CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION: PERSPECTIVES ON CIVIL SOCIETY IN CAMBODIA

Mainstreaming Climate Resilience into Development Planning – Civil Society Support Mechanism (MCRDP-CSSM)

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“So now we have a disaster management law, but it’s just a piece of paper if it’s not acted on. It doesn’t jump off the shelf to help you!” (H. E. ROSS Sovann). The key ingredient is action and follow-through, and civil society is an essential element of that.
CREDITS

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Climate change is real, and it is already here in Cambodia—especially in the form of erratic rainfall: floods and droughts are becoming more frequent and severe, making farming more and more precarious. When we visit villages and talk to people, they speak of differences in the weather, and how farming is more uncertain than ever. You don’t need to be an expert or a scientist to understand that the weather is different now, and farmers across Cambodia are already affected—and are already coping as best they can. Examples include sending teenaged daughters to work in garment factories, planting new or different crops, and planting traditional ‘low risk’ rice varietals that have smaller overall yields but are more resilient to the vagaries of weather.

Cambodia is often pointed to as one of the countries which is most vulnerable to the impact of climate change. In 2014, for example, Standard and Poor’s ranked its economy as the single most vulnerable to the effects of climate change worldwide¹ (Kraemer and Negrila 2014). The reasons for this are socioeconomic as well as environmental. Much of Cambodia lies on a river basin which floods seasonally; indeed, Cambodians are more exposed to flooding than

¹In fact, Cambodia had the highest average for the three variables evaluated by Standard & Poor’s. Firstly, the country has 10.6 % of its population living at an altitude of 5 meters (less than 17 feet) above sea level. Secondly, agriculture accounted for 35.6 % of Cambodia’s GDP. Finally, the country’s ND-GAIN vulnerability index (developed by the Notre Dame University Global Adaptation Index)—which “measures the overall vulnerability by considering vulnerability in six life-supporting sectors”—food, water, health, ecosystem service, human habitat and infrastructure—was ranked 106th out of 116 countries. (S&P 2014).
any other nation in the world (PreventionWeb n.d.). Many of the drivers of vulnerability, however, lie in Cambodian people’s poverty, inequality, and high dependence on natural resources for livelihoods. Despite impressive economic growth surpassing 7% per year since 2011, per capita GDP hovers around US$1,000 per year. The poorest 10% hold only 4% of the nation’s income while the top 10% accounts for 27% of it. Some eighty percent of the population remains rural (World Bank 2014), and 65% works primarily in agriculture (FAO 2014). Cambodians are overwhelmingly rural farmers and fishers and even small variations in weather can have an enormous impact on a family. Rice and fish are the traditional staples of the Cambodian diet. Rural livelihoods and food security are dependent on subsistence agriculture and small-scale fishing, which are highly sensitive to both gradual climatic changes and extreme weather events. Climate change is by no means the only stressor: environmental degradation and poor natural resource management compromises farming and fishing nationwide. Indeed, one of the chief concerns about climate change is that Cambodia’s ecosystems have become so fragile that it may take very little to ‘tip’ them into crisis.

Cambodia was one of the first least-developed countries to embrace climate change adaptation (CCA) in public policy, and there has been increasing interest – and funding – from development partners to confront climate change. Climate change is a global problem – but adaptation is fundamentally local. What constitutes “successful” adaptation varies enormously from place to place, even within a given country. Civil society organizations (CSOs) – including both professional non-governmental agencies and informal grassroots associations – have been working for years at the grassroots level on various village projects, already including CCA and DRR considerations to make their programs stronger, more effective and their impact more durable. There are many opportunities, however, to further mainstream CCA into their operations. Resources and capacity building are essential inputs, so that they can partner with communities and local governments to make a real difference on the ground. Not all the opportunities, however, are a question of simply being included in government strategies and processes, or ‘big development money’. Because CSOs work at the community level, they are in the best position to witness and take stock of how communities are already adapting to climate change, and identify innovative and strengths-based approaches which fit local cultures and ecosystems. It is not enough for CSOs to mainstream CCA into
their own programming and strategies. They should also transmit knowledge and skills towards government and development partners. This will help them transform isolated small-scale initiatives into a broad national effort.

This newsletter helps put some of these opportunities for CSOs on the table for discussion. Rather than a single long research paper, a series of short essays capture different viewpoints, including government, development partners, researchers, CSOs and their networks, as well as the voices of villagers themselves. This is one in a series of papers, multimedia, and other knowledge products produced by the Civil Society Support Mechanism of ADB’s Mainstreaming Climate Resilience into Development Planning Project, implemented by Plan International. Together, we will explore the experiences, lessons, and insights for Cambodian CSOs working at the ‘riceroots’ can respond to climate change.
Climate change change may be the greatest development challenge of the twenty-first century. Shifting weather patterns and increased “natural” disasters threaten lives and livelihoods across the planet. Those who are already poor and vulnerable will be the most affected, and have the fewest resources with which to cope. Climate change adaptation (CCA) is not just an option: it is a necessity and is already underway. The question for Cambodia today is how to cope with the effects of extreme and unpredictable weather.

In Cambodia, spontaneous adaptation strategies may include rural-to-urban migration, intensified (and possibly unsustainable) use of natural resources, and continuing to farm traditional rice varietals which are hardy in the face of uncertain weather, despite lower yields and market prices (Thavat, 2015).

Civil society organizations (CSOs) have the opportunity to engage with poor communities to facilitate strategies which respond to their immediate needs and are environmentally sustainable. These often include ‘climate-smart’ agriculture, water management (collection, storage, and distribution) ecosystem-based adaptation strategies, livelihood diversification, and disaster risk reduction.

CSOs — like Cambodians themselves — will have to adapt. The effects of climate change are already transforming the context and priorities. When Plan International’s partners conducted Vulnerability Reduction Assessments across Cambodia in late 2015, there was broad agreement among farmers that weather was already changing: floods and droughts were more...
frequent and severe, and the weather more unpredictable in general. This makes it difficult for farmers to make decisions on when, how and what to plant.

challenges for both communities and for CSOs, but there are also opportunities for effective action. Adaptation is a complex topic, and while many in Cambodia do recognize that climate change is here to stay, some CSOs are perplexed as to what, exactly, to do on a practical level. Climate change stretches far into the future. What does this mean for a plan of action, especially in the short term?

There is a great deal of experience on which to build, however. While climate change per se is a new threat, there is also a lot of overlap between CCA and general development aims. It will be important to recognize what development efforts need to be scaled up, and what needs to be done differently. As Spearman and McGray (2011) argue, “Not all development is adaptation and not all adaptation leads to development” (p. 11).

One pitfall is that when we focus on the co-benefits between adaptation and other aims, it is easy to sidestep tough choices in protecting people from climate risks – and recognize that vulnerability is not evenly shared. Climate change threatens some more than others, even within a single community. Those who are already poor and marginalized are likely to have the fewest resources with which to cope. There are inevitably tensions, tradeoffs, and political sensitivities surrounding adaptation priorities, and these do need to be confronted.

We have observed considerable confusion in some quarters of Cambodia as to how adaptation is distinguished from ‘business as usual’ (BAU) development efforts. Not everything that gets rained on is a suitable adaptation project! Indeed, one of the chief
difficulties Plan International had when reviewing a round of CSO grant proposals was identifying how a given project actually addressed adaptation per se, beyond (for example) a standard agriculture one.

Secondly, in Cambodia there is a history of CCA training/capacity building coming in at too high a technical level. When this happens, agencies are unable to actually apply this knowledge. For example, the evaluation of Cambodia’s Joint Climate Change Initiative (Dalhgren, Christoplos, and Phanith 2013) highlighted that effectiveness of trainings in climate-smart agriculture was hampered by weak or even non-existent agricultural extension services to begin with. They noted that both government and CSO approaches tended to be heavy-handed, top-down, and preoccupied with ‘modernization’ rather than a learning approach which recognized local strengths and capacities and built partnerships with smallholders. Promoting climate-smart agriculture that is ‘smart’ for smallholders is most effective when supported by strengthened agricultural services as a whole.

We do recognize that the two points we are making – for more technical assistance, but fewer technicalities – may come across as a paradox, but really they underscore the need for a more holistic approach which appropriately brings together technical and local knowledge. A critical challenge – but also opportunity – for CSOs in Cambodia is to strike this balance more effectively. Climate change is not simply a technical problem to be solved by outside experts; risk and resilience is too profoundly shaped by socioeconomic factors and perspectives from the ‘riceroots’ need to be recognized, embraced, and built upon.
A body of critical research and reflection on climate change adaptation in Cambodia has begun to emerge (e.g. Käkönen et al., 2014; Mahanty et al., 2015; Work, 2015; Christoplos & McGinn 2016), pointing to the need to challenge policy and programming narratives which, in Käkönen et al’s (2014) words, “render climate change governable” (p. 355) by framing it in technical terms which support rather than challenge dominant development paradigms. These approaches too often further marginalize the most vulnerable from what counts as ‘climate smart’.

At the village (or urban poor) level, programming silos do not make much sense because the many dimensions of risk and resilience are too deeply intertwined within people’s lives. CSOs are well-placed to identify and encourage strengths-based approaches, and facilitate the infusion of ‘riceroots’ perspectives to national policy and programming. Advocacy is essential to achieve this. Our research, however, highlights that advocacy is something of a fraught topic for Cambodian CSOs. We observed a sharp divide between agencies embracing ‘hard’ versus ‘soft’ advocacy strategies.

The ‘hard’ advocacy groups include an eclectic mix of strong rights-oriented groups with a strong legal focus, plus a newer emerging cluster of ‘rabble-rouser’ community-based organizations. Service-oriented CSOs – many of which see themselves as ‘professional’ development agencies implementing programs funded primarily by international donors – focus on implementing projects and soft (or no) advocacy which largely avoids political controversy.

We noted that nearly all agencies adopt advocacy positions according to how they want to situate themselves within the Cambodian political landscape, rather than by an analysis of what is needed to effect change. This is understandable, but also unfortunate. We also note that some ‘soft’ service-oriented CSO representatives are clearly ‘connecting the dots’ across complex issues, but feel constrained because they depend on government approvals and permissions. This echoes Frewer’s (2013) observation that CSO staff “navigated a precarious path between the demands of donors and what was possible and safe for them in their day-to-day existence” (p. 106).

There is clearly both need and opportunity to strengthen CSO capacities around advocacy and programming for CCA. There is also a need and opportunity to strengthen the trust and collaboration between civil society and government so that advocacy can be done in a constructive versus confrontational way, leaving aside as much as possible broader political agendas. The current thrust of policy and programming is to separate mitigation (i.e., reduce climate change itself through reduced greenhouse gas emissions and protecting forests and other ‘carbon sinks’ which absorb them) and adaptation (i.e., coping with the effects – rather than causes – of climate change). In a country like Cambodia, these two are actually inextricably interlinked. Ecosystems – including farmlands and other ‘human habitats’ – are much more affected by climate change if they are already under strain for other reasons. In this way, climate change exacerbates the
impact of unsustainable natural resource extraction. Cambodia has the third highest rate of deforestation in the world (Hansen et al. 2013, as cited by Milne & Mahanty 2015); aquatic ecosystems are similarly under enormous stress.

We are concerned a narrative is emerging which labels all environmental degradation as ‘climate change’ and that this narrative shifts responsibility for natural resource management to global actors. In fact, many of the issues that Cambodian farmers are struggling with – including droughts and floods – are also driven by deforestation and unsustainable water resource management which are both driven in part by local actors. Ecosystem-based adaptation is built upon the premise that a healthy environment is essential to adaptation. Because CSOs are – or should be – grounded in local-level experiences in Cambodia, it simply does not make sense to divvy up issues into separate sectors, because at the local level they are so intertwined. Deforestation is not just a “mitigation” problem: it is an adaptation one, because it affects farming and fishing.

Food security and nutrition also represents an opportunity for advocacy and targeted programming. The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry, and Fisheries (MAFF) has a (2014) Climate Change Action Plan which discusses food security, but its strategy (and performance measures) emphasize maximizing crop yields to strengthen overall national food security and increase commercial exports. What it lacks is a strategy to address household-level food security and nutrition. CSOs can and should model and advocate pro-poor strategies to improve nutrition across Cambodia, to reduce the toll that climate change will take on food security.

Perhaps the single most explosive public policy issue in Cambodia today is land tenure security, a full discussion of which is well outside the scope of this essay. But community-based adaptation projects cannot somehow build “resilience” amidst widespread dispossession of small-scale farmers. Adaptation often implies significant – and sometimes expensive - investments in water management infrastructure and systems, soil conservation, adoption of new seed varieties, or costly sanitation and housing infrastructure in the case of urban areas.

These investments are much more risky if land tenure is not secure. As more CSOs formally adopt rights-based approaches, it will be more difficult to sidestep political tensions, especially with regard to land.

Climate change adaptation presents both challenges and opportunities for CSOs to implement new types of projects and programs, and also contribute to mediating public policy discourse and occupy the ‘space’ between citizens and authorities. This is not only a question of capacity building, amassing technical expertise, and leveraging global funds to pursue this critical work. Opportunities also lay in reframing the discourse of development in Cambodia, to better promote bottom-up and more holistic approaches.
Mr. Khoun Sokha, Phnom Penh

Mr. Khoun Sokha is a vice chief of Prek Takong village, Sang Kat Boeung Tumpun, Khann Mean Chey in Phnom Penh city. He is 53 years old. He first came to this village in 1984, and is now a morning glory farmer.

Over the past few years, I observed that the environment and climate are different from before. These changes negatively affect people’s health, especially young children. The sun is hotter, and this affects schooling. It’s so hot during the day, and young students have to walk far from home to their schools. Some of them don’t go to school on hot days. It is hard for school children, the sun harms their health. In this community we are poor, so we cannot afford bicycles. The children have to walk 2 kilometers to go to school.

People in this community own their land, and built their houses themselves. Normally, our houses are built on wooden stilts, but the walls and roof are metal which is so hot! With the help of a local NGO, we are trying to renovate houses so that children are more protected by shade. For example some build houses next to ruins of old ones, where it is shady. We try to fix up the houses so that they can cope with three hazards: wind, flood, heat. Some of the houses are in bad condition.

There is more rain now, and strong winds. The village is on open land, with no trees nor shade. When I was young, it was not hot like this. The last 5-6 years have been really different.
Ms. Prak Khoeun, Kampong Speu Province

Prak Khoeun is 53 years old and has been living in Krang Serey village since 1979.

I have three children. My daughter works in a garment factory in Phnom Penh, my eldest son got married and lives in another nearby commune, and my youngest son studies in Phnom Penh. My husband and I are farmers. We farm rice during the rainy season only, but we grow vegetables year round.

Over the past few years, water has become more scarce, and it’s hard for villagers to find enough for households and for farming. The ponds and stream are dried up now. The environment started to change around 1993. Since then there is less rain, and now droughts always affect our village. I am a farmer, but because rain levels are low, my yield is low too. Ten years ago, I could sell two tons of rice per year, but not now. Now there is only enough for my family to consume, and no more to sell.

There is social hardship in the face of all these challenges. Income is hard to come by. There is some gambling; and despite some CSO education on this, it doesn’t stop. In Prek Takong 1 village, we have some self-help groups: savings groups, water user groups, and also an agriculture cooperative. Members can borrow from their savings group, to expand their business and pay back step by step. These groups are supported by an International NGO. If a group member has an accident or other emergency, he/she can also borrow 40,000 riels at a time.
Because of changes in the environment, I have noticed that more diseases affect my community, especially the elderly and young children. The changes also affect livelihoods in Krang Serey, because villagers now struggle to survive on farming. It’s hard to cope with the situation, but there are a few things we can do, like digging ponds for growing many kinds of vegetables. If there is more water, we can earn more from growing vegetables. We villagers always stay here, because we need to be here if it rains, then we can farm rice and grow vegetables. We are happy when we think about earning money that way.

Krang Serey depends on rainwater for farming. Some people drink purified water purchased from the community’s mini bottling factory, while others drink boiled water from the pipe.

I find that these years, the sun is hotter and sometimes people get sick. During the March and April hot season, it’s hotter and hotter at night. It’s so hot that some people sleep outside, and so does my family. During the hot season, villagers can get sick with diarrhea or typhoid. But we know how to prevent it now, and we get support from the health center as soon as we get sick.
To reduce risks from the changing weather, I have a few suggestions that a CSO could do with a government department to help my community. My idea is that digging more family ponds would be a great choice so that people could have more water to use. The piped water is currently not enough for all our community’s needs. Some people have their own ponds, but others don’t. It is also good to educate people about climate change.

I would be happy if there was CSO funding to support my community, it doesn’t need to be the government’s budget. If we had our own ponds, we could grow vegetables and also raise fish in the ponds, as these are the best of ways for us to cope with less rainfall. I am an optimist! I would also like to plant more trees to absorb carbon and give shade. We need to keep in mind the future of younger generations.

One way to reduce climate change is to plant more trees. This is also the best way to reduce heat from the sun, and CSOs help the government do this. CSOs work directly with us here in our community. The village and commune authorities are so busy, and they don’t know so much about climate change.
Ron Dyna is 28 years old and lives in Chan village, where she was born.

Before, we used to have floods every year. It was difficult, and there weren’t any CSOs who came and helped, so we did not get any information. We did not know how to deal with extreme floods, either before, during, or after. We did not have a good way to keep animals and poultry safe from floods. There were few safe hills or high grounds or places where families could keep their animals during a flood, except for a faraway pagoda. There were a few boats, but most families did not have one. When a flood came, many people got diarrhea from drinking unclean water. Most people in this village got sick. And people did not know how to live healthily. Some families drew water from a well and boiled it for drinking, but some families drank water directly from the well.

The need for water wells has increased in the last two years. A local CSO helped pay for digging wells and equipped them with pumps. Every family has a latrine in their house. When it floods, the water reaches under their houses [which are built on stilts], but the houses are not affected or destroyed. The flood occurs during school holidays and thus does not affect studying. With the floods, some families have migrated to work in other provinces or outside the country.

Most of them have gone to Thailand. They leave their young children at home with relatives. One girl drowned while traveling by boat with another 3 people during the flood. She didn’t know how to swim, and there was no one brave enough to help her at the time.

Storms also affect my village, but it has not been as serious.
We have had drought in recent years, since 2014. The water dried up and pump wells did not work. During the drought, we could only grow a little rice.

Not much grew and moreover, a lot of animals and poultry died from water shortages. Our biggest worry was not having enough to eat. We had to buy rice. Villagers here in fact are more worried about drought than about floods: our survival depends on our ability to access enough water. We face great difficulties when there is drought, as people and animals need water for drinking and living.

There is good mutual support in the community when disasters happen. Villagers share food, clothes and rice with those in greatest need. The pagoda also gives rice to poor villagers. We collaborated with a CSO to choose families who needed wells and then the CSO built them.

We can also get some income and support our own family from gardening, but we need CSOs and the commune council to help us improve home gardening and animal raising practices.

This is my first time to be involved with a local CSO to learn about climate change and disaster risk reduction. It is good to learn and it helps us a lot. I suggest that we receive more training on agriculture and that those be extended to more families in my village.
Cambodia embraced policies and programs addressing climate change adaptation when it was still a new topic. An important example of such policies is the Cambodia Climate Change Strategic Plan 2014-2023. What is the role of CSOs within official climate change strategies?

The Ministry of Environment of the Royal Government of Cambodia identified the potential role of NGOs and Civil Society Organizations under Phase I of Pilot Program for Climate Resilience (PPCR), and has thus supported civil society under Phase 2 of PPCR. The government sees the importance of strengthening the engagement of civil society (including women, youth, senior citizens, indigenous groups, NGOs, the media and academia) and the private sector within the climate change adaptation agenda, while at the same addressing gender disparities. The aim is to broaden awareness of climate risks and increase participation to a broader group of stakeholders. Civil society is seen as a key stakeholder to supporting climate change adaptation through practical actions such as the CSSM, which builds civil society capacity and awareness of the importance of integrating climate resilience in planning and programs for advocacy and service delivery.

We interviewed three government representatives to explore this question: His Excellency CHHUOP Paris (National Council on Sustainable Development), His Excellency ROSS Sovann (National Committee for Disaster Management), and Mr. SAR Kosal (Ministry of Interior’s Democratization & Deconcentration unit). They expressed a diversity of opinions and perspectives but above all, they expressed appreciation and enthusiasm for the contributions of civil society. Each have their own perspectives, but across their thoughtful, and incisive reflections some common themes emerged. We will briefly touch on five of these, which help frame opportunities for strengthened government partnerships with civil society in the years to come.
1. Cooperation: or, the government really does need civil society! One of the simplest yet strongest themes that came through is how eager the government is to partner with civil society, because CSOs help get things done. They also bring much to the table: technical expertise, strong and meaningful ties with communities, and bottom-up approaches – all of which are needed to help create change on the ground. Climate change is a relatively new issue, and there is a uncertainty as to what exactly to do. CSOs have training and experience in community-based adaptation projects, and this can help the government formulate better plans to further realize its ambitious policy agenda.

As His Excellency ROSS Sovann (photo left) commented, “So now we have a disaster management law, but it’s just a piece of paper if it’s not acted on. It doesn’t jump off the shelf to help you!” The key ingredient is action and follow-through, and civil society is essential to that. Getting things done will require partnerships, cooperation, and leadership – and there is opportunity for everyone.

2. Decentralization: The New Climate Change Opportunity. Climate change may be global, but adaptation is fundamentally local. Administrative reforms are underway in Cambodia, bringing new levels of both authority and responsibility to sub-national governments. Climate change funding too is increasingly directed to – or at least includes – local governments. Very significant capacity gaps remain, however, both in how to address climate change, and how to embrace bottom-up, participatory work. The government welcomes CSO strengths in this regard, which can and should strengthen decentralization processes. However, they point to lost opportunities in this regard. Some CSOs are so focused on accessing foreign donor funds that they do not fully recognize that resources may be available with and through local government. There is strong consensus among our interviewees that decentralization presents enormous opportunities for local-level partnerships.
SAR Kosal (photo left) particularly urged CSOs to directly approach commune councils about new opportunities for climate change adaptation projects. Aside from the fact that money may become available, projects will be more sustainable if they enjoy ongoing local government support.

3. **Scaling Up and Out.** The three interviewees strongly agree that CSOs do excellent work at the community level, but lack resources and capacity to scale up and out. Yes, water security is improved in one village – but what about the village next door? Government can learn a great deal about good practice (and bad) from the experience of CSOs – but CSOs simply are not equipped to roll out models widely, nor sustain projects over the long term. This is precisely what government can and should do. CSOs can experiment and identify successful strategies, but ultimately their effectiveness is limited unless interventions are delivered on a larger scale. **This only the government can do – but it**, in turn, relies on CSOs to show them the models. His Excellency ROSS Sovann was probably the most articulate on this point: “On DRR, there is no one with strong power, mandate, or capacity to really mobilize all the players. Now there are fragments of good practice, but they are unsustainable... CSOs are doing a good job on CCA and DRR, with good results at the community level. But there is no scale... they are isolated, fragmented, scattered.” He strongly argued that effective partnership between government and CSOs is critical – and that the main limitation is not capacity or resources, but leadership and willpower. The others echoed him in some respects, directly or indirectly emphasizing that CSOs need government to achieve systematic and sustainable results.

4. **Policy and Advocacy.** Interviewees expressed strong interest in a greater role for CSOs in public policy. Because of their strong technical expertise and knowledge about effective programming at the grassroots, their input is welcome and, indeed, needed to craft public policy.
As CHHUOP Paris (photo left) argued, “We cannot protect the environment alone! We need civil society and the development partners to work together with us…. We need to mobilize others… and integrate local with international expertise… CSOs help us more and more.” To do so, however, more sophisticated and nuanced advocacy strategies would be welcome. There were calls for input to be stronger, better, more effective, and useable – and paired with more trust and professionalism. There were comments about new leadership and ways of working within the government itself – “the old style is gone” and there are meaningful efforts to be more inclusive and bottom-up than in the past. While problems persist, there was some defensiveness about CSOs which are seen to either just argue for the sake of arguing, or else to extend input that is simplistic or generic rather than based on more incisive analysis – particularly ‘big picture’ thinking and highlighting of policy gaps which, indeed, can be better thought of as policy opportunities.

There were also calls for less passivity among CSOs: that too many wait to be told what to do rather than speak up and out. ROSS Sovann added that many of these comments also apply to donors! “CSO advocacy needs to push policy because policy determines resources and mandates. Development partners too! We are not as donor-driven as people think! I am a little disappointed in them, actually, because they should do more advocacy too. They have a lot of expertise, and we need more constructive thinking. And the CSOs should initiate more too, not just wait. They do such good work at the grassroots, but we need them at the policy level too, so that we can all do a better job.” SAR Kosal echoed, “Very few CSOs strategically advocate for climate change. We need to build a network with a stronger voice. I think the government will support them if it’s done well…. More sophisticated, informed, positive, and with evidence. The government can support that.”

5. The climate is not the only thing that’s changing! Cambodia is in transition, and this too poses both challenges and opportunities. This theme appeared again and again across the interviews. Cambodia is a country undergoing rapid change on many fronts, and it is imperative to be nimble and not get stuck in old habits if they no
longer fit the current situation. All this change – even climate change itself – can represent an opportunity to do things differently. SAR Kosal highlighted enormous opportunities for collaboration not simply in terms of style, but in funding and other resources to build climate resilience at the local level. As budgets devolve, CSOs will find new opportunities for funding well beyond their usual international donor base. He urged CSOs to recognize and act on this early, in order to shape new partnerships as well as secure a new source of funding. Concerns were also expressed in different ways that opportunities were being lost for both government and CSOs to do things differently. ROSS Sovann, for example, regretted that climate change is too often just a buzzword dropped into funding proposals without any real change in strategy or direction. Climate change is broad – but it should also be meaningful. He urged stakeholders to think critically about what CCA really means. One strategy is for a more comprehensive, integrated DRR programming across Ministries. SAR Kosal similarly called for CSOs to pursue more systematic and sustainable approaches and strategies to implement projects and build local capacities. “The role of CSOs is very important at the local level,” he argued, “but they need more systematic and strategic support” and decentralization is a new key. If one Ministry is still top-down in Phnom Penh, he suggested to go to its local department in the province and figure out how to action plan together. This can be a model for the Ministry – but also CSOs themselves. The era of waiting for government invitations is over, or should be.
CSOs and villagers are already coping as best they can with cascading floods and droughts, but there are opportunities to do so in a way that is more strategic and sustainable. To learn more about these opportunities, three Cambodian CSO leaders were interviewed: Mr. HENG Sok from our local partner agency Sovann Phoum, Ms. IM Phallay from NGO Forum (an association of NGOs in Cambodia), and Mr. NOP Polin from the international NGO Danish Church Aid. They all spoke with great enthusiasm and commitment, each expressing their own opinions and perspectives, while often echoing each other. This article presents some of the common themes that emerged from the discussions.

1. **It is essential to trust – as well as build - local capacities.** The development community in Cambodia is preoccupied with capacity building and capacity gaps, and unsurprisingly our interviewees all emphasized training, mentoring, and capacity building for villagers, CSOs, and government alike. However, there were strong assertions that local capacities need to be better recognized and embraced by outsiders.

   **IM Phallay (photo left),** for example, spoke at length about her experiences mobilizing illiterate village women for DRR activities. “In the end, I was so proud!” she exclaimed. “Many people think that uneducated people cannot do anything, but in fact they became real leaders. In the end, they are better able to cope with floods – and also to persuade the Ministry, the pagodas, and others to support them, too.” HENG Sok also discussed recognizing and supporting spontaneous adaptation in villages. “Sometimes people address the problem by themselves, without expert knowledge. They don’t intend to adapt to climate change exactly, but they adapt to the water shortage or other problems that they are experiencing.” Community-based work that draws from local strengths is more effective, and outsiders who respect and act upon that get better results.
2. The biggest capacity gap is not knowledge, but leadership, long term empowerment and effective follow-through. All made strong calls for development partners to go beyond simply information, training, and short-term one-off projects, and refocus toward long-term efforts. With mentoring and consistent funding, local CSOs can achieve more meaningful and sustained results. It is not simply a question of fundraising: climate change is a long-term problem which needs long-term action, and donors should see this as an opportunity to adjust their funding modalities in order to be more effective. There were complaints about “many trainings” without adequate resources for follow-through, or investment in the leadership to carry the work forward. To really apply new knowledge and information, training needs to be embedded within a strategic – and stably funded – pathway that stretches over time. IM Phallay made an especially impassioned plea for leadership training and mentoring champions. Capacity gaps should be addressed within a more empowering and holistic approach. Capacity building needs to be resourced differently, not simply adequately. Technical trainings are not enough, especially when people feel uncertain how to apply it to their own work. While everyone agrees that training should be part of longer-term efforts that build true leaders, the fact is funding is not currently available for that. Champions are change agents who make things happen: but they are much more effective when others also support their work over time.

3. Investing in Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) is one of the most important adaptation strategies for Cambodia. As NOP Polin declared, “DRR is the key.” More systematic investment in DRR is imperative. This in turn requires partnerships with communities and local authorities to enhance leadership and plan ahead: for example, invest in Disaster Management Committees in villages, and contribute to crafting local government strategies to ensure a focus on the poor and most vulnerable. Too often there are missed opportunities around disaster planning and preparedness, and our interviewees pointed to very specific and concrete examples. “Sometimes commune councils just build roads and don’t think about other options until there is an acute drought and it is too late”, NOP Polin explained. He argued for CSOs to present innovative and practical DRR suggestions to local government planners and villagers. HENG Sok explained that while community people may not know about climate change per se, they certainly know that floods and droughts are getting worse and keenly welcome any good advice.
They also admitted that acknowledging climate change makes proposals more fundable. Climate Change Adaptation should not be just a fundraising strategy – nor should it somehow crowd out ‘old’ DRR programming if that is precisely what is needed. In Cambodia, coping with climate change includes confronting disasters. Climate change calls for new strategies and approaches, and for a revision of long-standing priorities -chief among these is a renewed emphasis on DRR. Again: the latter is fundamentally an issue of leadership and vision – not just capacity.

4. **Government partnerships include both new opportunities and old problems.** Widespread enthusiasm was expressed about Cambodia’s efforts to devolve responsibility, authority, and budgets from central to local levels. Because CSOs can and are at the forefront of community-based programming, they are well-poised to be influential partners and leaders in the transition towards a new style of government. IM Phallay especially commented on the importance of CSOs contributing to new local-level government strategies and plans. “This is very important,” she asserted, “I think bottom-up approaches are better and [government officials] do not always know the villages.” CSOs can gently persuade a wider range of thinking and planning.

There were also comments, however, that government partnerships at any level are hardly the ‘magic bullet’ that everyone would like them to be. Government processes can be slow and officials passive; frustration was expressed that they are less committed and accountable than they should be. Decentralization is indeed an important opportunity for new ways of working to address climate change at the local level – but CSOs’ opportunity is undermined if government does not embrace more pro-active and participatory ways of working. Enthusiasm is high, but tempered by realism and concerns: for example, that both CSOs and community-based approaches be excluded.

5. **CSOs can play a leadership role in bridging science with local knowledge, and national policy with local needs.** IM Phallay argued that CSOs should be a change agent, and that climate change itself is driving innovation across the country. Livelihood strategies are being adjusted because they must. Climate change is transforming agriculture, fishing, and livelihoods. Old strategies may become less effective, but
villagers are uncertain as to what they should do differently. Meanwhile, recommendations are flooding in from international climate change experts – but their advice may not always be workable in the local context. “Climate change experts think in big terms, but they are not always practical!”, HENG Sok explained (photo left).

NOP Polin made similar comments that “we need to blend science with local knowledge” and that CSOs can bridge these to forge practical solutions at the community level. They especially emphasized how strategies must be culturally sensitive, not just technical, and that the best solutions are often quick, easy, and inexpensive. HENG Sok pointed to one example: local chickens are highly suited to Cambodian conditions (including floods and droughts) compared to commercial breeds – but are prone to dying en masse from disease breakouts. Actually, it is not ‘modern’ chickens that are stronger, but rather that those who raise them are large operations which can afford vaccines which are only available in bulk quantities! With modest resources, a CSO can mobilize a village and vaccinate the hardier, more resilient local chickens all together, and thus safeguard food security.

HENG Sok emphasized that poor Cambodians are very risk-averse: they simply cannot afford to experiment, or to try again if something fails. One result is that they quickly abandon a farming or other livelihood strategy – whether new or old – if something else seems safer or more reliable. Outside expert (or government) strategies often fail to account for the priorities and perspectives of the poor, including that they simply cannot afford to take chances. Climate change is transforming smallholder agriculture in Cambodia – and villagers can and are already adapting to new circumstances. But the experts too need to adapt: better understand villagers themselves, rather than regret that they are backwards or uneducated. This takes long-term effort and a humble attitude, but in the end it is the most effective way to promote resilience at the community level.

NOP Polin (photo left): “Civil society cannot substitute the government, but we can try to give support, evidence, and collaborate to fill the gap and widen the space to better include the most vulnerable.”
The climate is changing – and so, indeed, is Cambodia. CSOs have skills, expertise, and commitment to community-based programming in Cambodia. They serve as bridges between villages (or city neighborhoods) and the policy arena, and help translate international knowledge into local-level efforts. Government and donors do support them, extend funding, and capacity building. However, the overarching theme from conversations with CSO leaders emphasized leadership, decision-making, local context, and inclusive approaches. Neither CSOs – nor, indeed, Cambodian citizens themselves – are simply passive recipients of aid. Government and donor funding for climate change (and otherwise) is increasingly being channeled to local levels, but this requires new ways of working – not simply allocating budgets differently. This is an opportunity for CSOs to become models, leaders, and partners, who demonstrate what does and does not work at the ‘riceroots’, and ultimately influence public policy and praxis across the nation.
We met with three development partners to gather their perspectives about civil society contributions to climate change adaptation in Cambodia. Insights were generously shared by Mr. Julien Chevillard (UNDP Trust Fund Administrator for the Cambodia Climate Change Alliance), Mr. Clemens Beckers, (Natural Resources Management and Climate Change Attaché at the European Union mission in Phnom Penh), and Mr. Erik Wallin (Climate Finance Readiness Program Manager for GIZ in Cambodia). All weighed in on the advantages and limitations surrounding civil society organizations in Cambodia, and recommended future pathways for them.

1. **Local NGOs' access and trust in the communities brings important value. CSOs can mobilize people and deliver projects cost effectively – but they must work hand-in-hand with government to be effective in the long term.**

CSOs “can do good work in terms of social mobilization at the local level, and they are able to engage networks and function on relatively limited budgets because people are committed to their communities”, says Julien Chevillard. He sees a clear role for CSOs in Cambodia, because they are cost-effective and committed to quality community-based work. “Everyone has their own roles and strengths and weaknesses” says Beckers; the key is finding the right place for everyone: from civil society, Government and the private sector.

According to Clemens Beckers, the European Union has primarily engaged local CSOs through a forestry program. CSOs have strong community ties: they are trusted by villagers, partly because they operate differently from the private sector. INGOs also bring expertise and knowledge, and they often infuse global evidence and new ideas to Cambodia. Local CSOs further harness local knowledge and understandings of vulnerability, Beckers added. CSOs generate solid evidence and data, which is sorely lacking in countries like Cambodia. In an ideal world, it would be a very good role for NGOs to “come together, coordinate, and… share some basic information in a factual way about, say, the state of forestry, basic information about illegal activities, how Economic Land Concessions are being managed, about law enforcement efforts”. He clarified that these would need to be first uncovered and discussed and endorsed by government before going to the press.
Erik Wallin from GIZ sees that it may be beneficial to channel funds through local NGOs, although he does not see specific advantages that fully set them apart from other potential partners. Local NGOs often, but not always, have strong ties and knowledge of the target groups and areas. But for truly effective and sustained impact, working in conjunction with government is essential. Mr. Beckers confirmed the importance of working with authorities: doing so facilitates government buy-in and it is imperative that government officials do not feel excluded or antagonized, especially in politically sensitive sectors like forestry. Ultimately it is government who make key management decisions and grasp the policy arena over the long term.

2. **Local CSOs are valuable – but also have capacity limitations, including nuanced understanding of climate change adaptation, ability to scale successful models up and out, and forging innovation.**

There is a capacity challenge among many CSOs, especially around new and complex issues like climate change. Julien Chevillard explained, “Traditional developmental issues, they understand. But climate change requires long-term thinking, not just about current disasters….. This long term-thinking may be a bit difficult for some of these organizations.” Beckers agreed, commenting that “There is a very vibrant [CSO] scene with many active organizations, but given the very [cross-cutting] nature of the topic, so many people do climate change and education, or water supply, or agriculture… Sometimes one wonders why a project is called a climate change project when it is just an agriculture project!”. Wallin echoed, “The difference between a traditional community-based development program and those focusing strictly on climate change is seldom clear-cut, and knowledge of what is what is often lacking.” This creates both opportunities and challenges, especially from a donor perspective. If the donor is funding adaptation, then any community-proposal must also clearly demonstrate how it achieves this.

Local knowledge is essential, but it needs to be complemented by science. This is why partnerships are essential: because different agencies bring different knowledge to the table. Some also commented that CSOs are often efficient and effective, but not innovative. In other words, similar ‘tried and true’ projects are repeated over and over. CSOs often lack funding and/or technical expertise to experiment. To overcome these obstacles, “The most successful approaches we have had is when there are partnerships with a stronger, usually INGO, and a local [CSO],” Julien Chevillard explained. Partnerships with larger INGOs, research institutes or other agencies can bring in the expertise, funding for innovation, and quality assurance, while the local partner handles the on-the-ground work.
It was noted that few CSOs successfully scale up and out. Julien Chevillard also observed that “There is not a tradition of government programs that use public money to support civil society.” He suggested that partnerships between the two can be effective: CSOs can demonstrate success models which the government can replicate nationwide. Replication can also be achieved through partnerships with larger NGOs. “You need that network - the funding bridge - and a kind of technical assistance that reaches across all organizations. It is not simple and quite complex to manage”, he adds. Scaling up and out may also be facilitated by public policy support. Wallin confirmed that “a sustained scaling-up of any local model can only be done in partnership with the government… So again building real partnerships with government entities is essential. This will also create opportunities for additional international and national funding, making scaling up and out more likely.”

3. **CSOs have a role to play in policy and advocacy, especially in support to local development processes**

Beckers sees a role for CSOs in rolling out policies. They interact with key players in Phnom Penh – but also are active in most remote places. They are positioned to spread key information about, say, new prakas [regulations]. Civil society can also infuse village perspectives into national discourse: “Through civil society, local communities can better inform (sub-)national levels about the reality on the ground, share impressions of what is realistic, inform which policies are being implemented and understood – and which are not.” According to Mr. Chevillard, one lesson learned from UNDP programs was the continued opportunity to link successful local models with larger policies. “Where UNDP has tried to play a role is in taking the lessons learned [from CSO projects] and feed that into policy discussions.”

Chevillard notes that government policies tend to focus on the state apparatus – but there is room for CSOs too. He sees commune-level planning as a forum where NGOs can participate – and perhaps work toward service delivery opportunities at the local level, especially around ‘soft’ programming components. “Infrastructure is of course part of the mix, but actually in many cases infrastructure is not the best intervention for adaptation. In some cases, it is about community patrolling the local forest, because the community gets a lot of resources and a lot of the resilience of the community comes form that forest. [CSOs can be more effective] with soft interventions, supporting local authorities to cooperate with the local armed forces on enforcement issues, having money for agriculture extension type services, training communities on alternative livelihood opportunities, supporting small businesses,” he explained. Commune development plans and budgeting systems in theory could deliver soft interventions, but in practice it is very difficult for them to do so. This is the space for CSOs.
4. **Flexibility In the face of climate uncertainty**

With climate information and services in Cambodia still unreliable, not sufficiently localized, or on too long a horizon to be immediately helpful, Mr. Chevillard recommended diversifying livelihoods. “Sometimes the best approaches are the ones that leave people with options, so they do not rely on one single source of income... With alternative sources of income, if something goes wrong in one area, you have another crop. You have back-up options. This is not rocket science, but look at the potential of using savings groups or other risk reduction strategies.” CSOs can manage diverse small-scale activities within a village or area, which together strategically contribute to long-term resilience. Government and large agencies tend to be heavily siloed, whereas CSOs can straddle several sectors and forge a more flexible pathway towards sustainable development.

In the end, most important of all the recommendations above, “CSOs need to be serious about adaptation,” Wallin emphasized. “Throwing in climate change as a subject into your programs might seem easy but you need to know what you are doing, for whom and with what approach; build alliances, both on the ground and with government stakeholders.”
Several key themes emerge from our conversations with villagers, CSO workers and activists, government officials, and donor representatives. Everyone agrees that the weather is already changing: climate change is here now, and is one major reason why farmers and fishers feel more insecure. Old people confidently knew when the best time to plant and harvest was, and remember when the rivers swarmed with fish. This is no longer always true, and so livelihoods are more precarious. Floods and droughts have always been part of life in Cambodia, but now they are more frequent, and more severe.

Risks are somewhat balanced by the advantages of modern life: remittances sent by relatives working in the city, and government and CSO projects that reduce disaster risks and send emergency relief. Still, everyone is worried. Climate change will only get worse, and that means constantly struggling with either too much or not enough water.

What then, are the opportunities for CSOs? And what are the opportunities for government and donors to more effectively support them? In this newsletter, we have presented a variety of viewpoints and voices, including farmers, scholars, CSO workers, development partners, and government officials. Taken together, they point to many possible ways forward. What, then, are the most promising entry points for CSOs to mainstream climate change into their operations?

**Climate Adaptation versus Business as Usual**

There is an opportunity for more careful and strategic thinking about whether and how climate change adaptation calls for things to be done differently. In some cases, there may be little difference between climate change adaptation and development ‘business as usual’ on the individual project level: a well, after all, is still a well. The distinction would be the overall priorities and processes that drove the selection of that particular project. In other cases, however, adaptation does indeed mean doing things differently. But just because farming is sensitive to the weather does not mean that any agriculture project builds adaptation. Likewise, dry season is not the same as “drought”! By now, many CSOs are familiar with climate change adaptation. Going forwards, the next step is to improve the quality and coherence of adaptation strategies so that adaptation is truly mainstreamed into national and civil society processes.
Mainstreaming Climate Change into CSO Operations

Cambodia has received considerable funding in the past few years to address climate change. There is now high awareness about climate change and adaptation among CSOs. What is less clear is how to confront it effectively. There is consensus that motivation, commitment, and leadership at all levels is essential to translate concerns into concrete actions.

Promising pathways include:

1. Systematically include climate change concerns in needs/ vulnerability assessments and local development planning – even when it is not explicitly required.

2. Think through climate change implications and opportunities during ‘big picture’ strategic planning sessions.

3. Think about whether and how climate change adaptation is different from development ‘business as usual.’ While there is overlap between adaptation and sustainable development, climate change adaptation is not just a ‘co-benefit’ - it is a new set of projects and priorities.

4. It is now standard to consider climate change in some sectors, like infrastructure and agriculture. How might it apply to others, like education, health, and urban development? These sectors are under greater focus under newer government and development partner adaptation programs. Think outside the box. There are signals that there are missed opportunities in other areas. CSOs must put forward their capacity to deliver soft services that complement and differentiate from government initiatives which focus mostly on infrastructure.

5. CSOs may be so focused on securing international climate finance that they may be missing new opportunities – and funding – for partnerships with local government.

6. While continuing to mobilize and deliver at the grassroots level at relatively low cost, CSOs must work hand in hand with Government, for an adaptation model to be sustainable and “up-scaleable”.

7. Embrace rights-based approaches to climate change (see below). Specifically, seek to ensure transparency, accountability (particularly accountability to communities themselves), participation, and non- discrimination across programs. Doing so might lead to different emphasis in both advocacy and programming, including ‘big picture’ questions about development winners and losers, and whether / and how efforts are benefitting and empowering the poor and marginalized.
8. Strategically seek to leverage CSOs’ strengths to pilot innovative solutions in partnership with larger agencies such as INGOs or research institutes.

**OHCHR’s Key Messages on Human Rights and Climate Change**

1. Mitigate climate change and prevent its negative human rights impacts
2. Ensure that all persons have the necessary capacity to adapt to climate change
3. Ensure accountability and effective remedy for human rights harms caused by climate change
4. Mobilize maximum available resources for sustainable, human rights-based development
5. International cooperation
6. Ensure equity in climate action
7. Guarantee that everyone enjoys the benefits of science and its applications
8. Protect human rights from business harms
9. Guarantee equality and non-discrimination
10. Ensure meaningful and informed participation

**More effective advocacy around climate change**

Some might be surprised at how many stakeholders in this newsletter focused on how CSOs can and should engage in advocacy and public policy – including strong calls from government representatives and development partners for CSOs to fully engage. This may seem to contradict the ‘expert’ observation of the split between hard and soft advocacy CSOs, but the perspectives may not be that far apart: the common ground is the space between them. The government representatives called for more incisive, targeted, evidence-based, and solutions-oriented CSO inputs into policy discourse. The implication, of course, is that the service-oriented CSOs are too passive, and the advocacy-oriented ones too shrill and unconstructive. There may be ample opportunity for more and better CSO advocacy and engagement on climate change policy in Cambodia. We fully recognize that CSOs in Cambodia are not financially independent, and they rarely have discretionary budgets which they can direct towards unfunded activities like advocacy. Still, there may be opportunity for CSOs to do things differently.
For example:

1. There is broad agreement that CSOs are doing excellent project work at the grassroots, but do not always fully engage in larger public policy fora. CSOs can and should identify a few specific advocacy priorities and pursue them. They need not be complex; it might instead be, for example, that DRR should be a greater priority. In other cases, there is opportunity for more seasoned and nuanced analysis. For example, MAFF’s climate change (and other) policies tend to be more oriented towards agri-business. Rather than simply regret that smallholders are being left out, CSOs can and should identify specific changes and speak out. Another example is that DRR is a body of programming which does not fit neatly into any given Ministry. As a result, it is too easily seen as ‘someone else’s problem’ rather than a sector priority. Because CSOs work at the community level, they see the key cross-cutting linkages and thus are in an excellent position to advocate for Ministries to prioritize DRR.

2. Individual CSOs – especially service-oriented CSOs – often miss opportunities to mainstream advocacy into their everyday work and operations. Advocacy might be included in funding proposals more often than it is, for example. A related point is that advocacy is often left to a small handful of associations and umbrella groups like NGO Forum to do on behalf of participating CSOs. There is ample opportunity for CSO staff and activists to better include advocacy in their everyday work, for example in conversations they have with officials – rather than simply letting an umbrella group do it for them.

3. Advocacy is most effective if CSOs help policymakers translate village-level good practice into more systematic policies. ‘Big picture’ thinking and a good understanding of the government’s policy development process are essential.

4. CSOs and governments generally have very good relations, and everyone is invested in keeping it that way! Still, there are signs that ‘professional’ service-oriented CSOs are hesitant to speak up – and also to interact with more ‘rabble-rouser’ advocacy groups. This is unfortunate. It is true that some may be reckless, but many also dedicate time, energy, and resources to incisive policy analysis and often raise important concerns. CSOs can and should help bridge policy discourses and help convert external critiques into more positive and constructive policy solutions.

**What government and donors can do better**

It is rare for a Cambodian CSO to be fully independent: most are entirely dependent on securing international funding and official permissions in order to operate. It is easy for
outsiders to give advice – technical or otherwise – but it is just as important for them to be mindful of the real constraints which limit them. Yes, there are opportunities for CSOs to more effectively mainstream CCA into their operations – but there are also opportunities for government and development partners to improve the enabling environment. Key takeaway messages include:

1. Stable, long-term funding such as through local adaptation planning is essential for CSOs to fully mainstream CCA. They are almost all dependent on outside funding, which too often is short-term and oriented towards quick-impact projects and/or one-off trainings. In such a context, CSOs find it difficult to engage in long term strategic planning. Funding does not necessarily need to be increased – although that would certainly be warmly welcomed! – but structured differently.

2. CSOs which benefit from grants of course need to be held accountable for meeting targets and spending funds appropriately. However, each donor has its own specific paperwork/reporting requirements (in English!), and CSOs point out that some are onerous. Administrative requirements can be so burdensome that they compromise operations. Indeed, there can be more training/capacity building about use of specific forms than about climate change itself! It is encouraging that many donors are supporting CSOs, but sometimes they are not conscientious about the resource implications of their expectations. If donors want to directly fund local agencies, they may need to rethink their own ways of working.

3. It is easy to advise CSOs to be more pro-active and strategic – but the same goes for government! Indeed, there are complaints that CSOs are held to a much higher accountability standard than government agencies. CSOs express concerns that government “partnerships” are one-sided and that official inertia, lack of incentive structures, and top-down approaches can be challenging to deal with. It would be helpful for government agencies to explore ways to better foster leadership, motivation, and downwards accountability.

4. A major reason why CSO engagement is limited on a specific document (e.g., a Ministry Climate Change Action Plan) is that their advocacy may be concentrated elsewhere on defending basic rights. There is also a need for better tools to translate policy into practices for CSOs, so that they can be better engaged in implementing climate change policies and official action plans.

Photo: Child using new school water system, Takeo
References


Photo: Footbridge in mangrove protection area, Kampot


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Plan International’s Civil Society Support Mechanism under the ADB funded Mainstreaming Climate Resilience into Development Planning project funded 19 Cambodian’s CSOs in 17 Provinces of Cambodia to implement Community-Based Climate Change Adaptation (CCA) and Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) projects in a variety of sectors and targeting various vulnerable groups. Grants ranged from $40,000 to $100,000 and each lasted approximately 18 months.