

## Citizen Outreach for Citizen Service Centers: Lessons from the One Window Service Office initiative in Cambodia

Citizen Outreach is a key part of the One Window Service Office (OWSO) initiative in Cambodia. OWSO offices in District Administrations launch the new service in traditional Khmer style with a street parade to share information in markets and public places. These public awareness campaigns are conducted to encourage citizens and businesses to take up the services provided by the OWSO and District Ombudsmen (DO) and raise awareness about the quality of service delivery they can expect. Outreach activities held after the OWSO opening then focus on getting feedback on the quality of services, which is important to ensure continued high performance of the OWSO. Increasingly, outreach has drawn on the support of local non-state actors to partner with the OWSOs for greater impact. This DFGG Learning Note describes the efforts and challenges of outreach and communication in the newly launched citizen service centers in Cambodia.

### Efforts to Date

In the first year of the project, OWSO and district officials organized traditional Khmer events as public awareness campaigns at the launch of each OWSO site. In each district center, this consisted of a street parade, with music and flags, announcing the opening of the OWSO over loudspeakers. This was followed by a large public forum to explain the new services in more detail. At these outreach activities, promotional materials were distributed. At the national level, the Ministry of Interior (MOI) OWSO/DO national support team also implemented a mass media campaign on national and local TV and radio to advertise the OWSO/DO to a broader audience.

After the OWSOs were launched, the district administration organized monthly 'citizen hours', during which a group of 20-30 citizens meet and talk with the District or Municipal Governor on any topic. This allowed citizens to ask questions about the OWSO or raise any concerns they may have about operations. Corrective action would then be taken as necessary.

The districts/khans/municipalities involved in the first round of OWSO sites opened in 2011 conducted these activities on their own. However, with a partnership grant from the Non-State Actors Component of the Demand for Good Governance (DFGG) project, a pilot was funded for a NGO to support 5 OWSOs to conduct their public outreach.<sup>1</sup> In addition to helping with the events the local government was arranging, the NGO recruited and trained volunteers, usually students, who went door-to-door in the

community to explain the new services. After the launch, the NGO conducted citizen satisfaction surveys to measure levels of awareness, and scorecards to gauge how well the OWSO/DO services were meeting expectations. This helped the government conduct monitoring and evaluation and created an important accountability mechanism.



Launch Campaign of the OWSO in Oddor Meanchey

Following this positive experience, in 2013, NCDDES/DST engaged 4 NGOs to help OWSOs conduct this new model and expanded set of public outreach and social accountability activities in ten new districts.

### What works?

**Providing detailed information.** Feedback from customers indicates that brochures with detailed information, such as supporting documentation requirements and price lists, help customers come to the OWSO prepared and potentially eliminate extra trips to the OWSO to obtain this kind of information. As a result, the national team has developed brochures that are distributed in each district.

**Partnering with NGOs.** Surveys of citizens in the OWSO sites found that outreach and community awareness building was much more effective with NGO participation than when the government worked alone. In districts where the government implemented outreach without NGO support, awareness of the OWSO among a random sample of citizens was 24%, and only 4% of the sample were aware of the DO.<sup>2</sup>

In contrast, in sites where the NGO helped conduct outreach in 2011, awareness of the OWSO was almost 70%

<sup>1</sup> See DFGG Learning Note 3 for details.

<sup>2</sup> Customer survey by Green Goal, 2011.



## Citizen Outreach for Citizen Service Centers

of the sample and about 15% for the DO.<sup>3</sup> For those sites that received NGO assistance in 2013, surveys found that on average, 95% of citizens were aware of the OWSO and roughly 50% were aware of the DO.<sup>4</sup>

Anecdotally, it also was found that for the accountability aspects of the outreach, citizens felt more comfortable speaking in the 'citizen hours' and posing questions about the services if they were facilitated by a NGO rather than led directly by the local government.

### What doesn't work?

**Awareness of OWSO remains higher than awareness of the District Ombudsman.** Regardless of NGO assistance, public surveys consistently find that citizens retain the message about the OWSO services more effectively than they retain information about the accompanying complaint mechanism, the District Ombudsman (DO). The reason for this is not fully explored. They are advertised and explained at the same time. Since the DO is the main government accountability mechanism at the district/khan/municipal level, it is important that citizens are aware that the DO can accept complaints about the performance of the OWSO and other district services.

**Outreach efforts have not resulted in high levels of businesses applying for services.** Despite the outreach efforts to date and the generally high levels of knowledge that are being generated through the partnership with NGOs, there are still quite low levels of applications for many licenses, indicating that voluntary licensing is still new to citizens and the current mix of services may not be relevant in all locations. Failure of businesses to self-comply is causing line ministries to continue visiting places of business, a practice the OWSO model is meant to stop.

**Managing outreach is challenging.** At the beginning of activities in 2009, it was assumed that no special expertise was required to conduct awareness campaigns. When initial survey results showed that the efforts of the OWSO, district administration and national team were not having the desired impact, OWSO management realized that outreach requires special knowhow. The position of communication advisor was therefore added to the national team in 2011. However, hiring skilled communications specialists is difficult for government given the much higher salaries offered in the private sector for these type of skills. Another challenge was contracting partner NGOs; advertisements to conduct the outreach activities met with low response rates and many of the applications did not meet quality requirements.

**Insufficient targeting.** Initially, outreach activities targeted the entire population of the District/Municipality where

the OWSO was opening. This had benefits in terms of increasing awareness of the government's commitment to improved service provision. However, the general population might not need the services provided by the OWSO, or only very rarely. A focus on particular target groups such as motorbike and house owners, who are more likely to require OWSO services, could lower costs and be as effective. In addition, the large public forums were commonly attended by civil servants and students rather than business people and homeowners. The project therefore amended its strategy during implementation.

**NGO-led outreach needs to be more cost effective.** Although the Government recognizes the long term benefits NGOs brought to outreach efforts, costs need to be reduced. NGO contracts amounted to approximately US\$16,000 per district. In comparison, OWSO/DO operational costs (excluding salaries and salary incentives) are only about US\$6,000 on average per year per District.

### The way forward

With the OWSO becoming a formal part of the MOI funded by the Royal Government of Cambodia budget, sustainable ways must be found of continuing public outreach. The design of outreach moving forward will draw on lessons to date and include:

- **Use mass media.** Information campaigns will continue to be organized to launch new OWSOs but to raise awareness of existing OWSOs, TV spots will be broadcast through state media.
- **Enhance the role of the District Governors.** District and commune officials closest to citizens will, more systematically, disseminate information about the OWSO/DO at all events in which they participate, and Governors will continue to hold monthly Citizen's Hours. Village chiefs should also disseminate information to citizens in their area.
- **Employ accountability tools.** The DO is well positioned to help the District administration conduct anonymous customer surveys and feedback forms, perhaps in the form of exit surveys.
- **Develop civil society partnerships.** Local civil society actors will be invited to give feedback about the OWSO's performance, and requested to provide volunteers and help with customer feedback surveys, if they are able.

*The DFGG Learning Note Series provides quick summaries of the lessons learned in the field. The information is obtained from progress reports, workshops and World Bank Implementation Support.*

*DFGG Learning Note 19 reflects on lessons learned by the OWSO team. Written by the Office of One Window Service Affairs with Erin Weiser. Series editor, Janelle Plummer*

<sup>3</sup> Customer survey by API, 2012.

<sup>4</sup> Customer surveys by CCSP and VNBK, 2014.