



## Happy New Year 2008

### World Bank Launches Program to Enhance Social Accountability

“I like what’s happening here,” says CLEC Executive Director Yeng Virak, standing inside his booth with his colleagues. He pauses and smiles. “It shows a positive nature in society because leaders and the people who are led should understand each other and work together. I am happy to be part of this work.”

The Community Legal Education Center (CLEC)’s booth was one of 37 civil society organizations’ booths displaying activities promoting social accountability at the launch of a new World Bank Program called PECSA – Program to Enhance Capacity on Social Accountability, on December 3 in Phnom Penh.

More than 950 participants, representing the government, donors, NGOs, monks and students, participated in the launch of the new program and visited the civil society booths.

Welcoming them, World Bank Country Manager Nisha Agrawal said the launch was exciting for the World Bank. “We are usually in partnership with the government

on a range of issues such as natural resources management, public financial management, private sector development

and more,” she continued. “But today’s event is very new and exciting for us be-

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PHOTO:HENG CHIVON

*Government and Civil Society Representatives unveil the Social Accountability Program at its launch in Phnom Penh on December 3, supported by World Bank.*

### John Clark: Governance is Everybody’s Business



*John Clark speaks at the PECSA launch in Phnom Penh on December 3, 2007.*

The World Bank launched its *Program to Enhance Capacity on Social Accountability (PECSA)* on December 3, 2007. The World Bank Newsletter had an opportunity to interview Mr. John Clark, Lead Social Scientist and PECSA’s Task Team Leader, about this new program.

**Q. What does Social Accountability mean?**

A. Social accountability really means everything that citizens can do beyond voting that helps and encourages their government to be more accountable; it also includes the activities that government and civil society organizations can take to give oppor-

tunities for their citizens to become involved in these activities.

**Q. That describes Social Accountability in a general way. Would you mind giving us specific conditions for it?**

A. Yes, social accountability is about citizens truly being involved in the pro-

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## World Bank Launches Program ...

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cause it is a different kind of partnership; we are working with civil society who are helping the citizens of Cambodia to engage more and more actively with their own government.”

The program focuses on improving the effectiveness of public services; monitoring public spending and enhancing accountability for it; strengthening the management of Cambodia’s national resources; strengthening governance of the private sector; strengthening media as an instrument of good governance; and other governance priorities for Cambodian practitioners of social accountability.

PECSA is a World Bank-funded program in Cambodia which has been endorsed by the Ministry of Interior. It strives to enhance the capacity of civil society organizations to assist citizens of Cambodia to help their government be more effective and accountable.

The full-day event was about “social accountability” (SA) – action by civil society to help citizens achieve greater voice and influence in promoting good governance. This included learning and sharing among Cambodians themselves, learning from international best practice such as India and Philippines, and having the opportunity to exchange experiences among development, civil society, government and youth groups. There were also workshops to discuss lessons and challenges on social accountability initiatives in priority areas of Cambodia’s development, such as citizen rating of commune councils, conflict resolution, natural resource management, monitoring of the National Budget, best practice and good governance, and trade union and labor relations.

Workshops also gave an opportunity for all participants to hear from international resource people on the capacity-building programs their institutions and networks offer, the presentation of the preliminary findings of the World Bank-sponsored research study on Civil Society Assessment on Social Accountability, and presentation of the plans and program of PECSA.

In opening remarks, H.E. Ngy Chanphal, Under-Secretary of State for the Interior Ministry, briefed the audience on the Government’s actions on good governance. “I hope that this workshop is a great opportunity to share each other’s



*H.E. Ngy Chanphal, Under Secretary of State for the Ministry of Interior, says the launch was a great opportunity to share each other’s experiences.*

efforts to help the government to deliver more effectively on its services to people in need,” he said. “Today’s meeting is also a chance to set up a national network for civil society to strengthen the cooperation and sharing experience with the government to strengthen the service delivery mechanism to people, and to strengthen partnership with the government in promoting the state’s reforms.”

Participants were invited to walk around and inspect the 37 booths in which civil society organizations displayed their activities relating to “*helping government be more effective and accountable*”.

Pav Vannak, Coordinator of the Community Child-Based Organization (CCBO) – a local organization that works to protect against violation and human trafficking and which had a booth at the launch – said the booth was giving the organization the opportunity to share experience and to learn what organizations do for social accountability.

“I am so proud to be here,” he smiled. “This is a first time for our organization to display our activities in a big event to the public like this. I hope that from today’s results we will have a better society, a society more and more transparent and accountable, a society that has better public service delivery, a society with strong engagement from people and reduced corruption.”

A monk, Nov Sivutha, said the event provided young Cambodians with better understanding of social accountability. He urged that people all work together, including monks, so that the country would receive benefits such as better development and stability. “It is very important that you be responsible for yourself, of what you are doing,” he

said. “If you become a good person then our society will become a good society.”

A surprise for Meas Kim Seng, Coordinator of Samakum Teang Tnant (STT) based in Kampong Speu province, was the presence of students. “I see that youth are showing interest in this issue,” he said. “It has great impact to get the academic world to support our work and to help the government.”

Hong Nary, a student from the National University of Management (NUM), said the event was very important to help students to understand about social issues and to understand values in society.

Mour Sin Heang, another NUM student, echoed his classmate: “The message I got today is to work together for a better society.”

Mak Sarath, Program Coordinator of the Youth Council of Cambodia, said the launch was a first event and a good sign that the World Bank wants people to know and to think deeply about social accountability. “Even though we are a small youth organization, we are also a part of helping the government be more effective and accountable,” he said. “It is also a good opportunity to demand that elected representatives be more accountable to people and to respond positively to the needs of young people.”

The launch concluded with the announcement of essay competition winners and the presentation of awards. (Please read the first prize winner essay supplement.)

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## John Clark: Governance is Everybody's Business

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cess of governing. For this it is first necessary for the government to be prepared to listen to their citizens; which means freedom of speech, and freedom of citizens to come together to form associations, so they can think about what their concerns are. It is also necessary to have the right sort of culture in which senior government officials are truly prepared to listen to what people at grassroots really think about the issues that affect to their lives. You need the right culture *and* the right legal environment.

**Q. Now, on Monday December 3rd, this new program is called Program for Enhancing Capacity Building for Social Accountability – PECSA. What is that?**

A. In Cambodia, the government says they want more partnership with civil society, it recognizes that governance is a top priority for development in Cambodia, and it recognizes that problems of governance will not be solved by the government acting alone: it needs the donors, private sector, and civil society. When you talk to civil society organizations, they also say 'We think governance problems are big problems in Cambodia and we really want to do something to help tackle them, but we don't know what to do.' We find that in other countries there is a very rich experience among civil society organizations about helping citizens make their voices heard and their experiences known – to help the governments tackle these deep-rooted problems of governance. With PECSA what we are seeking to do is to help accelerate the arrival of these experiences - what we call social accountability – into Cambodia. This is what we mean by capacity building - helping organizations develop the skills and approaches that have proven effective elsewhere and apply them in Cambodia.

**Q. We talk about PECSA. What is PECSA going to do to make this program happen, and how?**

A. Well, PECSA has two main elements. One is training and mentoring in which we focus primarily on importing experiences from two countries, India and the Philippines, where social accountability practices are much more advanced than in Cambodia. This entails bringing practitioners with these experiences from those two countries to Cambodia to provide intensive training here. The second is a



*University students look at pamphlets in one of the 37 booths at the launch.*

mentoring scheme whereby organizations in Cambodia can be twinned with counterparts in India or the Philippines to get on-the-job advice and guidance to help them plan how they can really help the government more effectively tackle these governance problems. Third, there will be study tours for people here, including government officials, perhaps, to go and see how organizations in India and Philippines work together to tackle these problems with government. Fourth, there will be grants - grants to organizations here in Cambodia to help them pilot or build up social accountability tools that have proven effective elsewhere and develop them for the Cambodian context.

**Q. You mentioned India and Philippines. Can you tell us the names of some organizations in India or the Philippines and what they are doing?**

A. Yes, we have two main partners; one is called Participatory Research in Asia, based in India; and the other is the Ateneo School of Government based in Manila, in the Philippines. These organizations were selected, not just because they are leaders in social accountability themselves but because they are the centers of national-level networks, bringing all the practitioners together. For example, in the Philippines, the Transparency and Accountability Network focuses on problems at schools and the reason why children are not getting textbooks on time. What they did was monitor all the government production of textbooks, and they found that

40 percent of textbooks that were produced didn't arrive at proper destinations. Some of the cause was corruption, but a lot of it was just error. The organization teamed up with the boy scout and girl scout movements; hundreds of volunteers walked from distribution points to the warehouses and from warehouses to schools and then they found out where text books were going and where the error was occurring. They also found that textbooks were falling apart because they were improperly printed. So it led to pressure on the company producing the textbooks and encouragement for the Ministry of Education to do a better job. As a result, the average price of textbooks fell by more than 50 percent and the time of delivering textbooks to schools was cut from 24 months to 12 months. Without the information coming from the grassroots level, it would not have been possible for the government to achieve the transformation that they did.

**Q. From your experiences, who should be involved in making this program effective?**

A. Well, we need the involvement of everybody. Governance is everybody's business, as with the example I just gave about school textbooks in the Philippines. What we are looking at is the role of NGOs and other civil society organizations to go out and to help citizens at the grassroots level to know more about their opportunities to help the govern-

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## John Clark: Governance is Everybody's Business



*Members of the four winning essay writing groups with World Bank Country Manager Nisha Agrawal (center) and on her left Bhuvan Bhatnagar, Task Team leader of Demand for Good Governance Project.*

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ment become more effective. We look at the role media can play to disseminate the information that really empowers citizens to play more active roles in the area of governance. We also looking at the private sector helping to monitor what is going on at the local level or national level. So I think that civil society, media, private sector and citizens themselves all play an important role in improving governance.

***Q. If you were asked to give your top three recommendations to make Social Accountability work effectively, what would you recommend?***

A. My first recommendation would be to senior people in government, to say when you look at your staff's performance, one question you should ask is how much time do they spend talking to citizens and civil society organizations to find out what is really happening at the grassroots level.

My second recommendation is to big NGOs in Phnom Penh. What we found in the civil society assessment that we are just concluding is that many NGOs are not widely known outside Phnom Penh, and many of them are not seen as providing information to the people at the community level. So I would say to them, give more attention to providing information

to local people that they really need. By the way, we also want to see the government expand the amount of its information that it makes available to the public.

My third recommendation is to build coalitions. Citizens should be powerful actors in a democracy, but in Cambodia there is a weak connection between them and decision-makers in local or national government. What I would like to see is a strengthening of each link in the chain connecting citizens with decision-makers. That means building coalitions of local associations, linking these to networks at the district and provincial levels and then building the national coalitions. And then these need to find effective forums for truly engaging with senior people in government. Then you would have a solid chain connecting the citizens and policy makers.

***Q. What result do you expect to see in the next three years?***

A. We would like to see upward of 50 organizations develop new programs of SA – Social Accountability – using both grants that the PESCA program offers and the training program and mentoring arrangements that PESCA will offer and taking advantage of the National Social Accountability Network that we are developing. We are introducing a new series of what we call Social Accountability

Schools. These will be intensive 3-week training programs. We hope NGOs and other civil society actors, media, and perhaps government, will attend them. They will comprise a series of modules that we hope civil society will benefit from and apply in their organizations. Following this they will be given field assignments and distant learning programs through all of which they will be able to get a diploma in social accountability. By the end of three years, maybe 50 to 60 people will receive such a diploma. And we may take this a step further; since we are linked to the Ateneo School of Government, we can also develop this diploma into a masters program on social accountability.

***Q. What money is available for the program?***

A. We have \$2 million from the World Bank's own resources – a fund set up for countries emerging from major conflicts. This funding is for two years. Within two years, we will develop a large project called the Demand for Good Governance (DFGG) project that has some activities with government and also some \$4 million set aside for activities with civil society and others. So we intend that PESCA will start the ball rolling, operating with the World Bank's own money initially, but after that, similar activities will be funded through DFGG. Therefore, this program is going to be at least four or five years.