

Development Starting from Local Community: *Through Social Accountability Practice*

By Ms. Sotheavy Srey, the Executive Director of ACT

The Alliance for Conflict Transformation Organisation (ACT) is a local organisation partnered with CARE Implementing Social Accountability program since 2016 in Mondul Kiri – a northeast province of Cambodia and fund by BfdW, Danmission, and EWMI-USAID on Media for Peace project and Community Peacebuilding project that work more on community conflict resolution, intervention, conflict transformation, Do No Harm, and Peace Education. ACT believes on strengthening capacities of communities based on participatory learning of the community issues, identifying possible actions transforming community to achieve sustainable development, justice and peace.

Miss. Srey Sotheavy, presently is the Executive Director of ACT. Within this last two decade, she actively advocates for good governance and peacebuilding. Sotheavy believes that CSO significant contribute to sustainable natural resource management and development. She urges civil society to invest in local human resource development at local level that will be a long-term impact for communities. She strongly believe that good governance with effective and equitable institutions to enforce the rights of all stakeholders and ensure coordination will significantly solve the sustainable natural resource management which was the key issue in the northeast community where major ethnic minority community livelihood depend on the natural resources.

Sotheavy articulates from her experiences that the Implementation of Social Accountability Framework (ISAF) considerably contributed to the sustainable natural resource management in the northeast community. Although, the current contribution was in moderate level because high demand from citizens while limitation responses action from the supply-side. As the local authorities shown commitment to address community demands, still the solution that required intervention from higher government administrative including district and provincial level or upper class (district was not included in the social accountability framework and planning to include by the end of 2023).



A photo of Sotheavy and local authority planting mangrove tree at Kampot province. ©ACT

She shared her impression from the work with community:

We applied the social accountability process in our work with community members empower them to be able to report and engage to work on their issues such as forestry and land titling issues.

I observed that there was the inter-connection between social accountability with other projects to deal with communities issues. There is the strong engagement between social accountability projects with the same stakeholders and community change agents to solve the issue of the community included land and forestry issue.

I agreed that there was a strong connection between good governance and natural resource management. However, there was lack of obligation for local authorities. The local government feel that this not direct to address land and forestry issues in the project ISAF. Local authorities critically concerned when citizen was raised and included the issue on NRM in the community scorecard and community joint planning is out of the ISAF standard and scope. The local government lack of authority to solve because the first phase of social accountability (2015-2018) focused only issue at schools, commune administrative, health centre services.

I acknowledged that Citizens and Community Accountability Facilitators (CAF) who are commune volunteers are empowered to raise the issues they faced in the community. They are actively participating to provide feedback and raise the problems to find the response solution. On the other hand, the resolution to the community issues are required the intervention from the upper level such as district, provincial, and national, which it was not included in current social accountability framework in Cambodia.

I witness multiplying of impact through human resource development at those who get involved in the ISAF process. The project participants who was selected providing learning opportunity, they facilitated the local accountability process including community scorecard and joint planning. They gained better confidence to work for the community. The knowledge they have from social accountability enable them to be an active citizen who can engage community to advocate and mobilize resources to solve the common issue of the community. Community Accountability Facilitators who are the community volunteers will be a good human capital and potential to be decision makers for their community in the future. Qualified CAFs who completed the social accountability trainings have a great chance to be member of the village authorities, or commune councils or district officials in the future as there were some case already happened. They will be a better person who active and care about the community and capable to engage community.

Last but not least, Sotheavy strongly recommended and requested participation from CSOs and development partners invest more to cultivate the better young generation who care about the community and sustainable natural resource management.

Next step for CSO, she think that the NGOs have to continue the advocacy to expand the ISAF framework in other thematic areas including key issues in the community such as land titling, forestry, livelihood, and wildlife conservation as well as overall sustainable natural resource management.



A photo of Sotheavy joining with Indigenous celebration at KampongSpeu province. ©ACT