

Summary of Civic Engagement Framework

Introduction:

This Civic Engagement Framework has been prepared in the context of the proposed social land concession process and activities during the preparation of the pilot projects in three communes in Kampong Cham and Kratie Provinces. It has emerged through a number of versions based on consultations and valuable inputs and feedback by all stakeholders ranging from households and communities particularly the poor families, the official representatives of the villages and Commune Councils in the pilot project areas, representatives of the District Working Groups (DWGs), and the members of the Provincial Land Use & Allocation Committees (PLUAC), interested NGOs both at provincial (in Kompong Cham and Kratie Provinces) and national levels as well as with the guidance and inputs from the LASED National Preparation Team (NPPT) with representatives of the involved Ministries (MLMUPC, MoI, MoD, MoEF, MRD, MAFF, MOC) of the Royal Government and involved donors (World Bank and GTZ). It also developed on the expressed LASED principles, namely: (i) Good governance and rule of law; (ii) Supporting the Land Reform Agenda; (iii) Participation and Gender; (iv) Transparency and Accountability; (v) Sustainability.

Definition:

Civic Engagement can be one means by which ordinary citizens and/or civil society organizations participate directly or indirectly in exacting improved performance and accountability.

- In a public sector context, social accountability refers to a broad range of actions and mechanisms that citizens, communities, civil society organizations and the media can use to hold public officials and public servants accountable.
- This can be expanded to ensure accountability of all implementing stakeholders and service providers involved.

Aims:

The Royal Government's LASED preparation team and the World Bank are cooperating to support and facilitate the development of an appropriate and meaningful Civic Engagement Framework for the LASED project implementation ensuring that:

- Effective Consideration of transparency and accountability issues, information dissemination, stakeholder participation, and conflict resolution mechanisms are incorporated into the project and disseminated for the projects' implementation
- Building Consensus on the civic engagement concept and approaches by the Royal Government and other stakeholders including NGO and civil society.
- The Development Civic Engagement Tools and Guides to initiate and enable the engagement of civil society, NGOs and the participation of all project stakeholders.

Objectives:

- Ensuring that activities under LASED will be conducted, following agreed upon principles.
- The civic engagement framework will guide discussions and consultations with involved and interested stakeholders and observers to ensure that the activities are undertaken in a transparent and participatory manner and ensure that those undertaking the related activities on behalf of the Royal Government (at national, provincial, and district, commune and village levels) and involved NGOs are accountable for their actions.

Activities

The civic engagement framework guides to establish and maintain the roles and relationship between RGCs' implementation stakeholders and civil society/interested/involved NGOs to complement each other to contribute to the successful implementation of the SLC process and ensure that poor families gain meaningful access and secure tenure to land and the means of production. The building and consolidation of social and institutional accountabilities would be the key activities of the civic engagement that ensure information dissemination, participation, transparency and conflict resolution in all steps of SLC. These activities are based on premise of continuous and timely provision of and access

to information to complement and support the different steps of SLC processes and procedures (Pre-launch - Land identification - Beneficiary identification & Land allocation) by:

- improving and enhancing communication and disclosure as detailed in annex 2 (Public Announcement Guidelines & Sample Notice Template), annex 3 (Suggested Civic Engagement Communication Materials) and annex 5 (draft leaflet for pre-launch SLC).
- details measures to encourage and ensure greater participation –“informed family decision making” in annex 1 (Civic engagement in social land concession process).
- contributing to improve transparency in and accountability of those involved.

The Government and institutional stakeholders (LASED, PLUAC, District Working Groups and Commune Councils) is the primary informants, as LASED is the Royal Government programme for land distribution. Also best efforts should be made by involved local institutional stakeholders (Commune Councils, PBCs, and Village administrations) not just to provide documented information to families but also provide residents with the opportunity(ies) to seek formal explanations of what these documents contain.

It is envisaged a strong **community involvement** in the project, organised in a specific way to participate in and support the SLC process actively from bottom up. Communities will be expected and prepared to engage in

- explaining to villagers and making transparent the complex process of SLC during Pre-launch, state land identification, beneficiary identification and land allocation.
- providing a public forum to villagers, in the form of (existing) **village information meetings**, to keep villagers informed, discuss problems and expose malpractices, if any, encountered during project implementation;
- assisting Project authorities (CCs) and local NGOs in specific procedures, such as village land mapping, identification of individual beneficiaries, etc.;
- Apply mechanisms to tackle abuses and counter corruption.

To take up such an engagement, communities will themselves establish “**Community Support Groups**” (CSGs). It is in these groups that people will have a real chance to discuss relevant issues and express their individual opinion in a way that many of them would not offer in public. Moreover, these groups are expected to contribute substantially to identify, minimize and partly resolve conflicts emanating from clashes of interests, which the project will inevitably be faced with in the land allocation process. **Local NGOs** with a solid record of several years involvement in participatory community development and people empowerment should be mandated to act as facilitators to complement and support the overall objectives of LASED by: ensuring that Villagers and communities are better informed and able to understand, participate and engaged with those involved with officially implementing in the Social Land Concession Process; providing additional means of communicating and explaining information on the process, procedures and empowering people to be involved at all stage of the SLC process and activities; can support, observe and communicate concerns and issues arising from the people; reporting on and/or contributing to validating incidence of abuses to involved responsible agencies enable better feedback and communication to involved institutional stakeholders¹.

Conclusion:

It is hoped (and needed) that the Framework approaches and activities will continue to evolve and be refined and developed as experiences are gained. It is felt that the current framework will contribute to improving the levels of actual participation, ensuring greater transparency and communication of relevant and important information to families and communities undertaking and close to Social Land Concession in a timely manner and by doing reduce (but it is unlikely) to eliminate all conflicts and disputes. Some of the issues being raised will ensure improved social accountability of the public official and other stakeholders to those communities undertaking SLCs. It should also be noted that there is need to involve and encourage a broader range stakeholders and interested groups to get involved in SLC process as it expands. The effective implementation of civic engagement in the SLC process will be advantaged for replication of strong collaboration between the Royal Government and civil society, NGOs entities.

¹ such as to PLUAC under one of its roles an/or proposed compliant and grievance section of LASED-250506 guidelines Sec4 national level institutional structure