (eight requests) and roads for transporting products (nine requests). Sanitation systems, clean water, electricity, lower gas prices, and a school were also requested. With regard to agricultural policies, residents of Bos Sbov demanded a better market for their products, complaining that brokers provided low prices, and complained of high interest rates. Corruption was raised, and three participants asked why local authorities demanded different prices for legal documentation such as family books and licenses. Audience member also raised the issue of security and youth gangs and asked MNAs how rule of law could be improved. There was one land dispute reported at this CD, with accusations that the police illegally sold people's land. Finally, several participants asked the representatives to explain their policies on job creation and on helping migrant workers.

FUNCINPEC Senator Chea Kim explained that the price of rice was up to the farmers, as they could choose whether or not to sell. As for the price of official legal documents, he explained that it was fixed and no official could charge a higher price, as it was illegal. He added that Cambodia now had an anti-corruption unit and people could file complaints. On unemployment, he pointed out that the government had training centers. In response to the land dispute, he asked the commune council to resolve the matter.

SRP MNA Yont Tharo suggested that water pumping machines could help with irrigation and flood control. On the price of rice, he recommended that the government, rather than the brokers, buy farmers' rice at a higher price, and that the government invest in rice mills to improve exports. He also argued that interest rates should not be so high for farmers, as the law fixed the rate at 2%, and he called upon the government to intervene. In response to questions about employment, MNA Yont agreed that Cambodia had to fight poverty with jobs, and the government needed to create factories and focus on new industries. He added that Cambodian workers overseas were being cheated by private companies, and the government needed to intervene to address human rights violations. On the issue of youth gangs, MNA Yont emphasized that local authorities had to crack down and provide better security and parents needed to be involved. Regarding corruption, he said that no local officials should be charging more for legal documents than the fixed rate.

CPP MNA An Sum explained that the government developed a national policy on irrigation during the second NA mandate and it was still being implemented. He reminded participants that it was a free market economy so the government could not interfere in price setting for agricultural products, but it could find brokers with better prices. He reported that by 2012, the government planned to build a large cable from Pursat province to provide electricity to Banteay Meanchey via hydropower. In response to employment concerns, MNA An explained that the economic crisis had affected Cambodia, but the government had allocated a budget for training workers who lost their jobs in areas such as engineering and construction. He argued that it was important to send Cambodians to work abroad, and the government had improved the visa process with Thailand. In response to the question about the price of legal documents, MNA An said that no local officials should ask for extra money. He affirmed that Cambodia had “a 100% rule of law.” On youth gangs, MNA An said that the Ministry of Interior had a plan to address the problem.

B. Battambang

In cooperation with provincial NGO partner Village Supporting Group (VSG), NDI held two constituency dialogues in Battambang province.

Tumpuon CD

NDI held a CD in Tumpuon pagoda, Tumpuon village, Tapuon commune, Thmar Koul district on April 3, 2010. CPP MNA Chuonh Sochhay and SRP MNA Chiv Cata participated in the event. Attending the CD were 552 people (126 women), including the district governor, one district councilors, four commune chiefs, 10 commune councilors (one woman), six village chiefs, one district health officer, one officer from the district fishery administration, eight district and commune police officers, and one member of the provincial press corp. SRP MNA Chiv Cata arrived almost an hour late to the event, and CPP MNA Chuonh Sochhay agreed to wait until his arrival before commencing. As a result, both the question and response periods had to be shortened considerably.

In opening remarks, SRP MNA Chiv Cata explained that MNAs did not have enough resources to make constituency visits, so NDI’s forum provided an important opportunity. CPP MNA Chuonh Sochhay emphasized the public, free nature of the forum and promised to listen and find solutions to all the problems raised.

Ten CD participants spoke during the dialogue, including six women. Seven questions concerned land disputes, and participants described the difficulty they faced with obtaining titles, corruption of local authorities, problems accessing public land, illegal land grabbing, and concession policies. Four participants also raised concerns about fishing rights and sought clarification on, or changes to, the use of private fishing pens and pens in conservation areas. One Battambang participant reported that local officials enforced the ban on electric fishing on some residents but still used the method themselves. There were other complaints about local officials during the dialogue, including their demands for bribes in return for providing public services as well as their drunken, disorderly behavior. One commune chief asked about the Vietnam border issue and Sam Rainsy’s involvement, requesting that the MNAs explain the consequences of treason.

CPP MNA Chuonh Sochhay first discussed the role of MNAs and described the three branches of government. She explained that MNAs were responsible for drafting legislation, passing laws submitted from the government, and soliciting requests from the people. On the issue of social concessions, she said the local authorities had only completed the first stage of land distribution. She explained that a 1980 map was used to provide initial land titles, but people clearing new land complicated the process for local officials. Addressing questions about fishing rights, MNA Chuonh said individuals could receive a private fishing pen if they paid taxes or fees. She added that the law limited pen ownership and locations. She pledged to investigate the bribery issue and stressed her commitment to work with local officials. On the question of treason, she stated that everyone cared about the country but she accused some of only criticizing without taking action.



A MNA makes remarks at a constituency dialogue in Tapuong commune, Thmar Koul district, Battambang province on April 3, 2010.

SRP MNA Chiv Cata reported that local authorities were preventing villagers from clearing additional land for farming, and he discussed similar land problems across the country, demonstrating a lack of resolution between local authorities and the public. On the issue of corruption, he argued that most local officials were good, but some abused their positions for financial gain. With regard to fishing concerns, he accused the local authorities of failing to consult with or consider the needs of local people before providing fishing pens to private companies. He also argued that farmers needed land, irrigation systems, appropriate markets for local products, and cheap fertilizer, and explained that the ruling party and government were responsible for addressing these needs. In response to the question about treason, MNA Chiv explained that a traitor was someone who destroyed national interests, such as engaging in deforestation. He asked the participants to discuss the issues after the event so that they could solve them together. He also pledged to bring all the requests to the president of the National Assembly for resolution.

The head of the district fishery office, Mey Sothea, explained that people should apply for permission from the district land management office in advance of enlarging their land. District governor Mao Samneang commented on the confusion created over land ownership, saying that former refugees were given land for farming in the community which they later abandoned due to an inability to clear the land. Subsequently, other people moved in, creating multiple and competing ownership claims.



A participant raises concerns about fishing rights during a constituency dialogue in Tapueng commune, Thmar Koul district, Battambang province on April 3, 2010.

Kach Rotes CD

NDI held its second Battambang constituency dialogue in Kach Rotes pagoda and village, Kampong Preang commune, Sangker district on September 4, 2010. CPP MNA Muy Chat and SRP MNA Mu Sochua participated in the event. A total of 364 people (89 women) attended the dialogue, including one district governor, one deputy district governor, one commune chief, seven commune councilors (one woman), two village chiefs, three district officials, four district or commune police officers, three monks, four CPP staff members (two women), and four SRP staff members (two women).

During the opening remarks, SRP MNA Mu Sochua described the three roles of an MNA: making and approving laws; providing oversight of the government to ensure that laws and policies were well and equally enforced; and ensuring that the budget was transparently spent for the development of the nation. MNAs were also required, she added, to visit their constituencies to listen to the concerns of citizens and bring these to the government through the National Assembly for resolution. The role of the opposition, MNA Mu stated, was to constructively criticize and correct the government. CPP MNA Muy Chat also described the responsibilities of MNAs: making and approving laws for the government to respect and enforce equally; visiting constituencies to learn more about voters; and bringing people's concerns to the government. He reported that many land disputes occurred because fighting between

the government and the Khmer Rouge forced people to leave their land, creating confusion about ownership. He emphasized that the government was working hard to tackle this problem.

Fourteen participants, including two women, spoke during the Kach Rotes CD. Land conflicts dominated the discussion. Four participants described land seizures by army and national police officials, with the involvement of local authorities. Villagers also reported inaction on the part of local officials to enforce land resolutions. Three participants reported illegal activities in their communities, such as logging in protected areas and fishing in flooded forests, which are reserved for fish nesting and therefore off-limits. Nine participants described local infrastructure needs, requesting bridges, roads, electricity, irrigation systems, health centers, and schools. Participants complained of high unemployment facing graduates.

A few participants complained about their MNAs during the dialogue. One older man said that he learned through Radio France International that one MNA had 71 advisers. He asked whether this was true, how many advisers other MNAs had, why it was necessary, and who paid for these advisers. Another man expressed his disappointment with the MNAs for their infrequent visits to Battambang.

CPP MNA Muy Chat explained that in one of the land disputes, the case had been resolved but the losers did not accept the outcome. He also reminded citizens that public land could be farmed but not sold. In a land dispute, he explained, if citizens had a title, they could complain to the court, but if they held no title they must contact the land department for a resolution. He added that MNAs had no authority to intervene directly in the cases but could bring them to the government. On infrastructure needs, MNA Muy explained that the government had a five-year development plan but had to prioritize implementation due to a limited budget, particularly with ongoing defense needs on the Thai border. He encouraged participants to attend commune council meetings to help prioritize development needs. Regarding electricity, MNA Muy explained that Cambodia did not produce its own electricity but had to purchase it from Thailand, making contracts with companies necessary.

In response to concerns about unemployment, MNA Muy suggested that students think about their majors carefully, selecting areas in alignment with current market demands. He confirmed that no one was allowed to own or destroy the flooded forest. Regarding the complaints about MNAs, MNA Muy maintained that rich MNAs could pay for their own advisers and there were no limits on the number of advisers.

SRP MNA Mu Sochua emphasized that the law should be applied in land disputes in the spirit of the Constitution and urged the judiciary to resolve issues neutrally. She described SRP's call for the formation of an independent committee to address land disputes across the country and provide justice. She added that a judge should not be a member of a political party, and that the Supreme Council of Magistracy should take action against any judge who abused power. She also argued that economic land concessions should be provided to the poor instead of to private companies. In response to agricultural concerns, she stated that SRP wanted the formation of a farmers' association to defend the interests of farmers. Regarding infrastructure requests, MNA Mu reminded people that the government budget was their money, so they should control how it was spent and attend council deliberations to

weigh in on priority setting. She explained that the opposition had the responsibility of oversight, ensuring that the budget was spent properly and transparently.

Responding to concerns about unemployment, MNA Mu said that the SRP had asked the government to focus on helping small businesses, rather than large tycoons, and address job creation. She also agreed with MNA Muy that students needed to think about the job market when selecting a major. She emphasized that the flooded forest and trees needed to be protected. Finally, MNA Mu said that she had written the president of the National Assembly to ask about the large number of advisers for some lawmakers and was told that it was within the rights of MNAs. She added that SRP disagreed with this policy.

Commune Chief Nget Soeur explained that local authorities tried to educate people about the need to protect the forest and formed a group to prevent illegal logging. He also stated that the commune budget was used for priority development issues and all councilors, citizens, and community representatives could participate in the process.

C. Kampong Cham

In cooperation with provincial NGO partner the Nokor Phnom Community Empowerment Organization (NPCEO), NDI held two constituency dialogues in Kampong Cham province.

Koang Kang CD

NDI held a CD in Boronanhean pagoda, Koang Kang village, Koang Kang commune, Ponhea Krek district on January 9, 2010. CPP MNA Vann Sengly, SRP MNA Mao Monyvann, HRP MNA Yem Ponhearith, and NP MNA You Hockry participated in the event. Attending the CD were 311 villagers (103 of whom were women), including four district councilors, one commune chief, three commune councilors, and one staff member of the district land administration. Several people from other districts in the province, including Memot and O'reang Ov, also joined the event, specifically to raise their claims to land recently given to a company in an economic land concession.

In the opening remarks, CPP MNA Vann Sengly emphasized his party's achievements in establishing and maintaining peace in Cambodia. He added that peaceful dialogue was the heart of democracy. SRP MNA Mao Monyvann discussed the arrest warrant for party leader Sam Rainsy on the Vietnam border issue. He encouraged citizens to demand results from their leaders and vote for new politicians if they were not satisfied. HRP MNA Yem Ponhearith asked participants to share their concerns so the MNAs could address them and find solutions. NP MNA You Hockry reviewed the importance of the separation of power between the three branches of government. He explained that the CD program provided a bridge between elected politicians and their constituents

Eleven participants spoke during the dialogue, including two women. As in other provinces, most people raised land disputes. One group of villagers from another district traveled to the Koang Kang CD specifically to raise the issue of an economic

concession that was forcing them off their land. They emotionally requested an intervention from the MNAs. Several other farmers also indicated that the existing social land concessions were not sufficient to support their families, with one saying that 70% of farmers did not have enough land for farming. Participants also requested better roads, irrigation systems, a decrease in the price of fertilizer, better healthcare, and loan forgiveness. The district's proximity to Vietnam also resulted in a substantial number of questions regarding the alleged encroachment on Cambodian land, including references to Sam Rainsy's case. Three participants also complained about lack of education on the election system, voter registration procedures, and the issue of vote buying.

SRP MNA Mao Monyvann reported that his party investigated allegations of land grabbing due to concessions but was told by Prime Minister Hun Sen that the concessions were all for the good of development. He added that many concessions were for Vietnamese companies. Regarding the issue of debt, he said he had written to the provincial governor about loan policies for farmers and advised people not to borrow money. On the subject of elections, he said voter registration in Cambodia was too complicated and needed to be reformed. MNA Mao also argued that although the three branches of government should be separate, in practice they were not. He described the need for more equitable political radio coverage and for neutral and unbiased service provision by local authorities.

HRP MNA Yem Ponhearith identified several of his party staff members in attendance who would be available after the event to collect additional information on all the questions raised to ensure follow up. He stated that only five percent of Cambodians had more than five hectares of land and that economic concessions should be social ones for the Cambodian people.

NP MNA You Hockry, referencing his previous involvement in drafting the election law, explained that the proportional representation system was selected to bring peace. He added that local officials were not properly implementing the National Election Committee (NEC) guidelines. On issues of healthcare and road needs, he stated that they were the commune council's responsibilities. Responding to questions about the border with Vietnam, he argued that no land had been lost. Regarding debt, MNA You suggested the government could negotiate with banks to avoid land foreclosures. He also promised to write Prime Minister Hun Sen on the import tax on fertilizer and farming equipment. He announced he would provide a new irrigation pump to the village and requested that the responsible authorities see him to arrange the installation.

CPP MNA Vann Sengly argued the beginning of peace in Cambodia was in 1979, when a Vietnamese offensive unseated the Khmer Rouge, not the Paris Peace Accords of 1991, as implied by opposition MNAs. He stated that foreigners recognized this as well. He argued that other countries took a long time to establish democracy and Cambodia already had multiple parties represented in the NA. The next step for development, he stated, was for donors to become partners with the government. MNA Vann said he would investigate land issues, but added that the local authorities always followed the law.

The deputy district governor then spoke, stating his support for the election law. He also described the use of GPS to prove that no land had been lost to Vietnam. He asked people to stop blaming doctors for problems at hospitals. Finally, he argued that justice existed when citizens followed the laws made by the National Assembly.

Anlong Orklech CD

NDI held a second CD in Kampong Cham in Anlong Orklech pagoda and village, So Kong commune, Kang Meas district on May 22, 2010. CPP MNA Tres Sarom, SRP MNA Mao Monyvann, HRP MNA Yem Ponhearith, and NP MNA Sao Rany participated in the event. A total of 426 participants (218 women) attended the dialogue, including the deputy district governor, a member of the district governor's committee, two district officials, three commune chiefs, one commune clerk, 16 commune councilors (four women), 36 village chiefs (one woman), and five district and commune police officers.

During opening remarks, SRP MNA Mao Monyvann defended Sam Rainsy's recent actions with regard to the Vietnam border, describing him as a defender of Cambodian sovereignty and a victim of a broken court system. He also described the role of MNAs in making and passing laws, developing national policy, overseeing the government, and visiting their constituencies. CPP MNA Tres Sarom said voters helped the country by casting a vote in each election, developing the community during the year, and encouraging MNAs to be more responsive to community needs. He stated that his main objective for the dialogue would be to explain the importance of MNAs in democratic development and problem solving, to listen to people's concerns, and to describe the national development plan.

HRP MNA Yem Ponhearith explained that the National Assembly's internal rules prohibited his party from speaking in the Assembly, although the party had many ideas. He also expressed concern over the CPP's newly-announced policy of classifying villagers as black, grey, or white depending on their level of support for the party, suggesting it was discriminatory and needlessly divided Khmer people. NP MNA Sao Rany described the establishment of his party and thanked his supporters. He emphasized participation as essential to a democratic society and asked all present to raise their concerns so the MNAs could formulate policies to solve them.

Twelve participants, including four women, asked questions during the dialogue in Anlong Orklech. Five participants described the economic challenges for farmers, including the low price of rice, high costs of gasoline and fertilizer, droughts, poor roads, high interest rates on loans, and repossessions of land by banks. Four participants complained about the inability to obtain identification cards, particularly for voting purposes, and problems with voter registration in general, including the short time period, discrepancies on the voters' list, and misspelling of names. Three participants complained of problems in the judicial system, describing how the rich and powerful always won in court, and requested better law enforcement for activities such as illegal fishing. Three land issues were also raised, with participants accusing the local authorities of complicity and failure to resolve disputes and criticizing economic land concessions that served Vietnamese interests over Cambodian.

Participants in the Anlong Orklech CD expressed dissatisfaction with political parties and MNAs, particularly with regard to un-fulfilled campaign promises. One woman asked if the CPP built roads for the country or “for the ballot.” Another asked what the SRP had done to benefit the country. Several CD participants expressed discomfort with or fear about the CPP’s recently announced plan to document individual citizen’s level of support for the party, comparing it to the classification of people during the Pol Pot regime. A man expressed disappointment with both parties, saying that the ruling party always said that development was almost complete, and the opposition always criticized, but neither really understood the difficulties of people who placed their trust in them. Participants encouraged non-partisanship and requested that parties work together, expressing appreciation for the CD for including four political parties instead of just one.



A participant complaining about the low market price for rice but high prices for oil and fertilizer during a constituency dialogue in So Kong commune, Kang Meas district, Kampong Cham province on May 22, 2010.

CPP MNA Tres Sarom defended government policy and emphasized the independence of the three branches of government, stating that the courts were fair. In response to infrastructure requests, he reported that the government was first building quality, paved roads on the two most important stretches of road near the commune. On debt repayment, he explained that ACLEDA bank was a registered, law-abiding institution, and therefore the government could do little beyond requesting a small delay in loan repayments. He explained that local authorities were responsible for addressing the identification card problems, land issues, and public security, and said he would monitor their progress. Regarding land concessions, MNA Tres reported that he had already written a letter to Prime Minister Hun Sen on this matter and learned that the land concessions were legal. In response to concerns about the party’s sincerity, he said that the comment about “building roads to win at the ballot” was inappropriate for the event, adding that all people could use “CPP-built” roads.

HRP MNA Yem Ponhearith argued that many of the issues raised by the audience were linked, saying, for example, that the high price of gasoline and the low price of rice affected the ability of farmers to repay their debts. MNA Yem criticized the 99-year concessions given to Vietnamese companies, the filling of lakes for private company use, and the widespread deforestation across the country. He blamed problems like illegal fishing on corruption among the local authorities, who, he claimed, often took bribes, and he also discussed the lack of justice in the courts. On agriculture, he reported that his party had informed the government that clear agricultural data was needed, but that the suggestion had been ignored. He added that the government should help sell Cambodian agricultural products at a higher price, noting the current differences in the price of pork between Cambodia and neighboring countries. MNA Yem described the aid and loans given by donors to Cambodia to improve the economic situation, particularly the plight of poor farmers. He noted that Cambodia was already \$3 billion dollars in debt.

NP MNA Sao Rany encouraged participants first to take concerns, such as illegal fishing or land disputes, to the local authorities, as they had jurisdiction. If that failed, he said, as an MNA, he could bring all concerns to the National Assembly. With regard to debt payments, he asked individuals for a letter requesting debt relief and said he would negotiate with the bank on their behalf. He also promised to request that the road building process be accelerated, adding that the commune had one million *Riel* available for road construction. He explained that the government also approved an US \$18 million package to help farmers and increase the price of their crops, but he was not sure whether implementation had taken place. Regarding identification cards, MNA Sao said he met many times with the Ministry of Interior and received confirmation that the NEC would allow people to use expired cards. He also explained that citizens could complete an application for a new identification card and keep a copy of the form in case they encountered problems later on. Finally, in response to questions over party responsiveness, MNA Sao said that any party that made promises must work to fulfill them, adding that people had the ability to vote for a different party if their previous choice disappointed them.

SRP MNA Mao Monyvann described the importance of territorial protection and explained that Vietnam had encroached on Cambodia's land based on the border demarcation from a United Nations map. He added that Vietnamese were buying land and getting concessions at a time when Cambodians needed land for farming. Responding to agricultural concerns, he suggested proper irrigation systems, a training center for farmers, and social concessions. MNA Mao agreed with the participant who said that parties simply provided gifts to their constituents prior to the elections and urged people not to vote based on gifts but on the policies of each party. He also explained that development projects were national achievements, not party achievements, saying that in other countries no party would dare take credit for a development project. In response to concerns about CPP's new classification policy, MNA Mao suggested that the party should only use this at the higher level. He also asked the local authorities not to discriminate against people based on their political opinions.

The commune chief, Dy Phon, explained that there were 76 plans for development in the commune, but the Asian Development Bank and other international organizations did not provide the necessary funds. He said that he needed people to

contribute their own money or else expect delays. He asserted that his office did not discriminate and everyone was entitled to participate at commune council meetings. He added that he worked only 15 days a year for the political party and 30 days a year for the elections, but the rest of the year for the people. The district deputy chief, Moeun Pha, said that the local authorities paid for the NEC officials to come and fix the registration problems. Land disputes, he argued, were between a family and their neighbors. The local authorities were not the court and could only try to mediate a compromise.

D. Kampong Chhnang

In cooperation with provincial NGO partner Community Capacities for Development (CCD), NDI held two constituency dialogues in Kampong Chhnang.

Chrokr Tnoath CD

NDI's first CD in Kampong Chhnang was in Chrokr Tnoath pagoda, Chrokr Tnoath village, Chhean Leung commune, Samaki Meanchey district on February 27, 2010. CPP MNA Ker Chanmony and SRP MNA Khy Vandeth participated in the event. Attending the CD were 405 participants (125 women), including six provincial and district level staff (four women), the female district governor, three commune chiefs, five commune councilors (one woman), 20 district and commune level police officers, and ten village chiefs (five women).

In the opening remarks, CPP MNA Ker Chanmony explained that she had participated in government since 1979 in various roles, including as a commune chief, provincial councilor, director of the provincial department of women's affairs, and deputy provincial governor. She explained that National Assembly members were responsible for making laws, conducting oversight and monitoring the government, and representing the concerns of both their constituency and the whole country. She described recent legislative sessions and pledged to work with constituents to bring justice and foster development. SRP MNA Khy Vandeth said that he regularly visited this commune but the CD event was special since representatives from two political parties were present to listen to citizens' concerns and needs. Reminding citizens that economic, political, and development problems existed in all countries, MNA Khy encouraged people to raise their concerns to the MNAs.

Sixteen CD participants spoke during the Chrokr Tnoath dialogue, including three women. Five different participants, as well as the Chhean Leung deputy commune chief, raised a land dispute involving a new hydroelectric dam project undertaken by a Korean company in the area. Families had not received compensation, the company prevented people from crossing the river to access their fields, and the trucks were damaging the roads. Two other land disputes were raised. Three participants also questioned the use of 99-year lease concessions to private companies, many of which were foreign-owned.



Post-constituency dialogue focus group in Chhean Leung commune, Samaki Meanchey district, Kampong Chhnang province on February 27, 2010.

Three participants inquired about the policy differences of the parties, including the different dates on which the parties celebrated peace (January 1979 for the CPP and the anniversary of the 1991 Paris Peace Accords for the opposition). They emphasized their desire for parties to work together. Two participants asked about immigration legislation. Three participants reported that police took bribes through illegal checkpoints and district tax officials were illegally taxing farming equipment. Participants also requested a bridge, a health center, lower gas prices, and a crackdown on youth gangs. One participant specifically asked NDI to open offices in the communities to better report the concerns and difficulties of the people to the NA and the government. He also asked NDI to organize forums in all 24 Cambodian provinces.

SRP MNA Khy Vandeth argued that national economic growth must be balanced with improvements in living standards at the local level, and the government must study the impact of investments. For example, he said the Korean company was affecting many people but the dam might provide water to many people too. He argued the law on expropriation must, therefore, be implemented fairly with appropriate compensation. On the other land issues, he stated that the title allocation process was problematic, and local officials often demanded bribes. MNA Khy criticized the 99-year economic concessions to companies, which frequently brought in foreign laborers and provided no benefit to Cambodians. On a related matter, he said immigration laws should be better enforced.

MNA Khy said he preferred not to waste time comparing October 23, 1991 to January 7, 1979 because the discussion could have a bad effect on the dialogue. He only noted that 1979 was the liberation from the Khmer Rouge and 1991 was peace for all parties. He emphasized the importance of cooperation between political parties, arguing that the opposition only opposed when necessary to ensure government actions benefited society. On infrastructure projects, he promised to take the requests to the government. MNA Khy also pledged to request a decrease in gas taxes, with the goal of possibly reducing the price of gas to 3,000 *Riel* per liter.

CPP MNA Ker Chanmony explained to participants that development sometimes had negative effects but greater benefits. She said that the government was providing fair compensation to the people. Regarding the Korean dam, she said that the government needed time to settle the compensation, and she would request that the company repair the road. On land titles, she encouraged people to obtain their documents to avoid trouble later. She spoke forcefully against officials misusing their position through bribes. On price issues, she explained that Cambodia practiced free market principles, and suggested that farmers improve the quality of goods produced. Infrastructure requests, she explained, required study and assessments, but she would bring them to the proper authorities. She said Prime Minister Hun Sen was always happy when he heard about a new road, because it meant the CPP would win again in the elections. In response to concerns about immigration, she described globalization and how different nationalities now lived together. MNA Ker said that January 1979 was important because it was the day Cambodia was liberated from Pol Pot.

Sre Robang CD

NDI held a second CD in Kampong Chhnang in Sre Robang village, Chiep commune, Teuk Phos district on July 17, 2010. CPP MNA Ker Chanmony and SRP MNA Ho Vann participated in the event. A total of 533 people (330 women) attended the dialogue, including one district governor, one district councilor, two commune chiefs, one female commune councilor, eight village chiefs (including five women), ten district or commune police officers, three CPP staff members (two women), and three SRP staff members.

During the opening remarks, SRP MNA Ho Vann acknowledged that Cambodia faced problems as a result of the global economic crisis. He urged the Cambodian government to help farmers and low-income people by upgrading agricultural skills, irrigation systems, and health services. MNA Ho discussed the roles and responsibilities of MNAs from both the ruling and non-ruling parties and described their requirement to defend and serve the interests of Cambodian citizens. CPP MNA Ker Chanmony explained that 123 MNAs were elected by voters in 2008. The ruling CPP won 90 seats, SRP won 26, HRP three, and FCP and NP each won two seats. She said that MNAs approved laws, provided oversight, and made constituency visits.



A participant describes the lack of irrigation systems for farmers in his community during a constituency dialogue in Chiep commune, Teuk Phos district, Kampong Chhnang province on July 17, 2010.

Sixteen participants, including eight women, spoke during the Sre Robang CD. Seven participants raised land conflicts, emphasizing the irresponsibility of local authorities and the uneven application of the law. Villagers reported that local authorities demanded bribes for land titles. Participants also complained about the distribution of social land concessions and the unethical behavior of land brokers. Four participants reported that the logging and handicraft processing regulations were selectively enforced and several complained of poor security in the community. Five participants raised infrastructure needs, specifically canals and dams. One participant shared his concern about the issuance of identification cards. Participants also described food shortages.

SRP MNA Ho Vann suggested that an independent committee be formed to provide justice to victims of land disputes, and stated that if the SRP were in power, it would stop all economic concessions to companies and provide land only to farmers. On the issue of irrigation, he explained that the commune council had a development plan and that irrigation needs should be addressed in this plan. Regarding concerns about illegal activities, MNA Ho encouraged local authorities to implement the law fairly. He emphasized that it was against the Constitution for people to be treated unequally or discriminated against, adding that the laws in Cambodia were good but enforcement was weak. He urged local authorities to distribute identification cards quickly as they were critical for employment, receiving land titles, and participating in elections.

CPP MNA Ker Chanmony pledged to consult with local authorities on land conflicts and conduct an investigation of all the cases raised in order to identify solutions. She also explained aspects of the land law and the conflict resolution process. In response to concerns about unequal enforcement of the law, she stressed that local authorities must act consistently and encouraged people to report illegal activities. She also asked the local authorities and police to strengthen security in the area and investigate robbery cases. MNA Ker explained that she had discussed the need for improved irrigation systems with the relevant departments to make improvements and pledged to continue to study farmers' needs and advocate them to the government.

On the distribution of identification cards, security in the commune, and land disputes, Ou Sakhon, district governor of Tuek Phos, stressed that the laws must be equally enforced regardless of whether people were rich or poor. He pledged to review all cases raised at the CD. Regarding food shortages, he pledged to make a request to the Cambodian Red Cross for help and asked the village and commune chiefs to identify and record those who needed food.

E. Kampong Speu

In cooperation with provincial NGO partner Ponlok Sangkom Kampuchea (PSK), NDI held two CDs in Kampong Speu.

Teuk La'ak CD

NDI held its first Kampong Speu CD in Teuk La'ak pagoda, Teuk La'ak village, Taing Krauch commune, Samraong Tong district on March 27, 2010. CPP Senator Lak Oun and SRP MNA Nuth Rumduol participated in the event. Attending the CD were

434 participants (157 women), including the deputy provincial governor, six members of the provincial staff (one woman), five provincial councilors, the district governor, the deputy district governor, two district councilors, six district staff members, three commune chiefs, seven commune councilors (one woman), 19 village and vice village chiefs (three women), and five commune police officers.

During the opening remarks, CPP Senator Lak Oun explained that her party requested her participation in the dialogue, although she was not an MNA. She said the CPP worked hard to protect Cambodian territory and “build the country.” She explained how the National Assembly and Senate together comprised the parliament and described their legislative and oversight functions. SRP MNA Nuth Rumduol acknowledged that people had many problems in the past but no opportunity to express them. He pledged to bring their concerns to the government.

Fourteen citizens spoke during the dialogue, including three women. Three land disputes were raised, one involving forestry administration officials allegedly stealing people’s land. Eight participants described the need for irrigation systems – canals, dams, wells, reservoirs, and lakes. Participants also requested roads, a soccer field, a bridge, and a dormitory for monks. One woman requested that MNAs educate people about healthcare practices and another participant asked for a greater government focus on education. Some participants expressed partisan views, with one man describing the poor reputation of the SRP and another stating that the ruling party always considered the people’s needs.

Many participants expressed appreciation for and amazement at meeting their representatives for the first time. One woman described how she survived Pol Pot times, often without enough to eat, and now had a chance to speak to her representatives, thanks to NDI’s constituency dialogue.

SRP MNA Nuth Rumduol reported that land conflicts were a significant problem in Kampong Speu, referencing a high-profile case involving CPP Senator Ly Yong Phat who seized land from over 600 families as part of a concession. MNA Nuth asked for further details on the allegations of land grabbing by the forestry administration and promised to investigate the matter, adding that no government body could take land without notifying people and following a legal process. Infrastructure requests, he explained, fell under the responsibility of the government, which received foreign aid for such projects. He added that the SRP had no access to the national budget. Regarding questions about the SRP, he explained that the party was gaining support and had increased its number of seats in the NA during the last election, but still did not have access to radio and television to reach more people. MNA Nuth pledged to work with the CPP to fulfill all requests from the audience.

CPP Senator Lak Oun stated that one of the land cases was under the forest administration’s jurisdiction, with possible authorization from the provincial governor, but that she would investigate. On other requests, Senator Lak asked people to remember their living conditions under Pol Pot, adding that CPP members contributed their own money to help people. She pledged to work with the government to address the water and other problems but explained the shortage of funding and the need for donations.

Samraong Tong district chief, Harg Kimnhen, stated that if any forestry administration officials prevented people from farming their land, they should come see him. He added that the government conducted many assessments prior to land decisions.

Veal Lo Veang CD

NDI's second CD in Kampong Speu was held in Resting Hall (Sala Chhor Tean), Veal Lo Veang village, Kat Phluk commune, Boseth district on August 28, 2010. CPP Senator Lak Oun and SRP MNA Nuth Rumduol participated in the event. Attending the CD were 467 people (192 women), including the deputy provincial governor, district governor, five district councilors, one district staff member, three commune chiefs, five commune councilors, three commune police, and seven village chiefs or vice-chiefs. The district governor at this event accused NDI of "being a thief" because it did not provide equal speaking time to local authorities as it did to the national representatives.

During the opening remarks, CPP Senator Lak Oun explained she was filling in for the CPP MNA who could not be present due to illness. She emphasized that constituent visits, in addition to lawmaking, were an important obligation of all representatives but that limited budgets made it difficult. She said that all MNAs were poor and that MNAs used to arrive at the National Assembly by motorcycle taxis. SRP MNA Nuth Rumduol said that he visited Veal Lo Veang often and had seen the poverty, including one time when he witnessed people eating animal feed. He explained that in the past people may only have heard the voice of the SRP but never seen the party, but now there was one SRP MNA from the province.

Fifteen citizens spoke during the Veal Lo Veang dialogue, including three women. Seven participants described land conflicts, several speaking on behalf of many families. Three described how 80 families from Phnom Tou Teng were being evicted from their land by high ranking officials and had their houses burned down by army officers. They had travelled with 10 people from their village in the mountains



A MNA speaks during a constituency dialogue in Kat Phluk commune, Boseth district, Kampong Speu province on August 28, 2010.

early in the morning to attend the CD. Another participant described how local authorities confiscated people's land titles to make way for a company. The Vietnam border was raised, with a participant asking why the government fought for the Thai border and not the Vietnamese one.

Three audience members raised security and law enforcement issues, describing the lack of resolution to cases by the authorities. Four participants also reported that local authorities demanded bribes for services and charged additional fees for documents like family books. A commune councilor requested MNAs to push the Ministry of Interior to issue identification cards for people because in 2007 there were 1,500 cases of people using 1018 forms⁸ and the police demanded bribes for these forms. He also asked the MNAs to have the NEC cancel the current voters' list due to numerous errors. Other participants requested wells, a healthcare center, an elementary school, a pond, and a reduction in fertilizer and gas prices. Another participant reported that many people lacked food. Two participants angrily disputed this, with one suggesting that it was an embarrassment to Cambodia to say this, particularly on the radio.

Partisan issues emerged among audience members. One participant asked where the SRP had been in 1979, stating that if SRP MNA Nuth Rumduol loved the Khmer people he would have helped topple the Khmer Rouge government. Another participant complained of political discrimination, accusing local authorities of giving tax revenues to CPP party members only.

On the Phnom Tou Teng land dispute, SRP MNA Nuth Rumduol asked people to provide him with legal documents so he could investigate. Under the law, he explained, if someone had occupied land for more than five years, they could be owners. MNA Nuth reported that 85% of Cambodians were farmers and relied on the land to survive. He said that the government should listen to people and ensure that they get a fair price for their land and the right to refuse to sell. On the border issue, MNA Nuth expressed his satisfaction with the government for protecting Preah Vihear from Thailand and voiced his support for Prime Minister Hun Sen's submission on the issue to the United Nations. He added that the government should do the same with regard to protecting the border with Vietnam. In response to concerns about identification cards, family books, and taxes, MNA Nuth said they were all corruption problems and called upon the new anti-corruption unit to eliminate them.

MNA Nuth agreed that there was definitely a need for a school, and he would try to raise contributions. In response to other requests, he explained that taxes were meant to be used for building infrastructure and reminded people it was their money. On the issue of poverty, MNA Nuth said that it was not embarrassing to be hungry – it was reality. In response to the question about where he was in 1979, he explained that he was living in Cambodia “as a slave” to the Khmer Rouge.

⁸ Form 1018 is a document used for voting by people who lack other identification.



A participant describes how cows and buffalos are often stolen but police fail to intervene. He asked the MNAs to solve this problem during a constituency dialogue in Kat Phluk commune, Borseth district, Kampong Speu province on August 28, 2010.

CPP Senator Lak Oun acknowledged there were land problems, and explained that the government had created the Land Dispute Commission to resolve conflicts based on the law. She asked people to provide their documents for resolution. She also urged participants not to occupy land without a clear designation. In response to complaints about law enforcement, Senator Lak said there was a shortage of police and it took time to investigate cases. She added that the courts were independent. Responding to concerns about corruption, she reported that local officials claimed they did not ask for bribes but people gave money voluntarily. She asked officials not to accept any additional money regardless of the purpose. Senator Lak promised to bring people's requests to the government, but reminded them the budget was limited so the government could not meet the needs of every commune. She quoted the Prime Minister as saying spending took place in "frog steps" (i.e. slowly) based on the year's budget.

Senator Lak asked the local authorities to send resolutions and documents to NDI and allocated the rest of her time to the local authorities. Nuth Kimsreng, governor of Borseth district, said the local authorities were there to take care of people and they were like "the people's parents." Regarding the Phnom Tou Teng case, he said he was looking into ways to distribute land to the people. On law enforcement, Nuth explained there were only nine police for 11 villages, creating a challenge. He suggested villages needed security teams with participation from citizens. Nuth also said it was important to recognize the achievements of the government since the Khmer Rouge regime. He emphasized that the government even helped people who disagreed with its policies. He then said NDI was like a "thief of democracy" because it did not allow equal speaking time to local authorities at the constituency dialogues.

F. Kampong Thom

In cooperation with provincial NGO partner Cooperation for Development of Cambodia (CoDec), NDI held two constituency dialogues in Kampong Thom.

Svay Ear CD

On January 30, 2010, NDI held the first CD in Kampong Thom in Svay Ear pagoda, Svay Ear village, Chamnar Krom commune, Stoung district. CPP MNA Sik Bunhok and SRP MNA Men Sothavarin participated in the event. Attending the CD were 1,002 people (551 women), including two provincial councilors, the district governor, three district councilors, the director of the provincial land and urban department, two commune chiefs, two commune councilors, four district and commune police officers, and 36 village chiefs or vice-chiefs (including five women).

NDI's community volunteers reported that each village chief had earlier pledged to bring 200 people from their communities, including one group from a distant village who arrived in trucks. There were reports that the commune chief's wife, however, had tried to prevent people from attending and had temporarily blocked the trucks from driving down the road from the main highway, for fear that villagers would accuse her family of being involved in land grabbing.

In opening remarks, CPP MNA Sik Bunhok explained that NA President Heng Samrin encouraged MNAs to work hard to solve problems for citizens, and he promised to work for the people of Kampong Thom. SRP MNA Men Sothavarin explained that although his voice was limited in the National Assembly, he could bring messages to the government, and it was his obligation to represent his constituents. He added that citizens had the power in a democracy; they could elect the leaders of their choice and interact directly with those leaders at any level without interference.

Fourteen audience members spoke during the Svay Ear dialogue, including eight women. Ten participants raised land conflicts involving development projects. Eight people accused local officials, mainly commune councilors, of involvement in these conflicts -- grabbing land without compensation (including accusations against a commune chief for seizing 223 hectares), illegally obtaining thumbprints, and threatening community residents. Several participants raised disputes involving companies, including a case in which a company seized 778 hectares from 99 families in 15 different villages.

Two participants described problems in fishing communities, including the destruction of inundated forests (thereby destroying breeding grounds for fish) and illegal sales of community fishing plots. One participant asked for increased attention to education and a solution to youth gangs.

SRP MNA Men Sothavarin expressed dismay over citizens' struggles to obtain land while companies were receiving large economic land concessions, adding it was wrong for authorities to take land from the people they were supposed to help. He also accused some officials of keeping land for themselves when distributing social concessions. He promised to look into each case, asking people for more information, and said he would write King Norodom Sihamoni about the price of land for poor people. He offered his own money to resolve one case. MNA Men also pledged to investigate the fishing issues and write letters to the Ministry of Agriculture. In addition, he promised to write the provincial department of education on teachers' salaries. He reminded people they could vote for new officials if the current ones caused problems or did not perform well.

MNA Men briefly discussed the case against Sam Rainsy on the Vietnam border, explaining that he was helping protect people from land grabbing but was accused of undermining the government. He explained the role of the opposition was to provide oversight and bring concerns of the people to the government.

CPP MNA Sik Bunhok emphasized the need for a better understanding of the land law, describing several key points and reading text directly from the law, particularly passages on the difference between state and private property. He explained that legal ownership would need to be established for those claiming violations of their land rights, adding that any local authorities who grabbed land would be punished. He encouraged people to provide detailed evidence against the commune councilors who seized land. He acknowledged farmers needed land for cultivating rice and reported that the government had distributed 100,000 hectares of public land already. In response to fishing concerns, he stressed that no one had the right to occupy or damage wetlands. On education, he reported that the Prime Minister had already declared education a priority for 2010. He asked people to compare the situation today to the Khmer Rouge regime when there were no schools.

The commune chief from Trea commune, who had been accused of land grabbing, declared that he returned all the land in question to the people. Other local officials stood up to support the statement. The commune chief added that the council held meetings to explain the case to the community.

Roka Chuor CD

NDI held a second CD in Kampong Thom in Roka Chuor village, Kleng commune, Sandan district on June 5, 2010. CPP MNA Sik Bunhok, SRP MNA Kimsour Phirith, and FCP MNA Kuch Moly participated in the event. A total of 527 people (372 women) attended the dialogue, including one member of the provincial secretary's staff, one provincial councilor, one district governor, one deputy district governor, five district councilors, four commune chiefs, ten commune councilors (including two women), 18 village and vice village chiefs (including two women), 15 district or commune police officers, two CPP staff members, two SRP staff members, and two FCP staff members. A large group of students from a nearby secondary school also attended with their teacher.



A participant requests MNAs to help build a bridge for her community during a constituency dialogue in Kleng commune, Sandan district, Kampong Thom province on June 05 2010.

During opening remarks, SRP MNA Kimsour Phirith explained he was an MNA from another province and was replacing the SRP representative from Kampong Thom who was on an important mission. He emphasized it was critical for the MNAs to listen to the concerns of the people and bring them to the government. FCP MNA Kuch Moly explained that MNAs made and amended laws, approved the national budget, carried out confidence votes, provided oversight of the government, and represented Cambodians. He explained that MNAs were from the legislative branch, not the judiciary, so could not judge what was “right or wrong,” as that was the courts’ responsibility. CPP MNA Sik Bunhok stated that in 1993 the CPP had only 1.5 million voters but in 2008 it had 3.5 million. He said the people voted for MNAs to make laws and oversee the government, including local authorities.

Twelve participants, including one woman and two secondary school students, asked questions during the two rounds. Eight participants reported land conflicts, and people expressed their anger at local authorities and feelings of insecurity about their homes and property. People criticized 99-year concessions to companies, instead of farmers, complained they had not received pledged land from authorities, and described local authorities’ failure to provide land titles. One participant angrily stated that although people may be illiterate, they were not stupid and did not appreciate being treated without consideration. Three participants discussed their concerns about farming and need for roads, with one asking why the prices of Cambodian goods were so low but those of foreign products so high. Two participants reported that local authorities were demanding bribes for the construction of a school although it had already been approved by the provincial governor. A student urged authorities to crackdown on domestic violence. Two participants requested a healthcare center and two asked the government to create jobs. One person asked whether development was just for rich, high-ranking people or for all Cambodians.

On land issues, FUNCINPEC MNA Kuch Moly agreed that 99-year concessions were too long but the government had to balance the loss of land with job creation, which concessions provided. He emphasized, however, that it was not fair when land was taken from people and given to private companies, and local authorities needed to address this problem. In response to questions on pricing, he explained that there were taxes on imported goods, making them cost more, and that Cambodia needed to import many products because it did not produce enough. He suggested that people ask the government to lower the price of gasoline. He promised to report on the community’s need for a health center, and agreed that domestic violence was an important issue and local authorities should enforce the law. He stated that some infrastructure projects, like roads and bridges, carried out by Cambodians were not properly completed, as could be seen when compared to the high quality of foreign-implemented projects such as the Japanese Friendship Bridge. He stressed that development was for everyone, not just high officials. FCP MNA Kuch conceded his time to the CPP MNA to continue his explanation of the land law.

SRP MNA Kimsour Phirith emphasized that people voted for the government and therefore the government must work for the people. He argued that Cambodia did not help its farmers. He explained that in other countries people could obtain loans for their land to do more farming without using it as collateral, as required by ACLEDA. He said that all Cambodians must use the land more efficiently, like the Vietnamese and Thais who used irrigation technology and did not just rely on the weather.

MNA Kimsour explained that a new land law was passed in 2001, so any land seized after that was done so illegally. He warned people to inform the local authorities of their land status immediately, otherwise they could lose their property to an influential person. He joked that in Cambodia there were two rules: the rich were never wrong; and if the rich were wrong, see rule number one. He also agreed that 99-year concessions were problematic. Regarding infrastructure, he said that the CPP MNA should respond. On the price of gas, MNA Kimsour said he had already urged the government to reduce the cost, but there had been no response. He said he would write to the Ministry of Health about the health center.

CPP MNA Sik Bunhok explained that Cambodia had a free market system and could not influence prices, and he encouraged people to produce more. He explained that the commune council had money to build roads and implement other projects, so the community should submit their requests to the council. In response to the request for a health center, he said that he would ask the Ministry of Health.

MNA Sik spent the majority of his time explaining issues related to land, reading extensively from the actual text of the land law. He said that there were only five kinds of ownership under the new land law: private, private state, public state, community, and indigenous. He added that one could not attempt to repossess land after 2001. MNA Sik explained that the government wrote a policy book in 2009 to clarify issues related to land management and use. On social concessions, he said if the government provided a concession to 300 families, more than 100 of them would sell the land. The idea was not to give concessions for people to earn money, he stressed, but for people to use the land for farming. The 99-year private concessions, he explained, were provided to companies because they had the money and resources to develop the area. For example, a Vietnamese rubber company, he argued, could benefit many people through employment. Concessions were 99 years in length in order to provide adequate time for development, as in the case of mineral extraction. MNA Sik pledged to try to solve their problems and encouraged people to resolve issues based on the law.

G. Kampot

In cooperation with provincial community volunteers (CVs), NDI held two CDs in Kampot province.

Angkor Chey Boeung CD

On February 13, 2010, NDI held a CD in Kampot in Angkor Chey Boeung pagoda, Angkor Chey Boeung 1 village, Damnak Kantuoth Khang Thbong commune, Kampong Trach district. CPP MNA Som Chen and SRP MNA Mu Sochua participated in the event. Attending the CD were 982 participants (325 women), including the provincial governor, two provincial councilors, five district governors (one woman), 37 district councilors (ten women), 14 commune chiefs (six women), 15 commune councilors (three women), and 15 police officers. NDI's CVs also estimated that more than 200 CPP party activists were present.

In the opening remarks, CPP MNA Som Chen emphasized the progress made in the district since the Khmer Rouge regime. He also described the relative security of the area today, comparing it to 1994 when three westerners were executed. MNA Som added that all Cambodians had the freedom to participate in forums such as the CDs

due to CPP leadership. SRP MNA Mu Sochua stated that people must work closely with the government, through voting and participation in forums, to create better living conditions based on democracy. She also explained her participation in the CD event as part of her obligation as an elected representative. She described the opposition's role as filling gaps in obligations overlooked by the government, but emphasized the opposition's respect for government officials.

Thirteen CD participants spoke during the dialogue, including three women. Four participants did not raise specific questions but instead used their time to praise the CPP, particularly for progress made in infrastructure, and to emphasize the country's liberation from the Khmer Rouge in January 1979. They also attacked the SRP MNA, other participants, and NDI. One participant called the SRP MNA "ignorant" and "arrogant" and questioned her experience as an MNA. This represented a violation of the code of conduct, and the moderator intervened. Two participants criticized NDI for implying that democracy needed to be strengthened in Cambodia. One woman who argued that the country's current development benefited only the rich was quickly attacked by other participants for raising a complaint.

Specific requests from other, more neutral, participants focused on agricultural needs, including improvements in irrigation, education on pesticide use, increasing the market price for rice, and methods to improve productivity. Two participants directly addressed youth issues, including the need to eradicate youth gangs and challenges in finding employment for young people.

SRP MNA Mu defended herself and her party, explaining that the opposition did not control the budget and thus could not direct spending. She argued that the national budget and development plan should focus more on agriculture, claiming that less than one percent was currently spent on agricultural-related issues, and on reducing the income disparity in the country. She described the SRP plan to recruit responsible investment in rural communities, provide technical training for farmers, and lower interest rates and gas prices. She discussed the importance of education and need for positive youth role models, and described SRP's plan for increased training opportunities for young adults. MNA Mu also said she strongly supported the government's defense of the border with Thailand.



A student discusses the limited opportunities for students to pursue their studies in the community as well as the lack of jobs for graduates during a constituency dialogue in Damnak Kantuoth Khang Thbong commune, Kampong Trach district, Kampot province on February 13, 2010.

CPP MNA Som Chen urged participants to respect all speakers, adding that NDI's forums were the only ones in which he participated because they were fair and neutral, unlike other organizations' events. He explained the "Three Pillars" of Prime Minister Hun Sen's development plan, based on benefits to the state, investors, and citizens. He described the cement, salt, and power factories that were bringing development to Kampot. He also highlighted the 16 high schools and 84 secondary schools as evidence of social development in the area. He added that he spent his own money to dig a number of wells in a nearby village. MNA Som then allocated the majority of his time to five different local officials.

Sen Sothea, a provincial official, accused participants of "creating anarchy" by expressing dissatisfaction. He said people could send their children to work in factories in Phnom Penh to improve their living conditions. The head of the Kampot agricultural department spoke next and criticized the CD event as undemocratic because the moderator was selecting participants to speak. When he went over time and the moderator asked him to stop, he refused to comply. The director of the provincial land department stated that approximately 26,000 farmers in 170 villages had already been fairly provided land titles. He said community land titles in Kampot must now be issued by the provincial government and commune councilors.

Another official, the head of the Kampot education department, advised students to study hard to have a bright future because the government could not guarantee jobs. He pointed to the United States to illustrate that some countries had a high rate of unemployment and told citizens to look at the whole government policy, including attempts to attract foreign investment. He asked why the Asian Development Bank and World Bank would continue to fund the education system if they believed it would go to waste.

The CPP MNA also provided 15 minutes of his closing time to the district governor, Um Sinath. The district governor argued at length that local government was already addressing food security and youth gangs. On irrigation and farming education, Mr. Um chastised citizens for not participating in the existing government programs already designed to help. On unemployment, he pointed to Prime Minister Hun Sen's recent contribution of his own money to send women back to the provinces when they lost their factory jobs. He asked people not to raise these issues because it was not good for society.

Trapaing Manos CD

NDI's second CD in Kampot was held in Ang Svay pagoda, Trapaing Manos village, Dang Tong commune and district on July 10, 2010. CPP MNA Som Chen and SRP MNA Mu Sochua participated. Attending the CD were 667 participants (219 women), 12 provincial officials (one woman), three district governors (one woman), 12 district councilors (two women), 41 commune chiefs (13 women), ten district and commune police officers, and five military police officers.

NDI and its community volunteers encountered several problems at this event. Hundreds of activists from the CPP, many of whom were not from the area, were brought in and monopolized the chairs. The CPP MNA allocated the majority of his time to local authorities, many of whom repeatedly violated the code of conduct by

making personal attacks on the SRP MNA and other SRP officials. When NDI reminded them of the code of conduct, they criticized NDI, accusing the Institute of favoring the opposition. Local officials also tried to disrupt NDI's focus groups and told people not to participate.

In opening remarks, SRP MNA Mu Sochua expressed her appreciation for the local authorities and discussed the importance of multiple parties in a democracy. She emphasized that they all had different voices but were part of one Khmer family. CPP MNA Som Chen reported that the commune was now the most developed in the province, with 10,000 televisions and 11,000 houses. He stressed that there were "no bullets now, just development."

Twelve participants (five women) spoke at the Trapaing Manos CD, and most participants used their time to praise the government and criticize the opposition. Those who raised any concerns or complaints were attacked by other participants. One participant shouted at MNA Mu, chastising her for not recognizing January 7 as independence day. Another criticized SRP for potentially "causing civil war" on the border with Vietnam due to the Sam Rainsy case. Another participant stated that opposition oversight of the government should only point out positive aspects, not negative ones.

Three participants raised concerns about the lack of water in the area and requested dams and canals, but they were then harshly condemned by another participant for complaining. When NDI's moderator interrupted the man for shouting at and insulting other participants, in violation of the code of conduct, he accused the moderator of being biased. One land conflict was raised, in which participants reported that local authorities had burned three houses down. Again, another participant criticized CD participants for complaining and accused them of lying. Other requests included a university, a road, and free healthcare.

CPP MNA Som Chen spoke for 10 minutes and then allocated the rest of his time to local authorities. On healthcare, he said that the district increased the number of centers from three to five. He emphasized that in the past there were no schools but now there were 80 in the district, thanks to him. In response to the land conflict, MNA Som said he did not believe that local authorities had attacked people's homes. He said that the border issue with Vietnam was one for CPP alone to address. MNA Som also emphasized that the courts were independent institutions and all people must respect their decisions. In closing, he said that he strongly supported the CD program and had participated in many such events.

SRP MNA Mu Sochua said Cambodia needed an increased budget for agriculture. She explained that Kampot had great soil and grew many things but did not have good systems and technology, leading to poor production and inability to compete on the market. On the land conflict, she said local authorities did indeed destroy people's homes and the wrong-doers should be punished. On the land law, she said that there was a maximum of 10,000 hectares for government concessions, yet many were much larger. She explained that the SRP tried to investigate land issues and protect the people by doing assessments.

In response to the border issue, MNA Mu said that the SRP did not want conflict but was seeking justice for people who had lost land to Vietnam. She added that the border committee should have multiple parties, and asked whether the existing committee had ever informed the people about the current demarcation controversy. She also discussed the judicial system, saying that the courts often imprisoned people with no cause.

On development, she explained that the government had a national plan and budget, which was the public's money from taxes and foreign donations. SRP, she said, was serving to ensure this money was not lost. She pointed out that healthcare was a free public service, yet people still encountered demands for money. On education, she asked people where the schools and scholarships for the poor were, adding that SRP had requested education reform and a budget increase. Finally, she asked participants not to blame people for sharing their concerns and problems with MNAs, adding that this was the point of the dialogue.

MNA Mu gave five minutes of her speaking time to Pen Serita, an SRP district councilor in Chhuk district. Mr. Pen reported that he had visited the area with the land dispute and confirmed that local authorities had destroyed people's property. He added that community residents were brave to come to the CD and raise their concerns.

CPP MNA Som Chen allotted his time to five CPP officials. First, the director of the provincial cabinet, Sim Vuthea, said that "he organized this event" and people came from everywhere, demonstrating freedom. He also accused district SRP councilor Mr. Pen of bias. Mr. Sim pointed out that 10,000 people were living in the area of the land dispute, and asked why only 10 had complained. Then the director of the provincial department for water resource management reported that the government had been working on the building of dams and canals since the third mandate but had to do it "step by step."

Chan Chesda, the director of the provincial department for agriculture, spent the bulk of his time criticizing NDI and accusing the Institute of being biased toward the SRP. He said that people had concerns about their living conditions, but the government was working on them, and argued that Cambodia was more productive than Thailand and Vietnam. Pang Bunnaroth, the director of the provincial department for land management and urbanization, explained that there was a process for receiving land titles and people had to meet certain requirements. Finally, the head of the district operational hospital responded to concerns raised about healthcare in the area. He reported that his office was working on getting vaccines for children and trying to open a new commune or district center but first needed to do an assessment.

In response to the accusation that NDI was biased, NDI country director Laura Thornton explained that the leadership of all five political parties had agreed upon a code of conduct for the CDs, and the moderator was tasked with enforcing this code. She said it was acceptable for people to criticize policies or positions, but if someone made personal attacks, insults, or accusations aimed directly at an individual, then the moderator was required to interrupt. It did not mean that NDI favored one party over another. Thornton said that NDI would continue to review this code of conduct with the party leaders, and solicit their suggestions for improvement and further clarification.

She added that criticisms of moderators were expected, and NDI had been at various times accused of being biased toward the CPP as well.

H. Kandal

In cooperation with provincial NGO partner Indradevi Association (IDA), NDI held two CDs in Kandal province.

Chey Uddom CD

On January 16, 2010, NDI held a CD in Chey Uddom village, Samraong Thom commune, Kien Svay district. CPP MNA Ouk Damry, SRP MNA Chan Cheng, and HRP MNA Ou Chanrith participated in the event. Attending the CD were 402 villagers (170 women), including the deputy provincial governor, district governor, commune chief (who is a woman), eight district and commune police officers, and two district staff members.

In the opening remarks, CPP MNA Ouk Damry referenced a ceremony the day before in which King Norodom Sihamoni gave away 80 houses to the poor. He quoted the King's thanks to CPP leaders for their hard work to develop Cambodia. SRP MNA Chan Cheng reviewed the four roles of a parliamentarian: make laws; approve the budget; provide oversight; and visit constituents and respond to their concerns. He emphasized that building schools or roads was not the role of the NA. HRP MNA Ou Chanrith described how the government was formed by the party gaining the most votes, and that the opposition included the party or parties with fewer votes. Although they may have disagreements, he emphasized that all parties knew they were one Khmer people. He stressed that voters had the responsibility to monitor the actions of their representatives.

Fifteen CD participants spoke during the Kandal dialogue, six of whom were women. Eleven participants described land conflicts, several complaining of blocked access to previously accessible areas and others describing land-grabbing. Community residents complained about the inaction of local authorities on these land cases and the demands for money by the courts, with one woman describing how a judge told her directly that she did not have enough money to bring a suit to the court. The deputy chief of Korki Thom commune accused the CPP of taking public land used for planting sugar cane to build a party office. Another participant had 700 signatures requesting the conversion of a local forest area into public land. A monk claimed that six former militia members grabbed land from the pagoda.

Three questions focused specifically on corruption, and participants described bribes demanded by local officials for documents, licenses, and fishing practices. Participants also complained about high interest rates and prices of goods, and one person requested a well. One participant also asked the opposition whether they were trying to destroy the nation by being critical. He accused the SRP of racial discrimination and the HRP of orchestrating protests instead of contributing to a solution.

SRP MNA Chan Cheng expressed familiarity with most of the specific cases raised at the event and often requested additional clarification from both participants

and from local authorities during his remarks. He discussed a controversy involving a three star general accused of paying only some people for the purchase of a thousand hectares of land. MNA Chan argued that land-grabbing by the rich and powerful was an impediment to poverty reduction. He advised citizens to use local dispute resolution for land conflicts to avoid the potential corruption of court officials. Also on corruption, he acknowledged the low salaries for police and officials but stressed the importance of equal enforcement. In response to complaints about agricultural debt, he explained that other countries had provisions for poor people to borrow without interest and that Cambodia should adopt this policy.

MNA Chan defended the opposition by explaining that opposition parties had no power to tax, develop the budget, or implement programs. He reminded citizens that they could vote the opposition into government, giving them the power to do these things and help people. He also clarified the details of Sam Rainsy's case, saying it was an issue that should be settled by an international court.

HRP MNA Ou Chanrith framed the issues as a struggle between the rich and poor, particularly expressing concern that the courts were not independent and required people to pay money. He asked officials to understand the plight of the poor and not demand bribes. In response to the land cases, he requested that the district governor attempt to solve the problems and provide a report to the MNAs. Regarding the country's development, he explained that the nation's money, derived from international loans, donations, and tax collection, did not belong to the government but to the people. Therefore, he said, the government must use these funds correctly, accountably, and transparently, and the opposition served to provide this oversight. He asked whether participants felt that Cambodia was developed.

CPP MNA Ouk Damry explained that he was a new MNA (he was appointed in 2009 after serving as the vice president of the Cambodian Red Cross), but his family was from Samraong Thom commune and he had visited the villages in the area many times. He said land resolution was one of the government's priorities, and the land resolution committee would come to investigate the conflicts. He also dismissed claims that the CPP had used public land to build their headquarters, saying that the party fairly purchased private land. He claimed the CPP would move the headquarters if it was found to be public land.

MNA Ouk agreed with the other parliamentarians on the role of parties and the opposition, repeating that all MNAs had to conduct oversight of the government. He disagreed, however, with the implication that the CPP claimed publicly-funded development projects were from party or private donations. He added that non-ruling parties could use their resources to build roads, schools, or health centers for the public, but instead used their wealth for their own overseas trips. He reminded citizens that the King himself, not just the CPP, said the country was developing in all sectors.

The district governor said that the CPP committee would consider the request for a well. In response to the land cases, he argued that residents often had competing claims with varying documentation, requiring the land resolution committee to deliberate. He asked villagers to collect relevant documents to submit to the provincial authorities. He reminded people that they had to pay for electricity and be responsible for microloans to the bank because both were a matter of law. He added that January 7 had been made a national holiday by Royal Decree, so people should stop disputing it.

Chhork Chheu Neang CD

NDI's second CD in Kandal was held in Chhork Chheu Neang pagoda, Chhork Chheu Neang village and commune on May 8, 2010. CPP MNA Ho Naun, SRP MNA Chan Cheng, and HRP MNA Ou Chanrith participated in the event. Attending the CD were 499 citizens (222 women), one deputy provincial governor, one deputy district governor, one commune chief (a woman), and 14 district and commune police officials.

NDI's NGO partner Indradevi Association and the community volunteers reported that local authorities had threatened villagers not to attend the dialogue. One woman informed the NDI country director that the village chief told her family that



A participant describes the lack of health centers and hospitals in her community during a constituency dialogue in Chhork Chheu Neang commune, Kandal province on May 8, 2010.

only one representative from each household could attend. Military police lined the road to the CD and surrounded the event. During the group interview with local officials, at least five military policemen insisted on hovering over the group, creating an unsuitable environment and distorting the findings. The SRP local officials left the event saying they felt intimidated.

In the opening remarks, CPP MNA Ho Naun described her responsibilities in the NA as Chair of Commission Eight, which oversees the ministries of health, social affairs, employment, and women's affairs. She also described the three branches of government as outlined in the Constitution – executive, legislative, and judiciary. SRP MNA Chan Cheng emphasized that all MNAs were “workers” for the people and would sit and listen to the problems of the community. HRP MNA Ou Chanrith asked the audience whether they cared that Cambodia had no forests, about the future of their kids, about illegal immigrants, or that the government kicked people off their land. He claimed that the government and MNAs never told people about these real problems but instead visited the village a few times a year to give gifts and then left, never delivering on serious needs.

Thirteen participants (four women) spoke at the Chhork Chheu Neang CD. Three participants criticized the opposition, saying that its members did nothing but complain. Six participants had infrastructure requests, including a hospital, roads, and canals, and complained of high electricity prices. One audience member noted high interest rates and strict payment schedules for loans. Four participants described land conflicts, one in which the village chief stole farmland from families to sell to a company. In two cases, the participants explained that they had titles but nevertheless had their land seized by high ranking officials, adding that commune and district chiefs ignored these reports of violations and land seizures. Three participants described the corruption and ineffectiveness of local authorities.

SRP MNA Chan Cheng responded to the criticisms of the opposition, explaining that sometimes his party agreed with the ruling party and other times it disagreed. He added that non-ruling parties had no power in government and no resources to provide goods to citizens. He also described the changes of leadership that took place in other countries, as was happening at that time in the United Kingdom, and how the opposition party could become the ruling party and vice versa. On development, MNA Chan explained that the government received millions of dollars in aid and taxes that should be used for hospitals, roads, and other infrastructure projects, and noted that the commune council also had a budget. He described the need for an independent resolution process for land cases. Regarding the Vietnam border issue, MNA Chan said that Sam Rainsy had visited the area and confirmed that border posts had been placed on Cambodian land, according to international maps.

HRP MNA Ou Chanrith explained that hospitals, canals, roads, and other infrastructure projects were all the responsibility of the government and the local authorities, not the National Assembly. He described how the government was in great debt to other countries and people should monitor how money was spent, since \$500 million were lost every year to corruption. He encouraged people to ask for official receipts and request to see documents regarding fees. On land disputes, he asked citizens to share their documents with him so he could investigate. He also pledged to bring everyone's requests to the relevant authorities.

CPP MNA Ho Naun described in detail CPP's contributions to the country and stated to the CD audience that, without the CPP, "no one could live." With regard to corruption in the judiciary, she explained that "no one was perfect" and sometimes there were accidents. MNA Ho said that corruption in Cambodia was very small, like the "unevenness in our fingers." In response to the request for a hospital, she said she would discuss with the Ministry of Health. There were criteria, she explained, for building a hospital in a commune.

The deputy district governor explained that electricity prices were set by the national authority. He agreed that a hospital would be helpful, but they needed first to find the doctors and medicine. He also disputed a case raised about local authority corruption.

At the end of the response session, MNA Ho requested an additional five minutes to discuss Sam Rainsy's case regarding the Vietnamese border, which had been raised by a participant and addressed by MNA Chan. The moderator agreed to give all three legislators an additional five minutes of speaking time, in the interest of

fairness. When MNA Ou chose to use his extra five minutes to discuss something other than the border, MNA Ho interrupted him and complained to the moderator.

I. Kratie

In cooperation with provincial NGO partner, Kampuchea Women's Welfare Action (KWWA), NDI held two constituency dialogues in Kratie province.

Hanchey CD

On March 6, 2010, NDI held a CD in Kratie in Hanchey Le pagoda, Hanchey II village, Hanchey commune, Chhloung district. CPP MNA Troeung Thavy and SRP MNA Long Ry participated in the event. Attending the CD were 317 participants (67 women), the deputy provincial governor, two members of the provincial staff, the district governor, two district councilors, five members of the district staff, the commune chief, six commune councilors, five village chiefs or vice-chiefs (one woman), and three district or commune police officers. NDI noted that the timing of the event coincided with the tobacco harvest, which may have affected audience size.

During opening remarks, SRP MNA Long Ry reminded the audience that the event was a public forum to discuss local issues affecting the community and not a partisan event. He pledged to review all the issues with the CPP MNA to produce solutions and further development in the community, as that was their primary responsibility as MNAs. CPP MNA Troeung Thavy said that legislators agreed to attend NDI-organized events to learn about more local issues, although she also visited the province on her own. She explained that she invited representatives from various government institutions with specialized skills to attend the CD in order to dispel misinformation she knew existed in the community.

Fifteen CD participants spoke during the Hanchey dialogue, including five women. Eight participants raised land conflicts, with six involving the Casotin Company Ltd., a recipient of an economic concession. Participants accused Casotin of grabbing land from more than 500 families outside the concession area in three different villages. Participants reported that soldiers were involved in the land seizures and even threatened to shoot people. One villager asked how they "could fight a company that had soldiers and bulldozers with only their hands." Other land disputes involved seizures by commune councilors.

Three participants described irrigation needs, and several farmers requested help finding markets for their rice. Participants also requested reduced electricity prices, and two asked for improvements in education. Two participants described unequal law enforcement, reporting how government and police officials fined and extorted money from the villagers but allowed companies engaged in illegal logging to operate.

CPP MNA Troeung Thavy complained that the time allocated was inadequate to respond. On land disputes, she argued that the process of finding vacant land was complicated. She asked citizens to stop illegal land clearing, to stop requesting more than five hectares of land, and to remain patient as land was allocated within the system. On the Casotin case, she acknowledged that the company still did not understand the requirements for returning land and asked people to give her precise

information about their disputes so she could investigate. She warned people not to accuse the military or police of involvement.

MNA Troeung emphasized that the government understood the primary importance of agriculture and improving irrigation systems, but that the decentralization policy put power in the hands of local authorities to address these issues. She encouraged people to participate in council meetings. MNA Troeung agreed that the electricity prices were too high but explained that the government could not intervene due to free market principles. She would, however, try to negotiate with companies. On education, she acknowledged that there should be more scholarships for students and described the government's efforts to reduce the gap between the number of men and women students.

SRP MNA Long Ry questioned why the government kept providing land to companies but not to average Cambodians, adding that companies often did not even use their concessions. He encouraged people to try to obtain legal ownership of land, instead of moving around on social concessions. On the Casotin case, MNA Long asked people to produce a formal complaint and clarify the number of families affected, and he promised to write the Prime Minister if necessary and investigate the involvement of soldiers. He also asked local authorities to stop illegal land grabbing.

He reiterated MNA Troeung's statements on irrigation, asking local authorities to take action and submit a report to his office. On electricity, MNA Long said he would ask private companies to reconsider the price. In response to concerns about uneven law enforcement, he suggested that high ranking officials were responsible for logging and encouraged people to complain so that action could be taken. MNA Long also discussed an anonymous letter he had received just prior to the CD accusing local officials of gambling at a local café, and called upon authorities to shut the café down. On the subject of education, he expressed concern about corruption among teachers and the predominance of private universities over public ones, and described the need for free, government-sponsored education. MNA Long read out his phone number, encouraging people in the audience to contact him day or night with similar problems or questions.

The deputy provincial governor, Thun Kry, reported that the Prime Minister had issued a letter on September 2, 2008, allocating social concession land that had been previously owned by Casotin Company to 380 families. He said that a provincial expert team would investigate whether there were still displaced families, adding that some land issues were hard to solve because only one side had legal documents. On the cost of electricity, he argued that the current price was appropriate for rural areas, given the high price of gas. The SRP first deputy commune chief in Hanchey commune, who spoke next, asked the national government for better enforcement of logging regulations in order to protect the environment, a clear policy against youth drug use, and a concerted effort to improve irrigation infrastructure for farmers. He also expressed concern over the number of economic land concessions in the province and argued that the government could do more to reduce the price of electricity.

Dey Dos CD

NDI held its second CD in Kratie in Dey Dos pagoda, Dey Dos village, Prek Prasob commune, Prek Prasob district on July 24, 2010. CPP MNA Katoeu Toyeb and SRP MNA Long Ry participated in the event. A total of 440 people (320 women) attended the dialogue, including the female deputy provincial governor, one female provincial councilor, three provincial staff members (one woman), the district governor, four district councilors, six district staff members, two commune chiefs, eight commune councilors (two women), 10 district and commune police officers, five village chiefs or vice chiefs (one woman), one CPP staff member, and one SRP staff member.

During the opening remarks, CPP MNA Katoeu Toyeb compared the current level of development to the days of the Khmer Rouge, arguing that enormous progress had been made for all people. He suggested that Cambodia was developing faster than other countries in the region, like Malaysia, but it would take time. SRP MNA Long Ry briefly outlined the oversight, lawmaking, and constituent services roles of MNAs and asked everyone to work together to solve problems, including all parties, local authorities, and ministries.



A participant discusses the poor irrigation systems in his community and asks MNAs for help during a constituency dialogue in Prek Prasob commune and district, Kratie province on July 24, 2010.

Eleven participants, including three women, spoke during the Dey Dos CD. Four participants raised irrigation needs and requested permanent canal systems, explaining that they had exhausted any temporary means of improving their farming. There were three requests for roads. Two fishermen complained of a local monopoly in the fish market, where only one broker was issued a license by the provincial fishery department and forced them to sell at a low price. When they tried to sell elsewhere, they said that they were detained and intimidated. Two other fishermen complained about illegal fishing practices. Participants also raised the need for medicine and for clinics closer to their homes, solutions for unemployment, and improved sanitation in

their communities. One older woman also requested a well for her house. A participant described his desire for nonpartisanship in government, asking how the parties were expected to find solutions for the people if they were unable to improve the situation between each other.

SRP MNA Long Ry, addressing both irrigation needs and road improvements, encouraged citizens to attend commune council meetings to provide information to the council and ensure the correct projects were prioritized. He reminded voters that the opposition party could speak out about these issues but could not directly change the budget, which was up to the discretion of the government. In response to the fish broker monopoly, MNA Long referenced a decision released by the Ministry of Interior in February 2002 that banned all monopolies and urged the fishermen to report any violations to the authorities. He suggested that political parties should cooperate to educate citizens about the law on monopolies as well as fishing regulations, and described the importance of protecting the country's natural resources. Addressing concerns of partisanship, MNA Long welcomed comments from all party activists and argued that all political parties should work together to solve problems, especially at the local level.

On healthcare, MNA Long explained that the Constitution guaranteed health services for all citizens, and he described the SRP's 2003 platform outlining free healthcare for all. He asked people to write to their MNAs if their communities lacked medicine or doctors, so that they could lobby the Ministry of Health to allocate more effectively the more than \$70 million given by donors specifically for health programs. In response to concerns about unemployment, MNA Long spoke strongly against foreign companies exploiting Cambodian workers, at home or abroad, demanding punishment for those companies.

CPP MNA Katoeu Toyeb repeated the accomplishments of the current government and asked citizens to compare the present situation to the Pol Pot regime. In response to the infrastructure requests, MNA Katoeu agreed that citizens should speak up at the commune council meetings, but urged patience with overall development achievements. Responding to the fish broker monopoly, MNA Katoeu explained that there could be no fixed price on fish because it was a free market, and he reminded people that monopolies were illegal. He blamed illegal logging in the inundated forest for depleted fish stocks and asked citizens to report illegal activities. When addressing health concerns, he emphasized that walking a few kilometers to a clinic was nothing compared to how long it took to seek medical care during the Pol Pot regime.

District Governor Va Than reported that he was unaware of any fish broker monopoly and claimed that there were 20 active brokers in the district. He asked anyone facing problems to see him at his house or office to provide details for an investigation. On healthcare, Mr. Va encouraged citizens to lodge complaints at all levels of local government to request medicine for health centers so that the district hospital could address major health concerns like malaria. On infrastructure, he agreed with the MNAs that people should participate in the commune council meetings. He promised to eventually build a dam similar to the ones in nearby districts, and described his recent communication with the Minister of Rural Development about needed repairs.

J. Prey Veng

In cooperation with provincial NGO partner, Organization to Develop Our Villages (ODOV), NDI held two CDs in Prey Veng province.

Veang CD

On March 20, 2010, NDI held a CD in Prey Veng in Veang village and Chi Phuch commune, Mesang district. CPP MNA Sok Ey San, SRP MNA Chea Poch, HRP MNA Yem Ponhearith, and NP MNA Sao Rany participated. Attending the CD were 448 participants (38 of whom were women), including one district governor, twelve district councilors, eight provincial staff, 32 commune councilors (four women), six district police officials, and nine political activists from the four parties.

In opening remarks, CPP MNA Sok Ey San spoke of progress under the leadership of the CPP and highlighted government infrastructure projects, including two new bridges in Prey Veng. SRP MNA Chea Poch acknowledged the CPP's accomplishments but explained that they were part of the obligations of an elected government. He questioned the conduct of powerful politicians who borrowed money in the name of citizens, especially from China. NP MNA Sao Rany said that local authorities, not MNAs, were responsible for addressing problems in the area but promised that all four MNAs would listen to concerns. HRP MNA Yem Ponhearith said that the CD represented real democracy, contrasting it with other events that were always interrupted or blocked by local authorities. He argued that in the National Assembly all parties should be allowed to speak in order to fulfill their responsibilities, and criticized the short amount of time provided to lawmakers to review the anti-corruption bill.

Twelve participants, three of whom were women, raised concerns during the Veang event. Five participants spoke about land conflicts, describing the involvement of local officials in land seizures and questioning the government's 99-year economic land concession policy. Four participants raised issues of corruption, including extortion and bribery by local officials, and described the overall lack of transparency of government institutions. One man specifically requested an open bidding process for government contracts, as the road in his community had been built so poorly. Participants also requested more funds for teachers and better inspection of imported foods. One participant described listening to NDI dialogues on the radio and hearing about requests for a decrease to the price of fertilizer, and he asked why the issue still had not been resolved.

SRP MNA Chea Poch agreed there had been positive improvements under CPP rule but called for greater transparency and openness. On corruption, he criticized several aspects of the anti-corruption bill, saying it would only punish small offenders, should not have the option for "secret disclosure" for high-ranking officials, and would allow people to hide money with their families. He contrasted the new law to stronger policies in the Philippines. In response to land issues, MNA Chea promised to write to the government to request a reduction or reconsideration of 99-year economic concessions, expressing concern that the Vietnamese would eventually take over all Cambodian land. He also stated that the government should work harder to ensure an affordable price for fertilizer, comparing Cambodia's high prices to lower ones in

neighboring countries. MNA Chea argued that the Paris Peace Accords brought peace, stability, development, and democracy, while January 7 represented an invasion.

HRP MNA Yem Ponhearith pointed out that the CD was the only chance for people to hear about issues like economic concessions, as they were not covered in the mainstream media. He suggested that NDI events should be televised as well. He again explained that the HRP was not allowed to speak in the NA. On land issues, MNA Yem agreed with criticism of the length of economic concession leases. He confirmed his support for free market economic principles, but argued that a reasonable solution could be found to ensure an appropriate price of fertilizer and oil. MNA Yem discussed corruption as an issue of poor enforcement, rather than inadequate national laws, and admonished local authorities for taking bribes. He added that morality was clearly declining in the country when pregnant women died because they could not bribe doctors and parents sold their daughters into prostitution.

CPP MNA Sok Ey San defended January 7, 1979, as a historically accurate victory day that was supported by the King. He also defended the Assembly's internal rules and confirmed that the HRP had no right to speak because of its small number of seats. On the issue of the border with Vietnam, he invited anyone with evidence that Vietnam took land from Cambodia to go to Phnom Penh and report to the border committee. In response to concerns about corruption, MNA Sok argued that the government would not have received votes if it was corrupt. He accused non-ruling parties of only criticizing while the CPP tried to build the nation. He also cited the large amount of international money given each year for development as evidence that the country was moving in the right direction.

MNA Sok requested legal documents on the land disputes and asked local authorities to deal with them. On economic concession land, he said the government must maintain an open investment policy to create jobs for Cambodians. In response to questions about high prices, he explained that the government could not interfere with prices in a free market system.

NP MNA Sao Rany encouraged the parties involved in land disputes to talk to local authorities to find a solution and ensured people that no one could seize land from someone who had proper legal documents. On economic land concessions, he defended the infrastructure and employment they brought. He acknowledged that local people often did not understand the terms under which they sold their land and this led to confusion. As a member of Commission Four (which includes anti-corruption), he explained that he had raised the issue of bribery with Deputy Prime Minister Sok An. He warned local officials that they would be punished. On bidding processes, he said contracts were made in China or Japan. He explained that the price of oil was high due to high import taxes, which should be reduced.

The district governor also spoke, denying accusations that local officials did not help solve citizens' problems. He suggested that the two parties in one of the land cases simply refused to accept his mediated solution.

Kampong Popil CD

NDI held its second constituency dialogue in Prey Veng in Kampong Popil village and commune, Pea Reang district on August 14, 2010. CPP MNA Sok Ey San, SRP MNA Chea Poch, HRP MNA Yem Ponhearith, and NP MNA Sao Rany participated in the event. A total of 455 people (180 women) attended the dialogue, including one district governor, five provincial and district staff (one woman), 19 district councilors (two women), 11 commune chiefs, eight commune councilors (one woman), 20 village chiefs (including ten women), 18 district or commune police officers, one CPP staff member, four SRP staff members, four HRP staff members (one woman), and two NP staff members. One participant suggested that NDI televise its CDs so more people could benefit from them.



MNAs participate in a constituency dialogue in Kampong Popil commune, Pea Reang district, Prey Veng province on August 14, 2010.

In the opening remarks, NP MNA Sao Rany described the establishment of the Nationalist Party, previously the Norodom Ranariddh Party, and thanked constituents who voted for the party. He also explained that MNAs could not make judgments like a court but could listen to citizens and bring their concerns to the national government. HRP MNA Yem Ponhearith said that the event was not for discussing politics but for raising real problems, and he encouraged local authorities to work together in the interests of people. MNA Yem also described the illegal logging and fishing taking place across the country and expressed concern for villagers who were arrested for such activities while powerful businesspeople could continue to break the law.

SRP MNA Chea Poch also expressed concern about illegal logging as well as the high price of electricity, water, and fertilizer. He said that the government should protect the country's resources or the CPP could face problems in the next elections. He explained that the Cambodian government sought aid to build the country, but the

country also had enormous debt. CPP MNA Sok Ey San emphasized that the CPP worked hard to develop the nation and provide infrastructure. He added that the government was trying to improve the streets and sewage systems to prevent flooding.

Thirteen participants, including four women, spoke during Kampong Popil dialogue. Four participants described land conflicts and expressed their dissatisfaction with local authorities. One man reported that a rich man and commune chief were threatening to arrest him if he refused to sell his land, saying that the situation had made him suicidal. Another participant questioned the country's concessions policy, asking what would happen to the Dey Krohom and Sambuk Chab communities that had been displaced by concessions. There were five infrastructure requests for roads, bridges, and canals as well as demands for cheaper electricity and water. Four participants described poor and inconsistent law enforcement, with one person asking why there were so many laws but little enforcement.



A participant describes the high cost of water and electricity in his community during the constituency dialogue in Kampong Popil commune, Pea Reang district, Prey Veng province on August 14, 2010.

CPP MNA Sok Ey San said he would ask the district governor to investigate the land cases. He added that communities like Dey Krohom and Sambuk Chab were gone and new buildings were being built in those areas, so people should stop talking about it. Concerning law enforcement, MNA Sok agreed that laws must be equally enforced, and he asked villagers to identify the wrongdoers instead of blaming local officials. In response to complaints about the price of water and electricity, he explained that prices always varied from one place to another, but said he would ask the district governor to explore a solution between the consumers and the companies. On the subject of development, MNA Sok acknowledged that Cambodia was in debt to foreign countries, but added that many countries borrowed money. He argued that the CPP-led government had built the country from scratch and worked hard to create jobs and reduce poverty. He also raised the Vietnam border, saying that Cambodia needed clear demarcation to ensure that the country did not lose territory. He claimed that Sam Rainsy broke the law by removing border posts.

HRP MNA Yem Ponhearith described two types of aid given to Cambodia – loans and untied aid – and said that Cambodia owed over five billion USD to foreign countries. He also described the loss of Cambodia’s natural resources. On land disputes, MNA Yem argued that people had been victimized by the concession policy. In response to concerns about law enforcement, he explained that the Assembly had endorsed hundreds of laws and policies for the government, but law enforcement was so weak that corruption flourished. He asked how, for example, government employees who earned \$200 a month could buy cars.

NP MNA Sao Rany argued that only local authorities who lived close to the people could find the best solutions. On infrastructure needs and other requests, he asked people to bring their recommendations to the commune council meetings, as there was a commune budget for development. Responding to land issues, he said it was fortunate for the people that Deputy Prime Minister Bin Chhin, who was responsible for land management and conflict resolution, was also an MNA from Prey Veng. MNA Sao expressed his support for the government’s 99-year lease land concession policy, which he argued brought development to the country and created jobs. He acknowledged that Cambodia had lost territory to Vietnam and Thailand in the past and now the country must protect its border. In response to concerns about electricity prices, he reported that China was developing a power plant so that the public would have cheaper electricity in the future. On issues of law enforcement, MNA Sao said that people should not blame the government for not enforcing laws but instead blame some officials.

SRP MNA Chea Poch acknowledged that many countries owed money but they used their loans to benefit people and provide services, like pension funds for the retired, while Cambodia provided little to the people. He also reminded people that aid was given to the government, not to a political party. In response to land disputes, MNA Chea said he hoped that local authorities would resolve them and said he was also concerned about the 99-year leases given to private companies. On the border issue, he said that the SRP had repeatedly asked the government to submit the case to the UN for final verification of the actual border. Regarding poor law enforcement, MNA Chea blamed some local officials of collusion with businesspeople and thieves to violate the law. Responding to concerns about the high price of water and electricity, he acknowledged that the prices were inconsistent with prices elsewhere and questioned whether bidding had been conducted properly and transparently.

Chhuon Pring, commune chief, was called upon to respond to concerns raised. On the use of illegal fishing methods, he said that he was not able to answer. In response to concerns about theft, he also said that it was “over his knowledge” and referred to the district offices. On infrastructure needs, he said it was not his responsibility.

K. Siem Reap

In cooperation with provincial NGO partner Vulnerability and Illiteracy Reduction Organization (VIR), NDI held two CDs in Siem Reap province.

Taream CD

NDI held its first CD in Siem Reap in Kandal pagoda, Taream village, Chikreng commune, Chikreng district on January 23, 2010. CPP MNA Seang Nam and SRP MNA Ke Sovannroth participated in the event. Attending the CD were 720 participants (400 of whom were women), including the district governor, nine district councilors, four commune chiefs (one of whom was a woman), 15 commune or district police officers, and ten military police officials.

During opening remarks, CPP MNA Seang Nam said he came to the district as a representative of the people to see his constituency, and he promised to listen to people's problems and solve them. SRP MNA Ke Sovannroth reported that it was necessary for MNAs to respond to the people's needs, as they were elected by voters and therefore accountable to them. She reminded citizens that they had the right to choose from any party during the elections.

Fourteen CD participants spoke during the Taream dialogue, two of whom were women. All 14 participants raised land disputes, including a well-known incident involving violence in Chikreng and Anlong Samnor communes. One village chief, representing families from his community, gave a detailed description of how armed people, including military, from three other villages occupied the farmland in his village and how he received no help from local authorities. Several participants added details to this dispute, including a monk who described how his older brother and nephew were shot in this conflict. In other land cases raised, a participant described how people illegally collected thumbprints from villagers to take their land, and another reported being detained for trying to farm his rice fields. Two other participants described how a high-ranking official prevented some villagers from farming public land belonging to the district since 2004. One woman asked why land in Cambodia was only for rich people.

A participant identifying himself as the former chief of the local land department explained that in 1990 the government distributed land to people, some of whom requested titles. However, in 1992 the new land law required a re-issuance process, so titles were issued again, causing confusion and multiple ownership.

SRP MNA Ke Sovannroth acknowledged that the conflict in Chikreng was very serious, but explained that she and CPP MNA Seang were not the court. She added that it was difficult to determine who was correct, as several parties had titles and claimed that they had occupied the land. She said the problem was not only the land law but also the poor implementation by the Ministry of Land Management when issuing titles. She stated, however, that MNAs needed to address this serious case and end the conflict. She also argued that the government must better inform people about the land law, and secret government proceedings on land management only contributed to problems. With regard to resolution processes, she explained that some land conflict situations could use arbitration and a "win-win" policy to solve disputes, but others were criminal cases that needed the involvement of the court. She said local authorities should never use violent means to solve land disputes and must respect the law. MNA Ke encouraged people not to allow powerful people to abuse the law or the rights of others. She reminded them to remember these situations when casting their votes and to ask themselves whether they had all their rights.

CPP MNA Seang Nam explained that the large land dispute was between individuals, rather than involving the local authorities or institutions, and he was unable to determine which side was correct. He suggested that negotiation was a way to solve problems so that all citizens could win, rather than taking the dispute to court. He recommended that villagers should come together, estimate how much land they needed to farm, and send him a proposal, which he would take to the highest authority to request social land concessions. MNA Seang also addressed the case against the men who were shot during the violent episode, reading directly from the judgment from the provincial court. He acknowledged that in land disputes people could become angry and use violence. He asked monks and local authorities to help people resolve conflicts more peacefully to avoid so many criminal cases.

Moung CD

NDI held its second constituency dialogue in Prasat Botum Moung pagoda, Moung village and commune, Srey Snam district on May 29, 2010. CPP MNA Sam Heang and SRP MNA Ke Sovannroth participated in the event. A total of 604 participants (279 women) attended the dialogue, including the district governor, deputy district governor, four commune chiefs, five village chiefs, 22 members of the police, two SRP staff members, and one CPP staff member.



A participant asks MNAs to help settle a land dispute between villagers and powerful individuals during the constituency dialogue in Moung commune, Srey Snam district, Siem Reap province on May 29, 2010.

In the opening remarks, SRP MNA Ke Sovannroth asked participants to be brave and raise their concerns, reminding them of their right to speak in a democratic society. She stated that MNAs had an obligation to listen to all their constituents' issues and share them with the relevant bodies for resolution. She then described the three main roles of a member of the National Assembly: legislative, oversight, and representation. CPP MNA Sam Heang described the great infrastructure in Cambodia, including the roads across the country, and discussed the new anti-corruption law. He added that despite these achievements, the government still faced criticisms from those who “sit and do nothing” and asked participants to push “those people” to do something

positive. He asked people to trust Prime Minister Hun Sen, adding that the three CPP leaders would never run away to another country if there were problems.

Twelve participants, including two women, spoke during the Moug dialogue. Several villagers described a land dispute in which local authorities, in collaboration with soldiers, pressured 24 families to leave their land. Another participant reported that a high-ranking official was trying to take her land and was preventing her from harvesting rice in her fields. Other audience members requested roads, toilets, health centers, and schools, and several described irrigation needs. One person asked the MNAs to describe their positions on agricultural policies in general.

In response to the land disputes, CPP MNA Sam Heang explained that there was a clear land law and requested that people allow the government to take its time to complete investigations. He added that he would investigate the case involving the soldiers. He emphasized that even prior to the anti-corruption law, infrastructure was being provided across the country, proving that there was no corruption. He added that the anti-corruption law was demanded by the opposition but now opposition parties did not support it. MNA Heang argued that the CPP did its job and the opposition criticized. He also said that it was acceptable to ask powerful, rich people to build something for the community in the name of the Prime Minister.

On the subject of development, SRP MNA Ke Sovannroth reported that in 2009 the government received one billion dollars from donors, and she expressed concern about how the money was spent, particularly by local authorities. She said, for example, that the district had returned half of the 90 million *Riel* it was allocated, despite many un-met developmental needs. Responding to education requests, MNA Ke reported that SRP was pushing for increased funding. She also suggested that people ask NGOs to contribute and she would seek additional money from donors. Ultimately, she said, the Ministry of Education needed to secure more funds to fulfill the needs of the people, and SRP would continue to bring these requests to the government.

In response to land issues, MNA Ke argued that there was no justice for people in a dispute with powerful or well-connected individuals, and it was too expensive to solve land problems in court. She emphasized the need for an independent judiciary. Responding to the criticisms raised about the opposition, she explained that in her two mandates as an MNA, she never criticized [the government] without studying the real situation first. She added that it was incorrect that the opposition “did nothing.” She further explained that her salary was eight million *Riel*, and this money was used to visit the constituency, not to build infrastructure. She accused some political parties of using gifts to gain votes and told the audience to vote for the SRP if they wanted problems solved every day, not just before the elections.

Mak Samphear, the district governor, said he had only been in office for one year, so he did not have a full picture of the land disputes but would investigate. Regarding the soldiers’ involvement in one of the land conflicts, he said it could be difficult to communicate with their commanders to solve the problem. He acknowledged the lack of water in the community. Mak reported that the commune council had a precise budget, and he asked people to participate in commune council meetings and voice their needs. On the issue of agriculture, he said they were trying to

teach technical skills to farmers but that there were many obstacles such as poor land quality and water shortages. In response to requests for more roads, he asked citizens to contribute. He agreed that the need for a hospital was important, but explained that the community needed at least 5,000 residents to qualify with the Ministry of Health. He pledged to follow up with the Ministry, despite their low population numbers.

L. Takeo

In cooperation with provincial NGO partner, the Bright of Society Organization (BSO), NDI held two constituency dialogues in Takeo.

Tnaot CD

NDI's first CD in Takeo province was held in Tnaot pagoda, Tnaot village, O'Saray commune, Tram Kak district on February 20, 2010. CPP MNA Um Sokhan and SRP MNA Kuoy Bunroeun participated in the event. CPP MNA Yean Hunly attended the event as scheduled, but requested that CPP MNA Um speak in her place because she had lost her voice. Attending the CD were 337 people (including 91 women), a provincial councilor, the female district governor, a district councilor, one member of the district staff, nine female village chiefs and vice village chiefs, and 14 district and commune police officials. Fourteen commune chiefs from the 16 communes in Tram Kak district and 37 commune councilors (including seven women) attended the dialogue.

During the opening remarks, CPP MNA Um Sokhan emphasized the improvement in democratic space in Cambodia since the Pol Pot regime, describing in detail the limitations on freedoms back then. SRP MNA Kuoy Bunroeun explained the responsibility of an MNA to make laws, monitor the government, and visit his or her constituency to learn about and find solutions to people's concerns. He said that although the government was formed by the party that received the most votes, he could still fulfill his obligations as an MNA in the opposition. He argued that democracy came with the Paris Peace Accords and the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia (UNTAC)-sponsored elections in 1993.

Seventeen participants, including three women, spoke during the dialogue in Tnaot. Partisan remarks emerged at this event, with several participants asking why the CPP was the only party delivering goods. Three participants accused the SRP of not cooperating and argued with the party's position on the Vietnam and Thai borders. Another participant compared SRP commune councilors to the Pol Pot regime, saying they damaged development, and one audience member criticized SRP's characterization of the importance of the Paris Peace Accords. Two participants, on the other side, discussed political discrimination against opposition supporters, accusing the local government of distributing goods unevenly and of doctors refusing to treat opposition members.

Four attendees raised the issue of law enforcement, which they felt was either corrupt or unfairly focused on the poor. One man described how the police demanded money from him for illegal logging when he transported wood but allowed wealthy people to log. Two participants wanted to know the "real" cost for obtaining government documents, like identification cards, as officials charged varying prices. Another participant asked about progress on the draft anti-corruption law. Four people raised land issues, asking for an explanation of the 99-year lease concession policy and

expressing concern about the shrinking amount of available land in Cambodia. One audience member criticized the SRP for raising land issues from the “victim’s perspective” only. On infrastructure, participants requested irrigation systems, improved sewage systems, and bridges, and one man described the need for better quality of construction overall. Other issues included the need for improved tourism policies, requests for an increase in factory wages, and concerns about immigrants voting.

SRP MNA Kuoy Bunroeun compared at length the symbolism and importance of the dates marking the overthrow of the Khmer Rouge and the Paris Peace Accords, arguing that the former was a transfer of power while the latter was a true transition to liberal democracy. He strongly defended the government’s response to the Thai border dispute. MNA Kuoy explained that his party only wanted the same protection on the Vietnamese border and asked why the government was preventing international experts from verifying delineation. Responding to criticism of SRP, he clarified that only the ruling party, which formed the government, could use the national budget to develop the country. The opposition, therefore, was unable to “deliver goods,” he explained. He added that SRP’s goal was to present alternative policies, not cause conflict. On the issue of discrimination in development projects, he said the commune council pledged to write a letter to Minister of Agriculture Chan Sarun on the matter.

MNA Kuoy called for closer monitoring of private companies when granting economic land concessions because foreign companies often brought their own workers, minimizing the benefit to Cambodians. On corruption, he explained that official documents from the ministries should cost no more than 300 *Riel* (about US \$0.07). He reminded citizens that the SRP had been lobbying for the anti-corruption law since 1996. He described three necessary components of any future law: full disclosure of all officials’ income; a neutral national anti-corruption committee appointed by the King; and a permanent secretariat to receive complaints. In response to concerns about immigration, MNA Kuoy noted that when he served on the National Election Committee, he tried to delete 10,000 names of Vietnamese immigrants on the voters’ list. He promised that SRP would increase factory workers’ salaries if elected.

CPP MNA Um defended January 7 as the most important national event, saving the Khmers from destruction. He praised the CPP for defending and developing the country from scratch and questioned the effectiveness of UNTAC. He described how there were only 30 doctors in the country in 1979 and how Prime Minister Hun Sen used to clean his own office. He reported that CPP members often visited their constituencies to listen to citizens’ concerns and needs and never discriminated. On the border conflicts, MNA Um said the government drew the borders based on the international map brought by the King Father Norodom Sihanouk, now kept at the United Nations.

To avoid land conflicts, MNA Um advised citizens to build their houses at least 30 meters from the road or railway, the distance included in a new policy designed to allow for improvements in transportation. On corruption, he asked participants to name those who were corrupt and he would dismiss them. He explained that official documents did vary in price depending on the request. Addressing immigration, he said that foreigners unequivocally did not and could not vote. MNA Um noted that the government needed time to raise salaries for factory workers, but they had been increasing 20 percent per year.

Kampong Po CD

On July 31, 2010, NDI held its second constituency dialogue in Takeo in Kamnou pagoda, Kampong Po village, Prek Phtol commune, Angkor Borei district. CPP MNA Yean Hunly and SRP MNA Kuoy Bunroeun participated in the event. A total of 533 people (206 women) attended the dialogue, including the district vice-governor, five district councilors, one district staff member, five members of the district fisheries and taxation departments, two commune chiefs, four commune councilors, four district and commune police officers, nine village chiefs or vice-chiefs (one woman), three CPP staff members (one woman), and three SRP staff members.



A participant describes a lack of food and land for farming during a constituency dialogue in Prek Phtol commune, Angkor Borei district, Takeo province on July 31, 2010.

In the opening remarks, SRP MNA Kuoy Bunroeun described the three branches of government – legislative, executive, and judicial – and explained that the separation of power between the three branches was clear in the Constitution. He also expressed his hope for a “national congress,” as stipulated in the 1993 Constitution, in the future, but suggested local forums could fill the gap. He reminded citizens that they held the power in the country and had the right to know if their MNAs were working hard for their interests. CPP MNA Yean Hunly outlined the CPP’s accomplishments under the leadership of Prime Minister Hun Sen, noting the party had built the country “from zero” while at the same time providing all human rights and freedoms. She then explained plans for the future by reading several points from the CPP platform. Although MNA Yean encouraged citizen participation, she specifically asked people not to protest in front of the National Assembly in order to avoid “producing a bad image” and spending too much money. Instead, she suggested that they raise their issues at the forum or write to the provincial National Assembly office.

Fifteen participants (including four women) spoke during the Kampong Po CD in Takeo. Three participants described the administrative difficulties facing fishermen and women and the confusion surrounding the allocation of fishing rights, particularly the use of reservoirs and fishing methods. Four land disputes were also raised, with participants describing the lack of resolution from local officials. Three audience members reported corruption among and extortion from local authorities, describing

bribes demanded from villagers in order to construct houses and “fees” charged to receive pension payments. One man described the purposeful negligence of medical staff that killed his son. One woman said her family did not have enough to eat, and another participant asked the MNAs to contribute their salaries for development. Other specific requests for MNA intervention included three road improvement requests, the negotiation of a 1,000 *Riel* decrease in both electricity and water prices, and demands for an increase in the price rice brokers pay farmers.

Partisan differences also emerged at this dialogue. One man asked the CPP to stop the classification of people into three groups corresponding to level of party support. In support of the CPP, one man thanked the government for providing so many rights, including freedom of movement, after January 7, 1979. Another participant said that only the CPP had taken care of the Angkor Borei district in the past, and he admonished the woman who complained of hunger for not speaking to the local authorities before raising her issue at the forum. One man asked for clarification on the role MNAs have in developing the country, and on the difference between ruling and non-ruling party lawmakers. He suggested that the parties had different rights within the political system, which determined their ability to take action. He asked MNAs to therefore stop using the criticism “one party does while the other party just talks.”

CPP MNA Yean Hunly asked a representative of the fishing administration to give more information about the law and how they manage different fishing areas, adding that fishing was allowed in public areas. On healthcare, MNA Yean described the government’s plan to build 14 hospitals in the district and a new maternity and women’s health clinic. She said land dispute solutions must be based on the law, and she read the law on state public land to illustrate her point. She added that, based on the law on expropriation, even private land could be legally confiscated if the government provided fair compensation. On corruption, MNA Yean reminded citizens that both those who gave and accepted bribes would be punished under the new criminal code.

MNA Yean agreed that poverty was a serious issue but was hard to measure because “some say the rich are also poor” and there were no statistics available. She instructed the local authorities to never let people die of hunger and to write down the names of all those who did not have enough to eat; she would go to the appropriate bodies to deal with it. On development in general, she reported that the government was focusing on improving agriculture and irrigation, attracting foreign direct investment, and finding markets for Cambodian rice. MNA Yean spent considerable time focusing on the progress made since the Pol Pot regime. She said that during the Khmer Rouge there was a policy that everything had to be great but now people acknowledged that not everything could be accomplished at once.

In response to the questions on the role of the National Assembly, she emphasized her participation in oversight activities and her membership in the NA Human Rights Commission. She acknowledged that the opposition had an important role to oversee the mistakes of the government but added that they often made “small issues bigger” and just complained. In response to concerns about CPP’s color coding scheme to classify party support, she demanded that anyone continuing the practice to stop immediately.

SRP MNA Kuoy Bunroeun promised to write a letter to Nao Thuork, director of the fisheries department of the Agriculture Ministry, to request further investigation of

the fishing-related complaints. He said that Mr. Nao had already reduced the number of private fishing blocks to benefit the people. He also promised action against local authorities who enforced laws unequally or acted in their own interests when, for example, they allowed only some people to use certain fishing methods but not others. MNA Kuoy explained that land was a complicated issue because now documentation was needed to prove ownership and without proper paperwork, the government could give the land to private companies. This created many problems, he said, as local authorities demanded bribes for titles and people needed to pay for favorable verdicts in court. MNA Kuoy pledged to investigate and collect information on the cases raised during the dialogue.

On healthcare, MNA Kuoy said that the government was supposed to provide health services free of charge to the poor, but it was not happening. He explained that the SRP had requested four priority ministries to receive more funding than others, including health. Responding to concerns about agriculture and pricing, he explained that other countries provided technical support to make the input costs lower to increase output, and he said the government should find a way to do this. MNA Kuoy said he would investigate the requests for roads, but would not use his salary to build a road, as requested by one participant. He explained that this would be cheating the people and described how in other countries public goods came from funds and taxes, not individuals. The government received US \$1.1 billion this year alone in foreign aid, he reported, and it was the responsibility of the government to distribute this to the people. He added that MNAs should never put their names on development achievements because they should be provided by the government, not individuals or parties, and should not be used as a tool to secure votes.

MNA Kuoy said that of course if one compared today's Cambodia to the Pol Pot regime there had been vast improvements in development. He said that donors provided lots of money following the 1991 Accords, which paved the way for development. However, he said that if Cambodia was compared to other countries, it still was under-developed. He asked what the government was doing for people now, despite billions in debt. He suggested making better use of the country's natural resources and encouraged people to participate in development by attending meetings and overseeing the government.

Regarding the role of MNAs, MNA Kuoy said that they needed to oversee the government to ensure it was following policies, but all the commissions were controlled by the CPP and just rubber stamped government directives. In other countries, he explained, lawmakers did not simply protect the government but rather questioned the government on issues and crossed party lines to vote for the solutions they thought were best. He added that other countries also had public hearings and invited people to give testimony and debate draft legislation. MNA Kuoy said that the SRP wanted to ensure these types of open debates in the NA, but its voice was limited.

A district fishery administration chief was allowed to speak next. He explained there were three types of fishing areas – the community fishing block, private blocks, and public blocks. He explained that people could use any fishing method except those specifically prohibited, such as three-level nets, nets with small holes, and electric fishing tools. The deputy district chief spoke next, expressing his strong support for the CPP. He said the CD had created a bad picture because only 15 people spoke about problems but the other 9,000 people in the area had no problems.

III. FOCUS GROUP/INTERVIEW FINDINGS

Focus Groups with Constituency Dialogue Participants

NDI uses focus groups to gather qualitative information to help evaluate the effect of the CD program on Cambodians' knowledge of and attitudes toward the National Assembly and its members, and on citizens' perception of their political options and multiparty democracy. NDI also collects information on common practices for problem-solving in the community and the communication between citizens and their representatives.

NDI moderators asked the same questions (with a few exceptions) and conducted word association exercises to the same group of people before and after all 24 CDs in an attempt to capture any changes. The focus groups lasted approximately one hour and included an average of 12 people, with a total of 275 participants (138 women) from January to September 2010. The vast majority of participants were farmers, aged 25 and up. NDI conducted the focus groups in Khmer and recorded the proceedings; later the Institute transcribed the recordings and translated them into English.

Focus group participants' understanding of the National Assembly and its members prior to the CDs varied. In some instances, participants could quite clearly articulate the functions of the NA. This was most evident in the focus groups prior to both CDs in Kratie and to the second CD in Battambang, Kampong Chhnang, Kandal, Kampot, and Kampong Cham. These participants mostly described the law-making and representative functions of the NA, although they often associated the legislative process with crime and punishment and the judicial system. Few mentioned the oversight responsibilities of the Assembly.

In other areas, participants' understanding of the NA and the role of its members was minimal prior to the CD. For example, during the word association exercise in a Banteay Meanchey focus group, one woman responded to the term "National Assembly" with: "I have never heard this word or seen it." Another stated, "The National Assembly is an international body." In Kandal's first CD, when asked about the role of MNAs, all but one woman in the group stated that they "do not know what our MNA is supposed to do for our community. We are farmers and only know how to farm." When asked to describe the difference between the NA and the government, people could not clearly distinguish between the two. Prior to the first CD held in Kampong Thom, focus group participants said that the two bodies were the same. Participants also displayed low levels of understanding prior to the first CDs in Kampong Speu, Kampong Cham, and Siem Reap.

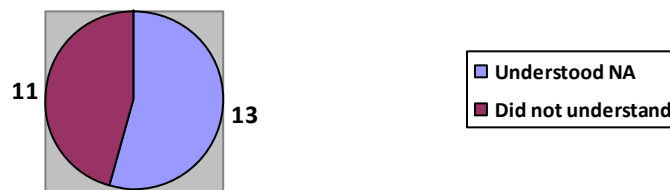
Whether or not they understood the official purpose of the National Assembly prior to the CD, focus group participants in all 12 provinces overwhelmingly associated MNAs with the provision of developmental goods. As a Banteay Meanchey resident said, "The MNA is supposed to help build roads, lakes, canals and schools."

The post-CD focus groups revealed changes in participant knowledge as a result of attending the dialogue. Across the board, there was a clearer sense of the role and

function of the National Assembly and MNAs, particularly notable in those provinces with a limited understanding prior to the CD. Participants were also more likely to discuss the representative function of MNAs, although oversight was still rarely mentioned. In Banteay Meanchey, one participant in a post-CD focus group stated, “I learned that the MNA plays a role to convey concerns of people to the government and bring back the response of the government to people in the community.” Oversight was only mentioned in the focus group following the second Kandal CD, where one participant stated, “The MNA should positively respond to the needs of people, monitor the government’s enforcement of laws, and bring all the concerns and needs of citizens to the government.”

The distinction between the NA and the government also crystallized following the CD. In the second Siem Reap CD, for example, the focus group indicated a significant change in understanding. As one man succinctly said, “The National Assembly is established to make laws for the government to enforce. The difference between the two institutions is that the National Assembly passes laws and the government rules the country.” Following a CD in Battambang, two women agreed, “The National Assembly is established to make laws. The difference between the National Assembly and the government is that the National Assembly makes laws, while the government enforces laws.”

Before CD: Number of focus groups in which 50% or more participants stated that they understood the role of the National Assembly



After CD: Number of focus groups in which 50% or more participants stated that they understood the role of the National Assembly

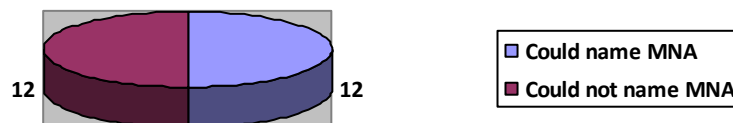


Following the CDs, focus group participants reported a better understanding of the roles of the NA and its members. When asked what they wanted from their MNAs in the future, however, participants continued to describe the provision of basic goods: “In the future, we want our MNAs to restore the shallow canals and ponds and repair the broken roads” (Banteay Meanchey). Another participant added, “In the future, we want our MNAs to help repair damaged roads and provide lakes, canals and toilets.” The second Kampong Cham CD group was the exception; after the CD, participants expressed an understanding that MNAs could not directly provide development goods but were responsible for encouraging the government to do so. As one participant stated, “The MNA is supposed to bring the people’s concerns to the government and push to have them resolved.”

Participants in the pre-CD focus groups had clear ideas about the qualities they looked for in an MNA – namely trustworthiness, compassion, experience, and good morals – and these did not shift following the dialogues. “Gentle” was an adjective repeated frequently. Often these descriptions indicated their expectations of MNAs to deliver basic goods and to conduct activities that are officially discouraged, such as giving gifts. For example, a participant from the first Siem Reap CD stated, “I want an MNA who... distributes gifts to poor people and helps develop the local infrastructure such as roads and pathways and wells.” In other cases, participants used their descriptions of desired qualities to point out deficiencies. One Kampong Chhnang focus group participant stated, “I want to have an excellent MNA who is much better than the MNAs in this morning’s dialogue.” Interestingly, the political affiliations of MNAs did not come up during the discussions.

The pre-CD focus groups revealed that although the MNAs’ representative function was often understood by citizens, MNAs’ outreach efforts were falling short. Focus groups held before the dialogues revealed that most participants had had no previous contact with their representatives. Moreover, in half of the focus groups not one participant was able to name a single member of the National Assembly. In the rest of the focus groups, often only one or two participants were able to name an MNA, and the person identified was frequently a nationally prominent government leader. Across the board, participants reported that neither they nor anyone they knew had ever: met an MNA; received information from an MNA or the Assembly; or been consulted by representatives or staff from the NA.

Number of CD focus groups in which not one person could name a MNA



Almost all focus group participants, however, expressed a belief that he or she had the *right* to communicate with their representatives and described his or her wish for increased contact. As a participant in the second Kampong Chhnang CD focus group stated, “Meetings with MNAs are important to us. We have an opportunity to voice our concerns and needs to them.” Despite this acknowledged right, however, many expressed fear or discomfort about interacting with their representatives. Before the first Siem Reap CD, all focus group participants indicated they were afraid of talking to MNAs. One man in Banteay Meanchey said, “I’m afraid to talk to them and feel nervous.” Before the first CD in Kratie, four focus group participants agreed they “would not [express their problems to MNAs] because we are always scared to talk with high ranking people.” In the focus group before the second Siem Reap CD, people also reported they would never talk to their MNAs: “No, we won’t because we don’t know how to express a problem to MNAs.”

Even following a CD, some people did not feel comfortable communicating with their MNAs. Asked if they would communicate with MNAs in the future, participants from the first Siem Reap CD responded, “No, we will not talk to MNAs

because we are afraid that local authorities will feel unhappy with us.” Focus group participants who attended the second Siem Reap CD also indicated that the CD did not change their perception of the accessibility of MNAs, and all reported they would not contact their representatives with a concern. As one said, “No, I won’t because they live far away, and I do not know how to talk to them through their mobile phones.” Another participant stated, “No, I won’t because I’m afraid that they would be disturbed.” Following the second Kampong Thom CD, one focus group participant said, “I dare not express my problem to MNAs as they stay very far from the people. I rely on the village chief and commune chief.”

In addition to limited communication with their MNAs, focus group participants, both before and after the CDs, could not identify activities or initiatives MNAs had taken on behalf of them or their communities, or efforts they had made to solve problems. When asked which bodies or individuals had solved problems for them in the past, participants predominately cited the village chief or commune councils. In some provinces, participants reported high local authority engagement and mentioned NGO involvement in their communities. However, in other groups participants said the local authorities were often unable to resolve an issue. In the second Kratie CD, for example, focus group participants reported, “The village chief and commune chief address our problems, but we see no results as they were unable to solve problems successfully.” In Prey Veng, focus group participants at the first CD also complained about the lack of resolution from local authorities.

Number of CD focus groups in which not one person could name a MNA activity



Many participants also described their own involvement in community-building, often in the form of monetary support for small, local development projects or participation in commune council meetings. In the first Kandal CD, several focus group participants shared how they were part of the decision-making process by attending commune council meetings and setting development priorities for their community.

Through the focus groups, NDI also explored people’s perceptions of political competition and options. Overall, there were positive associations with the opposition and multiparty democracy, even prior to the CD. This represents a change from 2009, when NDI implemented a similar program⁹ and found more negative associations with the opposition, particularly prior to the CDs. In the first Kandal CD of 2010, a majority of participants showed strong support for opposition parties both before and after the event, stating, “When we hear the word ‘opposition party,’ we think that it is a political party that demands rights and justice for people.” Prior to the first CD in Takeo, one focus group participant articulated, “I think that the opposition party has a different policy and political platform from other parties. If the governing party does something improperly which goes against the national policies and needs of citizens, the

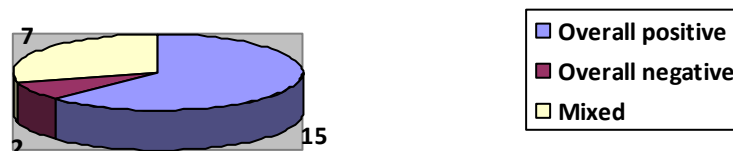
⁹ In 2009, NDI implemented a USAID-funded constituency dialogue program in 10 provinces with only one event in each.

opposition party helps provide applicable recommendations to the government, in order to correct them to walk in the right direction for the sake of national interests and citizens’ needs.” Or, as one Battambang man succinctly stated, “I think that an opposition party works to push the government to work better.”

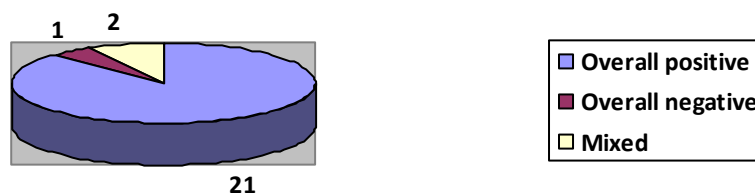
However, there were some instances in which participants expressed negative associations about the opposition in pre-CD discussions. Before the second CD held in Kampong Speu, most focus group participants expressed fear and aversion to the idea of an “opposition party,” associating the word with conflict and expressing a desire for unity above all else. At the focus group prior to the second Kampong Thom CD, feelings were mixed. As one man said, “If they oppose [the governing party] but are for development, then I will support them. However, if it is for making problems, I won’t support them.” Prior to the second Kampot CD, focus group participants had strong negative associations with the word “opposition.” As one said, “I do not feel good. I’m afraid a conflict or dispute will occur.”

In those provinces where focus group participants expressed negative or neutral associations with the concept of an opposition before a CD, the associations almost always improved after the CD. In Kampot province, for example, the change was remarkable following the second CD. Almost everyone in the focus group reported positive associations with the word and expressed their appreciation for the opposition’s role as a check on the government. As one participant said, “It is good to have an opposition party to correct the governing party.” After the first Siem Reap CD, one man said, “The opposition party is the one that [may] push for more developments in the country. If the governing party goes in the wrong direction, the opposition party can correct them.” Prior to the second Kandal CD, several focus group participants had a negative reaction, or no response, to the word “opposition.” After the CD, however, people expressed more positive associations with the word: “The word ‘opposition’ is simple – it is established to correct the government, and help it walk in the right direction.”

Before CD: Number of focus groups in which at least 50% of participants reported positive associations with the concept of an opposition



After CD: Number of focus groups in which at least 50% of participants reported positive associations with the concept of an opposition



The only exception was in Banteay Meanchey, where, interestingly, although prior to the CD there were no reported negative associations with the word opposition, following the CD, two men stated, “The opposition party is a party that has a policy against the development of the country.”

In general, post-CD focus group participants were most impressed by the MNAs’ verbal pledges to work together, expressing their desire for nonpartisanship. As a participant in the first Siem Reap CD noted, “Today’s dialogue made me understand further, and I respect and love MNAs equally. But I want MNAs to take impartial positions with citizens.” Most participants expressed their dislike of representatives or local authorities who criticized the other party during the CD. In the second Kampong Speu CD, for example, many focus group participants were not pleased with the tone of the dialogue and did not appreciate the attacks that were made on the opposition MNA. As one man said, “The dialogue is good, but speakers did not respect the code of conduct of the dialogue.”

The focus group instrument included several questions for the NDI moderator to ask following the CD to gauge people’s opinions of the dialogue in general, their perception of MNAs’ performance, and their confidence in MNAs’ ability to deliver on promises. In general, post-CD focus group participants were pleased with the performance of the MNAs and felt their problems had been addressed. Most affirmed their perception of their representatives had improved as a result of the CD, and their confidence in MNAs to follow through on their pledges was high. As one Battambang man stated, “Now I know that MNAs have to do a lot of work, such as taking responsibility to help solve people’s difficulties and lead people.” The word association exercise also captured these positive feelings after the events. In the post-CD focus group, one woman from the first Siem Reap CD said, “When I hear the word MNA, I feel warm because they can solve problems for people.”

In a few provinces, however, focus group results were inconsistent or negative following the CD, with many participants reporting having less confidence in their MNAs. Although after the second Kampong Speu CD participants reported that their perception of MNAs had improved, the majority, interestingly, also stated that they had less confidence in their representatives. Following the second dialogue in Prey Veng, focus group participants’ confidence in their MNAs remained low, with two reporting they were less confident than before the event. They explained that some of the MNAs did not respond well to the questions, and they expressed a desire to see whether the representatives delivered on their promises. These participants also had negative associations with the word “politician” and “political party” following the CD. As one participant said, “When I hear the word ‘politician,’ I feel that they have two ways to walk. If they receive no advantage, they won’t participate in politics. But if they expect to receive some advantages, they would dedicate themselves to be a politician. Thus, a politician is the person who leads us to both the wrong and correct way.”

In most post-CD focus groups, increased confidence in MNAs came with greater expectations, and participants expressed high hopes that MNAs would fulfill their promises made during the CD and visit their constituents again. This focus on fulfillment indicates an increasing understanding of accountability. A Prey Veng participant emphasized, “We want the MNAs to come to visit us more often so that they know about our difficulties and can help to solve our problems.” Sometimes expectations with regard to MNAs’ pledges during the CD were specific. A focus group

participant during the second Kampong Chhnang CD stated, “In the future, I want my MNA to help push the provincial authorities to issue land titles to people and provide a good dam to my community.”



Pre-constituency dialogue focus group in Kampong Popil commune, Pea Reang district, Prey Veng province on August 14, 2010.

When asked if they received useful information from their MNAs during the CD, most focus group participants reported that they learned from the CD and the dialogue. After the second Kratie CD, participants expressed their appreciation for the MNAs’ remarks and the information shared. As one woman stated, “It makes me understand more about the freedom of expression.” A Kampong Thom participant noted, “In advance of attending the dialogue, I had little understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the MNA. But now I learned more through the explanations of each MNA. MNAs need to help solve problems for people and treat people equally.”

Participants from all the focus groups expressed the value they placed on the concept of a constituency dialogue. A participant after the second Prey Veng CD said, “We think the CD event this morning was very meaningful, because it permitted participants to raise their concerns before the MNAs.” The post-CD focus groups left no doubts about people’s hunger for attention from their MNAs, and participants unanimously said there needed to be more CDs.

Group Interviews with Local Officials

Following each CD, NDI conducted group interviews with commune councilors and village chiefs to solicit their perspectives and input on the dialogue and constituency relations in the commune. In 2010, 378 local officials (including 66 women) attended the 24 group interviews, with an average of 15 people at each one. In what was meant to be group discussions, the commune councilors usually allowed the most senior member to take the lead while others simply nodded in agreement.

Unfortunately, when asked for their input, the village chiefs usually just stated they had “the same idea” as the speaker, likely due to the presence of their superiors. Only occasionally did the village chiefs have additional comments or different opinions from those of the commune councilors.

During these discussions, commune officials reported having regular contact with MNAs through visits and conversations with MNA staff, particularly about local development plans. In fact, in 15 of the 24 group discussions, commune councilors reported having communicated with an MNA in the past. Officials emphasized that this contact was predominately with CPP MNAs. Village chiefs reported less contact, emphasizing the “vertical” reporting system (to the level above them, i.e. the commune authorities) as the reason for having little direct contact with MNAs. In some places, however, councilors reported no contact at all. In the second Takeo CD, for example, councilors stated, “We never communicate with MNAs. We never have had a chance to meet with them to discuss anything.” Whether they had contact or not with their MNAs, local officials in all provinces reported that they received no information from the National Assembly on its work or activities.

Impressively, in 19 out of 24 group discussions, commune councilors could name an activity undertaken by an MNA. In the majority of cases, local officials pointed out that the activities were those of the CPP, not the opposition. Often MNA activities included donations to pagodas and other gifts, but officials also described MNAs’ constituency visits and meetings with local authorities. When asked what they wanted from their MNAs in the future, officials cited the delivery of goods and increased visits and communication. For example, after the first CD in Kampong Speu, councilors said they wanted MNAs “to help build houses for homeless people, provide a canal, a dam, and rice seeds, and educate farmers in agricultural techniques.” They unanimously expressed their desire for more MNA visits, more collaboration, and more information on NA activities.

Local officials generally reported that the CDs changed their perception of MNAs. They stated they better understood the roles of representatives, and in 13 out of 24 groups, councilors perceived MNAs as more accessible. Confidence in MNAs increased markedly following the CD, with participants in 20 out of 24 discussions expressing more confidence. As councilors in Kampong Chhnang stated, “We are more confident in our MNAs’ interest [in our community] because we saw that they asked the district chief to solve the problems. Moreover, they promised to bring those concerns to the government.” Local officials often provided a percentage value to their level of confidence in their representatives in the NA. For example, after the first CD in Kratie, a councilor said, “We are 70% confident in our MNAs. We will wait and see their activities.”

This confidence, however, was often based on party affiliation. In the first Kampong Speu CD, a councilor explained, “We are 100% confident in our CPP MNAs because they actively help to solve problems for us and for citizens.” Following the second Takeo CD, a councilor said, “We always are confident in our CPP MNAs more than the opposition MNAs because they [the CPP MNAs] have helped people and local authorities in building roads, schools, pagoda temples, health centers, and more.”

In some group discussions, officials expressed a lack of confidence in the MNAs based on their performance at the CD and their ability to deliver on their promises. After the second Banteay Meanchey CD, a councilor stated, “We are not confident in all the MNAs. For instance, the CD event held in 2004 at Pring Kaong village, Bos Sbov commune produced no results. If MNAs want us to be confident in them, they need to do something further to prove their commitment to respond to the people’s concerns.” After the second CDs were held in Siem Reap and in Kratie, commune officials expressed a low impression of MNAs following the dialogue. In Prey Veng, interestingly, councilors from the second CD commune reported they felt more confident in their MNAs while village chiefs said they were less so. As a village chief stated, “No, we feel less confident in them because some MNAs did not provide solutions to the issues raised by participants.”

In 22 of the 24 discussions, officials stated they learned useful information from the MNAs, and they often cited specific examples. Moreover, in all 24 group discussions, local officials requested more CDs and expressed their support for the program. This was surprising given the difficulties that NDI and its local partners often faced with the local authorities when organizing the dialogues. After the first Banteay Meanchey dialogue, a councilor stated, “The dialogue is important. Participants had the opportunity to raise their concerns and needs. Additionally, participants interacted with MNAs to report to them about what they have faced and what they need. The time [for the CD] is short, but meaningful and neutral [unbiased]. We thank NDI for organizing such an important event for MNAs and citizens to interact to each other directly and publicly.”

Although almost all officials expressed support for the CD program, they also provided critical feedback, particularly on MNAs’ behavior and participants’ criticism of local authorities. After the first CD in Prey Veng, a councilor said, “We think that this dialogue is good. It helps strengthen the democracy and freedom of expression. However, there were some words spoken by MNAs to attack each other. Some issues are true while some others are not true because people do not understand about our work.” An official who participated in the second dialogue in Kampot said, “The Institute should have more events in this commune but find a way to control the event, preventing attacking and criticism.” Interestingly, after the first Kampong Thom CD, officials wanted more dialogues but requested that they be held in different communes: “We all want more dialogues to be held. But, please hold a constituency dialogue in another commune in the future. We will be happy to attend the dialogue.”

IV. POST-CONSTITUENCY DIALOGUE ACTIONS AND RESULTS¹⁰

Following each CD, NDI completed a monitoring form to capture: the main problems identified by CD participants; the pledges made by MNAs to address each concern; the results based on reporting from MNAs; and the results as reported by the community. NDI staff followed up with individual MNAs two months after the CD to discuss their progress, recording any information on the monitoring form.¹¹ In addition, NDI's local partners visited the CD village and nearby communities two months following the dialogue, meeting with participants and local authorities to enquire about any changes or progress made on the issues raised at the CD and to cross-check the validity of the MNAs' reports. For the most part, the actions and results reported by the MNAs were confirmed by and consistent with the observations at the local level by local officials and citizens. These results were then compiled and reported back to each community in August and September 2010. (For a sample monitoring form, see the Appendix.)

Almost all MNAs took some action following a CD to address a concern raised during the dialogue, and their interventions took many forms. Often the MNAs filed reports or wrote letters to relevant institutions. In some cases, MNAs held meetings with local authorities and actively intervened in the problem, often serving as an important mediator to resolve disputes. Even without specific MNA involvement, the CDs exposed unfavorable and often illegal activities, leading to official action at the local level or voluntary termination of the activities by their perpetrators. CDs and subsequent MNA attention frequently served to speed up existing development plans, particularly on infrastructure requests. Although NDI cannot report that most concerns raised by participants were resolved as a direct result of the CDs, the dialogues definitely had an impact – often in subtle and indirect ways – and sometimes did result in full resolution of a problem.

As mentioned, MNAs often wrote letters or met with relevant government officials to draw attention to problems raised at the CDs. NDI recorded these interventions, regardless of whether the issue was ultimately resolved, as a demonstration of MNA intent and commitment. Examples include:

- In the CD held in Koang Kang, Kampong Cham, participants expressed concern about the distribution of national identification cards that would be used for voting. Following the CD, HRP MNA Yem Ponhearith said that he talked with the Ministry of Interior to press for a faster process for issuing identification cards to citizens.
- Many participants in the Taream, Siem Reap CD raised the ongoing violent land conflict in Chikreng and Anlong Samnor communes. Following the CD, SRP MNA Ke Sovannroth wrote to the Minister of Justice and copied the President of the National Assembly asking for the release of 12 people

¹⁰ At the time of writing, not all monitoring meetings with MNAs had been held. Moreover, not enough time had elapsed since the more recent CDs to allow for proper follow-up at the community level. Thus, the results are not complete.

¹¹ NDI staff normally met with MNAs in their offices. Occasionally, members were too busy for one-on-one interviews and requested that NDI send them the monitoring form so they could fill it out on their own.

who were serving a sentence in the provincial prison for their involvement in the conflict.

- At the Dey Dos CD in Kratie, participants described their need for improved irrigation systems. Following the CD, CPP MNA Katoeu Toyeb reported that he wrote to the President of National Assembly, CPP Secretary General Say Chhum, the Minister of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction, the CPP working group of Kratie, provincial governor Kham Phoeun, and provincial district councilors. MNA Katoeu requested that the district authorities submit copies of their development plans to him for review.

Perhaps the most frequent and useful role the MNAs played after the CDs was that of a negotiator in a variety of disputes, creating opportunities for mediation and lobbying on behalf of the participants' interests. Examples include:

- In the Kampong Cham, Koang Kang CD, participants described a conflict with a rubber company. Following the CD, NP MNA You Hockry discussed the conflict with the district governor. He informed MNA You that he had provided land at Plak Samraong village, Da commune to the families for living and farming.
- In the Kampong Chhnang, Chrorok Tnoath CD, participants reported that a land dispute with a Korean company had displaced people from their land. Following the CD, the Chhean Leung commune chief reported that, following instruction from the CPP MNA Ker Chanmony, the district governor intervened and requested that the Korean company pay damages. Several families received compensation from the company.
- In the Kampong Thom, Svay Ear CD, participants described how land was seized by a private company. CPP MNA Sik Bunhok met with the district governor who returned the land to the families until the case is resolved. The families confirmed to NDI that they were allowed to farm the land temporarily until the case is settled.
- In the Kandal, Chey Uddom CD, participants complained of a port owner extorting money from people. SRP MNA Chan Cheng pledged to investigate and contacted local authorities. Participants and community volunteers reported the problem was solved with an intervention from the Kien Svay district governor.
- Also in Chey Uddom, participants reported that the CPP was building a party office on public land where people farmed sugar cane. SRP MNA Chan Cheng reported that his deputy commune chief gathered thumbprints of people to file a complaint to the CPP party. As a result, the CPP moved its party office construction to Por Mav village.
- In the Takeo, Kampong Po CD, a participant accused local medical staff of intentional negligence, leading to the death of his son by denying him treatment because they assumed the family could not pay. SRP MNA Kuoy Bunroeun reported that he sent his district councilors of Angkor Borei district and Prey Kabas district to attend the meeting called by the district governor of Prey Kabas between victim's family and the staff at the hospital. The hospital admitted to negligence and apologized to the victim's family.
- In the Kampong Cham, Anlong Orklech CD, a participant complained that the commune council was illegally building on his land. CPP MNA Tres Sarom

contacted local authorities. Commune officials and Kchao village residents reported that following the instruction from the CPP MNA, the land conflict had been resolved.

- In the Kampong Thom, Roka Chuor CD, participants described how they had not received compensation from a rubber company that displaced them. After the CD, the district governor said he got an order from CPP MNA Sik Bunhok to resolve the matter, and he put in a request to the provincial governor to provide land to the people.

During the CD in Dey Dos village in Kratie, participants described how a monopoly in the local fish market was forcing them to sell their fish and eel at low prices. The monopoly had been created in 2004, when the provincial fisheries department sold a license to only one broker. This monopoly had been supported by the district governor, commune officials, and the police. Fishermen and women reported being threatened and even detained by local authorities if they attempted to sell their products to other brokers at higher prices. People complained that they were not earning enough to support their families.

Following the CD, participants approached NDI for advice and support on advocacy efforts to end the monopoly. NDI's local partner, the Kampuchea Women's Welfare Action, and community volunteers helped people gather 243 thumbprints on a petition, which they submitted to the provincial parliamentary office on August 4, 2010. NDI also forwarded the petition to the MNAs. SRP MNA Long Ry sent a letter with the petition to the Ministry of Interior through the President of the National Assembly on August 11, 2010. On August 18, 2010, an official letter was sent to Prek Prasob district office demanding there be an immediate end to the monopoly. SRP local officials also made copies of this letter available to the people, in case they encountered problems. The price of fish has since increased from 2,000 *Riels* per kilo to 10,000 *Riels*.

In response to development requests, MNAs applied pressure to local authorities to speed up already planned projects or initiatives, frequently creating results. Thus, while the result is not attributable to the CD alone, the CDs helped to raise the necessary awareness of the issue and provided an incentive to accelerate action, sometimes without MNA participation. Examples include:

- In the Kampot, Angkor Chey Boeung CD, participants requested improved irrigation systems for farming. Following the CD, CPP MNA Som Chen met with local authorities. Soon after, according to officials and participants, a three kilometer-long canal from Damnak Kantout village, Damnak Kantout Khang Thbong commune to O' Rolus village and a pond (50 meters x 30 meters) in Damnak Kantout village were built.
- In the Banteay Meanchey, Sras Raing CD, participants requested electricity in their area. Following the CD, CPP MNA Pal Sam Oeurn reported that a private company that received a license from the provincial electricity department would connect electricity to four villages in the Sras Raing commune. Commune and village officials reported to NDI that following the CD, the

- electric company met with them and informed them that the company would connect the villages to the power grid in December 2010.
- In the Kratie, Dey Dos CD, participants requested road repairs. Following the CD, CPP MNA Katoeu Toyeb discussed this with district authorities. People from Dey Dos Ler, Dey Dos Krom, and Prek Kou villages, as well as commune and district officials, reported to NDI that one road along the river had been repaired.
 - In the Siem Reap, Moung CD, participants requested roads. Following the CD, the Moung commune chief, commune councilors, and a SRP activist all reported that the district governor instructed officials to begin construction of a 3,979 meter-long dirt road from Moung Khang Cheung village to Cheng Meng village.
 - Following the CD in Kampong Thom, Svay Ear, CPP MNA Sik Bunhok reported that a 100-meter dam and two sewage systems in Kleng and Chheu Teal communes had been built in response to participant requests.

At the CDs, many illegal activities were exposed to the public. The combination of this exposure, and subsequent MNA interventions, often led to a crackdown on ongoing activities and served as a deterrent for others. Examples include:

- In the Kampong Cham, Anlong Orklech dialogue, participants complained of illegal gambling. Following the CD, CPP MNA Tres Sarom reported the problem to the National Assembly and the CPP, and he met with the Sokong commune council. Villagers reported to NDI that the gambling venue had been closed down. Commune councilors sent letters to all the village chiefs to inform residents to stop all gambling activities.
- During the CD in Prey Veng, Veang, participants complained about illegal fishing methods such as electrocution, also known as fish shocking. Following the CD, CPP MNA Sok Ey San met with district officials to put an end to illegal fishing. The district governor, district council and commune councils of Chi Poch commune and Prey Khnes communes reported to NDI that the local authorities had asked people to hand over any illegal fishing tools.
- During the Battambang, Tumpuon CD, community residents complained that five families had built their houses over a road in front of a local school. CPP MNA Chuonh Sochhay discussed this with commune and district officials, who instructed the families to move their homes. As a result, three of the five families have complied at the time of writing.
- In the Kratie, Hanchey CD, participants described cock fighting, gambling, drug use, and prostitution in their community. Following the CD, SRP MNA Long Ry and CPP MNA Troeung Thavy reported that these activities had been reduced. Community representatives confirmed to NDI this was indeed true, and illegal activities were decreasing following the CD. The district governor reported that he ordered his officials to take action as well.
- Also in the Hanchey CD, participants explained that due to a land conflict, farmers were blocked by a company from collecting their produce. SRP MNA Long Ry and a SRP deputy commune chief in Kanchor visited the provincial governor. Following this meeting, the company's security guards allowed the people to collect all their produce from the land.
- In addition, Hanchey residents reported that a ferry company charged inconsistent fares to people and refused to post the official costs. CPP MNA

- Troeung Thavy reported that Thun Kry, the deputy provincial governor, and provincial authorities ordered the owners to post the prices.
- In the CD held in Banteay Meanchey, Sras Raing, participants complained about youth gangs. Both CPP MNA Pal Sam Oeurn and SRP MNA Yont Tharo reported that local authorities took action following the CD. Commune officials and police noted to NDI that after the CD, they educated both the parents of youth gang members and the members themselves, at the commune office.
 - During the Takeo, Tnaot CD, participants complained about bribes demanded by police and authorities for the provision of services such as security at weddings. SRP MNA Kuoy Bunroeun informed NDI that he asked his district councilor to work together with the CPP district councilor to raise this issue in a district meeting. As a result, the district governor ordered the commune officials not to demand money. Community representatives reported that commune police and officials had provided security without demanding money since the intervention.
 - A participant at the Prey Veng, Kampong Popil CD reported that a rich individual and the commune chief were forcing him to leave his land, for which he had a title, and threatened to arrest him if he refused. CPP MNA Sok Ey San wrote the district governor asking him to intervene in this case, after which the man was able to live peacefully on his land without threats.
 - During the Kampong Chhnang, Sre Robang CD, participants complained of having their cows stolen. Following the CD, villagers reported that the police found six of the cows and returned them to the owners.
 - A woman at the Kandal, Chhork Chheu Neang dialogue complained about police abuses and described how her son was being held without charges. Following the CD, the woman reported that SRP MNA Chan Cheng intervened in the case, providing the family with a lawyer from the Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO). The son was subsequently released on bail.
 - In the Kampong Thom, Roka Chuor CD, participants described how domestic violence was damaging their community. Following the CD, the district governor encouraged the police and commune authorities to educate residents on domestic violence, and several workshops were organized in the community.

In a few cases, MNAs were able to effectively lobby for new programs or activities requested by their constituents. Examples include:

- Participants in the Kampong Chhnang, Chhork Tnoath CD requested a health center. Following the intervention from CPP MNA Ker Chanmony, the provincial health department incorporated the cost of a health center in the 2011 budget. The commune chief reported to NDI that representatives of the Health Ministry met with the commune officials to discuss and find an appropriate place for building the health center. In the meantime, the Health Ministry sent medical staff to work in Chhean Leung commune to provide supplemental health services.
- Also during the Chhork Tnoath CD, participants complained about a tax on rice mills. SRP MNA Khy Vandeth reported that after CD event, the commune and district councils suspended the tax on rice mills. This was confirmed by district councilors and villagers. However, the SRP MNA later informed NDI that the tax was reinstated on June 21, 2010.

- In the Kratie, Hanchey CD, participants described the need for improved irrigation. SRP MNA Long Ry and CPP MNA Troeung Thavy both reported that the Minister of Finance Keat Chhun visited and studied the problem, promising irrigation systems. The commune chief, village officials, and participants confirmed to NDI that a committee studied the canal systems and selected Kampong Raing village for a new canal, which would benefit both Hanchey and Pon Ror communes.
- Participants at the Kampot, Angkor Chey Boeung dialogue requested repairs to the community's ponds and roads. Following the CD, participants and local authorities from Sre Chea Khang Cheung commune and Dornng Tung commune reported to NDI that a lake (700m x 1115m) in Prey Pi village, Sre Chea Khang Cheung commune was rebuilt and a damaged road (1,300m) in Kcheay Khang Cheung was repaired.

In a few cases, results involved the personal donations of MNAs, rather than use of their specific authority as an elected representative to solve the problem through official channels. Examples include:

- In the Kampong Cham, Koang Kang CD, participants requested a water pump in the village. NP MNA You Hockry donated a water pump using his personal funds. This was confirmed by the Kaong Kang commune chief and people in the community, who formed a committee to oversee the installation of the pump.
- A participant at the Kampong Thom, Svay Ear dialogue described how she had borrowed 700,000 *Riel* from the village chief using her land as collateral, and now she had trouble paying him back in order to retrieve her land. SRP MNA Men Sothavarin made a personal contribution to the woman, which was confirmed by the village chief.

The SRP and HRP MNAs reported facing greater obstacles in producing specific goods or results from their interventions, due to their position in the NA as opposition parties and their lack of control over the national budget. Several opposition MNAs also reported difficulty in trying to conduct the most basic follow-up activities.

- In Kampot, SRP MNA Mu Sochua invited participants to discuss the infrastructure needs raised during the first CD in Kampong Trach district, but people refused to meet her because they reported being targeted by local officials.
- Following the Battambang, Tumpuon CD, SRP MNA Chiv Cata reported that he faced many difficulties in communicating with local authorities about a land conflict raised at the CD. He asked SRP commune councilors to intervene, but they reported receiving no cooperation from local officials.
- Participants at the Kratie, Hanchey CD described a conflict with the Casotin Company. The SRP MNA reported that he contacted the deputy provincial governor and a member of the provincial land dispute resolution committee requesting relevant documents on the land conflict, but they refused to provide any information or documents to him.

V. CONCLUSION

NDI's January to September 2010 constituency dialogues revealed significant consistencies in the concerns facing Cambodians across the program's 12 provinces: land conflicts; agricultural challenges, particularly irrigation needs and access to markets; pervasive corruption, especially among local authorities; unequal application of the law and lack of justice for the poor; and infrastructure and development needs, such as roads, health centers, schools, and electricity. There were remarkably few differences in the main issues from those in NDI's CD program the previous year. In 2010, NDI found that Cambodians had a pervasive sense that although their country's economy was growing, this development was benefiting the rich and connected, and not the average Cambodian. Feelings of frustration and dissatisfaction underscored people's remarks, and participants were outspoken and critical at the events.

Members of the National Assembly conducted themselves professionally, followed the protocol of the moderators, and refrained from personal attacks and unconstructive comments. They also demonstrated excellent party discipline, staying on message and articulating their party's positions, resulting in consistent responses to key issues. Compared to the past, MNAs were also more specific in describing the policies and philosophies of their political parties. The overall performance and speaking skills of parliamentarians were improved over previous years, and MNAs demonstrated their commitment to listening to their constituents and clearly responding to their concerns. Skill levels varied among individuals, but the quality of their performance was not correlated to party affiliation. Participants responded more positively to those MNAs who clearly and systematically addressed each of the issues raised, rather than those who spoke in generalizations or had local officials respond in their place.

On a few occasions, political parties sent an MNA from a different provincial constituency to attend the CD. It is important that parties and MNAs understand this program aims to bring people closer to their representatives. Although the duty of the National Assembly is to represent all Cambodians, MNAs are elected by province on provincial party lists, and they are ultimately accountable to voters in the province. MNAs should be proving themselves to potential voters, a strategy more likely to get them elected in the future, than spreading themselves across the country. It should also be noted that when an MNA representing another province participated, he or she often performed more poorly than the MNAs from the province, as he or she did not understand the local issues and leaders as well and was unable to provide adequate follow-up. It also confused the CD audience members, particularly when an MNA from a different province thanked people for their vote.

In many communities, local officials posed a problem to the organization of the constituency dialogues as well as during the dialogues themselves. In some instances, they demanded bribes from NDI's local partners in order to hold the CD, although permission is not required. There were also times when local authorities tried to prevent people from attending the CD, and community residents demonstrated significant bravery by participating in the dialogue. At the request of political parties, NDI changed its CD program in 2010 to allow for additional speaking time to local officials. The officials were, on average, not particularly helpful in their remarks. Frequently

they failed to provide clear answers to the concerns raised and adopted a defensive posture. In some cases, the local officials used their time to verbally attack others, violating NDI's code of conduct.

Overall, the CDs demonstrated concrete results, many of which can be directly attributed to the actions of MNAs who participated in the event. MNAs demonstrated their strong commitment to their constituents and their duties as representatives, and most parliamentarians followed up on at least one of his or her promises. Other interventions were spearheaded by the communities or local authorities. Often the CD itself served as a deterrent for illegal practices by shedding light on the problem and publicly identifying culprits. Thus, although no one specifically took action against a problem, the problem stopped. In many cases, MNAs took steps to address an issue, but no results have been realized yet. Nevertheless, NDI recognizes all the efforts of MNAs to respond to the concerns raised by their constituents.

The representative function of the MNAs has been enhanced through the CD program, with parliamentarians taking critical steps to raise the concerns of their voters to the relevant bodies. Oversight duties have also been practiced, particularly with regard to illegal practices at the local level. However, it should be noted that none of the interventions have involved legislation. Rather, the issues have been addressed through the relevant government ministries and offices. Although many of the problems raised during the dialogues certainly fell under the jurisdiction of the executive, the Assembly could play an important problem-solving role through its legislative function. Citizens correctly identified the law-making task of the National Assembly and expressed their expectation that the NA exercise this power.

The focus groups demonstrated how little the public knows about the NA's ongoing activities. In addition to initiating no legislation, the NA has no coordinated constituency outreach efforts or other methods for disseminating information (e.g. through a newsletter, email list-serve, or other media). Few participants could name members of the NA prior to the CDs and said they had never met or been contacted by a representative of the Assembly. They could not provide examples of any activity the Assembly members had undertaken on their behalf. Interviews with local officials also revealed their desire for more information on the business of the National Assembly and its members. Although certain individual members of the NA conduct visits to their constituencies, and in some cases are very active, more coordinated support and initiative from the National Assembly are clearly needed to ensure greater impact of the Assembly's outreach efforts. NDI's CD program has provided an important opportunity for MNAs to build these relationships with communities and fulfill the tasks they were elected to do, but it is not enough on its own.

The CDs have also served the important role of demonstrating to Cambodians around the country the range of their political options. There are few opportunities – if any – in Cambodia for ruling party and opposition party MNAs to participate side by side in a public forum and answer citizens' questions. Following the CDs, focus group participants showed a greater awareness of the opposition and the value of a multiparty democracy. They responded negatively to partisanship and positively to parties cooperating and working together to solve problems.

Encouragingly, NDI's post-CD focus group participants had an overall positive perception of their representatives in the Assembly. The focus groups revealed that people appreciated the opportunity to see their MNAs in person and reported learning useful information from them. However, participants did not express quite as much confidence in their representatives as in previous years, and described the need to first see deliverables. Some shared their skepticism on their MNAs' abilities to follow through and reported cynicism about politics in general. The public's general goodwill toward members of the National Assembly should not be taken for granted, as Cambodians are expecting more from their representatives and from parliament in the future.

APPENDIX

Monitoring Form for Kampong Chhnang

No.	Main Problem	CD Pledges	Results (MNAs)	Results (Community)
1	<p>Land issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Anlong Pring community conflict with Korean company. Asked the MNAs to negotiate compensation for those affected so that they could have money for the upcoming farming season. • A woman participant asked the district office for land management to issue land titles to the people to avoid future land problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPP MNA Ker Chanmony: pledged to bring the issue to the government to solve it as soon as possible. • SRP MNA Khy Vandeth: asked local authorities and MNAs to work together to discuss with the provincial governor. • CPP MNA Ker Chanmony: asked local authorities to work on that. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPP MNA Ker Chanmony: reported that the vice committee of the inter-ministries signed a contract to compromise with people in Kdol and Anlong Chrey villages, affected by Korean company's dam construction. The final solution on the payment has not been made. • CPP MNA Ker Chanmony: reported the provincial department for land management would register the land ownership. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Chhean Leung commune chief reported, following instruction from the CPP MNA, that the district governor intervened and requested the Korean company to pay damages. Twelve families will receive 2 million Riels per hectare in a year. For other families whose properties were slightly affected, the company will pay the damages later. • For other farmers whose four hectares of farmland were affected by the company, the local authorities and villagers reported no solution was reached with the company. • The Chhean Leung commune authorities requested that the provincial department for land management issue land titles to villagers. The provincial land department responded that it will register and issue the titles to villagers step by step.

2	<p>Local Infrastructure:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Request for a health center for Anlong Pring community • Request for a bridge of 33 meters • Road request for Anlong Pring due to damage from Korean company; ability to cross dam needed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPP MNA Ker Chanmony: pledged to bring the issues to the government and relevant ministries. • SRP MNA Khy Vandeth: pledged to take the request to the government for a study of the possibility of building the bridge. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPP MNA Ker Chanmony reported: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the provincial health department incorporated a request for a health center in the 2011 health budget. -the provincial rural development department requested local people to raise the proposal to the Minister of Rural Development to do a research study on the bridge. -district authorities discussed the damaged road with the Korean company, which agreed to fix it 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Health center: the commune chief, after the CD event, reported that Ouk Rabun and representatives of the Health Ministry met with the commune officials to discuss and find an appropriate place for building a health center. The Health Ministry sent a medical team to work in Chhean Leung commune to provide health services to people. • Bridge: the commune chief asked the Anlong Pring village chief to communicate with other village chiefs to submit a proposal for building a bridge in 2011. • Road: On April 21, 2010 the Korean company promised to build a road to cross the dam (length 30 meters and width 5 meters) in Chhean Leung commune.
3	<p>Security/law enforcement:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Problem with youth gangs during ceremonies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPP MNA Ker Chanmony: asked the local authorities to solve the problem concerning lack of security during ceremonies. • SRP MNA Khy Vandeth: asked the local authorities to solve the problem concerning lack of security during 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPP MNA Ker Chanmony: reported that the district governor held a meeting with local authorities, demanding them to maintain order and security in village and commune. • SRP MNA Khy Vandeth: reported that his SRP district councilor in Samaki 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Local authorities and people from five villages of Chuonh Chit, Royeas, Treng, Anlong Pring, and Trapeang Thmar reported that the commune council planned to hold monthly meetings with youth to educate them on laws, with the aim of reducing the insecurity and

		ceremonies.	Meanchey and members of the commune council in Chhean Leung took action to educate a group of youth gangs.	violence in the community.
4	<p>Corruption:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • District officials demanding tax on rice mills though not required. • Illegal police checkpoints to extort money from taxi drivers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPP MNA Ker Chanmony: pledged to solve illegal taxing on rice mills; would ask authorities to investigate illegal checkpoints. • SRP MNA Khy Vandeth: pledged to ask the provincial governor to take action against the checkpoints. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPP MNA Ker Chanmony: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Said tax law required businesses to pay tax to government. - Said checkpoints were legal. • SRP MNA Khy Vandeth: reported that after CD event, the commune and district councils suspended the tax on rice mills but reinstated it on June 21, 2010, finding the tax legal. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Two members of the Rolea Ba' Ear district council and four villagers reported that the CPP MNA asked the district and provincial authorities to investigate the tax law. • The SRP MNA and district councilors conducted an advocacy campaign on the taxing of rice mills. The tax was temporarily suspended. • The district authorities reported that illegal checkpoints in the province were removed.
5	<p>Price of commodities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High price of oil relative to the market price of rice. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP MNA Khy Vandeth: pledged to request a decrease in gas taxes to approach the level of other countries, with the goal of reducing the price of gas to 3,000 <i>Riels</i> per liter. 		