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# Improving Public Services through Social Accountability

## ISAF

Implementation of the Social  
Accountability Framework

Highlight Report

## Project Brief



Budget **2.5M Euros**  
(about 2.8M US dollars)



December 2018  
to March 2021



**Donors:**  
The European Union  
and World Vision International  
Germany



**Implementing Partner:**  
Wathnakpheap

## Project Objective

Strengthen and expand the demand side of social accountability in the sub-national democratic development reform process to improve public service delivery in Cambodia, specifically in primary schools, health centers and commune administrations.

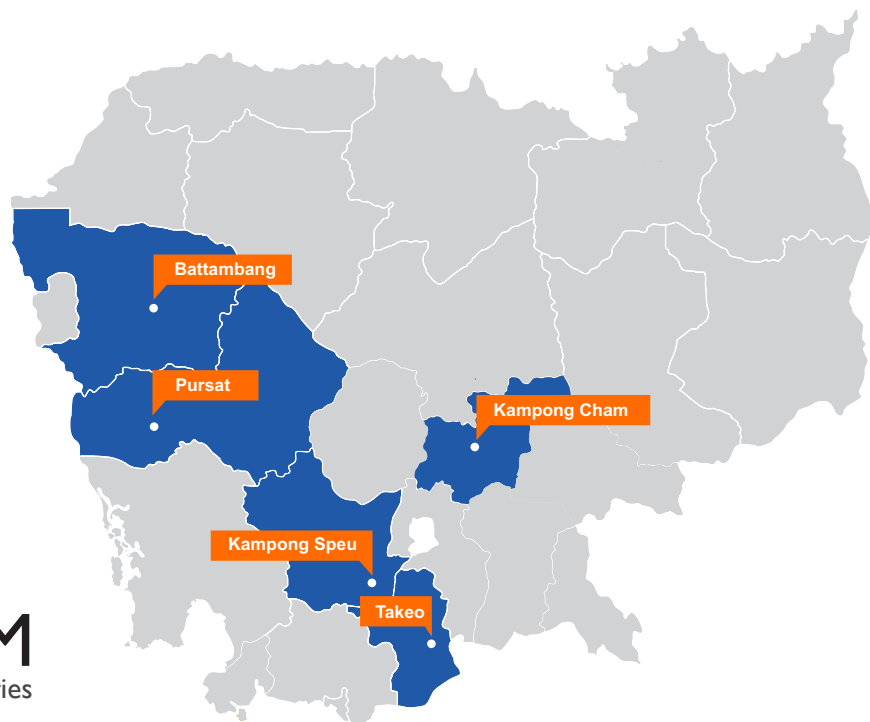
Through this project, more than **300,000 citizens** took part in information sessions and local dialogues to improve the quality of essential services (primary schools, health centres and commune administrations) used by **more than 2.8 million people**.

## Project Location

 **30**  
districts

 **292**  
communes

 **2.8M**  
beneficiaries



**569**  
primary schools



**225**  
health centers

# What is ISAF?

The Implementation of the Social Accountability Framework (ISAF) in Cambodia aims to improve local service delivery through enhanced accountability of service providers and local authorities. Through ISAF, citizens are informed about the services they are entitled to receive, they assess the quality of these services and provide feedback while dialogues with sub-national authorities are fostered and joint actions to address issues are identified and implemented. ISAF originated from the National Programme for Sub-National Democratic Development (SNDD) of the Ministry of Interior (MoI) in Cambodia. Under the leadership of the Royal Government of Cambodia, donors, international organizations and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) joined forces behind this project. World Vision (WV) participated in the design of ISAF in 2014 and was one of the first CSOs to pilot it in six districts in 2015.

## How does ISAF work?

**The ISAF process includes four steps implemented during an annual cycle:**



# The detailed annual cycle of ISAF

## JOINT ACCOUNTABILITY ACTION PLANS (JAAPs)

The JAAPs are disseminated and integrated into the Commune and Sangkat Investment Programs. They are presented at the Municipality/District/Khan Integration Workshops and during the consultation on the 3-year rolling program at province and national levels.

## MONITORING & EVALUATION

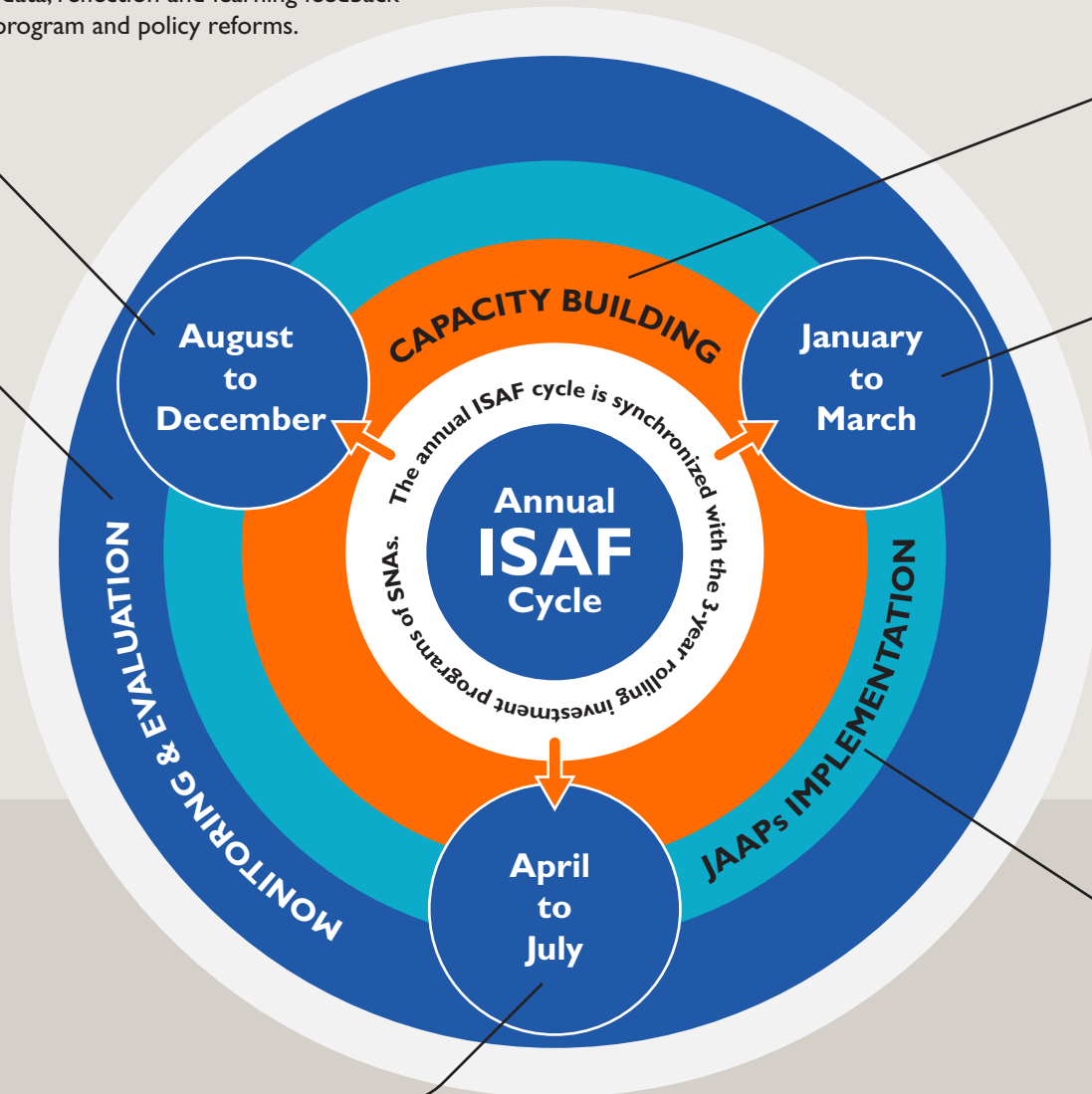
M&E data, reflection and learning feedback into program and policy reforms.

## CAPACITY BUILDING

ISAF activities are supported by on-going training and technical coaching.

## TRANSPARENCY AND ACCESS TO INFORMATION AND BUDGET

Preparation and dissemination to the ISAF posters. Conduct public awareness-raising on quality standards and budget.



## CITIZEN MONITORING

Prepare and conduct the community scorecard and interface meetings. Develop the JAAPs and establish the JAAP Committees.

## JAAPs IMPLEMENTATION

The implementation of the JAAPs is supported, monitored and reported on an on-going basis through the year.



The Community Accountability Facilitators (CAFs) lead the process at the local level. 1431 CAFs (774 women) were recruited for this project and trained on the ISAF process and facilitation of community dialogues. They then engaged local authorities to secure their support for the ISAF process before leading all activities on this ground. Almost 90% of them had been certified<sup>1</sup> by the end of the project.

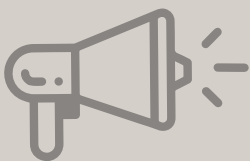
## Achievements

### Participation of citizens

**More than 300,000 citizens** took part in information sessions or in the monitoring of the quality of local services.

Step of the ISAF Cycle	Number of citizens involved
Transparency and Access to Information and Budget	189,816
Citizen Monitoring	118,551
<b>Total</b>	<b>308,367</b>

### Information and empowerment of citizens



**More than 7,000** information sessions at the village level about the right of citizens were organized.

Over the past two years, the project organized more than 7,000 information sessions at the village level about the right of citizens, local budgets and the quality standards that local services are supposed to meet. Around 190,000 citizens (67% of which women) took part in these meetings.

Our monitoring data shows that more than 80% of the participants had a better understanding of their rights following the meetings<sup>2</sup>.

The project has a strong focus on the inclusion of all citizens at the local level. 23% of the citizens participating belonged to vulnerable families and 16% were Equity Cardholders (IDPoor). Through the project, children also took part in the monitoring of the quality of the services provided by their schools.

<sup>1</sup> To be certified, CAFs must complete 3 training and facilitate at least one activity for each step of the ISAF cycle.

<sup>2</sup> Among 6,299 respondents who were interviewed immediately after the information sessions.

## Increased accountability and improved quality of services



**71%** of all the actions adopted in the actions plans have been implemented.

By March 2021, 71% of all the actions adopted in these plans had already been implemented. Public funding had also been allocated to support the implementation of more than half of the actions suggested by citizens<sup>3</sup>.

By the end of the project, citizens agreed that the performance and quality of services offered by almost half of the schools, health centers and communes covered by this project had improved because of the implementation of these actions.

## Sustainability



In 2021, local authorities committed **\$82,000** to continue the implementation of the project beyond the funding from the donor.



- 87 communes committed **98 million Riel (\$24,580)**
- 23 districts committed **89 million Riel (\$22,192)**
- Takeo, Kampong Cham, and Battambang provinces **140 million Riel (\$35,142)**

The allocation of this funding to sustain ISAF beyond the project shows that local authorities, at all levels, see the added value of social accountability to improve the quality of public services and are dedicated to continuing to support it even if it requires to allocate local public funding.



<sup>3</sup> Overall, 23% of actions from the action plans were raised by citizens, 39% were raised by the supply-side and 34% were raised by both sides. Due to some M&E issues, it was not possible to identify the side who suggested 4% of the actions.

# Our Partners



## Building the next generation of local leaders



Bopha is, a 23-years-old fresh graduate, from Prey Sloek Commune, Treang district, Takeo province. She used to be a quiet and shy woman until she was encouraged to apply to become a Community Accountability Facilitator (CAF) as part of WVI's ISAF project.

At first, her limited English and her young age made her doubt herself. "As a younger generation, I was scared to speak to the service providers since almost all of them are older than me and I believed they would not take me seriously," said Bopha.

But Bopha is not that kind of person who gives up easily. Through her hard work, passion and good relationship with local service providers, she soon became one of the best CAFs in her district. And soon afterward her good work started to pay off. More people started to join the public meetings and citizens showed a better understanding of their rights when going to the local school, health center as well as commune hall.

"The barriers between service providers and citizens have been reduced and I am proud to have contributed to this positive change. Without this project, I don't think service providers and citizens would have ever been able to have a constructive dialogue to improve public services", said Bopha.

Soon her good work and results led to her receive a promotion as Project Assistant based in Takeo. "ISAF not only allowed me to improve services in my commune, but it also allowed me to grow personally and I could not have imagined where I would be today without joining the project," she said. "Seeing the change it brought to my commune and to my life, I don't want the project to stop here and I will do my best so ISAF is implemented in the whole province as well as in the entire country," said Bopha.



## Sustainability through the allocation of local funding is the best indicator of success



Mr. Koh Seng Hav, is the leader of Chheu Teal, a commune located in the Banan District in the Battambang province where ISAF has been implemented since 2016. “At first, I thought social accountability is an NGO project focusing on criticizing and putting pressure on service providers. But after participating in the ISAF trainings and meetings, I realized how important this work is.” Mr. Koh Seng Hav said.

“Through this project, citizens and service providers have improved their knowledge on their rights and on the national quality standards and it has led to real improvements of the quality of the public services in the commune” he added.

Mrs. Phim Sokha, Community Accountability Facilitator (CAF) based in Chheu Teal Commune confirms this progress. “Before ISAF, Citizens did not try to access public services themselves; they always relied on the village leaders for the ability to access the services. After implementing ISAF, citizens have a much better understanding of their rights and they are now more confident when they need to go to the health center or commune hall”.

Building on these good results, the commune council started in 2019 to support financially implementation of ISAF. For 2021, this support raised to 2 million Riels (around 500\$ or around 25% of the cost of ISAF activities in the commune). “We are seeing more and more communes allocating funding to support ISAF activities, and for us this is the best indicator of success. It really shows that local authorities and service providers recognize the need to continue the dialogue with citizens and this is how the sustainability of the project will be achieved” said Sotharith Ry, ISAF Programme Manager at World Vision.

## Accountability is sometimes as simple as clean toilets



“Before ISAF, the health center, and especially the toilets, were not clean. There were not enough staffs and resources to take care of them” regrets Mr. Leang Sokhy, health center chief in Trapeang Preah Commune in Kampong Cham. This point kept coming back in the assessment of the citizens and, after a constructive dialogue, the health center agreed that the issue needed to be fixed. From the end of 2019, it started to allocate 100\$ a month to hire a janitor.

Mrs. Chave Saret, a community accountability facilitator in the commune confirms that the impact was immediate. “The health center is now very clean and it has made a big difference for the citizens of the commune. They keep mentioning this achievement to me when I visit them and that really convinces them to use the service of the health center when they need it”.



### វិធីកាត់បន្ថយហានិភ័យពីការឆ្លង ជំងឺកូវីដ១៩

**1** លាងដៃម្ដងៗដោយប្រើទឹកស្អុយ និងម៉ិចតូភូត មុនការប្រកបរបរ និងមុនការចូលទៅក្នុងផ្ទះ

**2** ជៀសវាងតំបន់ដែលមានអ្នកម្នាប្រកបរបរក្នុងមួយកន្លែង

**3** ជៀសវាងតំបន់ដែលមានអ្នកម្នាប្រកបរបរក្នុងមួយកន្លែង

**4** បិទចោលអាហារដែលនៅសេសសល់

**5** ស្ថានភាពជម្ងឺរាងកាយដាច់ស្រយាល

*(Logos of WHO and other partners)*

### ព័ត៌មានសម្រាប់ប្រជាពលរដ្ឋ ស្តង់ដារសុខភាព

#### តើអ្នកដឹងអ្វីខ្លះអំពីសុខភាពសុខភាព?

**សុខភាពសុខភាព** គឺជាស្ថានភាពដែលអ្នកមានសុខភាពល្អ ទាំងរាងកាយ ចិត្ត ជាមួយនឹងគ្រួសារ និងសង្គម។

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*(Logos of WHO, UNICEF, EU, World Vision)*



World Vision International participated in the design of ISAF in 2014 and was one of the first Civil Society Organisation to pilot it in six districts in 2015.

In 2020, through two different projects (including the one described in this document), World Vision supported ISAF in 767 communes and sangkats in 89 districts and municipalities in 15 provinces and Phnom Penh, contributing to improve the public services used by over 7,000,000 beneficiaries.

World Vision is a Christian relief, development and advocacy organisation dedicated to working with children, families and communities to overcome poverty and injustice. World Vision serves all people, regardless of religion, race, ethnicity or gender.

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