The Importance of Community’s Participation in Environmental Impact Assessment Process

The Cambodian government has been focusing on empowering indigenous people and creating an open space for them to be involved in all development activities. Public consultation for the environmental impact assessment (EIA) process is an important factor in ensuring that natural resources such as water, soil, air, climate, forests, and the health of animals and villagers are protected and it provides the opportunity for public sectors and the community to raise comments and recommendations related to environmental issues which are the key success of sustainable development.

EIA is a process which analyses any potential environmental effects for proposed projects or specific decisions before the projects are implemented.  

White Ribbon Campaign “Elimination of all forms of violence against women”

The Development Education and Advocacy (DEA) programme of Development and Partnership in Action (DPA) collaborated with the Association for Development and Our Villager’s Rights (ADOVIR) and District Women Affairs to organise a White Ribbon Campaign entitled “International day for eliminating all forms of violence against women” in Bovel district, Battambang province.

The campaign was held in the Ampil Pramdoem pagoda, Ampil Pramdoem commune, Bovel district, Battambang province for 114 attendees (37 women), who came from nine villages (Ta Khiev, Satha Por I, Satha Por II, Siem, Boeung Sangker, Bourun, Daung, Ampil Pramdoem and Thmey village).  

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Overview of public forum on EI “Community rights and decision-making in EIA process” in Mondulkiri province, 18 September 2012
Lack of participation, little understanding and low ability are factors which affect the processes of decentralisation, less of accountability, transparency and poor planning.

In 2012, after observing these problems, Po Thom Elder Association (PTEA) encouraged people in the community, especially women, to prepare a village plan and participate in a monthly meeting with commune council.

Po Thom Elder Association (PTEA) is an organisation working in Svay Rieng province. The PTEA is one of DPA’s partner organisations which works on agriculture, food security, decreasing fighting in families, controlling natural resources and decentralisation.

Mrs. Sao Sarorn, aged 36, is a vice village chief of Svay Tor Tem Village, Tropaing Sdao Commune, Romeas Hek District, Svay Rieng province. She said “I used to be a simple person who didn’t participate in monthly meetings with the commune council and was not aware of problems in society because I was too busy with farming, house works and taking care of my children”.

In addition to her position as vice village chief of Svay Tor Tem Village, Mrs. Sao Sarorn is also chairman of a self help group and a gender focal person. “Due to the encouragement and support of people in the community, I was selected to be a vice village chief of Svay Tor Tem Village,” she said. “I have learned many new things and gained more experience, especially in the field of society development work, and I now encourage more gender equality in my community”.

DPA continues to support Po Thom Elder Association (PTEA), partner organisations and related communities through building people’s ability and funding so they can achieve their goals.

Community Problem......... (from page 3)

“In 2007, there were many cases in the village which were sent to the commune hall to seek solutions,” he said. “After the villagers attended the training on conflict solution, they applied their knowledge by solving three cases related to domestic violence and the other two cases dealing with neighbour arguments without any support from outsiders or local authorities.”

DPA-ICDST has been working in Ban Bung village since 2008, dealing with natural resource management, agriculture, health education, capacity building, and disaster risk reduction.

“Since ICDST approached in my community to provide numerous trainings, domestic violence awareness has improved and the number of incidents in the village has decreased because villagers and local authorities are more aware of it,” he said.
Community Problem Solving

One of the activities of DPA’s Integrated Community Development programme in Stung Treng province (ICD-ST) is to build the capacity of local development actors to plan and coordinate their own village development activities to encourage participation from all villagers, particularly women.

As a member of a community problem-solving committee and also a gender focal point, Mr. Nou Savat, plays an important role to facilitate other problems that occurring in his village. Mr Savat is 50 years old and lives in Ban Bong village, Phlunk commune, Sesan district, Stung Treng province.

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White Ribbon Campaign .......... (from page 1)

The three slogans which were used included: (1) Domestic violence as human rights abuse; (2) Promises to stop using violence against women and children; and (3) Joining together to prevent domestic violence through the strict enforcement and implementation of relevant laws.

Mr. Oeum Tith, district police inspector of Bovel district said “Domestic violence is a social problem and not an individual’s private matter. Therefore, we have a duty to implement the existing laws and prevent this from happening so we can live in harmony and peace and participate in community and social development.”

Mr. Chhoeun Bunthoeun, aged 33, is a member of a men’s group in Ampil Pramdoem village and expressed his support of this event. Mr. Bunthoeun said “Through this event, I hope that all villagers will join with the local authorities to work together to stop all forms of violence against women and children.”

DPA has worked actively to achieve equal gender rights in social and economic development through capacity building and empowerment for women to escape poverty, domestic violence, and human trafficking.
As the facilitator of national network on Extractive Industry Social and Environmental Impact (EISEI), Development and Partnership in Action (DPA) plays an important role in communicating, sharing knowledge and facilitating dialogue between the community, organisations, government ministries and mining companies. It gives them a chance to discuss mining development projects as well as providing an opportunity for the community to raise any concerns related to mining exploitation projects in their residential areas.

“The development of the extractive industry constantly affects social and environmental conditions, including loss of natural resources which affect the livelihood of indigenous people who depend on those resources,” said Mr. Kong Piseth, Director of Provincial Department of Industry, Mine and Energy in Mondulkiri during the public forum on “Community rights and decision-making on EIA process” in Mondulkiri province. “It is therefore a challenge if the investment on this project was implemented without responsibility or participation of the public and if human rights respected which would cause negative impacts on social and environmental conditions. Public consultation for EIA on extractive industry is very important as it provides a chance for public sectors, especially indigenous communities, to raise their concerns and comments in all development activities.”

DPA, along with the provincial network and the national level EISEI network, will take part in sharing their concerns through the distribution of knowledge and experience in order to promote the community’s acknowledgement.