

# A Policy Research Network in Cambodia: COSECAM

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# **1. Background to the research**

The extent to which networks can influence policy or carry out other functions is affected by different constraints in any given location. In Cambodia, there are varying constraints. Chief among these is the fact that networking and communication is carried out against a background of distrust, owing to recent history, which impacts on private sector, government, NGOs and other actors. Although this factor is accepted within the country and among various actors, there has been comparatively little research in this area. It is important to note how the lack of trust, among other constraints, affects the potential of a network to carry out its mandate and/or influence policy.

## **1.1 Objectives**

This research project was contracted by the Research and Policy in Development (RAPID) programme of the Overseas Development Institute (ODI). The aim of the project was to produce a case study of one NGO network in Cambodia as a preliminary study of the effectiveness of the network model within the country, in terms of influencing policy and carrying out its own mandate. The project uses the function/form framework (as detailed by the RAPID website to identify: i) the functions of the network; ii) the network's structure and how this affects its functions; iii) the ways in which it attempts to carry out its functions; and iv) its successes and failures to do so. In assessing the network's form (structure), the research assessed one of the factors of the external environment in greater depth (social and cultural milieu, particularly trust). This was to be done against the background of the effects of distrust in Cambodia on the network's ability to carry out its mandate.

## **1.2 Methodology**

The research was carried out over 15 days between January and February 2006. It was decided to select COSECAM (Coalition to Address Sexual Exploitation of Children in Cambodia) as the network for focus, owing to the background of the researchers, both of whom work or have worked within the fields of sexual exploitation and trafficking in Cambodia.

Research took the form of a brief literature review of background information on i) the network itself; ii) the context in which the network carries out its activities; and iii) the current debate on networks and the function/form framework. This was followed by the development of a questionnaire for participants. Three members of staff from COSECAM and one staff member from each of four NGO member organisations were identified to be interview participants. Interviews with the members of staff from COSECAM took the form of a participatory focus group discussion. Interviews with the staff members from the four NGO member organisations were individual.

## **1.3 Constraints and caveats**

Despite the proliferation of NGOs and other institution reports on Cambodia, there has not been much research carried out in this area. The idea of studying the significance and impact of networks is relatively new (although see Bradley, 2005, for the exception to this, on networks in natural resources management, and RAPID's preliminary findings on the MediCam network on its website). In addition, the effect of distrust has not been explored in any depth, particularly in the area of networks. This means that the findings from this report are preliminary and should not be taken as confirmed conclusions: it is recommended that findings lead to further discussion in the future.

Cambodia faces many problems in its attempt to develop. Identified in this report is the lack of trust resulting from Cambodia's significant and recent problems of war and political and social upheaval, and a major part of the analysis was to look at how the issue of trust in Cambodia affects the functions of COSECAM. The fact that the research was addressing

both the overall effect of form on function, and the effect of one particular aspect of the form (social and cultural milieu: trust), had an effect on the clarity of the final report. In addition, it was found that many participants found this question hard to answer, apart from confirming that it was a problem; therefore, findings are based on a general overview of the subject. In addition, participants do not want to appear to be criticising their organisation or network. This research has made an effort to reassure participants that the report is an attempt to assess conditions for networks in Cambodia and not merely a critical review of the network.

It was originally decided that four staff of COSECAM would be interviewed. In the event, it was difficult to set up meetings with so many: three were identified and it was deemed that this number was in fact sufficient.

#### **1.4 Structure of the paper**

Interview participants spoke of issues of relevance to all sections of the report. It was therefore decided that findings from interviews were to be incorporated throughout the paper: there is no individual section on findings. Section 1 has introduced the research. Section 2 of the paper will detail a background of COSECAM, looking briefly at its background, structure, and objectives and activities. This section will analyse the functions of the network. Section 3 will make a brief analysis of the country context, for the purpose of identifying major challenges faced by a network in carrying out its mandate in Cambodia (external environment: social and cultural milieu – trust). Section 4 will then look at the successes and failures of the network in carrying out its mandate, according to participants and according to further analysis of the primary and secondary information. Section 5 will make an analysis of the ways in which activities are constrained by the form of the network and the challenges identified in Section 3. Section 6 will give brief initial conclusions, outlining possible future research in this area in Cambodia. It will not make recommendations to the network reviewed. Annexed to the document will be a brief bibliography, a list of COSECAM members, organisation details, a list of interviewees and a summary of the questionnaire used.

## **2. Organisational overview**

### **2.1 Structure of COSECAM<sup>2</sup>**

COSECAM (Coalition to Address Sexual Exploitation of Children in Cambodia) was established on 16 November 2001. It has 23 member organisations, with 10 new members being considered at the current time, and is in nature non-governmental, independent and democratic. Its aim is to address sexual exploitation of children in Cambodia (see Section 2.2 for details of objectives and activities). COSECAM is registered with the Ministry of Interior of the Royal Government of Cambodia (2003). Membership is free and members should follow the common goals of COSECAM, have three references from NGO Coalition members, and have a Board of Directors and secure funding. Membership criteria are under review.

Donors include: American Jewish World Service (AJWS); Kerkinactie (KIA; Stichting Kinderpostzegels NL (SKN); The Asia Foundation (TAF: USAID); International Organization for Migration (IOM); and Canada Fund. The Coalition has a 3-5 year business plan, depending on funding. The organisation is based in Phnom Penh but works in the provinces through regional networks, and through the activities of its local NGO members.

The structure of COSECAM was simplified in 2003 through a Special Delegate Meeting. It is hierarchical, consisting of three levels (see Figure 1). At the top, the Steering Committee (StC) is established through election every two years (staggered, to ensure continuity) of five

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<sup>2</sup> This section is taken from the 'Structure of COSECAM' leaflet.

members from among potential candidates who are representatives of member organisations (directors or presidents). Members can stand for re-election. The chair of the StC is rotated every six months, and responsibilities include chairing the meetings, representing the Coalition and signing contracts. Members of the StC have a mandate as follows (adapted from 'Structure of COSECAM'):

- To advise the Coalition;
- To represent the Coalition;
- To approve annual budget, programme strategy, direction and policy of the Coalition;
- To supervise and monitor implementation against plans and budgets;
- To support fundraising;
- To assess Secretariat achievements;
- To approve advocacy issues to be submitted to subcommittees;
- To draft decision making statements and submit to Coalition members;
- To support subcommittees as required;
- To appoint and dismiss Coalition Coordinator and Technical Advisor;
- To approve the content of the audit agreement.

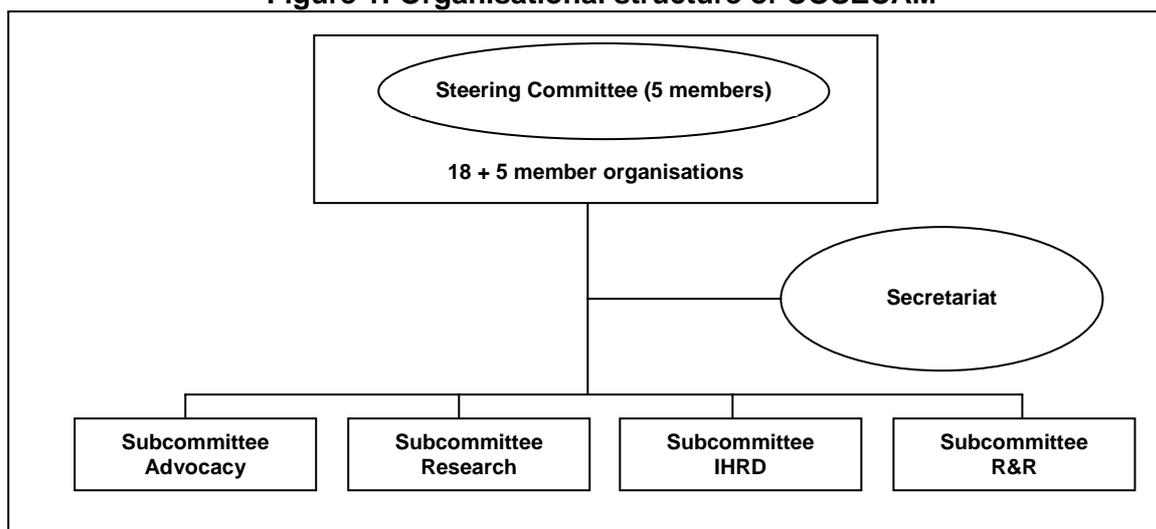
The five members participate in every fourth meeting of the Delegate Group (every four months) to overview the coalition work, readjust the workplan and give advice to the coalition on areas for improvement. In other meetings they act as observers.

Under the StC is the Delegate Group, with 23 representatives from the member NGOs (including 18 delegate representatives and the five members above), with the role of identifying the policy and strategy of the Coalition. The Delegate Group meets every four months to discuss general business.

The Secretariat is responsible for coordination and support of its member organisations in implementing programme activities through the subcommittees, in terms of technical, capacity-building and administrative support. Staff are employed full time. It is supervised by the Coalition Coordinator (CC) with advice from the Technical Advisor. The CC manages programme activities, finance and administration; coordinates communication between subcommittees and StC; coordinates outside the Coalition; coordinates fundraising with donors; coordinates programme proposals, budgets and workplans; communicates, coordinates and organises meetings, trainings and workshops/conferences; updates reports to Coalition members and donors on progress and achievements; brainstorms on possible projects/programmes; and makes income statement reports and submits them to the Board of Directors.

The network has four major component activities in the form of subcommittees, including: advocacy, research, institutional development and human resource development (IHRD), and rehabilitation and reintegration (R&R). Each programme is implemented through these subcommittees, with the involvement of senior staff from member organisations, based on their interest and the relevance of the programme to their own organisation's activities. Members are elected from the 18 member organisations of the Delegate Group and have a mandate of one year, with the chair rotating between them. Subcommittees meet monthly to discuss programme activity, experiences, problems, lessons learned and strategy. Members have the right to make decisions on their programme, including on role, structure and policy. They prepare proposals, reports and budgets and submit to the Secretariat and Delegate Group and implement, monitor and follow up on activities. They also coordinate with the Secretariat and cooperate with other subcommittees.

**Figure 1: Organisational structure of COSECAM**



Source: adapted from 'Structure of COSECAM'.

See Annex 2 for a list of members and Annex 3 for a list of Secretariat staff.

## 2.2 Objectives and activities<sup>3</sup>

COSECAM works as a coalition in order to give strength of voice. Its main objectives are:

- 1 Strong coordination and cooperation among local NGOs with similar goals and objectives.
- 2 Developing comprehensive approaches and strategies [in achieving the goal of addressing child sexual exploitation in Cambodia].
- 3 Strengthening qualities and capacities of local NGOs in their specific work areas and increasing specialisation.
- 4 Including advocacy, political pressure, and popular activism in the approach.

The Steering Committee, the Delegate Group and the Secretariat work towards fulfilling all four objectives, particularly Objective 1 and Objective 2. Prominent activities within the subcommittees support their work in doing so, including current emphasis on the following areas:

- Advocacy: policy influencing; constituency support building; child advocacy (Obj. 4).
- Research: capacity of local organisations; demand factors for child sex; situation analysis for child sex (Obj. 4).
- IHRD: Integrated child issue programming; programme staff training; provincial member NGO support; corporate development and cooperation (Obj. 3).
- R&R: centre staff training; child rehabilitation services; vocation training scholarship fund (Obj. 3).

Activities also include networking (Objective 1), but not fundraising for member NGOs. Currently, key issues include:

- Policy influencing on trafficking issues
- Regulations and minimum standards for residential childcare
- Comprehensive and integrated programming – participation of children in the NGO planning process
- Appropriate social counselling for sexually abused children
- Appropriate vocational training for children in recovery centres
- Research on demand factors for child sex and situation analysis

<sup>3</sup> This section is taken from COSECAM promotional leaflet.

### 2.3 Functions of COSECAM according to the RAPID framework

RAPID uses the network definition of Portes and Yeo (2001) which suggests that networks can fulfil six, non-exclusive functions: filter; amplify; invest/provide; convene; build communities; and facilitate. According to Bradley (2005: 8), 'networks may function in a variety of ways, but generally speaking, they aim to either bridge the gaps between different sectors and interest groups or else to build consensus and capacity within one particular group, so that it can advocate for its own agenda'. RAPID also details the supra-functions or roles which guide their work: **agency**, which 'denotes a network that is charged by its members to become the main agent of the change they aim to achieve' and **support**, which 'supplies the network members with the resources (goods and services) it needs to carry out their own research and policy advocacy'.

In terms of the **functions** of COSECAM, an analysis of the above objectives and the roles and responsibilities of the various parts of the structure of the network shows that, to differing extents, COSECAM covers all six of the functions mentioned above (with the possible exception of community building, which can be included within investment/provision). COSECAM's objectives and activities do not fit neatly into a one-factor-per-function pattern; mostly, the functions carried out are covered by more than one objective or activity.

#### *Filtering*

COSECAM possesses databases of statistics and relevant information which is made available to members and the general public, in harmony with carrying out its **amplification** role and in the effort to carry out Objective 1 above, on strong coordination and cooperation among local NGOs with similar goals and objectives.

#### *Amplifying*

COSECAM brings in outside consultants to conduct research in the area of child sexual exploitation, and is currently working particularly in the areas of local organisation capacity and of child sex. This research is available for the network itself, for advocacy activities, and for the general public. Advocacy is seen as one of the major objectives of COSECAM, as seen in Objective 4 above. This can be seen as fulfilling the dissemination function of amplification. COSECAM also partakes in communication, both by disseminating information and by receiving information from member NGOs on the ground. In addition, COSECAM manages its members through the amplification of administrative information. This assists with Objective 1: strong coordination and cooperation among local member NGOs and with Objective 2 (developing comprehensive approaches and strategies).

#### *Investing/providing*

COSECAM provides access to capacity-building opportunities for local member NGOs on relevant issues although most of the IHRD programme is involved in strengthening the Secretariat. No financial investment is made in local member NGOs. Non-financial investments, however, are made in R&R to members and non-members, through staff training. Financial investments are made through the vocational training scholarship fund to children in centres. These are made to ensure the implementation of the objective of developing comprehensive approaches and strategies towards addressing child sexual exploitation, and for building capacities to strengthen specialisation of members (Objective 3). In addition, such investments aim to assist with Objective 2.

#### *Convening*

COSECAM fulfils a convening function within the network to ensure the smooth running of activities and to enable strong cooperation and coordination among the member NGOs. In addition, its advocacy activities demand that it work in convening relevant actors outside the network together with relevant network members to influence policy etc. This is covered by Objective 1, 2 and 4 above (developing comprehensive approaches and strategies). The

network has members with varying backgrounds and who work with different strategies. The convening function here brings these members together under a similar strategy, one which combines all the missions of the various members under one.

#### *Building communities*

COSECAM does not build communities directly, except in terms of its **investment** function above, by assisting its members.

#### *Facilitating*

The Secretariat of COSECAM ensures that members carry out their activities more efficiently and effectively through support in the organisation of conferences and meetings, through the dissemination of publications through **amplification** and through the **investment** activities above. This is covered mainly by Objective 1 above, but also the other objectives through the amplification and investment roles which are assisted by facilitation.

In terms of the roles, again COSECAM does not fulfil one exclusive role. In its **agency** role, for example, COSECAM contracts researchers, produces documents and carries out advocacy activities towards effecting policy change. In its **support** role, COSECAM invests in activities for members and non-members to enable them to carry out their own work which can lead to agency against child sexual exploitation.

Please see Figure 2 for a breakdown of COSECAM's objectives, responsibilities, activities and functions. The Secretariat is listed here as responsible for Objective 1, and within its activities therein to be responsible for coordinating implementation of all other objectives. This format has been chosen to ensure clarity later on in the report when listing strengths and weaknesses and identifying actors (Sections 4 and 5), as its role towards Objectives 2, 3 and 4 covers support rather than implementation itself.

**Figure 2: COSECAM's objectives, responsibilities, activities and functions**

<b>Objective</b>	<b>Responsibility</b>	<b>Activity</b>	<b>Function</b>
1. Strong coordination and cooperation among local NGOs with similar goals and objectives	Secretariat	Coordinates: implementation of Objectives 2, 3 and 4; communication between subcommittees and StC; work outside the Coalition; fundraising; proposals, budgets and workplans; meetings, trainings and workshops; reports to members and donors; brainstorms on possible projects.	Filtering Amplifying Convening Facilitating
2. Developing comprehensive approaches and strategies	Steering Committee Delegate Group	To advise; represent; approve budget and; supervise and monitor implementation; support fundraising; assess Secretariat; approve issues to subcommittees; draft decision making; support subcommittees; approve audit.	Amplifying Investing/providing Convening Facilitating
3. Strengthening qualities and capacities of local NGOs in their specific work areas and increasing specialisation	IHRD subcommittee  R&R subcommittee	Integrated child issue programming; programme staff training; provincial member NGO support; corporate development and cooperation  Centre staff training; child rehabilitation services; vocation training scholarship fund	Investing/providing (Building communities) Facilitating
4. Including advocacy, political pressure, and popular activism in the approach	Research subcommittee  Advocacy subcommittee	Capacity of local organisations; demand factors for child sex; situation analysis for child sex  Policy influence; constituency support building; child advocacy	Amplifying Convening Facilitating

### **3. External environment: challenges**

Findings in this sector come both from interviews with the network Secretariat and with member NGOs, and also from research analysis of current conditions. However, this is an overview of general conditions in Cambodia, not a specific review of issues which may have occurred within the network. This section may appear negative, but as it is supposed to review challenges, it does not detail positive developments currently underway in Cambodia.

#### **3.1 Cultural challenges**

According to Bradley (2005: 36), 'it is important to consider Khmer culture and how it can affect networks and their functioning'. Cambodian culture has been through a difficult recent history. This is exemplified most famously in the Pol Pot era and its tearing asunder of local relationships and communities. As villages were separated and as the population was turned against one another during the purges and the 're-education' of the era, so trust between people became impossible. Families were forced to betray each other; marriages were forced; and the paranoia of the central regime meant that nobody was safe and anybody could disappear at any given time. This regime was then followed by years of poverty, instability and guerrilla warfare from the deposed Khmer Rouge.

This has had an effect on present day Cambodian society and its institutions. All interviewees responded that trust was a big problem in networking in Cambodia. Although organisations in Cambodia may be working towards a common goal, the issue of jealousy and suspicion leads to the hiding of their work from other 'competing' organisations making it difficult for local NGOs who are interested in networking to cooperate with others. In some cases, it is difficult to organise workshops or meetings, because participants do not want to share information, or do not trust other participants because they do not know them. But, even when people are known, trust can be absent: as one interviewee stated 'I don't trust anyone in my country, except my family, and often not even them'. This is also identified in Bradley (2005: 43), 'according to a member of the Forestry Network, "Some people are active, while some are free riders. For example, I myself tried to develop a proposal and then other members copied from me. Some people do not accept others' ideas for improvement.'

This is exacerbated by other aspects of Khmer culture: some of these are traditional and some have been adopted by the recent history of the country. As Bradley (2005: 36) states, 'many Khmers hesitate to ask others for help ... questioning is not common in Asian culture. Questioning may be perceived as a way of accusing or looking down on someone.' This is a part of the wide Asian concept of 'losing face' and often leads to actors preferring not to communicate with others so as not to look lacking in knowledge, or to them agreeing with something without really being committed. Khmer reluctance to 'lose face' means that participants are often not motivated to join training, or to admit failures. Capacity is growing steadily, and many Cambodians are fully involved in building the capacity of other Cambodians. These actors can be treated with suspicion or jealousy. Capacity is generally seen as low of local NGOs in the countryside: it is hard to attract staff with capacity to fill jobs outside the capital, as conditions are poor and infrastructure is weak. It can be difficult to reach those outside Phnom Penh with capacity building. Khmer society is also hierarchical, which means that people build relationships within the patron-client system so that they can obtain 'security and opportunities in return for support and agreement with his/her decisions. This system makes it very difficult to ensure genuine participation' (ibid: 37).

#### **3.2 Challenges in the NGO climate**

It is often hard to motivate people to attend meetings; in some cases, participants will not attend without receiving a per diem, even if the meeting is close by and short. This is in particular because of the high prevalence of NGO meetings and jargon in Cambodia, much of which is difficult for members of local NGOs to cope with and which can contribute to

workshop/bureaucracy overload. This has an effect on efforts to coordinate among members, particularly if they are outside the capital, if the network is heavily centralised: Cambodia is sometimes seen as the 'Republic of Phnom Penh' because of the difference in infrastructure and conditions between the capital and the provinces.

Another issue in this area is the diversity of members. As seen above, and particularly on the issue of sexual exploitation and trafficking, organisations may have different missions. An example is the contrasting opinions on whether prostitution or sex work should be legalised or not; a stance in this area can lead to particularly defined activities, which may be different to those of an organisation with a different view. Often, this follows the attitudes of international donors (NGOs usually cannot get funding without proving they are following the indicators of the donor). This leads to a complex environment, a lack of coordination, and increased suspicion regarding donors and activities. Another example can be seen in recent times by raids on brothels by NGOs and the government which may contradict methods held by other NGOs. This leads to difficulties in producing a comprehensive strategy.

In addition, the NGO climate in Cambodia is considered to be hard to work in. The format for proposals and reports for local NGOs is difficult to master, and concepts such as indicators, objectives and other are not widely understood. As such, it is difficult for participants to understand or agree on comprehensive approaches and strategies. Capacity is growing, but donors find that preparation of the necessary documents, and accountability and monitoring are still weak.

### **3.3 Challenges in the political arena**

As Bradley (2005: 8) suggests, 'In Cambodia, civil society has been given a relatively large degree of freedom to form associations or networks, both formal and informal.' However, the recent political climate in Cambodia has made it difficult for people to speak out or to perform advocacy activities. At the end of 2005, human rights activists were jailed for defamation of political authorities; some prominent figures were forced to flee (Development Weekly, 6-12 Feb 2006). All have recently been released, pardoned and/or allowed to return, and Prime Minister Hun Sen has made claims that he is going to work towards decriminalising defamation. However, many believe that such actions have been orchestrated for the benefit of donors prior to the upcoming Consultative Group meeting whereby donors allocate aid to Cambodia (Cambodia Daily, 2006b, 23 February). Whether or not this is the case, the political situation in Cambodia remains unstable and it can be difficult to hold dialogue and promote advocacy in such a climate.

Corruption still plays a big role in Cambodian politics. In terms of addressing sexual exploitation, it is vital to impact policy, particularly because it is alleged that high-ranking officers are involved in trafficking and there is a need to clarify the trafficking stance at all levels, especially government. However, the judicial system is acknowledged as weak and the legislative power suffers the burden of heavy bureaucracy. There are often many actors involved and issues can cross ministries. For example, the Ministry of Justice has drafted the anti-trafficking law; the Anti-Human Trafficking and Juvenile Protection Department exists within the Ministry of the Interior to address trafficking and sexual exploitation of women and children; and there are also departments within the Ministry of Women's Affairs and Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation (MoSVY) (ActionAid Vietnam, 2006 unreleased: 9) which address the issue. This can cause confusion leading to a lack of enforcement of existing laws. In addition, the hierarchical relationship (see Section 3.1) makes it unnatural for Cambodians to criticise those in higher positions; and those in positions of power can be reluctant to lose face by admitting failings or discussing ways forward.

## 4. Strengths and weaknesses

This section arises from the interviews of the staff of the network and the member NGOs. It concludes by summarising the strengths and weaknesses according to the six functions it carries out (see Figure 2).

### 4.1 Implementation of coordination and cooperation

This section is seen here as being the responsibility of the Secretariat, for the purposes of clarity, which includes support to the objectives covered in Sections 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4.

#### *Strengths*

- According to all interviewees, the level of support offered by the COSECAM Secretariat was high. Staff were seen to have a high level of capacity, most of whom hold BSc or MSc/MA qualifications, and the administration team was seen as strong. Interviewees stated that it was easy to work with the COSECAM staff and that they were efficient and effective. All interviewees were aware that there were staff specifically employed to deal with networking, and were assured that the role was fulfilled adequately.
- Technological support, systems and databases were seen as strong, professional and up-to-date by interviewees from the Secretariat.
- All interviewees stated that knowledge sharing was successful and that they had access to the information they needed. Interviewees said they could share experiences and information, and obtain information on other members in the field.
- Some organisations which had previously been inactive in the Coalition, owing to lack of financial support to travel from the provinces to Phnom Penh, now were able to attend as the Secretariat supplied a per diem.

#### *Weaknesses*

- Still some interviewees from member NGOs were unaware of databases and information available for sharing.
- Some interviewees from member NGOs stated that it was difficult for them to attend all meetings because of activities in their own organisations.
- All member NGOs said that the issue of trust/unwillingness to share achievements affected the network's activities (although they did not expand on this).

### 4.2 Developing comprehensive approaches and strategies

#### *Strengths*

- All interviewees stated that COSECAM was able to develop good strategies, which are outlined further in Sections 4.3 and 4.4.

#### *Weaknesses*

- Interviewees from member NGOs were unclear about the network approach and strategy. None had a clear idea of who the donors are; what the objectives are; what the goal is; or what the mission of the organisation is.
- One member NGO believed the network was good as it answered requirements of donors. One other member NGO interviewee stated that some members were in the network only to answer donor obligations. It was highlighted that many members of the network were inactive: only a handful of NGOs in the network actually participate. This has an effect on the development of strategies from a truly participatory basis.

### 4.3 Strengthening capacities of local NGOs and increasing specialisation

#### *Strengths*

- Long-term capacity building for staff and members is fully in place, with in-house trainers and consultants available.

- Work is being carried out on a draft MoU (memorandum of understanding) with MoSVY to cover child custody in shelters.
- Training on counselling skills has been provided to NGOs working in the area of shelter. Follow up is regular and complete.
- Psycho-counselling courses have been facilitated. Psychology training is to be provided by COSECAM to shelter staff.
- 78% of clients of the Victims of Trafficking Vocational Training Scholarship Fund (VTF) Project have found work through the scheme.
- The VTF scheme has also enabled the setting up of three regional networks for this activity, with various tasks. It is reported that these networks are regularly joining in and supporting the project, and attendance numbers at meetings are increasing.
- The head office is in Phnom Penh but activities are seen as being fully decentralised.

#### *Weaknesses*

- Secretariat interviewees confirmed that that plans for 2006-8 have had to be postponed owing to lack of funding and to falling behind schedule.

#### **4.4 Advocacy, political pressure and activism**

##### *Strengths*

- Research documents are all available in both Khmer and English.
- All interviewees saw that COSECAM was effective in influencing policy and in advocacy. COSECAM has been successful in lobbying the Ministry of Justice to sign the MoU on child custody in shelters and work is being carried out on a draft MoU with MoSVY to cover this. Public discussions are facilitated frequently.
- The child advocacy unit encourages girls to share their experiences with others and to talk to the public about rights.

##### *Weaknesses*

- Some interviewees from member NGOs were not clear about the research which has been carried out and did not access it.
- It was identified by the Secretariat that it was difficult to get funding for research.
- COSECAM had found it difficult to find human resources for the advocacy field.
- All member NGOs said that the issue of trust/unwillingness to share achievements affected the policy arena.

#### **4.5 Summary: strengths and weaknesses in implementation of functions**

- The network is identified as having weaknesses in **filtering** information on databases and research to member NGOs, although strengths were identified in terms of ability to filter other information such as experiences and knowledge from other NGOs.
- The network is identified as strong in **amplifying** in terms of advocacy and dissemination, despite problems of finding human resources to cover this area
- The network is identified as strong in **investing**, with many examples of successful projects. However, there are some constraints encountered in terms of seeking funding for activities for training.
- The network is identified as not dealing in **building communities** apart from within its investment function.
- The network is identified as strong in **convening**, although it was stated that it is sometimes difficult for members to attend meetings.
- The network is identified as strong in **facilitating** information and dissemination, although weaknesses were identified in terms of knowledge of member NGOs on the approach and strategies of the network and in garnering NGO commitment to the network.

## **5. Impact of form on function**

According to RAPID, it is necessary 'to define how [a network's] structural characteristics (organisation, skills, resources, etc.), or organisational practices affect its capacity to carry out its functions satisfactorily'. Here we use RAPID's key factors to analyse their contribution to the strengths and or weaknesses detailed above. These are: governance; localisation and scope; capacity and skill; resources; membership; communications; external environment; and strategic and adaptive capacity.

### **5.1 Governance**

Governance is identified as strong: COSECAM has a governance agreement in place and a clear structure. Although the structure is stated as hierarchical (in the network's own documents), in reality, different parts of the structure work side-by-side, supporting each other. The different parts of the structure are answerable to each other and submit information to each other, including the administrative hub (the Secretariat) in Phnom Penh. Roles are defined and workplans are firmly in place, with member NGO participation.

COSECAM is a well known brand within Cambodia and within the field. Member NGOs had a clear understanding of the objectives of activities within the network, but were less clear on the actual approach and strategies of the network itself, including objectives, mission and vision. COSECAM outlines its vision and mission in its network's documents, in both English and Khmer; however, it seems that some members have not processed this information. In addition, some member NGOs were identified as being part of the network to answer donor requirements rather than to provide a service to the target group (sexually exploited children). Member participation is restricted to only a few key members and many are inactive. This can weaken the implementation of activities. This could be addressed by a continued focus on facilitating information to members in this area, and a focus on member capacity building (5.3) on solving this problem section.

### **5.2 Localisation and scope**

COSECAM has a central office in Phnom Penh but is considered by its member NGOs as working on a decentralised basis, mainly because of i) the activities of the members themselves and ii) the reach of some of the projects (particularly the Victims of Trafficking Vocational Training Scholarship Fund Project (VTF), which works regionally and has created its own sub-networks. This focus on decentralisation contributes to the strengths of the network and the success of activities.

COSECAM also works at all levels of the policy process, but in particular in policy formulation and policy implementation. This has contributed to its strength in terms of advocacy, where it has had numerous successful impacts on influencing policy. The network works by sector of interest, and its research programme is focused on carrying out further work on analysing demand (of victims). This work contributes to successful programming, as activities are implemented which answer demand (VTF; advocacy of custody children in shelters; child advocacy; training of centre staff). Section 3 of this paper noted that local NGOs in Cambodia sometimes are constrained by donor wishes, and by diversity of approach, particularly in the area of sexual exploitation. COSECAM has a clear vision and mission, although members are sometimes unaware of this or not attending because of this (see Sections 5.1 for details and Section 5.3 on capacity for ways of addressing this).

### **5.3 Capacity and skill**

Secretariat capacity is identified by all interviewees as strong. As a result, COSECAM is identified as mainly a strong network in Cambodia: it is able to carry out its functions well and its activities are successfully implemented. This is true in terms of research capacity (mainly the hiring of external consultants); networking (there are specific staff members employed for

this, and all members were aware of this); communications (there are specific staff members employed for this, and all members were aware of this); management (the structure is clearly defined and staff are qualified and have good resources); and fundraising (handled by the management).

It has been considered that members are sometimes unclear on the mission and vision, although there is greater clarity in terms of their responsibilities and the structure. In addition, members are sometimes unaware of research or databases available to them. This could be addressed by a focus on capacity building of members, and a bigger focus on communicating such issues. In addition, it was identified that it was difficult to fundraise for the research programme; also, funding has been difficult to secure for the training programmes for 2006-8. This has an effect on programme activities. Fundraising can be hard work for all NGOs in Cambodia (see Section 5.7), although continued effort by those responsible should have an effect.

#### **5.4 Resources**

In general, COSECAM is well funded: it has a central office, with sufficient technology and systems. Funding is secure, apart from difficulties in a few areas (as we have seen, raising funds has difficulties in Cambodia, see Section 5.7). COSECAM is well resourced in terms of research and advocacy (although some members are unaware of these).

In terms of staff: human resource capacity is high in the Secretariat. There are some difficulties in securing staff and members for the advocacy programme. This could have an effect in the future of the network's activities in the advocacy programme. Despite this, COSECAM's advocacy activities have been successful, showing that the existing resources are working well. In addition, COSECAM has recently employed a staff member for the advocacy team. COSECAM also has a long-term capacity building focus for both the members and Secretariat, which should lead to eradicating many of the problems identified within this report, provided it focuses on perceived weaknesses. Additionally, gender equality has been addressed and more than two-thirds of staff are women (COSECAM website in January 2006).

#### **5.5 Membership**

Membership criteria are under review. Currently, membership is voluntary and free, and subject to references by three member NGOs and certain other criteria, such as working within the area towards the common goal of COSECAM. Members work generally within the area of sexual exploitation, with a focus on children, although some members may have differing indicators or objectives (often as a result of donor requirements in the area of trafficking or other). This could potentially lead to disharmony although, in the case of COSECAM, the central goal is to address child sexual exploitation, which unites all members. These are organised in what is said to be a hierarchical structure by the network. However, the rotating membership of the Steering Committee and the chairmanship promotes more equality within the network; the relationship between members is therefore said to be flat. However, we have seen that Cambodia has a culture of patron-client relationships (see Section 5.7).

#### **5.6 Communications**

The network does have an appropriate communications strategy and staff members responsible for it and members are aware of it. Resources are available in support of this.

#### **5.7 External environment**

The external environment in Cambodia has been identified as key in this report. There are some difficulties in the policy context, in terms of civil and political freedoms and room for manoeuvre at the government level. This makes it difficult to have an influence on policy,

although COSECAM has nevertheless been successful in advocacy. The network has access to sufficient external technology (Cambodia has some glitches in this area, but things are relatively good and improving), and demand is assured (child sexual exploitation is an acknowledged issue).

One of the major factors affecting work in Cambodia is the cultural milieu. Trust has been identified as significant in impacting both the network and the policy arena. Lack of trust makes it difficult for actors to work together and to share work. In addition, the NGO climate in Cambodia is peculiar, particularly in terms of the issue of sexual exploitation: as we have seen, donors have differing attitudes towards the issue, and this can be reflected in different missions of member NGOs in a network. Seeking funding can be competitive; this also has an effect on fundraising, as does the requirement by donors for those seeking funding to go through complicated funding processes which are hard for those with fewer skills to understand.

Although the network is said to have a horizontal structure, relations between individuals, both in and outside a network, are traditionally hierarchical, such as patron-client. Young give way to old and less powerful give way to more powerful, despite experience or education. This can lead to difficulties in generating a participatory process, whereby all voices are heard. Added to the issue of distrust in Cambodia, both within and outside the network, this can impact the success of functions of the network. In addition, despite the network's claims, it is difficult to maintain such a horizontal structure against the traditional culture of Cambodia. In fact, the structure of COSECAM is more hierarchical than flat, although it is interesting to note its efforts to consider changing this.

All member NGOs stated that these issues were significant, but it was difficult for them to detail how this affects the functions of the network or the implementation of activities. It is important to be aware of the impacts of these factors in programming; as Bradley (2005) states 'by encouraging the openness of networks it ensures that the network broadly reflects community interests', and this can lead to better implementation of all functions.

### **5.8 Strategic and adaptive capacity**

The network is identified by all interviewees as able to deal with changes in interests, but only to the point where interests still follow the common goal. COSECAM is also able to deal with external changes, which reflects positively for all of their functions, keeping work relevant and pertinent: research on demand is one key example of their openness to adaptability. The network is flexible and covers a number of functions, and has the capacity to adapt further. Decisions are made by the whole network, by members and by the network itself: decisions are discussed by all in their various roles in sub-committees or as chairs of the various components of COSECAM.

The network is not sustainable financially, as it is dependent on international NGO/donor funds to a large extent. It is difficult to see when this will be possible for the network. As Bradley states (2005: 58), 'networks are highly dependent on NGO/donor funds'. More sustainability could be garnered through membership fees or lowering per diems; however, it is difficult to envisage members being willing to cooperate with this, constrained by their own budgets as they are.

## **6. Brief conclusions and a future focus**

This paper has given a brief review of one network in Cambodia, detailing its form, its functions, its strengths and weaknesses, and the effect of these on the former. It has also given a particular initial focus on certain areas of the external environment which impact its functioning, namely the social and cultural milieu, in this case illustrated by trust.

The network is identified as generally strong, despite some weaknesses in a few areas. It is clear that COSECAM is able to adapt to future demands and conditions, and is capable of addressing its own weaknesses through its strong structure and the high capacity of its administration. One of the more serious weaknesses is the need to involve members more in the network: many members are seen as inactive with responsibility mainly falling on a few key larger NGOs.

A continued focus on the issue of trust and the cultural milieu would be useful here: it is clear that trust impacts heavily on networks and their functioning and it would be good to see how. The external environment of networks in Cambodia is both interesting and under-researched. In addition, it is important not to undervalue the impact that can be had by networks which work well in terms of influencing policy and carrying out other functions. It is clear that the study of networks in Cambodia is useful and can contribute to an understanding of ways in which this can be done successfully: it is hoped that further studies in this area will be carried out in the future.

## **Annex 1: References**

### **Networks**

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COSECAM (2004) *Goods and Girls: Trade Across Borders*, Border Research No. 3.

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COSECAM 'Vocational Training Scholarship Fund for Survivors of Exploitation'.

## Annex 2: COSECAM members

ADHOC	Cambodia Human Rights and Development Association
AK	Anakot Kumar
CDP	Cambodian Defenders Project
CCASVA	Cambodian Children Against Starvation and Violence Association
CCHDO	Cambodian Children and Handicap Development Organisation
CCPCR	Cambodian Center for the Protection of Children Rights
CHO	Cambodian Hope Organization
CWCC	The Cambodian Women's Crisis Center
CWDA	Cambodian Women's Development Agency
CRF	Child Rights Foundation
CAMP	Child Assistance for Mobilisation and Participation
GOUTTE D'EAU NL	To assist vulnerable children and their families
HCC	Health Care Centre for Children
KnK	Kokkyo naki Kodomotachi (Children Without Borders)
KNKS	Komar Ney Kdey Sangkheum
KRR	Komar Rikreay
LSCW	Legal Support for Children and Women
PTD	Help Street Families
PJJ	Protection of Juvenile Justice
SCCO	Save the Cambodia Children Organisation
SKK	Seva Kapea Komar
WP	Wathnakpheap
WVC	World Vision Cambodia

## Annex 3: COSECAM details

### Address

Mail: PO Box 574, RP12000, Phnom Penh, Cambodia  
Secretariat: 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor, Room No 321, Phnom Penh Center, Corner Sihanouk (274) and Sothearos (3) Blvd, Sangkat Tonle Bassac, Khan Chamcar Morn, Phnom Penh.  
Tel: (+855-23) 993 675/224 801  
Fax: (+855-23) 993 675  
Email: office@cosecam.org  
Website: www.cosecam.org

### Staff (from website accessed January 2006)

#### Steering Committee

1. Mr Thun Saray (President ADHOC) chair January - June 2004
2. Mr Sok Sam Oeung (Director CDP) chair July 2004 - June 2005
3. Mrs Oung Chanthol (Director CWCC) chair July - December 2005
4. Mr Nuy Bora (Director Wathnakpheap)
5. Position vacant

#### Secretariat Staff

Coalition Coordinator:	Mr Tuon Vicheth (MA Rural Dev. Management)
Advocacy Program Officer:	Vacancy
IHRD Program Officer:	Vacancy
IHRD Program Assistant:	Mrs Kao Sokdeth (MA Comm. Res. & Dev)
R&R (VTF) Program Officer:	Mrs Sea Sovityea (BA Management)
VTF Project Officer:	Mrs Prum Phaldyn (BA Marketing)
VTF Project Assistant:	Mr So Sokbunthet (BA Law)
Micro Business Consultant:	Mr Thong Phirum (BA Dev. Management)
Publication Officer:	Vacancy
Financial Officer:	Ms Oum Mommary (BA Accounting)
Administrator:	Mr Nget Sopheap (BA Tourism)
Driver/Messenger:	Mr Mao Vannak
Cleaner:	Mrs Noin Chanthy
Volunteer Finance:	Mr Sok Sothun
Provincial VTF Job Agents:	Ms On Chea Tevy (Phnom Penh), Ms Hing Srey (Sihanoukville), Ms Sary Deth and Ms Pok Bunna (Battambang), Ms Nhan Sakhen (Siem Reap).
Program Advisor:	Mr John Vijghen (MA Anthropology)
Research Intern:	Ms Judith von Gyer (LLB, LLM lawyer)
Advocacy Intern:	Ms Caroline Putman-Cramer

## **Annex 4: Interviewees**

### **COSECAM Secretariat**

Mr Tuon Vichet, Coordinator

Ms Caroline Putman-Cramer, Intern Lawyer

Ms Sovityea So, Vocational Training Fund Officer

### **Members**

Mr Tep Pov, Administrator of CCASVA

Mr Savoeun, HCC

Ms Ith Koeu Houpatey, Legal Assistant PJJ

Ms Hun Phanna, CWDA

## **Annex 5: Questionnaire**

This questionnaire is a summary of questions asked: it was adapted as necessary, and more questions were posed as necessary as seen on the RAPID function-form webpage. Interviews were carried out in Khmer and English as necessary.

### **A: Background**

1. When was COSECAM formed?
2. Why was it formed?
3. Who are its major donors?

### **B: Functions**

1. What are the main objectives of COSECAM?
2. How do you rank them in terms of importance?
3. What activities have you carried out/do you carry out to fulfil each objective?
4. What else does COSECAM carry out, outside its objectives?
5. Does COSECAM have a long-term business plan? What is it?

### **C: Management and organisation**

1. Do you have a governance agreement? Including what? Is it a formal document?
2. What kind of management system is there? Are there incentives? Is there a clear structure?
3. What kind of organisational mission is there?
4. Is COSECAM centralised? What work does it do outside Phnom Penh?
5. Could you supply an up-to-date organisational chart, and a list of the sub-committees and their functions?

### **D: Resources and communications**

1. Does it have access to research from non-members?
2. Does it have access to databases and sources?
3. How is knowledge shared within COSECAM and outside?

### **E: Staff**

1. Are there staff employed specifically to network and make links with others?
2. Do staff have relevant skills and capacity?
3. Are there staff capacity-building initiatives within COSECAM? What kind?
4. Does the network as a whole have sufficient and adequate staff?

### **F: Membership**

1. Is membership voluntary, free, fee-based, means-tested, open, by invitation only?
2. How diverse are the members?

### **G: Strategic and adaptive capacity**

1. Can the network address changes in the interests/values of its members?
2. Can the network respond to opportunities in the policy context?
3. Is the network sustainable? How?
4. Does the network have the capacity to adopt new skills?
5. How does the network make decisions?

### **H: External environment**

1. At what stage of the policy process does the network intervene (agenda-setting, formulation, implementation, M&E)?
2. Who are the key policymakers and institutions?
3. How does the policy process work?
4. What is the extent of civil and political freedoms?

5. What difficulties are there with advocacy?
6. What determines the attitudes inside and outside the network? Are people united towards the common goal?
7. Does the issue of trust/unwillingness to share achievements affect COSECAM? How?
8. Does the issue of trust/unwillingness to share achievements affect the network as a whole? How?
9. Does the issue of trust/unwillingness to share achievements affect the policy arena? How?
10. Is there a demand for the network's products and services? Who demands it? Government, civil society, donors?