



ANNUAL PROJECT REPORT 2009

United Nations Development Programme - Cambodia

Project: Strengthening Democracy and Electoral Processes in Cambodia

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Project Partners:	Ministry of Interior, Ministry of Information, National Election Committee, Cambodian Political Parties, Cambodian and International Civil Society Organizations
Country Programme Outcome:	Legislature and civil society are able to improve checks and balances of the executive branch

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I. Executive summary

Following the *End-of-Project review* in 2008, the need for a **second phase** of the *Strengthening Democracy and Electoral Processes in Cambodia* (SDEP) Project was mutually agreed upon by UNDP management, donors and the project's partners: the National Election Committee (NEC), Ministry of Interior (MOI) and Ministry of Information (MOInf). The two year extension phase was in line with the long-standing UNDP discussions with the Royal Government of Cambodia through its Minister of Interior and the NEC on moving from short-term event-specific support to advocacy, long-term change and focused initiatives with Ministries, civil society and political parties on improving the electoral process and strengthening Cambodia's democracy.

In the first quarter of 2009, the majority of staff time was spent **developing the new project**, including defining and clarifying the annual workplan, developing relationships with an expanded set of project partners, and recruiting qualified staff. Administrative and project assistants were hired, and one national Component Specialist dealing with civil society organizations was recruited. One international UNV volunteer (IUNV) joined the project in 3rd quarter to formulate a detailed workplan with regard to the planned youth initiative, one IUNV joined in October to fill the vacant position of Project Operations Coordinator, and another IUNV joined in November as Political Party Liaison Officer.

Three scoping exercises were organized based on the decision of the Project Executive Group (PEG) to elaborate activities for the 2009-2010 workplan and determine further staffing needs. Recruitment for the international posts of Chief Editor, TV Production Manager and Advocacy Advisor was ongoing throughout the year, but only the Chief Editor post was filled by the end of 2009.

- The **media scoping exercise** in the 1st quarter reviewed possible areas of intervention in media development, media law, journalist training and the creation of an enabling environment for independent media, as well as the long-term sustainability of Equity Weekly. A set of refined outputs were created, and work on engaging necessary human resources identified by the exercise continued throughout 2009.
- A scoping exercise on how to **strengthen democratic multi-party system in Cambodia** was undertaken during the 2nd quarter. It formed the basis of a more refined output on the development of multiparty democracy.
- The final scoping exercise focusing on **improving Cambodian voter registration processes** and supporting the existing Cambodian National ID card programme was postponed several times due to unavailability of qualified consultants. A technical assessment mission on the voter registration system in Cambodia eventually took place in the 4th quarter.

SDEP and the British Embassy provided a grant to the Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (**COMFREL**) to carry out, in cooperation with the MOI, a **survey of citizens** on problems encountered with the voter register during the 2008 election. As part of SDEP's civic engagement efforts, COMFREL also implemented an extensive Cambodia-wide civic engagement project aimed at enhancing citizen knowledge on RGC's Rectangular Strategy and grassroots participation in governance. The initiative was funded by the UN Democracy Fund (UNDEF), with monitoring and evaluation responsibilities delegated to SDEP.

The joint UNDP-TVK initiative project continued production of the **Equity Weekly programme** throughout the year, with shows highlighting issues of political, social, economic and environmental importance to Cambodia. It seems that a number of social and environmental issues raised by *Equity Weekly* were picked up by policymakers and that government took corrective actions. In order to increase the sustainability of Equity Weekly, the MOInf created an Equity Bureau within the Ministry, demonstrating their dedication to Equity brand programming and to their staff being trained in fair and balanced journalism.

Discussions on **improving electoral framework and processes** continued in close coordination with the EC Legal advisor, Cambodian interlocutors and international stakeholders. Engaging our

national counterparts in ongoing discussions was very challenging. In order to kick start the meeting of a long awaited working group on electoral reform, discussions were held at various levels with senior officials from the MOI. The NEC has not changed its position on not engaging in electoral reforms discussions. However, all stakeholders have raised concerns over having discussions without NEC involvement and hope NEC will change its position in due course.

There is **limited progress** on Outputs 1, 2, and 3, which are directly focusing on improving complaints and appeals processes, improving voter registration processes and enhanced electoral framework, respectively. It is expected that ongoing efforts to engage higher political level would bear some results providing much needed momentum. **Significant progress** has been made in working with civil society organizations, broader civic engagement, and balanced journalism.

It is important to understand that any progress towards project outputs, especially outputs of projects like SDEP, is contingent upon **political will**, which would subsequently allow technical levels to proceed with the necessary discussions and implementation. In the current Cambodian political environment, where one party enjoys two-thirds majority in the Parliament and with all parliamentary commissions without any opposition representation, generating such a political will has never been more necessary.

II. Implementation progress

PROGRESS TOWARDS PROJECT OUTPUTS

OUTPUT 1: Increased capacity and leadership of the National Election Committee (NEC)			
Output Indicators	Baseline (month/year)	Target (month/year)	Current status (month/year)
■ Strengthened NEC outreach and dialogue with stakeholders			NEC public briefings no longer taking place (Dec 2009)
■ Strengthened communications with political parties, CSOs, and media			
■ Improved complaints and appeals processes			NEC presents itself as implementer of LEMNA, referring all electoral reform issues to MOI (Dec 2009)
■ Technical recommendations of observer reports of 2007 and 2008 election considered and acted upon			
<p>The Deputy Chairperson of NEC and SDEP continued to meet on a regular basis to exchange information and coordinate activities. This included supporting the coordination of a South-South study trip by the NEC Nepal in the 3rd quarter. SDEP participated in NEC's post-election conference in Siem Reap held in June 2009 to discuss implementation and outcome of the district and provincial elections. The project NEC focal point attended NEC public briefings and collaborated with the EU legal advisor and the NEC legal department on ways to improve the public briefings as a mechanism of communication between the NEC and civil society. Under an understanding between UNDP and EC, the activities falling under this output became the responsibilities of the EC Media and Legal advisors starting with the 2nd quarter. However, through close interaction with EC advisors, SDEP monitored progress towards this output, such as workshops for the benefit of NEC's staff organized by the EC Media advisor.</p> <p>The EC legal advisor was involved in extensive discussions with the NEC on improving the Complaints and Appeals processes. Surprisingly, and to the detriment of electoral reform agenda, NEC changed from active engagement in discussions aimed at improving the Complaints and Appeals processes to claiming that the domain of electoral reform falls beyond NEC's mandate and directing all reform issues to the MOI. NEC presented itself only as the implementer of electoral law (LEMNA), an approach that has left no room for constructive engagement even with regard to the regulatory framework that is within NEC's mandate.</p> <p>NEC's effectiveness and independence are limited by a variety of institutional and political factors</p>			

that are having a growing impact following the outcome of the 2008 elections which strengthened the position of the ruling party. These limitations also had a direct impact on the ability of SDEP to achieve progress towards this output, since any efforts towards supporting NEC's outreach and dialogue with stakeholders and improving the appeals and complaints processes were effectively stonewalled from inception by NEC's narrow self-definition as purely an implementer of electoral law. It is anticipated that future delivery towards this output will continue to be below plan if political will for any kind of reforms remains absent.

Source of funds used: Irish Aid

delivery exceeds plan delivery in line with plan delivery below plan

OUTPUT 2: Improved voter registration process and voter registry

Output Indicators	Baseline (month/year)	Target (month/year)	Current status (month/year)
■ Interface designed between the MOI database and the NEC voter registry database and MOU signed between MOI & NEC on its use			No interface agreed upon by either DP or national stakeholders. (Dec. 2009)
■ Amalgamation of the national ID card data bases into one system	Two separate and disconnected databases running in parallel. (2006?)	One unified and functional database containing information for all existing databases. (2010?)	MOI conducting its own ID card program, existing databases not yet amalgamated. Training and equipment support for MOI national ID card program in progress. (Dec. 2009)
■ Improved voter registration system and more accurate voters list for the next elections		MOI/NEC TWG on voter registration set up and meeting regularly.	TAM reviewed VR reform options and reported to DP and national stakeholders. Voter survey conducted by COMFREL and results shared with stakeholders. Political will towards VR reform remains absent. No TWG on voter registration was set up. (Dec. 2009)

A joint UNDP-EU letter was sent in early October 2009 to the MOI requesting a meeting to convene the long-awaited **Technical Working Group (TWG)** tasked with looking at the technicalities of voter registration (VR) improvements in time for the 2012 Commune Council elections. Despite UNDP's and EU's attempts, no replies were provided, in a clear indication of the low relevance of VR reform in the MOI agenda. In addition, MOI informed the project that technical issues to be discussed in the TWG would be solely identified by the MOI together with the NEC, without formal direct consultation with other national and international partners and stakeholders. This approach, though legitimate, offers a meaningful example of the low level of openness of the national institutions involved in the electoral process. Towards the end of December 2009, MOI finally invited UNDP and EU for a discussion on the TWG, but then the meeting was cancelled at the last minute by the MOI without any explanation. The lack of political will towards electoral reform, including voter registration system reform, thus has had an equally stifling effect on SDEP's ability to implement any activities and achieve progress under this output as under the previous output.

Initial contacts were established with the **EU/UNDP Joint Taskforce (JTF)** on the use of IT Systems in electoral assistance to address the shortcoming in the ID card databases. Following several postponements in the deployment of the JTF and taking into consideration the concerns over its focus on the possible application of Automated Fingerprint Identification System (AFIS), it was decided to field a **technical assessment mission (TAM)** to advise on different reform options for the improvement of the voter registration system based on other countries' experiences. It was also agreed that a feasibility mission should follow in the first quarter of 2010 to look at the practicability of the recommended options in time for the 2012 Commune Council elections. The cancellation of the JTF mission did not allow producing the expected recommendations for the other output indicators (Link of ID card database with voter registry and amalgamation of the three ID card databases) and

the scoping of the TAM was therefore focused around possible improvements of the voter registration system. The TAM, deployed in December 2009, met with a wide range of stakeholders and presented them with final recommendations over the possibility of having a new VR exercise directly managed by the NEC or continued support for VR process improvements. During this presentation NEC was explicitly interested in **a new VR exercise, but doubts over its implementation** arose following CPP's hinted lack of enthusiasm for the proposal. CPP cited various international observer reports that described the 2008 elections as free and fair to support its position that there was no need for a new VR exercise or for VR reform (see also Project Risks).

In terms of **capacity building and operational support for MOI**, at the end of 2009 SDEP was in the process of procuring 30 ID card kits for mobile teams, plus additional IT equipment to support national ID card HQ operations. In coordination with the MOI, SDEP attempted to engage the National Information Communications Technology Development Authority (NiDA), a RGC agency based within the Council of Ministers and chaired by the Prime Minister, in providing basic PC training for a selected number of MOI ID card staff (72) to support the operational capabilities of MOI. Despite extensive efforts, however, NiDA was unable to provide timely and adequate feedbacks and the project decided to contract a private training institute in the beginning of 2010 and informed MOI of this decision.

A voters' survey was conducted in all 24 provinces in partnership with COMFREL and with the full cooperation of MOI. The first phase was completed with funding from the British Embassy and other development partners, and results aimed to improve future voter registration processes and feed directly into the TWG on voter registration (which has yet to be setup and begin meeting, as explained above). In the second phase of the **Survey on Voters, the issuing of FORM 1018 and Voter Registration, COMFREL** interviewed 8,678 voters in order to identify problems encountered during the 2008 election. In July 2009 COMFREL produced the final survey report both in Khmer and English and delivered to the electoral stakeholders including MOI and NEC. The survey report highlighted that 21.4% of the voters who did not cast their ballot in 2008 election went to the polling station but could not vote because of facing difficulties, mainly inability to find their names and/or polling stations. Based on the survey findings, COMFREL gave six recommendations on voter registration & voters' list, voter information notice, issuing Form 1018, reducing voter fear, reducing irregularities with vote buying and reducing media bias. However, given the lack of interest in VR reform at high levels, how the results of this survey would be taken up by the authorities remains uncertain.

Source of funds used: AUL (International consultant and sub-grant to CSO), CIDA (international consultant and travel), UNDP Trac (IT equipment and workshop for MOI)

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OUTPUT 3: Enhanced electoral framework and processes

Output Indicators	Baseline (month/year)	Target (month/year)	Current status (month/year)
Revised legal framework	Inadequacies identified in the legal provisions governing the electoral process. (2006?)		Political will to reform the legal framework is absent. NEC presents itself as purely an implementer of electoral law. (Dec. 2009)
Consultations on needed electoral reforms between stakeholders and lawmakers			
Revised drafts for needed reforms produced (longer term outcome)			
Passage of revised legislation (longer term outcome)			
NEC's institutional independence			NEC membership is approved by National Assembly, which is under firm control of one party, CPP. No political will to reform the legal framework governing NEC
Consultations on reforms include discussion of developing the NEC as an independent institution			
Revised draft legislation includes the necessary provisions for the NEC to become			

an independent institution			means that no technical progress can be made. (Dec. 2009)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NEC becomes an independent institution (longer term outcome)			

The **recruitment process for an international Advocacy Advisor** commenced early in the year and continued throughout, suffering from a number of administrative delays. The Advocacy Advisor was meant to be responsible for working closely with the MOI, NEC and the EU Legal Advisor to advocate for improvement of electoral system, and also to take part in the work of the TWG on voter registration (yet to be formed – see previous output). In order to mitigate the adverse effects of recruitment delays, an interim Advocacy Advisor was hired on an SSA contract as a bridge position. It is worth noting that even at the end of 2009 the recruitment process was not finalized.

The lessons learnt from recent elections underscored a number of remaining inadequacies in the legal provisions governing various aspects of electoral processes. The EU/EC legal advisor lead efforts in this arena and produced detailed recommendations on **amendments to the LEMNA** critical for the improvement of future electoral processes. However, **progress towards this output is a real challenge** not only for SDEP but for all stakeholders involved. Despite the promising statements at all political levels, there was very little or no progress at technical levels. The absence of decision-making and engagement spirit within the national institutions clearly pointed towards the fact that unless higher level political green light is obtained, one could not expect any progress towards this output.

On the part of NEC, its approach on dealing with the electoral legal reform agenda became more and more narrowly defined during this reporting period. NEC's position stemmed from an operationally defined angle where **NEC presented itself as the implementer of LEMNA**, leaving all legal formalities and electoral reform issues with the MOI. This approach has de facto left no room for engagement with the NEC. Following the same argument, NEC did not participate in a national workshop on electoral reforms organized by NDI which was attended by the Secretary of State for the MOI.

In accordance with the current legal framework, NEC members are nominated by the MOI and approved by the National Assembly through the request of the Council of Ministers. Since the MOI, the Council of Ministers and the National Assembly are under CPP control based on the 2008 elections, the law itself limits the NEC's ability to function as an independent institution. Consequently, on one side NEC is limited in its ability to promote efforts on electoral legal reform, and on the other side there is no political will in the Legislative to promote similar efforts. Therefore, SDEP's ability to deliver under this output has been severely affected.

However, the project continues to **consider NEC's participation instrumental** in any discussions on electoral reform. NEC's participation ensures that the Executive and the Legislative are able to receive technical feedback from the most qualified institution. It is hoped that in the coming months constructive engagement with MOI would enable NEC to soften its position and lend its full support and participation in discussions on electoral reform issues.

Source of funds used: UNDP Trac (international consultant, SC salary, and UNV)

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OUTPUT 4: Strengthened democratic multi-party system

Output Indicators	Baseline (month/year)	Target (month/year)	Current status (month/year)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Increased capacity of political parties to engage constructively in electoral and political processes			Regular high-level political party & NEC dialogue meetings resumed. Political Parties Liaison Officer recruited. (Dec. 2009)
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Strengthened capacity of political parties to create an enabling environment for women's political leadership and			Initiated a research study on the democratic space available to women in decision making, to be

participation			undertaken in partnership with civil society organizations. (Dec. 2009)
■ Increased participation and voice for youth in political processes			KAP study into youth and civic participation commissioned, will provide a baseline on civic awareness and political participation among Cambodian youth. (Dec. 2009)

At the beginning of 2009, the UN Electoral Assistance Division (EAD) was asked to provide the name of experts who could undertake **a scoping study on political parties development work**. After a lengthy search, eventually a political party expert was identified and undertook a scoping exercise to define SDEP's intervention in the development of political parties and a multiparty democratic system in Cambodia.

The consultant reported that opposition parties were very eager for SDEP to promote activities that individually and collectively created space for an opposition voice to be heard. Such activities would also force the parties to craft and articulate clear policy platforms, which were generally considered poorly developed. In follow-up consultations all main political parties, including CPP, confirmed their interest in **resuming SDEP facilitated multi-party dialogue**, and the MOI was also willing to participate. Therefore, a high level political parties meeting was organized in December 2009, with participation from NEC, CPP, SRP, FUNCINPEC, Nationalist Party and HRP. Participants received an update on voter registration from NEC and were able to provide comments/suggestions and express their opinions in a shared forum. Following expressions of appreciation and continued interest from the participants, SDEP will continue to organize such high level party meetings into 2010, to maintain a forum in which multi-party dialogue can occur. The project recruited **an International UNV as Political Parties Liaison** who started his assignment in November 2009 to coordinate SDEP's engagement with political parties.

The political parties scoping mission also highlighted **the importance of effective coordination**, given the large number of international and national partners working in electoral reform in Cambodia. The report recommended that UNDP establish a coordination group with representatives from DDLG, LEAP, SDEP, NDI, IRI, the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, and CCO. The first of such coordination meeting took place in June 2009. 2nd meeting in September 2009.

Towards the end of 2009, SDEP initiated planning for **a qualitative research on the democratic space available to women in decision making**. As part of the planning and development phase, SDEP held consultative meetings with several organizations such as the Committee to Promote Women in Politics (CPWP), Cambodian Disabled People's Organization (CDPO), Neutral and Impartial Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (NICFEC) and COMFREL. The project will look for partnerships with one or two local partners to conduct this research, expected to begin in March 2010. The research results are expected to serve as a baseline for future activities supporting both women's leadership and the capacity of political parties to create an enabling environment for women's political leadership and participation.

Following another recommendation of the scoping mission, SDEP conducted consultations around the establishment of **provincial political party resource centres**. Discussions with various projects and organizations, such as LEAP and IRI, revealed that the potential was high for such centres to support predominantly the ruling party, and therefore this particular activity was put on hold.

Early in 2009, UNDP management requested that **SDEP act as a monitor for a UNDEF-funded project implemented by COMFREL** entitled **Strengthening Citizen Participation in Democratic Governance** (see also next output). This project included a Parliament Watch and forums to increase linkages between citizens at the grassroots and democratic governance at the national level. SDEP monitored these forums and delivered critical feedback to COMFREL. A National UNV Civil Society Liaison was recruited to work closely with COMFREL and ensure timely implementation and proper use of funds.

Four Voter Benchmark workshops were organized by COMFREL to make voters aware of the government's political platform and strategies and to prioritize the needs of constituents in their

areas. A total of 1,410 people (512 female) participated; four of these workshops were funded by UNDEF, with 349 participants (125 female). After the workshop, a short report detailing the benchmarks and the commitments made by government/political representatives was released to appropriate local/regional government officials and media, as well as posted on COMFREL's website. The report aimed to make regional and local officials aware of the needs of their constituents, to enable and encourage them to take action to address these needs, as well as to facilitate monitoring of elected officials.

COMFREL also conducted **Local Public Forums** at the commune level, to encourage interaction between locally elected officials (commune councils) and the citizens in their constituencies. During 2009, 20 forums were conducted which were funded by UNDEF, with 1316 people participating (557 female). The forums gave opportunities to local residents to meet with their commune councilors and gain more knowledge and benefits, such as more awareness on rights and obligation of people participating in local governance as well as roles of district and commune councils. Elected officials, especially commune chiefs, became more responsive and accountable, and more open to participate, when invited, in public forums in a bid to listen to and explain/resolve local residents' issues. After the forums, COMFREL selected 37 (13 female) local observers to follow up on the promises made by their commune councilors.

In Quarter 4 SDEP commissioned a **Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) study into Youth and Civic Participation in Cambodia** (see also next output). The KAP study covers civic awareness, attitudes towards and practices of political and social participation and participation in development initiatives, as well as media consumption trends and communication channels for young people. The results of the KAP study, due in April 2010, will also a comprehensive baseline against which to measure future gains in civic awareness and levels of participation in political processes among Cambodian youth.

Source of funds used: AUL (international consultant, SC salary, UNV and travel)

delivery exceeds plan delivery in line with plan delivery below plan

OUTPUT 5: Increased civic engagement, participation and interaction between government, civil society and citizens and a stronger democratic culture

Output Indicators	<i>Baseline (month/year)</i>	<i>Target (month/year)</i>	<i>Current status (month/year)</i>
■ Increased independence and balanced news reporting on current political affairs	3680 minutes (2008)	8360 minutes (2010)	48 Equity Weekly shows, of 45' each, each broadcasted 3 times a week (total 6480 min.) plus 3 climate shows of 25' each (total 75') for a total over 2009 of 6555' (Dec. 2009)
■ Continued production of Equity Weekly and its syndication			See above. Since the show is regarded as a flagship of TVK, its syndication is seen as a loss and so far has been discouraged.
■ Equity Weekly programme extended to radio			Not extended to radio. (Dec 2009)
■ Other products developed that broadened SDEP-relevant dialogue at the national and local levels			4 specific shows developed on climate change. Series of programmes on extractive industries to be funded by Oxfam America. University screening programme developed. (Dec. 2009)
■ Reporting networks developed for TV that enabled reports from local radio and TV stations to be aired on the regular news and within the Equity Weekly programming			See above. Since the show is regarded as a flagship of TVK, its syndication is seen as a loss and so far has been discouraged.
■ Improved enabling environment for independent news and investigatory journalism			Discussions of sensitive issues on EW opened the space for similar public discussions through other channels. (Dec 2009)

In the 2nd quarter a media consultant undertook a scoping mission on feasible areas of support on developing an enabling environment for independent media, media development, news broadcasting, legal/regulatory frame for media and the sustainability of Equity programming. **The media scoping study**, proposed that the project utilize its extensive experience of producing Equity programmes to conduct a long-term strategic mass media outreach strategy aimed directly at young Cambodian people aged 15 to 24 years. An international UNV was recruited and undertook a thorough research and consultations with broad range of media outlets, civil society organizations, and other stakeholders in developing a cooperation framework aimed at producing a weekly TV programme exclusively for Cambodian youth.

During quarters 3 and 4 the project made great progress towards the development of a long-term Youth Civic Education Multimedia Initiative. The project recognized the vital importance of engaging and educating Cambodian youth, especially given that the 2012 and 2013 Elections would engage the largest number of young voters since democratic elections began in 1993. Activities began with extensive consultations with civil society, donors, development partners, universities, UN agencies, political parties, youth organizations and media institutions. SDEP is currently making preparations to lead **a long term, cross UN Agency Youth Civic Education Multimedia Initiative** including UNICEF and UNESCO, aimed at making a significant contribution to enlarging the democratic space in Cambodia. The multimedia component will be contracted by SDEP to an outside media organization and involve several components including television, radio and internet. The content will cover governance issues in Cambodia and will include but not be limited to the role of elections; principles of representative democracy and democratic participation; the roles of Commune Councils and the National Assembly; and decentralization and deconcentration reforms. A Request for Proposals was advertised at the end of quarter 4 and the project expects to contract an organization to conduct the multimedia components in quarter 1, 2010.

Discussions for the arrangement of the **cross agency cooperation arrangement** made significant progress in quarter 4. SDEP will take full responsibility for contracting and coordinating the multimedia component – the centre piece of the initiative. Significant preparations were made in quarter 4 towards the establishment of a **Content Advisory Group (CAG)** to provide oversight, support and guidance to the outside media organization contracted to run the multimedia components. The CAG will offer an important channel for communication and coordination between organizations working in the areas of youth, civic education and media. It also represents another important step towards coordination and harmonization of UN agency activities, in this case between UNDP, UNICEF and UNESCO. The Terms of Reference for the CAG were finalized in December and the group is expected to meet for the first time in quarter 1 2010.

In order to ensure that any media outreach is effective in engaging a large section of Cambodian youth and addresses the most pressing issues in a way that is relevant and compelling, in Quarter 4 SDEP commissioned a **Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices (KAP) study into Youth and Civic Participation in Cambodia** (see also previous output). Aside from providing a baseline on youth civic awareness and participation, the results of the KAP study, due in April 2010, will allow UNDP and the successful multimedia contractor to design targeted media outreach that will provide engaging civic education content aimed directly at Cambodian youth.

Also in quarter 4 SDEP contracted the NGO Support Children and Young People (**SCY**) to conduct a **Pilot Youth Forum** Television Programme and accompanying Radio Programme. The programmes will address the topic of "Youth and Participation" and will bring approximately 200 young participants from around Cambodia to engage in a discussion with a panel of experts and other guests. The programme began pre-production and shooting of documentaries in quarter 4. Final shooting, post-production and airing are scheduled for quarter 1, 2010. The programme has provided SDEP with an excellent opportunity to begin its engagement with the emerging youth media sector, ahead of larger initiatives planned for 2010.

SDEP acted as a monitor for a UNDEF-funded project implemented by COMFREL (see also previous output). This project included a **Parliamentary Watch** component, under which COMFREL

conducted observations of National Assembly (NA) members' field visits and determined that 99 different members of the NA conducted field visit a total of 1,042 times. During 2009, COMFREL also prepared a directory of NA members by preparing personal profiles and conducting information quality controls. The Directory was finalized and released to the public at a press conference at the end of October 2009. COMFREL completed and distributed the Parliamentary Watch report on the 3rd NA session (2003-2008).

As part of its efforts to inform the Cambodian citizenry about issues of concern to Cambodian democracy, COMFREL produced **regular radio shows**. During the reporting period, COMFREL broadcasted the 60-minute radio program called "Voter Voice" **63 times** (live 44 times and rebroadcast 19 times). COMFREL also sought to inform the Cambodian public through the production and broadcast of a **TV informational spot**, to show the process whereby participation in commune-level governance could be used to address issues faced by Cambodian women and children. The spot was broadcast on TV9 three times and Apsara TV five times, for a total of eight times. The audio version of this TV spot about using participation in communes to promote women's and children's rights was broadcast four times on radio as well, as part of COMFREL's *Women Can Do It* radio show.

Equity Weekly continued to produce shows during 2009, covering issues of economic, social, political and environmental importance which were aired on TVK and also uploaded to YouTube to increase access to the programme. The last year of activity maintained the **high journalism standards** expected and the MOInf remained very supportive of the project and of the ethics behind it. An official Equity Bureau was established in the MOInf, reflecting recognition for the partnership and promoting the sustainability of Equity Weekly. UNDP and MOInf agreed on the terms of a Memorandum of Understanding, and at the end of the reporting period approval was pending from the UNDP legal office in New York.

48 original TV programmes (shows 71 to 119) were produced during 2009, including additional and special shows devoted to climate change and aired in synchronicity with events/activities of other UN agencies. Four journalists, 4 camerapersons and 4 editors increased their capacity to produce high-quality current affairs programme, following a strict code of conduct, and respecting balance, fairness and impartiality. The project continued to **improve the capacities of a team of 17 people from TVK** to engage in investigative journalism practices.

During the course of the last year, a number of media-related laws were adopted that placed burdens on journalists of the private sector. However, Equity Weekly continued to push the political discourse, and it has been noted that other media channels felt more confident talking about certain issues if these issues were discussed on Equity Weekly. New laws dealing with defamation had a negative effect on the freedom of speech of show guests. Following consultations with MOInf, a letter from the Council of Ministers was issued assuring Equity Weekly guests that they would not be prosecuted for views expressed on the show. The Equity initiative can therefore be said to have **improved an enabling environment for independent news and investigative journalism practices** in a unique way.

The project followed a series of national agenda issues on matters related to domestic violence and governance, and continued to assist opposition parties to get better and increased features in national media in balanced and fair ways. During the reporting period, there seems to have been an increasing correlation between topics airing on Equity Weekly, such as private ambulances, coral destruction and gambling, and **government policy shifts**. While it is impossible to be certain that Equity Weekly prompted those changes, it is certain that Equity Weekly tackled the current issues of the day, and therefore the Equity Weekly team began to carefully **track the impact of its shows**.

As the show came to be regarded as one of the main flagships of the national television, providing the show to other media channels was considered a potential loss by TVK and therefore **no progress was made in developing reporting networks** and news exchanges between Equity Weekly and other TV stations. Nevertheless, providing older shows of Equity remains a possibility and it is planned

that re-packaging of the shows will be pursued in 2010 to further progress on this issue.

Products were developed that **broadened SDEP-relevant dialogue** at the national and local levels. Four special shows were made on the topic of climate change, which were used in support of various campaigns on climate change policies. This led to interest from local development partners and helped to secure a larger pool of funding for the initiative. Contract negotiations between **Oxfam America and UNDP** concluded on a series of Oxfam-funded **programmes about the impact of the extractive industry** on social groups and environment in Cambodia. While the funding will come from Oxfam, the shows will be produced following the principles of fair and balanced journalism to which Equity Weekly adheres to. Similar discussions are underway with UNDP's Parliamentary support project (LEAP) so that LEAP could make use of Equity Weekly platform to increase the impact of its work with the Parliament.

Multimedia / Internet tools were also developed based on the shows produced, with over 700 clips uploaded for public access on youtube and on the Equity Weekly website. The website attracted a steady flow of readers and the clips proved highly popular among Cambodians abroad and local internet users. Press releases have also been widely used to target over 1500 email subscribers with weekly press release and announcements of the shows, thus keeping stakeholders in the development sector informed of show contents. Over 200 DVD copies per show were made and systematically delivered to stakeholders and other interested groups. For example, many students and learning organizations asked for show copies on a variety of themes, such as Bophana Centre, Panastra University, the Asean Television Network (part of the TVK network) and the Asean TV network website, the 'Gender' mobile cinema project, and the National School of Administration. The show was also used in events on human rights day, the climate change conference in early November 2009 and, recently, the anti-corruption conference organized by UNDP Information unit with other partners.

Based on the recommendations of the Media Consultant, the project looked into different avenues for expanding the audience of Equity Weekly, such as through mobile or itinerant screenings of past EW episodes. After a round of consultations, the initial proposal to take the show to rural audiences was abandoned, and a **University Screening Programme** was devised to take the programme to students, particularly outside Phnom Penh. Consultations with universities identified enthusiastic support for a pilot screening and discussion forum programme that would screen reedited past episodes to university students across Cambodia and engage them in discussions of the issues raised. This would provide a chance for a group not often exposed to balanced journalism to be able to develop media literacy skills and to engage in informed discussion about social and political issues relevant to Cambodian youth. Four universities were selected to conduct the pilot programme at 13 campuses across 8 provinces. A Cambodian University Screening Coordinator was hired by the project late in quarter 4 on an SSA contract, who would begin conducting screenings over a 10 week period in Quarter 1, 2010.

Sources of funds used: AUL (international consultant, SC salary, and UNV), CIDA (local consultant, travel, equipment, audiovisual production and miscellaneous), Irish Aid (sub-grantee to CSO, equipment, and audiovisual production), Oxfam-A (travel, local consultant, and workshop)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> delivery exceeds plan	<input type="checkbox"/> delivery in line with plan	<input type="checkbox"/> delivery below plan
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PROGRESS TOWARDS COUNTRY PROGRAMME (CPAP) OUTPUT

OUTPUT 1.1: Capacities of electoral stakeholders strengthened in democratic electoral processes

Output Indicators	Baseline (month/year)	Target (month/year)	Current status (month/year)
■ Cleaning of ID card database systems	N/A	N/A	N/A
■ No. of grass-root electoral stakeholders and NEC staff trained in election procedures and impartiality	0 (2006)	30,000 (2009) 40,000 (2009)	20,109 (02/2009)
■ Production hours of current affair programmes and election campaign news for national TV	0 (2006)	7.000 (2009) 7.000 (2010)	10,235 (12/2009)

At present there are no indications that responsible institutions have taken onboard any recommendations on electoral reform from various observation groups or stakeholders. Voter registration processes remain a critical weakness of the electoral process, including the reform of the electoral disputes resolution framework and accompanying adjudication processes. The LEMNA and its implementing regulations remain unnecessarily complex. Notably, the Regulations establishing separate procedures for complaints relating to voter registration, the preliminary voting list, party and candidate registration, the electoral campaign, polling and counting, the posting of provisional results, and the commission of electoral offenses specified in Chapter 11 of the LEMNA. The fact that the specific processes are similar, but not identical, has created internal inconsistencies within the Regulations and confusion among electoral officials.

There is increased interaction between government institutions, notably MOI and civil society organizations. The MOI supported a very useful survey identifying problem faced by the Cambodian voters during the 2008 National Assembly elections. SDEP's Equity Weekly continued to play a role in creating a more inclusive and balanced media environment. However, there were also some setbacks which overshadowed the seemingly positive looking civic engagement environment. Legal developments during the year dampened interaction between civil society organizations and government, following a number of cases "won" by the government claiming misinformation as the reason for suing various individuals and publishers.

PROGRESS TOWARDS COUNTRY PROGRAMME (CPAP) OUTCOME

OUTCOME 1: Legislature and civil society are able to improve checks and balances of the executive branch

Outcome Indicators	Baseline (month/year)	Target (month/year)	Current status (month/year)
■ Voter registration system jointly accepted by Government, Development Partners and civil society	Controversial voter registration system	Assessments by UNDP concluded	UNDP recommendation being studied by the government

Capacity Development

UNDP staff members all received UNDP trainings and were provided with additional education opportunities: English classes, communication, result based management and PR.

Equity Weekly continued to be a training ground for fair and balanced journalism. Quarter 4 saw the arrival of a new female journalist who received on the job training and support. This training is no longer led by UNDP experts, but also by TVK journalists who had previously received training from UNDP advisors, demonstrating their increased capabilities. Three members of the UNDP

Equity staff undertook communications and media training where they learnt about reporting, finding sources and communications techniques.

A large amount of time was devoted to providing daily support to journalists, editors and cameramen. This **on-the-job training** provided a unique opportunity **for the staff of TVK** to be able to practice and experience fair and balanced reporting techniques. The building of analytical skills among all team members remained a main challenge. Staff turn-over is a key issue: we have had to replace one journalist; the replacement also did not stay and forced us to recruit a third person as replacement. The latter is a motivated young woman whose production capacity has steadily improved over the last 6 months.

While acting as a monitor for the project implemented by **COMFREL**, SDEP monitored the community forums and delivered critical feedback to COMFREL requesting improvement in implementation where required. Extensive feedback was also provided on reporting and evaluation, in an effort to promote sustainable improvements in the work of this civil society organization. Similar efforts at promoting capacity development of civil society are being undertaken as part of the **partnership between SDEP and SCY** on producing television and radio programmes.

Three interns from International University of Japan were provided the opportunity to do their three-month internship with the project to gain the practical knowledge and experience for their future careers.

Gender

The project recruited a female national staff as Civil Society Liaison, and for the short-term SSA position of Equity Weekly Screening Coordinator. However, the project staff continued to have unequal representation of men and women, partly due to difficulties in finding qualified and experienced female candidates for the positions advertised.

Three women are also part of Equity Weekly production: two journalists (out of 4) and one editor (out of 4). A problem faced is the difficulty to identify camera-women, as this job does not seem to be attractive to women. Despite this imbalance (only 4 out of 17 staffs are women), the show maintains a gender balance on air with 2 out of 4 journalists and 1 out of 2 hosts being women, and is looking to identify other potential team members and interns to help redress gender inequity. Equity Weekly show is facilitated on a weekly basis by a female host: Noun Thouk. She is one of the most credible and recognised female hosts in the Cambodian audio-visual landscape today.

Lessons learned

The long term **engagement of NEC** by the SDEP project did not result in any progress. As detailed throughout the discussions under outputs above, the lack of institutional independence and the particular political climate in which NEC operates meant that no technical progress on any form of electoral reform could be made in the absence of political will. Since no changes are foreseen during the coming year, this important lesson learned has been incorporated in the 2010 SDEP annual work plan, which has been adjusted accordingly.

During 2009, SDEP acted as **monitor for the UNDEF funded project** implemented by COMFREL. However, SDEP was not involved in the preparation phase normally part of project planning, which placed severe constraints on the ability of the project team to monitor the activities of its national partner. Thus, an important lesson learned is that the project who is supposed to take on

responsibility should be on board from the preparation phase, to ensure that adequate mechanisms will be put in place to facilitate the work.

The **success of the Equity Weekly** show had both positive and negative repercussions. On a positive level, it gives all team members a needed feeling that the show is highly visible, it is a good morale booster and also gives recognition of the work: all team members know the importance of their work and strive to that end to do a better job.

On the negative side is the pressure felt by staff when covering sensitive issues, knowing that the information will be seen at the highest levels. This can be intimidating and pushes the staff to be more careful about the information they gather and the balance they provide in coverage. In addition, care must be taken that **internal complaints and criticism** are not an issue of individual self-censorship. The project management has worked to ensure the MOInf would be supportive and deal such threats to independence. This raises many sensitive issues that need to be considered, for example to what extent should the Ministry be asked to intervene in the show's favour and would some NGOs feel that the show is not independent if they receive letters from the Ministry to assure them of the show's integrity. The stance taken by the project is to continue to use transparency at all levels.

Out of the last series of shows produced this year, a marked difference is noted in the quality of the show based on **the performance level of the guests in studio**. This is difficult to control as the quality of the guests may not always be judged in advance. However, over time key speakers have been identified who excel in providing a good judgement and information on the issues discussed.

IT can help tremendously to achieve a better reach and coverage. For example, some people follow the Equity Weekly show only through press and web-releases. Many new audiences have been reached abroad (Australia and USA) and the website is now receiving hundreds of hits rapidly after each clip is tagged and uploaded.

There is a **need for more flexibility in supporting production** of a TV show that does not follow the same needs and speed of execution as UNDP. In many ways, the production team has adapted to the UN system requirements successfully – still some points remain difficult to handle due to the urgency of the needs on a daily basis. This was experienced recently with the use of a new transport system (car pooling), which has slowed down the production and made it harder for teams to operate with the level of flexibility and speed required of a TV show.

III. Project implementation challenges

a. Updated project risks and actions

Project risks and proposed actions

Project Risk 1:

Progress towards project Output 3 concerned with the revised legal framework and NEC's independence is dependent upon the acceptance of necessary reforms by higher political levels without which technical levels, both national and international, are unable to move any further. The 2008 National Assembly election was peaceful but also highlighted a number of issues, as underlined by many observers groups, including the need for changes to the legal framework ensuring NEC's institutional independence and complexities of voter registration requiring improved and secure processes. So far, despite many meetings and consultations national technical officials are not prepared to make necessary moves without political green light.

Actions taken/suggested:

It has become necessary for senior international development partners to take this issue to the highest political level for an acceptance which would allow technical levels to move forward. To this extent, a joint letter signed by the Head of EC Delegation and UNDP Country Director was sent to the MOI explaining the necessity of moving forward on electoral reforms and requesting a meeting with the Deputy Prime Minister. After a long period of no response, a meeting was organized by the MOI but cancelled at the last minute without explanation.

Project Risk 2:

The Equity Weekly programme must broaden its programming to cover more substantive and in-depth and controversial issues which encourage a real public debate. There is a possibility that TVK and the MOInf directly or indirectly may discourage Equity Weekly journalists, editors and production staff to tackle these issues.

Actions taken/suggested:

Project staff, based at the TVK and MOInf, continued dialogue with the Ministry and the TVK officials to work together and create a fair and balanced news programme.

Project Risk 3:

Cambodia's media environment has become subject to more legal threats. A series of defamation and disinformation cases were brought against members of the media. This could reduce the scope for independent media current affairs production.

Actions taken/suggested:

The show is a current affairs show, which provides the editorial team more choices for coverage of issues. It means there is more time to produce and follow issues and to pick stories that bring the issues to the fore while remaining balanced and fair. The code of ethics must be strictly adhered to by all members of the team to avoid risks of collusion, bias, misinformation and other potentially harmful errors. Further to this, the new MOU has asked of the MOInf that the government not take legal action against the program and its guests if such a case occur. Particular care is also being taken by the senior journalists and content editors when there is a potentially sensitive issue. There have been no instances of topics being dropped because of such considerations so far.

Project issues and proposed actions

Project Issue 1:

It is important that MOI, SDEP and its partners start a dialogue on how to resolve the issue of data protection and move forward with support to enable the cleaning of National ID card database. Absence of any action will only result in national partner, i.e. MOI, being deprived of necessary support and inability of linking ID card with the voter register. (Technical/political risk)

Actions taken/suggested:

Efforts were made to bring a joint mission of EU-UNDP experts to review the political and technical aspects and propose a mutually acceptable and feasible solution. After several delays in the deployment of the Joint Taskforce, a Voter Registration System technical assessment mission (TAM) was conducted instead in December 2009 and the recommendations presented to all stakeholders. Further action will be taken on this issue in 2010.

Project Issue 2:

The TAM's recommendations for VR system reform encompass a large number of crucial technical, administrative, operational and legal actions. This leaves less than two years to complete all required elements of reform, to which added are the funding needs that will require rapid donor engagement, thus making the reform's timeline extremely vulnerable to possible challenges. It is therefore of paramount importance that decisions over the reform's features are taken in due time before the 2011 VR exercise.

It has also to be underlined that a new and independent voter registration exercise, ran and managed by the NEC, could clash with MOI's parallel engagement with "competing" ID/civil registry activities. Without MOI's formal and timely commitment to the reform process the likelihood of failure is deemed very high. Without the political will for a systematic and effective reform process, the risk of supporting isolated and "cosmetic" changes in the overall electoral process is very high together with the associated risk of legitimizing the current regime.

Actions taken/suggested:

The TAM's report has been shared with relevant stakeholders. More feedback is expected, but the initial comments received from the ruling party do not leave much hope for significant transformations. The CPP has made it clear that it would not be supporting major changes in the electoral process such as VR reform. SDEP continued ongoing risk analyses and close coordination with CO and partners/stakeholders. Negotiation space with both the NEC and the MOI has been preserved to support the longer term democratization efforts and the wider project's activities.

Project Issue 3:

As identified in the media scoping exercise, Equity Weekly's audience base is very narrow; hence Equity Weekly risks losing its impact and audiences if new ways of attractive marketing are not explored (Technical/political risk).

Actions taken/suggested:

MOI and TVK are being encouraged to diversify Equity Weekly broadcasting by approaching private media establishments. This approach may require modifying current Equity weekly format to suit the needs of private channels. In addition, SDEP has designed a University Screening Programme to take the show to university audiences outside Phnom Penh.

Project Issue 4:

The Equity Weekly show is bound to a weekly broadcast deadline. Considering the high speed and pace of production, few of the staff have opportunities to rest. There is also a tendency from TVK to use the staff for its own needs so the staff have to work twice as hard to meet deadlines during holiday periods and national events. There is a lack of clarity about working hours and expected time of rest in the TVK-UNDP agreements. In addition, expansion and better positioning of the Equity Weekly program have been affected by lack of staff resources.

Actions taken/suggested:

It is suggested that special care be taken to make an official arrangement for the staff to take time off. Recent decisions to hire service staff to help in the website tasks will be helpful, along with the added support of the newly hired Chief Editor. With this it is hoped that the website will shortly be updated to its full capacity and that new activities to help sustain and develop the initiative can be established.

Project Issue 5:

The issue of retaining copyright in contracts with partners arose twice in 2009, in both cases with the BBC World Service Trust.

Actions taken/suggested:

In the first case the Trust was ranked highest in the evaluation of proposals to conduct the Youth Debate/Forum programme. During contract negotiations however, it emerged that strong institutional policies to retain copyright and intellectual property rights on content produced made a compromise position difficult. A decision was taken by UNDP senior management to award the contract instead to the second ranked organisation, for which copyright would not be an issue.

In the second case the Trust came out again as the highest ranked organisation for proposals to conduct the KAP Study into Youth and Civic Participation in Cambodia. Given the strong credentials of the organization and importance of commissioning the highest quality research on which to base future activities, UNDP senior management entered into negotiations with the Trust and came up with a revision to the General Conditions of Contract to allow shared copyright.

Project Issue 6:

Recruitment of SDEP key positions is still on-going at the end of 2009, and this process has slowed the implementation of the 2009 annual workplan. The recruitment of the three Component Specialists, meant to carry out the bulk of the substantive work, was slowed due to a lack of qualified applicants, forcing a re-advertisement of the positions. The presence of Advocacy Advisor was critical with regard to the progress towards Outputs 2 and 3, i.e. voter registration and electoral reforms. In addition, the project could not find a Media Component Officer under the service contract modality which was advertised three times in February, May and July 2009.

Actions taken:

Concerted efforts are being made to expedite recruitment processes where possible and in the interim, the Project Assistants dedicated to these areas have been designated as focal points. After discussions with the UNDP senior management, a consultant was engaged to provide bridging services pending conclusion of the recruitment of Advocacy Advisor. In response to the need for a Media Component Officer, the project looked for a national UNV as the alternative solution.

Project Issue 7:

For every staff recruitment undertaken, the project always considered promoting gender equality, however, the number of women applicants remained lower than that of men.

Actions taken/suggested:

For the female candidates who mostly met the job requirements, the project gave them every opportunity to make an effort at the next step.

Project Issue 8:

SDEP was designated as monitoring agency for COMFREL; however, SDEP was not able to provide any substantive feedback or have much influence towards improving COMFREL's project because of the way the monitoring was set up even before SDEP was designated. Namely, activities monitoring and budget monitoring were assigned to two different offices (SDEP and Country Office, respectively), and provision of funds from UNDEF to COMFREL from each quarter to the next was not dependent on the monitoring results.

Actions taken/suggested:

SDEP did not accept a similarly set up project by COMFREL, where SDEP was proposed to be the executing agency again, since the setup would have caused the same problems identified above. The submission process also mirrored the problems of the previous one, where SDEP was assigned the monitoring role without being consulted during the project development phase.

IV. Financial status and utilization

Table 1: Overall contributions [01 January 2009 – 31 December 2009]

DONOR	CONTRIBUTIONS		TRANSFER TO SNEA PROJECT (60217)	TRANSFER from SNEA PROJECT (60217)	RECEIVED FUND BALANCE
	Committed	Received (Equivalent in US\$)			
UNDP	US\$ 3,431,966.00	US\$32,431,966.00	-	-	US\$ 3,431,966.00
Australia/AusAID	AU\$ 3,000,000.00	US\$ 2,286,847.00	US\$ 69,889.00	US\$54,547.00	US\$ 2,271,505.00
Canada/CIDA	CA\$ 3,000,000.00	US\$ 2,653,544.00	US\$ 153,839.00	US\$41,291.00	US\$ 2,540,996.00
Sweden/SIDA	SEK 6,000,000.00	US\$ 860,832.00	US\$ 101,545.00	-	US\$ 759,287.00
DGTTF	US\$ 105,000.00	US\$ 105,000.00	-	-	US\$ 105,000.00
Ireland/Irish Aid	EUR 200,000.00	US\$ 269,541.00	-	-	US\$ 269,541.00
OxFam	US\$ 141,000.00	US\$ 140,788.00	-	-	US\$ 140,788.00
TOTAL		US\$8,607,730.00	US\$ 325,273.00	US\$95,838.00	US\$9,519,083.00

Table 2: Overall Expenditures [01 January 2006 – 31 December 2009]

YEAR	EXPENDITURE
2006	US\$ 796,723.00
2007	US\$ 2,959,150.00
2008	US\$ 2,585,259.00
2009	US\$ 878,907.00
TOTAL	US\$ 7,220,039.00

a) Remaining balance of received fund: US\$ 2,299,044.00
 i.e. Received funds: US\$ 9,519,083.00 - Expenditure: US\$7,220,039.00

1. Planned Expenditures (2009) : US\$1,489,541.00 (budget revision G20)
2. Actual expense 2009 : US\$ 878,907.00 (CDR)
3. Balance : US\$610,634.00

Funding available for year 2010 : US\$ 2,299,044.00
 i.e. Balance in year 2009: USD\$610,634.00+UNDP-Trac fund for year 2010: USD\$ 945,970.00+CIDA for year 2010: USD\$742,440.00)