

Report on Constituency Dialogues in Cambodia

Covering the Program Period of October 1, 2008 to September 30, 2009

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NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

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

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

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

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

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

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

NDI in Cambodia

Since 1992, NDI has aided democratic activists in Cambodia through work with civic groups and political parties, the adoption of political party codes of conduct, the development of women's caucus and youth wings in parties, and electoral support initiatives. The Institute's current programs in Cambodia seek to enhance the capacity of citizens and political parties to participate more effectively in the political process. The Institute works with local civil society groups to organize constituency dialogues that bring together citizens and parliamentarians to discuss local issues of concern. NDI also collaborates with a technical working group to draw together the recommendations of previous and ongoing electoral reform programs, and engage the National Assembly, the National Election Commission, political parties, civil society and the media on practical approaches to adopting such reforms.

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NDI REPORT ON CONSTITUENCY DIALOGUES IN CAMBODIA *Covering the Program Period of October 1, 2008 to September 30, 2009*

I. Background

In Cambodia, parliamentary constituency relations are weak. Citizens rarely enjoy opportunities to express their views or advocate reforms to their elected representatives. Moreover, elected representatives rarely visit their constituencies to report on their activities and programs. Although some Cambodian members of the National Assembly (MNAs) have made individual efforts to conduct outreach visits and meetings on their own or through their parties, they continue to face time constraints, limited research and organizational facilities at the local level, and a lack of an effective mechanism for constituents to communicate with them. Because of such limited interaction, citizens have a narrow understanding of the role of parliament or its legislative, representative, and oversight responsibilities, and elected parliamentarians have a limited knowledge of their constituencies and fall short in representing the needs and interests of their voters.

To provide an avenue for broader interaction and more meaningful engagement between citizens and their elected representatives, the National Democratic Institute for International Affairs (NDI) has organized multiparty constituency dialogues (CD) since 2004 involving representatives from all political parties that have seats in the National Assembly (NA). From October 2008 to August 2009, CDs were held in ten provinces, all of which have representation of more than one party: Banteay Meanchey, Battambang, Kampong Cham, Kampong Speu, Kampong Thom, Kampot, Kandal, Prey Veng, Siem Reap and Takeo. The objectives of this program are to: facilitate interaction between constituents and MNAs; enhance MNAs' knowledge of and relations with their constituency; and educate citizens on the roles and responsibilities of a MNA and their roles as citizens in a democratic society. Another important goal of the program was to increase citizens' understanding of their political options, as there are so few opportunities for them to hear alternative viewpoints and policies from non-ruling parties.

The format of a constituency dialogue is similar to that of a town hall meeting, and between 400 and 600 citizens attend each dialogue. Members of the National Assembly sit at a table and are allowed to give brief opening remarks. Participants then voice their concerns about local issues and raise questions directly to members of the National Assembly, and request actions to be taken. MNAs use the opportunity to update citizens on the activities of the legislature and government and provide other relevant information. The dialogues encourage two-way communication and are unscripted, allowing for the often "tough" questions and demands of citizens.

Importantly, the CD program is a multiparty event, and each activity involves representatives from both the ruling party and opposition. From 2004 to March 2008, three major political parties – the Cambodian People's Party (CPP), The Sam Rainsy Party (SRP), and FUNCINPEC – were invited to participate in the constituency dialogue program. With two new parties, the Human Rights Party (HRP) and Norodom Ranariddh Party (NRP), gaining seats in the 2008 elections, five parties participated in the dialogue

program in 2009. The forum provided a unique opportunity for policy debate and highlights the distinctions between legislators and their approaches to local concerns. Local authorities, such as commune councilors, village chiefs, and district and provincial officials, are also often present at these CDs, but participate only as citizens.

NDI has a provincial partner in each province, and these local civil society organizations play a pivotal organizational role in planning for the CDs. They determine the village, manage the event logistics, and obtain permission from local authorities to hold the public event. In addition, in each province, NDI has community volunteers (CVs) who help mobilize citizens and hold small focus groups to discuss priority issues in the community, which they pass on to NDI to share with MNAs prior to the CD for preparation purposes. NDI also works with a sound editor and two radio stations – FM90 and FM93.5 – to broadcast CDs across the country. Media coverage expands the reach of the program by ensuring a wider audience and generating requests for more events.

NDI developed a code of conduct for MNAs and moderators participating in the CD program. This code of conduct is an agreement between the Members of the National Assembly, political parties, and moderators about the rules of conduct during the dialogues. This code can be used to clarify any misunderstanding, confusion about process, and/or allegations of bias. It also serves to prevent personal attacks and insults during the dialogues. This initiative was suggested during a meeting of representatives from the five political parties represented in the program and NDI. The code clarifies timing allotments, appropriate and inappropriate topics for discussion, and rules regarding audience participation. The aim is to ensure equity and neutrality in moderation and foster constructive dialogue.

Following each CD, NDI develops a monitoring chart to outline the issues raised and the actions proposed by each MNA. NDI continuously communicates with the parliamentarians to follow their progress in fulfilling their pledges made during the CD. At the same time, NDI's local partner organizations in the province visit the CD villages to investigate any changes that may have taken place as a result of the CD. All results and initiatives are recorded and reported back to the communities. This tracking is essential in encouraging accountability and allowing citizens to judge performance.

NDI also conducts focus groups prior to and following each CD. The aim of the focus groups is to help measure the impact of the CD program on changing people's attitudes, beliefs, or anticipated behavior. Prior to each CD, NDI gathers a group of 10 to 12 participants who have *never before attended a CD event*. The focus group, which lasts for approximately one hour, is moderated by a NDI staff person. Following the CD, the same group of people re-assemble for another hour. NDI developed an instrument with questions related to knowledge and attitudes about the National Assembly and MNAs, community problem-solving, and behavior. The instrument also includes a word association exercise. The same questions (with a few exceptions) are asked before and after the CD in an attempt to capture any changes. NDI also held small focus groups with local officials following several CDs to gather their input and perspectives on the dialogue and lessons learned.

This program has fostered an understanding among the public of the link between local problems and the responsibilities of elected officials. In addition, by showcasing the differences between political parties, citizens have been encouraged to learn more about their MNAs' diverse interests, affiliations, and platforms. The dialogues provide an opportunity for MNAs to further strengthen relationships with their constituents and accommodate and defend the public's requests and needs. In many cases, the CDs have resulted in concrete actions, including intervention on issues such as teacher shortages, land-grabbing, and crime prevention.

II. Constituency Dialogue Proceedings

From October 2008 to December 2009, NDI conducted meetings with its provincial partners to discuss workplans and preparations for the dialogues. The Institute also conducted refresher trainings on moderating techniques, and collaborated with the provincial partners on the focus group format and questions that would be used pre- and post-dialogue.

From January 2009 to July 2009, ten dialogues were held – one per partner province.

A. Banteay Meanchey

In cooperation with provincial NGO partner Hi-Free, NDI held a constituency dialogue in Tapho pagoda, Tapho village and commune, Svay Chek district of Banteay Meanchey province on February 14, 2009. Mr. Pal Sam Oeurn, MNA from the Cambodian People's Party (CPP), and Mr. Yont Tharo, MNA from the Sam Rainsy Party (SRP), participated. Attending the CD were 680 villagers (185 of whom were women), including two administrative police officials, seven commune council members, four deputy district governors, 11 village chiefs, and two commune chiefs.

Most questions concerned obstacles facing farming, the main industry in this area. Participants described the lack of a market for local agricultural products, and they asked what the government was doing to address this problem. Other issues of concern raised were the lack of an irrigation system for farming and the high price of fertilizer. Participants also described the shortage of teachers, schools, and health centers in the community. One speaker asked why there were no scholarships or opportunities for Cambodians to pursue their studies. Finally, several participants shared stories of the head of the community forest providing land to "powerful people" illegally.

Regarding the need for a market for local agricultural products, SRP MNA H.E. Yont Tharo said that the government needed to develop a policy to buy products from the farmers and provide incentives to farmers so the country would not become dependent on Thai goods. He also pledged to raise the issue of high fertilizer prices to the Ministry of Agriculture. Mr. Yont stated that dams needed to be restored, and he asked the deputy district governors to raise the issue with the government. He explained that that government received funds every year from donors for development and it was its responsibility to address these basic needs. He also asked citizens to provide him with a

proposal that he could present to the NA, adding that they should contact NGOs in the province to help on this effort.

CPP MNA H.E. Pal Sam Oeurn explained that the Cambodian government endorsed a free-market policy and therefore could not adjust the price of goods for citizens and farmers. He added, however, that the Ministry of Commerce was responsible for finding markets for local products and promoting Cambodian goods abroad. He also reported that the Ministry of Agriculture was appealing to Cambodian farmers to stop the use of chemical fertilizers to focus on organic products. He said that the issue of irrigation fell under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Water Resource Management, and he would bring the problems to the Minister directly.

In response to the questions related to schools and education, Mr. Yont of SRP said he would bring the matter up with his party, particularly to garner ideas on how to help poor students pursue their studies through the provision of scholarships. He further promised to appeal to the government to establish a budget for local teachers, including reasonable allowances, transportation costs, and accommodation, to encourage them to work in remote areas. Mr. Pal of CPP promised that he would bring these issues up with the Ministry of Education and would propose a plan to build a six-room school in the commune. A deputy district governor was also invited to respond briefly to the concern about a lack of teachers. He explained that the students in the village had demonstrated a low capacity to pass national examinations, and he called upon the parents to ensure that their children were attending classes. He also agreed to raise the issue with the commune council.

On the issue of the community forest dispute, the deputy district governor was invited to respond. He reported that he did not know if the complaint had been submitted to the commune council but explained that the issue was an internal one and it was up to the forest community to apply its own statutes and remove its head. He reminded citizens that no one was legally permitted to seize land from the community forest. Mr. Yont agreed that the community had its own laws and procedures to solve internal conflicts and they should come to a decision about whether or not to remove the community head. Mr. Pal also urged the community members to use and obey their own laws, statutes, and principles to solve the problem.

B. Battambang

On January 17, 2009, in cooperation with NGO partner Buddhism and Democracy (B&D), NDI organized a constituency dialogue for elected representatives and citizens in Ruong pagoda located in the Bannan district of Battambang province. Mr. Tes Heanh, MNA from CPP, and Mr. Eng Chhai Eang, MNA from SRP, participated in the event. The dialogue was attended by 230 citizens (94 women). Participants included commune councilors, commune administrative police, military police, deputy district governors, and legislative staff. A Radio Free Asia (RFA) journalist was present at the dialogue.

The main issue raised at this dialogue concerned the abuse by local authorities and police, particularly with regard to a recent change in districting. The district of Bannan

had been divided, and several villages were officially moved to Kah Krolor district, putting them under a new administration. Participants emotionally expressed that they did not want to live under the control of Kah Krolor because of abuse by the local authorities there, including forceful prevention of using local water sources, extortion of money, and land grabbing. Participants also complained about “double standards” in and unfair application of the law by authorities. One participant shared that many rich businesspeople were allowed to import motorcycles without the proper tags but were never punished, while the poor were constantly fined. A young woman added that she was stopped for lacking a helmet and mirrors on her moped by police who, contradictorily, also lacked helmets and mirrors. Another speaker complained that certain powerful people were using official procedures to evict people from their homes. Participants also shared that police were stopping them from transporting fuel and logs and extorting money from them.

In response, SRP MP H.E. Mr. Eng Chhai Eang said he would investigate the alleged confiscation of land by officials. He called upon the chief of the commune to take action and protect people’s land. Mr. Eng Chhai Eang added that the officials should be arrested and brought to court for extortion, and he also pledged to meet with the district officers in Kah Krolor. He said that if anyone was fined or arrested illegally, he or she should report to the radio and use other media to get the message out.

CPP MP H.E. Tes Heanh said that it was illegal to prevent villagers from using public water sources, and if officials were doing such things, then there should be action. He added that he had already reported concerns about threats from local authorities in Kah Krolor to the commune chief but that he would follow up with district leaders. He explained that illegal transportation of fuel, illegal logging, and lacking proper tags and helmets were violations of the law and citizens should respect this or expect to be stopped and fined. He added, however, that the law should be applied evenly and the fines should follow legal procedures and processes and not involve bribes. He promised to talk to the Ministry of Interior about the problems in the district and requested that citizens try to get the names of police or local authorities who violated the law, threatened citizens, or extorted money.

With regard to development needs, a lack of roads was cited as a major concern for district citizens. One participant said that he was frustrated because he chose the party that said it would build roads but he felt no action had been taken. Another participant complained that the government was not doing enough to curb increased prices on goods, particularly given the fall in oil prices. There were also several concerns raised about the Vietnamese-Cambodian border. One participant was worried about the influx of Vietnamese laborers and their impact on employment. Another stated that Prime Minister Hun Sen needed to explain why the border with Thailand was so carefully monitored and discussed but no attention was paid to the border with Vietnam.

In response, both MNAs promised to look into possibilities for improving local infrastructure and development. Mr. Tes Heanh explained that the government had not forgotten about its promise to construct roads and that it was in the process of reviewing bids. He asked people to be patient, as development projects such as roads and schools

took time. He acknowledged that the price of oil was decreasing but that it did not affect the price of fertilizer and food, which were still rising. He explained that the government did not have the power to control the market. He instead asked people “not to waste.” Mr. Tes Heanh also pledged to encourage factories to build in the district, but that people, again, should not expect action in one day. Mr. Eng Chhay Eang responded by telling participants to vote for him if they wanted lower prices. He argued that unfettered monopolies were responsible for some of the price hikes.

Regarding the border with Vietnam, Mr. Tes Heanh said that immigration from Vietnam was grossly exaggerated. He also explained that there was indeed strict border control with Vietnam, following the same standards as those used with the Thai border. Mr. Eng Chhai Eang agreed that the law was strong but the enforcement was weak.

C. Kampong Cham

In cooperation with provincial NGO partner Nokor Phnom Community Empowerment Organization (NPCEO), NDI held a constituency dialogue in Chony Rainsey Pagoda, Kampong Raing village, Seda commune, Damber district of Kampong Cham province on March 22, 2009. H.E. Khok Sam On, MNA from the CPP, H.E. Mao Monyvann, MNA from SRP, H.E. Kem Sokha, MNA from and leader of the Human Rights Party (HRP), and H.E. You Hockry, MNA from and leader of the Norodom Ranariddh Party (NRP), participated in the event. In attendance were 481 villagers (148 of whom were women), including two district governors, two commune councilors, three village chiefs, and two commune administrative police officials.

In general, the mood was one of exasperation, with people voicing their frustration at the inaction of their leaders, both at the national and local levels. Several participants brought up the issue of leadership change and questioned whether it would make a difference to their lives. One complained that the community had supported CPP for a long time but received nothing in return. He added that he could not understand why voters would give CPP a landslide when it provided no benefits. Another speaker questioned whether another party could perform better than the CPP. Speakers also had very harsh words for local officials and police, explaining that they not only never helped but also were often the source of trouble.

The majority of concerns raised involved farming prices and debt. The price of dried potatoes (for ethanol), the major source of income in the province, had plummeted. One participant sought an explanation for the increase in the price of virtually everything *except* agricultural outputs. She also wanted the MNAs to clarify why the country was not exporting to countries other than Thailand and Vietnam, which were importing fewer Cambodians goods. As a result of low prices and a poor export market, numerous participants described their inability to pay back their debts and asked the MNAs to request the banks to reduce their interest rates.

Participants also described serious development and infrastructure needs -- roads, health centers, schools, and dams. One villager reported that scholarships were supposed

to go to the extreme poor but ended up given to those who did not need them. People also reported that villagers were being turned away by doctors, some left to die, if they did not pay a bribe. Equally troubling, people described their inability to buy enough rice to eat, and one speaker called upon the MNAs to provide rice for everyone in the province. Moreover, domestic violence, one villager reported, was dramatically increasing and there had been no effective responses.

As in other provinces, people described problems with land seizures. One participant complained that commune councilors who were no longer in office were still illegally signing land titles to businesspeople. Although he had lived on his land since 1979, a rich hotel-owner claimed it as his own in 2005. This participant lost in court, with the judge granting him only one hectare, and the hotel-owner was now actually suing him for this one hectare.

In response to the issue of leadership change, Mr. Mao Monyvann of SRP explained that in other countries leaders changed frequently through elections, and term limits were also in place to guarantee the handover of power. He added that these countries, not coincidentally, had plentiful schools, accessible healthcare, and jobs. He told participants that the ‘choice was theirs,’ as they selected their leaders.

Mr. Mao reported that in other countries, the government helped people during times of economic hardship. He described his own party’s request for \$500 million USD for public support, loan forgiveness, and a stimulus package. He added that the government was responsible for renegotiating interest rates and/or adjusting payment schedules with the banks. He pledged to again raise the banking issue with the government and NA. Regarding trade, Mr. Mao said it was the responsibility of the government to build trade relationships with other countries, adding that even the Constitution required the government to find markets for Cambodian products.

Mr. Mao explained that the government received \$900 million USD from international donors and two billion USD in taxes for development purposes. He asked participants to think carefully about whether or not the government was spending the money correctly and efficiently. He added that corruption was a serious problem in Cambodia and resulted in tremendous waste. He emphasized that as a member of the opposition, he had no control over the budget or spending but would continue to serve as a monitor. He deferred to the CPP MNA to help on issues concerning road construction and irrigation.

Regarding the lack of healthcare, Mr. Mao, a former medical doctor, said that not only did Cambodia spend less than other countries but also corruption ate into the existing health provisions. Hospitals, for example, received free medicine from the government and donors for patients but ended up selling it. He promised he would follow up on the cases in which doctors refused to treat patients. On issues of land ownership, he implored people to check documents carefully before signing, and he said he would demand that commune chiefs look into land seizures.

On the issue of leadership change, Mr. Khek Sam On of the CPP explained that Cambodia had had experience with many regimes, not just the CPP. He added that “those who do not lead do not understand how difficult it is.” On issues of farming, he reported that Cambodia was increasingly self-sufficient and was now producing fresh water, for example, instead of importing it. He urged people to buy local products. He explained that the global economic crisis, which was out of the government’s control, was the cause of many problems facing the country, and Cambodia was not alone in dealing with hard times. Because Thailand and Vietnam were also suffering, they were not purchasing as much from Cambodia, contributing to the drop in export prices. Mr. Khek explained that finding other markets for Cambodian products was difficult, as Cambodian goods were of low quality and did not meet international standards. He promised to negotiate with the banks on behalf of farmers.

Mr. Khek expressed his desire to solve problems and reported that he had provided infrastructure to the community. He also pointed out that commune councils had the ability to provide services, and municipalities and districts would soon have new bodies to meet the needs of the community. He explained that the party had an office in every commune and urged people to submit their requests there as well. On education, Mr. Khek reported on the progress made. In the 1950s, he said, there was only one high school in the whole province, while in this mandate alone, 55 new schools would be built. The district now also had seven hospitals, he explained. He pledged to investigate the problem of doctors refusing medical care, saying he recognized the “lack of ethics.”

Mr. Kem Sokha of HRP devoted a sizable portion of his remarks to argue the importance of changing leaders. He explained that Cambodia, however, had only changed leaders through force -- coups or wars -- and never through peaceful, democratic means. He emphasized that it was up to them as citizens and voters to engender change, but he understood their fears. He recognized that people did not receive accurate information due to a biased media and that they were afraid that if they voted against the CPP they would be punished.

Mr. Kem reported that HRP and SRP lawmakers wrote a letter to the government to find a solution to the loan problem, but the government did not respond. He added that this lack of response was in violation of the Constitution, and he pledged to raise the issue again. Mr. Kem stressed that the government claimed to have an economic plan but allowed no one to see it. He explained that it was the government’s responsibility to build roads and dams as well as provide emergency food to people, adding that if he was in the ruling party, the rice problem would be solved in a few days.

Mr. Kem blamed the government for the lack of medical ethics, as the country’s leaders had “no morals.” He promised to raise the issue of doctors’ ethics with the government and NA. Mr. Kem questioned why the government continued to give land to companies and not its own people, reporting that the government had even given land to retired Vietnamese soldiers but not to Cambodian soldiers. Mr. Kem concluded by asking people to complain to the local authorities, the offices of the MNAs, and the parties. He said he would intervene on their behalf.

Mr. You Hockry of NRP said that he understood the public's frustration with the country's leaders and acknowledged that during elections, candidates made many false promises. He said that the Constitution did not mandate term limits, adding, like the SRP and HRP MNAs, that term limits were normal in other countries. He explained that it was up to the voters to bring about a leadership change.

Mr. You said that the price of a kilo of potatoes had dropped to 350 riel from 800, and he agreed that Thailand and Vietnam could not serve as the only markets, particularly with border closings. He explained that despite hardships, the government could not provide food to everyone but did have a responsibility to look into solutions. The NA, he explained, had a special commission and he would request an intervention. He also suggested that people plant more food for their own consumption. With regard to the loan crisis, Mr. You pledged to negotiate with the banks and provide a written intervention to the government.

In response to education needs, Mr. You argued that there should be compulsory, free education in Cambodia. The Minister of Education, he explained, was from Kampong Cham and should be sympathetic to the problems described. Mr. You said he would talk with him. On the topic of domestic violence, Mr. You said this was a problem across the country and was the result of low morals, alcohol, and economics. He explained that there were laws to protect victims but they were inadequately enforced, adding that corruption in the judiciary exacerbated the problem. Mr. You promised to request that the government address the denial of healthcare and ensure free medicine for everyone. Finally, he called upon participants with specific problems to give their cases to him in writing so he could investigate. He also encouraged people to submit their complaints to the courts.

D. Kampong Speu

In cooperation with provincial NGO partner the Poor Children's Agency (APCA), NDI held a constituency dialogue in Kampong Speu province on June 20, 2009. H.E. Hem Khon, MNA from CPP, and H.E. Nuth Romduol, MNA from SRP, participated in the event. The CD was attended by 662 citizens (320 of whom were women), including one deputy provincial governor, the Thpong district governor, and three district officials, eight commune councilors, 13 village chiefs, and eight commune and district administrative police.

Ten of the 14 participants who spoke raised the issue of land seizures by companies with the involvement of local authorities. Villagers openly expressed their outrage and demanded repeatedly whether the government represented the interests of companies or the people. They also complained that they were unable to obtain legal land titles because the authorities demanded bribes. They pleaded that the MNAs stop the seizures.

One woman described how 383 families had occupied land since 1996 but in 2005 the commune council sold the land to a company without informing them. The families had gone to the commune, district, and provincial courts but had received no resolution. She had a copy of the signed deal between the commune authorities and the company and

asked MNAs to solve the matter. She asked whether local authorities were there “to protect companies or the people?” Another woman explained that her family had occupied a rice field since 1979 but that the authorities gave her land to a Singaporean company to build a road. A man said he had occupied his land since 1980 and a company seized it without his consent. He had asked the commune council to intervene but there had been no resolution.

Another villager discussed a land case involving CT MART. The company’s bodyguards demanded that 388 families leave their land in June 2009, and 73 families had already left. Only 15 of these families were able to get titles from the authorities. He expressed his frustration with seeing local authorities always driving around together with the company owners. Another man asked the MNAs to stop CT MART from clearing the land until a solution was reached. He said he had never been able to get an explanation from the local authorities and had written the Prime Minister and provincial governor about the matter but had never received a reply.

A woman explained that a key source of the land conflicts was that citizens were unable to get titles. She said that she, for example, had gone to numerous authorities and government officials and they either refused to provide her a title for her land or asked for exorbitant payoffs. The companies, therefore, were able to get titles for land that had been occupied for years because they were willing to pay the bribes. She asked the MNAs to help people secure titles for their property free of charge. Many other participants at this CD also reported that they had tried to obtain land titles but were always asked for bribes from the local authorities.

Another woman raised the issue of community land, also reporting that companies had seized this land. She explained that the community land expanded over three villages and used to include thousands of hectares but had been reduced to only 1,500 hectares today. She said that they lost land every year to concessions and they did not have space to feed their cows anymore. She added that the local authorities had guaranteed the land for the community but had done nothing about the infringements and never notified people about development projects. A villager also complained that the military was occupying land taken from the Khmer Rouge and he inquired about the legality of this. Another participant asked the MNAs to clarify the requirements for company concessions.

Other issues involved the corruption of local authorities, in addition to the extortion involved in land conflicts and obtaining land titles. Villagers complained that officials had set up checkpoints and charged people for simply using the road. A woman complained that when she was going to court to participate in a land case, the police arrested her. She also said that local authorities had stole machinery from her house. Villagers also repeatedly complained that the local authorities never informed them about development projects or involved them in planning. Participants asked about the passage of the anti-corruption law. Other concerns involved the lack of roads (one person requesting a 25km road), corruption among healthcare workers, and broken dams. Several people asked generally what the MNAs and political parties were doing to help reduce poverty. Finally

one participant asked about Article 80 on the immunity of MNAs, pointing out that the NA only lifted the immunity of the opposition.

CPP MNA Mr. Hem Khon said that the provincial governor must answer concerns about land matters, and he requested written information from the villagers. He emphasized that the Prime Minister had pledged to take land from any company if it was illegally occupied, adding that the land law was designed to protect people. He argued that there were very few concessions given in Cambodia. He added that only legal occupation of land could lead to legal land titles and pleaded with people to submit their requests for land titles to the local authorities. Authorities could not demand extra money in exchange for titles and if they did, he said, people must report it. In response to the question on military occupation of land, he explained that it was allowed but had to follow certain procedures. Finally, he acknowledged that high ranking officials sometimes grabbed land but that the government always punished them. He told people to provide him with names.

Mr. Hem stated that most Cambodian people do their jobs well, but there were always some mistakes, as in the case of corrupt healthcare workers. He stressed that local authorities must solve these problems. With regard to poverty reduction, he said that there were more televisions and motorbikes now than in 1979. He added that he always requested a greater budget for the communes. The development council, he emphasized, must think about the needs of people. On the issue of lifting parliamentary immunity, Mr. Hem explained that MNAs simply follow instructions from the Ministry of Justice. He argued that they had to “follow rule of law.” He added that the government and the CPP always followed the law.

SRP MNA Mr. Nuth Rumduol said that he was aware of the CT MART company seizures and had brought the complaint to the NA, distributing information to all MNAs, but the Assembly had done nothing. He pledged to continue to bring up the case and to talk to local authorities. He said he hoped the CPP would help solve this problem. He reported that across the country powerful officials took land from people and that commune councils and village chiefs were often in collusion with the companies. They were able to get the courts on their side through bribes, he explained, and the courts were all corrupt. Mr. Nuth argued that companies must stop clearing land until resolution was reached with the people. He promised to bring the issue of difficulties obtaining land titles up with the government and said he hoped the district governor would keep his promise to solve land disputes.

In response to the other issues raised, Mr. Nuth said that local authorities needed to conduct their work with more transparency and must notify people about their projects. He added that the police checks must stop. He encouraged people to bring their complaints to the district or provincial offices. On the role of parties, he said that they worked together, stressing that when the government made good decisions, the opposition said nothing but the opposition would speak out if the government was wrong. Regarding the anti-corruption law, he explained that he had no idea when the law would be passed as it was up to the government. In response to concerns about healthcare corruption, Mr. Nuth said he had intervened with the Ministry of Health.

The SRP MNA asked villagers to provide a written request on the 25km road and promised to submit it to the provincial governor, who was responsible. On poverty reduction, Mr. Nuth said that the government always said that it was reducing poverty and was “almost finished” with the task. Mr. Nuth argued that there had been some development but poverty was actually increasing. Previously, he claimed, each family had one hectare of land but now people lacked both land and jobs. He said that government officials could not just provide gifts during elections and expect improvement. He explained that the government money was the people’s money so it was critical that it was spent appropriately. Mr. Nuth did not respond to the immunity issue.

Deputy provincial governor Mr. Touch Sarun was given a short time to respond to the concerns. He first acknowledged that people were poor in his province and needed jobs. He said that his office had a development plan and always tried to inform the people about the plan, as he had an obligation to do so. He reported that he was actively trying to attract investment to create jobs. With regard to CT MART, the deputy governor claimed he had not been involved in this matter but that the concession was approved by the ministries. He promised to “look into it” and ask the governor to explain the arrangement to the people. Mr. Touch then called upon people to give him copies of their legal documents and proof of land occupation. He added that if they did not have titles, he could not help them. He said that his office constantly encouraged people to register their land. On the issue of the anti-corruption law, Mr. Touch explained that the penal code was needed first. Finally, he stressed that his office never misused funds.

The district governor, Tuon Song, was also allotted time to respond. He explained that the local authorities were not “a court” and could not make judgments on land matters. All he could do, he said, was to bring parties together for reconciliation. He argued that companies listened to the local authorities but the people did not. He also accused participants of “lacking knowledge” about land matters. Mr. Tuon asserted that the companies could not clear land illegally and the government would intervene if they did so. In response to concerns about difficulties obtaining land titles, Mr. Tuon said that it was the obligation of local authorities and the ministry of land to provide titles.

E. Kampong Thom

In cooperation with provincial NGO partner Cooperation for Development of Cambodia (CoDeC), NDI held a constituency dialogue in Pnov pagoda, Pnov village and commune, Santuk district, Kampong Thom province on April 5, 2009. H.E. Sik Bunhok, MNA from CPP, H.E. Son Chhay, MNA from SRP, and H.E. Kuch Moly, MNA from the Funcinpec Party, participated in the event. In attendance were 285 villagers (110 of whom were women), including one deputy district governor, two provincial cabinet staff, four commune councilors, nine village chiefs, and two commune administrative police officials.

As in other dialogues, the key concern expressed was about land ownership and the land seizures by local officials and businesspeople. One villager from Pnov village reported that a former commune chief had taken land near the pagoda, blocking an

important pathway for villagers. He sought clarity from the MNAs on the status of land ownership prior to 1979. A man from Chambak village reported that a company surrounded citizens' land in the areas of Boeung Chamnar, La'ak, Prasath Bak, and Boeung Santouch in Taing Krasaing commune and did not allow villagers to work in their rice fields. A representative of the company said they had permission and approval from the provincial governor to seize land in those areas. The man inquired about the villagers' rights in this matter.

A woman representative of 104 families living in Pnov village complained about the So Chheng Company, which took villagers' land in Veal Krom, Trapiang Saray, and Boeung Kampouy, leaving them with no place to farm. She asked MNAs to return the land to villagers. A participant from Chambak village, Taing Krasaing commune explained that he had been growing rice in the area of Snok Krabey and Damrey Bat for many years, but Mr. Chin Sitha, an official of the provincial fishery department, had prevented him from plowing in order to protect a fish shelter.

Several villagers also described incidents of political discrimination. In fact, it was reported that village chiefs had threatened opposition supporters from attending this CD, hence the relatively small attendance. One woman from Prek O' village said that the local authorities ignored the concerns from those who supported the opposition. She suggested that all MNAs explain the political rights of citizens, and she asked whether it was wrong to support a party other than the CPP. Another woman from Pnov village and commune said that her husband was in the commune militia during the State of Cambodia (SoC). Once demobilized, he was given half a hectare of land, but when it was discovered that he supported the opposition, the commune chief seized the land.

Other issues raised included the alleged illegal fish-stocking and logging by "powerful individuals," the high price of electricity (3,800 Riels/KW), and the need for a pathway (400 meters) in Po Lech village. Participants said that they had complained to local authorities on these matters but had received no response. A man from Troeuy O' village, Pnov commune said that the SRP commune chief had been elected since 2002, but there had been no development in the commune, and he asked SRP MNA Son Chhay for a clear explanation. Another participant complained that the commune chiefs were keeping equipment donated to the people (sewing machines, water pumps, and generators).

In response, CPP MNA Mr. Sik Bunhok explained to participants that Prime Minister Hun Sen appealed to local authorities at all levels to solve problems for people, adding that if problems were not solved, then there would be no security in the village. On the issue of land, Mr. Sik went through the land law to ensure participants' understanding of their rights. Regarding discrimination, he emphasized that the CPP never discriminated between political parties as Hun Sen repeatedly argued that the opposition was necessary to direct the CPP and improve its performance. Finally, he promised to make interventions on the high price of electricity with authorities and the electricity official in Santuk district.

SRP MNA Mr. Son Chhay pointed out that despite the country's land law, there were still disputes across the country and people continued to have their land taken by

powerful individuals and companies. Mr. Son said that he would discuss with local authorities, the relevant ministries, and the president of the NA. He suggested that a committee be established to monitor and investigate land seizures. He argued that local authorities must guarantee citizens' land ownership rather than protecting only the interests of powerful individuals. Mr. Son also asked participants to send written complaints to their commune councilors or the provincial parliamentary office, so he would have evidence for interventions in NA sessions.

On the issue of political discrimination, Mr. Son explained that this was a leftover "principle" from the Pol Pot regime. He pledged that if he received any complaint about SRP local officials discriminating based on political affiliation, he would get them removed from their positions. On illegal fish-stocking, he asked people to report to the district and provincial authorities if the fishery department was not responding. With regard to commune development, he explained that the commune council should cooperate with district and provincial authorities to determine the annual development plan.

FCP MNA Mr. Kuch Moly agreed with Son Chhay's idea to form a committee to investigate land disputes. On the issue of discrimination, he stressed that the commune councils were part of the government and they should serve all the people equally. He warned that if the local authorities continued to discriminate, they would ultimately lose power. Mr. Kuch said local authorities were responsible for implementing the forestry and fishery laws effectively. He encouraged people, however, to submit written complaints to the MNAs with evidence of illegal logging and fish-stocking. He promised to visit people frequently and discuss their problems with local authorities.

F. Kampot

In cooperation with provincial Community Volunteers (CVs), NDI held a constituency dialogue in Trapeang Run village, Dambouk Khpuos commune, Angkor Chey district, Kampot province on July 25, 2009. H.E. Som Chen, MNA from CPP, and H.E. Cheam Channy, MNA from SRP, participated. In attendance were 898 villagers (385 of whom were women), 11 commune council chiefs, 50 commune council members (11 women), one district governor, one district council chief, 24 district officials (12 women), 33 village chiefs (six women), and six provincial officials.

As in other provinces, the main concerns involved land. One villager described the difficulties citizens faced trying to obtain titles. He explained that a group of people had been living on a piece of land in the area for years but were unable to secure official titles, while a company recently quickly acquired an official title for thousands of hectares of land. He asked why companies were able to secure titles so easily but it was so difficult for people. A man from Makak village asked how he could obtain ownership for his property in Trapeang Trakeat village, where he had been farming since 1979. A woman living in Dambouk Khpuos village requested local authorities to issue land titles to people who had land in Trapeang Trakeat village and were having difficulty obtaining papers.

Another source of confusion, according to the first assistant in the Angkor Chey commune council, concerned local authorities. She described how village chiefs often asked people to make thumbprints to verify land ownership but provided no official titles to protect people. A participant from Trapeang Run village complained about the unequal enforcement of the land and logging laws by the local authorities. He said that local officials had banned farmers from clearing forest land east of Sen Han Mountain for farming but allowed a private company to do so.

Other issues of corruption and unequal treatment were also raised at this CD. A man living in Dang Tong village complained that health workers did not treat patients without money and children were unable to study if they had no money, although these services were supposed to be free. Another participant complained that fishery officials only arrested people for “fish shocking,” an illegal fishing technique, if they were unable to pay a bribe. Those with money and influence, however, were never arrested. On infrastructure needs, two participants, from Prey Kcheay and Trapeang Run villages, requested water for farming. Another participant complained that a dam had been constructed between Phnom Kong and Tany communes, causing flooding in the rice fields and roads. A villager asked why there was still political discrimination against those who did not support the CPP. Another participant asked why MNAs from the opposition never helped people and only the ruling party came to provide goods and services.

Mr. Cheam Channy of SRP said that deforestation and logging were occurring across the country and that people should establish forest communities to protect the land. In response to questions about fish shocking, the SRP MNA explained that this was a community concern and people should work together to protect and educate fisherfolk about the negative impact of shocking. He stressed that anyone violating the law should be reported to the local authorities, regardless of their wealth or position. Mr. Cheam discussed at length the need for the long-awaited anti-corruption law.

On the issue of political discrimination, Mr. Cheam explained that in a democracy, all citizens should have the same access to services and not be discriminated against due to their political principles. In response to the question about the lack of action by the opposition, Mr. Cheam explained that the government was in charge of development and received funding to build in all sectors. The opposition, however, was not in a position of power and had no budget to provide services. He added that the SRP would work to help build the country together with the ruling party.

Mr. Som Chen of CPP expressed his strong support for the NDI constituency dialogue program and stated that he never missed an opportunity to participate in a CD. He also described his appreciation for NDI moderators, who he said behaved in a neutral and fair manner. Mr. Som explained that he always brought along representatives from the district and provincial authorities to events to help respond to concerns. He, therefore, kept his comments brief. He said that no party could provide for citizens better than the CPP, emphasizing that he always brought along gifts when visiting citizens. Mr. Som said he was very optimistic about the development of the province, district, and community because people now had modern materials, televisions, telephones, cars, motorbikes, luxury

houses, good schools, universities, roads, and health centers/hospitals. He explained that all this development was due to the good leadership of Prime Minister Hun Sen.

Mr. Yi Chhoeun, the district governor, reported that local authorities had no tolerance for “fish shockers” and punished all wrongdoers. On the issue of land logging, Mr. Yi said that the local authorities never banned only local people from logging but companies as well. In response to land concerns, he suggested that sometimes people misunderstood the rules and got angry at local officials. Mr. Pang Bunroth, head of the provincial land department, explained that if people controlled land since 2001 without conflict or dispute, they were entitled to ownership. They needed to apply for a land title. He added, however, that if people occupied land since 1979 but the land was public land, they could not be issued ownership rights.

Mr. Chan Chesda, head of the provincial agriculture department, explained that farmers could increase their output of rice even on small amounts of land by using new technology. This was preferable, he explained, to deforesting in order to extend land for farming. He added that with logging, local officials faced criticism on all sides. If they allowed logging, they would be accused of not protecting community forests, but if they banned logging, they were accused of not allowing citizens to farm. On fish shocking, Mr. Chan said that people could help limit violations by reporting transgressions to the police. Regarding political discrimination, he said that the government never discriminated against any political party or person, otherwise only CPP supporters would have land. Finally, he asked participants to raise these issues with local authorities before announcing them at an event like a CD.

G. Kandal

In cooperation with provincial NGO partner Indradevi Association (IDA), NDI held a constituency dialogue in Machhim Voan pagoda, Boeung Krom village, Khpob Ateav commune, Leuk Dek district, Kandal province on April 26, 2009. H.E. Chan Cheng, MNA from SRP, and H.E. Ou Chanrith, MNA from HRP, participated in the event. Due to a scheduling conflict with the annual Cambodian People’s Party (CPP) Congress, a MNA from CPP was unable to attend. However, Mr. Thach Sovann, district governor of Leuk Dek from CPP, participated on the panel. In attendance were 202 villagers (65 of whom were women), including one district governor, one deputy district governor, 12 district officials, and one deputy head of the commune administrative police.

Most of the issues presented at this event involved agricultural and development needs, such as irrigation, agricultural debt forgiveness, markets for agricultural goods, and transport roads. Participants also reported on corruption in the district and abuses by wealthy and powerful people, and, as in other provinces, land rights emerged as a problem at this CD.

One participant from Chong Kah village, Khpob Ateav commune requested a water canal. He explained that World Vision had given money for the project but a powerful man named Lao Hoeung did not allow the community to build the canal. Another participant requested that the MNAs advocate a reduction and/or delay in bank interest payments. He pleaded that they ensure that the banks do not confiscate people’s land due to late payments. He also requested that the government import fertilizer directly and

subsidize it for farmers. Other participants requested roads from Khpob Ateav to Ko'orm Samnor in Leuk Dek district and from Khpob Ateav to Ko'orm Samnor needed to transport goods to market. Participants also asked for the MNAs' help in finding markets for agricultural products and improving agriculture technology. One villager suggested that the Ministry of Agriculture breed corn seeds in Cambodia instead of importing them from Vietnam. Another recommended that the provincial agriculture department train villagers on new farming techniques.

Participants reported numerous illegal activities. One villager stated that an unknown company was illegally pumping sand in the Mekong River, and the banks were collapsing as a result. Another participant said that the private electricity company in Ampil Teuk village, Kampong Thnong commune demanded that people pay two hundred thousand Riel (200,000 R) for installing a new electricity meter, and the company disconnected the electricity of those who could not pay. He requested that MNAs negotiate a new price. The first deputy commune chief of Khpob Ateav reported that police were demanding double tax for transporting goods at a checkpoint on the Cambodia-Vietnam border. He also said that Vietnamese were illegally fishing in Leuk Dek district. Another participant asked when the much awaited anti-corruption law would be passed.

Land was another important issue for discussion at this dialogue. One participant from Chey Oddam village, Samrong Thom commune, Kean Svay district explained that he represented four families who had seven hectares of land seized by Mr. Lor Khuon, a powerful businessman. The families had been living on the land since 1983, and one day Mr. Lor prevented them from farming by deploying bodyguards in the area. Mr. Lor tried to force them to sell the land (for only \$1,500 per hectare) but the families refused and filed a complaint against him. No action had been taken on this matter, so the participant asked the MNAs for assistance. Another villager from Spean Dek village, Prek Tonlap commune reported that local authorities were preventing him from building a house on his own land, which he and his family had been living on for years. He requested intervention.

A disabled man from Khpob Ateav Leu village, Khpob Ateav commune, Leuk Dek district said that he wrote a letter to the president of the National Assembly asking for help on his pension fund, land for settlement, and a rice field. He lost his sight as a soldier and received nothing from the government and was homeless. Another participant said that she too was homeless after a storm destroyed her house.

Mr. Ou Chanrith of HRP informed participants that HRP and SRP had written a letter to the government asking its leaders to explore possible markets for Cambodian farmers. In addition, the two parties wrote the Prime Minister requesting a meeting to discuss the issue of agricultural debt and the need to renegotiate payments. He also pledged to send a written letter to the Minister of Public Works and Transport asking that the construction of National road #118A from Khpob Ateav to Ko'orm Samnor be completed. With regard to illegal activities, Mr. Ou said the party had written letters to the government to curb illegal sand pumping, but had received no response. Mr. Ou promised to follow up. Concerning the illegal fishing activities in Leuk Dek district, he requested that the district governor respond to the issue. On land seizures, Mr. Ou requested that

participants write an official letter of complaint to him and he would consult with the relevant institutions. Mr. Ou explained that he was not confident that an anti-corruption law would be passed and questioned the government's commitment.

Organizers allowed Mr. Thach Sovann, district governor of Leuk Dek from CPP, to participate in responding to concerns, as many of them fell under his jurisdiction. On the price of fertilizer, he explained that it was high due to market forces. In response to concerns about agricultural debt, he said he did not believe that a significant portion of Leuk Dek villagers had borrowed money, and, moreover, he had no power over the interest rates as there were signed agreements between creditors and debtors. Regarding the construction of roads, he explained that the government was waiting for financial assistance from donors. Mr. Thach also stated that the Ministry of Water Resource Management was responsible for all contracts with private companies for sand pumping. He added that no one had ever complained to him about this matter and encouraged people to contact him. Finally, Mr. Thach said the electricity installation process was not his responsibility but he would raise it with the relevant bodies.

Mr. Chan Cheng of SRP explained that the Minister of Commerce was responsible for finding markets for agricultural products but had repeatedly ignored citizens' requests for help. The president of SRP requested the government to allocate five million US dollars in the national budget package to buy agricultural products from Cambodia farmers, but the government responded that it had its own plan to address the problem, although it was unclear what this plan entailed. In response to concerns about illegal fishing, Mr. Chan requested that the district governor investigate problems in his district and arrest those conducting illegal businesses. On the issue of land seizures, Mr. Chan suggested that the district governor provide empty concession land in Khpob Ateav commune to those families who had no land for farming. Regarding the land grabbed by a powerful individual in Chey Oddam village, Samroung Thom commune, the SRP MNA described the injustice of people having their land illegally taken from them.

Finally, Mr. Chan explained to participants that there were two types of corruption. One form was conducted by people who were poor and trying to survive, and he argued that this did not badly affect the nation. The other, however, involved illegal activities, such as logging, unlawful tax collection, land seizures, etc., which all negatively impacted the country. He informed CD participants that the government had pledged to endorse and promulgate the anti-corruption law by the end of the year.

H. Prey Veng

In cooperation with provincial NGO partner the New Initiative for Livelihood and Health, NDI held a constituency dialogue in Kdey Skea village in Prey Veng province on February 21, 2009. H.E. Sok Eisan, MNA from CPP, H.E. Chea Poch, MNA from SRP, and H.E. Ou Chanrith, MNA from HRP, participated. A member from NRP, also represented in the province, was unable to attend. In attendance were 488 villagers (230 of whom were women), 11 commune council members (three women), one district governor, eight district office staff (two women), two administrative police, and four village chiefs. In addition, a

representative from Radio Free Asia attended the event, portions of which were broadcast on February 23. Several participants expressed that their commune leaders and village chiefs did not tell them about the CD, and in fact seemed keen to discourage attendance.

The participants at this CD seemed particularly exasperated at the lack of responsiveness of the government and local authorities to their concerns. As in other provinces, many of the concerns cited involved land ownership. People explained that they had their land taken from them either through coercion, manipulation, or naiveté. In one case, a farmer reported that the former village chief seized his land, promising him money which he never paid. One man described how road development encroached on his property, and when he complained he was threatened and fined. Another woman said that “powerful people” forced her to give up her land against her will, ultimately securing her thumbprint, and she also never received payment. In all cases, participants stated that they took their complaints to the local authorities and the courts but were either ignored or unsuccessful, and in a couple instances were told to pay fines. There was also widespread confusion about, or inability to, secure land titles, and one villager tried, for example, to obtain an official title for his property, even paying a fee to the local authorities, but received nothing.

Villagers also complained about the lack of roads, crime, high prices for fertilizer and fuel, inability to sell farm products (such as pigs), poor education services, and the corruption of local officials. There was an overwhelming sense that local officials and police were not responsive to any of these problems, or were the problem. One man reported to the police, for example, that his motorcycle was stolen, but the police said they would not help him because he supported SRP. Another claimed that local officials arrested and harassed him when he complained that they were building illegally on his land. Others accused local authorities of stealing fuel from the irrigation machines used to provide water to farms.

Mr. Chea Poch of SRP explained that with land grabbing and other robberies, the local authorities were responsible to take action. He argued that land concessions should not be provided to foreigners but to Cambodians, along with technical training and skills. He added that there was a need to change the chief of police in the district. He also complained that it was taking the government 15 years to pass an anti-corruption law, explaining that the delay was due to the fact that those responsible for passage were also the ones who were corrupt. He asked participants to report corrupt behavior to their MPs, and he provided his personal mobile telephone number to the group. He added that he would help secure pro-bono lawyers for villagers in need of representation.

Regarding farming, Mr. Chea Poch argued that the government was responsible for keeping the price of fertilizer high. In Thailand, he explained, the government limited the price of fertilizer for its people but in Cambodia the government and fertilizer importers were in collusion, inflating prices. He said the same was true about the pig market, with high ranking officials making deals with pig importers. Mr. Chea also complained that officials hoarded rice, leaving over two million tons in the hands of brokers, impacting prices. He suggested that the government should provide help to farmers with debt, lowering interest rates or mandating later payment terms with the banks, adding that the interest rates in Cambodia were far higher than in other countries. He reported that he had

already written to the Ministry of Agriculture on these matters, but would follow up. Mr. Chea reminded people that they voted for the government and if they were not happy with its performance, they needed to think about their election choices in the future.

Mr. Ou Chanrith of HRP emphasized that the problems raised all came down to land and officials. He argued that no one was serving the people and that many good laws existed but were not implemented due to rampant corruption. He asked villagers to report improper behavior and if confronted by the police, to demand an official report and to be taken to the police headquarters. With regard to agricultural needs, Mr. Ou reported that he had requested the government and the banks to stop interest rates on loans. He called upon the commune councils to intervene on the irrigation issue. Like Mr. Chea Poch, he questioned the long leases for land concessions to foreign companies, arguing that the land should be given to Cambodian people to develop. Finally, Mr. Ou told villagers to call him with their concerns and he pledged to do what he could to help. He reminded participants that it was up to them, as voters, to examine the people who were supposed to serve them.

Mr. Sok Eisan of CPP said that it was critical for people to hold on to their registration documents and land titles otherwise they would never win land cases. He explained that they had to have concrete evidence. He explained that the local authorities were responsible for road development and people should check with their commune councils on road quality. He agreed that a small number of officials were corrupt, and it was the responsibility of citizens to report transgressions. He added that people must obey the laws to avoid conflicts with the police and officials, explaining that the laws, such as mandatory helmets, were to protect them. He said that the CPP had institutions to look into problems and called upon participants to report to the party as needed.

Mr. Sok Eisan said the government wanted to improve agriculture in Cambodia by increasing exports, with the goal of becoming the biggest rice exporter. Last year, he reported, 1.8 million tons of rice was exported, and countries like Qatar and Kuwait had promised future purchases. He added, however, that Cambodian techniques were still “traditional” and not efficient enough, and the Ministry of Agriculture was working to improve farming skills. Mr. Sok explained that the government had never promised to make people rich but rather to improve the standard of living. During the Khmer Rouge, 100% of the population lived in poverty, while now approximately 30% did. He argued that the government was heading in “the right direction,” which was why it continued to receive money from donors. He explained that land concessions were given to foreign companies because they had the resources and techniques to develop.

He agreed with the other MNAs that all citizens had the right to information about their chosen government’s performance and he encouraged people to “look into the facts” and not listen to politicians. He added that Cambodia was “not a real democracy,” but rather “on the path to democracy,” adding that they would not be there at the CD if there was no democracy at all.

I. Siem Reap

In cooperation with provincial NGO partner Vulnerability and Illiteracy Reduction (VIR), NDI held a constituency dialogue in Skun primary school, Skun village, Tbeng commune, Banteay Srey district of Siem Reap province on March 14, 2009. H.E. Peou Savoeun, MNA from CPP, and H.E. Ke Sovannroth, MNA from and Secretary General of SRP, participated in the event. In attendance were 529 villagers (220 of whom were women), including two deputy district governors, six commune administrative policemen, four members of the commune council, five village and commune assistants, and one district soldier. Several people from Krapeu commune in the Anlong Veng district of Oddar Meanchey province also joined the event. They learned of the CD through the Angkor Ratha Radio station in Siem Reap, which has coverage in both provinces (Siem Reap and Oddar Meanchey).

Virtually all of the concerns raised during this dialogue involved land rights and seizures, with reports of egregious violations by companies, local officials, and the military. Several participants also explained that the process for obtaining land titles was cumbersome, and one speaker asserted that 673 families lacked legal documents proving ownership. Participants reported that Banya Group Company had been forcing villagers in Sre Nouy village of Varin district to leave their land for \$200, and they asked the MNAs whether or not this was legal. Another participant reported that 254 hectares in Snar Sangkream village of Balaing commune were seized by the Ly Ratanak Company in 2005 from 87 families, leaving them without any land for farming. He called upon the MNAs to take action and return the land.

A villager from Kdey commune said that the village chief had sold citizens' land to a "powerful individual" without permission from the owners. She asked the MNAs to respond and force the involvement of the provincial authorities. Another participant also reported having her land stolen by the village chief, who threatened to imprison her if she resisted providing her thumbprint. Soldiers have also been culprits in land grabbing. One participant stated that soldiers from the Ministry of Defense had taken land belonging to former Khmer Rouge soldiers despite the Prime Minister's announcement to protect this land for farming. She requested intervention by provincial authorities. Several participants reported that the Military Regiment 2 stole 30 hectares of land from villagers in Anlong Veng district. The villagers had reported the theft repeatedly to the provincial authorities, who refused to respond.

Ms. Ke Sovannroth of the SRP expressed her dismay that local authorities not only completely ignored complaints by citizens of land grabbing but also were often perpetrators. She added that anyone who grabbed land illegally from people, regardless of their title or position, should be arrested under the law. She explained that there was a land law but it was not being implemented properly and pledged to bring the cases of land seizures to the National Assembly and government and to demand an investigation from provincial authorities. Ms. Ke also emphasized the importance of obtaining proper proof of land ownership and said she would ask the provincial land committee to investigate the barriers to obtaining land titles.

Ms. Peou Savoeun from the CPP said she understood the land grabbing problems in Banteay Srey district and Anlong Veng district of Oddar Meanchey province, adding that three hectares of her own land was taken. She explained that article 44 of the Constitution and the land law both clearly state that anyone who had lived on land for five consecutive years was the legal owner, but the land law did not recognize any land ownership before 1979. Ms. Peou emphasized the importance of obtaining proof of land ownership because without documentation, it was difficult to ascertain the legitimate owners, particularly when land illegally changed hands so frequently in Cambodia. She called upon the provincial authorities and provincial land committee to issue land titles to citizens to certify their ownership.

The government, Ms. Peou explained, had the right to take away a person's land only with "just compensation." She also clarified that the government did provide concessions to companies, but that companies could not clear land without a concession and government approval. She pledged to discuss the issue of land seizures with the relevant government authorities and the National Assembly leadership, particularly emphasizing the seizures carried out by soldiers. She added that she hoped that provincial authorities would hear the CD broadcasts through NDI-contracted radio stations. She also offered to donate her land to the government to build a center for disabled soldiers.

Participants also raised the need for farming irrigation systems, and one speaker explained that villagers in Tbeng commune of Banteay Srey district had no water at all for daily use and farming. Another explained that the district lacked schools, teachers, a health center, and roads.

Regarding irrigation and other development needs, Ms. Ke said she would raise the issue with her party and the National Assembly, and would lobby the government to ensure that people have enough water for farming. She explained that the NA enacts a national budget every year and can allocate funds to improve living conditions. She added that donor countries had contributed over \$900 million to the Cambodian government for development purposes. In response to concerns about schools and teachers, Ms. Peou said she would request the government to build more schools in the commune and provide teachers. Further, she promised that one health center would be built in mid-2009. She also pledged to raise the issue of roads and irrigation with the government, explaining that the government already had a policy to build more roads and enhance irrigation systems in remote areas. Finally, Ms. Peou promised to discuss the shortage of water wells with province-based NGOs to enroll their help.

J. Takeo

In cooperation with provincial NGO partner the Bright of Society, NDI held a constituency dialogue in Trapeang Sambour Thmey pagoda, Trapeang Ponlous village, Sambour commune, Treang district, Takeo province on May 23, 2009. H.E. Chao Sophon, MNA from CPP, and H.E. Kuoy Bunroeun, MNA from SRP, participated in the event. In

attendance were 415 villagers (82 of whom were women), including one deputy district governor, three district council members, and 13 commune councilors.

Many of the concerns raised involved agriculture and infrastructure needs. Participants asked the MNAs to find markets for their goods, raise the price of rice, and reduce the price of fertilizer. One villager said that the company CHIFAMA, which was responsible for buying rice from farmers, had “done nothing.” There were also several requests for water pumps. A villager in Trapeang Ponlous village, Sambour commune requested repairs to the water pump for the Kbal Po’s water station. Another participant expressed his concern that if this pump station was repaired there would be political discrimination against people trying to use the pump. Others reported that they needed a water pump for the Samput water station in Prey Phlong village as well. CD participants also complained that the roads were currently too poor to transport goods. Villagers asked for 1,000 meter pathway from Trapeang Ponlous village to Srangai commune, a 1,200 meter pathway from Po Chas village to Po Lech village, and a six kilometer pathway from Tapreum village to Prey Phdao village. Several participants also requested sewers for Trapeang Ponlous and Tapreum villages.

The need for improved education was raised repeatedly. A woman asked that the MNAs repair the primary school in Trapeang Sambour Thmey. Others reported that teachers in the commune only worked three or four days a week. One participant said she would like qualified English teachers and a dormitory for the countryside’s female students to enable them to study at universities in Phnom Penh. A former primary school teacher from Po Ampil, Sambour commune described the low pay for teachers. She reported that before the 2008 election, the government announced on the radio and TV that it would increase the wages and pensions of teachers and retired teachers by more than twenty thousand Riels, but she had received nothing.

Police extortion was another problem expressed at this CD. Villagers reported that there were 18 illegal police checkpoints from Kbal Po village to Kampong Krasaing. Police took money from those transporting rice and other products from Cambodia to Vietnam. One participant said that these illegal checkpoints explained why traders offered such a low price for rice, as they needed money to pay off the police. Others also described how police only fined poor people who had no mirrors, helmets, and/or plate numbers for their motorcycles.

In response to concerns about the price of rice, Mr. Chao Sophon of CPP explained that because of the poor quality of Cambodian rice, the price was low. He pledged to work with local authorities to find appropriate solutions for farmers. On the issue of water pumps, he promised to discuss this issue with the Minister of Agriculture and request an expert to check and repair the water pumps. In response to concerns about discrimination, he emphasized that not only the water station in Kbal Po village but all government services were available to all citizens regardless of political affiliation. Responding to the former teacher’s complaint about her pension, the CPP MNA explained that pensions were not received on time because of late submission of needed documents. Moreover, the pension increase was only applicable to those who retired since 2008. With regard to the

police, the CPP MNA called upon people to respect the traffic codes, urging them to wear helmets and install proper mirrors and plate numbers on their motorcycles. If the police were extorting money for no cause, it was illegal. In conclusion, Mr. Chao asked people to report to the commune chief and district governor or send their complaints to him through the provincial parliamentary office in Takeo. Finally, Mr. Chao said that the dialogues organized by the Institute were critical.

Mr. Kuoy Bunroeun said that traders were not permitted to charge a high price due to the illegal checkpoints and that the Prime Minister had ordered local authorities both to eliminate such checkpoints and communicate with sellers and buyers about prices. Mr. Kuoy promised that he would inform the relevant institutions, the Ministry of Commerce, and the Prime Minister that the local authorities in this district were not obeying government orders. Regarding the CHIFAMA company, he said he would write to the provincial governor to inquire about the benefits citizens received from this company. He added that based on people's reports, the company had done nothing but charge buyers of rice from 50,000 to 100,000 Riel per boat.

In response to requests for water pumps and other goods, the SRP MNA explained that the Ministry of Agriculture was under the jurisdiction of the ruling party and, therefore, the CPP could initiate requests. On the topic of discrimination, he urged people to treat each other equally regardless of political affiliation. Mr. Kuoy encouraged participants to follow the government's instruction to obey the law, adding that all drivers were supposed to wear helmets and needed to equip their motorcycle with plate numbers and mirrors in order to prevent accidents. He suggested that police educate people before fining them.

Addressing concerns about education, the SRP MNA explained that the school in Trapeang Sambour Thmey could not be used because of the poor quality of construction, adding that local authorities should report to district and provincial governors to include the school in their annual development plan. He promised to write to the district and provincial governors and the Ministry of Education to strengthen the education system in this location and develop a foreign language program for students. Mr. Kuoy also said he would investigate the case of the former teacher who did not receive her pension, raising the issue with the Ministry of Social Work and Veteran's Affairs. He disagreed with Mr. Chao, stressing that the pension increase applied to all retirees regardless of retirement date.

In conclusion, Mr. Kuoy Bunroeun gave his phone number to participants, asking them to call him if any violations were made by powerful people. He said they could also complain through the provincial parliamentary office in Takeo. He then informed participants that he would be participating in a NDI-IRG study mission to the United States to "see democracy," observe the law-making process, and learn about the roles of ruling and non-ruling parties in the legislature. He promised to brief people on his return. Mr. Kuoy thanked participants for giving him the opportunity to listen and respond to their concerns, apologizing if he could not solve all their problems.

III. Focus Group Findings

A. Focus Groups with Constituency Dialogue Participants

NDI uses focus groups to help measure the impact of the CD program on people's attitudes, beliefs, or anticipated behavior. The same questions (with a few exceptions) are asked to the same group of people both before and after the CD in an attempt to capture any changes. Each focus group lasted approximately an hour on average, and 12 people usually attended. The vast majority of participants were farmers, aged 25 and up.

The understanding of the National Assembly prior to the CDs varied. In Battambang, Banteay Meanchey, Kandal, Prey Veng, Siem Reap, and Kampong Cham, for example, the focus groups revealed that villagers had little to no understanding of the work of the National Assembly or MNAs and were completely unable to distinguish the legislature from the government. Respondents unanimously thought the role of MNAs was to provide developmental goods and services (roads, schools, etc.). Whereas in Kampong Speu, Kampot, Kampong Thom, and Takeo, focus group participants understood the lawmaking function of the NA and could distinguish it from the executive. As one man from Kampong Thom succinctly stated, "The National Assembly is established to draft/make laws that are called 'legislation' and those laws are submitted to the Senate for finalization and debate before being sent to the government and various institutions to enforce." Overall, however, few discussed the representation and oversight functions of the National Assembly, and had little sense of MNAs' duties to their constituents.

Prior to the dialogues, focus groups also revealed that citizens had absolutely no contact with their representatives and were unable to name even one member of the National Assembly. (The exception is Kampong Thom, where one focus group participant was able to name Sam Rainsy of SRP, Sar Ho of CPP, and Ngoun Nhil of CPP.) Across the board, participants reported that neither they nor anyone they knew had ever met a MNA; received information from a MNA or the Assembly; or been consulted by representatives or staff from the NA. Moreover, although the participants could list numerous problems facing their community, and described a pervasive feeling of inequity, they could not cite a single example of a problem solved by the NA. As one participant from Kampong Cham stated, "MNAs never bring any development to the community. The current achievements and development in our community have been because of generous people, NGOs, and the government."

Focus group participants also reported that they felt abandoned by the government, particularly local officials, and had to deal with the bulk of their problems on their own. Few could provide an example of how a local official had helped solve their problems. As one man from Kampong Thom said, "When we have any problem and approach them (village chiefs) for help, they ignore us and tell us to meet with our MNAs." Focus group participants also described their fear of the village and commune chiefs. In several provinces, participants reported that local officials sometimes stole from them, and were fiercely partisan, accusing people of being with the opposition if they ever complained about local problems. In addition, in all the focus groups, not once did a person state that a

political party had ever helped solve a problem for the community. Several participants did, however, refer to the help of local NGOs and, in some cases, their own activism. In Kandal, focus group participants demonstrated an unusual level of community action, with villagers working together on issues, such as crime, and pitching in to support development projects. These citizens also reported more positive relationships with their local authorities.

Prior to the dialogues, citizens expressed a strong desire to have more communication with their representatives and showed little preference for political parties. In the words of one man from Prey Veng: “We only see MNAs during the election campaign. I don’t care about political party, I just want some help.” Participants had very clear ideas about the qualities they looked for in a MNA: trustworthiness, compassion, experience, good morals – but political affiliations never came up. According to one focus group participant, “MNAs should have good qualifications to serve people. They should be modest, polite, and not arrogant with citizens, and they have to treat people fairly and equally without any discrimination between rich and poor and between powerful and less powerful. Also, MNAs need to adhere to the four basic noble conducts (compassion, pity, happiness, and sincerity).”

They also acknowledged that they had the right to communicate with their MNAs, but many described a “vertical system,” in which they first must report to their village chief, then commune council, and then up the hierarchy. A few expressed fear of retribution by local authorities if they went directly to their MNA: “I want to speak, but I am afraid, like the Khmer saying that ‘the boat leaves, but the port stays.’ If I speak at this time, when MNAs leave, I am afraid of having problems in the community.” Some also expressed doubt about the ability for the National Assembly to help them. A participant from Kampong Speu said, “If I have any problem, I would dare to speak with MNAs to ask for help. But in some cases, I dare not speak with them on topics such as land grabbing by the Chinese company because citizens used to submit the complaints to the National Assembly but we received nothing from them.”

The word association exercise revealed interesting results prior to the CDs. Most noteworthy, many focus group participants associated the word “opposition” with the conflict, trouble, suffering, and even the Khmer Rouge. This could be primarily due to the Khmer word for “opposition,” which has negative connotations. One Banteay Mancheay villager said that when he heard the word opposition, “I am worried that there could be disagreement.” Another participant from Kampong Speu said, “When I hear about the opposition, I feel that it is very serious, like a serious fight.” There was little understanding that the opposition was comprised of political parties and represented an alternative to the ruling party. The exception was Kampot, where some participants had positive associations with the opposition: “Opposition party is like ‘wife’ and the ruling party is like ‘husband.’ If the husband wants to do something that does not bring an advantage, the wife can object to the plan. So, if the government does the wrong thing, the opposition has the role to correct.” In general, there was also no sense of differences between political parties at all. As one participant from Battambang said, “They all have the same ideas.”

Interestingly, the pre-CD word association revealed positive feelings about politicians, MNAs, and parties. A Kandal participant had the following association with the word “politician”: “Politicians work to bring progress to the nation and reduce the shortages faced by citizens as well as bring peace to the country.” Although one man from Takeo was more skeptical, saying that “they are divided into two categories: doer and liar.” Parliamentarians also received glowing reviews, despite previous reports of having done nothing for the community. As one Siem Reap woman said, “I feel very happy because I have never met a MNA, so when I hear the word ‘MNA,’ I am very happy.” People expressed support for multiple parties. One Kampong Thom man reported, “I think about article 51 of the Cambodian Constitution that states: Cambodia adopts a policy of Pluralistic Liberal Democracy. Thus, the more political parties, the better. They constructively criticize and correct the ruling party.”

In the pre-CD focus group, participants were asked about their expectations and feelings about the upcoming dialogue. Everyone expressed extraordinary excitement, emphasizing again that this was the first chance they had to ever see a member of the NA. In Prey Veng, one man expressed, “Today I am very proud of myself. I’m attending a meeting with MNAs for the first time. This is very good for my community.” The primary expectation of citizens for the CD was simply to be heard. As a participant from Kampong Speu stated, “I want to listen to the explanations and comments of MNAs. Also, I want to express my ideas and raise concerns to the MNAs to get them to understand about my concerns and difficulties.”

In several provinces, citizens only heard about the CD through NDI and its partners. Local authorities often neglected to tell people about the event and in some cases threatened them from planning to attend. One woman from Prey Veng said, “I know about this event by NDI staff. The village authorities did not tell me because they discriminate against me.”

The post-CD focus groups revealed significant changes in knowledge, as well as attitudes and anticipated behavior as a result of the event. Across the board, there was a clearer sense of the role and function of the National Assembly, particularly notable in those provinces with a limited understanding prior to the CD. Participants were also more likely to discuss the representative function of MNAs, although oversight was still never mentioned. All participants could identify at least those MNAs who had just participated in the CD, whereas previously they could name no one. Participants also reported learning from the MNAs and would often describe the issues about which they felt more informed.

Following the CD, participants reported more confidence about approaching MNAs with their problems and a general sense of empowerment and excitement. In Kampong Thom, where initially participants were unsure whether they had the right to talk to their MNAs, following the CD respondents described this right enthusiastically. People also reported finding their MNAs more accessible. Following the CD in Takeo, participants expressed a greater connection to their MNAs: “Now that I know and have met MNAs, I will communicate with them to seek their help if I have problems in the future. I will ask

them to visit the community very often.” However, some still described local authorities as their first target for problem-solving. One Kandal participant said, “Though we have known our elected representatives, we always rely on local authorities and seek help from them when we have problems because we all are living in this village and commune. The local authorities are like our parents. Thus, we cannot go beyond local authorities.”

Participants were particularly impressed when MNAs provided their personal mobile phone numbers, and carefully noted who did and who did not. In Prey Veng, one man said, “The most significant point that I noticed from the dialogue was that both MNAs from SRP and HRP gave their phone numbers and asked us to contact them if we have problems. Whereas the MNA from CPP did not give us his phone number, so we do not know how to contact him.”

Focus group participants expressed an extraordinary increase in their confidence and trust in MNAs following just one event. Participants even would remark that they had “complete confidence” or “100% confidence” in their MNAs. In an almost heart-breaking sentiment, a Banteay Meanchey participant stated, “When I see MNAs I feel like I have one more hope.” A Kampot participant said, “I have more confidence in them because they are visiting their constituency now.” After the CD in Kampong Cham, one focus group participant said, “My doubts have been removed by the MNAs’ explanations and interpretations. Previously, I didn’t know where I could go to find answers. Now I know.” A few did, however, express more skepticism and caution. As a Takeo participant said, “We all are not confident in them 100% as we do not yet see their activities to fulfill the said promises.”

With increased confidence after the dialogues came greater expectations, and participants expressed very high hopes in MNAs to fulfill their promises and keep visiting their constituents. In Kandal, according to one participant, “I want any MNA who can understand about the difficulties of citizens and help citizens without any discrimination and partisan behavior. Also, I want a hard-working MNA who pays regular visits to see the difficulties of citizens in the area.” Although there were heightened expectations, participants were willing to give MNAs the benefit of the doubt and expressed confidence that they would help. The post-CD associations with the words “MNAs” and “political parties” were even more positive than those prior to the CD.

The focus groups also revealed an understanding of distinctions between parties and that the concept of political competitiveness was being absorbed. In Prey Veng, one man thoughtfully said, for example, “I heard the MNA from CPP said that because the government is doing the right thing, donors provided millions of dollars to the government. However, the MNA from SRP said that because we are still poor that’s why they give us more money. This point is very interesting to me.” A Takeo respondent said, “All the political parties have a commitment and purpose to develop the country, but they have different policies. Therefore, there could be some disagreements. However, all of them are trying to make people love them and support them. Even though there are many political parties, all of them have the willingness to serve the country.” In Kampot, one respondent’s reaction to the word “political party” following the CD was: “I think that there are multiple

parties in a democracy and they cannot do whatever they want after winning the elections. They need to think about citizens. Any political party representatives who show their achievements through their policy can make people trust them.”

Participants were most impressed by the MNAs’ verbal pledges to work together. As one woman from Kampot said in response to the word “political party,” “I think about the three MPs who sat together to listen to the concerns raised by citizens and take action to solve those concerns and problems for them.” Participants explicitly expressed their desire for multiparty cooperation and recommended that the MNAs drop the politics and work together.

The word association following the CD often demonstrated changes with regard to the word “opposition.” In Takeo, for instance, where people had negative reactions to opposition, after the dialogue, one man responded: “The word opposition appears in the family and society. We will oppose when we think that something is not good. For example, if a husband asks for 10,000 Riels for drinking wine, then his wife would oppose this. However, if he asked for 10,000 Riels to buy small fish for breeding, then his wife would agree because she sees the benefits. So the opposition does not mean to be negative always, it often just criticizes for the benefit of development.”

The post-CD focus groups left no doubts about people’s hunger for attention from their MNAs, and participants unanimously said that there needed to be more CDs.

B. Focus Groups with Local Officials

NDI conducted focus groups in select provinces with local officials, mostly commune councilors and village chiefs, following the CDs. The aim of these discussions was to solicit the perspectives and input from local authorities on the dialogue and constituency relations in general.

During these groups, commune officials reported having regular contact and consultations with MNAs through visits and conversations with staff, particularly about local development plans. Village chiefs had less contact. When local officials had a problem, they explained, they reported “vertically,” to the office above them. Some, however, said they also would bring certain issues straight to the NA. Regarding their expectations of MNAs, they unanimously expressed their desire for more MNA visits, more collaboration, and more information on NA activities. They explained that currently they have very little information on the work of the Assembly.

Local officials all reported that the CDs changed their perception of MNAs. They stated that they better understood the roles of representatives and perceived them as more accessible. Officials also expressed greater confidence in MNAs in solving problems. According to one Kampot councilor, “I am more confident in my MNA because he is active in my community. He came to visit citizens and local officials to share with us the things to be done in the community.”

Local officials also expressed support for the CD program not only as an avenue for people to communicate with MNAs but also as a way for them to learn more about the problems in the community. As one Takeo councilor said, “They (CDs) are very important because people can communicate directly with MNAs and report to them about what they want for their community. Also, local authorities can hear about the people’s difficulties and understand all the problems happening in the community.” They requested more dialogues in their communities.

IV. Post-Constituency Dialogue Actions and Results

Following each CD, NDI developed a monitoring form which lists the problems identified by CD participants and the pledges made by MNAs to address each concern. NDI followed up monthly with individual MNAs to discuss their progress, recording any information on the monitoring form. In addition, NDI’s local NGO partners regularly visited the CD village following the dialogue, meeting with participants and village chiefs to enquire about any changes or progress made on the issues raised at the CD. These “results” were then compiled and reported back to each community in August and September 2009.

A. Banteay Meanchey

1.

Main Problem	Agriculture: lack of market for local agricultural products/high cost of fertilizer
CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP Yont Tharo: government needs to develop a policy to buy products from the farmers and provide incentives to farmers. He also pledged to raise the issue of high fertilizer prices to the Ministry of Agriculture. • CPP Pal Sam Ourn: Cambodian government endorses a free-market policy and therefore cannot adjust the price of goods for citizens and farmers. He added that the Ministry of Commerce is responsible for finding markets for local products and promoting Cambodian goods abroad. The Ministry of Agriculture was appealing to Cambodian farmers to stop the use of chemical fertilizers and focus on organic products.
Results (MNAs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP MP Yont Tharo sent an intervention letter to the Minister of Agriculture to ask about markets for Cambodian agricultural products. He also sent a letter to the Minister of Commerce requesting a reduction in fertilizer price for farmers. He said there was no response from those ministries yet. • CPP MP Pal Sam Ourn said that he contacted the Chamber of Commerce and the Ministry of Commerce to ask for interventions to find proper markets for Cambodian local agricultural products. The Chamber of Commerce had already asked local authorities to negotiate with neighboring countries, but there were some problems because of border disputes. The Ministry of Commerce is finding markets through “diplomatic measures.”
Results (Community)	Commune council members, village chiefs, and citizens report that prices of agricultural products, such as potato, as well as the price of fertilizer were decreasing. They are unaware of any intervention.

2.

Main Problem	Lack of irrigation systems and dams
CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP Yont Tharo: dams needed to be restored, and he asked the deputy district governors to raise the issue with the government. He also asked citizens to provide him with a proposal that he could present to the NA, adding that they should contact NGOs in the province to help on this effort. • CPP Pal Sam Ourn: issue of irrigation falls under the jurisdiction of the Ministry of Water Resource Management, and he said he would bring this issue to the minister directly.
Results (MNAs)	CPP Pal Sam Ourn contacted officials of the provincial department for Water Resource Management in Banteay Meanchey to discuss repairs to the water dam “Prasat Pram Dam” in Tapho commune of Svay Chek district. The provincial department chief proposed a plan to the Ministry of Water Resource Management asking to build the dam. The Ministry replied that there was a national plan for building dams in between 2009 and 2010 in Banteay Meanchey.
Results (Community)	

3.

Main Problem	Shortage of teachers, schools and health centers
CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP Yont Tharo: he would bring the matter up with his party, particularly to garner ideas on how to help poor students pursue their studies through the provision of scholarships. He further promised to appeal to the government to establish a budget for local teachers • CPP Pal Sam Ourn promised that he would bring these issues up with the Ministry of Education and would propose a plan to build a six room school in the commune.
Results (MNAs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP Yont Tharo sent a letter to the Minister of Health to request for expanded health centers for patients. • CPP Pal Sam Ourn said that he discussed the lack of teachers with the Minister of Education H.E. Mr. Im Sithy. The Minister replied that the government will send some teachers from the province to any districts and communes that do not have enough teachers for students.
Results (Community)	Commune council and village chief reported that there was a plan to expand the health care center before the end of 2009 in response to concerns raised in the CD event.

B. Battambang

1.

Main Problem	Division of communes in Banan to Kah Krolor districts and abuse by local officials. Local authorities in Krolor threaten villagers looking for water; extort money from residents seeking wood, and steal property.
CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP MP H.E. Mr. Eng Chhai Eang said he would investigate the alleged confiscation of land by officials; pledged to meet with the district officers in Kah Krolor.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPP MP H.E. Tes Heanh said that it was illegal to prevent villagers from using water sources, and if officials were doing such things, then there should be action. He said that he had already reported concerns about threats from local authorities in Kah Krolor to the commune chief but that he would follow up with district leaders.
Results (MNAs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP MP Eng Chhai Eang sent the case about the division of communes to local authorities. • CPP MP Tes Heanh said that the division involves the administrative management of government. On the issue of local authorities prohibiting people from using water, the commune chief and district governor have educated the individuals and the problem has been solved.
Results (Community)	

2.

Main Problem	Participants also complained about "double standards" in and unfair application of the law and extortion, allowing some to violate laws (such as lacking proper tags for motorcycles). Police were stopping villagers from transporting fuel and logs and extorting money from them.
CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPP MP H.E. Mr. Tes Heanh stated that the law should be applied evenly and the fines should follow legal procedures and processes and not involve bribes. He promised to talk to the Ministry of Interior about the problems in the district and requested that citizens try to get the names of police or local authorities who violated the law, threatened citizens, or extorted money. • SRP MP H.E. Mr. Eng Chhai Eang said if anyone was fined or arrested illegally, he or she should report to the radio and use other media to get the message out. He also reiterated Tes Heanh's suggestion that people record the names of any officials or police officers breaking the law.
Results (MNAs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPP MP Tes Heanh instructed the district and commune police not to punish/fine citizens who have no proper tags, helmet or mirror, but educate them only. He told policemen not to extort money from the people. • SRP MP Eng Chhai Eang said that he communicated with stakeholders, but there was no result.
Results (Community)	Police officials in Cheng Meanchey commune and police chief of Banan district reported that CPP MP H.E. Tes Heanh asked them not to fine citizens who have no proper tags or helmet, especially poor people. They can educate those people about the traffic law first and later on they can enforce the traffic law.

3.

Main Problem	Infrastructure needs: roads
CD Pledges	CPP MP H.E. Mr. Tes Heanh explained that the government was in the process of reviewing bids to construct roads. He also pledged to encourage factories to build in the district.
Results (MNAs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After the event, CPP MP Tes Heanh discussed this issue with the provincial governor. A road from Battambang to Banan district, 7 km out of 24 km, has been repaired. A road from Chey Meanchey to

	<p>Ratanak Mondul district, a project in which a constructor did not follow the contract, will be open for new bids. The road will be constructed next year.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP MP said that he is in the opposition party and has no ability to do anything, but he will discuss this issue in the NA sessions.
Results (Community)	<p>Commune chief of Chey Meachey commune said that, after the intervention of CPP Tes Heanh in the event, the local authorities discussed with the commune council and drafted a proposal to World Vision, Ministry of Rural Development, and Ministry of Transportation to start building in Chey Meachey commune, Banan district. A wooden bridge 2.50 meters x 250 meters in Me May village Wa, Chey Meachey commune was built. Two roads were also built: 5 km from Chey Meachey village to Mut Steung Rong village and 3600 meters length from Chey Meachey village to Me May village. Another road is currently under construction from a cross road point in Pai Lam village to Pai Lam school, with 350 meters completed. The budget came from contributions from citizens and the commune council.</p>

4.

Main Problem	Low price of agricultural goods, high price of fertilizer/oil
CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP MP H.E. Mr. Eng Chhai Eang responded by telling participants to vote for him if they want lower prices. He argued that unfettered monopolies were responsible for some of the price hikes. • CPP Tes Heanh acknowledged that the price of oil was decreasing but that it did not affect the price of food, which was still rising. He explained that the government did not have the power to control the market.
Results (MNAs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP Eng Chhai Eng said that he will send this case to the government and the National Assembly to make interventions. • CPP Tes Heanh said that he met with the chairman of Chamber of Commerce already to encourage him to buy agricultural products from farmers. As a result, the price of corn is higher than before while potato crops still face no market improvements.
Results (Community)	

5.

Main Problem	Vietnamese-Cambodian border: influx of Vietnamese workers.
CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPP MP H.E. Mr. Tes Heanh said that immigration from Vietnam was grossly exaggerated. He explained that there was strict border control with Vietnam, following the same standards as with the Thai border. • SRP MP H.E. Mr. Eng Chhai Eang agreed that the law was strong but that enforcement was weak.
Results (MNAs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPP Tes Heanh said that he will bring this issue to the police border to make intervention to prevent the influx of Vietnamese illegal workers. • SRP Eng Chhai Eang said that he will send this information to the authorities and stakeholders to solve this problem.
Results (Community)	

C. Kampong Cham

1.

Main Problem	Price of agricultural goods: plummeting; small market for products
CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mao Monyvann of SRP: responsibility of the government to build trade relationships with other countries. • Khek Sam On of CPP: government has plan. • You Hockry of NRP: need additional markets for goods.
Results (MNAs)	SRP and HRP sent a written letter about the drop in prices of agricultural products and lack of markets to the Prime Minister.
Results (Community)	

2.

Main Problem	Inability of farmers to pay off debts/interest to the local bank
CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mao Monyvann of SRP: said his party requested \$500 million USD for public support, loan forgiveness, and a stimulus package; government was responsible for renegotiating interest rates and/or adjusting payment schedules with the banks; pledged to again raise the banking issue with the government and NA. • Khek Sam On of CPP: will negotiate with banks • Kem Sokha of HRP: HRP and SRP lawmakers wrote a letter to the government to find a solution to the loan problem (no response) and would raise the issue again. • You Hockry of NRP: would negotiate with the banks and provide a written intervention to the government.
Results (MNAs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP Mao Monyvann and HRP Kem Sokha sent a letter to the government about delaying debt payments for farmers and requesting a ban on bank seizures. The government responded to the National Assembly that they have not seen any bank seizures due to debt payments. • CPP Khek Sam On said that he met with H.E. Mr. Chea Chanto, the General Governor of the Cambodia National Bank and representative of ACLEDA bank, to discuss the concerns of citizens.
Results (Community)	Citizens and local authorities said that after conducting CD event in Damber district, ACLEDA Bank decreased its interest rate from 3.5% to 2.7% based on the amount of debt.

3.

Main Problem	Health centers refusing to treat patients
CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mao Monyvann of SRP: corruption and lack of ethics; he promised he would follow up on the cases in which doctors refused to treat patients. • Khek Sam On of CPP: He pledged to investigate the problem of doctors refusing medical care. • Kem Sokha of HRP: He promised to raise the issue of medical ethics with the government and NA. • You Hockry of NRP: promised to request that the government address the denial of healthcare and ensure free medicine for everyone.
Results (MNAs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP and HRP sent a letter to the Minister of Health asking for measures to be taken on the code of ethics of medical officials.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPP Khek Sam On said that he had a discussion with officials at the Health Center in Kampong Raing. • HRP Kem Sokha said that he sent his activists in Damber district to investigate the case on the health officials who refused to treat patients.
Results <i>(Community)</i>	

4.

Main Problem	Infrastructure: Lack of schools, roads and wells
CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mao Monyvann of SRP: said CPP should address issue of roads • Kem Sokha of HRP: this is the responsibility of the government • You Hockry of NRP: Should be compulsory, free education; he would talk to the Minister of Education.
Results <i>(MNAs)</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPP Khek Sam On met with the Damber district governor to discuss road construction in the district. The governor said that the government had a plan to build needed roads at the end of 2009 or early 2010.
Results <i>(Community)</i>	

5.

Main Problem	Frustration with leaders/value of leadership change
CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mao Monyvann of SRP: other countries have term limits; in Cambodia, choice is theirs • Khek Sam On of the CPP: Cambodia had had experience with many regimes, not just the CPP. • Kem Sokha of HRP: one leader for a long time is bad for the country; up to them as citizens and voters to engender change. • You Hockry (NRP): term limits normal in other countries; up to them.
Results <i>(MNAs)</i>	
Results <i>(Community)</i>	

6.

Main Problem	Land seizures
CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mao Monyvann of SRP: he implored people to check documents carefully before signing, and he said he would demand that commune chiefs look into land seizures. • Kem Sokha of HRP: government should limit concessions and give land to people; he would raise issue with commune authorities, NA, and the political parties.
Results <i>(MNAs)</i>	
Results <i>(Community)</i>	

D. Kampong Speu

1.

Main Problem	Land seizures: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 383 families had occupied land since 1996 but in 2005 the commune council sold the land • Family occupied a rice field since 1979 but authorities gave land to a Singaporean company to build a road • Villager occupied land since 1980 and a company seized it • CT MART company seized land from 388 families in June 2009 • Community land seized – reduced to only 1,500 hectares
CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP MP Mr. Nuth Rumduol: Already brought CT MART complaint to NA and distributed info to MPs. Heard nothing. Said he would bring up the issue again. Land seizures due to corruption in judiciary. Would bring up with authorities. • CPP MP Mr. Hem Khon: Said he needed written information from villagers on the cases. Told villagers they had no legal rights without land titles. Encouraged local authorities to solve these problems. • Deputy provincial governor Mr. Touch Sarun: CT MART had been approved by ministries. Asked people for proof of land ownership. • District governor Tuon Song: Said that the local authorities were not “a court” and could not make judgments on land cases.
Results (MNAs)	CPP Hem Khon said that he requested deputy provincial governor H.E. Mr. Touch Sarun, member of land conflict committee, to investigate the land conflict between CTMART, Golden land company, and the community. He added that if the people sent him a written letter, he could bring the issue to the National Assembly.
Results (Community)	Citizens and local authorities reported that the land dispute between citizens (48 families) and the Singaporean company was resolved. Local authorities offered to exchange the land for neighboring land in O’ Dar village, Amlang commune and both parties agreed.

2.

Main Problem	Land titles: Commune officials demand bribes
CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP MP Mr. Nuth Rumduol: Encouraged people to bring complaints to district office. Would follow up with local authorities. • CPP MP Mr. Hem Khon: Told villagers to get titles and report corrupt officials. • District governor Tuon Song: Said it was obligation of local authorities and the ministry of land to provide titles.
Results (MNAs)	
Results (Community)	Local authorities and citizens said that after CD event, demands for money in exchange for land titles stopped.

3.

Main Problem	Corruption of local authorities: as examples, officials set up illegal checkpoints for extortion, and healthcare workers demanded bribes for treatment
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CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP MP Mr. Nuth Rumduol: Intervened with MOH on healthcare workers. • CPP MP Mr. Hem Khon: Encouraged local authorities to look into the problems.
Results (MNAs)	
Results (Community)	Local authorities and citizens reported that after the CD event, illegal check points and demands for bribes by health care workers stopped.

4.

Main Problem	General: What parties are doing to fight poverty?
CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP MP Mr. Nuth Rumduol: Government officials should not give gifts to citizens during election season – government money is the money of the citizens, so it is critical that it be spent appropriately. Opposition would serve as check. • CPP MP Mr. Hem Khon: Hun Sen had brought peace and progress. • Deputy provincial governor Mr. Touch Sarun: acknowledged that people were poor in his province and need jobs. Had development plan.
Results (MNAs)	
Results (Community)	

E. Kampong Thom

1.

Main Problem	<p>Land seizures:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pnov village seized by former commune chief • Company seized land in areas of Boeung Chamnar, La'ak, Prasath Bak, and Boeung Santouch in Taing Krasaing commune • So Chheng Company took villagers' land in Veal Krom, Trapiang Saray, and Boeung Kampouy <p>Villagers farming in Snok Krabey and Damrey Bat for many years, but Mr. Chin Sitha, an official of the provincial fishery department, has prevented him from plowing in order to protect a fish shelter.</p>
CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sik Bunhok of CPP: explained land law and said local authorities were responsible. • Son Chhay of SRP: suggested formation of committee to investigate land disputes; said that he would discuss with local authorities, the relevant ministries, and the president of the NA; asked citizens to write to provincial parliamentary office so he would have evidence for intervention with NA. • Kuch Moly of FNCP: agreed with establishment of committee.
Results (MNAs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPP Sik Bunhok said that he sent a recording of the constituency dialogue held in Santuk district to the deputy and district governors, asking them to address the concerns raised by citizens. He will then send a report to NDI. • SRP Son Chhay said that the Ministry of Interior had received written

	<p>complaints about land seizures of So Chheng Company and other powerful individuals. The Minister ordered local authorities to resolve the problems.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FCP Kuch Moly said that he gathered complaints with thumbprints from 104 families living in Leav village in Veal Krom in the area of Chhuk Yuon, which the Sok Long Company seized 395 hectares. He discussed this with Santuk deputy district governor and asked him to intervene. He will also write an intervention letter to the president of the National Assembly and relevant institutions to solve the problem.
Results (Community)	Village chiefs, citizens, 17 families in Chambok Khang Cheung, and the first commune assistant of Taing Krasaing reported that after CD event – with intervention from the Sam Rainsy MNA Son Chhay, local authorities, and the Ministry of Interior – the So Cheng company agreed to give back the land in the area of Boeung Chamna, La’ak, Prasat Bak and Boeung Santouch to the people for farming.

2.

Main Problem	Political discrimination: local officials punishing non-CPP supporters
CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kuch Moly of FNCP: stressed that the commune councils were part of the government and they should serve all the people equally. • Sik Bunhok of CPP: CPP never discriminated between political parties. • Son Chhay of SRP: if he received any complaint about SRP local officials discriminating based on political affiliation, he would get them removed from their positions.
Results (MNAs)	
Results (Community)	

3.

Main Problem	Illegal logging and fish-stocking
CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Kuch Moly of FNCP: local authorities were responsible for implementing the forestry and fishery laws effectively; he encouraged people to submit written complaints to the MPs with evidence of illegal logging and fish-stocking. • Son Chhay of SRP: people should report to the district and provincial authorities if the fishery department was not responding.
Results (MNAs)	
Results (Community)	

4.

Main Problem	High price of electricity charges
CD Pledges	Sik Bunhok of CPP promised to make interventions on the high price of electricity with authorities and the electricity official in Santuk district.
Results (MNAs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP Son Chhay sent an intervention letter to the Minister of Industry, Mines and Energy to investigate the high price of electricity of the monopoly electricity company in Taing Krasaing commune, Santuk, particularly given the falling price of diesel. This letter made a specific

	<p>reference to the exchange at the Constituency Dialogue.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FCP Kuch Moly said that he sent one of the district deputy governors to discuss the electricity issue with the private company to ask for a decrease in the price. Since then, the price of electricity price decreased to 2,000Riels/KWh.
Results (Community)	

5.

Main Problem	Donated materials being kept for the personal use of the commune chief
CD Pledges	
Results (MNAs)	SRP Son Chhay sent a letter to the Ministry of Interior asking for an explanation on the use of materials donated to the Phnov commune.
Results (Community)	

F. Kampot

1.

Main Problem	<p>Land issues and disputes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Difficulty obtaining titles for citizens • A citizen from Trapeang Trakeat village, where he had been farming since 1979, wanted a title • Trapeang Run village: unequal enforcement of the land and logging laws by the local authorities
CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP Cheam Channy: deforestation and logging were occurring across the country and that people should establish forest communities to protect the land. • Yi Chhoeun, district governor: people often misunderstand local laws; authorities can ban both citizens and companies from logging. • Mr. Pang Bunroth, head of the provincial land department: if people controlled land since 2001 without conflict or dispute, they were entitled to ownership. If people occupied land since 1979 but the land was public land, they could not be issued ownership rights. • Mr. Chan Chesda, head of the provincial agriculture department: farmers should not log but increase outputs through technology.
Results (MNAs)	
Results (Community)	After the CD, the local authorities and citizens reported that one community forestry association was established to prevent land-clearing and logging. The groups has 111 members, including 22 women.

2.

Main Problem	Lack of transparency in local government spending
CD Pledges	Yi Chhoeun, district governor: open meetings were held with all parties informing them of the community budget and development plan.
Results (MNAs)	
Results (Community)	

3.

Main Problem	Corruption -Dang Tong village: no health care or education without money - Fish shocking laws are unfairly enforced; authorities taking bribes
CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP Cheam Channy: fish shocking must stop and those violating the law should be reported to the local authorities; need anti-corruption law. • Yi Chhoeun, the district governor, said that local authorities had no tolerance for “fish shockers” and punished all wrongdoers. • Mr. Chan Chesda, head of the provincial agriculture department: people must report transgressions to police.
Results (MNAs)	
Results (Community)	After the CD, citizens and local authorities reported that the Ministry of Agriculture started rewarding people who voluntarily handed over their electronic tools for fish shocking. As a result, 445 electronic tools were destroyed.

4.

Main Problem	Political discrimination against non-CPP
CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP Cheam Channy: all citizens should have the same access to services and not be discriminated against due to their political principles. • Mr. Chan Chesda, head of the provincial agriculture department: no discrimination
Results (MNAs)	
Results (Community)	

5.

Main Problem	Infrastructure: Prey Kcheay and Trapeang Run villages requested water for farming.
CD Pledges	
Results (MNAs)	
Results (Community)	Local authorities and citizens reported that after the CD, a road of 1,600 meters and a canal of 1,600 meters were repaired in Dambok Khpuos commune. Repairs were funded through the commune budget.

G. Kandal

1.

Main Problem	Local infrastructure building, including the incompleteness of roads from Khpob Ateav to Ko'orm Samnor and from Khpob Ateav to Ko'orm Samnor
CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HRP Ou Chanrith: promised to write letter to the Minister of Public Works and Transport asking that the construction of National road #118A from Khpob Ateav to Ko'orm Samnor be completed.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPP governor Thach Sovann: government was dealing with road construction "step by step." He said they were also waiting for financial assistance from donors to continue building.
Results (MNAs)	HRP Ou Chanrith wrote a letter to the Minister of Public Works and Transport to request completion of the road from Khpob Ateav to Ko'orm Samnor.
Results (Community)	Citizens and local authorities reported that after the CD event, National Road number 118A, 3Km in length with five bridges, is being built from Khpob Ateav to Ko'orm Samnor.

2.

Main Problem	<p>Illegal and corrupt activities, such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sand pumping along the Mekong River • extortion by electricity company in Ampil Teuk village, Kampong Thnong commune • police demanding double tax for transporting goods at a checkpoint on the Cambodia-Vietnam border • Vietnamese illegally fishing in Leuk Dek district
CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP Chan Cheng: requested that the district governor investigate problems in his district and arrest those conducting illegal businesses. • HRP Ou Chanrith: The party has written letters to the government to curb illegal sand pumping, but had received no response. Would follow up. On fishing, requested that the district governor respond to the issue. • CPP governor Thach Sovann: Ministry of Water Resource Management was responsible for all contracts with private companies for sand pumping. Electricity installation process was not his responsibility but he would raise it with the relevant bodies.
Results (MNAs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP Chan Cheng called for discussion on the police checkpoints on the Cambodia-Vietnam border to discuss double taxing. After the discussion, the demand for payments decreased. • HRP Ou Chanrith wrote to the Minister of Water Resource Management asking that sand dredging along the Mekong River be stopped.
Results (Community)	Citizens and local authorities in Khpob Ateav and Ko'orm Samnor reported that the sand pumping had stopped since the CD. Local authorities and citizens also noted fewer cases of illegal fishing.

3.

Main Problem	Agriculture: no market for agricultural products
CD Pledges	SRP Chan Cheng: Minister of Commerce was responsible for finding markets for agricultural products but had repeatedly ignored citizens' requests for help.
Results (MNAs)	
Results (Community)	

4.

Main Problem	<p>Land disputes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chey Oddam village, Samrong Thom commune, Kean Svay district: four families who had seven hectares of land seized by Mr. Lor Khuon
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Villager from Spean Dek village, Prek Tonlap commune prevented from building his house on his land by local authorities
CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP Chan Cheng: suggested that the district governor provide empty concession land in Khpob Ateav commune to those families who have no land for farming. Requested the district governor to solve the problem for the man who claimed he was unable to build a house on his own land. • HRP Ou Chanrith: requested that participants write an official letter of complaint to him and he will consult with the relevant institutions.
Results (MNAs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP Chan Cheng sent his assistant to investigate land disputes in Prek Sleng and Boeung Khyang communes. Moreover, he told the SRP provincial councilor to discuss the case related to Mr. Lor Khuon, who took land from four families living in Kien Svay, during his meeting with the provincial governor on June 2, 2009.
Results (Community)	

5.

Main Problem	Inability of farmers to pay off debt
CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CPP Thach Sovann: no power over the interest rates as there were signed agreements between creditors and debtors. • HRP Ou Chanrith: SRP and HRP already wrote the Prime Minister requesting a meeting to discuss the issue of agricultural debt and the need to renegotiate payments.
Results (MNAs)	
Results (Community)	

H. Prey Veng

1.

Main Problem	Local infrastructure building (roads and water canals)
CD Pledges	HRP Ou Chanrith: commune councils must intervene on the irrigation issue. Asked people to report to him.
Results (MNAs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • HRP Ou Chanrith appealed to the commune council but did not follow up. • CPP Sok Eisan said that after the dialogue, he discussed the building of a water dam with the CPP leaders of the Preah Sdach district. Reported that the water dam in Chey Kampok commune has been completed.
Results (Community)	Citizens, Kdey Skea village chief, Chey Kampok commune council and the district deputy chief of Preah Sdach reported that there are two pathways being repaired: one is 1276 meters long in Kdey Skea village of Chey Kampok commune, of which the commune council budget was used for the repairs; and another which is 1,500 meters long in Trah village of Kdey Skea commune, of which donated food was used in exchange for people's labor. A water canal, 1500 meters in length, from Trah village to Tapoung village) is also under the construction by using Uri Proda company contributions; about 90% of the project is complete. People and local authorities attribute these actions as responses to the needs that people raised in the CD event.

2.

Main Problem	Insecurity in the commune (theft); improper behavior by police
CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP Chea Poch: need anti-corruption law; need new chief of police • HRP Ou Chanrith: enforcement lacking due to corruption, need anti-corruption law. Report transgressions to police headquarters. • CPP Sok Eisan: people must obey the laws to avoid conflicts with the police and officials, explaining that the laws, such as mandatory helmets, were to protect them.
Results (MNAs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP Chea Poch said that after the CD event and broadcasts on RFA, FM90, and FM93.5, the police in Preah Sdach district reported to him that theft is reduced. • CPP Sok Eisan, together with commune councilors in Chey Kampok, discussed the establishment of a “people’s protection movement” in order to maintain security in the community.
Results (Community)	After the event, citizens and local authorities reported that the district authority established a “people’s protection movement” to maintain security in the district as well as Chey Kampok commune. Since then, the number of gang youth clashes and domestic violence cases has decreased.

3.

Main Problem	Agriculture: no market for agricultural products, high cost of fertilizer
CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP Chea Poch: government is responsible for keeping the price of fertilizer high and should stabilize the price. He had already written to the Ministry of Agriculture on these matters, but would follow up. • CPP Sok Eisan: government wants to increase exports of rice. Qatar and Kuwait had promised future purchases. He said the Ministry of Agriculture was working to improve and modernize farming skills.
Results (MNAs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP Chea Poch said that he would submit the letter of intervention to the SRP President and to the Ministry of Agriculture on the reduction of fertilizer costs and the need for markets. • CPP Sok Eisan said that he requested that the Minister of the Agriculture send an official of the provincial Agriculture department to provide skills to citizens in Preah Sdach district.
Results (Community)	

4.

Main Problem	Land disputes: land seized through force or manipulation.
CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP Chea Poch: local authorities were responsible to take action. Need to stop corruption in courts. He said there needed to be an anti-corruption law, for which his party was pushing. He asked participants to report corrupt behavior to their MPs, and he provided his personal mobile telephone number to the group. He added that he would help secure pro-bono lawyers for villagers in need of representation. • CPP. Sok Eisan: people must hold on to and obtain their registration documents and land titles. He agreed that a small number of officials were corrupt, and it was the responsibility of citizens to report transgressions. He said that the CPP had institutions to look into problems and called upon participants to report to the party as needed. • HRP Ou Chanrith: Anti-corruption law needed

Results (MNAs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP Chea Poch intervened on a land dispute (land was stolen by a powerful individual who forced a woman to give her thumb print) to the provincial court. The SRP and HRP MNAs continue to follow up on this case. • CPP Sok Eisan discussed the land cases at a working group of the CPP in Preah Sdach district and requested the party to send officials to investigate the cases with local authorities.
Results (Community)	

5.

Main Problem	Inability of farmers to pay off debts
CD Pledges	SRP Chea Poch and HRP Ou Chanrith: government should provide help to farmers with debt, lowering interest rates or mandating later payment terms with the banks. He discussed with NA and government to suspend debt payments to ACLEDA Bank.
Results (MNAs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP Chea Poch wrote to the NA, asking members to address the issue of agricultural debt. SRP held a meeting and press conference on the issue. • SRP and HRP released a statement to the government asking for the suspension of debt owed by farmers. The government responded that it had a plan to address the issue. • CPP Sok Eisan informed the chief of CPP's working group in the district about the citizens' request to delay debt payments. He also nominated an official to discuss the issue with the bank to find out the reasons for the bank's confiscation of land and to review loan agreement policy.
Results (Community)	

6.

Main Problem	Local economic development – land concessions to foreigners
CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP Chea Poch and HRP Ou Chanrith: Land concessions should not be provided to foreigners but to Cambodians, along with technical training and skills. • CPP Sok Eisan: land concessions were given to foreign companies because they had the resources and techniques to develop.
Results (MNAs)	SRP Chea Poch wrote to the government asking that land should not be leased out to foreigners.
Results (Community)	

I. Siem Reap

1.

Main Problem	<p>Land seizures by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • companies: Banya Group Company in Sre Nouy village of Varin district and Ly Ratanak Company in Snar Sangkream village of Balaing commune 254 hectares from 87 families • officials: village chief in Kdey commune • soldiers: military regiment 2 in Anglong Veng
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CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP Ke Sovannroth: he promised to bring the cases to the NA and government, and demanded an investigation from provincial authorities. • CPP Peou Savoeun: he promised to discuss the issue of land seizures with the relevant government authorities and the NA leadership, particularly emphasizing the seizures carried out by soldiers.
Results (MNAs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP Ke Sovannroth said the SRP wrote a letter to the NA president and the Minister of Interior calling for an investigation into land seizures in the province. • CPP Peou Savoeun sent a complaint written by the victims to the provincial governors of Siem Reap and Oddor Meanchey.
Results (Community)	Citizens and local authorities reported that after the CD event, Ly Ratanak Company stopped clearing the land in the commune.

2.

Main Problem	Difficulty obtaining land titles for those lacking documentation
CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP Ke Sovannroth: ask the provincial land committee to investigate the barriers to obtaining land titles. • CPP Peou Savoeun: called upon the provincial authorities and provincial land committee to issue land titles.
Results (MNAs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP Ke Sovannroth said that there have been a lot of complaints on land disputes and requests for land titles sent to the National Assembly. Thus, she does not need to raise these issues to the Assembly. • CPP Peou Savoeun discussed the land title issue with the provincial land committee and asked the committee to issue the land titles to citizens. The committee promised to issue the land titles for any land which is not involved in a dispute.
Results (Community)	The local authorities said that provincial land committee is now ready to handle land title registration, but they reported that no citizens have applied for a land title.

3.

Main Problem	Agriculture: lack of water in Tbeng commune
CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP Ke Sovannroth: raise the issue with her party and the National Assembly; lobby the government to ensure that people have enough water for farming. • CPP Peou Savoeun: raise the issue of irrigation with the government, explaining that the government already had a policy to enhance irrigation systems in remote areas.
Results (MNAs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • SRP Ke Sovannroth said that she cannot talk about the issue of the lack of water in Tbeng commune in the Assembly session as the Assembly has its own agenda topics. • CPP Peou Savoeun sent a report on the lack of water irrigation systems to the government through the provincial Cambodian People's Party in Siem Reap and the CPP Headquarters.
Results (Community)	The local authorities and citizens reported that after the CD event, a Lan water dam (75 meters long by 15 meters wide by 5 meters high) and a water canal (250 meters long by 2 meters wide by 1 meter deep) located in Skun village, Tbeng commune have been built.

4.

Main Problem	Lack of schools/teachers, roads and health centers
CD Pledges	CPP Peou Savoeun: request the government to build more schools in the commune and provide teachers; build more roads; promised that one health center would be built in mid-2009.
Results (MNAs)	CPP Peou Savoeun said that the provincial governor had a plan to build one primary school and health center in the year 2009
Results (Community)	The local authorities and citizens said that a six classroom-building in Rom Chek village and commune district is being built – about 90% of the project is now complete.

J. Takeo

1.

Main Problem	Local infrastructure: building roads, water pumps <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repair Kbal Po's water station • Samput water station needed in Prey Phlong • Concerns about potential discrimination in use of water pumps. • 1,000 meter pathway from Trapeang Ponlous village to Srangai commune • 1,200 meter pathway from Po Chas village to Po Lech village • 6 kilometer pathway from Tapreum village to Prey Phdao village
CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chau Sophon of CPP promised to discuss this issue of pumps with the Minister of Agriculture and to request an expert to check and repair the water pump in Kbal Po. He emphasized that all government services were available to all citizens regardless of political affiliation. • Kuoy Bunroeun of SRP said SRP was not able to provide development as it was not the ruling party and could not receive funds from donors. On discrimination, he urged people to treat each other equally regardless of political affiliation.
Results (MNAs)	SRP Kuoy Bunroeun wrote a letter to the Minister of Water Resource and Management to research irrigation systems at Kbal Po water station in Kbal Po village, Sambour commune and Traing district.
Results (Community)	Local authorities and citizens reported that after an intervention by Chau Sophon of the CPP, a road of 600 meters in length from Ta Prem village to Prek Pdav village was built with contributions from citizens.

2.

Main Problem	Education issues: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repair the primary school in Trapeang Sambour Thmey • Ensure teachers work full hours • Enforce teachers' pay raises and pension raises • Offer English language • Build dorms for women in Phnom Penh
CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chau Sophon of CPP said pensions were not received because of late submission of needed documents; the pension increase was only applicable to those who retired since 2008. • Kuoy Bunroeun of SRP promised to write to the district and provincial governors and the Ministry of Education to strengthen the education

	system in this location and develop a foreign language program for students. He would investigate the case of the pension, raising the issue with the Ministry of Social Work and Veteran's Affairs; said pension increase applied to all retirees regardless of retirement date.
Results (MNAs)	
Results (Community)	

3.

Main Problem	Agriculture: no market for agricultural products, low price of rice, high cost of fertilizer, CHIFAMA Company not offering good prices to farmers
CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chau Sophon of CPP explained that because of the poor quality of rice, the price is low; pledged to work with local authorities to find appropriate solutions for farmers. • Kuoy Bunroeun of SRP explained that rice price was low due to police extortion (see below); would write to provincial governor regarding the CHIFAMA company.
Results (MNAs)	SRP Kuoy Bunroeun wrote a letter to the provincial governor re: 1) whether or not the provincial governor authorized CHIFAMA Company to buy agricultural products from farmers to export; 2) whether or not the provincial authorities offered licenses to this company; 3) whether or not the company took money from people to transport rice; and 4) whether or not the government has monitored the company's performance and activities.
Results (Community)	

4.

Main Problem	Land disputes: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Villager from Kampreum village, Sambour commune blocked by villagers from selling her land; no response from district authorities • Councilors blocking people from praying at a tree in Roveang village, Sambour commune
CD Pledges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chau Sophon of CPP said he would take action against the councilors blocking the tree if they were CPP. He said complaint was lodged already with the district governor, and if the councilors did not comply, the villagers should bring the complaint to the provincial court. Said he would follow up with local authorities about the villager unable to sell her land. • Kuoy Bunroeun of SRP said court should handle tree case; asked local authorities to look into the case of villagers blocking the land sale.
Results (MNAs)	
Results (Community)	

5.

Main Problem	Police extortion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 18 illegal police checkpoints from Kbal Po village to Kampong Krasing • Police only fined poor people who had no mirrors, helmets, and/or plate numbers for their motorcycles.
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<i>CD Pledges</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chau Sophon of CPP called upon people to respect the traffic codes, urging them to wear helmets and install proper mirrors and plate numbers on their motorcycles. If the police were extorting money for no cause, he stressed that this was illegal. • Kuoy Bunroeun of SRP reported that the Prime Minister had ordered local authorities to eliminate illegal checkpoints; promised to inform the relevant institutions, the Ministry of Commerce, and the Prime Minister that the local authorities in this district were not following government orders. Encouraged participants to obey traffic law to prevent accidents. He suggested that police educate people before fining them.
<i>Results (MNAs)</i>	SRP Kuoy Bunroeun wrote a letter to the Takeo provincial governor to eliminate the illegal police checkpoints along the river from Kampong Tuk of Takeo market to Kampong Krasaing commune, Borey Cholsar district of Takeo province (Vietnam border).
<i>Results (Community)</i>	

VI. Conclusion

The 2009 constituency dialogues in ten provinces revealed significant consistencies in the problems facing Cambodians. Land seizures were undoubtedly cited as the greatest problem. Villagers across provinces reported that their land, land they had been living on for years, was taken from them, often with the involvement of local authorities. They expressed confusion about the concessions process and frustration that companies took priority over them. Villagers also described the difficulty in obtaining legal land titles due, in particular, to demands from commune councilors for bribes. People also reported their inability to find justice through the courts on land matters.

Agricultural economic hardship was also a universal concern. Prices for agricultural inputs, namely fertilizer, have largely stayed the same but the prices of agricultural outputs have plummeted. Moreover, the markets for Cambodian goods appear to be dwindling. People are simply not earning enough money from farming. In addition, many have loans from ACELADA and are unable to make payments. Participants also described their need for dams and irrigation systems, roads for transport, and electricity. Citizens reported on the shortages of schools and quality health care.

CD participants discussed the pervasiveness of corruption as an underlying cause of many of their problems. People's exasperation with local officials was palatable at these dialogues. Village chiefs, commune councilors, and police were cited as the biggest culprits and were involved in land seizures, extortion, and bribery, as well as intimidation. In many communities, local officials tried to prevent people from attending the CD and voicing their concerns, and participants demonstrated significant bravery by doing so. It is also notable that participants were increasingly outspoken in their remarks, compared to previous years, raising pointed and often critical comments. Interestingly, the MNAs were rarely attacked by each other, but rather by the tough questions from the audience.

Members of the National Assembly conducted themselves professionally, followed the protocol of the moderators, and refrained from personal attacks and unconstructive comments. The performance and speaking skills certainly varied among individuals, and some were more responsive than others by specifically responding to the issues raised. The quality of performance, however, was not correlated to party affiliation, but varied randomly. There were a few instances when MNAs avoided the questions, provided no real concrete solutions or explanations, or tried to outsource their responses to local officials. These instances were most certainly noted by participants, who did not report favorably on them.

On a few occasions, parties sent a MNA from a different province to attend the CD. It is important that parties and MNAs understand that the program aims to bring people closer to their voters, their constituents. MNAs are elected by province on provincial party lists and are ultimately accountable to those provincial people who voted for them. MNAs should be proving themselves to voters, which is more likely to get them elected in the future, while spreading themselves across the country is not a good electoral strategy. It should also be noted that when someone participated from a different province, he or she always performed more poorly than the MNAs from the province, as he or she did not understand the local issues and leaders as well and was thus unable to provide adequate follow-up. It also confused voters, particularly when a MNA from a different province thanked people for their vote.

Over the course of only eight months, the CDs have demonstrated concrete results. Many of these results can be directly attributed to the actions of the MNAs who participated in the event. MNAs demonstrated their strong commitment to their constituents and their jobs, and every single representative followed up on at least one of his or her promises. Other interventions were spearheaded by the communities or local authorities. It seems that in a few cases, the CD itself served as a deterrent for illegal practices by shedding light on the problem and publicly identifying culprits. Thus, although no one specifically took action against a problem, the problem stopped. In many cases, MNAs have taken steps to address an issue, but no results have been realized yet. Nevertheless, the program recognizes all efforts of MNAs to respond to the concerns raised by their constituents.

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

The focus groups also demonstrated how little the NA and its members are currently doing. In addition to initiating no legislation, the NA has no coordinated constituency outreach efforts nor does it perform its oversight function adequately. Participants could not name a single member of the NA prior to the CDs and said they had never met or been contacted by a representative of the Assembly. They could not provide a single example of an activity the Assembly had done on their behalf. Interviews with local officials also revealed the desire for more information on the business of the National Assembly and its members. Although certainly individual members conduct visits to their constituencies, more coordinated support and initiative from the National Assembly is clearly needed to ensure greater impact of the Assembly's outreach efforts. The CD program has provided an important opportunity for MNAs to build these relationships with communities and fulfill the tasks they were elected to do, but it is not enough.

The CDs have also served the important role of demonstrating to people their political options. There are few opportunities – if any – in Cambodia for ruling party and opposition party MNAs to participate side by side in a forum with a debate-like format in front of citizens. The focus groups revealed that citizens were starting to make comparisons and distinctions between parties and policies. Following the CDs, participants showed a greater awareness of the opposition and the value of multiparty democracy. People also responded negatively to partisanship and positively to parties cooperating and working together to solve problems.

Perhaps the most important lesson learned from the CD program in 2009 is that people have an enormous amount of goodwill toward MNAs. The focus groups revealed that despite reporting having been neglected by their representatives, people expressed such willingness to give them the benefit of the doubt and described in glowing terms their confidence in them. People were so thrilled to have simply had the opportunity to see their MNAs at a dialogue, and that participation alone earned representatives tremendous admiration and trust, before even delivering on a single promise made. This goodwill is capital the National Assembly and its members are advised not to take lightly, as over time expectations will certainly increase. It was evident from the focus groups that people are expecting answers and responses from their representatives and have expressed more confidence to air their demands to the NA in the future.