

TI IPP STRONGG IN CAMBODIA

Ready to Engage Project

Transparency International Cambodia (TI Cambodia) has celebrated its 10th year anniversary in 2020 and is part of the Transparency International global coalition against corruption that brings together chapters operating in more than 100 countries worldwide with an international Secretariat based in Berlin, working towards a shared vision: a world free of corruption.

With support from the *TI Indo-Pacific Partnership for Strong, Transparent, Responsive & Open Networks for Good Governance (TI IPP STRONGG) 2020 – 2023*, TI Cambodia is increasing awareness of anti-corruption among diverse groups across the country, enhancing social demand for accountable governance by citizens, and improving the national anti-corruption legal framework. Building on existing networks that reached over the last four years approximately 25,000 citizens, the *Ready to Engage Project (REP)* intends to further expand its outreach and engage various anti-corruption actors and citizens, particularly women and youth, to increase awareness and empower their participation in anti-corruption.

Project At A Glance

- Topics of focus:
Citizen engagement through social accountability mechanisms & Improved anti-corruption frameworks
- Project timeframe:
1 June 2020 – 31 August 2023
- Locations & project outreach:
Across the country, both in urban and rural areas.
- Budget: 150,000 EUR

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Advocacy and Legal Advice Centre (ALAC)

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Report Corruption!

Free Call ឥតគិតថ្លៃ
1292 (ប្រព័ន្ធ Cellcard)
7777 (ប្រព័ន្ធ Smart)

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Advertisement for TI Cambodia's ALAC services

BACKGROUND

In Cambodia, corruption remains a critical issue. Over the last five years, Cambodia scored very low in [Transparency International's Corruption Perceptions Index \(CPI\)](#), dropping from 21 to 20 points in 2018 and placing the country at the rank 162 (out of 180) in the 2019 Index. However, results from [Transparency International's Global Corruption Barometer – Asia 2020 \(GCB\)](#) indicate some positive recent developments regarding anti-corruption. More than half of Cambodians think that corruption levels have decreased in the 12 months prior to the survey, and 7 out of 10 people believe that they can make a difference in the fight against corruption. Nevertheless, the bribery rate remains a concern, with 37% surveyed people saying that they had to pay a bribe to access a public service over the same period.



Youth-led initiative in Steong Treng province

© Picture: Transparency International Cambodia

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Objectives

1. Increase anti-corruption awareness among diverse groups, particularly women and youth, and their engagement in demanding more accountable governance.
2. Strengthen anti-corruption legislation in Cambodia.
3. Increase public awareness of beneficial ownership and demand for transparency.

TI Cambodia's response to the COVID crisis

TI Cambodia's outreach under this project includes social media campaigns conducted to raise people's knowledge related to COVID-19, and activities on COVID-19 related governance issues conducted for youth and targeted communities.

Main Activities

Activities under this project include:

- Strengthening TI Cambodia's youth networks across the country to further expand its outreach and **engage various anti-corruption actors, particularly women and youth**. Tools and platforms will be developed and used for initiatives to reduce corruption and build **demand for accountable governance**.
- Strengthening the effectiveness of alternative reporting mechanisms on corruption cases through the [Advocacy and Legal Advice Centre \(ALAC\)](#). Through its ALAC services, TI Cambodia provides free and confidential **legal advice to victims and witnesses of corruption** and help them to seek redress for their grievances.
- Enhancing anti-corruption legal and regulatory frameworks in partnership with relevant stakeholders, including on **whistleblower protection**, and **right to information**.
- Developing enhanced knowledge and understanding of **beneficial ownership transparency** through evidence-based research.

SUMMARY OF PROGRESS & KEY ACHIEVEMENTS - 2022

As the social restrictions in connection with the Covid-19 pandemic were eased in Cambodia, significant project progress was made in 2022. Through a number of activities, **TI Cambodia has reached out to 1,792 citizens**, young leaders and professional and aspiring journalists to raise awareness and understanding of anti-corruption, good governance, social accountability, budget transparency, civic participation in the decision-making process at commune levels and many other cross-cutting issues. Out of these 1,792 participants, 966 were women. Of all the activities conducted by TI Cambodia, 16 capacity-building activities involving 211 participants have been selected for monitoring purposes. Results from short tests designed to capture participants' level of knowledge and awareness before and after the events show **that around 90% of the participants demonstrated increased knowledge**. Youth who received capacity-building training and support from TI Cambodia were able to apply their knowledge and skills in their own initiatives and successfully implement ten initiatives to address governance and community issues. As short-term impacts of their initiatives, there have been signs of increased public awareness and civic participation in decision-making processes.

In addition, trained youth have become more confident in addressing issues affecting them and their communities. Mutual trust has also been built and fostered between local councillors, citizens and youth themselves, as the project has brought them closer together. Working in close partnership with CSOs, TI Cambodia succeeded in passing **recommendations on the draft law on public procurement** to the government. Out of the 13 recommendations provided, 3 were adopted, and seven are being considered by the Ministry of Economy and Finance (MEF) in charge of drafting the procurement law. In addition, the chapter has continued to **advocate for the adoption of the Whistle-blower Protection Bill and Access to Information Law**.

Some of the key accomplishments in 2022 include:

- TI Cambodia's **Advocacy and Legal Advice Centre (ALAC)** engaged 329 people, around 54% of whom were women, from across the country. Citizens received free legal advice and were trained on the country's legal framework and anti-corruption issues. This year, the chapter's ALAC conducted a series of 17 trainings which targeted youths, CSOs, and journalists to increase participants' awareness of corrupt practices and anti-corruption legal and regulatory frameworks.
- Capacity of the **youth network** across different provinces continued to be built and enhanced through training on corruption issues, transparency, accountability, and good governance. Throughout the year, 344 youths (55% women) received capacity-building training. In addition, youth groups developed and successfully carried out ten initiative projects of their own, aiming at promoting awareness on various subjects, including local governance, administration, service delivery, gender, village safety and environment. The initiatives further engaged 713 youths and citizens.
- A total of 322 youths and representatives from CSOs, development partners and government gathered on **International Anti-Corruption Day** and **National Youth's Day**, where corruption issues were discussed, anti-corruption was promoted, youth role in a democratic society was emphasised, and networking among youth and relevant stakeholders was enhanced.



Students in Kampong Phluk, Siem Reap, after joining a youth led session on early school drop-out and marriage © TI Cambodia

- TI Cambodia continued to foster good **partnerships and coordination with CSO working groups on anti-corruption**, access to information, budget transparency and digital rights. Joint advocacy activities were organised, making CSO voices even stronger and louder and pushing for improved policies and practices. A joint statement, endorsed by 424 people from diverse backgrounds in 19 provinces, was issued to push for the adaptation of the Access to Information Law. Back in 2021, TI Cambodia had joined forces with 26 CSOs, issuing a joint statement highlighting the threat to internet freedom posed by a proposed National Internet Gateway Sub-Decree brought forward by the Cambodian government. In 2022, the campaign efforts bore results as the internet gateway sub-decree has been put on hold.

YOUTH TAKING CHARGE IN THE COMMUNITY

Near the end of 2022, TI Cambodia conducted a focus group discussion with a selection of youths engaged and supported under the project to identify any notable changes in them or as a result of their actions during 2022. Youth reported that they gained knowledge and confidence in addressing social issues and participating in decision-making processes with their local council. This was especially true for one of the interviewed youths.



National Youth Forum in 2022 © Transparency International Cambodia

In an interview with TI Cambodia earlier in the year, he reported that he had a better understanding of the budget and community development after attending a capacity training provided by the chapter. TI Cambodia followed up with him at the focus group discussion to see if any further concrete changes had occurred. In his response, he stated he attended meetings with his commune council more often and brought any community concerns to the meetings. He reported that his most significant accomplishment thus far was to have his commune council incorporate a fishery community's proposal into the commune development plan. He helped bring the fishery community's request to the council and successfully advocated for it to be included in next year's commune development plan.

LOOKING AHEAD

In 2023, TI Cambodia will focus on the following:

- Producing a **policy paper on beneficial ownership**.
- Compiling and analysing **corruption reports** found in the media over the past few years.
- Implementing **youth and citizen outreach activities** focusing on ALAC and anti-corruption legal framework, good governance, accountability, and effective public service delivery.
- In partnership with the existing CSOs working groups on Access to Information and Digital Rights, TI Cambodia will co-organise **campaigns to continue to push for the adoption of the Access to Information Law and protect and demand internet freedom**.