THE PERCEIVED PROGRESS IN THE QUALITY OF COMMUNE CIVIL REGISTRATION SERVICE IN CAMBODIA

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By
Sophal Leoung

Thesis Committee:
Richard Pratt, Chairperson
Christopher Grandy
Jefferson M. Fox

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<td>ADB</td>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
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<td>CC</td>
<td>Commune Council</td>
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<td>CDRI</td>
<td>Cambodian Development Research Institute</td>
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<td>CPP</td>
<td>Cambodian People’s Party</td>
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<td>CRS</td>
<td>Civil Registration Service</td>
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<td>CS</td>
<td>Commune/Sangkat</td>
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<td>CSDF</td>
<td>Commune Sangkat Development Fund</td>
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<td>DOLA</td>
<td>Department of Local Administration</td>
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<td>D&amp;D</td>
<td>Decentralization and De-concentration</td>
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<td>MoI</td>
<td>Ministry of Interior</td>
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<td>Mobile National Civil Registration Project</td>
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<td>NGO</td>
<td>Non-Government Organization</td>
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<td>PBC</td>
<td>Planning and Budgeting Committee</td>
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<td>PFMRP</td>
<td>Public Financial Management Reform Program</td>
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<td>RGC</td>
<td>Royal Government of Cambodia</td>
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Abstract

In an effort to achieve decentralized development, political reform and administrative structures, the Royal Government of Cambodia launched the Law on Commune/Sangkat Administrative Management (Commune Law) on March 19, 2001. The election of Commune Councils subsequently ensued in February 2002. This was a critical step in the devolution of power to local authorities across the country. With this local decentralization policy, the national government hoped the establishment of local administrations would be able to deliver better public services, conduct expenditure transparency, improve local infrastructure, and allow a more democratic and local participation. Thus, the purpose of this study is to explore the perceptions of both the commune administrators and the local service receivers on the perceived progress in the quality of commune service delivery. This study focuses on civil registration, from 2002 through 2014. The case study was conducted in Koymeng Commune, Mongkolborey District, Cambodia. Draw from four analytical themes related to local administrators’ and local residents’ perceptions, the findings on service quality were organized into four basic areas: (1) village-based outreach meeting, (2) increasing knowledge of the local residents, (3) the increased numbers of the commune standing staff on the administrative work, (4) the actual use of modern office equipment.

Key words: Decentralization, De-concentration, Civil Registration Service, Public Service Delivery, Commune Council, Perception, Quality of Public Service

1 Commune and Sangkat are administratively equal in status. In Cambodian decentralization, commune is frequently used as a low-administrative entity situated in provinces while Sangkat is used in urbanized areas. From now on, I write shorter name “Commune Law” replacing the Law on Commune/Sangkat Administrative Management that was released in 2001

2 Civil Registration refers to official civil documents in three forms: birth, marriage, death certificates. In Cambodia, this document is generally important for citizens to use for other official documents. For example, they can apply for passports as long as they have a birth certificate, residential certificate, ID, and other necessary information authenticated by commune authorities.
Chapter I. Introduction

Historically, Cambodia was a highly centralized state rooted in strong politico-administrative processes installed by the central government. In the late 1800s, the French protectorate created the sub-district or commune administration to improve the machinery of tax collection. This administrative model continued to be adopted in post-colonial Cambodia, the government of King Norodom Sihanouk through decades of the 1950s and 1960s. From the 1970s to the 1990s, through the period of civil war, Cambodia, on her knees, struggled to build human resources and physical infrastructure. After the cold war, the transition from socialist regime to a more democratic regime helped bring a change in local administration. One of the key pillars to realizing local development and reducing inequality and poverty is the policy of democratic development laid out in the strategic frame for Decentralization and De-concentration Reform (Hun Sen, 2010). As a result, in February 2002, Cambodia for the first time in the Second Kingdom³ launched an election to select local representatives; namely Commune/Sangkat Council. The election of commune councils was intended to serve the local level better in terms of service delivery, locally democratic participation, local development and social order.

1.1 Problem Statement

Cambodia’s three decades of civil war⁴ lost systems of civil document records and the administrative structure was virtually all destroyed. Worse still, during the Khmer Communist regime, 1975-1979, the country was programmed to start from year zero. This means the Khmer communist’s chief policy was to obliterate all kinds of previously residual governing systems. After the war, most Cambodian people lost identity records, including birth, marriage certificates, and family books. Presently, the Ministry of Interior (MoI) is responsible for civil registration across the country. Working in partnership with MoI, the Asian Development Bank (ADB) assisted the creation of a Mobile Civil Registration Project as part of the Commune⁵

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³ The Second Kingdom began in 1993. Noticeably, between the 1970s and 1990s, Cambodia was no longer a Kingdom due to the political turmoil and the civil war. After the 1993 national election, the second Kingdom was established and the monarchy constitution was set in motion.

⁴ The Cambodian civil war lasted almost three decades began from 1970 to 1993.

⁵ Commune is considered the lowest level of territorial administration in Cambodia. Unlike the provincial and district administration, a commune administration is an independent entity whose local officials are elected through free and fair elections to serve five year-term. One of the basic functions of commune councils is to provide the local
Council Development Program to provide services to local citizens at the early stage of Commune Councils first mandate in 2002 (Ahmed, 2004).

The mobile project was originally planned to meet the goal set by the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) started from 2002 to 2015. The RGC desired the entire Cambodian population should be registered for birth certificates. At the start of the Commune Council Development Project, the government unveiled that only 5% of Cambodians among the total population registered their birth. The majority of these people are born after the 1980s (ADB, 2013). The project has five main objectives:

1. Update civil registration system across the country
2. Remove 95% backlog of un-registered population with birth registration
3. Provide service training to commune councilors
4. Assist in capacity building for planning, implementation and monitoring at sub-national administration
5. Educate people about the importance of civil registry

Prior to this project, December 29, 2000, the RGC issued Sub-decree 103, forming the legal framework for this civil registration. This sub-decree aimed to provide formalities and procedures for civil registration service across the kingdom. The sub-decree was put into force on August 1, 2002; making this service available to the local residents through the commune channel. In line with this sub-decree, commune councils are given the power to issue the civil status known as “Civil Registration” and a commune chief serves as a registrar to administer this service to all villagers within his/her jurisdiction.

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6 This project initially was funded by Asian Development Bank (ADB), which injected $10 million for the commune development project from December 2002 to November 2007. The project focused on (1) Construct and improve physical facilities of commune and provincial department, (2) build capacity of commune officials and hold media campaign on decentralization, (3) produce photomaps to commune as planning tools, and (4) support establishment of a national civil registration system (Ahmed, 2004).


8 The sub-decree is an executive regulation usually prepared by relevant ministries, adopted by the Council of Ministers and signed by a Prime Minister; while the King signs a royal decree.
The process of providing this service typically is the responsibility of the commune’s clerk whose task to ensure the administrative affairs (Article 289). To request the civil documents (birth, marriage, and death), applicant, as stipulated, shall bring two adult witnesses being clearly aware of the applicant’s background and used to live in a same village within commune since the applicant was born10. The clerk then proceeds to deliver a form to applicants to fill in. Then, after reviewing the form completed by the applicant, the clerk works to get application approved from a commune chief. An official copy would be issued to the applicant and another would be kept at the commune office for reference. Eventually, the clerk must record the new client’s information into a Civil Status Book11. Because the service is administered daily, there are several possible aspects of the service provision that may be overlooked, including how long it takes, the quality and accuracy of the issued documents, costs, and accountability of the commune administrators to citizens at large.

Several studies so far have concentrated on varied topics of decentralization reforms, commune development plans, local participation, commune financial regime, and commune leadership. However, little attention has been paid to the development of commune administrative service provisions and the progress commune councils have made since the conception of these local entities from the year 2002. This study therefore aims to explore the perceived progress in the quality of commune services, focusing on civil registration, at a rural setting in Cambodia.

1.2 Research Question and Objectives

The chief objective of this study is to answer this question: from 2002 up to 2014, how do commune administrators perceive changes in the quality of civil registration service delivery in comparison to how local service receivers perceive the quality changes? To answer this question, I have set the following objectives:

- Explore the perception from both service receivers and commune administrators toward the quality of civil registration.

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9 Law on the Commune/Sangkat Administrative Management (commune law) passed on March 19, 2001
10 Article 43 of Sub-decree 103 on the Civil Registration
11 Civil Status Books, blank-page books, are issued from the Ministry of Interior (MoI); which are not available at markets. The formality of the books is solely decided by the capacity of the MoI.
12 Some places within this study, I use commune officials or authorities instead of commune administrators
Moreover, to provide an understanding of the context in which these perceptions are held, I will also:

- Identify sites, numbers of operational staff, and related technological innovation.
- Explore means of service delivery conducted by councils over the last 12 years.
- Examine main challenges/progress in distributing this particular service provision.

Chapter II. Literature Review

This chapter will situate the concept of decentralization; highlight relations of public service delivery to the policy of decentralization. Reviewing these topics will illustrate the rationality behind a central government’s intention to employ decentralized policy to promote local public service delivery; and local participation harnessing the local development effort.

2.1 The Concept of Decentralization

Many scholars may define decentralization differently. There are many dimensional aspects of decentralization existing in the field of public administration. Sometimes, the definition itself is nebulous and ambiguous. Then, what is decentralization? How it works?

In a broad sense, decentralization is seen as “the transfer of authority to plan, make decisions or manage public functions from the national level to any organization or agency at the the sub-national level” (Mills et al., 1990, p. 89). It is an efficient tool to bring services closer to local people. Bevir (2009 p.64) also precisely points out that “decentralization generally tries to bring power and authority closer to the citizens concerned in order to promote local efficient and democratic politics.” Indeed, decentralization is designed to provide proximity programmable operations and decisions to local aligning with the consistency of effective and responsive performance (Ink and Dean, 1970). In short, by decentralizing, a central government holds larger power and assigns responsibility, authority or function to a sub-national government, which leads to some degree of autonomy (Cheema and Rondinelli, 1983). It is generally true, in recent decades; decentralization has been a popular and fundamental- institutional framework that emerging countries are pursuing this path for their strategies of government systems.
In order to help these third world countries, many international organizations, particularly the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, are leading to assist in implementing decentralization by working with national governments Saito (2001). They vision the benefits to the local people through the decentralization policy; for it helps shape the participation of local people in the decision-making process. Ninh and Henke (2005, p.12) indicate “[t]he complexity of governance in a market-oriented, globalizing world, coupled with strong demand from citizens to have voices in the decision-making process, have made decentralization efforts an inescapable fact for government everywhere.” Therefore, many third world countries choose to implement decentralization policy in the purpose of local development.

Perhaps developed and developing countries alike have observed that decentralized service can result in quicker gain than centralized system. In the post-cold war, after the demise of the Soviet Union, there has been a pressing need for politico-economic reform. Some former states of the Soviet Union experienced the ineffectiveness in policy implementation of the centralized system. Thus, they turned to decentralized system that could be implemented to best internalized benefits for local development, resource management, and the welfare of local citizens. As such, decentralization became the international trend for both political and economic reforms. The book titled, Foundations for Local Governance: Decentralization in Comparative Perspective provides an interesting point that decentralization is a “driving force for local democracy” because this political mechanism allows local people to participate in many governmental programs (Saito, 2008, p.5). Along with these economic reasons, the author also suggests states may employ decentralization policy¹³ to foster “economic prosperity and poverty reduction” (2008, p.6). To realize this, central governments delegate power to local administrations to manage resources and control its own financial regime. Since the economic activities link with markets, this decentralized administration would be a promising mechanism to achieve economic prosperity.

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¹³ The author also argues that to stimulate growth from economic activities, state should “interfere with market mechanism” (Saito, 2008 p.5)
Decentralization also contains three components pertaining to efficiencies Azfar et al., (2001). First among the three components, decentralization helps manage efficient resources. Local administrations better understands what kinds of public services are needed compared to centralized systems. Closer to the local citizens, they are more likely to allocate the most efficient services to local constituencies in their jurisdiction. Secondly, decentralization helps maintain accountability among local administrators. Since the sub-national governments are more localized to make citizens better informed. Consequently, local officers tend to promote accountability, and to improve public services. However, many developing countries lack inspection systems, which lead to a recurring failure in accountability. This is a typically complex issue existing virtually in many third world countries. Thirdly, decentralization may be employed to facilitate cost recovery. The local administrators may design services to be more “demand responsive,” which is believed to serve common interests of local citizens. In light of this, the local population may be willing to pay for some services that match their demand, which in turn helps local governments raise some fiscal revenues and properly balance their own financial regime. In such a case, local government is supposed to know what kind of service to design and how to control local revenues for various development plans. Again, in less developed countries, corruption would occur if there is no mechanism for oversight and enforcement of anti-corruption laws.


1. **Vertical Decentralization** applies to a governmental system that possibly consists of many tiers. For example, in a country such as Cambodia, the administration has four levels (central government, province, district and commune). Vertical Decentralization could be a political machine to generate bureaucratic force more visible in the lower tiers of the government.

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14 Decentralization is used alternatively for both a process and a state. Here, Treisman refers to decentralization as a state, for instance, the condition of being decentralized.
2. **Decision-making Decentralization** may concentrate on the local political decision of authority. Treisman (2002 p.6) simply indicates, “If authority decides all questions belong to the central government, the system itself is “maximally centralized.” On the other hand, if the lowest tier-governments have all decision-making rights, it is considered “maximally decentralized.”

3. **Appointment Decentralization** is related to the degree to which the authority of each tier exercises the selection and sacking process. For example, if the central government appoints lower positions, it is appointment decentralized.

4. **Electoral Decentralization** focuses on the direct, popular election among the tiers to choose an executive. The more officeholders are chosen in a direct election, the more decentralized the system is.

5. **Fiscal Decentralization** means division of revenues or financially decentralized expenditures granted to lower level tiers of government with transparency and responsibility. Sometimes, this decentralized notion is alternatively called “fiscal federalism” but it can be applied to unitary, federal and nonfederal government.

6. **Personnel Decentralization** concerns about human resource distribution among tiers of all levels of governing systems. As indicated by Treisman (2002, p. 13), “the greater share of administrative personnel employed at lower tier of a government, the greater a personnel decentralization is.” It is interesting to note that many third world countries have problems within this notion because it is hard to proportionally decentralize human resource to lower tiers of administration. The fact of the matter is that low motivation (low remuneration) makes it hard for the centralized governments and decentralized governments alike to retain a few experts/technicians.

A report of Organisation for Economic Co-Operation and Development (2004) highlights three domains of decentralization: (1) to create a favorable legal and political atmosphere; (2) to help implement training programs for government staff; and (3) to deepen and sustain decentralization through fiscal devolution. In emerging countries, decentralization can also be crucial to promoting democratic processes and promoting economic development. On the other hand, decentralization is not always viewed a positive method for developmental programs. In the article “Decentralization Theories Revisited: Lessons from Uganda,” the author puts:
…decentralization may foster more local loyalty to regional identities than the national identity, and this may encourage more autonomy from the central government and even a territorial secession in multi-ethnic and multi-religious societies, particularly in Africa. This put the national integrity itself at risk. Newly created autonomy maybe manipulated by local elites for seeking their narrow personal benefits at the cost of general population, who are in need of improved livelihood. More than that decentralization may increase corruption at local level and this would not improve accountability. The increased efficiency and effectiveness of public resources may not be realized. (Saito, 2001p.2)

At this stage, decentralization is more political-oriented rather than administrative-oriented, which has attracted the most attention and support in some countries in Asia. This undesired phenomenon may happen in many developing countries. In the case of Cambodia, it is believed that the ruling party, the Cambodian People’s Party (CPP), may use decentralization as an effective approach to politically control nationwide and to extend political influence and size of the MoI (Cheema and Rondinelli, 2007 p. 122). As such, this kind of decentralization definitely slows down the devolution of authority with little reallocation of service delivery.

If this scenario frequently the case, decentralization would be simply a political instrument that is designed to serve political gains and a façade of democracy devised by powerful elites in the less developed world where law and governing system are not yet strong. To curb this issue, strong law enforcement and judicial independence must be strongly maintained. In the particular of this study, this is evidence for both views of decentralization.

2.2 Public Service

Public service is a core-function in government policy to make services available to the public. It differs markedly from the private sector, which is profit-driven. Typically, the primary components of public service range from administrative aspects\textsuperscript{15} to basic infrastructure services.

\textsuperscript{15} Administrative services include civil documents, will agreement, real-estate paper work, while infrastructure services ranges from irrigation, roads, water supply, primary education, rural health center, and security maintenance and so on.
Figure 1. Public Service Reform Strategy

The figure above illustrates the development of public service back in 1970s to 1990s. The development ranges from unresponsiveness public services bureaucracies (1970s), New Managerialism (1980s), Self-improvement (1990s) to customer relations. It is generally believed that the government\textsuperscript{16} runs public service but governments tend not to be the sole actor in the public service delivery in these present days. There are external actors (private, community, civil society) also play important roles in shaping service provision that provide the root of local

\textsuperscript{16} Government here is referring to both central and local administration.
participation and pro-poor service objective. Thus, in this section, research articles are reviewed pertaining to pro-poor public service and local citizen participation in public service delivery.

### 2.2.1 Pro-poor Public Service

Poverty exists in different forms in every society. To solve such a problem, different policies are needed. To date, there are many studies concentrating on the link of decentralized policies and pro-poor results. However, Crook and Sverisson (2001) study the link of decentralization to four areas: pro-poor economic growth; pro-poor service delivery; income redistribution, redistribution of resources from wealthy to poor areas. According to their study, there is no general link between decentralization and the development of pro-poor policies or outcome of poverty-alleviation (p. 52).

**Figure 2. Customer Relation: Public Service**

![Customer Relation: Public Service](source: Humphrey (1998) p. 11)

Nevertheless, organizing public service provision could be deemed an important plank of poverty reduction strategies. OECD (2004 p. 26) given that poverty alleviation can be addressed through the process of a careful design based on the understanding of “...local, social, economic, political and institutional circumstances.” Pro-poor service delivery is to help the local poor gain greater access to health, education, sanitation, and administrative service. It is very important in the context of less developed countries. Cheema and Rondinelli (2007 p.257) argue that development actors should pay much attention on “infrastructure and service” because they have
direct impact for the local poor. For example, small-scale infrastructure projects provide tangible benefits to local farmers; rural roads provide greater mobility in their communities so reduce the transport cost. The local government can also create public job programs such as the construction and maintenance water supply system, roads, small bridges, and local libraries. Thus, poor residents may have jobs and together improve the local public work system.

Local government has potentiality to implement the policy of local economic growth. However, they have to possess “specialized capacity and determined mindset” (GFLD, 2010 p. 52). For example, in the area of collaboration, local council should increase the ability to attract development actor (individual and civil society) and private sector to invest and create jobs for the local in their jurisdiction. At this stage, local government plays both roles as a coordinator and policymaker. Besides, there are other areas that local government needs to focus on. Such areas are local resources, fiscal tax and other economic potentiality that are backbones for local development. All these require the capacity of management skills that many local governments in developing countries are struggling. At this point, the national government needs to establish sound policy on capacity-building program to strengthen works of local officials so that local poverty alleviation could be realized.

2.2.2 Citizen Participation in Service Delivery

Part of the central theme of decentralization is to encourage local participation in decision-making process so that local administrators know the pressing need that their constituencies are facing. In a democratic society, citizens’ engagement in policymaking and the design of public service-decision is very important. In this society, they have both rights and duties that avail them the full participation in shaping the service policy deemed necessary for their communities.

Bovaird and Down (2008) surveyed the perception of municipal officials and find that citizens’ involvement in the process of public service may lead to better service provision, comply with the needs of citizens, improve informed-decisions, and enhance collaboration among local stakeholders. Further, the study reveals that local administrators, through the participation of the local citizens in service delivery, can draw critical feedback on service
quality prompting them to enhance efficient service policy to meet a desired quality. This however is more easily said than done. To practically provide efficient services, local officials themselves should also possess a moderate degree of public service motivation (PSM) and accountability that sometimes becomes a recurring issue existing in the realm of public administration in developed and developing countries alike. Nevertheless, Kelman (1987) asserts that public servants are drawn to participate in the process of policy formulation that helps boost their individual’s image of self-importance. This tactics could assist reinforce their motivation in service provision delivery.

As stated before, a local government is not the only manager of public service delivery. The private sectors, local communities, civil societies should also all play crucial roles in shaping demand, developing state policies, and delivering services. In democratic countries, government realizes the importance of direct participation from many sectors in order to govern them well. Holmes (2011 p.2) asserts that through this meaningful participation, government is able to harness “ideas, knowledge, wisdom, and skills of non-government sectors---businesses, the academic, the professionals, and voluntary organizations.” If the government fails to harness these, it can be the loss of resources and block opportunities for these local potentialities.

Meanwhile, the report also indicates that though there is a remarkable achievement of “direct and indirect citizens’ participation in service design,” true engagement in this “co-production” of policy needs to have the major change in the “culture and operation” carried out by lower government agencies (Holmes, 2011). Thus, there should be a change of mindset on “command and control” from all tiers of governments to the kind of local collaboration “characterized by complex networks of multi-organizational, multi-governmental, and multi-sectoral collaboration” (Parker and Gallaher, 2007 p.72). In other words, we call this a great paradigm shift in public administration where government works as a coordinator rather than a regulator in the area of service provision.
Chapter III. Cambodian Commune Councils

3.1 Background of Commune Councils

3.1.1 French Protectorate Era (1863-1953)

Cambodia was under the French colonization for almost a century, from 1863 to 1953. The presence of the French in Cambodian history radically brought the reform to the public administration in the country. Virak (2005) gives that the French colonial authorities initiated the local decentralized system in an effort to modernize Cambodia’s government by converting its “natural society-oriented to local administration” (109). However, the reform did not reflect any local democracy, because the real purpose of the French effort was chiefly to impose economic oriented taxation. Accordingly, by and large, Cambodian administration was heavily influenced by this reform.

From 1889 to 1953, the French authorities launched three administrative reforms in Cambodia, 1889, 1908, and 1919. Again, these reforms were not democratically effective, since the real motive of the French was to tax as much as possible; perhaps to expand their purpose of colonial power (Say, 2001). On the other hand, the Royal Decree of June 15, 1908, the first legal framework regarding commune administration, was issued by the French” COMFREL (2007 p.7). This royal decree launched the administrative division of lands across the country, in three ways: First, it stipulated the division of villages, the lowest administrative division within a commune; second, it initiated the devolution of administrative power and financial resources; and third the decree enabled the election choosing commune chiefs and councils nationwide. This decree sets a fundamental administrative framework for future governments.

3.1.2 Post-Colonialism

On November 9, 1953, France granted independence to Cambodia. From 1953 to 1969, the sub-national administration had not seen administrative innovation because the royal

17 The French wanted to organize a commune-based administration so that they could easily manipulate local leaders to collect taxes. Before the French colonization, communes were led by leaders who were revered among the local people in their communities. Those leaders worked for the benefit and security of their community with no remuneration. In return, they received rewards in the form of rice, fish, coconut and vegetables. The French saw the advantage of this system, so they selected and paid those revered leaders to tax their own people who used to trust and depend on them. In 1919, the French organized commune elections to elect commune chiefs and councils to prepare the commune budget. This tax revenue made local villagers fear and hate them (Say, 2001)
government of King Norodom Sihanouk then ruled the whole country\textsuperscript{18}. The royal government adopted the French territorial and commune functional frame. For example, an elected commune chief, or Mekhum\textsuperscript{19}, had dual functions. He or she served as a representative of the central government (a governmental agent of law enforcement) and as a representative of a commune, assisted by a commune council, deputy commune chief, and commune secretary (Le Cambodge, 1962: p. 89). After the election, it was a task of a provincial governor to announce the validation of the election’s results and appointed a commune chief and a council by a provincial order.

The 1959 law on commune councils stipulated that the dissolution of the council could be done through a referendum (Say, 2001, p. 434). This law seems to be more democratic than current laws concerning commune councils because a referendum allows full participation of local citizens, who are the real service receivers and the owners of votes. The new law of 2001, however, stipulates that the dissolution of the council can be done through a declaration issued by a MoI minister. This power to dissolve commune councils is in many ways controversial because voters have no voice over the decision (Article 57)\textsuperscript{20}.

Early in 1967, the Vietnam War steadily flared into Cambodia, destabilizing the country. Politico-economic crises frequently occurred, resulting in instability in most parts of the country. As such, the royal government then issued Royal Decree 383/69, dated February 11, 1969, announcing the suspension of commune elections. In light of this, commune officials and chiefs were appointed by the central authorities (provincial or district authorities). Further, the royal decree of 1969 continued to suspend the operational and developmental budget of the commune councils (Say, 2001. p.433.)

From 1970 to 1989, Cambodia underwent a bloody civil war, in which substantially large numbers of civil documents from previous governments were destroyed. The war took virtually\textsuperscript{20}

\textsuperscript{18} King Norodom Sihanouk (1922-2012), then a young monarch who came to the throne backed by the French in 1947, later on, he launched a crusade for independence; which ultimately was granted on November 9, 1953. For this achievement, he earned the title the King Father or the Heroic King of Independence in Cambodian history.

\textsuperscript{19} Mekhum originally were respected commune leaders who acted as elders for the community. When the local people had conflicts or the commune underwent security threat, the local people always looked to those elders for leadership. In the French colonial period, however, the French empowered those Mekhum to tax the locals and, as a result, Mekhum was no longer respected (Say, 2001)

\textsuperscript{20} Commune Law 2001
30 years to end. By 1991, all conflicting factions signed the Paris Peace Accord officially ending the conflict. In 1993, backed by the United Nations, a national election could be launched. Thus, a new constitution was drafted and ratified in 1993. As a result, the election of a new government was set in motion. Since then the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) opened its borders and began to realize the policy of decentralization, which continues today. In order to establish a local civil administration that represents the local population, in the year 2000 the RGC began to prioritize decentralization (Kato et al., 2000).

RGC envisions that decentralization as an essentially strategic mechanism for local development and democratic process. Rusten et al, (2004) also points out three important objectives of decentralization in the Cambodian context: First, decentralization helps strengthen democracy and enhances political party collaboration. This means that after elections, candidates from different parties work together in a commune council serving the interests of their constituencies. Second, it helps create ownership of decision-making, allowing people to direct their own development. Third, decentralization contributes to local poverty reduction through improvement of equitable accessibility of public services. Romeo and Skyckerelle (2003) argue that “enabling the commune councils to become significant service providers in the eyes of their local constituencies will also realize the political goal of Cambodian Decentralization Reform; establishing democratic state present at a local level.” However, the local democracy becomes the source of recurring debates in the third world. At this point, the question is whether local democracy is an objective in itself or if it actually helps increase government effectiveness in reducing the poverty level. The response to this question is not simple; but so far, the purpose of decentralization in practice addresses both possibilities.

3.2 Cambodian Commune Administration

The existing Cambodian Constitution states that the territory of the Kingdom is to be administratively divided into provinces and municipalities. Provinces are to be divided into districts, and districts into communes namely Khum. Municipalities, on the other hand, are to be divided into Khan and the Khan into Sangkat. To date, there are 25 provinces; Phnom Penh is

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21 Article 145 (formerly Article 126) the Constitution of Cambodia revised in 1999.
the capital of Cambodia, considered one of the provinces due to its same level-administration as the other 24 provinces.

The local administration is divided into a three-tiered system of province, district, and commune. In order to realize decentralization, in 2001 the Royal Government launched a Law on Commune/Sangkat Administrative Management. The purpose of this law is to define regional boundaries, and the management and administration of all communes/Sangkats in the Kingdom of Cambodia according to the decentralization plan. In addition to this law, June 2005 the Council of Ministers approved the Decentralization and De-Concentration (D&D) Framework aiming to establish the objectives, vision, basic principles, scope and strategies used to reform structures of governance at the sub-national level, which is comprised of provinces/municipalities, districts/khan and commune/Sangkat. These legal frameworks are the backbone for reforms because they provide rules of operation for different levels of local government---significant reforms to the previous administrative, political, and financial frameworks for governance.

**Figure 3. Hierarchical Triangle of Sub-national Administration**

February 3, 2002, the council election was held in 1,621 communes across the country, with 76,000 candidates from eight political parties (NDI, 2002). This Commune election offered

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22 Article 1 of Commune Law 2001
Cambodia the chance to experiment with local democracy. The 2002 Commune Council Election was supposed to implement another step in local decentralization with the hope of substantially improving local governance and service delivery. However, in the Strategic Framework for Decentralization and De-concentration, the Royal Government acknowledges that “the capacity of the communes is low; inter-commune/sangkat cooperation has not yet been put in place, management systems and structures at provincial/municipal level for provision of support and control legality of local administration has not been strengthened” (ADB, 2005 p.3). Apart from this, the commune councils have not implemented a clearly guided framework for the operation:

Driven by an administrative rationale, the decentralization reforms in Cambodia are still not guided by a clearly stated framework that makes explicit their broader objectives and how the Royal Government intends to approach the devolution of administrative and service delivery responsibility and related fiscal resources. On the administrative front, however, major critical questions have been asked on what could actually be the role of local councils in provision of public service, particularly in the major sector that are crucial for the national poverty reduction strategy (COMFREL, 2007 p.12).

To successfully realize the local decentralization, there must be a high-level of cooperation between local administrators and other stakeholders in the constituencies. Along the line, the development agency partners can play an important role to better this cooperation. For example, local NGOs can serve as focal points to provide various trainings on development. This training can help local administrators and villagers work well together to achieve the commune’s development plans.

3.3 Legal Framework

To ensure the success, the Royal Government has furthered its public administration reform by adopting the “Strategic Framework for Decentralization and De-concentration (D&D)\textsuperscript{23}, creating the Organic Law on the Administrative Management of the Capital, Provinces, Municipalities, Districts and Khans which was passed in 2008. This Organic Law creates two sub-national governments, the district/municipal and the provincial councils. The two

\textsuperscript{23} In administrative rank, province is equal to municipality while district is equal to Khan. Khan is used in a lower tier to a municipality, so is district to a province. Provincial, Municipal, District/Khan councils as indicated by law are indirectly elected. The question occurs how local democracy can be feasible if local people do not directly elect them.
hierarchical sub-national governments are elected indirectly in accordance with procedures provide in the Law on Elections of the Capital, Provincial, Municipal, and District/Khan Council (Chapter 2: Section 1, Article 14). Here, commune councilors are given the task to vote by an indirect election to choose these two sub-national governments (Sreang et al., 2011). These two sub-national bodies work to realize democratic development as pointed out in (Article 12):

1. Public Representation: Local councils are elected to democratically represent local citizens and protect their interests within their constituencies.

2. Local Autonomy: Local councils are bestowed the power over the fiscal budget and development plans within their jurisdictions.

3. Consultation and Participation: Local people are given rights to participate in decision making and seek consultation from councils for domestic conflicts at all levels.

4. Responsiveness and Accountability: Strengthen the responsibility and accountability of public administrators.

5. Promotion of quality of Life for local residents: Enhance governing capacity to eradicate or reduce level of rural poverty by focusing on vulnerable groups.

6. Transparency and Integrity: Councils perform works in a way that demonstrates transparency to the public, for example, public bidding on various development projects.

7. Measure to fight corruption and the abuse of power: complying with the Anti-Corruption Commission, the councils are supposed to work in collaboration with governmental agencies to eradicate and curb the cancer of corruption and power abuse.

Commune officials work in partnership with these sub-national entities (province/municipality and district/Khan) to ensure good governance within their constituencies as prescribed in the National Strategic Development Plan of the RGC. For example, annually commune councils are supposed to report their civil registry work and other progress of development plans to MoI through sub-national administration. Though these two decentralized entities are not related to what we are studying here, it is worth examining how commune councils cohere works with these hierarchical entities to fulfill the policy of decentralization and de-concentration set by the Royal Government.
3.4 Local Governance

The National Strategic Development Plan (Rectangular Strategy Phase II) advocates that good governance is a core development strategy of the Royal Government. Further, the Commune Law (Article 41) stipulates commune administration support good governance, using the available resources to serve the common interests of their local constituencies with respect to the general policy of the state.

Currently, the total number of commune councils is 1,633 across the country (COMFREL, 2012). In order to facilitate and accelerate the local administration implementation, on December 31, 2008, the Royal Government issued a Royal Decree of NS/RKT/1208/1429 to create “National Committee for Democratic Development at Sub-national Level (NCDD).” The task of the NCDD is to check on the implementation of the Law on Administrative Management of the Capital, Provinces, Municipalities, District/Khan, Law on Administrative Management of Communes/Sangkats and decentralization and de-concentration policy. One of the Committee’s main missions is to check and frame agreements between the Royal Government and development organizations to back the decentralization and de-concentration reforms, “ensuring that all Development Partners are parties to such agreements and ensuring alignment and harmonization in using external assistance.” Assuming continuing conditions of limited resources, it is doubtful whether this institution will be able to perform the overarching task of promoting democratic development through decentralization and de-concentration nationwide. The Committee may ultimately become an instrument to monitor and control local administration for some degree of political purpose.

In whatever manner this Committee ultimately functions, genuinely achieving the purpose of good governance will be a long and difficult road. The most challenging bottleneck is the lack of management resources, so its assumed progress will be slow. In addition, the lack of capacity in the matter of administrative and financial matters is a pressing challenge. Most council members have a low level of education; as a result, it can be problematic “to meet demands of their jobs; although they have numerous training provided by NGOs, and

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government Seila program” (CCC, 2004). Their management practices are often inherited from previous administrations, complicating efforts for the increased transparency and accountability. To address the issues, some external parties, development partner agencies, and the central government itself, should double their effort to help supply necessary resources and provide capacity building to ensure that the commune councils truly perform their work to serve the interest of local people. In light of this, Mansfield and MacLeon (2004) give that strong partnerships between civil society and commune councils will prove good representative governance addressing the needs of their constituencies.

Indeed, since Cambodia just emerged from decades of civil war, by and large, the reforms of the Cambodian decentralization could be complex, resulting in complications such as long post-conflict characteristics in administration, poor revenue collection, and heavy dependence on external funding and technical support (ADB, 2011). These challenges contribute to the constraints on an effective local service provision. The concept of the 2002 elected commune council was conducted to bring proximity of public service delivery to local people, but with “the minimally local programmable resources,” the development plan does not go so far (Romeo & Spyckerelle, 2003). The central government should consider providing necessary resources for local government to counter the slow progress of rural administrative and development work.

However, to help combat these challenges, the national government, working in partnership with other international development agencies, continues to commit every effort to build the commune council’s capacity as well as to supply technical support, in the hope that the path of good governance could be realized. So far, the implementation of such collaboration with concerned stakeholders proves to be a positive manifestation of RGC’s willingness to undergo public administration reform.

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25Seila, Foundation Stone, a rural development program of the Royal Government of Cambodia, is an aid mobilization and coordination framework, supports the country’s decentralization and de-concentration” reform. The program was launched in 1996 as a government poverty alleviation experiment in rural areas.
3.5 Commune Election

The National Election Committee (NEC) is responsible for organizing the Commune election to elect councilors. In previous practice; this responsibility was shouldered by the Ministry of Interior (Say, 2001 p. 435). To be more transparent in the election process, the existing Law on Election Commune/Sangkat Council allows the participation of an electoral observer to be present at polling stations (Article 148 & 149). Local non-governmental organizations or associations may be allowed to participate in the commune council election as an electoral observer in the election process. To some extent, civil society may worry that these electoral observers can lose their independence under the strict authority of the National Election Committee. So far, there has not been any case to justify this concern.

According to Article 22 of the same law, the election of the commune councils is held by proportional representation with closed party lists. This means that political parties nominate candidates and the local residents cast their votes for desired parties. This electoral mechanism could raise concerns that elected officials, representatives of collective constituencies, are more loyal to their political parties rather than serving common interests. To counter these potential problems, the MoI should establish a task force to assess and monitor the work of commune councils across the country. With budget constraints, it is unlikely to achieve such a goal.

Nevertheless, the trend of voters’ turn out had gradually dropped from year to year. Up to now, the commune councils have been elected three times, 2002, 2007, and 2012. The turnout in the 2007 commune election was 66% while the 2002 election was 87%. The recent turnout in the 2012 commune election declined even more just 64% (Patterson, 2012). There has not yet been any study looking into the reasons on this continuous decline in voters’ turnout. Though the three consecutive elections have achieved success so far, there are still many challenges in the operation of commune councils’ performance in handling wide range efficient service delivery and rural development.
3.6 Commune Council

According to Commune Law, commune councils are legal entities because a council is elected by “general, universal, free and fair, equal, direct and secret election within the framework of each commune/Sangkat” (Article 4).

Table 1. Statistics of Commune Councils and Councilors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No. Province</th>
<th>No. Commune Councils</th>
<th>No. Councilors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Banteay Meanchey</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Battambang</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>744</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kampong Cham</td>
<td>173</td>
<td>1335</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kampong Chhnang</td>
<td>69</td>
<td>415</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kapong Speu</td>
<td>87</td>
<td>605</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kapong Thom</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>575</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kampot</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>542</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kandal</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>1061</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Koh Kong</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kratie</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mondolkiri</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phnom Penh</td>
<td>76</td>
<td>652</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preah Vihear</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prey Veng</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>886</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pursat</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>339</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ratanakiri</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>251</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Siem Reap</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>668</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sihanouk ville</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steung Treng</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>176</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Svay Rieng</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>516</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Takeo</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>734</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Otdor Meanchey</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>152</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kep</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pailin</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A commune council has two main roles: commune affair and the agent of the central government (Mansfield and MacLeon, 2004 p. 6). For the local affair, the councils are to support good governance by managing existing resources, using it in a sustainable manner to meet the basic need of communes and to serve common interest of local people. In Article 22 of the Commune Law, the absolute majority of the entire commune council can set a valid decision on certain matters. The following require an absolute majority vote:

- Approval of the commune budget.
- Approval of commune development plan.
- Imposition of local fiscal taxes, non-local fiscal taxes, and other service fees.
- Internal rule, regulation and resolution.
- Any other related matter prescribed by a Minister of Interior.
- If upon any adoption, if there is an equal vote, the vote of a chairperson of the meeting shall be superior.

As an agent of the national government; working in collaboration with the local police department, the councils’ responsibilities are also to maintain security and social orders in their constituencies. This work often appears in a picture of reducing domestic violence, juvenile crimes, other delinquencies, and so on. Further, commune councils also serve as an important channel to disseminate effective law from the central government and to support and maintain public service delivery.

A council consists of five to eleven councilors depending, on the commune’s demographic and geographic condition (Article 12\(^{27}\)). The actual number of councilors of each commune is determined by a sub-decree of the national government, proposed by a Minister of Interior, but the already determined number of councilors may be changed by sub-decree

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\(^{26}\) In Article 13 of Commune Law, the chairperson refers to a position of commune chief who presides the council’s decision meeting over important commune’s affairs.

\(^{27}\) Commune Law 2001
following the proposal of a minister of interior depending on the change of demography and geography.

3.6.1 Capacity of Commune Council

Capacity issue has still become a grim symbol of commune administration. Law on Commune/Sangkat Council Election does not mention about the councilors’ educational qualification. Low formal education and little experience surely prove the difficulty for councilors to meet the demand of their jobs. Thus, it is a central theme for local development. So far, the central government and other stakeholders (international development agencies) have spent considerable effort establishing programs to enhance capacity for commune councils. To implement this, a more uniformed data-system should be established at local base nationwide so that the central government make sure what capacity building program would fit the implementation” (Ninh and Henke, 2005). If this issue is not solved immediately, there will be implications relative to the lack of “political distribution, checks and balances and democratic accountability of local elected office” (COMFREL, 2013). Capacity building will not be realized in a single day, but it will be realized as long as the central government and international development agencies continue to commit to this effort for a longer run.

3.6.2 Commune Chief

A commune chief serves as a presiding person in a commune council. The commune chief has two assistants, a first deputy assistant and a second deputy assistant. A chief has the right to appoint various committees to provide advice and assist necessary affairs. Citizens, who are entitled to vote, may become the chairperson of the above committees (Article 27). As a chief, he/she may also propose to form an advisory committee. Here are duties and responsibility of a commune chief (Article 39)28:

- Fully execute decision made by a commune council
- Implement rules and principles receive from the council
- Write reports on work performance to commune council at least once a month

28 Commune Law
- Raise recommendation and assist a commune council in preparing planning, finance and implement of role and function, and power of the commune council and other affairs that assigned to him/her by the council.

The salary of a commune chief is the responsibility of the central government. On August 31, 2012, a sub-decree released by the central government increased the salary of commune chiefs from 37.5 USD to 75 USD per month, while commune deputies’ salary increased from 30 USD to 60 USD per month (The Cambodian Daily, 2013). There has not yet been any study linking the effect of the salary level effect on the quality of public service delivery.

3.6.3 Commune Clerk

In an administrative setting, a clerk is assigned by the MoI to work as an administrative staff at the commune level. This position is a direct appointment by a minister of interior to assist and ensure the sustainability of administrative affairs at commune base. Therefore, a commune clerk is not a member of a commune council. Though he or she is appointed by the MoI, the work of a commune clerk must be neutral, and impartial toward all local villagers, political parties, councilors and commune committees. However, in severe cases, a commune clerk can be dismissed by a request made by a commune chief, following a decision of the commune council (Article 28). A commune council can hire employees that are outside the state framework to assist commune affairs. This employing must however be approved by a majority of commune councilors and that assistant’s employment status may or may not be extended decided by the council of the next mandate (Article 29). With severe commune budget constrain, this extra employment seems unlikely. In addition, it depends on the pressing workload that commune council considers the need of hiring more staff.

3.6.4 Village Chief

A village chief is a lowest grass-root administrative authority of a government. To assist a regular local election and to ensure local participation, commune council has to select village chiefs from villages in the territory of a commune. The minister of interior is empowered to issues a guideline on the qualifications of candidates for village chief, formalities and procedures for selection of village chief, the change of village chief and the appointment of assistants of a
village chief (Article 30). At this point, there seems not to have a clear guideline to select a village chief. In previous practice, village chiefs were selected by either a commune council or a commune chief. Currently, village chiefs shall have the following duties:

- Implement duties that is vested to him/her by a commune council
- Provide recommendation to the council on matter pertaining the interest of a village
- Seek advice from the council and a commune chief to manage, facilitate affairs in his/her village.

At the village level, there is also a village committee as implemented by an official policy of MoI since mid-2006. This committee consists of a village chief, a deputy and one assistant. The sub-degree released on August 31, 2012 also increases the monthly salary of village officials from 10 USD to 20 USD. Village chiefs can also be efficient focal persons for a commune outreach program. Once per month, commune councils have to meet, update, and educate their constituencies about social order and new public services. To keep people informed, village chiefs work to disseminate the information to villagers about the venue, purpose of up-coming meetings conducted by a commune council.

3.7 Power of Commune Councils

Important power rests in the hand of a commune council. As indicated in Article 22 of the Commune Law, a commune council has the power to decide many commune development projects, the commune’s budget, fiscal taxes, service fees, commune rules and resolutions. As a local-legal entity, in order to ensure safety and security, the council is empowered to issue rules, resolutions that can be only applicable within its jurisdiction. However, this legal decision must comply with the state law and the constitution.

3.7.1 Commune Council Resolution

Article 49 of the Commune Law gives the commune councils power to issue resolutions within its territory. By law, any issued resolution must not conflict with international treaties and

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29 Commune Law 2001
30 What follows is a general description of the functioning of communes. This will be helpful in understanding the civil registration system examined below.
conventions, the spirit of the constitution, laws, royal decrees, sub-decrees, proclamations and other legal instruments. Any resolution passed by a commune administration that is in conflict to the abovementioned legal instrument is to be considered null and void by the MoI. While the law gives much power to commune councils, this decentralized council has limited power over the followings:\(^{31}\):

- Forestry: the council cannot commercially decide anything related to forestry, on the contrary, the council is supposed to help protect and stop all the illegal deforestation within its territory.
- Postal and Telecommunication service: the council has no right to establish any postal service/office within its own territory.
- National Defense: the council must not recruit soldiers for whatsoever purpose.
- National Security: the council has no capacity to decide on any matter of national security, particularly, the commune share the border with neighboring countries.
- Monetary: the council has no right to order more printing of budget.
- Foreign Affairs: like national security, the council has no power on any international treaties or affairs.
- Fiscal Tax policy: the council must not formulate any taxing policy.

Besides, the minister of interior is responsible to examine the legality of management, exercise of powers and the implementation of roles and duties of each commune. He or she also assesses the interventions and supports to strengthen the capacity of management, exercise of power, the role to performance and duties of commune councils. The minister may also share power with officials representing the Royal Government at sub-national administration to assist him/her with the matters. In the case that a commune council commits activities against the Royal Government or against the Constitution, the minister of interior may immediately decide to dissolve that council (Article 58)\(^{32}\).

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\(^{31}\) Article 45 of Common Law 2001
\(^{32}\) Commune Law 2001
3.7.2 Development Plan

There are many development plans written in the Commune Law to meet national economic and social development plans. The commune’s development plan must be established in the form of feasible local participation. “Commune council shall prepare, adopt and implement commune development plans in an effort to identify perception, program, and development of its commune” (Article 60). Within these development plans, the council takes measures to evaluate the existing level of development, assemble all needs and prioritize those needs, to deliver services and launch development according to its budget within its jurisdiction (Article 63).

3.7.3 Commune Fund

To implement development plans and sustain both public and administrative services to their constituencies, commune councils need financial resources and staff to perform these tasks. Generally, commune councils have their own financial resources, budget and assets. The councils also have right to collect direct revenue from fiscal taxes, non-fiscal taxes and other service charges. Thus, commune councils can draw revenues from various sources as mentioned in the law. However, financial regime and asset management of a commune is supervised under the authority of the Ministry of Economy and Finance after reaching a principal agreement with the Ministry of Interior. As a result, substantial fund for commune councils is not solely from their own revenue but mainly is from Commune/Sangkat Fund. Commune Funds are in average ranging from US $5,000 to US $12,000 (Mansfield and MacLeon, 2004 p.11). Article 77 Commune Law states that:

Commune/Sangkat Fund shall be established. The Commune/Sangkat Fund is established for the purpose of transferring incomes from the national revenues and other incomes to commune budgets. The transfer of incomes from national revenues to the above fund shall be made following a formula of specific rate for at least three (3) years or for more five (5) year as determined by a sub-decree. The procedures for practical implementation of this Article shall be determined by a sub-decree (Article 77).

33 Commune Law 2001
34 Commune Law 2001
Sub-decree of Commune/Sangkat Financial Management System issued on April 02, 2002, states that commune councils have two main revenue components; recurrent revenues (Article 6) and capital revenues (Article 8). Recurrent Revenue consists of Local Taxes Revenues, Non-tax Revenues, and Commune/Sangkat Fund Transfer for General Administration, Agent Functions Revenues. On the other hand, capital revenue consists of Reserve Fund, Commune Fund Transfer for Local Development, and Contribution of Residents to Local Development Investment.

*Figure 4: Components of allocated financial resource in commune administration*

![Diagram showing the allocation of financial resources]

*Source: Decentralization Reforms and Commune-Level Service Delivery in Cambodia 2003 (p.7)*

**Administrative Expenditure**

The administrative expenditure consists of two components: Recurrent Expenditure and Capital Expenditure. Recurrent expenditure includes allowance to councilors while capital expenditure is a purchase expense on commune councils’ furniture, office equipment, major repair and maintenance work.

**Table 2. Administrative Expenditure**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recurrent Expenditure (Article 5)</th>
<th>Capital Expenditure (Article 7)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Related expense on staff salaries, rental of</td>
<td>Expenditure on office furniture and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>repair and maintenance work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Development Expenditure

Like administrative expenditures, development expenditure consists of two components: Recurrent Expenditure and Capital Expenditure.

### Table 3. Development Expenditure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recurrent Expenditure (Article 5)</th>
<th>Capital Expenditure (Article 7)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Expense on personnel and other related cost such as administrative operation of the local infrastructure, community development programs managed including education and information campaigns, environmental protection and natural resources management and other programs on welfare of local population.</td>
<td>Expense on local construction, and major repair and maintenance of: roads, bridges, markets, educational and healthcare facilities, community centers, irrigation networks and structures, agricultural storage facilities, water and power supply and other economic and social infrastructure.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Commune council has to prepare its annual budget plan; the budget plan has to be balanced between total income and expense. It is also possible for the council to increase its expenditure but this should be consistent to its revenue. Though commune councils are local entities, they do not have the power to borrow money or issue any assurances, loans or any other financial obligation (Article 80).

### 3.7.4 Local Revenue

With respect to commune finance, the Commune Law requires commune councils establish their financial resources, budget and assets. The main fund that commune councils receive from the national government is Commune/Sangkat Fund. Beside this fund, commune
councils can generate revenue through administrative fees such as registration fees, business related fees (Ninh and Henke, 2005 p. 35). The power of local revenue collection is granted in Article 74 of Commune Law. Commune councils may also generate fund from administrative fees, and local investment. In addition, with local development programs, commune councils receive funds non-governmental organizations (Mansfield and MacLeon, 2004).

3.7.5 Monitoring and Evaluation

According to Commune Law (Article 53), the minister of interior is tasked to establish procedures to follow-up and monitor general activities of commune councils. He/she works to examine the legality of management, exercise of power and implement the roles, examine the evolvement of capacity of commune, assess the intervention and support commune councils, strengthen the capacity of management, exercise of powers, and overall work performance.

3.7.6 Public Service Delivery

Traditionally, service functions are defined in a top-down fashion through lines of ministries/departments that receive fiscal funding for both capital and recurrent expenditure. Thus, there needs to be a de-concentration, devolution, and delegation of the service delivery chain in order to improve efficiency. Helling et al. (2005) advocates three key institutional delivery mechanisms: a sectoral approach; a community-based/driven approach; and a local government approach. Among these approaches, local government approaches are popular in developing countries to channel services to local people. However, Cheema (2013) argues, “local government although ideal for service delivery, always suffers from lack of adequate resources, leading to a tendency for other actors to play more significant roles in local service provision.”

In the Cambodian context, since the first mandate of commune elections, building capacity of the commune councils has become a primary goal of the Royal Government. After stakeholders perceived that local administrations are the most efficient channel of public service delivery, the RGC launched nationwide training courses to educate councilors about “their roles and responsibilities, planning, budgeting, general management and financial management” (Mansfield and MacLeon, 2004 p. 9). Yet, the local administrations’ capacity to deliver services and fight poverty is still a key issue.
Such capacity is currently constrained by a still embryonic local administration and by system-wide problems that include gaps in the regulatory framework, limited financial resources, lack of inter-communal arrangement that address the viability of individual jurisdiction, lack of an effective provincial system of state support and supervision...(Romeo & Spyckerelle, 2004 p.iii).

In relation to this matter, COMFREL (2007) shows several challenges on local public service delivery ranging from poor/unacceptable quality of service provision, unofficial payment, and the lack of delineation of mandatory and optional task in service provision. To overcome these bottlenecks, therefore, the central government shall continue the work to provide commune councils with adequate resource and help facilitate the coordination stakeholders (public sector, non-profit organization, business sector) to participate in providing a sustainable and standardized quality service in their locality.

3.8 Civil Registration

Civil registration is considered a crucially administrative service provided by commune authorities. It is one of the highly prioritized components in the decentralization and de-concentration reform in Cambodia (ADB, 2013). This service of civil registration provides benefits to citizens to gain their legal rights to access education, employment, family asset, and other public services. Article 43\textsuperscript{35} says that commune councils have to provide services that are responsive to the need of their constituencies, and assure that the local people have adequate access to such services. One of the decentralized public services is the civil registration service itself.

Civil registration is a system for recording, updating and maintaining the documents in relation to birth, marriage and death certificate. Article 2 of Sub-decree 103 on Civil Registration states that “Civil Registration is joint relations which attaches nationality, to the state and a specific person in his/her family line, in society and create his/her own rights and obligations.”

\textsuperscript{35} Commune Law 2001
**Birth Certificate:** Once a baby is born, parents are obligated to register him/her for birth certificate within 30 days in the presence of registrar at commune office. This service of provision birth certificate within 30 days will be free of charge (Article 17).

**Marriage Certificate:** Commune council has the authority to issue marriage certificate within its own jurisdiction. In order to obtain the marriage certificate, men and woman, who are willing to get married, have to file an application to commune registrar at the residence of a bride. Registrar\(^{36}\) will issue an announcement to the public of “marriage schedule ceremony to the public by posting one copy of the publication at the house and commune office in jurisdiction where woman concerned resides.” There are three more copies of this marriage schedule. One copy of publication will be sent to the commune registrar in the jurisdiction where a man concerned resides. Another one will be posted at the man’s house and one copy at the relevant commune office (Article 28 and 29)\(^{37}\).

**Death Certificate:** Article 35 of this sub-decree says soon after a person’s death, his/her relatives are obligated to report this to commune’s registrar at the deceased’s permanent residence. The registration of this death certificate is requested within 15 days after the death of that person. The main purpose of the death certificate is to complete legal individuality and to protect the interest of that deceased person. Over the years, the number of registered and certified births, marriages, and deaths is increasing, average growth from 2010 to 2012, from 30% to 40% as indicated in the table below (ADB, 2013).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Birth</th>
<th>Marriage</th>
<th>Death</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>225,574</td>
<td>25,367</td>
<td>10,997</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011</td>
<td>244,716</td>
<td>34,679</td>
<td>13,412</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>370,345</td>
<td>49,687</td>
<td>19,000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: ADB: Performance Evaluation Report 2013, p. 13*

\(^{36}\) Registrar is usually a commune chief. However, sometime, the commune chief delegates the work to a commune clerk or a counselor who are entrusted by the commune chief.

\(^{37}\) Sub-decree 103 on Civil Registration states
The power to issue the civil registration is in the hand of commune councils themselves. This service is one of the core-administrative services that central government delegated to the local government right after the first commune council election. On August 01 2002, the Royal Government launched “a uniform civil registration system” across the country and it planned to register the entire population by 2005 (Ahmed, undated). However, two years passed, there was only 5% of the whole population obtained their civil status documents. In order to assure the goal to register entire population into this new civil registration system, the Royal Government, in partnership with Asian Development Bank and other donors started to launch a Mobile National Civil Registration Project (MNCR) in the country. The question arises, before the 2002 commune council election; did the government already have a civil registration system nationwide put in place?

3.8.1 Civil Registry prior to 2002 Commune Election

Before the civil war, Cambodia had civil registration system and civil code (Sophat, N.D). This civil code was the backbone formalities and procedures for the civil registration implementation. Unfortunately, from midst 1960s, the civil war began, insecurity occurred across the countries. So, most of civil registration services were to provide in provincial and municipal administration. In 1975-1979, the Communist, Khmer Rouge, took over the country, wiped out all civil document systems in the purpose to start the country from year zero38

Then from 1979 onwards, there was inconsistent civil registration system nationwide. Provincial and municipal authority across the country operated this service differently according to their own usual management of keeping civil documents. In other words, there was no uniformed civil registration system. Until December 2000, Sub-decree 103 was promulgated stipulating the uniformity of recording birth, marriage and death certificate. The new system was fully launched on August 01, 2002 under the responsibility of newly elected commune councils.

38 “Year Zero” is a revolutionary analogy that the Khmer communist adopted right after they took power in Cambodia from 1975-1979. The notion of Year Zero is to destroy cultural, traditional, administrative elements of previous regime. This new communist regime wanted to plant a new revolutionary culture in Cambodia.
3.8.2 Joint Prakas (Declaration) on Public Service Fees

Before, there was no uniformity of public service fee in many parts of the country. This means fees were set by individual local officials. As a result, some communes charged less, others charged more. On December 2, 2013, the Ministry of Interior issued a Joint Declaration with the Ministry of Economy and Finance on public service fees, the duration of service provision, and validation in accordance with the types of administrative documents as shown in Table 5 below.

This declaration (Prakas) stipulates that the commune councils, and municipal, provincial, district governments post fees of public services on the information boards at their offices (Provision 2). The Prakas also requires all levels of sub-governments establish a monitoring and assessing system to deal with irregularities of service provision within their territorial jurisdiction. It is worth noting that in relations to the civil registration service, the Prakas stipulates the exact service fee to only certain provinces. These are Rattanakiri, Mondulkiri, Stueng Treng, Preah Vihea and Banteay Meanchey. This illustrates that these kinds of public service fees may not be applicable nationwide. It is not known about the motivation underlying the inter-ministerial decision to set the civil registration fees for only those five provinces. Therefore, the communes located in other provinces still have to follow the stipulations of Sub-Decree 103.

In addition, the Prakas states that for all means of revenue collection from administrative services, the local governments are required to provide authorizing receipts issued by the Office of Economy and Finance (Provision 5). Meanwhile, the commune administrations have to produce reports on the monthly and annual revenue that has been collected, and these reports are to be sent to the Office of Economy and Finance in their respective provinces, on or before the 10th day of each month (for monthly reports), and on or before January 15th each year (for annual reports).

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39 The Declaration (Prakas) of Inter-Ministries was designed to determine some public service fees at sub-national governments. The Prakas is joined between Minister of Interior and Minister of Economy and Finance.
Table 5. Civil Registration Service Fee

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Fees (Riel)</th>
<th>Duration</th>
<th>Validation</th>
<th>No.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Copy of birth and certified birth certificate</td>
<td>3000R</td>
<td>3 days</td>
<td>permanent</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Copy of marriage and certified marriage certificate</td>
<td>3000R</td>
<td>3 days</td>
<td>permanent</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Copy of death and certified death certificate</td>
<td>3000R</td>
<td>3 days</td>
<td>permanent</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Inter-ministerial Declaration on Service Provision at Sub-national Administration (Issued on 12/02/2013)

Chapter IV. Field Observation

Data collection was taken in the whole month of June 2014. Field data collection included interviews, a survey, and observation at the commune of Koymeng, Mongkolborey District, Cambodia. Observation is helpful in understanding the context in which surveys and interviews are conducted. Creswell (2007 p. 134) gives observing is a set skill that helps address “potential deception of the people being interviewed, impression management, and potential marginality of researcher in a strange setting.” I began the data collection in June 2014. First, I began contacting participants and a research assistant. Then I distributed questionnaires to commune residents. Four areas impressed me as valuable to observe, record, and reflect on to help interpret what was learned in the interviews and survey. These subjects of interest for observation are: (1) Service-seekers, (2) Commune staff, (3) Survey participants, (4) Commune Building issue.

4.1 Service-seekers

Service-seekers here refer to villagers who are residing in this commune. I noted three areas relating to these residents: time spent at the office, age, and kinds of services that were sought. This note provides clear information on the quality of daily interaction between service administrators and clients/villagers; how they conduct their commune-based administrative business.

4.1.1 Morning Office Service

At the field site, I observed many villagers came to the commune office only in the morning from 8:00 am to 12:00 PM. This is perhaps because villagers know the time that commune administrators (commune clerk) comes to open the office. The average numbers of
these villagers visiting per day ranges between five and ten, coming for various services. Generally, the commune clerk is the first person that clients come for because she is a chief person managing various administrative services. In general, it is common for villagers to feign politeness in their interaction with commune administrators, so that they can receive services quicker. Based on the villagers’ familiarity with the clerks and processes, I assumed that many of them had come to the commune office for one or more services in the past. At the commune office, each of them spent about 45 minutes to one hour for their business with the commune clerk. This time duration was for the administrative process. For example, administrators checked service-seekers’ identification cards and supporting documents; asked related questions. After the completion of filling a civil registration form, the administrator processed it to get approval from the commune chief. Finally, the commune clerk stamped the documents. However, it was frequently the case that the commune chief was not at the office or he was late due to other official business. Thus, the time spent to get this service done might be extended.

To share administrative work and to speed up the completion of the service, commune clerk has to share some tasks with a commune assistant and one of the councilors. At the commune, I did not see any offices or rooms reserved for them to conduct their business. Both commune officials and service-seekers sat around a long table with several chairs in an open space. I felt concerned about their ability to conduct private business in such an open atmosphere.

Villagers now come to the commune office with their documents in a secure folder. I believe that these documents are prerequisites for requested services. This indicates that villagers somehow know the requirement process of requesting the services or they probably have experienced that without these documents, they could not obtain the desired service. I was told that previously these same villagers came empty-handed, without knowing the requirement and process of requesting services. To this end, I believe village-based outreach program plays an important part of increasing their knowledge on the service requesting process. So far, I did not see any posters or distributed materials for aiding villagers in knowing what kinds of supporting documents are required to request civil registration services.
4.1.2 Age of Service-Seekers

Through the whole month of June, I observed that most villagers came for administrative services, were between fifty and seventy years old. Many young people residing in this province, sharing the border with Thailand, migrated to work in Thailand in large numbers where wages are better. In the year 2010, there is an estimation of 350,400 young people migrate abroad to seek jobs (Tunon & Rim, 2013). According to local knowledge, these young people (age 18-30) return homes only for holidays and religious events. As a result, older people, with their grandchildren, are often left home and are thus the ones who seek services at the commune.

4.1.3 Kinds of administrative services

Not all these villagers came to seek only for civil registration service. Their purposes of coming to the commune office were diverse. Some of them came for the consultation on domestic violence, some came for obtaining paperwork approval from commune chief on the financial matter relative to micro-finance bank, and some came for the solution of land conflict or the settlement of real-estate matter whose paperwork had to be processed by commune authorities. Among these villagers, the majority came to the commune office, sought civil registration service. According to the local knowledge, in the dry season, from November to May, it is a high season for marriage. Thus, the commune administrators are quite busy to provide marriage certificates within this period.

With respect to office work, commune clerk serves as both a receptionist and a commune chief’s secretary. Therefore, service-seekers somehow have to make initial contact with the clerk. If the clerk is absent, work is to be delegated to commune assistant whose task is to support both commune chief’s work and commune clerk’s work. Therefore, the assistant has two direct supervisors, the commune clerk and the commune chief.

4.2 Commune Staff

Like other communes across the country, Koymeng commune council has similar structure that aligning with the Law on Commune/Sangkat Administrative Management. Local
villagers residing within commune’s territory elect these councilors but the central government pays them their payrolls. After the commune election held every five years, the council has to meet and develops plans as mentioned in the Commune Law. Noticeably, commune staff workforce mainly is divided in two: Administrative staff and development staff.

4.2.1 Commune Chief

By law, commune chief serves as a president of commune council consisting of seven councilors elected by residents of this commune. This commune’s current chief has served the commune for two successive mandates. The first and second mandate, he served as a council member within the same commune. Within this third mandate beginning from 2012, he was elected to serve as a commune chief presiding the work of commune council. In his political life, he has been a member of the ruling party, the Cambodian People Party (CPP). Remarkably, the CPP “has gained up to 72% of the commune/Sangkat councilor seats and it is to control up to 1,592 out of the country’s 1,633 commune/Sangkat chief positions. 22 chief positions or only 1.4% has fallen to Sam Rainsy Party and 18 positions to Human Rights Party” (WMC, 2012 p.6). Later on, these two opposition party merged into a new and biggest opposition party namely Cambodia National Rescue Party (CNRP) on July 17, 2012. Likewise, among the seven councilors in this commune, there is only one councilor elected by the minority CNRP. The rest are members, selected by the ruling CPP. Therefore, it is my preliminary assumption that the CPP councilors dominate decisions regarding administration and development, due to its majority status.

4.2.2 Administrative staff

At the commune office, I saw three operational administrative staff, a female commune clerk, a male commune assistant, and a male commune councilor, worked side by side. There was a long table with five to six chairs, located in an open space of a bigger room located on the ground floor of the commune office, where the commune clerk and the other two staff administer services. Their interaction with clients every now and then is friendly and sometimes is not. I could not determine the reason.
The current clerk is young, graduated with a bachelor degree of Business Administration from a provincial university. She was educated in using computer and printer for administrative work; adroit at general commune-based administration. I was informed that she had several years of administrative work experience. Prior to her current position, she had worked for many years at the district administration. As a clerk, she has many roles. She frequently serves as a receptionist. Thus, she is the first one to whom villagers talk. She is the only person who represents the commune chief in the matter of general administration. The administrative services that she provides range from civil registration, residential certificate, real-estate clearance, and monthly pay roll for commune officials. The clerk is also responsible for keeping all types of administrative records in a secure place. She is also in charge to keep a commune stamp when is needed.

The other two staff, a commune assistant and a commune councilor, allocated by the commune chief, are to support the administrative work of the commune clerk as required. They appeared to be daily busy according to the number of service-seekers. For example, when 20 to 30 service-seekers come for services the two have to help the work as assigned by the commune clerk. This is not normal. This may happen three to four times a year. Therefore, through the observation, to complete one service would take from 30 minutes to a few hours depending on the kind of services. The two men are in their 50s; they are not knowledgeable about how to use modern office equipment such as a computer or printer. However, they are experienced with the process of administering various commune-based services and possess a good skill of interaction with the residents. Since the computer and printer is private property and only available to the commune clerk, the two men must complete handwritten paperwork. When monthly outreach is conducted at villages, the three staff participate to inform villagers about the importance of using correct names, residential addresses, and the processes for obtaining civil registration. Normally, the commune assistant has to stay at the office to receive villagers seeking services.

4.2.3 Development staff

Unlike commune administrative staff, development staff essentially consists of elected councilors. As assigned by the commune chief, their work is to implement the commune development plan that is prepared and approved by the council. The development plan includes
road building, dams and irrigation construction, bridges, culverts, and commune health center, etc. Among the seven elected councilors, five of them are assigned to work in these projects spearheaded by the commune chief. Therefore, these people did not fully answer to questions related to civil registration service because it is not in their area of expertise. In the course of my stay, I met these individual councilors only one time for the interview and I did not ask for the details of their daily-based work.

### 4.2.4 Chief of Commune woman’s affairs Section

One of the commune councilors, a first deputy chief of the commune, serves as a chief of commune woman’s affairs section. I do not see how any staff working within this section. Notably, I did not see the office or room of this section either. However, I was told that the work of this section get funding from provincial office of woman’s affairs that work to promote woman’s right in a local administration. This work is varied. The works of this section is to support women not only for the promotion of their rights but to support their welfare. For example, the section works closely with the commune health center to inform women how to maintain pregnancy care, safe birth delivery and post-birth delivery disease prevention, etc.

More importantly, this section also works closely with security section (commune police post) to prevent domestic violence against women and children. To implement this, particularly, during the commune outreach at a village-based meeting, the section, headed by that deputy chief of the commune, educates villagers how to seek legal support and solution in case there is a domestic violence. I believe this section within the commune plays a very important role to reduce domestic violence through village-based informal education. However, it is a short-term project of the RGC, in partnership with international agencies and other stakeholders, launched to reduce domestic violence in Cambodian rural. How this project is evaluated is unknown.

### 4.3 Moods of villager participants

June 2014 was very humid and rainy in Cambodia. My assistant and I decided to go to the first village of the commune, Sdie Leu, and selected households as planned. At my first contact with the household, my assistant presented me to the family. The first person we met was an elder, in her 60s, looking after little grandchildren whose parents went to work in Thailand. Her
husband died a few years before. Now she is in charge of the household. Luckily, she was able to read and write. For clarity, I asked my assistant to explain our objective to her in detail. The assistant read her a letter of consent and the purpose of the study. Then, after a few minutes, she agreed to participate in the survey. As planned, we left the questionnaire with her for two days and told her we would return to collect it. Before, we were ready to leave for another household, we provided her with our contact details so she would be able to contact us if she had any questions.

From first village to the last, I found that most of them were cautious. Nevertheless, after we read the consent letter and explained the project, they were on board with providing us information for the study. Their hesitancy was understandable because the residents have had a history of matters regarding land conflicts. For them to sign any documents, they must feel sure that their sensitive information was safe and protected. I am thankful that my research assistant was there to help provide the reassurance. They perhaps looked to my assistant as the assurance of what we were doing. Thus, my research assistant is very helpful in regard. The things that the assistant provided me were to acquaint the physical villages and to facilitate the contact from household to household.

Along with data collection, I did not want any commune officials to accompany me due to three motives. First, I wanted to consistently keep the respondents’ information confidential as I promised them in the consent letters. Secondly, having a commune official with us would have made the participants feel quite pressured and so as they had no choice to participate because they would fear the commune officials. Third, I would have to financially compensate the officials for their time. For these reasons, I decided against having an official helping familiarize me to the participants.

While most of them felt reluctant to fill in the questionnaire, a few families happily agreed to participate. These families were those who had more education and good relationships with the commune council. Consequently, we did not need to read the consent letters. We gave them both a consent letter and questionnaire. They could fill the questionnaires by themselves without additional explanation. Like others, we left questionnaires with them for two days and
gave them our contact details in case they did not understand. We spent one day for each village and eight days for eight villages and two consecutive days for the collection of questionnaires.

To conclude, 59 questionnaires were able to be collected. Yet, among these participants of the commune, there were 18 that needed assistance filling out the questionnaires. Five of them were illiterate and the rest were uncertain of the meaning of questions. For example, these participants were not sure of the question “What has changed and what has not?” In Khmer translation, this question possibly was not clear enough because the term “change” itself is very broad. It could refer to policy, administration, paperwork, or the character of administrators, etc. I sat down and explained to them that “change” referred to the quality of the service, for example, whether the product of the service is accurate, neat, typed and printed.

Fortunately, among the 59 participants, there was only one who rejected the participation of this study. A man in his 50s, residing in Phlov Siem village, declined to participate. His only reasoning was that he was not knowledgeable about the work of the commune and never requested any services from the commune before. Later on, I was informed the household had issues about the land conflicts and the commune council was not helpful when the man sought all means of the solutions from local administrators. In practice, he was directed to take the case to a court. As a result, I understood that the man was upset with local authority, so that he decided not to participate in the study.

**Challenges:** In hindsight, I think the only challenge I faced in the fieldwork was spending a long time with each household to explain the purpose of study. We spent around 45-60 minutes first to build rapport and then we began our business of reading the consent letter and questions to make sure they understand. This time was mostly spent on the process, interaction, explanation and so on. Then, we left the questionnaires with them. However, when we returned to collect, some did not finish and needed our help for further clarity. Secondly, since I was new to the village, it was hard to earn their trust with just words and paper (letter of consent). These were not enough, but with help from my assistant, we were able to convince them to participate in the study.
The last challenge was that many of participants were older women, could read little, staying at home while their husbands and children went to work in Thailand. Their main work at home was to look after grandchildren. In Cambodia, men have more power to decide important household business. Therefore, those women felt reluctant to decide to participate in the study because their men were far away or died in the civil war. As a result of this, we spent more time explaining and convincing them about the project.

4.4 Commune Office Building

The commune building is the central administrative office where commune residents come to seek one or another services. The existing and temporary commune office building is located in the village of Sdei Kroam but this office building is rented. It has two floors. The first floor is reserved for administrative office and the second floor is for council meeting. According to the Law on Commune/Sangkat Administrative Management, commune councils must have a meeting at least once per month. In an interview, the commune chief mentioned that in the past, there were many relocations of office building from one village to another. In fact, the council has limited financial resources to build its own office even though one plot of land is reserved for the office construction. According to the commune chief, the village of Koymeng would be selected because this village is the central place all commune residents may easily access.

4.4.1 Small space

The current office is close to the side of the road, surrounded by villagers’ houses, which enable the accessibility of villagers to request services. The problem, however, is that the police post shares the space with the commune administrative office, which would potentially render difficulty for storing for large numbers of documents. In addition, with this small administrative space the villagers, who have domestic problem, would encounter a lack of privacy. However, with respect to the administrative work, they have made much progress over the years compared to the first mandate of commune councils (2002-2007).
4.4.2 Alternative Commune Office and Local Financial Contribution

There have been three mandates by the central government through the MoI for the construction of an office building. It has been already the third mandate and there seems to be no sign of any financial commitment. At present, the commune council is worried about the expiration of the rental contract. When the rental contract expires, the council would encounter the challenges of seeking a new place to run their business.

In the interview, I was informed by the commune chief about two places that could be considered for a temporary working-meeting place. The first choice is an available building in a pagoda situated in the village of Plov Siem. In the past, the pagoda was a central place where villagers met and discussed matters pertaining to the security in their community. This practice is still considered today. Therefore, taking a building at the pagoda to run temporary commune work could be the most feasible. The second choice is the commune chief’s residence. This means that when people want to seek administrative service, they have to go to the commune chief’s house. This would be the possibility because some communes already follow this practice until they have enough funds transferred from the central government for a building construction.

For a longer term, the council will not be still waiting for such a financial commitment from MoI. They now appropriate their own budget plan to build a permanent office building. As far as I know, this commune council has some budget for the construction; but that is not enough. They still need more money to build. The only way is therefore to propose a plan to local residents and ask them to contribute according their financial ability. On the other hand, the commune council members themselves try to seek a partnership with other non-profit/ or religious organizations to help share the financial burden for the construction. In this context, I view the financial challenge the council faces may turn a positive indication that the council is mature enough to orchestrate funding resources within the ambit of their power. The ability to do so is aligning with the goal of local decentralization.
Chapter V. Methodology

In this study, both primary and secondary sources are used. The primary data were collected in Cambodia during the summer of 2014. Two methods of primary data collection were used. The first was to administer questionnaires to local villagers (service clients). The second method was to conduct in-depth interviews with commune councils and clerk who daily run this administrative service. Secondary data were also used, retrieved from online government reports, non-profit organization reports, case studies, journals, books; and other published academic sources. Journals and books are collected from Hamilton Library at the University of Hawai‘i.

5.1 Primary Data

Koymeng Commune is in Banteay Meanchey Province, North-West Cambodia. From the Capital city, it is approximately 380 kilometers in distance. This commune is one of thirteen communes in Mongkolborey District. The main reason to select this commune is its rural nature, which allows the study to look closely at the progress in quality of commune service delivery in a Cambodian rural setting. This rural commune administration is a good place to investigate because it is far from urban areas, and hypothetically is less developed in both economic and administrative status.

Interviews

Fieldwork was conducted for four weeks in June 2014. Research tools in this commune included in-depth interviews, and open-ended questionnaires. In-depth interviews were conducted with one commune chief; six council members, a commune clerk, and a commune assistant in total nine interviewees. Each interview took 30 to 40 minutes conducted at the commune office.

Survey Participants

The questionnaire was administered using households as sampling units. There are eight villages in this commune. Questionnaires were delivered to seven randomly selected household service receivers in each village. Participants completing the questionnaire had to be residents living in this commune for the last 12 years and be between the ages of 30 and 70. Among these
After the completion of the interviewing with commune officials on June 10th the work of questionnaire distribution was begun with a research assistant. He is a prominent resident residing in this commune. He has no administrative position in the commune; he however is perhaps well-known among villagers for his community service as one of the religious leaders. In his 50s, he earns respect from villagers as well as commune administrators. I knew him through my previous work. Before we began the work, we had to make sure that local authorities (commune administrators and local police) approved our request of data collection from village participants. Since we built good rapport earlier with these commune officials, we were free to distribute questionnaires starting from the first to the last village of the commune.

The questionnaires distribution began by selecting seven households within one village. We moved from the village of Sdei Leu, the first village of the commune; to the last village, Angkor Khmau. There are eight villages located in this commune. First, we gave seven questionnaires in each village; except, Stueng Chas village, where the population of this village is almost double (332 households) while other villages, in average; have the population of around 180 to 200 households. I therefore added three more questionnaires to make a total of ten for this village. In total, 59 questionnaires were distributed. The participants, selected from each household, must be long-time residents of the commune and their age must be between 30 and 70 years old.

5.1.1 **Method of Interview Data Analysis**

The interview took place at the commune office. All nine commune officials were interviewed separately. The interview was tape-recorded and then transcribed into a written English text. The texts were then analyzed using content data analysis. Content analysis is a “research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns” (Hseih & Shannon, 2005, p. 1278). This involved first reading through the texts to become familiar with

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40 See table 6
the contents, then creating categories for coding. Responses were coded into categories. This produced the frequency tables, to which percentages have been added. Normally, coding is done by two people to allow a test of inter-coder reliability. This is not done here because at that moment there was no person who was knowledgeable about the data coding processes. Last, data were presented under four themes as follows: (1) Service visibility, (2) Value of the service, (3) Experience of Service, (4) Service Improvement. The questions were structured with closed and open-ended questions. *For interview questions, see Appendix C.*

### 5.1.2 Method of Survey Data Analysis

After the interviews with commune officials, survey questionnaires were distributed to residents of eight villages within that commune. The questions were structured with closed and open-ended questions. (*For survey questionnaires, see Appendix D.*) Following the collection of data, data were managed in files according to names of villages. The open-ended responses needed to be translated from Khmer into English before coding. Like the interview data analysis process, the survey data were analyzed using content analysis, using the process employed for the interviews. Lastly, the data were presented in tables under four main themes as follows: (1) Service visibility, (2) Value of the service, (3) Experience of Service, (4) Service Improvement.

### 5.1.3 Data Analysis Reliability

Creswell (2007, p. 207) gives that validation strategies in qualitative research allows most researchers to explore “accuracy” in their studies. These strategies are: triangulation, peer review or debriefing, refining hypothesis, clarifying researcher bias, soliciting participants’ views of credibility, transferability, and external audits. He further suggests that qualitative researchers should engage at least two strategies in any given study.

Here, two validation strategies, triangulation and debriefing, were used for data analysis validation. First, triangulation is the validation strategy that “multiple and different sources, methods, investigators, and theories provide corroborating evidence” (Creswell, 2007 p.208). Interview, survey, and observation were used in this case study. Meanwhile, peer review or debriefing was also used. In the course of data analysis, there was no peer able to work on this project. Many could not understand the Khmer language nor were they knowledgeable about the
data coding process. However, after the survey, data were translated from Khmer into written English texts, consultation with the research supervisor and research committee was sought regarding the analysis and data presentation. The supervisor provided timely corrections, advice and comments on how data were coded, categorized and presented. Thus, the meetings with both the supervisor and the committee could best be represented the validation strategy in the sense of peer review or debriefing.

5.2 Secondary Data

The secondary data is mainly desk research consisting of recent non-government organization reports published by development partners, coupled with other legal instruments, such as D&D\(^{41}\) or Organic Law (2008), Commune/Sangkart Administrative Management (Commune Law), Law on Commune/Sangkat Election, Public Finance Law (2008), and other legal instruments officially published by the Royal Government of Cambodia. Journals and books were also accessed for the literature review that is the backbone of this research thesis.

5.3 Confidentiality

On May 2, 2014, this data collection method was approved by University of Hawai‘i: Human Study Program as exempt from federal program pertaining to the protection of human research participants. To comply with their requirements, names of the participants in this qualitative technique must be kept confidential. Before the interview, the principal investigator, introduced the purpose of the study and delivered consent forms to check if they agreed to participate in the study. After finishing the interview, participants were invited to share any concerns or questions relating to things in the study. As part of the protocol, refreshments and small gifts were given to all participants. After the overall study, their interviewing records and other related information which leads to their identities will be destroyed.

5.4 Significance of Study

This research topic is to compare perceptions of progress in the quality of civil registration service between the commune administrators and service receivers. I believe it is important to

\(^{41}\) D&D Law is commonly used in Cambodian decentralized context standing for Decentralization and De-concentration Law. This law was passed in 2008 after six years of commune election.
check whether this kind of public service provision improves, stays the same or slides back. The result of this study is expected to provide suggestions, point out appropriate policies to promote the quality of local service provision in the area of local administrative services, and suggest efficient decentralization focusing on citizens’ participation at the commune level in Cambodia. In addition, the paper will serve as an academic achievement archived at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa. The study will also aid as a reference for graduate students, researchers and faculty staff whose interest falls in local service delivery.

5.5 Scope and limitations of Study

Although conditions were favorable for conducting this research successfully, limitations still are unavoidable. First, at the field site, challenges occurred when seeking accurate information from commune councilors due to strong, local political influence. In the commune, 6 out of 7 councilors are members of Cambodian People’s Party. Therefore, some questions pertaining to political sensitivity were not asked. Second, the timeframe for the fieldwork was short (four weeks). With this period, it would not be possible to enlarge the scope of this study. Last, secondary data (the commune’s annual report of administrative activities) could not be accessed. Finally, as discussed more fully below, this is a case study, and therefore not representative of Cambodia in general.

Once per month the commune clerk has to submit reports to the upper-level administration (district level). When asked for the reports the commune clerk said she did not have them at the commune for this time being. It seemed that both commune chief and the clerk could help access these data of civil registration statistics but they may not want to help nor did they have much time for the study. However, at the commune office, only basic information was given by a commune clerk. The information contains basic commune boundary and population statistics. It should be noted that once the commune councils send their annual reports to district administration, it would be difficult to access these documents for many reasons, such as the documents continued to be sent to the upper-level of administration (provincial administration or the Ministry of Interior.) However, by law, the commune councils should leave one copy of the report at the office. When asked about it, they informed that there was no such monthly report.
Chapter VI. Data Presentation and Interpretation

In this section, the presentation of the data is done through two sub-sections. First, the interview data (perception of local administrators on CRS\textsuperscript{42}) is summarized followed by data interpretation. The second sub-section summarizes the survey questionnaires (perception of villagers on CRS) followed by interpretation. Both summaries are based on four themes that are used in structured interview questions and structured survey questionnaires (see appendix C and Appendix D). These are: (1) Service visibility, (2) Value of the service, (3) Experience, (4) Improvement of the service.

6.1 Summary of Interviews with Local Administrators

In early June 2014, the interviews with commune administrators were conducted. The participants consisted of seven commune councilors, one commune clerk, and one commune assistant. There are nine administrators in total. Among these administrators, the commune clerk is the only one who completed higher education at a provincial university, while the others have no university degree but many years of experience serving in this commune. For example, the current commune chief served as a commune councilor for two terms before he was elected as a commune chief in the third term. The followings are the tables of their responses to 11 questions based on the four themes shown below. (See Appendix C.)

Service Visibility

*Table 1. Do you think the civil registration service provided by the Commune Council is well known among the local residents?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Villagers realize the importance of CRS</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villagers understand better now</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More and more people come to request this CRS</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most people lack the understanding of the importance of this CRS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Villagers do not pay much attention to the importance of CRS</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\textsuperscript{42} CRS stands for Civil Registration Service.
The first question asked administrators whether villagers know the civil registration service (CRS) existing in their commune. There are five categories with 14 responses. The majority of the responses emphasize that local villagers understand better the importance of CRS compared to the first mandate of the commune council. These clusters of responses imply that villagers know the service availability in the commune. However, the other two clusters below show that, while villagers know about the availability of the service, some may not be sure of the importance of these civil registration documents.

Table 2. How do local residents know about this kind of service?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Through the outreach program provided by commune council</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct practice of service provision</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOs, other stakeholders such as police office</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile Unit of CR* registrar 2003-2004</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from external NGOs (Plan)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass Media</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Asking about the means how the service is visible, there are 14 responses within six categories. Remarkably, an overwhelming majority of responses agree that villagers know the CRS through the outreach effort. The remaining responses are quite diverse with one response each. Villagers know about the service through direct practice[^43^], stakeholders, CRS mobile unit[^44^], mass media, and NGOs. One of the councilors, in the course of the interview, vividly told that in the first mandate of the commune council, an NGO, named PLAN, collaborated with the commune authorities to work on both civil registration services and rural development projects.

[^43^]: Direct practice could refer to casual conversation, which conveys the information of CRS to another villager.
[^44^]: This project was operated with funds from ADB in early stage of commune council (2002-2007). According to the interview, this CRS mobile unit was not effectively functional. First, the administrators themselves were not well trained enough. Second, people (villagers) did not understand the importance of the civil documents; as a result, they lost these documents. This was simply because there was no village-based outreach or information dissemination before they launched the CRS mobile operation. Third, mobile unit administrators did not have good record system to store the data of their work.
Table 3. What are these activities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commune officials meet villagers and conduct village-based meeting</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preparation such as poster, white papers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Village chief relay the information</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work in partnership with other community stakeholders</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educate village chief first</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do not know</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>15</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Three clusters of the responses focus on village-based outreach through preparation process and through informing village chiefs\(^{45}\) to convey information about the venue and date of the meeting. Meanwhile, individual responses mention about their partnership working with local NGOs, and stakeholders to inform the people. Noticeably, one of the responses is “Do not know” which means that one of the councilors is not familiar with the process of the CRS. The reason is that he is assigned to work in the area of local development project. Thus, he is not familiar with this administrative work.

**Interpretation**

Most commune officials agreed that villagers now fully know CRS is available in their commune. According to these local administrators’ responses, village-based outreach meeting is the main and effective channel to disseminate the information and improve the equitable access to the service. Commune officials believe that though some villagers know about the availability of the service through other means, such as mobile unit, and mass media, the knowledge that they gain is not as solid as what they are directly experience the two-way communication with service administrators at the village-based meeting.

**Value of Service**

(a) Do you have any outreach activities that help them become aware of the service?

\(^{45}\) In this case, village chiefs work as messengers and facilitators to disseminate the information to their villagers. They have to make sure venue within their village is available for the outreach purpose.
A. Yes, ☑️ (9 responses)
B. No ☐️

Responding to the first question (a), all nine respondents agree outreach activities assist villagers become more aware of the availability of the service.

Table 4. (b) Do you think that local residents believe this service is valuable?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They (local residents) believe the service is very valuable</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To request other official documents, CR must be basically required</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They know better now⁴⁶</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Responses to question (b), are presented in the table 4 and demonstrate that the majority commune administrators perceived that local citizens recognize the service is very valuable. Here, it is the opinion of commune officials, not local residents. Three responses show that in order to request other officially civil documents⁴⁷, CRS is needed.

How valuable do you think local resident think the service is?

C. Very valuable ☑️ (9 responses)
D. Valuable ☐️
E. Not valuable ☐️

The nine administrators together agree that the service of civil registration is very valuable to villagers. They believe that CRS is essentially helpful to villagers in many areas ranging from ID request, traveling purposes, education, and other business documents.

Table 5. What do you think is the most important aspect that local resident obtain CRS?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

⁴⁶ Since villagers know the importance of these civil documents, unlike before, the period of mobile unit service provision, they are now carefully storing these documents for various purposes.
⁴⁷ Official documents here refer to ID, passports, and real-estate documents.
Table 5. Here, described the commune officials’ opinion about the local residents’ perception regarding the CRS. According to the interview, many commune officials observe that family records, IDs, passport, and real-estate certificates are categorized as the most important aspect and as motivating factors of obtaining CRS sought by local residents, while the other clusters are second in importance. Here villagers request birth or marriage certificates for their children, not for themselves. Interestingly, job application and school registration are second in importance.

Interpretation

Local administrators acknowledged that CRS is the basic document required for other official documents. Without these civil documents, it is impossible for villagers to file for other business documents such as IDs, real-estate certificates, passports, residential records, and so on. This is true. In the commune, there is a large number of younger residents migrating to work in neighboring countries. These people (aged 18-35) need civil registration documents to apply for visas and passports. Aside from immigration purposes, most villagers need CRS to apply for real-estate certificates. In recent years, land conflicts have become of central concern in many parts of the country. This prompts many villagers to obtain legal documents to safeguard their properties. Another important aspect of obtaining CRS is relative to schooling registration. Many parents, prior to sending their children to go to school, must possess birth certificates for them and their children\(^{48}\) to enable them to register for school. This implies that local administrators have to make sure that everyone gain equitable access and continue to carry out widely disseminate information in their territory.

\(^{48}\) Sometimes, parents use their own ID, or passport, or family record instead of their birth certificates. Nevertheless, in the rural context, birth certificates are widely used instead of the three-abovementioned civil documents. The practice has perhaps generalized in the rural base.
Experience of Using Service

*Table 6. How often do local residents request the service?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Whenever they need (villagers come to the commune office)</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>One time per request</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unintelligible</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>9</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The purpose of this question is to learn the frequency of local residents coming for services as observed by commune officials. In the answer to this question, most local officials agree that villagers have no fixed date or frequency for requesting the service. Most respondents state that it depends on whenever these residents need. In actual practice, individual residents cannot file for one service for multiple times. In the interview, the commune clerk mentioned that when a villager applies for a birth registration certificate for his or her child, after obtaining the service, he or she cannot reapply for another birth registration certificate for the same child. Likewise, in the case that he or she loses the document, he or she has to appeal to the court or to the higher-level administration (district level). The reason is that commune administration has no capacity to reissue the already registered documents. Thus, according to the interview, there were several cases of this, where the commune council, by law, would not take action, but instead referred their clients to a district administration where the monthly statistics are held. The last response presented is “unintelligible” due to high degree of ambiguity.

*Table 7. What have been the main challenges in providing the civil registration service?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Slow transfer of civil status books from MoI</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of required documents</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wrong names provided by villagers</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No challenge</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People do not understand</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The service is slow</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The top three responses are clear examples of reoccurring challenges that commune administrators face in daily service provision. First, the main challenge is the slow transfer of the “Civil Status Books” that must be sent from MoI. This frequently happens when the commune clerk runs out of pages for recording issued CRS. Markedly, these books are not available at markets, they must be sent from the MoI through provincial and district agencies. During the interview, the commune clerk stated that the process of transfer takes 4-5 months, during which service operation can potentially be suspended. The second challenge is that villagers “lack prerequisite documents” and sometimes “provide inaccurate names” when they come to seek the service.

Table 8. Have there been any irregularities in service provision during the commune election year? What is the response to these irregularities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Continually Operational</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Short break during the election campaign</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commune assistant is working on this CRS while the commune clerk is busy</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Five out of ten responses give that though in the commune election year, the service provision is still operational while four responses out of ten demonstrate short-break during the election campaigns observed. Prior to the election, it takes one month for a political party to run campaign locally. The commune clerk, as administrator of this service, is very busy during this

49 These documents consist of family records, parent’s birth certificates, medical records, residence records and so on. In some cases, two witnesses are required to certify that the child is born to those certain individuals.

50 This is a frequent case that administrators encounter. When asked about the names of a child to be recorded in a birth certificate, parents provided but a few days later, they found out the name in the birth certificate was not right, they would come back to the commune office, and ask for a correction to that name. In this stage, it is too late because the commune clerk already recorded that name into the Civil Status Book. Registrar (the clerk) would find it difficult to make any change or correction once the information is recorded. Article 13 of Sub-decree 103 on Civil Registration stipulates a strict restriction on making any change or correction on the previous recorded information in the Civil Status Books.
period because she is tasked to register voters’ turn out in the commune and reports to the MoI and commune council. However, according to the interview, some councilors observed that the service could be suspended about 15 days to about one month.

Do you think local residents believe the civil registration service has:
A. Improved ☒ (8)
B. Stayed the same ☐
C. Gotten worse ☐ (1)\(^5\)

**Interpretation**

Asking about the frequency of service requested by local people, commune officials said there was no fixed time. This means local residents come to request the CRS when they need. With respect to the challenge that these commune officials encounter, a majority of the responses point to the fact that the transfer of Civil Status Books, sent by MoI, is quite slow. When a large demand of requests from villagers coincides with the depletion of pages in the Civil Status Books, administrators may suspend services until new books arrive. In this case, they have to wait for several months. It is noted that this kind of book is not available at markets. It must be reissued by the MoI. Relating to the question of continuity of services during election years, a majority of responses indicate that services are still functioning, while a few responses noted that there was a short break during the election campaign. The irregularity of the service is unlikely because the service is run by the commune clerk, who is not a political candidate in an election campaigns.

**Service Improvement**

*Table 9. From 2002 to 2014, have changes taken place in the civil registration service? What has changed and what has not, as far as you know?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The service is faster</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gradual change</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^5\) One of the council members, elected from an opposition party, is not satisfied with the service. His only motive is because the process is slow. It is not clear if his answer is sincere or political-motivated, compared to the other administrators' answers.
This question has fourteen responses with six categories. It worth noting respondents provided varied answers. Many of responses agree that the service is “faster” compared to the last 12 years while others agree with the quality of the service, increasing knowledge of local residents, and gradual changes. Nevertheless, two responses claim that there is no change at all. This response is difficult to determine since eight out of nine respondents choose “improvement” of the service in the question “Do you think local residents believe the civil registration service has...?” Perhaps the respondents themselves may not understand the question or respondents of that particular answer are not well-informed about the CRS. As mentioned earlier, over half of the councilors are assigned to work in the development area while a few carry out administrative work.

**Table 10. Are there any administrative and technological innovations in this service since the 2002 commune election?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Computer and printer</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More administrative staff on this service</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laminating machine</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff are more knowledgeable</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secured document management</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This question has two parts: Administrative and technological innovations. In relation to technology, all commune officials say at the commune office presently there are a computer and a printer. Nevertheless, according to the interview, this equipment is private property and
belongs to the commune clerk. While all commune officials agree with technological innovation, only two responses acknowledge the knowledgeability of staff who administer daily services.

**Table 11.** How much progress do you think there has been in improving the civil registration service in general?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both quality and quantity have improved from 70%-90%</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Three areas of progress: (a) faster service provision, (b) modern technology (c) increased numbers of staff to serve</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The service provision is much faster</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>More people understand</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass media and wider dissemination</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>14</strong></td>
<td><strong>100</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This is the last question of the interview asking all the local administrators to express their opinions about the civil registration service over the years. All responses agree with high degree of quality and quantity that they endeavored serving their constituencies over the years. Two other responses represent quite a range. Particularly, the progress of service provision centers around three areas, (a) faster service provision, (b) modern technology (c) increased numbers of administrative staff. The other responses acknowledge about the increasing knowledge of local people over the CRS through mass media and wider dissemination.

**Interpretation**

Overall, administrators are content with their performance in the provision of this CRS. The progress they gave centers around three areas: (1) the speed of service, (2) modern technology, (3) increasing number of staff. Although the commune added two standing staff (commune assistant and commune councilor) who do not know how to operate modern technology (computer and printer), they have had advanced experiences--- coupled with additional training and neat hand-writing ability---they are selected to support the commune clerk in the provision of this service. One notable achievement that the commune council is proud of is the increasing knowledge of the local people about the importance of CRS. Through their outreach campaign on the CRS, more and more people begin to understand and know how
to request, and use CRS for their benefits. However, the council does not keep a record of numbers that they covered in their outreach campaign so far. Nevertheless, this is no surprise because through my observation, there was no sophisticated recording system or no guided instruction, especially in such a rural environment.

As mentioned above, there is one computer and one printer but this is private property belonging to the commune clerk. When there are not many demands from villagers, the clerk is able to use her equipment to type and print. When there are a large number of demands, the clerk may not use her equipment; instead, she and other administrators use handwritten forms to process the work to meet deadlines. Even though it seems counterintuitive, the handwriting is actually faster, as many people can work on processing forms at the same time, as opposed to waiting for the use of one printer. After issuing the document, villagers can pay a small fee for lamination so that their documents look neat and are more durable.

With respect to administrative work, respondents provide three important aspects: increasing staff number, staff’s knowledgeability, and document management. Currently, there are three standing staff: a commune clerk, a commune assistant, and a commune councilor who daily operate the services. These three backbones significantly deal with varieties of services ranging from civil registration, micro-credit loan guarantee certificate, residential record, etc.

Last, the commune clerk shoulders the responsibility of securing commune documents. At the commune office, there are two large iron boxes that the commune clerk can store administrative documents, compared to the last 12 years, when there was no secure place to store such documents. In previous practice, documents were piled at the clerk’s table or the commune clerk brought some to store at his/her house (in the case of sensitive documents).

Last, the commune officials acknowledge that it is very pivotal that local people understand the importance of the service. Without this knowledge, they may not store their documents properly. When they lose a document, they may come back to the commune for another copy of the document. Then, it is too late. Commune officials would refer them to upper-

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52 Inter-ministerial Declaration on Service Provision at Sub-national Administration (Issued on 12/02/2013) requires that registration service document be completed within three days.
level administration (district and provincial offices) or to the court to seek the reissuing of the original document. This would cost them money and time.

6.2 Survey Questionnaires

Following the interviews with the nine commune officials, my research assistant and I began the delivery of research survey questionnaires to selected households. We began the survey delivery from the first village of the commune to the last. There are eight villages and I randomly selected seven households per village. The age of the respondents ranged from 30 to 70 years old. Like the format of the interview questions, this survey questionnaire also consisted of four themes as shown below. See Appendix D

Service Visibility

(a) Do you know about the civil registration service?

   A. Yes ☑ (59)  B. No ☐

   This is a closed-ended question. Responding to it, all respondents acknowledged that they know about the existence of CRS in their commune. All these residents used to go to the commune office for CRS in the last 12 years.

   (b) Table 1. How do you know about the existence of this service?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Outreach</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mass media (radio and TV)</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registrar (Commune chief or Clerk or Councilors)</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In table 1 of question (b), 56 out of 81 responses indicated that outreach is the most frequent means (69%) enabling respondents to hear of CRS while mass media represent only
25% of overall responses. On the other hand, only three responses say they know CRS through a registrar.53

(c) Where do you come to obtain this service?
A. Provincial Hall □  B. District Hall □  C. Commune Office □ (59)  D. Others □

In question (c) in the same section, asking about the venue where this service could be accessed, all the 59 respondents agree that commune office is where the service can be sought.

Interpretation

According to the survey, all residents know the existence of the service provided by the commune authorities. They also know that the commune office is the only place where the service can be sought. This demonstrates that residents have basic knowledge about the existence of the service in their commune. Most likely, the information they receive comes specifically through the commune outreach campaign. It is worthy to note that 20% of these responses acknowledge the knowledge they gain through mass media such as TV, and Radio. Different from the last 12 years, many residents did not possess TV like what they do currently. Thus, the CRS information was not much widely disseminated.

Value of the service

(a) Do you think that obtaining civil registration is important for your family?

A. Yes □ (57)  B. No □ (2 no response)

(b) Table 2. Why is the civil registration important to you and your family?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School registration for kids</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage certificates</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passport</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

53 It is not clear whether respondents want to refer registrar as a commune chief or a commune clerk. This is a confusing word because a commune chief himself serves as a registrar (Sub-decree 103 Article 8) while local knowledge perceived the commune clerk serves as a registrar.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job application</th>
<th>17</th>
<th>12</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Real-estate request Certificate</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solve personal and family issues</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ID document</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Identity record</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family record-books and Residential certificates</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inheritance documents</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others(^{54})</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>140</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In question (a), 57 respondents agree that CRS is important for their families while the other two did not provide responses. Question (b) asked about the reasons of importance relative to CRS. In **table 2**, five clusters of responses demonstrate multidimensional aspects of the importance of CRS. Many respondents have typically used civil registration documents for varied purposes ranging from school registration, marriage certificates, passports, job applications, and real-estate certificate requests. These responses explicitly mirror the recurring needs for CRS from local people. The other less frequent responses simply reflect elements of civil documents that need CRS as a requisite.

**Interpretation**

The majority of respondents acknowledged that CRS is very important for themselves and their families. Perhaps they know the importance of this CRS through their needing experiences for other civil documents. For instance, prior to obtaining any civil documents, school registrations, or any other job applications, civil registration certificates are required. Local residents also learn the importance of CRS through the media, and through village-based outreach conducted by commune officials. Nevertheless, there are no statistics revealed by the commune council regarding those who have participated in their outreach effort. More than that, many of residents in this commune, who work in Thailand or other neighboring countries, may

\(^{54}\) These responses cannot be interpreted. These responses refer to different ways but may reflect misunderstanding the question.
not participate in the outreach program. Upon their return, their relatives or neighbors, who participated in the outreach meetings, may brief them.

**Experience of seeking the service**

(a) *Do you use the service between 2002 and 2014?*

Yes ☒ (59)  B. No ☐

(b) *Table 3.* How often did you use this service (annual basis)? Circle the number indicating the frequency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency of service usage</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>more</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Responses</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In question (a) of the section, from 2002-2014, all respondents acknowledge that they have come to contact with the commune officials for CRS. The frequency of annual-based service requesting is varied as shown in *table 3* of question (b).

(c) *Table 4. In this period, what has the civil registration service been used for?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birth Certificates</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriage certificates</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Death certificate</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Table 4,* question (c) reveals that 81% of responses say CRS is used for requesting birth certificates while 17% and 2% are used to request marriage and death certificates respectively. In order to request these certificates for their kids and deceased relatives, requesters must present their IDs, or their own birth certificates. Surprisingly, no respondents mentioned the use of their CRS to request civil documents such as passports, family records, real-estate certificates, etc. One possibility is they are not sure of the question nor have they used their CR documents for requesting other civil documents besides birth registration for their kids.
Table 5. What have been the main challenges in requesting civil registration service?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Lack of document proof</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of transportation</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No change (9)</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Expensive</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No answer</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unintelligible</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In Table 5, there are three important factors that need to be considered: the lack of proof documents, the lack of transportation, and the increased fees of the service. The majority of responses to this question are the lack of required documents. In order to request CRS, villagers must have with them any proof of identity and witnesses, depending on the kind of CRS they are requesting. Perhaps many of them face the challenge of not having the proper documents such as IDs, residential certificates, or their own CR documents (in case they request CRS for their kids and relatives). Another frequent challenge is the lack of transportation. The geographical connection from villages to the commune office post presents difficulties to villagers to travel. Some responses state that there is no change. This percentage is noticeably high (18%). Only 5% of responses mentioned that the service becomes more expensive, while 8% and 6% contribute to the categories of “others” and “unintelligible” respectively.

**Interpretation**

Indeed, from the year 2002 to 2014, all respondents indicated that they had experiences in requesting the service. Forty-three of 59 used the service three or less times per year, with 3 per year being the most frequent. In response to the question about what they used this service for, all indicated that they use this service for “birth, marriage and death” certificates. These answers are quite vague because “birth, marriage and death” certificates are in fact the civil registration

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55 These responses cannot be interpreted. These responses refer to different ways but may reflect misunderstanding the question.
service itself. Another noticeable thing, these responses are different from those of the commune officials that give villagers request CRS for other business documents such as passports, family records, etc. However, this could be indicating that they do not understand or are confused by the nature of the question. Another reasonable interpretation could be that parents (respondents) use their CR documents to request CRS for their children or for their deceased relatives.

On the other side of the coin, local residents have faced challenges in requesting the CRS: lack of required documents, transportation, increasing service fees. For instance, relating to the transportation issue, especially, in the rainy season, some villages are flooded making it difficult for villagers to travel to the commune office because they do not have boats. Determined to come to the commune office for the service, they have to rent a boat. In this case, they will have two expenses; first for the transportation and second for the service fee itself. The last frequent challenge that they face is the increased fee of the service. Currently, the fee charged for each CRS is 10,000 Riel (2.5 USD). Previously, commune administrators charged only 4,000 Riel/CRS. This increased fee makes some villagers unhappy. So far, it is uncertain whether through the two-way communication in village-based meetings these concerns have been raised to commune authorities, or whether commune officials know about them, but do not take action.

**Improvement of the Service**

(a) From 2002 to 2014, do you think the civil registration service has:

A. Improved ☑ (59)  
B. Stayed the same ☐  
C. Gotten worse ☐

(b) *Table 6. What has changed and what has not?*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Know the increasing importance of CRS</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The service is faster</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>improved</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wider dissemination of the service</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

50 The Declaration (Prakas) of Inter-ministries was designed to determine some kinds of public service price at sub-national governments. The declaration is joined between Minister of interior and Minister of Economy and Finance. Here, 4000 Riel = 1 USD.
In terms of service improvement, all 59 respondents agreed that the service is improved over the years from 2002 to 2014. However, in question (b), asking about “what has changed and what has not?” there are varied and possibly contradictory responses. The most frequent response is the knowledge that local residents have about the increasing importance of CRS. In addition, respondents expressed the change related to the speed of the service, and wider dissemination. On the other hand, there are notable contradictory responses, such as “No change.” I find that this category cannot be interpreted due to its high degree of vagueness.

(c) Have there been any administrative and technological innovations in this service from 2002 up to now?
A. Yes ☑ (56) B. No □ (3 no answers)

In question (c), 56 out of 59 respondents agree there are innovations relative to service technology and administration while the other three respondents decided not to give answer. Perhaps, these three do not know what is technology or what is administration or they are not sure about the question. However, the majority of respondents experienced these innovations.

(d) **Table 7: What are they? Please describe?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Responses</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The service is more satisfactory and faster</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Modern equipment: Computer, laminating machine, printer</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting improved (administration)</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

57 These responses refer to different ways but may reflect misunderstanding of the question. Or respondents may not have idea about the change of services over the years. In whatever they give, it is difficult to interpret because it is paradoxical to question (a).
Table 7 tells the categories of innovations in technology and administration. The most frequent responses contribute to the fact that the current service is more satisfactory/faster than before along the line of visibility of the use of modern technology. The former implies that the administration of the service is improving while the later shows the sign of using modern technology in this commune. Interestingly, the two categories are equal in frequency. Two categories, being improved and quantity of service requesters, should be noted. Twenty-two percent of responses mention the service administration is improved and seventeen percent believe there are more and more people are seeking the service. Besides, there are individual responses overlapping and are placed in the category labeled “others.” This category consists of individual responses ranging from ID documents, outreach activities, school registration, accuracy/neatness and friendly staff.

**Interpretation**

This section looks at the improvement/innovation relative to the service administration and technology. Almost all respondents acknowledge that the CRS administrative/technological innovations genuinely take place. Though one category, “getting improved”, is vague the real meaning refers to service administration. Administratively, the majority of responses essentially agree with the speed and satisfactory process of the service request. Equally important, respondents indicate that modern technology (computer, printer, laminating machine) are also being used to support the administrative work. Though this equipment is private property (belonging to the commune clerk), the majority of paper documents that respondents received are probably printed and laminated. Thus, they acknowledge that modern equipment is really in use at the commune office. In short, this is an improvement compared to the last 12 years when the service would take days and weeks and all paper documents were hand-written. Sometimes, there was a loss or inaccurate name spelling occurring on the hand-written paper documents.

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58 These responses cannot be interpreted. These responses refer to different ways but may reflect misunderstanding the question.
Now the service is much better due to the administrative and technological innovations as illustrated above.

Chapter VII. Findings

Drawn from the four analytical themes on the perception of local administrators and local villagers, the findings of service improvement fall in four areas, (1) village-based outreach meeting, (2) increasing knowledge of the local residents, (3) the increased numbers of the standing staff on the administrative work, (4) the use of modern equipment. These findings are elucidated through two lens: Perception on Service Improvement, and Perception on Challenges in Service Administration.

7.1 Perceptions of Service Improvement

Indeed, the commune council is functioning quite well in terms of the closest administration to the local citizens. In this regard, there are many factors implicated to the quality improvement of the service provision. According to the findings above, first, frequent village-based outreach meetings lead to quite influential impacts on the knowledge of local residents about the service. Local residents learn the importance of CRS through village-based meetings and enjoy direct interaction with local officials. Nevertheless, the effect of this direct measure is not fully guaranteed. Some local citizens have to be motivated to spend time and effort to attend and follow meetings. One interesting fact is that large numbers of the commune’s residents migrate to work in neighboring countries. This group has no chance to participate in any local outreach meeting. Worse still, the commune officials themselves do not keep records of how many people they covered so far. However, those who attend and stay behind are well informed. With this information, unlike before, these residents are careful to keep these documents in secure places.

Secondly, one notable improvement is the speed of the service itself. A relatively new inter-ministerial declaration, issued on December 28, 2012, stipulates that administrative service be done within three to five days. Unlike the previous administrative practice, there was no restriction on the duration in issuing public services. Free riding of course frequently occurred
within the commune administration. As a result, the issuing of civil registration service could have taken weeks or months. Currently, commune officials must issue requested paper documents within three to five days at most. However, the declaration issued by this inter-ministry is indicative rather than punitive. Nowhere in the declaration indicates the punishment when the administrators exceed the due date or commune administrator must hold liable to the damage of the late process. Example, requesters need a Birth Registration Certificate to apply for visa to work abroad. The process of CRS requested is very slow harming the chance of the requester to timely apply for visa.

Third, the improvement may be partly related to knowledgeable staff. Within this third mandate, the commune administration has better human resources to deal with high demands of residents. Indeed, there are some studies concerning the capacity of local administrators. For instance, COMFREL (2007) raises concerns about the commune administrators’ low education relative to service capacity delivery. This study interviews 34 commune chiefs in Pursat Province and finds that the overwhelming majority completed only primary education. They shed doubt that this low capacity would lead to public service inefficiency.

In this study, the story however is different. The Commune clerk, in her twenties earning the degree of Business Administration from a provincial college, is experienced and knowledgeable about the administrative matters within the commune. She is quite knowledgeable about computer and printer. Working with her are an experienced commune assistant and a councilor whose handwriting ability is neat. Though these two administrative staff have lower education, their years-long experience, training and motivation prove that they can provide comparably good services to clients. When there is a lot of CRS demand, they use their handwriting skills to meet the demand. With a few demands, the commune clerk may use her computer and printer to process the work. Thus, the commune council, within this mandate, has no problem dealing with high demands of CRS requests.

Lastly, the visibility of technology use may also contribute to high-quality service, making typewritten documents look neat, accurate and official. The goal of computerized administrative services is not new. ADB (2013 p.19) gives that the computerized system related
to the Central Office of Civil Registration, introduced under the Second Commune Council Development Project, was no longer operational because of the lack of funds. If it is operational nationwide, the benefit of using it could be remarkable. Employing computerized system with CRS benefits the administrators and local residents in many ways. First, the paper documents issued to local residents look neat and easily to get name/address corrected before printing it out. Secondly, the service administrators can easily digitally store large number of information in a single place. Third, the administrator can easily retrieve the information whenever she/he wants. At this point, the question arises about who can operate such modern technology, and where is the budget?

To answer this question, the commune council should consider buying office equipment to fulfill its responsibility of full public service delivery for its constituency. There may be financial possibilities that the council can pursue. For instance, the council may appropriate the commune fund or raise funds from business sector and development partners such as NGOs, religious organizations and private contribution. With these funds, the commune authorities may also buy computers, printers and send its member to get computer-training course. As a result, it is part of the capacity building aligning with the goal of the central government. The question is how much the council interacts with these agencies and the ability, accountability, transparency of managing these funds.

7.2 Perceptions of Challenges in Service Administration

While the service has improved over the years, the findings also indicate that both commune officials and local residents face undesired challenges. With respect to the commune official perceptions, their main challenge of CRS provision rests on the slow transfer of Civil Status Books, which are sent from the MoI. When they run out of pages within these books for the issued CRS, commune officials make a request to MoI. The transfer of books can take four to five months because the transfer comes through MoI agencies (such as provincial and district agencies). This slow transfer potentially cripples service efficiency. At this stage, it is not known much about cooperation between commune, district and provincial authorities. If there is a good cooperation and an efficient line of communication, there should not be a prolonged delay to transfer these two books which takes several months. Thus, the way forward is based on the
understanding that best practice dictates clear-cut formal systems of interaction and well-articulated line accountability, along with timely and effective communication. This will improve relations and minimize service constraints.

Different from the perception of commune officials, local residents experience challenges on the lack of required documents, transportation, and increasing service fee. Before requesting the CRS, villagers have to show related documents to identify their identities. So far, this has been considered one of the recurring challenges because these residents do not have all the required documents. This is sometimes a difficult matter for both commune administrators as well as residents. After decades of civil war, some families lost all their civil documents. As a result, they have nothing to prove their identity. On the other hand, by law, the commune administrators need some civil documents to prove the identity of the requester. The only feasible solution is to have witnesses testify and confirm the identities of that person. This process can take some time in the process.

The second challenge is transportation. This usually happens during the rainy season when some villages get flooded. The village of Tanong and Angkar Khmau are the most affected during this season. To come to the commune office for the CRS, they must rent a boat, which means they spend money on transportation as well as the service fee. Indeed, this challenge requires action from commune council. To assist those affected by the flood and minimize their expense, the council needs to provide boats for communal use in their commune. As a local entity, the council has the power to raise funds through development NGOs, the private sector, local residents, and the upper-level of administration and national government; in fact, the council may manage part of their commune fund to implement this project. The council’s ability to implement this project, however, can be questionable. So far, there has not been any initiative regarding this transportation matter. Either most likely the council lacks the ability to influence and demand from stakeholders’ responses to the needs of local residents or they simply ignore this burden.

The last challenge that villagers face is the increasing service fee. With inter-ministerial declaration, namely Prakas, setting the public service price, villagers have to pay 2.50 USD per
CRS while in previous practice they paid just under 1.00 USD/CRS. Although 2.50 USD is not much in an urban area, 2.50 USD is considered expensive for most rural residents. The new declaration and the previous practice put local administrators in a difficult position. The words of the commune chief also illustrate his difficult position regarding the increased service fee:

“…..before the declaration came into effect, there was a small penalty (fee) in the second mandate. The penalty was only 4,000 riel (1 USD). The question is whether it is a small penalty because right after the birth of a child, parents seem not to pay attention to [birth registration]. This time, the penalty makes [villagers] unhappy because they have to pay more than before. The service is faster but the locals pay more money. In this case, they increased the fees so that they, the villagers, so that they will come to request the service on time. On the other hand, in some communes, for example, the commune in Poi Pet [district], the new declaration makes people happy. Before, these people [of those communes] used to spend 500 to 1,000 Bath⁵⁹ (12.5 USD-25 USD); now the declaration stipulates clearly that each CRS costs only 10,000 Riel (2.5 USD) with 4,000 riel is for two stamps.”

This indicates that the effects of the new declaration make some residents in some regions pay less but some residents of other places pay more compared to the previous practice. This decision of setting the service fee was directed by the national government through line ministries. The commune councils have no other choice but to comply with this Prakas.

Chapter VIII. Discussion
8.1 Comparing Perceptions of Local Officials and Local Residents

In this section, the two perceptions of commune officials and residents are taken for discussion. Again, these compared perceptions are based on the four themes that appear below, (1) Service Visibility, (2) Value of the service, (3) Service Experience, and (4) Service improvement.

8.1.1 Service Visibility

Through commune administrators’ interview responses, the village-based outreach meeting is the main and most effective channel to disseminate the information and improve the equitable access to the service. Likewise, in the survey, all residents acknowledge the existence of the service provided by the commune authorities. However, besides the commune outreach campaign, residents also were informed about the service through mass media such as radio, TV.

⁵⁹ Bath is a Thai currency. Since this district is along the Thai-Cambodian border, Bath is a popular currency in that district.
newspaper, and posters. According to the interview, the outreach work has already been operational for just only two mandates which means it has been in existence since 2007. Compared to the first mandate of the council, there was no outreach campaign to promote the awareness of the service, thus not many villagers knew about the potential importance of the service nor did they know how to access the service as well. After analyzing the data, both commune administrators and villagers agree that the village-based outreach meeting is the most efficient means to channel and receive information about this service.

8.1.2 Value of Service

Local administrators acknowledge that CRS is the basic document required for other official documents. Without these civil documents, villagers may find it hard to file for other business documents such as IDs, real-estate certificates, passports, residential records, and so on. In the survey, a majority of respondents see CRS as important for themselves and their families. They acknowledge that CRS is the basic civil document that is essential for filing for other documents such as family records, passports, and school registration, and so on. These congruent responses from both commune administrators and commune residents prove that civil registration documents are the principal civil documents for multi-dimensional uses.

8.1.3 Experience of Services

In this area, commune administrators and villagers have different experiences and challenges in the delivery and the receiving of the service. This is not surprising because the experience could certainly vary due to the different nature of service supply and service demand. The chief challenge that local administrators face is the slow transfer of Civil Status Books. These books are the record of each civil registration documents that the local administrators provide to residents. At the beginning of the year, two civil status books are given to the commune council by the MoI. However, when there is a lot of demand for CRS, the books run out and the service may be potentially suspended. At this stage, the commune clerk and chief make a request to the MoI. However, it could take a while (four to five months) before the books arrive at the commune office. Potentially, this occurrence affects the service efficacy if it persistently exists from year to year. There are also minor challenges such as misspelled names, request for name change/correction, etc. It is also doubtful that the commune officials relate
knowledge/technology to the challenge of service delivery. Except for the commune clerk, all commune officials are computer illiterate. Many of them do not have a university degree and their service knowledge is based on their experience and direction from the MoI (through the provincial and district agents).

On the other side of the coin, villagers have a different experience in their contact with the service. From the year 2002 to 2014, all respondents indicated they had experiences in requesting the service. In the survey responses, each year, many of them have requested the service three times. With respect to their challenges within this period, respondents indicate three notable challenges they have encountered: (1) lack of the required document, (2) transportation, (3) increased service fee. In order to request CRS, villagers must present certain certified proof of identity depending on the kind of CRS they are requesting. Such proof can be IDs, residential certificates, or voting cards. Some people do not have such documents to present to the commune officials. Second, lack of transportation is also a frequent challenge. In this context, during the rainy season, some villages are flooded. Determined to come to the commune office for the service, villagers have to rent a boat. In this case, they may have two expenses; first for the transportation and second for the service fee itself. Furthermore, a new inter-ministerial declaration has raised the service fees. The current fee is 10,000$ Riel ($2.50 USD) per service document. In contrast, the previous cost was only 4,000 Riels ($1.00 USD) per service document. This increased fee makes some villagers unhappy, especially, in the rural area, where poverty is visible. So far, it is unknown whether through village-based meetings these concerns have been raised to commune authorities or whether commune officials know about them, but do not take any action because they are unable to do anything about it.

8.1.4 Service improvement

Commune administrators are content with their performance in providing the CRS. The improvements they cite are in three areas: (1) the speed of the service, (2) modern technology, (3) increasing number of staff. One notable achievement that the commune council is proud of is the increased knowledge of the local people about the importance of CRS. This achievement is

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60 The Declaration of Inter-ministries was designed to determine some kinds of public service price at sub-national governments. The declaration is joined between Ministry of interior and Ministry of Economy and Finance. Here, 4000 Riels = 1 USD.
perhaps because of the outreach campaigns have been conducted for several years. However, the council did not keep a record of the numbers that they reached in each campaign over the years. This is not surprising. They perhaps have no sophisticated record keeping system to store such records.

Similarly, in the survey, all resident respondents acknowledge that the service provided by the commune officials has improved over the years 2002 to 2014. This improvement can be related to the administrative/technological innovations. The survey responses indicate that speed and satisfactory process are the main factors driving the administrative innovation. This is particularly true because the commune administration has more staff to process these kinds of paperwork. Unlike before, when the CRS could take weeks or even months to process, now the CRS takes only one to three days at most. Equally important, respondents also indicate that modern technology (computer, printer, laminating machine) is also being used. The majority of paper documents that respondents receive are typed, printed or laminated-paper documents. With these neat and typed documents, they thus acknowledge that modern equipment is really in use at the commune office.

This is an indication of service improvement over the last 12 years. In the first mandate (2002-2005), the service would take days and weeks and all paper documents were hand-written. In addition, a document would sometimes be lost or name misspelled on the hand-written paper documents. This is understandable since in the past, there were not enough staff to deal with the mounting demand from villagers. A lone service administrator (commune clerk) may not have much time to check for accuracy or to give timely service. Now the service is much improved due to administrative and technological innovations coupled with increasing numbers of standing staff.

8.2 Limitations of the research

This study aims to explore the perceived differences in the progress of quality of commune services, focusing on civil registration service, within a rural setting in Cambodia. Though this study has successfully examined the perceptions of both local administrators and residents regarding CRS delivery over time, this case study does not imply that the findings and
recommendation could be implemented as a general tool to enhance service delivery in other rural communes due to varied size, administrative culture, and geographical features. Coupled with this, there is a lack of statistical reports of residents registered for the CRS so far. In the matter of administrative process, services could however be customized to address the needs of other rural communes provided that their public service delivery objectives, political commitment, and knowledge of local residents drive the core elements of change.

8.3 Suggestion for further research

The suggestions below are based on the research findings relative to the perception of the qualities of civil registration service delivery in this commune.

Public Service Motivation of Commune Staff: further research should be done on the intrinsically- and extrinsically-motivated factors influencing rural commune administrators in their administrative service and development projects. Administrators here refers to all commune councilors, the commune chief, commune clerk, and commune assistant.

Communication among commune and upper-level administration: the alignment between the priorities and activities of the commune and higher tier administration; and the impact of this alignment on visible service delivery should be examined. In the case study, for example, the slow transfer of civil status books constraint CRS efficacy.

Inter-commune co-operation: the exchange of information among communes within the same districts over experiences, administrative innovation; staff-training, leadership training should be further researched.

Chapter IX. Recommendation and Closing Remarks

9.1 Recommendation

- Human Capital and Accountability: the development of a healthy, skilled and productive workforce should be investigated to ensure that the basic needs of the constituencies are met. Moreover, the citizens would benefit from looking for ways to reduce inefficiencies,
such as the long delay in providing Civil Status Books, or the short hours of service in places, and so on.

- According to this study, the quality of civil registration service has improved over the years. Despite this improvement, there are still more things that can be done to help make the service even better. First, the commune council can make sure that a good system of communication with upper-level administration is established so that the transfer of civil status books does not take quite so long. Secondly, commune officials themselves have to be capable of using office equipment (computer, printer, laminating machine). In this case, the council, as a local entity, has power to manage its own resources. The council should consider using the Commune/Sangkat Fund to provide training for administrative staff and to procure such office equipment needed for the enhancement of the CRS. Third, the council also needs to quarterly assess their work through evaluations from local residents in their constituency.

- The council should continue to conduct village-based meetings and encourage more meaningful participation from local people. Overall, whatever the council does should be responsive to the needs of the local people so that the decentralized policy set by the central government is realized.

### 9.2 Closing Remarks

The recent decentralization reforms in Cambodia have positioned the communes as potentially important providers of local services. Two broad terms of local service delivery are in the form of administrative and development services. Though many believe that health, education, agriculture and rural development and water and sanitation pose the greatest potential impact on poverty reduction of the rural poor, the progress and quality of administrative services (civil registration service) should not go unnoticed.

Using qualitative methods (interview and survey questions), this case study has found that over the last 12 years, the civil registration service has improved in the perceptions of both local officials and villagers using the service. The quality of improvement is essentially related to the village-based outreach meeting, increased knowledge of the local residents, the maturity of the commune officials in their administrative work, and the actual use of modern equipment.
Within the ambit of local administration, the council, over the years, has conducted village-based outreach emphasizing wide range public services within the commune. With this effort, local residents gain better knowledge about the request process, the use, and the storing of civil registration documents. This is different from the early stage of decentralization in 2002 when commune residents were less informed and as a result paid less attention to the storing of this civil document. In addition, with long years of experience, commune administrators (commune clerk, commune assistant, and councilors) have matured in their work. Administrators with long years of experience, the increased number of commune staff, and the visibility of modern office equipment are the crucial elements that have resulted in the better quality and improved speed of the service provided.

The findings also reveal existing challenges that both administrators and local residents face in their experience of delivering and seeking the service. The main challenge that the local administrators face is not their ability to deliver administrative services but the slow transfer of civil status books sent from the MoI that are used to record the issued civil registrations. However, the transfer has to been done through the government agencies (provincial and district administration) and takes four to five months. The slow transfer potentially causes the suspension of the service and overall hampers its efficiency. Looking at this, it implies that upper-level administration (district and province) and commune administration lack a mechanism of smooth communication. The lack of communication among these sub-national governments potentially poses major challenges and needs to be addressed in order to enhance service delivery.

Along with the challenge that local administrators face, local residents as the service requesters also encounter varied challenges in the process of seeking the service. Three main challenges occur in their perception: the lack of required documents, transportation, and increased service fee. There is no way to check whether these challenges are raised in the village-based meetings. Technically, there are no options for the commune authority to deal with the lack of required documents and increased service fees. They are bound by rules and by the Prakas issued on December 28, 2012. However, regarding the transportation issue, the council can take a practical step to provide transportation service for those requesters who are affected.
by flooding during the rainy season. This will help residents to spend less money, and possibly ensure that satisfactory service is provided within the commune jurisdiction. The success or failure of public service delivery depends on the willingness of the council. This is not an increase of work for the council; this is responsiveness to the need of its constituencies.
References


Le Cambodge. (1962). Published by Le Ministere de L’information du Gouvernement Royal du Cambodia, Phnom Penh


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Sophat, H., (N.D). The Civil Registration of Kingdom of Cambodia. Slide Presentation, Slide 2 and 3


Appendix A

Background of Koymeng Commune

Koymeng is one of the 13 communes in Mongkolborey district, western part of Phnom Penh. There are eight villages within this commune, Koy Meng, Sdei Leu, Phlov Siem, Ta Nong, Kasang Thmei, Stueng Chas, Angkar Khmau, and Sdei Kraom. The total area of this commune is 2400 Hectares with the total household of 1,754 households. The commune is located on the eastern part of the district with a road link the commune to the district hall along Mongkolborey River. The commune itself borders with Ruessei Kraok commune to the West, Ta Lom commune to the South, Serei Sophoan to the north and Sambour Commune to the South-East.

Table 6. List of population statistics in Koymeng commune as of 2013

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Name of village</th>
<th>Groups</th>
<th>Household</th>
<th>Population</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sdei Leu</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>262</td>
<td>1010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Sdei Kraom</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>237</td>
<td>941</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Phlov Siem</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>230</td>
<td>868</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Ta Nong</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>121</td>
<td>492</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Koymeng</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>194</td>
<td>805</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Steung Chas</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>332</td>
<td>1467</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Angkar Khmau</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>197</td>
<td>742</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Kasang Thmei</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>181</td>
<td>730</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>68</td>
<td>1754</td>
<td>7055</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Statistics of villagers’ population in 2013 prepared by Police Department of Mongkolborey District and Koymeng’s Police Post. My last day, June 30, 2014, at field research, I was handed with this document by a commune clerk. The appearance of the document is not official yet because I did not see the signature of the chief and the stamp provide. I see there are tables of each village statistics. However, this is the only document I got.
Figure 5. Koymeng Commune Organization Chart
Hello,

I, Sophal LEOUNG, am a graduate student in the Public Administration Program at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa, the United States of America. As a requirement of my degree, I am interested in finding out perceptions of local public service delivery in your commune. I would like to select you, as a local and long-time resident, to participate in the study.

I wonder if you can help by answering the questionnaire to help me understand how the delivery of services relative to the civil registration can be improved.

To complete answering this questionnaire, you may spend about ten to fifteen minutes. Please note that your information will be kept confidential and you may withdraw from participating at any time. If you agree, I will proceed to give you the consent form and go over it before embarking the real questionnaires. If you have questions, please ask me now.

Thank you
Verbal Recruitment Script
Local Administrators

Hello,

I, Sophal LEOUNG, am a graduate student in the Public Administration Program at the University of Hawai’i at Manoa, the United States of America. As a requirement of my degree, I am interested in finding out perceptions of local public service delivery in your commune. I would like to select you for the interview because you are currently serving as a commune council member in your constituency.

I wonder if you can help by participating in the interview to help me understand the challenge and the improvement of the delivery of local services relative to the civil registration provided by the commune council.

This interview will take place at your home or commune office according to your conveniences. We may spend 30 to 45 minutes to complete the whole interview. Please note that your information will be kept confidential and you may also withdraw from participating at any time. You can also skip any questions that you do not want to answer. If you agree, I will proceed to give you the consent form and we will set the date and place for the interview. If you have questions, please ask me now.

Thank you
University of Hawai‘i

Consent to Participate in Research Project

The Perceived progress in the Quality of Commune Civil Registration Service Cambodia

I, Sophal LEOUNG, am a graduate student in the Public Administration Program at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa. As a requirement of my degree, I am conducting research on perceptions of local public service delivery in Cambodia. I am asking you to participate in this project because you are one of the commune administrators serving in this commune.

What activities will you do in the study and how long will the activities last? If you choose to participate, I will interview you to seek your perception about the civil service delivery in your commune. The interview should take about 30-40 minutes. If you participate, you will be one of a total of seven commune administrators serving in this commune. One example of the type of question I will ask is, “What is your perception about the civil registration service currently?” If you would like to see a copy of all of the questions that I will ask you, please let me know.

Benefits and Risks: There are no direct benefits to you in participating in my research project. The results of this project might help me and other researchers learn more about local public service delivery and the policy in general. I believe that there is no risk to you in participating in this project.

Confidentiality and Privacy: All the information will be stored in a secured file. I will evaluate the information from the interview. I will use a Sony Recorder to record the information. In Cambodia, only I will have access to the information. The University of Hawaii Human Studies Program has the right to review research records of this study. After I code and analyze the information, I will destroy all this recording information. When I report the results of my research project in my typed papers, I will not use your name or any other personal information that would identify you. If you would like a copy of my final report, please contact me at the number listed near the end of this consent form.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this research project is voluntary. You are free to choose to participate or not to participate in this study. At any point during this study, you can withdraw your participation without any penalty.

Do you agree to participate in this audio interview recording?

Yes ☐ No ☐

Questions: If you have any questions about this project, please contact me via phone (808) 944-7330 or local Cambodian phone +855 7796 8400 or e-mail leoungso@hawaii.edu
You can also contact my academic supervisor:
If you have any questions about your rights in this project, you can contact the University of Hawaii, Human Studies Program, by phone at 1-808-956-5007 or by e-mail at uhirb@hawaii.edu.

Please keep the section above for your records.
If you agree to participate in this project, please sign the following signature portion of this consent form and return it to me

______________________________________________________________
Tear or cut here

______________________________________________________________

Signature(s) for Consent:

I agree to join in the study entitled, “The Perceived progress in the Quality of Commune Civil Registration Service: Cambodia.” I understand that I can change my mind about being in this project, at any time, by notifying the researcher.

Your Name (Print): ______________________________

Your Signature: ______________________________

Date: ______________________________
ការប្រកបដោយគមន៍: បានតំណាងទុកដាក់គ្រប់គ្រងដោយអតិថិជន ព្រះបរមបុត្រ អ្នកអានដោយ តំណាងទុកដាក់គ្រប់គ្រងបញ្ហាធិបត្ថិបត្តិ។ អតិថិជនប្រកបដោយ ស្ថានភាពនិងអត្ថប្រយោជន៍ សង្កេតបញ្ហារបស់យើង និងការស្រាវជ្រាវក្នុងរបក្សរបស់យើង។ សូមអភិច្ឆិត និងអនុវត្តការងាររបស់យើង សរសេរសុខពីដែលយើងមាន។

ការប្រកបដោយការអភិវឌ្ឍន៍: ការប្រកបដោយការអភិវឌ្ឍន៍តម្រូវការដែលមានប្រសិនបើ សុខមានសមត្ថភាព និងអត្ថប្រយោជន៍។ យើងហេតុអញ្ច្រញមកដែលយើងប្រកបដោយការស្រាវជ្រាវរបស់យើង និងការស្រាវជ្រាវដោយអតិថិជន។ យើងអាចដួលឈឺការងាររបស់យើង និងសរសេរសុខពីដែលយើងមាន។

លេខសារសេវាកម្ម: leoungso@hawaii.edu

លេខសារសេវាកម្ម: pratt@hawaii.edu

លេខសារសេវាកម្ម: OLI

លេខសារសេវាកម្ម: លេខសារសេវាកម្មដែលបានបញ្ចូលនៅប្រភពខ្លីរបស់យើង។
ទូរសព័ន៍ ៨០៨ - ៩៥៦ - ៥៨៩០
ប្រការការសម្រាប់ ៦០៨ - ៩៨២ - ៥០០៧ និងថ្ងៃពីទូរសព័ន៍ ១ - ៨០៨ - ៩៥៦ - ៥០០៧ ឬ ៦០៨ - ៩៨២ - ៥០០៧ ។ ការប្រការអំពីអាស៊ីម៉ោល ០៩-៨៥-៨៤៧ ឬ ៦០៨ - ៩៨២ - ៥០០៧ ។

ម៉ាលីម៉ូ ២០០៨-៤-៤-៤-០ ។

សូមរក្សាសិន ក្រុមអគ្គមន៍អាស៊ីម៉ោល របស់អ្នក។

ម៉ាលីម៉ូ ២០០៨-៤-៤-៤-០ ។

ក្រុមអគ្គមន៍អាស៊ីម៉ោល របស់អ្នក។

ឈ្មោះ……………………………………………………………………

ការប្រការ……………………………………………………………………
University of Hawai'i

Consent to Participate in Research Project

The Perceived progress in the Quality of Commune Civil Registration Service Cambodia

I, Sophal LEOUNG, am a graduate student in the Public Administration Program at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa. As a requirement of my degree, I am conducting research on perceptions of local public service delivery in Cambodia. I am asking you to participate in this project because you are one of the local service receivers residing in this commune.

What activities will you do in the study and how long will the activities last? If you choose to participate, I will give you a survey questionnaire to seek your perception about the civil service delivery in your commune. The questionnaire should take about 7-10 minutes. If you participate, you will be one of a total of 56 participants residing in the villages within this commune. One example of the type of question I will ask is, “What is your perception of the civil registration service currently?” If you would like to see a copy of all of the questions that I will ask you, please let me know.

Benefits and Risks: There are no direct benefits to you in participating in my research project. The results of this project might help me and other researchers learn more about local public service delivery and the policy in general. I believe that there is no risk to you in participating in this project.

Confidentiality and Privacy: I will collect the survey questionnaires and put it in a secured file. I will evaluate the information from the survey questionnaires. I will keep all information from the questionnaires in a safe place, storing in my files. In Cambodia, only I will have access to the surveys. The University of Hawaii Human Studies Program has the right to review research records of this study. After I code and analyze the information, I will destroy all these questionnaires. When I report the results of my research project in my typed papers, I will not use your name or any other personal information that would identify you. If you would like a copy of my final report, please contact me at the number listed near the end of this consent form.

Voluntary Participation: Participation in this research project is voluntary. You are free to choose to participate or not to participate in this study. At any point during this study, you can withdraw your participation without any penalty.

Do you agree with this participation of this study or not?  
A. Yes □ B. No □
Questions: If you have any questions about this project, please contact me via phone (808) 944-7330 or local Cambodian phone +855 7796 8400 or e-mail leoungso@hawaii.edu
You can also contact my academic supervisor:
Dr. Richard Pratt
Professor
Coordinator, Organizational Learning Institute (OLI)
Public Administration Program
University of Hawai‘I at Manoa
pratt@hawaii.edu
Tel: 808-956-5890

If you have any questions about your rights in this project, you can contact the University of Hawaii, Human Studies Program, by phone at 1-808-956-5007 or e-mail at uhirb@hawaii.edu.

Please keep the section above for your records.
If you agree to participate in this project, please sign the following signature portion of this consent form and return it to me

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Tear or cut here
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Signature(s) for Consent:

I agree to join in the study entitled, “The Perceived progress in the Quality of Commune Civil Registration Service: Cambodia.” I understand that I can change my mind about being in this project, at any time, by notifying the researcher.

Your Name (Print): ______________________________________

Your Signature: ______________________________________

Date: ______________________________________
ការសំខាន់នៃយុទ្ធសាស្ត្រ
វិចិត្រុប្តានុកិច្ចការអភិវឌ្ឍន៍ក្នុងប្រភេទកម្មវិធីដែលបានបង្កើតឡើងច្នៃបង្ហាញ

ក្នុងប្រភេទនេះគួរតែរកឃើញអត្ថន័យដែលមាននៅក្នុងក្រុមប្រឹក្សាមួយហើយក្នុងក្រុមប្រឹក្សាមួយនេះដែលមានអត្ថន័យ

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ការបញ្ជាក់ខោតុការៈ ការបញ្ជាក់ខោតុការៈ ការរួមរៀន និងការរួមបញ្ជូនដូចគ្នាពីសិទធន៍ពីវិទេសាសន៍នៃតារារដ្ឋសិក្ដីដ៏ខ្លាំង។ សូមមានពិតបស់មួយនឹងអ្នកបច្ចេកវិទេសាសន៍នៃតារារដ្ឋសិក្ដីដ៏ខ្លាំង។ ផ្ទាល់មួយការរួមរៀននេះ មានបំណងជាតិបច្ចេកវិទេសាសន៍នៃតារារដ្ឋសិក្ដីដ៏ខ្លាំង។ សូមធ្វើការរួមរៀននេះ។

លេខទូរស័ព្ទ: ៨០៨-៩៥៦-៥០០៧ ឬ អេម៉េល: uhirb@hawaii.edu

លេខទូរស័ព្ទ: ៨០៨-៩៥៦-៥៩០ ឬ អេម៉េល: pratt@hawaii.edu

លេខទូរស័ព្ទ: ៨០៨-៩៥៦-៥៩០ ឬ អេម៉េល: leoungso@hawaii.edu
សូមរក្សាទើបការបញ្ជាក់បំផ្លាញប់ក្រងចុងក្រោយ
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បញ្ជាក់សម្រាប់ក្រុមហ៊ុន: ហៅយោងសម្រាប់្ឤួលពី

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ហតេល្បយល់ក្នុងអំឡុងពេលចុះហតល់មកខ្ញុំវិញ

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បញ្ជាក់បំផ្លាញព័ត៌មាន
ម្តងណាណ/អនុសី បញ្ជាក់បំផ្លាញការបញ្ជាក់បំផ្លាញ: យើងចុះបញ្ជាក់ថា ដោយថ្មី យើងត្រូវ
ខែមករអំឡុងពេលការធ្វើការបញ្ជាក់បំផ្លាញអំពីការបញ្ជាក់បំផ្លាញ។ យើងបានទទួលបញ្ជាក់បំផ្លាញពីការបញ្ជាក់បំផ្លាញខ្លី។
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ក្នុងការបញ្ជាក់បំផ្លាញ យើងបានបញ្ជាក់បំផ្លាញពីការបញ្ជាក់បំផ្លាញខ្លី។

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បញ្ជាក់បំផ្លាញ: ..............................................................

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ការបញ្ជាក់បំផ្លាញ: ..............................................................

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Appendix C

QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWS
ADMINISTRATORS

I. Commune Administrator (In-depth interview)

1. Service Visibility
   - Do you think the civil registration service provided by the Commune Council is well known among the local residents?
   - How do local residents know about this kind of service?
   - Do you have any outreach activities that help them be aware of the service?
   - What are these activities?

2. Value of the Service
   - Do you think that this service is valuable?
   - Do you think that local residents believe this service is valuable?
   - How valuable do you think local residents think the service is?
     A. Very valuable  B. Valuable  C. Not valuable
   - What do you think is the most important aspect that local resident obtain CRS?

3. Experience
   - How often do local residents request the service?
   - What have been the main challenges in providing the civil registration service?
   - Have there been any irregularities in service provision during the commune election year? What is the response to these irregularities?
   - Do you think local residents believe the civil registration service has:
     A. Improved  B. Stayed the same  C. Gotten worse

4. Improvement of Registration
   - From 2002 to 2014, have changes taken place in the civil registration service?
   - What has changed and what has not, as far as you know?
   - Are there any administrative and technological innovations in this service since the 2002 commune election?
   - How much progress do you think there has been in improving the civil registration service in general?
Appendix D

Survey Questionnaire

My name is Sophal Leoung, a graduate student in the Master of Public Administration Program at the University of Hawai‘i at Manoa. As one of my academic requirements I conduct research. The purpose of this research project is to learn the perception of local administrators and service receivers about the civil registration service. I am asking you to participate in this project because you are a service receiver living in this commune.

Name of village  ………………………………………..
Gender  ………………………………………..
Age  ………………………………………..
Ethnicity  ………………………………………..

1. **Service Visibility**
   - Do you know about the civil registration service?
     
     A. Yes □           B. No □

   - How do you know about this service?
     ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………
     ……………………………………………………………………………………………………………

   - Where do you go to obtain this service?

     B. Provincial Hall □       B. District Hall □       C. Commune Office □       D. Others □

     If you choose other, what?…………………………………………………………………………………………

2. **Value**
   - Do you think that obtaining civil registration is important for your family?

     A. Yes □           B. No □

   - Why is the civil registration important to you and your family?
3. **Experience**
   - Do you use the service between 2002 and 2014?
     
     A. Yes □  
     B. No □

     If yes, how often? (Please circle the number below.)

     1  2  3  4  5  or more

   - In this time, period, what is the civilian registration service been used for?

   - What have been the main challenges in requesting civil registration service?

4. **Improvement**
   From 2002 to 2014, do you think the civil registration service has

   A. Improved □  
   B. Stayed the same □  
   C. Gotten worse □

   - What has changed and what has not?

   - Have there been any administrative and technological innovations in this service from 2002 up to now?

   A. Yes □  
   B. No □

   - What are they? Please describe as far as you know?
What is your overall opinion about the Civil Registration Service?

Thank You!

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