

Living Under the Rule of Corruption

**An Analysis of Everyday Forms of Corrupt
Practices in Cambodia**



Christine J Nissen

Center for Social Development

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An Analysis of Everyday Forms of Corrupt Practices in Cambodia

Report on Qualitative Research Component



By Christine J. Nissen

**Center for Social Development
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Request for further information should be addressed to:

The Center for Social Development
P. O. Box 1346
Street 57, No. 19
Sk. Boeung Keng Kang 1
Phnom Penh
Kingdom of Cambodia
E-Mail: csd@online.com.kh
www.online.com.kh/users/csd
Or to:
Christine J. Nissen
E-Mail: christine@joker-nissen.dk

Contents

	<u>Page</u>
Abbreviations	i
Foreword	iii
Acknowledgements	v
Background	vii
Preface	ix
Executive Summary	1
PART ONE: FACING CORRUPTION	5
Chapter 1 Introduction	6
Approach and theoretical overview	
Objectives of research	
Contents of report	
Chapter 2 Data collection	11
Qualitative fieldwork	
Quantitative survey	
Public forum	
Workshop	
Combination of methodologies	
PART TWO: ENCOUNTERING CORRUPTION	17
Chapter 3 Everyday forms of corrupt practices	18
Corrupt locations and impact on the average household	
Corrupt practices	
Law enforcers	
Education Sector	
Health Sector	
Public positions of trust and registry	
Judiciary	
Forestry Department and Environment Department	
Jobs and promotion	

Department of Land Administration	
Others	
Causes	
Chapter 4 Agents in corrupt transactions	35
The gender dimension	
Corruption: rich and poor	
Using middlemen	
The takers view	
Chapter 5 Talking of ‘corruption’	48
Conceptualizing	
Blurred boundary between ‘corruption’ and ‘gift-giving’	
Social dynamic affects the distinction between corruption and gift-giving	
PART THREE: REACTING ON CORRUPTION.....	57
Chapter 6 Low trust, low acceptance and low resistance	58
Low community trust	
Low acceptance of corrupt practices	
Available strategies	
Chapter 7 Ordinary citizens’ strategies	65
The Wan Family feels little freedom to act	
Resistance?	
Low incentive to increase productivity	
Power structures make resistance risky	
Chapter 8 Active strategies	73
Resistance by Civil Servants: Possibilities and Limitations	
Informal procedures	
Network becomes ‘the strategy’ in resisting corrupt practices	
PART FOUR: A MULTIDIMENSIONAL SOCIAL PHENOMENON	81
Chapter 9 How to change the practice	82
Recommendation: Clear transparent bureaucratic procedures	
Recommendation: Awareness raising, information and education of civil servants and ordinary citizens	
Priority actions against corrupt practices	

Chapter 10 Conclusion	87
Citizens theorize on corrupt practices	
Stereotypes and networks are ‘the strategy’	
Vision	
 Bibliography	 93
 ANNEXES	 97
Annex I	98
The high cost of living is by far the most serious concern of Cambodians	
Definitions of Rural-Urban	
Annex II	99
Payments for services actual average amounts	
Number of respondent households paying for particular services: official costs & bribe payments	
Annex III	101
Correlation between corruption severity indicators and most dishonest institution rating	
Annex IV	102
Recommendations from CSD 1998 Survey	
 TABLES	
Table 1: Overview of pattern of bribes among all households	20
Table 2: The relative impact of bribes on the household’s budget	21
Table 3: Payments for public education	27
Table 4: Women and corruption	39
Table 5: Middlemen often play a facilitating role	44
Table 6: Corruption is not socially accepted	46
Table 7: Vocabulary from extortion to gifts out of kindness	49
Table 8: Integrity rating	59
Table 9: Corrupt practices are not accepted	62
Table 10: Corrupt practices are not acceptable even though	63
they are widespread	
Table 11: Personal network cushion against corruption	79
Table 12: Priority actions against corruption	86
Table A: The high cost of living is by far the most serious	98
concern of Cambodians	
Table B: Definitions of Rural-Urban	98
Table C: Payments for services actual average amounts	99
Table D: Number of respondent households paying for particular	100
services: official & bribe payments	

FIGURES

Figure 1: Vicious circle	60
Figure 2: Pyramidal payment flow	88
Figure A: Correlation between corruption severity indicators and most is honest institution rating	101

BOXES

Box 1: Interview with Mr. Sieng	24
Box 2: Interview with Sothear, high school student	26
Box 3: Interview with Mrs. Panny	29
Box 4: Identification construction by participants	43
Box 5: Local distinctions	55
Box 6: Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Wan	65
Box 7: Interview with Mr. Sokha	69
Box 8: Interview with Mr. Sen	73
Box 9: Interview with Mrs. Panny	76
Box 10: Interview with Mr. Seima	78
Box 11: Observation of two-faced relation	79

Abbreviations

ADB	Asian Development Bank
CAS	Center for Advanced Study
CSD	Center for Social Development
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
SES	Socio-Economic Status
UNTAC	United Nations Transitional Authority of Cambodia
\$	All amounts in Tables are in U.S. Dollars. \$1=Riel 4.000

TABLES

Socio-Economic Status:

A-A: Above Average

A: Average

B-A: Below Average

Rural-Urban:

A-R: Accessible-Rural

R-R: Remote-Rural

S-U: Semi Urban

U: Urban

Foreword

It is common knowledge, in Cambodia, that corrupt practices are pervasive and are experienced by many families and households. In order to have factual, scientific data on these seemingly accepted conclusions, the Center for Social Development (CSD) conducted a research project entitled “The Impact of and Attitudes Towards Corruption”. The research was conducted in 2004 and is a follow up and expansion of the earlier 1998 CSD study entitled the “The National Survey on Public Attitudes Towards Corruption”.

This report is the qualitative component of this research project which focuses on local-level corrupt practices. It mirrors the families and household’s concrete experiences with corrupt practices, the effects these practices have on their lives, and their ways and strategies of coping with corruption.

The qualitative report provides a voice and sounding board for the people to speak with clarity on the negative and ill effects of corruption. It shows that there is a need to curb corrupt practices not only from the top, on the national level with high level policies, but much more so on the local level through local structures. Corrupt practices are a concern of all sectors. With enough political will, and by drawing upon all positive resources, we can bring about clean bureaucracy and institutions working for the benefit and good of the Cambodian nation. The Buddhist teachings and precepts can also help in instituting structural changes that may eventually bring about transparency and accountability in society.

The results and findings of the qualitative part are very interesting and may be the basis for further studies and actions to be undertaken by various sectors and groups. The government and the public sector should see the findings as inputs for policy formulations and actions to enhance good governance and better services for all people. For the private sector, the results and findings of this field research may be used as a guide for greater social responsiveness towards their market clients. For the people, NGOs, and civil society, the field research can trigger more concerted efforts, actions, programs, projects, and interventions to curb and counter corrupt practices.

Lastly, we hope that this research will bring about further debates and discussions so as to generate greater and wider interest on this multi-dimensional social phenomenon. As corrupt practices are discussed more openly, understanding becomes more scientific, and countering these practices will become more effective.

Chea Vannath
President

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Likewise, the Center for Social Development (CSD) would like to congratulate Ms. Christine J. Nissen, program director, for conceiving, initiating, designing and tirelessly managing the research project “The Impact of and Attitudes Towards Corruption”. Furthermore, Ms. Christine J. Nissen conducted qualitative field research and undertook the writing of this report.

We would like to acknowledge valuable comments and contributions from NGOs, donor community, and various individuals of which should be mentioned Cristina Mansfield, Roger Henke (CAS), Kevin Currie, Lector Mikael Gravers, and Robin Biddulph, among many others, whose inputs have helped improve the substance and comprehensibility of this report

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Chea Vannath, President Christine J. Nissen, Program Director

Background

There have been few major scientific studies on corruption in Cambodia. The Center for Social Development (CSD) conducted the first-ever study on corruption, the *National Survey on Public Attitudes Towards Corruption* in 1998. That study indicated some interesting but also very alarming patterns of corruption perceptions in Cambodian society at that time. A large number of Cambodians believed that corruption was a normal way of doing business, yet over half of the Cambodians surveyed did not feel that corruption made things run more smoothly. A large majority viewed corruption as hindering national development and widening the poverty gap. This illustrated that corruption was viewed as a normal practice but not seen as positive for the country's development.

A World Bank study conducted in 1999 and entitled *Cambodia - Governance and Corruption Diagnostic: Evidence from Citizen, Enterprise and Public Official Surveys* analyzed the perceptions of Cambodian citizens, enterprises, and public officials towards governance and corruption. The results indicated that the quality of several public services was perceived as relatively poor and public corruption was perceived as a leading problem for citizens and enterprises. Moreover, the household survey provided strong indicators that corruption disproportionately burdened the poor through informal payments.

In 2004 the World Bank conducted a further study entitled *Cambodia – Seizing Global Opportunity: Investment Climate Assessment & Reform Strategy*, which focused on the business environment for small and medium size enterprises. Eighty two percent of the firms surveyed reported paying bribes and the average estimated payment exceeded five percent of annual sales revenues.

Notwithstanding different purposes, methodologies, and objectives, these studies all draw a picture of corruption as a common, pervasive phenomenon in contemporary Cambodia. Building on existing literature, this report provides analysis of the most recent corruption study undertaken in Cambodia. The research project *The Impact of and Attitudes Towards Corruption in Contemporary Cambodia, 2004*, which this report is a part of, analyses citizens' interpretation and experiences of everyday forms of corrupt practices when dealing with civil servants in the local bureaucracy and institutions. This study aims to contribute to the above argument of corruption as an all-embracing phenomenon in the Cambodian community and to voice the opinions of ordinary citizens' voices in the corruption-debate.

Preface

The Center for Social Development (CSD) initiated the research study under the working-title *The Impact of and Attitudes Towards Corruption in Contemporary Cambodia* in 2004. The objective of the study was to document and analyze everyday forms of corrupt practice at the local level where citizens deal with civil servants in the local bureaucracy and institutions. It provides a contextual and broad view of the Cambodian way of living with (and against) corrupt practices, analyzes corrupt transactions, and details citizens' perceptions and attitudes towards corruption.

The fundamental focus of the study is the nature and interpretation of ordinary citizens' encounters with civil servants in the local bureaucracy and institutions, which excludes high-level corruption from our inquiry. However, high-level corruption and low-level corruption is understood to be interconnected through an institutionalized demand structure. Focusing on low-level corruption does not downplay high-level corruption, quite the opposite. The scope of the research was limited to low-level corruption both to ensure a feasible research project (access to high-level corrupt practices is often very difficult) and to gain knowledge of structures of low-level corrupt practices for designing anti-corruption values campaigns. It is believed that to fight corruption in Cambodia public pressure through awareness and support is essential. The study presupposes that corrupt transactions take place in the encounter between ordinary citizens and civil servants and that both parties have their own interpretation of these transactions.¹

This study assumes that in order to analyze how corrupt practices are experienced at the local level the researcher must observe corrupt practices at that level, gain understanding of citizens' mechanisms to cope with the practices, and identify attitudinal patterns.

The research results aim to provide a better understanding of how corrupt practices at the local level leads to social dysfunction and identify the mechanisms necessary to prevent corruption. Corruption research data provides crucial information for analyzing the impact of everyday forms of corrupt practices on households and generates an understanding of the connection between poverty, corruption and social life. Once this connection is clear, anti-corruption projects can focus on each target group, responding to their specific capacity, needs and

¹ This report is thereby very different in its approach from an inspiring study on corruption conducted in East Europe. Miller et al. 2001. That study analyzes how ordinary citizens and officials interact and then capture corruption as one of the answers to this interaction. The present report goes a step further and assumes there is corruption in the interaction, albeit not always. This assumption builds on CSD's year-long analysis of corruption in Cambodia and citizens reports in public forums, the media, workshops, and debates.

incentives, and macro level reform initiatives can be implemented that focus on concrete problem areas.

The need for research on corruption arises from a number of developments:

Firstly, at the time of writing this report the Royal Government of Cambodia has outlined its strategy to fight corruption in two documents, the *Rectangular Strategy* and the *National Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper*. These strategies view corruption as a threat not only to democratic institutions, and fundamental rights and freedoms, but also as a source that undermines socio-economic development. Both strategies link corrupt practices intrinsically to poverty. Unfortunately the number of citizens living in poverty in Cambodia has not decreased in recent years. It is difficult to prove if this development is a direct result of corruption but the hypothesis is obvious.

Secondly, CSD agrees on the noble and common goals spelled out in the Anti-Corruption Action Plan for Asia and the Pacific undertaken by OECD/ADB. However, experience indicates that implementation and follow-up is challenging because it is directly linked to the operational and fiscal responsibility of the government.

An anti-corruption law has been promised by the Government for more than ten years. As recently as December 2004 at the CG Meeting with bilateral and multilateral donors did the Prime Minister mention the law as its anti-corruption strategy. This strategy also has noble goals but unfortunately the prospects for a well functioning and well implemented law are questionable.

And finally, Cambodia has undergone three national elections. The first was supervised by UNTAC in 1993, followed by an election every five years in 1998 and 2003. In addition, the first ever local elections were held in 2002 when the commune councils were established. The country has furthermore experienced economic development with a growth rate around 5% yearly, and a rise in education and literacy rates. These developments are positive and provide some hope that democracy in Cambodia is slowly taking hold.

On the negative side, Cambodia still faces limited freedom of expression. The previous years have witnessed a prohibition against demonstrations, as well as political killings, violence and political spitefulness towards minority groups, a weak judiciary, and increased censure of the media. These developments could be perceived as government concern for maintaining peace, social stability, and public order. Protection of the nation state after years with war is crucial.

However, they also suggest a political fear of letting the people express their voice democratically and freely.

This research study is not designed to directly link to analyzing the above mentioned themes and issues. However, political strategies create procedures for civil servants and government institutions, and thereby impact the experiences of ordinary citizens with everyday forms of corrupt practices. The above described context is therefore relevant as a framework for the analysis of the structures of corrupt practices in Cambodia.

Executive Summary

The Center for Social Development initiated the research project entitled “The Impact of and Attitudes Towards Corruption” in order to document and analyze corrupt practices experienced by ordinary citizens when they encounter civil servants in local bureaucracies and institutions. The study aims to give voice to ordinary Cambodians in the debate on corruption in the country. The study consists of qualitative and quantitative components. This report describes findings from qualitative research in two provinces.

The qualitative field research has three objectives:

1. Describe and analyze how ordinary citizens experience and interpret everyday corrupt practices, with particular reference to how corruption impacts upon people’s incentives for improving their quality of life.
2. Analyze how ordinary citizens respond to corrupt practices in the local bureaucracy and institutions, including any impacts on social structures in local communities.
3. Make recommendations for future anti-corruption initiatives and strategies.

The qualitative field research conducted over five months of fieldwork, from January to May 2004, using social anthropological methods. The researcher took part in everyday social life in two provinces conducting 60 semi-structured interviews of approximately 1-1½ half hours length. In addition the researcher did extensive participatory observation, focus group discussions, participatory corruption appraisal meetings, mappings, and took part in everyday small talk.

The target groups were ordinary citizens in semi-urban and accessible-rural areas such as policemen, teachers, civil servants, students, farmers, fishermen, motor/taxi drivers, housewives, market vendors, business people, and fabric workers. This group represents both corruption payers and takers, with the majority being payers.

Participants show a variety of concerns regarding corrupt practices. Some of the major concerns mentioned by participants are:

- Access to local bureaucracy and institutions by poor citizens is constrained due to their lack of affiliation to local network systems and patrons. They easily fall victim to exploitation and lack ways of resistance.

- Citizens voice concerns that the bureaucracy lack transparency and the local patrons do not always act fairly towards all citizens.
- Corrupt practices are institutionalized and paid up through the network structures where resistance has limited possibilities. Money flows from ordinary citizens to civil servants and then to patrons and higher-ranking officials in the bureaucracy.
- Low trust in governmental institutions and law enforcement hinders incentives to improve livelihood.
- Citizens are concerned that all civil servants are corrupt and therefore many citizens refrain from using local bureaucracy and institutions.

The following major findings from the study further reflect the concerns of citizens:

Corrupt practices are not being viewed as socially approved. Bribe takers publicly deny taking corrupt payment and use the same folklore of corruption as ordinary citizens. Khmer language has a broad vocabulary for talking about a corrupt practice. The Khmer word '*luy puk roaluy*' is commonly used but many terms detail specific situations depending on the relation between the payer and the taker. It is the social relationship between the payer and taker which determines the vocabulary used to describe the transaction as extortion, corruption, gift-giving with sincerity or gift-giving without sincerity. This makes some practices more socially approved on the local level.

Corrupt practices are frequently a problem in the public service sectors represented in local communities. These sectors are also more prone to corruption accusations, which can be a strategy used by citizens to avoid losing face when turned down by a civil servant. While the 'rich' and 'powerful' are often accused of being corrupt, it is to lower-ranking officials that citizens mostly pay bribes.

Women are the main corruption payer due to their role in overseeing the household budget, taking care of the children, arranging documents for the family, etc. While the taker is more often a man than a woman, this does not imply that men are more corrupt than women. Instead it reflects the division of occupations within the bureaucracy along gender lines. Women do not pay more in bribes than men because the bribe-payment is fixed and often initiated by the payer as a strategy to 'control' the amount paid.

Strategies against corrupt practices are rather vague and consist mainly of passive everyday forms of resistance like creating rumors and gossip or pretending not to have any money. However, there are small signs of resistance with distinctly moral overtones. Civil servants are more likely to use active resistance like

arguing or contact higher-ranking patrons to avoid a bribe. The patronage structures thereby limits corrupt practices at some level but also hinders reports and resistance against corrupt practices within one's own work-sector.

The habitual use of informal procedures is the common way to achieve success within the bureaucracy whereby networks is the primary strategy to either avoid or reduce the amount of the corrupt payment, leaving the poor with limited access to services. For many citizens incentives to improve livelihood and growth are hindered by corrupt payments and lack of well-functioning infrastructure. This is further influenced by the low trust in the local bureaucracy and institutions. This low trust is often, in turn, projected onto the perception of the government.

Citizens express the need for more transparency in both local and national level bureaucracy. Suggestions are made by ordinary citizens and civil servants to increase awareness and information on 'right' procedures and some citizens want education on organizing local participation in development projects in communities.



Children from poor households in provincial area

PART ONE

FACING CORRUPTION

Cambodia has rich traditions, symbolized by the ancient temples of Angkor Wat, passed on from generation to generation, creating a nation with strong family values rooted in the Buddhist Theravada Tradition.

The country has recently undergone a change from centrally planned to free market economy. This change affects the traditional bureaucratic and institutional structures moving, not without frictions, towards a so-called modern rational bureaucracy. The challenge in the transitional process is to carry the whole country, both mentally and economically, into the new practices. The key statistics for Cambodia suggest that the citizens in the countryside, comprising approximately 85% of the population, have not benefited from the recent average annual economic growth of 5-6%. As a result, nine-tenths of the 36% of the population living under the national poverty line reside in the countryside.¹ Cambodia ranks as the third poorest country in Southeast Asia and the gap between rich and poor is at risk of widening.

In addition to the above-mentioned statistics, democratic practices in Cambodia are questionable. Corrupt practices in various forms and functions are often mentioned in public discourse as one of the main causes of social dysfunction, consequently affecting the national financial climate as well as rice farmers in the provinces.

This report is addressed to all who are interested in everyday forms of corrupt practices experienced by ordinary citizens in contemporary Cambodia when encountering civil servants in the local bureaucracy and institutions. The report aims to encourage debate on practices in the local bureaucracy and institutions and envisions a continuing discussion.

¹ National Institute of Statistics 1997

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

*C*orruption is important for people in general because it hurts the poor – we must get rid of corruption! It is very difficult to explain corruption because corruption has no face. [...] Many people in Cambodia talk about corruption, some that talks are not honest I think, but I only know that people talk about corruption everywhere.

Mr. Saphan, Police Chief in accessible-rural area.

The above quote from an interview with Mr. Saphan suggests that corruption is often talked about by ordinary citizens. This was certainly the case during qualitative fieldwork in the provinces. Most stories are told while drinking tea and enjoying the afternoon breeze on a bamboo bed in the shadow of a mango tree. Family and neighbors gather and discuss the events of the day and the discussions regularly turn towards a recent event in the bureaucracy, the high gasoline prices, land disputes, or a family member's illness. The frequency with which the topics of corruption, power, and poverty are linked in these conversations by villagers is striking.

What this report will demonstrate is that ordinary citizens theorize about corrupt practices and view the practice within the social and cultural context of both hindsight and contemporary Cambodia. In spite of illiteracy and lack of formal education, or maybe even because of the lack of schooled thought, ordinary citizens have firm ideas about the reasons and structures of corruption in their life. Despite these levels of understanding it is also clear that they lack ways to effectively resist corruption.

1.1. Approach and theoretical overview

Discussing corruption is never a simple task. The term itself is widely criticized as being too restricted.¹ The material in this report confirms that corrupt practices are multidimensional. An open approach toward defining and discussing 'corruption' is required. This means including corruption as a sense of a gift, a payment, of service, of hospitality, of entitlements, of understatement, even euphemism.² This leaves the usage and definition of the term to the narratives of the participants and the report thereby shifts vantage point from that of the researcher-interviewer to that of the interviewee whose perspective is being sought.³

This report focuses on corrupt practices in the local bureaucracy connecting Michael Herzfeld's theory on the general features of citizens' encounter with the bureaucracy to citizens' reactions and perceptions expressed through the folklore of corruption.⁴ Herzfeld argues that bureaucracy cannot be studied in isolation from people's reactions to it.⁵ Reactions and perceptions do not however, always go hand in hand, and further differ from personal experiences. Like most symbolic systems, bureaucracies offer grounds for dispute, especially in matters of interpretation.⁶ As the report demonstrates, citizens react to the bureaucracy on several fronts with active as well as passive strategies affected by notions of trust, calculated risks and morality.

Creating stereotype expectations of 'others' is a strategy to identify one self in opposition to others. Herzfeld states that 'the fact that people have stereotypical expectations of bureaucratic unfairness offsets their sense of personal failure'.⁷ Herzfeld thereby opens the kaleidoscope of the encounter between citizens and bureaucrats, drawing attention to how stereotypes are used as strategies by the citizen to protect themselves against social disapproval. This notion is relevant when analyzing corruption accusations and when distinguishing between actual experience versus perception. This report seeks an emic perspective (a folk explanation) in the analysis to understand these strategies but retains an etic perspective (principals perspective) so as to retain objectivity.⁸ This combined approach is evident throughout the report and results among other things in discussions of issues not mentioned explicitly by the participants but observed by the research team as important.

1.2. Objectives of research

The purpose of this report is to document and analyze the nature and interpretation of corrupt practices which ordinary citizens' encounter with civil servants in the local bureaucracy and institutions.⁹ The report provides a contextual analysis of how citizens experience, conceptualize, and act upon corrupt practices in contemporary Cambodia.

The report is based on two research components. The first is a qualitative fieldwork study of how ordinary citizens in accessible-rural areas experience and participate in corrupt practices in their contact with civil servants in the local bureaucracy and institutions, and how they act upon this practice. The second component, a quantitative survey, with 2,000 respondents in all of Cambodia's 24 provinces and municipalities, identifies patterns of perceptions on corruption among the population, analyzes the actual cost of corrupt practices for a household, and clarifies knowledge and attitudes towards corruption.

The study has five research objectives:

1. To describe and analyze how ordinary citizens experience and interpret everyday corrupt practices, with particular reference to how corruption impacts upon people's incentives for improving their quality of life.
2. Analyze how ordinary citizens respond to corrupt practices in the local bureaucracy and institutions, including any impacts on social structures in local communities.
3. Identify perceptions and attitudes towards corrupt practices, and examine vocabulary used for corrupt transactions. Analyze patterns by age, gender, socio-economic status, and rural/urban location.
4. Document and analyze the cost and impact of corrupt practices for households.
5. To make recommendations for future anti-corruption initiatives and strategies.

The findings are published in two reports: an analytical and case study based report answering objectives 1, 2, and 5, and a diagnostic study answering objectives 3 and 4.

The present report is founded on an empirical analysis of corrupt practices collected through qualitative fieldwork combined with results from the quantitative component. Specifically, this report covers how ordinary citizens in two provinces relate to local-level corruption, also known under the expression 'petty corruption', or as used in this report, 'everyday forms of corrupt practices'. This type of corrupt practice is faced by ordinary citizens in their encounters with civil servants in the local bureaucracy and institutions when they require an official document, apply for a job, receive treatment at the hospital, seek to build or buy a house, enroll children in school, export products, are involved in a traffic accident, start a business, etc. These often involve some sort of corrupt practices such as gift giving, owing a favor or directly giving money. The report provides an analysis of the association between corrupt practices (including perceptions of corruption) and social life within the context of Cambodian cultural values and everyday practices.

1.3. Contents of report

This report consists of four parts starting with introduction, including description of methodology and concluding with recommendations. The two middle parts represent exploration and discussion of personal experience and perceptions followed by analysis of reactions toward corrupt practices.

Part One forms the context

Part One covers the introduction and methods used in the research and spells out the goals of the study. Findings and methods are highly linked creating the form of the study.

- Chapter 1 contains the introduction outlining the theoretical approach and objective of the study.
- Chapter 2 discusses research methodology and biases for studying corrupt practices.

Part Two explores local perceptions and interpretations of corrupt practices

Many debates in Cambodia between policy makers (national and international), civil society groups and academics end with the argument that ‘corruption is just a traditional gift-giving practice’.¹⁰ This part of the report describes and analyses the contexts and agents of corruption and discusses the ways in which it is described in order to paint a much more textured picture.

- Chapter 3 introduces the setting and context of everyday forms of corrupt practices; locations where citizens encounter corruption in the community are listed and finalized with a list of causes.
- Chapter 4 explores the agents in the transactions; gender, poverty and the use of middlemen in corrupt transactions are analyzed. A discussion of the takers view is furthermore included to integrate both parties experience in the analysis.
- Chapter 5 analyzes how corrupt practices are defined; the complexity of participant’s distinctions between gift giving, corruption, and extortion is explored.

Part Three analyzes reactions on corruption

Corruption is a dynamic phenomenon in local communities surrounded by perceptions and strategies. Strategies are both passive and active with consequences not always in the hands of the ordinary citizens. Part Three examines participants’ reactions and strategies to corrupt practices through cases studies representing different forms of reactions.

- Chapter 6 analyzes how trust affects perceptions of corruption and corrupt practices, followed by an illustration of corrupt practices as unacceptable and a list of forms of daily resistance.
- Chapter 7 presents the Wan Family's and Mr. Sokha's stories and illustrates how a presumed corrupt practice is experienced and acted upon so that it hinders incentives for improving everyday livelihood.
- Chapter 8 illustrates active/available strategies to deal with corrupt practices in local bureaucracy and institutions.

Part Four discuss recommendations and context

Throughout the qualitative study, citizens express great interest and support for initiatives to decrease corrupt practices. Part Four lists the recommendations mentioned by citizens and conclude with the findings and future prosperity.

- Chapter 9 consists of recommendations and priority actions for future anti-corruption initiatives and strategies.
- Chapter 10 holds the conclusion and vision gathering the analysis from the previous chapters into a concluding summary and vision.

This report seeks to uncover how ordinary citizens deal with everyday forms of corrupt practices. Many perspectives are involved in the subject of the practice and while some issues are discussed successively as they emerge in the report others are dispersed among the various sections or chapters.

The terms 'payer' and 'taker' are used throughout the report to describe the actors in the corrupt transactions. The terms illustrate the relation of power in the transaction where the 'taker' holds more power than the 'payer'.

1 Defining 'corruption' has been discussed widely during the years. See for example; Rose-Ackerman 2004, Andvig et al. 2000, Ruud 2000, Visvanathan & Sethi 1998, or Tanzi 1998.

2 Visvanathan & Sethi 1998:8.

3 Tanzi describes corruption to be; 'like an elephant, even though it may be difficult to describe, it is generally not difficult to recognize when observed'. Tanzi 1998:8. The term 'corrupt practices' is used to describe the broad spectrum of practices covering corruption and should not be mistaken as a legal definition.

4 Myrdal 1968:938-939.

5 Herzfeld 1992.

6 Herzfeld 1992:46-47.

7 Herzfeld 1992:4.

8 The operational meaning of 'Emic' is defined as folk explanation. The emic perspective in this report is constructed by the participants' explanations in the qualitative research. The operational meaning of 'Etic' is, in contrast to emic, defined as the observed principles that exist outside of the minds of the actors. The etic perspective is elicited through the researchers' observation. Harris 1976:331.

9 Refer to all civil servants employed by the state and represented in the communities including teachers, policemen, military and army, bureaucrats, tax collectors, village and commune chiefs.

10 Said at workshop on 'Discussion on Everyday Forms of Corrupt Practices – Comments and Recommendations', November 2004, Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Center for Social Development.

CHAPTER 2

Data collection

Asking ordinary citizens about the current major problems in Cambodia does not bring corruption high on the list. On the contrary only 2% of respondents in the quantitative survey answered ‘corruption’ when presented with a list of nine issues.¹ This might lead one to conclude that corrupt practices are not relevant to further research. However, the low score by respondents is not interpreted as a barrier against research on corrupt practices. On the contrary, it can be viewed as an illustration of the complexity of citizens’ life where many matters have impact on daily concerns. The ‘high cost of living/poverty’, reported by 51% of the respondents as the most serious problem, is strongly connected with corrupt practices and highly relevant for this study because it gives a picture of citizens’ real constraints. Still, overcoming this dilemma and plunging into research on corrupt practices leads to further risks and complications.

Juliet Gole points out a number of disadvantages when conducting survey research on corruption and expresses the view that ‘corruption surveys may skew the results merely by asking the questions’.² The great risk is answers that exaggerate the importance of corruption in daily lives. Another threat is embedded in Herzfeld’s theory on citizens’ encounters with the bureaucracy because ‘everyone, it seems, has a bureaucratic horror story to tell’.³ This brings attention to citizens creating rumors and stereotypes about the ‘failure of the bureaucracy’ to conceal their own failures and risk of social degradation. These loose strategic accusations must be considered to maintain a critical perceptiveness when participants describe corrupt practices and the agents behind them.

This study acknowledges these obstacles and uses a variety of methods to complement each method limit and inadequacy. The various methods are concentrated around a narrow subject to limit the risks of biased conclusions.⁴

The study used a variety of methods:

- Five months qualitative fieldwork in two provincial and accessible-rural areas⁵
- A representative nation-wide questionnaire survey with 2,000 respondents
- Two public forums
- A workshop to gain input to solutions and recommendations

2.1. Qualitative fieldwork

The qualitative data was collected through five months of fieldwork from January to May 2004 using social anthropological methods. The researcher took part in everyday social life in two provincial and accessible-rural settings. The two selected research areas are not particularly known for widespread corruption. This provided a view of people's maneuvering in a situation of 'ordinary' and 'medium-range' corrupt practices rather than in an unusual and extreme case.⁶

The researcher conducted 60 semi-structured interviews of about 1-1½ half hours length. In addition the researcher did extensive participatory observation, conducted focus group discussions, participatory corruption appraisal meetings, mappings, and took part in everyday small talk on a regular basis. Approximately 120 nights were spend in the province dividing the time with 1/3 used on participant observation, 1/3 on interviews, and 1/3 on writing field notes, mapping, and socializing with participants.

The team, consisting of a research coordinator and an interpreter, took part in everyday social life by following various informants belonging to the target group in their activities. This involved attending private schools education-classes, weddings, social gatherings, pagoda activities and festivals, local meetings, market life, family/neighbor visits, factories, visiting hospitals, government institutions, etc. During these activities the researcher did not pretend to be invisible, but rather experienced and observed first-hand the interrelation between the attendants. Since corrupt practices are not understood as an isolated act distant from the moral norms, values and perceptions of the society, this approach opens up opportunities to gain insight into practices of everyday social life wherein corrupt practices take place.

The target groups were ordinary citizens in semi-urban and accessible-rural areas such as policemen, teachers, civil servants, students, farmers, fishermen, motor/taxi drivers, housewives, market vendors, business people, and fabric workers. This group represents both corruption payers and takers, with the majority being payers. All names and places in this report are pseudonyms to protect the participants due to the sensitive subject.

An emic/etic distinction is especially interesting for this target group in which participants with limited education are over represented. Quite a few participants showed a rather low reflexive awareness of and capacity to explain their own actions. The etic approach through participant observation and subsequent discussions with participants opened up instinctive patterns and enlightened tacit principles.⁷ This emphasized the distinction between perceptions of corruption,

engulfed by gossip and rumors, versus actual experiences of corruption, involving confessions as well as allegations.

The emic/etic approach is furthermore a strong ethical tool for dealing with the sensitive topic of corruption in the field. Questions about experience are inevitably intrusive whereby a combination of folk analysis, susceptible to exaggeration, and direct (participant) observation by the researcher results in a more balanced perspective.

2.2. Quantitative survey

Data for the quantitative component was obtained through a survey conducted by CSD and the Center for Advanced Study (CAS). The research team interviewed 2,000 respondents, a representative sample, proportionately drawn from all of Cambodia's 24 provinces and municipalities, using communes as the primary sampling unit. The design included 200 communes, 2 randomly selected villages per commune and 5 respondents per village. The survey took place from May to June 2004.

The quantitative instrument was designed after two months of qualitative research in order to integrate experiences and hypothesis constructed during the qualitative phase into the questionnaire design. This approach resulted in questions on gender, the use of middlemen, and the influence of personal relationship between payer and taker being added to the questionnaire. Moreover, the questionnaire became increasingly attached to citizens' context which, it is assumed, made the answers and the following analysis more precise.

The survey explores perceptions, attitudes, and the impact of corruption at household level including a relatively elaborate battery of expenditure questions making this survey more nuanced and detailed than previous surveys.⁸ There are mixed arguments as to whether corruption can be measured and if so, if questionnaire-based surveys provide an adequate picture. Vito Tanzi expresses the view that 'surveys measure perceptions of corruption rather than corruption per se'.⁹ However, existing literature does show that surveys are not only limited to measure perceptions supporting the analysis of this survey.¹⁰ Still, Tanzi is justified in pointing out that perceptions should not mistakenly be compared with personal experience.

In addition to the usage of the quantitative results in this report, a separate publication provides an independent extensive corruption diagnostic containing many issues not addressed here. The diagnostic study presents a quantitative

picture of historic and current petty corruption in Cambodia and compares it with results from other countries.

The quantitative respondent views are aggregated into a Net Opinion, which is presented as a numeric percentage value. The Net Opinion subtracts the percentage of unfavorable responses from the percentage of favorable. A value of -100% indicates unanimous unfavorable responses, +100% represents unanimously favorable replies, and 0 suggests opinions are exactly divided. The Net Opinion is based on *aware* respondents, that is respondents who express an opinion. When results are presented both the size of the aware segment (as a percentage of the total sample) and the Net Opinion are reported. This method of presenting results highlights response patterns by weighing positive opinions against negative ones.

2.3. Public forum

Two public forums were held with a total of 251 participants, including 85 women. Local governance was actively debated with selected representatives from local and provincial government offices, ordinary citizens, NGOs, and media.

The forums were especially enriched by having a number of women from village and commune levels raise their concerns. Key-persons, men and women, were interviewed by the research team after the forum to gain in-depth information on their purpose in participating in the forum. This provided insight into the underlying social structures of the local community concerned and at the same time illustrated the public discourse of governance and corruption. The public forum also became a gateway to participants outside the target group who had a direct impact on the target group by virtue of their position, such as representatives from the police, department chiefs, and school masters. Their side of the story is useful in the analysis of perceptions (folklore) versus personal experience.

Both public forums were broadcasted on private television and radio. Articles on the forums were printed in the CSD monthly Bulletin and letters on the concerns presented by the participants including their recommendations were sent to national and local stakeholders.



Parliamentary hearing in Siem Reap, CSD project

2.4. Workshop

A workshop was held in Phnom Penh in November 2004 to discuss preliminary research findings, identify issues and articulate recommendations. The workshop was a one-day event combining group discussions with plenary sessions. The four discussion topics were: 1) Education and health sector, 2) Private and government workplace, 3) Local authority and police, and 4) Informal structures and networks. The 48 participants (18 women) represented a wide range of sectors and institutions including representatives of the parliament/senate, civil society groups, police, health and education workers, students, unions, private sector (large and small enterprises), scholars, and donor agencies. This division gave a broad debate between citizens who experience corrupt practices in their daily life and potential corruption takers and policy/law makers.

In addition to discussing possible solutions, the workshop aimed to explore differentiations in discourse between the various discussion groups. Some participants made the same mistake often heard in the public discourse. They showed knowledge of the range of problems related to corruption but somehow believed that ordinary citizens are not aware of how corrupt practices impact their lives. This was especially noticeable for participants representing the government/political parties.

2.5. Combination of methodologies

Studies of corruption or corrupt practices have traditionally used survey methodology. These have, as illustrated by the citation from Tanzi above, been subject to much criticism. More recent research on corrupt practices has, however, shown more focus on qualitative and case-based methodologies providing a larger spectrum of perspectives.

Each method used in this study was selected to meet a specific objective. The combination of survey, fieldwork and case studies expanded the range of possible conclusions that could be tested against each other to identify consistent and inconsistent patterns.

Generalization

The margin of error for the quantitative survey (n=2,000) was $\pm 2.2\%$, assuming a simple random sampling design. However, somewhat higher error margins are expected because a multi-stage design was used. The error margins increase when disaggregating the data which was taken into account during interpretation of results.¹¹

By definition, anthropological fieldwork is not representative. Nevertheless, conversations with citizens from other parts of the country, a review of media reporting and previous reports on related subjects, and analysis of the additional survey and case study suggests that the patterns from the fieldwork do not differ significantly from situations in the rest of the country. On this basis is it arguable that this report might be representative of the whole country. Local differences and nuances must, however, be taken into account when action is taken for specific sectors, areas, or among specific groups of citizens.

1 This question functioned as ice-breaker in the questionnaire and is free of probing, thoughts and emotions surrounding corruption. See Table A Annex I for the full table.

2 Gole 1999.

3 Herzfeld 1992:4.

4 Furthermore, the epistemological usage of 'emic' and 'etic' perspectives ensures a balanced approach between what participants say they do and what the researcher observed. However, Harris stress that there is no absolute operational purity. Harris 1976:341.

5 See Table B Annex I for definition.

6 Ruud 2000:272.

7 'Tacit' refers to themes, commonly taken for granted, where people are not quite aware or seldom find need to express what they know. Spradley 1980:142-144.

8 Of previous surveys on corruption in Cambodia can be mentioned: CSD 1998, World Bank 2000, World Bank 2004.

9 Tanzi 1998:21.

10 See for example Čábelková 2001, Kaufmann 2003, Andvig 2004 for discussions on perceptions and the development and use of surveys to measure impact of corrupt practices.

11 See more on sampling design in the diagnostic survey: CSD 2005:7-13.

PART TWO

ENCOUNTERING CORRUPTION

Using an inductive approach, Part Two explores how ordinary citizens meet and define corrupt practices in their encounters with civil servants in the local bureaucracy and institutions. It uncovers dimensions of corrupt practices mentioned by ordinary citizens and captures their characterizations of the practices. The three chapters contained in Part Two allow the participants' narratives to illustrate the essence of what corrupt practices are to them and thereby overcome simply using 'corruption' as a phrase, or a word. Hence, the organization and concepts are determined by the participants' experiences of corrupt practices with the folk explanations held against a critical ethic perspective.



Ordinary citizens after a day in the fields

CHAPTER 3

Everyday forms of corrupt practices

Chapter Three sets out to analyze the framework of everyday forms of corrupt practices. The chapter is based on participants own descriptions of where and when they meet corrupt practices in their encounter with civil servants in the local bureaucracy and institutions.

This chapter has five main findings. First, corrupt practices are frequently a problem in the public service sectors represented in local communities. Corrupt practices amongst law enforcers, the public education sector, and the public health sector are reported to influence households the most. Second, the average Cambodian household spends 1.4% of its yearly expenditure on bribes with citizens from urban areas and those who are well-off paying the most. However, this does only indicate that the poor have much less access to the services. Third, participants' descriptions suggest that corrupt practices are institutionalized and flow up through the structures of employment following the patronage structures. Fourth, payment for jobs and promotion is common practice. Fifth, payer and taker mention several of the same causes for corrupt practices, but with payers mentioning most.

3.1. Corrupt locations and impact on the average household

Corrupt locations

During the 60 semi-structured interviews, the most often mentioned everyday forms of corrupt practices were found in the service sectors with 28 reports from the qualitative research component regarding law enforcers, 21 reports on education, and 18 reports on health. Public positions of trust and registry¹ have numerous reports consisting of different institutions and, with their respective tasks not always distinguished clearly by participants, are therefore difficult to aggregate together. These numbers cannot be used statistically or be perceived as a representative sample. They simply illustrate how often the sectors have been mentioned by participants in the qualitative research component. The frequency with which a sector is mentioned generally reflects its importance to the participants.

The reported sectors harmonize with results from participatory corruption appraisal meetings held separately with women and men. They discussed the most corrupt institutions in the local community and proclaimed, using stones and maps as tools, where they viewed corrupt practice as a problem for them. Along with law enforcers, health and education sectors are mentioned as the most corrupt

with a small discrepancy between the reporting of men and women, which is discussed further in Chapter Four.

The results comes as no surprise since it is these sectors that are present in local communities, visited by most citizens in their everyday encounter with civil servants in the local bureaucracy and institutions and therefore more prone to corruption accusations.

Table 1 provides an illustration from the quantitative survey of the pattern of payments for *all* households surveyed. The result for the three sectors mentioned as primary corruption locations in the qualitative study show in the quantitative survey that the likelihood of paying a bribe conditional on contact is 67% for police excluding traffic police, and 50% for traffic police exclusively, 33% for public education, and 13% for public health. Public health services score relatively low which can be explained by the high frequency of contacts households have with private health services (92%). Another high-scorer which can be added to the list of citizens' local corrupt paying locations is the public registry. Twenty-five percent of households surveyed had contact with the public registry and within that group there was a 32% likelihood of bribes conditional on contact.

It is noticeable that the majority of households had contact with only two basic services during the last year: private health services (92%) and public education (72%). The other corruption prone locations have contact rates of 31% for public health services, 25% for public registry, and 16% for police including traffic police.

Impact on the average household

Table 1 further shows the average annual official fee and bribe amounts for *all* 2,000 respondents, i.e. those that reported having contact and paid bribes, and those that did not. It also shows the proportion of bribes paid to each service calculated as a percentage of total bribes paid. Thus these numbers refer to an average Cambodian household and are not illustrative of actual amounts paid upon contact. Table C Annex II shows the actual bribe paid for only those households that use the particular services, illustrating that there are great differences of bribe payments between urban versus rural and socio-economic status (SES). Table C further shows that bribe payments constitute a substantial share of total payments. Table D Annex II shows the actual number of respondents having contact with these service institutions.²

Table 1: Overview of pattern of bribes among all households

Service providers	% of households having contact with the service provider within the last year	% of households reporting bribes	Likelihood of bribes conditional on contact	Average annual official Fee ¹	Average annual bribe amount ¹	Proportion of Bribes paid to each service, as % of the total bribes	Total ²
Public education	72%	24%	33%	\$73.5	\$13	53%	\$86.5
Judge/Courts	1%	1%	100%	\$3.5	\$3.5	14%	\$7
Police excluding traffic police	6%	4%	67%	\$0.5	\$2.5	10%	\$3
Traffic police	10%	5%	50%	\$0.5	\$2.5	10%	\$3
Customs	2%	1%	50%	\$0.5	\$1.0	4%	\$1
Public health services	31%	4%	13%	\$8	\$0.5	2%	\$9
Public registry	25%	8%	32%	\$2	\$0.5	2%	\$2.5
Land administration	5%	1%	20%	\$1	\$0.5	2%	\$1
Private education	14%	-	-	\$32.5	\$0.5	2%	\$32.5
Private health services	92%	-	-	\$70	-	-	\$70
Public electricity services	12%	1%	8%	\$25	-	-	\$25
Business licensing	4%	1%	25%	\$1	-	-	\$1
Private electricity services	8%	-	-	\$6.5	-	-	\$6.5
Construction permit	1%	1%	100%	\$0.5	-	-	\$0.5
Water	22%	-	-	\$14.5	-	-	\$14.5
Total				\$239.5	\$24.5		\$263

¹ When the respondents reported paying for a service they were asked to distinguish between four kinds of payments: 1) Official fees; 2) Unofficial fees replacing official fees but not exceeding them; 3) Unofficial fees, exceeding the official amount, henceforth called bribes; 4) Gifts. However, the respondents were either unwilling or unable to differentiate between the 'official' and the 'unofficial fee replacing official fee but not exceeding them'. This did not change the figures significantly because the share of 'unofficial fees replacing official fees, but not exceeding them', is way below 1% of the total.

² Differences in the total amount are caused by rounding figures to the nearest \$0.5.

The pattern of bribes in Table 1 shows that public education clearly stands out as the sector responsible for more than half (53%) of the total yearly amount spent on bribes, with the other sectors having a substantially lower average annual amount and therefore lower proportions ranging between 14% and 2% for the services discussed above.

In total, the amount spent on education (public and private) is by far the heaviest expenditure item amounting to a total of \$119 as an average for all 2,000 households, with 11% of the \$119 paid in bribes.

Table 2 below illustrates the relative impact of bribes on the household's budget with a total average expenditure of 1.4% on bribes. This gives the immediate impression of bribes having a limited impact on the household economy. However, with a GDP per capita at only \$307³, one could argue that 1.4% of expenditure of average household budget for bribes is exactly 1.4% too much. Nevertheless, the reported bribes as a proportion of total expenditure are a very limited indicator of the impact of corruption on the household economy.⁴

Table 2: The relative impact of bribes on the household's budget

	Total average expenditure	Rural-Urban				Socio-Economic Status		
		U	S-U	A-R	R-R	B-A	A	A-A
Food	46.1%	37.4%	46.6%	50.6%	57.1%	58.2%	49.6%	34.4%
Non-Food, excluding services & donations	38.4%	40.3%	37%	38%	33.2%	29.5%	34.5%	48.4%
Total Services	13.2%	19.1%	14.2%	9.8%	8.1%	10.9%	14%	14.3%
Bribes	1.4%	2.1%	1.5%	0.9%	1%	0.9%	1.3%	1.8%
Gifts & Donations	0.9%	1.1%	1%	0.7%	0.6%	0.6%	0.8%	1.1%
Total*	\$1816	\$3554	\$2124	\$1396	\$1265	\$1071	\$1800	\$3701

*Average divided on households and therefore not comparable to GDP

The Table shows that citizens with access to services (urban and above-average SES) pay a larger share of total expenditure in bribes, 2.1% and 1.8% respectively. The category of 'gifts & donations' (0.9% of expenditure), includes gifts in return for services rendered and other donations, with most of the category attributable to charity, merit-making, relatives, local development projects, etc. This category also shows larger weight of payment from urbanites and above-average SES while it is the below average and remote-rural groups which spend a greater percentage of total expenditure on food products.

Corrupt practices are associated with expenditure of what is here termed 'services' requested by citizens to civil servants in the local bureaucracy and institutions. Table 2 shows that urban citizens and the above average group pay substantially more of their total expenditures to services and thus pay a larger share of total

expenditures in bribes. The Table above does not thereby illustrate that the poor are less impacted by corrupt practices, but merely that it is the people using the services who pay the bribes.

The results in Table 1 & 2 clearly illustrate that corrupt practices are a serious constraint of everyday encounters with civil servants in the local bureaucracy and institutions where unofficial fees and bribes make life unnecessarily expensive for citizens. The payments are divided irregularly between urban versus rural and between SES (as illustrated in Table C in Annex II). The diverse payments reflect the barriers impacting livelihood for the different groups. As the tables indicate, and the further analysis will demonstrate, the consequence of corrupt practices is that some groups do not have access to all sectors and services.

3.2. Corrupt practices

The following sections are based on descriptions by participants in the qualitative research. It shows the forms and places of corrupt practices which citizens encounter according to sector. This is combined with quantitative tables where appropriate.

3.2.1. Law enforcers

Law enforcers, consisting of the general police including traffic police, are mentioned by citizens as being frequent corruption takers with 67% and 50% likelihood of bribes being paid upon contact respectively (Table 1).

Different police units cover different areas but citizens tend to differentiate between very few units. In everyday conversations traffic police, border police, and administrative/general police are mentioned when discussing police work. The army and military are also often perceived in relation to police. The groups have different uniforms and ranks but mainly the poor and illiterate citizens ascribe everyone in uniform as a stereotype with power they do not dare to oppose.

Stereotypes of law enforcers are viewed as representing the government. Whenever the stereotyped group is perceived negatively the same negative assumption is reflected on the government.

Citizens mention corrupt practices in the police when:

- Policemen approach private houses and demand money: payment is described as a corrupt practice where citizens receive inadequate explanation of why they have to pay.
- Citizens need a service like the family book, papers or permissions, or authorizations: citizens report extra corrupt payment for paper, copying, stamps, transportation, food, and cigarettes, etc.
- Check points: corrupt payment is demanded for goods or people to pass.
- Traffic offenses: corrupt payments are paid to avoid a traffic fine and to speed up the process.
- Conflict resolution: citizens report the necessity to pay corrupt payments to win a case even if they have done nothing wrong.
- Illegal activities like smuggling, border crossing and logging:⁵ citizens report they are hired as middlemen to transport goods and pay the expected corrupt payment to avoid exposure or if they need help with procurement of documents.

The majority of reported practices where citizens pay corrupt payments to a policeman are to lower-ranking policemen. They seldom have personal relationships with the policeman and feel they are pressed to pay in order to continue their daily business.



Houseboats for fishing families

Policemen and their family members report pressure from higher-ranking policemen and officials to pay a monthly percentage of their unofficial income to them, especially if they have a lucrative position. This is practiced directly by exchange of cash from the lower-ranking to the higher-ranking officials, or, more frequently reported, by paying for dinner parties, picnics, cigarettes, drinks, or girls. An apparently fixed payment for promotion or change of position to another location is also frequently reported. Box 1 below exemplifies the frame of corrupt practices for lower ranking policemen.

Box 1: Interview with Mr. Sieng

Mr. Sieng, 35, is a low-ranking policeman who lives in an accessible-rural area. He and his family guard the land and live in an abandoned house on the site. Five people live together: himself, his wife, two children, and his sister-in-law. Mr. Sieng has been a policeman since 1987 and claims that he has never taken a bribe. He is now rank two in the police corps and has been promoted two times since he started, which he considers too little. He asks for money during the interview to get a promotion as deputy office chief or police inspector.

Mr. Sieng: *So you can help me or not?*

Interviewer: *No I can not. How much do you need to get a promotion?*

Mr. Sieng: *I must pay between \$500-1,000, depending on the job I want.*

Interviewer: *Did the general police officer ask you for this money?*

Mr. Sieng: *The general police officer did not say he would take a bribe from me and the ministry people did not say they would take a bribe from me either, they just ask about how much money I have.*

Interviewer: *Is that the same as asking for a bribe?*

Mr. Sieng: *This is different, I just pay for making the application form. They do not use the word bribe, they only used good words, but usually they mean a bribe: to get a promotion you must have money. Nowadays everyone think about money, relatives and cousins. They do not think about skills and capacity. I have no relatives in the police so then it is difficult to get a promotion.*

Mr. Sieng explains that he is not corrupt himself but he would be willing to pay \$500-1,000 in corrupt payments for a promotion if he had the money. Since he has no relatives in the police corps the only way for promotion is through corrupt practices. As a single provider in the household, earning \$25 a month and under pressure for money from high-ranking officials, it is obvious that in order to get his promotion he either needs to borrow the money, or take it from ordinary citizens.

3.2.2. Education sector

Households frequently pay corrupt payments in their everyday contact with the education sector with 72% of all households reporting contact the previous year, and those 72% had a 33% likelihood of bribe conditional on contact (Table 1). Public education clearly stands out as the institution responsible for more than half of the total yearly amount spent on bribes by all households according to Table 1.

Teachers possess, like the policemen earlier described, power through their profession. Teachers do not wear uniforms but are the gatekeepers of education, knowledge, and qualifications. They are seen as representing the government in the same manner as policemen.

The most commonly mentioned forms of corrupt practices paid by students to teachers are for:

- Enrollment and registration: corruption is paid when enrolling a child in school.
- Exams and grades: teachers ask for corrupt payment when students have tests or students pay to receive better results.
- Snacks or drinks during breaks or after school: snacks and drinks are sold by teachers as a supplementary income. Parents feel pressed to give their children money to spend on this and feel the children will otherwise be discriminated against by the teacher.
- Extra private classes: payment for private education by the teachers covering the official curriculum after school hours.

Box 2 below is a description by Sothear, a grade 12 high school student, of how corrupt practices are organized in schools. As Sothear explains payments are small and regular and are not always paid in secret.

Box 2: Interview with Sothear, high school student

Corrupt payment to receive better grades is common especially in grade 9 and 12 where students need good grades to continue their education. Sothear, 17, a 12th-grader and living in a provincial town explains:

When we have a test and finish the test, the teacher will ask us to put money inside the exams-paper. The amount depends on how good you want your marks. At the end [of the year] the teacher looks at all our monthly tests and gives us final grades. The teachers use different expressions to ask for money. Some say “if I do not get money from you then how can I live when I have such a low salary?” Some say “you need to pay money to me for the paper for your test otherwise you cannot take the test.” Some teachers are really shy. We have a new teacher who just finished the teacher training school and she is very shy. She tries to ask for money but she does not get much, not like the other teachers. Every teacher wants money but we only pay when we have a test. [...] This is a big problem for students who have no money and also for the ones from rural areas. We pay most for the important tests like mathematics and literature. Here we pay about 500-1,000 riel for monthly tests and 1,000 to 1,500 for quarterly tests in each subject. [...] The teacher will tell you how much to pay but sometimes we bargain with the teacher. That is really fun.

Table 3 presents an overview of payments to the public education sector across *all* respondents, i.e. those with and without children in school. The Table illustrates that bribes paid very regularly (monthly), calculated per year, average \$12.5 while bribes paid only occasionally (yearly) adds up to only \$0.5.

That nearly all bribes are paid on a regular basis corresponds with Sothear’s statement in Box 2. The relative high official annual monthly payments (\$71.5) encourage speculation on how citizens view corrupt payment to the education sector since education in public schools is supposed to be free of charge. This discussion will be explored further in Chapter Five.

Table 3: Payments for public education

Public Education	Urban/ Rural				Total
	U	S-U	A-R	R-R	
Annual sum of monthly official payments	\$171.5	\$108	\$45	\$33	\$71.5
Annual sum of occasional official payments	\$6.5	\$2	\$1	\$1	\$2
Total sum of official payments	\$178	\$110	\$46	\$34	\$73.5
Annual sum of monthly bribe	\$43	\$17	\$5.5	\$2.5	\$12.5
Annual sum of occasional bribe	\$1.5	-	\$0.5	\$0.5	\$0.5
Total sum of bribe	\$44.5	\$17	\$6	\$3	\$13
Total bribe of total official payment	25%	15%	13%	9%	18%
Total occasional bribe of total official payment	1%	-	1%	1%	1%

Again the data shows that it is the city dwellers that pay most in both official fees and bribes compared to rural citizens with total bribes per year amounting to 25% of official payments compared to ‘only’ 9% for remote-rural citizens. Even semi-urban citizens are much below the urbanities with total bribes counting 15% of official fees demonstrating large differences between urban areas and the other parts of the country. These differences further exclude the rural poor from advancement because they are not able to pay the urban-level bribe for a grade 10-12 exam at the provincial town in order to get to University.

Corruption in the education sector is not only between students and teachers. Teachers also report they experience a demand for paying corruption for:

- Enrolment and exams at the teacher training schools: corrupt payment to enroll and pass exams.
- Getting a good position after finalizing the teacher’s trainings school: corrupt deal is made to ensure a teaching position close to the family, especially if this is in an urban or semi-urban area.
- Transfer to another school with higher demand: corrupt practices are involved to change school if the new school is perceived as more lucrative than the former, often urban or semi-urban areas.
- Receive positions of trust:⁶ corrupt payment to receive positions of trust.

This system illustrates that teachers experience both taking and paying corrupt payments and function indirectly as a form of middleman channeling money from the students to those higher up in the structure. This suggests that corrupt practices in the education sector are institutionalized to some degree. Box 2 and Table 3

further back this point by demonstrating corrupt payments from student to teachers as a frequent monthly practice.

It is noticeable in Table 3 that persons in urban areas report considerably higher payments than persons from semi-urban, accessible-rural and remote-rural areas. This corresponds with teacher reports on high corrupt payments if they request transfer to an urban or semi-urban area, which is obviously a more profitable location because citizens have higher incomes. This reported form of corrupt payment for a more profitable location is not a unique situation and will be discussed further under section 3.2.7. *Jobs and promotion*.

3.2.3. Health sector

The health sector is an area where corrupt practices can be directly life-threatening if treatment is not available. Table 1 suggests that many citizens prefer to consult private (92% contact rate) rather than public (31% contact rate) health care providers. This implies that some citizens are willing to pay a substantially higher amount for better service at private clinics that have a reputation of providing better quality care. Private health care providers also include traditional healers, '*kruu*', frequented especially in remote areas.

The situations where citizens often describe encountering corrupt practices in the health sector are:

- Treatment from doctor, registrar, or nurse: corrupt payments requested or expected before treatment begins,
- Medicine: extra corrupt payment is demanded,
- Treatments which are supposed to be free, for example tuberculosis treatments: corruption paid to receive treatment,
- Private clinics: staff 'steals' time from public hospitals and refer patients to their private clinics.

Private clinics are included under this category for two reasons; first because citizens mention private clinics when talking about corrupt practices in the health sector, and second because citizens who report that doctors and nurses refer patients to their private clinic for treatment instead of treating them at the public hospital.

Box 3: Interview with Mrs. Panny

Mrs. Panny was a midwife at a public hospital and now has her own private clinic. She explains how she experienced the practice of corruption in the public hospital:

When you enter the hospital you pay a formal fee. When you get a bed you pay an informal fee to the doctor, registrar doctor, and nurses. The doctor usually gets more than the others. It is very secret, just done individually. When you ask the doctor to take care of a relative you put payment into the doctor's pockets. [She gestures by moving her hand down towards the interpreter's trouser pocket as if she had money in her hand and wanted to give it secretly to him.] The amount depends on how much you have. If you give something to the doctor he will not share with the others. If you give to the nurse the nurse will keep it. The problem arises if you only pay to the doctor because then the nurse will not take care of you and the doctor is not always there in the hospital but the nurses are. So if there are five people [who give you treatment] you have to pay all five people. For poor citizens this is difficult. They try to collect 5,000 riel for the doctor but when the rich come to the hospital many doctors come and visit and nurses take care of the rich instead of the poor.

Box 3 illustrates corrupt practices at a public hospital. The case demonstrates the problems for poor citizens who cannot afford payment for all the personnel and therefore receive less care. This alleged practice is cited in many of the reports of people who die due to lack of professional treatment.

The practice of paying for promotion and job transfer, as mentioned earlier by policemen and teachers, is also described as common practice in the public health sector by doctors, nurses and midwives. The material suggests an institutionalized pattern of corruption flowing up through the structure from ordinary citizens to public health care personnel to the Department of Health and the Ministry of Health.⁷

3.2.4. Public positions of trust and registry

Public positions of trust and registry include all public offices such as village chiefs, commune offices, district and department offices, tax authorities, provincial departments, and ministries.

Table 1 shows that 25% of the households had contact with the public registry over the previous year with a 32% likelihood of bribes conditional on contact. The relatively high likelihood of bribe is problematic because ordinary citizen's

contact with state institutions is through civil servants in the local bureaucracy and institutions. Experience from this contact is projected onto how citizens perceive the government in general, as also described for policemen and teachers. The relationship between integrity/trust as affecting the actual corrupt practice is discussed in Chapter Six.

Corrupt practices are described by citizens when they contact officials for:

- Procurement of documents: extra corrupt payment is paid for paper, stamps, copying, transportation, food, and cigarettes, etc.
- Conflict resolution: corruption is paid to win a case.
- License, business agreement, and permissions: corrupt payment to speed up the procedure and receive the right papers.
- Illegal activities: citizens report they pay corruption to prevent officials reporting them if they commit illegal activities.

The amounts paid to the civil registry offices are relatively low compared to the previously discussed sectors with an actual average official and unofficial fee of \$9.5 and \$8 in bribes (Table C Annex II). However, the service provided by the civil registry is incredibly important to ensure democratic equal access to legal procedures and the fee is still enough to strain the budget of a poor family.

3.2.5. Judiciary

Few citizens (1%) have had direct contact with the judiciary during the last year according to Table 1. However, the judiciary is often mentioned by participants as being highly corrupt and favoring the rich and powerful because they can pay bribes to ensure they win a case. Public perception that the judiciary is not free and fair influences their trust in the system and they avoid using it. Instead they use informal networks to reconcile and resolve a case and easily fall victim to exploitation and injustice.

In spite of the low frequency of visits to the judiciary, Table C Annex II does show very high amounts of average payments for the respondents who reported having contact with the judiciary. The average official and unofficial fee amounts to \$578 while the average bribe amounts to \$357.5 a substantial high amount compared to GDP.



Fisherman on the Tonle Sap Lake

3.2.6. Forestry Department and Environment Department

Many households in accessible-rural and remote-rural areas supplement their income by utilizing the natural resources like cutting and collecting trees, fishing, hunting, and collecting frogs and snails. While only cutting trees and hunting is directly illegal, citizens report that officials from the two departments take corrupt payment if they meet them on their inspections, no matter if the act is illegal or not.

It is mainly the male participants who reported corrupt payment in the Forestry and Environment Department. This mirrors the traditional gender pattern in the households.

3.2.7. Jobs and promotion

The ideal procedure for employment and promotion is through an examination of the candidate's qualifications. However, participants regularly raised concerns that kinship relations, informal systems and networks, political affiliation, and corrupt practices are the actual ways to access a job or a promotion. This concern was raised by participants with jobs like teachers, policemen, and civil servants in the bureaucracy and by students, those employed in the private sector, and unemployed.

During conversation with participants representing several sectors and areas, a pattern of systematic payment for a job or promotion is revealed. The practice appears to be institutionalized as suggested earlier in this chapter. The below citations, with a range of teachers from several areas, demonstrate a notable uniformity in the amounts and places where corruption is paid.

There is much corruption in the education sector with salary and position change. It is the staff in the Education Department that takes the bribes. The low ranking officials can not do or say anything about this.

Secondary school teacher in provincial town, male.

My daughter wants to go to Phnom Penh and teach. She is a primary school teacher and has been told to pay \$500 to get a transfer. [...] You do not have to pay to move to a similar place but to move to another district or province where you can earn more you must pay the Education Department.

Mrs. Saphan, Primary school teacher from accessible-rural area. Wife of Police Chief Mr. Saphan.

If you do not have money and relatives working in high ranking position you will be sent to a remote area to teach. [...] Teachers pay \$300-500 to the schoolmaster and Department of Education for a transfer. It is done in secret. My brother and friend were asked to arrange a party and the schoolmaster and chief of the Education Department invited many people. I think this was very expensive. [...] I think everyone knows about this practice.

Secondary school teacher from semi-urban area, male.

You must pay about \$300 to teach near your home. The money is paid to the Department of Education to arrange it for you.

Primary school teacher in semi-urban area, woman.

The teachers' continual and consistent description of corrupt payments to the Department of Education to get a transfer in amounts ranging between \$300 and \$500 is an alarming pattern. With payments of \$500 for low-level civil servants positions one wonders how much high-level positions cost and who benefits from this system. Teachers are not the only group where there is general consensus on the amount paid and to whom. Descriptions from the health sector, police, military, army, and those employed in the departments show a similar picture. An army soldier expressed the logic of the system:

Small rank pays small money, high rank pays big money.

Army soldier, 28, in accessible-rural area

3.2.8. Department of Land administration

When procuring land titles, the Department for Land Administration is consulted. Participants report difficulty in procuring documents for land titles. They complain about longwinded procedures if the citizen has no personal relation to the person in charge and corrupt payment to receive the final documents. Table C Annex II confirms the figures showing \$24.5 is paid in official and unofficial actual average fee and \$20.5 paid in bribes (84% of the official and unofficial fee).

Many households do not have proper documentation for the land they rightfully own and have paid for. These households are vulnerable to land grabbing and expulsion.⁸ Poor citizens risk eviction from their home if rich or powerful citizens decide they want the land. Because of the weak judiciary system, many poor will not complain to the court. There are also reports of several citizens having land title to the same land because citizens left their home during the Pol Pot regime and new citizens moved into the house in the meantime or shortly after.

3.2.9. Others

Ordinary citizens have contact with many bureaucratic offices and institutions depending on their personal situation. Not all can be categorized to be places of citizen's everyday encounters with local bureaucracy and institutions.

Some of the less mentioned places by the participants are noted here:

- Customs
- Private enterprises
- Transportation
- Electricity and water supply
- National Election Commission
- Political parties
- Media

This description of places and forms of corrupt practices is not exhaustive. There are surely other experiences in other areas. All the mentioned places and forms were described by several but not all participants and therefore represent a wide range of corrupt practices experienced by some ordinary citizens in their everyday encounter with civil servants in local bureaucracy and institutions. Citizens not only report monetary payments when describing corrupt practices. Favors, consumption products (like beer, coffee, cigarettes, and gasoline), parties, and land are mentioned as exchange items.

3.3. Causes

Participant descriptions of causes of corrupt practices are abundant. Some have direct causes, like low salary, and some indirect causes, such as political signals from the government. Some mention greediness, malevolence, materialism, or ill will as causes of corrupt practices, however this is most often stated when describing corrupt people who are already perceived as being rich. Causes of corrupt practices often mentioned by participants include:

- Low salary (mentioned by payer and taker)
- Common habitual practice (mentioned by payer and taker)
- Little risk of consequences (mentioned by payer and taker)
- Food or drinks for civil servants (mentioned by payers and takers)
- Gift for service rendered (mentioned by payers and takers)
- Weak governance and state (mentioned by payers and takers)
- Nepotism (mentioned by citizens without job or in low ranking positions)
- Security (mentioned by payers)
- Access to permissions, licenses or documents (only mentioned by payers)
- Power, threat or fear of consequences of not paying (only mentioned by payers)
- Special treatment (only mentioned by payers)

As the list illustrates, almost half of the causes are mentioned by both payers and taker. The other half is predominantly mentioned by payers. It is no surprise that the payers mention most causes. The payers use well-described causes in their corruption accusations against the bureaucracy while takers do not openly admit to corrupt practices. That the takers agree with the payers on half the causes is encouraging because it shows that the takers are aware of their practice and have thought about why they do it. The awareness can on the other hand also function as an excuse and reason to continue the practice. Causes, consequences and recommendations on the practice are explored further in Chapter Nine.

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- 1 Including public offices such as village chiefs, commune offices, district and department offices, tax authorities, provincial departments, and ministries.
 - 2 See CSD 2005 on a thorough quantitative analysis of the impact of bribes for households.
 - 3 Development Economics Central database 2004 (year 2002 number)
 - 4 Expenditure is used to view the impact more precisely than when using income. The reason is that most Cambodians live in rural areas and do not have a monetary income. See CSD 2005 further on this discussion.
 - 5 Since the focus is on everyday forms of corrupt practices, illegal activities will not be explored further. However, it is important to mention them because citizens often complain about these activities. Citizens describe organized networks that are often government related (military, police, high ranking officials, politicians, etc.). Without their involvement it would not be possible to go through with such activities.
 - 6 Member of school board, staff at elections, assist in conflict resolution, village chief, etc.
 - 7 More sector-based research is needed to map and analyze the flow of money from the bottom to the top. See Kuyseang Te 2000 for information on initiatives on reforms in the health sectors to fight against corrupt practices.
 - 8 Nissen 2004.

CHAPTER 4

Agents in corrupt transactions

The descriptions, tables and boxes in Chapter Three show that corruption is not a simple practice between the payer and the taker. Chapter Four analyzes the agents in corrupt transactions and explores how corrupt practices play a role in the social organization of households and local communities. Folk explanation and participant observation contribute to an examination of the role of gender, poverty and usage of middlemen in corrupt transactions, supplemented by a discussion of the takers view.

Four main findings are presented in this chapter. First, experiences with corrupt practices vary by gender. Women are the main corruption payer but shared memory within the household makes perception on corrupt practices collective. Second, citizens accuse the rich of being the corrupt but their own experience is only to pay to lower ranking officials. The discrepancy illustrates an opposition when discussing corrupt practices based on ordinary citizens construction of identity. Third, middlemen are often used in corrupt transactions. Fourth, takers publicly deny taking corrupt payment and use constructed stereotypes as a protection against social disapproval.

4.1. The gender dimension

‘Wealth is there because the woman knows how to save and be frugal; a house is comfortable and happy because the wife has a good character’.
Khmer proverb¹

Traditional gender pattern

It is clear to all observers that where there is microeconomic business in Cambodia there are women present. Women traditionally control household finances and are responsible for ensuring enough food, clothes and other necessities for the family while the men are responsible for working and bringing money home to the family. It is the woman’s job to go to the market and buy food or sell products produced by the family, take the children to the hospital or health clinic when sick, maintain good relations with the Wat through offerings and donations, send the children off to school, visit offices to procure documents and papers when needed, and take care of other related encounters with civil servants in the local bureaucracy and institutions.



Women selling fish at Psar O'Russeï in Phnom Penh

The difference in women's and men's area of responsibility was reflected when discussing corrupt practices during interviews and participatory corruption appraisal discussions. Women generally drew from their own experiences and described their own encounters with officials, while men talked in more general terms about problems with corrupt practices and theorized upon these practices, mentioning weak governance and power structures as causes.

This gender pattern becomes increasingly evident when comparing two participatory corruption appraisal meetings conducted in one area with women and men separately. In the meeting with women, they literally talked for hours about their problems and frustrations with corrupt practices for services that should be free, extra money to official fees, and being treated negatively by civil servants in the local bureaucracy and institutions as the citations below illustrates:

What can we say? I earn money for one meal only. I sell cakes. My husband is blind and cannot work. The donations from organizations and the Government are always divided by party members or the rich. We, the poor, never get anything.

Woman, accessible-rural area.

My problem is that I finished high school but cannot find a job. There were many candidates when I applied to be a trainee teacher. Another reason is that it is corrupted and I do not have money to give them.

Woman, 27, accessible-rural area.

Doctors take money so they can build a house and buy a moto. They take for themselves, not to benefit others. [...] It affects poor people like us. When our children get sick we are not able to go to the hospital because we do not have money. Her child died because of this. [The women points at another women who then responds] Yes, my child died after I brought him back from the hospital because I did not have money to pay for him.

Both women are in their mid-thirties from an accessible-rural area.

During the participatory corruption appraisal meetings, the men mentioned noticeably fewer personal experiences than women but focused more on general inequality between rich and poor in society. This pattern was further influenced by the restraint the men had about discussing the subject in public where women did not seem to care much about this. The difference between the group meetings can be due to other reasons, like the researcher being a woman and therefore having greater access to the women's sphere than the men's. However, since this was not a pattern experienced in other situations it is not perceived to be sufficient explanation for the observation. Instead the difference is analyzed as expressing different gender perceptions and experiences.

Private interviews of the male participants after the group discussion provided much more information. However, the discussion on corrupt practices was still in more general terms about rich and poor than in the discussions with the women, as these citations indicate:

The government does not permit corruption, but people are involved in corruption anyway. People who have problems and contact the court or police must pay to succeed. The police and the courts will then solve the problem quickly. If we [referring to poor in general, 'neak kro'] have a problem and we do not pay a bribe then we will have the problem for a long time [...] when we have a problem and contact the police they say they can resolve it, but if we do not pay them we must wait one month, two months, and wait and wait. If we pay bribe money they start to resolve it immediately. Now people that have money can complain and be successful, people without money cannot be successful. If people know about the law there is no problem, if they don't know about the law then they must pay money.

Man, mid-fifties, poor rice-farmer, accessible-rural area.

Today when people do business like sell wood or chicken at the market, the police on the road stops them and ask about money, sometime 1,000 or 2,000 riel. I do not think they give this money to the officer, they keep it for themselves.

Man, poor rice-farmer, 37, accessible-rural area.

This gender pattern suggests that while it is usually the men earning the money in a household, it is the women who encounter the problems of contacting, negotiating, and making corruption payments to civil servants as part of everyday life. Men, on the other hand, pay less frequently and then to sectors where women rarely pay, e.g. forestry and environment sector. This fits into the gender work pattern where men go into the forest to cut and collect wood and there meet forestry and/or environment officials to whom they must pay.

An insertion to the gender pattern is women's cultural status as more gentle and modest despite their recognized firmness in money-matters. These perceived cultural features make them appropriate as couriers between service delivery and corrupt payments and they take on the role of 'middle-women'.

The difference in outspokenness between the two sexes may be a coincidence. However, the difference is very solid and contributes to the assumption that men are more careful/at greater risk of speaking out about sensitive topics than women due to their different positions in the society. This was confirmed further by the fact that only one of the women interviewed requested anonymity while several men did.

Collective memory

When interviewing citizens about their experiences with corrupt practices, it was noticeable that neither the women nor the men interviewed differentiated between who had made the actual payment. All the members of the household would refer to themselves as the payer even though it actually was someone else who paid.

The collective memory and way of experiencing shows how Cambodian households are tied together as a unit where everyone fulfills his or her function but share experiences as joint identity. The stereotypical expectations of bureaucratic unfairness counterbalance the accusing person's sense of personal failure. This strengthens the representation of the failure of bureaucracy, which according to Herzfeld, is comforting precisely because it is collective.² Shared perceptions of corrupt practices in a household thereby maintain a reassurance that everyone rejects the accused corrupt act collectively. Gunner Myrdal's old concept 'folklore of corruption' is descriptive of the collective representation of

the bureaucracy.³ The representations are merely constructed expectations and feelings ensuring social division between ‘us the household’ against ‘them the corrupt’ which is discussed further in the next sections.

Gender in corrupt transactions

As already suggested in the background on traditional gender patterns, women are the main corruption payers in a household. The quantitative data supports this conclusion illustrated in Table 4. The Net Opinion is +23% to the statement: ‘when the household has to pay a bribe it is mostly a female member of the household who deals with it’.

The gender division must be viewed in the light that most civil servants in receiving positions are men.⁴ The hypothesis that because of the traditional power relation between the two sexes in the Cambodian society women are at risk of being exploited in a corrupt transaction with a man is proved wrong. Table 4 shows a Net Opinion of -31% that citizens disagree to women paying more in bribes than men.

The reason for this apparent ‘breakdown’ in the gender pattern can be attributed to women’s necessary fight to make ends meet in the household budget so no money is paid without negotiation. Another explanation can be that most corrupt payment is institutionalized and thereby standardized so both the payer and taker knows beforehand the amount expected to be paid.

Table 4: Women and corruption

N=2000	Aware (%)	Net Opinion (%) ⁵
When the household has to pay a bribe it is mostly a female member of the household who deals with it	96%	+23%
Women are normally asked for higher bribes than men	95%	-31%
Female officials ask for bribes less often than male officials or ask for lower amounts	97%	+18%

Opinion varies as to whether women are less corrupt than men in civil service positions in the local bureaucracy and institutions with a rather neutral Net Opinion of +18% to the question ‘female officials ask for bribes less often than male officials or ask for lower amounts’.

Research from Indonesia suggests that the level of corruption in an institution declines initially as the percentage of women employed increases. This could suggest that women are less corrupt than men. However, the Indonesian study

concludes that corruption increases when women become more than the majority in an organization and that corruption has more to do with the group dynamics in the workplace than with gender.⁶ Even though Indonesia has a very different cultural setting than Cambodia are the Indonesian results interesting when discussing gender.

The weak (only +18%) but relatively positive view of women as being less corrupt in Cambodia can be explained by the low number of women in the civil service and thereby there is little experience as to whether women are corrupt or not. Several female participants mentioned that male civil servants are corrupt because their wives want jewelry. If this perception holds women can be viewed as the agent behind corrupt practices in the society. However, men are also accused by the same female participants as corrupt because they want a motor bike or car, girls, beers, mobile phone, or nice house. So the gender argument appears inconclusive.

The question is: does the presence of a liberal democracy that promotes both gender equality and good governance thereby determine the link between gender and corrupt practices? New research has tested the gender-corruption link and strongly supports the liberal democracy hypothesis.⁷ The argument is that liberal democracies emphasize equality and egalitarianism that facilitate women's entry into governmental positions *and* at the same time minimizes opportunities for systemic corruption. Suggestions that men are more corrupt than women in Cambodia should therefore not be analyzed as gender-related, but rather as an illustration of the gender inequality in the yet not fully developed bureaucracy.

4.2. Corruption: rich and poor

Money and power

Economic capital has considerably higher status in society than social capital. The Khmer term for a rich person is '*neak mean*'. '*Neak*' is person, while '*mean*' refers in English to the verb 'to have' and together creates the word 'a person who has'. In contrast the Khmer term for poor, '*neak kro*', does not equal 'not to have' but rather 'rare' or 'little'. There is in the Buddhist tradition a tendency of describing a rich person as one who holds merit from a former life and thereby possesses higher status in this life. In this sense, rich citizens are 'better' than ordinary citizens and should thereby be shown respect. This feeds the patronage structure which we will return to in Part Three.

Economic status is equal with power. Therefore high-ranking officials without money may have less power than a lower-ranking official with money. A soldier describes the situation well:

Money is power. If you have a high ranking position but no money, then you have less power than a lower ranking official with much money. Buying a position is therefore not always profitable if you have no more money.

Army soldier, 28, accessible-rural area.



Poor households

The above cultural structure describes a practice with economic capital as the main status symbol. This brings focus on the actual relationship between rich and poor citizens into the debate, revealing a complex system of the usage of stereotypes, identification and constructed oppositions as is further explored.

Corruption and poverty

When discussing corrupt practices with citizens in semi-urban and accessible-rural areas, most participants mention poverty in connection with corrupt practices. That poverty and corrupt practices are interrelated comes as no surprise, but the extent with which poverty and corrupt practices are mentioned in the same context is thought-provoking. The citations below provide examples on how poverty and corrupt practices are connected in the participant's mind:

Corruption is a problem because it hinders development. Children can not receive the education they should and poor people die because they can not afford to pay the doctor. When people are at the hospital they end up selling cows, pigs, land and house to pay for treatment and then end up on the streets in Phnom Penh.

Man, teacher, 28, provincial town.

I wanted to work at a garment factory because my family is poor and needs the money. If I am here [provincial area] there is no job. I want to go to Phnom Penh to get a job but I am poor and cannot pay to get a job. Next year I will try to go again and take money to pay for the job.

Woman in mid-twenties, accessible-rural area.

Children need to spend money to access school. Some families can only afford one meal a day and cannot afford school uniforms and the children are hungry in school and need to buy snacks and drinks from the teachers. And some children who are 8-10 years cannot afford to attend school yet.

Woman, early twenties, accessible-rural area.

These citations among many others in the research material illustrate that citizens are aware of the social consequences of corrupt practices. They have awareness of the inequality corrupt practices creates between rich and poor and use this defined inequality, through the folklore of corruption, to create a stereotype of ‘the rich’ against which they identify themselves. The following section explores this construction further.

Constructions of identity

Participants in the research study often stressed that they themselves are poor. This was experienced during interviews with women and men, people from poor and well-off households, and all age groups. The massive self-identification of oneself as ‘poor’ is related to the construction of identity between ‘us as poor’ versus ‘them as rich’ where the rich are stereotyped as being corrupt. Several statements have already demonstrated this division and the citation below expresses this attitude directly.

The rich and powerful people are corrupt. Corruption is very bad for poor families and lower ranking officials but good for rich people and higher ranking officials.

Man, 74, in accessible-rural area.

The interpretation of corruption that distinguishes payer versus taker represents the stereotypical division between a ‘culture of corruption’ model for ‘them’, the bureaucrats, versus a ‘victim of circumstances’ model for ‘us’, the citizens.⁸

The models of constructed self-identify as poor versus rich illustrates the way participants experience and create stereotypes. The stereotypes represent long-established prejudices and exclusions and use the terms of social life to exclude others on cultural grounds.⁹ The perception that in order to get a good and lucrative job in the bureaucracy you must either be rich or have connections is

prevalent. The stereotypes are seldom questioned because they also function to protect oneself against personal failure as the above discussion on collective memory shows. Therefore, defining all corrupt civil servants in the local bureaucracy and institutions as rich and powerful makes sense for ordinary citizens.

Box 4 shows in simple terms some of the binary oppositions described by the participants.

Box 4: Identification construction

Oppositions described by participants from semi-urban and accessible rural areas.

Us	versus	Them
Poor	versus	Rich and powerful
Corrupt	versus	Non-corrupt
Official	versus	Unofficial (informal)
Honesty	versus	Corruption
Man	versus	Woman
Rural	versus	Urban
Victim of circumstances	versus	Culture of corruption

The oppositions are horizontal and not vertical.

An interesting aspect of the stereotype of the rich as corrupt is that most participants seldom make a corrupt payment to rich or high ranking officials. In their daily encounter with civil servants they only meet low ranking officials. The lower civil servant then blames the higher official for the practice. This confirms that a negative perception is not necessarily based on a negative experience but on generating folklore.

The negative perception of ‘rich as corrupt’ combined with the cultural belief of ‘rich having merit’ appears as a contradiction. The discrepancy can be viewed as a way for poor citizens to deal with and explain the unequal division of wealth in the society and justify their own lower position in life, while at the same time seeking relation through showing respect to this group as a strategic action.

4.3. Using middlemen

The qualitative research did not set out to examine the practice of using middlemen. However, through interviews and observations the importance of

middlemen as a strategy to deal with corrupt practices became evident. This created a hypothesis about the role of middlemen, which was integrated into the quantitative survey.

Table 5 illustrates how gifts and bribes are initiated. In the case of bribes, middlemen are used in one out of three cases (36%), while in the case of gifts middlemen are less frequently involved (17%).

Table 5 Middlemen often play a facilitating role

N=2000	When someone gives a gift to an official	When someone bribes an official
The official asks for it	7%	13%
The household offers of its own accord	46%	30%
It is known beforehand how to give and how much to give, so it is not discussed	8%	9%
There is a middleman	17%	36%
Do not know	22%	13%
Total	100%	100%

The only apparent underlying influence is that the youngest age group seems to make less use of middlemen,¹⁰ probably because the payments they make to teachers are given directly.

This suggests that having contact or a personal relationship with a person who can play the role of middleman is a practice citizens use to facilitate corrupt transactions. As Visvanathan & Sethi note; ‘the middleman... performs a function. He mediates between various levels, niches of society’.¹¹ The middleman functions to protect the payer and facilitate transactions between the citizen and the civil servant. This function must be balanced to serve both parties in the transaction and citizens are therefore likely to choose a middleman they know and trust. The strategy for households to use middlemen is that the transaction is pushed away from households but with no less impact because the amounts are frequently higher when a middleman is involved.

4.4. The takers view

This chapter has until now primarily looked at payers dealing with corrupt practices but there are at least two parties in the transaction: the payer and the taker. When takers mention agents in corrupt transactions they distinguish between two perceptions what the taker perceives he does himself, and what the taker perceives others do.

Civil servants articulate many of the same complaints as other citizens but generally feel they are more knowing of their rights due to their position. Like

other citizens, they allege that civil servants often take bribes but interestingly make exceptions when asked about officials who do the same job as themselves. This situation is surprisingly similar to the findings by Miller et al. on civil servants in post-communist Eastern Europe.¹²

Officials almost always deny being corrupt themselves, as a woman who is a member of a commune council did when she said:

Corruption is pressure [...] corruption means that powerful people with money can hurt us [and then she continued] I think the unofficial payment that people are willing to pay is not the problem because we did not ask for that and we do something like write papers. People give to us willingly; we do not ask them for payment.

Member of commune council in accessible-rural area.

The member of the commune council uses the same constructed stereotypes as payers use and voices a feeling of ‘victim of circumstances’ in spite of receiving money herself for services. Adjusting one’s definition of corrupt practice to fit into the picture of others being corrupt is a simple way to reject the notion of being corrupt oneself.

However, not *all* takers deny taking money. A young man working for a construction company willingly explained that he took \$100 in bribes for a certain company’s rocks to be approved for road-construction. He was not too worried about it since a lot of money was involved in the project anyway and no one would be directly hurt by his taking the money. The young man did not take directly from other citizens, which may be why he is more likely to label the practice corruption than civil servants usually are when they are involved themselves.

Taking bribe is not a socially accepted practice

The frequency of bribes being paid at the household level and the fact that most households pay lower officials illustrates that while it can be strategic to admit paying, it is not socially accepted to take bribes, as Mr. Sieng implied in Box 1. Even though other participants had pointed him out as being corrupt, he explained that he never took corrupt money:

I work here and I have no idea about being involved in corruption but in other provinces they are involved in corruption. [...] It is up to the family of the police if they get involved in corruption. Some families of police are poor and need the money. Some families are rich and need to be happy. Many policemen are involved in corruption. Among 100 policemen, I think 80 or 90 are corrupt. [...] I

do not practice corruption because some people speak badly about you if you practice corruption. I do not like that.

Mr. Sieng, 35, is a policeman from an accessible-rural area.

This attitude that ‘all the others are corrupt but not me’ is very common and can be referred to an understanding that corrupt practices by low-ranking officials is not always perceived as a corrupt practice by oneself. This perception illustrates the dualism with which takers create stereotypes and distinguish between themselves as a ‘good person’ versus the corrupt as an ‘evil person’ and ‘me’ as poor versus ‘the corrupt’ as rich. These oppositions match oppositions in Box 4.

Civil servants and ordinary citizens should not be analyzed as symbolizing two poles representing only the taker and the payer. The categories are much more blurred as Chapter Five will demonstrate. Civil servants and ordinary citizens alike experience corrupt practices as social disapproval and easily sit together complaining about other civil servants being corrupt.



Traditional Cambodian house on stilts

Table 6 illustrates that people are aware that taking bribes is socially disapproved of, but it does not show if people in fact are less willing to accept a bribe.

Table 6: Corruption is not socially accepted

N=2000	Aware (%)	Net Opinion (%)
If I had the opportunity to take bribes I would accept them to support my family	98%	-15%

The taker belongs to the ‘culture of corruption’ model according to the payer’s view but may experience a conflict where the models overlap, for example, when takers feel they belong to the ‘victim of circumstances’ model because of pressure from higher officials to pay money, or feel they are victims of clients who expect they can get any service because they have paid a bribe. A shift in ‘them’ and ‘us’ takes place or more precisely, the taker moves the stereotypes of corrupt bureaucrats to cover the officials higher up in the structure and thereby protects himself. Herzfeld argues that ‘while disgruntled clients blame bureaucrats’ as demonstrated earlier, ‘the latter blame the system, excessively complicated laws, their immediate or more distant superiors, the government’.¹³ Transferring responsibility for the corrupt practices away from oneself onto others, be it superiors or the broad term ‘the system’, gives room for civil servants to join the social community of folklore of corruption.

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- 1 Many Khmer proverbs deal with the family, with a particular emphasis on women. Fisher-Nguyen 1994:100. (Khmer language: Trôap kŭang thët srey cheh sámchai tŭk phtĕah thŭm srănôk thët lĕakkh srey chea.)
 - 2 Herzfeld 1992:4.
 - 3 Myrdal 1968:938-939.
 - 4 There is no clear measure of which positions female civil servants have, but the “Human Development Indicators” show a low percentage of female members of parliament, legislators, senior officials, managers, and professional and technical workers, combined with a ratio of estimated female to male earned income at 0.77. UNDP 2003.
 - 5 See Chapter Two on the use of Net Opinion as a measure of positive/negative patterns.
 - 6 Mukherjee & Gokcekus 2004.
 - 7 Sung 2005:296-298.
 - 8 Miller et al. 2001:15-16. The terms ‘victims of circumstances’ and ‘culture of corruption’ are not used by the participants directly but their expression, attitudes and distinction are similar to the two terms.
 - 9 Herzfeld 1992:71-79.
 - 10 CSD 2005: Annex V Table 14A.
 - 11 Visvanathan & Sethi 1998:4.
 - 12 Miller et al. 2001: 235. In fact are there a number of similar results between the finding of this research study and Miller et al.’s study on post-communist Eastern Europe. More comparative research is encouraged between the two regions.
 - 13 Herzfeld 1992:5.

CHAPTER 5

Talking of ‘corruption’

“What is corruption to you?” is a question the researcher again and again asked citizens in Cambodia. The answers were to a great extent similar but also very rhetorical. However, through more in-depth conversation nuances began to surface. This chapter uses data from the quantitative component to explore how citizens conceptualize different forms of corrupt payment and concludes with an exploration of the qualitative material of the social differentiation between corruption and gift giving.

This chapter has four main findings. First, the Khmer language has a broad vocabulary for talking about a corrupt practice. The Khmer word *‘luy puk roaluy’* is commonly used but many terms detail specific situations depending on the respondent’s position. Second, the social relationship between the payer and taker determines the vocabulary used. Third, gift-giving have several faces depending on the context. Reciprocity is built on social obligations, while corrupt practices more often are an exchange. Fourth, the definition and moral evaluation of corrupt practices makes some practice more socially acceptable at the local level.

5.1. Conceptualizing

The Khmer phrase for corruption *‘luy puk roaluy’* is commonly used with a multi-shaded understanding of the behavior ranging from the act of extortion, a gift for a service, a bribe, or payment to arrange a service. The term is also used outside the bureaucracy and in discussions of inequality between rich and poor. More detailed terms for corrupt practices are used for specific situations as Table 7 below illustrates.

Table 7 is constructed on five common sense motives for why someone makes an informal payment.

- To get any service at all,
- To improve the quality of a service,
- To avoid a (higher) official fee,
- To compensate the official for his underpaid time,
- To express thanks for a service delivered.

Table 7 below gives the range of responses elicited on these five explanations from the quantitative survey. The answers are categorized along a basic continuum of moral evaluation.¹

Table 7: Vocabulary from extortion to gifts out of kindness²

Types of payment	Khmer terms	English meaning	Notes	
Extortion	Luy keng pravanh	'exploitation 'money'		
	Luy keapsangkat	'money paid under pressure'/'forced payment'		
	Luy hot cheam reastr	'money from sucking people's blood'		
	Luy lob lun	'money from ambition/greed'		
	Luy Bokpras	'money cheated out of someone'		
Corruption	Luy puk roaluy	'corrupted/spoiled money'		
	Luy rok krao	'money outside one's salary'		
	Luy ngonget	'dark money'		
	Luy kraom tok	'money under the table'		
	Luy luocleak	'money paid secretly'		
	Luy min sucaret/ tuccaret	'dishonest money'		
	Luy kraocbab/ min srabcabab	'money outside the law'		
	Luy khubkhitnea	'money agreed upon for an illegal action'		
	Luy kec pun	'money to evade taxation'		
	Luy pak puok	'money shared among a clique'		
	Luy col hopao aekacun	'money going into a private pocket'		
	Bribery	Luy (sisamnok) Sok pan	'money to persuade an official to do something'	Payment explicitly initiated by the giver
		Luy tinh toekcet	'money to buy someone'	
Luy sokcet		'money to buy a favor'		
Payments to arrange service provision	Luy roatkaa	'money to process the paper'	General for 'payment for service involving different officials, either by self, or through an intermediary official'	
	Luy tinh kaangea	'money to process the paper'	General idem	
	Luy camnayphlovkat	'short-cut money'/'money to speed up procedures'	Specifically referring to quickening the procedure	
	Luy thvieu ouy sevakarngae toancet	'money to speed up procedures'	Specifically referring to quickening the procedure	
	Luy camnay knong kaa tumneak tum noang	'money to establish a relationship'		
Payment to encourage service provision	Luy loek toek cet/ luong(lom) cet	'money to encourage an official to do his job'		
	Luy yok cet ke	'money to please someone'		
	Luy cun cea rungvoan	'prize money'		
Tips after service	Luy toek tae	'tea money'	General	
	Luy toek beer	'beer money'	General	
	Luy tlay tuk bic	'ink money'	Specific for clerks in offices	
Gifts after service	Luy sakun	'payment out of gratefulness for service received'		
	Luy kunbammac	'payment out of gratefulness for service received'		
	Luy deng kun	'payment out of gratefulness for service received'		
	Luy arkun	'payment out of gratefulness for service received'		
	Luy tobkun	'payment out of gratefulness for service received'		
Financial contributions	Luy vipeak'tean	contribution (e.g. to local project)	Part of total	
	Luy banthaem	'additional payment to please the poorly salaried'		

Types of payment	Khmer terms	English meaning	Notes
	Luy bampenh karkhvakhaat	financial support (e.g to school for underpaid teaching staff)	Part of total costs
	Luy bampan	'money to feed someone'/'assistance'	
	Luy cumnuoy	'money to help someone'/'assistance'	
	Luy chamnay upaktham	financial support	May be in part or full
	Luy amnoy	donation	
	Luy cuy sangkruoh	donation	Specific for times of emergency
Unsolicited gifts expressing kindness	Luy sandan'cet	'unsolicited payment from the heart'	Not only financial but also psychological support
	Luy sobboros	'charity money'	
	Luy metathoa	'compassion money'	
	Luy monusthoa	'humanity money'	

What immediately stands out is the variety of expressions. The type 'corruption' contains eleven different expressions, 'payments to arrange service provision' contains five different expressions, and 'gift after service' also contains five different expressions. The expressions are all very descriptive and some expressions refer directly to the relationship between the payer and the taker. For example the 'money paid under pressure' specifically refers to the power relation between the payer and taker, 'dishonest money' specifically refers to trust versus distrust, and 'additional payment to please the poorly salaried' specifically refers to helping the taker to survive.

As Chapter Four explored, most accuse others of being corrupt without admitting to corrupt practices themselves. This ambiguous logic must be viewed on the basis of the pressure on civil servants from family members for them to bring home extra money. The taker thereby stands in a conflict of corruption as social disapproval versus expectations and pressure from the family. The term used for a corrupt transaction therefore depends on the respondent's position and motive which is evident when reading the meaning of the terms used in Table 7. It is furthermore evident that citizens distinguish between different types of corrupt practices.

5.2. Blurred boundary between 'corruption' and 'gift-giving'

Section 5.1. illustrates corrupt practices as being wrapped in indigenous idioms implicitly describing the relationship between the payer and taker. But corrupt practices are more than presentations of naked power between the payer and the taker, it is also about relations and strategies.³ Tanzi points out the importance of distinguishing 'bribes' from 'gifts'.⁴ To explore this boundary, an examination of the latter is necessary.



Policeman stopping some young men on motorbike

Gift-giving

There is no doubt that gift-giving, 'tveu bon', plays a major role in Khmer culture⁵ and the practices can be divided into several degrees of sincerity all different from corrupt practices. Two categories in this report are used to illustrate different moral evaluations of the practice of 'gift-giving': 'gift-giving with sincerity' and 'gift-giving without sincerity'.

First, there is the traditional 'tveu bon douv chet smos' practice with giving donations to monks and making offerings in the pagoda.⁶ This practice is categorized as 'gift-giving with sincerity' to earn merit, as the following citation describes:

I must respect and celebrate and give ['tveu bon douv chet smos'] to the poor and the elderly and to the pagoda because I respect Buddha. When I see poor people on the street I will give. I also give to the monks and they will divide among the poor and the elderly, and I will get a good next life.

Mrs. Bou, mid-fifties, vendor at market in accessible-rural area.

The second category is giving a gift without sincerity, 'tveu bon douv chet men smos', to gain something. This is described by Mrs. Bou as:

If you give a gift to an official with sincerity ['tveu bon douv chet smos'] then there is no problem. If you give a gift to someone who orders the gift, then he [the person who orders the gift] will get something bad in the next life because he did

something bad and oppressive. Also to give without sincerity ['tveu bon douv chet men smos '] to the pagoda or others is bad for you in the next life.

Mrs. Bou, mid-fifties, vendor at market in accessible-rural area.

Then there is the 'tveu bon' to patrons to maintain good relations. This practice lies between the two above described practices depending on the payer's perception of the practice. A situation like this is described below:

Mr. Narin, who is a secondary school teacher in a semi-urban area, and the researcher sit at a local café drinking iced coffee. We are about to leave when his schoolmaster enters the café, sees us, and head towards our table without any invitation. The schoolmaster orders a coffee while chatting with Mr. Narin. We sit and wait until the schoolmaster has finished his coffee and Mr. Narin then pays the bill for his own, mine, and the schoolmaster's drink. He afterwards explains this act with: *I must show respect to him, he is my employer and even though he earns more money than I, he will expect me to pay for him.*

The thoughts behind the practice of 'gift-giving' determine whether the practice is morally right or wrong, 'tveu bon douv chet smos' or 'tveu bon douv chet men smos'. This moral evaluation concerns the gift-giver individually, differently from a corrupt practice, where both payer and taker know it is morally wrong. Another specification of 'gift-giving' is that it is not secret by nature as corrupt practices usually are.⁷

Table 5 showed that it is often the household itself who initiate both gifts (Net Opinion +46%) and bribes (Net Opinion +30%). The significant agreement to 'gifts' being initiated by the household illustrates that gift-giving can be understood as a form of protection payment. In other words the consequence may not be something that happens when you pay, but something that happens when you do not pay.

All categorizations of gift-giving involve reciprocity where the giver receives something in return without knowing exactly *what, how* or *when*. This is unlike corrupt transactions where the arrangement is more clearly an exchange for something. This argument is contrary to Tanzi who states that 'bribes can be disguised as gifts' but then continues; 'a bribe implies reciprocity while a gift should not'.⁸ Tanzi rightly distinguishes between 'gift' and 'bribe' on basis of reciprocity as mentioned above, but somehow turns the practice around so that the reciprocity lies in bribe-paying. Understanding 'gift giving' as a complex web of reciprocity with obligations involved in the act of giving, as described by Marcel Mauss,⁹ makes Tanzi's distinction futile. While citizens might not clearly know *how* or *when* they receive the requested service when processing a corrupt

payment, they clearly know *what* they requested and at what cost. The empirical data thereby confirms the above distinction between ‘gift-giving’ and ‘corruption’.

However, several of these distinctions are not constant and the boundary for what is perceived as corrupt behavior or simply giving/receiving a gift of gratitude is blurred. This blurred boundary is interesting not only because it reflects what is socially and culturally accepted and what is not, but it also touches upon the dynamic in local communities.

Furthermore, there is no guarantee that bribes result in services. This is especially uncertain when citizens are competing to bribe the same official, e.g. police in the case of conflict. This uncertainty further encourages citizens to pay more in bribe than necessary to ensure enough pressure is applied to gain the service requested. This discussion on perceptions of corruption upholding actual corrupt behavior is discussed in Chapter Six.

5.3. Social dynamics affecting the distinction between corruption and gift-giving

The secrecy surrounding corrupt practices and the statement from Mr. Sieng, policeman cited in Box 1 and further in section 4.4. *The takers view*, demonstrates that accepting a corrupt payment is not socially accepted. The previous discussion of the distinction between ‘gift-giving with sincerity’ and ‘gift-giving without sincerity’ illustrates that the vocabulary of gift-giving has moral overtones and that to a large extent the latter has taken over as vocabulary for a *local* corrupt practice.

The use of the phrase ‘gift-giving’, has more positive connotations than ‘extortion’ and ‘corruption’, and should be seen in the local context that many payers have personal social relations with the taker beforehand and prefers to call the practice gift-giving. The civil servants might be neighbors or local patrons who help out with documents and the payer know through common practice that they most show respect by paying extra money to receive the service. Power as part of the patronage structure thereby generates corrupt practices in local communities. However, the practice might not be understood as naked power by the payer because the practice is standardized and becomes habitual.

A statement by a provincial Police Chief (whom several participants accused of being very corrupt) illustrates the difference between local and national perceptions very well:

We are not corrupt here, only in other places are they corrupt. But you know, it is no problem to give gifts [‘tveu bon’] because that is not corruption that is different.

Provincial Police Chief.

When the payer and taker know each other locally and the taker is accused of corrupt practices by other citizens, as the Police Chief above is, the vocabulary will typically reflect the social distance between the accuser and the accused.

Based on the qualitative fieldwork, Box 5 below illustrates that if a practice is conducted in secret it is more often labeled extortion or corruption, while gift-giving is more socially approved and thereby more overt. The practice is viewed as gift-giving if citizens know the taker beforehand while they mostly do not know the taker if the practice is labeled as corruption or extortion and where there is more regular use of a middleman for the transaction. Practices labeled ‘extortion’ or ‘corruption’ are an exchange of money/sex/equipment, while gift-giving is more often an exchange of things other than money and of lower value. Gift-giving without sincerity is done based on a calculated reciprocity where the giver expects/hopes for a service, while the exchange in corruption is a clearer defined service. This Box is a generalization on basis of participants’ descriptions. Variations and different forms of categorization take place all the time, often determined by the relationship between the payer and the taker.

The social dynamic between the payer and the taker is the determining factor for what ordinary citizens label as ‘extortion’, ‘corruption’, ‘gift-giving without sincerity’, and ‘gift-giving with sincerity’. This is additionally demonstrated by the use of middlemen shown in Table 5 and discussed in Chapter Four. When the relationship between payer and taker is facilitated by a middleman the practice will more often be labeled corruption/bribe than gift-giving.

Box 5: Local distinctions

	Secret	Arrangement	Exchanged	Socially approved	Middlemen	Moral evaluation	Relation to taker	Taker
Gift-giving with sincerity	No	Social reciprocity	Money, favor, food etc. (low value)	Yes	No	Individual	Mostly know beforehand	Pagoda, Wat, poor, old.
Gift-giving without sincerity	Yes/No	Calculated reciprocity	Money, favor, food etc. (low value)	To some extent	Very occasionally	Individual	Mostly know beforehand (occasionally not)	Civil servant, local patrons
Corruption	Yes	Clear deal Exchange	Money/sex/equipment (high value)	None	Sometimes	Morally wrong	Sometimes know beforehand	Civil servant Political party
Extortion	Yes	Pressure	Money/sex/equipment (high value)	None	Sometimes	Morally wrong	Do not know beforehand	Civil servant Political party

- 1 For more explanation behind the use of these five motives see the diagnostic study; CSD 2005.
- 2 Different spelling of the Khmer words is due to no official regulation of Khmer spelling in Roman letters. The 'bold' Khmer words are the most common used words for that category.
- 3 Visvanathan & Sethi 1998:8.
- 4 Tanzi 1998:9.
- 5 See for example Peang-Meth 1991 or Kalab 1968.
- 6 By accepting the gift, the monk helps the giver acquire merit. Kalab 1968:531.
- 7 Inspiration on gift-giving from Mauss 2002.
- 8 Tanzi 1998:9.
- 9 Mauss 2002.

PART THREE

REACTIONS ON CORRUPTION

When some of the people here face problems they just keep them in their mind because they are poor and they do not go to the police or commune. This is because they do not hope to obtain a fair resolution from them.

Poor farmer in accessible-rural area.

Corrupt practices are an economic struggle for a high number of citizens as illustrated in Part Two. The moral aspect of the practice is no less important. This is described well by John T. Noonan in Miller et al. as; ‘bribery is a betrayal of trust [...] the notion of fidelity in office, as old as Cicero, is inextricably bound to the concept of public interest distinct from private advantage. It is beyond debate that officials of the government are relied upon to act for the public interest not their own enrichment. When they take bribes they divide their loyalty’, Miller et al. finalize the sentence ‘and become traitors to the people’.¹ The bond between morality and trust is therefore essential for the further analysis which is also implied throughout Part Two. Likewise factors like hope and fairness play a significant part in citizens dealing with corrupt practices, as the citation from the poor farmer above shows.

Part Three of this report focuses on how ordinary citizens create strategies and react against corrupt practices and how this can be understood as resistance against the formal bureaucracy. Analysis of trust in local communities compared against low acceptability of the practice and daily strategies is followed by a case study analysis of respectively passive and active forms of resistance. Exploring reactions and strategies is an important approach in the fight against corrupt practices because anti-corruption initiatives will be more likely to succeed if based on existing practices of resistance.

The cases presented are collected through qualitative research methods and chosen to illustrate typical responses to corrupt practices among the target group.

¹ Miller et al. 2001:12.

CHAPTER 6

Low trust, low acceptance and low resistance

It has been implied in the previous chapters that ordinary citizens in general do not accept corrupt practices but that they distinguish some practices as being more morally wrong than others. Chapter Six explores citizens' level of acceptance of corrupt practices in the context of the society as a low trust society and lists participants' strategies for dealing with the situation, exemplified further in Chapter Seven & Eight.

This chapter has five main findings. First, trust and levels of corrupt practices are correlated. Second, high perceptions of corruption results in high levels of actual corruption. Third, low trust hinders joint resistance against corrupt practices. Fourth, confirmation that corrupt practices are not accepted even though it is a frequent practice. Fifth, strategies against corrupt practices are rather vague.

6.1. Low community trust

Much new research suggests that trust and corrupt practices have a strong reciprocal relationship.¹ Low-trust societies, that is societies with a low level of trust in anonymous others and institutions, also described as 'generalized trust', are thought to promote a higher perception of corruption than in high-trust societies.² These findings are consistent with the empirical data in this report and the diagnostic study which shows a clear correlation between corruption severity and integrity rating.³ Vartuhi Tonoyan links highly perceived corruption with high actual corruption rates.⁴ Low generalized trust thereby increases the perceptions of corruption *and* the actual illegal corrupt deals because of a self-fulfilling prophesy as has also been discussed earlier in citizen's use of accusations against the failure of the bureaucracy.

Citizen's massive negative experience with corrupt practices at the local level with law enforcers, teachers, health staff, and registry offices influences generalized trust towards the government. Table 8 illustrates the integrity rating where government at all levels is not perceived as being trustworthy.

Table 8: Integrity rating⁵

N=2000	Aware (%)	Net Opinion (%)	Most dishonest % of respondents⁶
NGOs	75%	+59%	1%
Private schools	40%	+42%	1%
Your local pagoda	95%	+29%	2%
The military	71%	+21%	3%
Private hospitals	94%	+20%	4%
Public schools	98%	+12%	6%
Water service provider	28%	+7%	1%
National Election Commission	83%	+2%	10%
Village chief	99%	-10%	10%
Electricity provider	32%	-10%	2%
Media (Radio, TV, Newspapers)	81%	-13%	3%
Senate	37%	-13%	1%
National Assembly	62%	-24%	4%
Public hospitals	96%	-28%	2%
Commune administration	98%	-32%	14%
Political parties	86%	-35%	10%
Office of Council of ministers	52%	-38%	8%
District administration	87%	-41%	8%
Central government and administration	87%	-42%	20%
Provincial administration	80%	-44%	9%
Police excluding traffic police	92%	-55%	26%
Traffic police	82%	-61%	17%
Tax authority	69%	-68%	19%
Judge/ court	85%	-77%	53%
Customs authority	64%	-83%	28%
Average level of integrity across negatively rated institutions		-40%	

Mrs. Vanny, a house-wife in her mid-fifties, illustrates how low trust is generated and hurts society through her complaint against the police (rated among the lowest in Table 8):

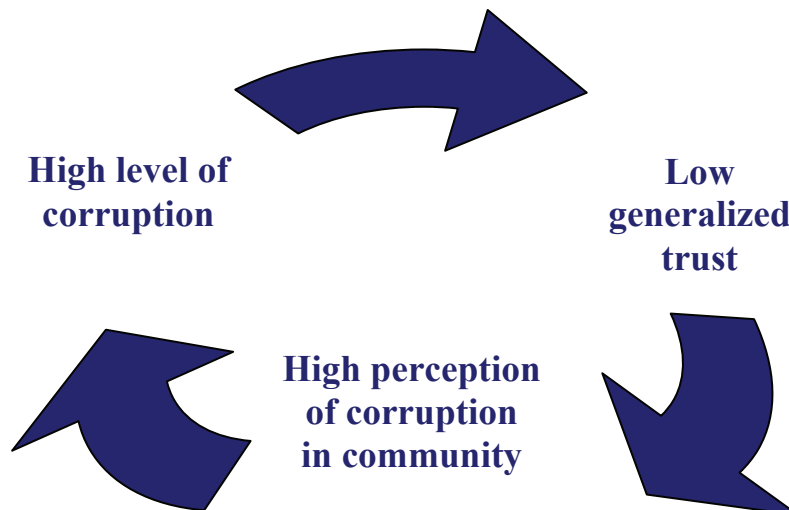
The role of the police station is to act as a fair place for the people to solve conflicts. Nevertheless, they take money from people when they solve the conflicts. They take money for the purpose of going to bars, drinking, having beautiful girls, gambling, and give jewelry to their wife. For example, they have a car and they cannot save to buy a car if they are not corrupt. [...] It affects society because people are poor. People are victims. Poor people get hurt because of the unfair police station.

Mrs. Vanny, accessible-rural area.

Mrs. Vanny's statement clearly shows the stereotypical perception of all policemen as corrupt and her low trust in the institution. The statement is shared by ordinary citizens and has become folklore of corruption in a manner that

citizens expect meeting corrupt practices when facing the police. The statement represents a vicious circle of low trust and corruption.

Figur 1: Vicious circle



Tonoyan goes further in his arguments and states that the higher the ‘particularized trust’, i.e. trust which is person- and situation-specific, the higher the corruption.⁷ There is little quantitative measurement of the state of particularized trust in Cambodia. However, qualitative findings suggest that particularized trust is low in local communities.⁸ Mr. Pheary, a secondary school teacher expresses with frustration in his voice the lack of solidarity in the local community at a focus group discussion:

We have no solidarity. Even with my friends we smile at each other but have no real confidence in each other. Even him [points at the man next to him]. We have no confidence in each other. You have no confidence in people you have not known for a long time because you do not know their background.

Mr. Pheary is a secondary school teacher in a semi-urban area.

Mr. Pheary’s expression of a low trust community is confirmed by frequent complaints of neighbors stealing chickens/eggs/fruit, plowing and harvesting beyond ones own field, low confidence in local autonomy rice banks, and hesitation at creating cooperatives. Furthermore, Meas Nee and Joan Healy argue that the low trust society is a result of the Khmer Rouge regime (1975-1979) where neighbors and family members informed against each other.⁹

According to Tonoyan's theory, high particularized trust in friends and kin generates a high level of corruption. This is in contradiction to the empirical results from the research study where low trust in the local community promotes increased corrupt practices because citizens are bound to look after themselves first and initiate a small bribe rather than wait for the civil servant to request a larger bribe. The weak horizontal ties and low trust among neighbors, especially poor citizens, further hinders movements of joint resistance and leaves it to individual households to protest against the practice. The level of trust in the vertical strategic constructed patronage networks can furthermore be questioned. As Chapter Eight further illustrates it is the patronage structure that provides a huge constraint for resisting corrupt practices while at the same time enforcing those practices.

The discrepancy with Tonoyan's theory can be explained by a number of factors. The term 'particularized trust' defined by Tonoyan is directed towards entrepreneurs rather than local face-to-face relations. Entrepreneurs are more likely to become involved in corrupt business practices when particularized trust networks are strong. This is consistent with the use of middlemen discussed earlier in Chapter Four which illustrates that when networks become closer and trust is shared among a closed group of people, it increases the usage of informal and corrupt practices.¹⁰ Furthermore, the high perception of the importance of friends and relatives to cushion against corrupt practices builds on a perception of high corruption and thereby generate corrupt practices.

The essential differentiation between types of trust, generalized and particularized, is important because it reflects how citizens react to corrupt practices. This is consistent with the way the different vocabulary is used and created depending on the relation and position of the involved persons as analyzed in Chapter Five.

6.2. Low acceptance of corrupt practices

Corrupt practices have long been debated internationally whether it is 'universal shameful' as the moralist Noonan argues, or if it has a positive effect on the economy under special circumstances as Huntington argues.¹¹

When respondents in the quantitative survey were presented with eight short descriptions of situations that sometimes happen in Cambodia and other countries and were asked to state how acceptable they thought the described behavior was they clearly declared that all but one situation was unacceptable, as illustrated in Table 9. This fits with very few participants (only two) in the qualitative part expressing positive aspects of corrupt practices. This supports the moralist approach to corrupt practices.

Even though CSD's survey from 1998 shows that corruption is 'a normal way of doing things' (with a Net Opinion on +68%) it is not perceived as acceptable by Cambodians.

Table 9: Corrupt practices are not accepted¹²

N=2000	Aware (%)	Net Opinion (%)
To avoid having to visit the police station and pay a full fine, a traffic offender offers to pay 5,000 Riel directly to a traffic policeman. The policeman did not ask for the money, but accepted it.	99%	-89%
A person visits a government office, and receives good assistance from the officer in charge. When the matter is concluded, he offers 10,000 Riel which the government official accepts	99%	-13%
A person needs some service from a government department. The officer in charge deliberately takes his time. The person gives the officer money (4,000-20,000 Riel) to speed up the work and to reward the officer for his efforts.	99%	-86%
A government official takes paper and pencils from the office to use at home	99%	-89%
A person is promoted because he is the relative or protégé of a senior officer	99%	-92%
An official pays money to get promotion	99%	-95%
The court decides not to prosecute an offender because he comes from an influential family	99%	-99%
A political party offers to pay money if you vote for them in the next election	99%	-90%

The most unaccepted practices regard questions on the use of networks and the informal system with respectively a Net Opinion of -99%, -95%, and -92%. This contributes to the notion of low trust explored in the previous section.

The high awareness at 99% of the described situations demonstrates citizens' familiarity with corrupt practices in society as noted in previous chapters. This implies a high moral rejection of the practices and demonstrates a low attitude towards corrupt practices where corrupt behavior is normal but not acceptable. This leads to the conclusion that corrupt practices are not culturally accepted but rather a result of the social, economic and bureaucratic/institutional structures.

Table 10 backs the point that just because corruption is widespread it does not become acceptable. The Net Opinion to the question as to whether 'you cannot call something corruption if everyone is doing it' is -46%.

Table 10: Corrupt practices are not acceptable even though they are widespread

N=2000	Aware (%)	Net Opinion (%)
You cannot call something corruption if everyone is doing it	93%	-46%

Cambodians overall acceptance of corruption has decreased during the six years since CSD's 1998 survey. This immediately suggests that corrupt practices are not accepted as Khmer culture. But since cultural systems most also be attended by behavior and social action, perceptions of corrupt practices alone cannot determine the role of corrupt practices as cultural or not. Reaction to the practice analyzed in Chapters Seven & Eight, thereby becomes essential for drawing conclusions on the role of corrupt practices in the society.



Farmer on his way home on a oxcart

6.3. Available strategies

Few citizens actively resist in an open and strategic way that makes a real difference. Instead, citizens live with corrupt practices and adapt different strategies to avoid or reducing payment.

Some of the strategies in use mentioned and/or observed during the qualitative fieldwork were:

- Avoid using the public sector e.g. education, health, land titles.
- Avoid attention and publicity.
- Create influential networks and use informal structures.
- Become a member of the ‘right’ political party.
- Initiate payment to control the amount.
- Negotiate the amount down.
- Follow the chain of command.

These strategies are rather vague and differ from the ‘movement-like’ reactions in other countries that include demonstrations, public campaigns and protests through the media. The next two chapters look into reactions and strategies by ordinary citizens when dealing with corrupt practices in the local bureaucracy and institutions.

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- 1 If it is low trust that leads to higher corruption or high corruption that leads to low trust is being widely discussed but out of scope for this research study to explore. To see more on this debate see for example Uslaner 2004, Uslaner & Badescu 2004, or Tonoyan 2003 among others.
 - 2 Tonoyan in fact argues that the higher the generalized trust the lower the (perception of) corruption. The argument is turned around here to state that the lower the generalized trust the higher the (perception of) corruption. Tonoyan 2003:21-23
 - 3 Figure A Annex III. Although trust and integrity are two different concepts measuring different issues, they are here used together to illustrate a pattern. See more on definitions of trust/honesty/integrity/confidence in Parson 1969, Luhmann 1980, Barber 1983 among others. Basically, we can say that when interviewing citizens about trust, the term is not defined beforehand, instead it is determined by the context and citizens own notion of trust.
 - 4 Tonoyan 2003:21-23.
 - 5 Question: Please tell us if you think each of the following is very honest, honest, neither honest nor dishonest, somewhat dishonest, or very dishonest. And tell us which are the most dishonest, the second most dishonest and the third most dishonest.
 - 6 This was a multiple response questions asking for the first, second and third most dishonest institution (numbered in bold at the right). The reported result is the un-weighted aggregate of these three answers, expressed as a percentage of respondents that mentioned the particular institution (as opposed to percentage of total answers given).
 - 7 Tonoyan 2003:23
 - 8 See Nee & Healy 2003:67-80 for argument of low trust as result of the Khmer Rouge regime.
 - 9 Nee & Healy 2003:67-80
 - 10 For more discussion on this subject see for example: Lambsdorff 2002, Raiser 1999.
 - 11 Miller et al. 2001:9.
 - 12 Q: I am going to describe some situations that sometimes happen in Cambodia and many other countries. Can you tell me how acceptable you think the described behavior is? Very acceptable, acceptable, neither acceptable nor unacceptable, unacceptable or very unacceptable.

CHAPTER 7

Ordinary citizens' strategies

There is no doubt that citizens react to corrupt practices, as illustrated in Part Two. But one can ask whether there are conscious strategies behind the reactions and whether these can be viewed as resistance or merely coping mechanisms.

Chapter Seven is based on the Wan Family's and Mr. Sokha's stories about encountering civil servants in the local bureaucracy and institutions without having a patron to ensure security. The chapter has four main findings. First, lack of information combined with threats makes exploitation easy. Second, the Wan Family and Mr. Sokha feel they have limited possibilities of action against corrupt practices. However, there are small signs of resistance with distinctly moral overtones. Third, incentives to improve livelihood and growth are hindered by corrupt payments and lack of well-functioning infrastructure like markets and an enforced law-system. Fourth, active resistance is strangled in the culturally constructed power structure.

7.1. The Wan Family feels little freedom to act

A huge problem for citizens, especially for the poor, is when uniformed police officers visit private houses and ask for money. Often it is the woman and the children who are at home and the policemen are perceived as intimidating and a threat especially because the policemen usually operate in groups of two or three. A situation like this is illustrated in Box 6 below.

Box 6: Interview with Mr. and Mrs. Wan

Mr. Wan is a fisherman living in a rural area near the sea. He has ten children and nine of them still live at home together with him and his wife in two small bamboo huts with a leaf-covered roof. The land they live on is not theirs and there is no water, sanitation, or electricity. The family own one small fishing boat and Mr. Wan goes fishing every morning together with three of his children and a neighbor if the weather is not too rough. He has known the neighbor for many years and he is almost part of the family now. They fish with fishing net and when they have enough fish Mr. Wan's wife sells the surplus at the market at noon and buys rice to bring home.

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(Continuation)

We are sitting in front of one of the bamboo huts on a bamboo bed talking about their family's situation. It is afternoon and all the children are at home relaxing in the shadow and Mrs. Wan is looking for lice in one of the children's hair while she participates in the converses.

When asked if they have ever had any experience with corruption Mrs. Wan explains that sometimes some policemen come and ask for money when she is in the house alone. Sometimes she pays 5,000 or 6,000 riel even though they ask for 20,000 riel but sometimes she tells them that she has no money on hand and that the family earns its livelihood from sea and is very poor. She does not know what the money is for or why she should pay.

I do not know what the money is for. They just say that they take this money to pay for food and cigarettes. I have not heard them say that they take it to the government. Sometimes I hear that they need money for gasoline, sometimes to buy wine. Last time they came just before Khmer New Year. Sometimes they say it is for a tax but then I wonder why they come so many times and why I need to pay a tax when I am just an ordinary citizen.

She explains that she pays them when she has money because they are uniformed policemen and even though she does not know their rank she thinks they have the power to hurt her and her family. One time when she said she had no money they threatened to burn the family's boat and destroy their fishing net if she did not pay soon. Mrs. Wan further complains:

If we do not fish we do not make money and have nothing to eat. It is very difficult and we have many children. All are very young and the oldest have no work. I think sometime I want to laugh like the child over there [she points at her three-year old daughter] and be the same age to get away from this misery.

Ms. Wan has never received a receipt for the money paid and is afraid to ask the policemen what the money is for. Mr. Wan does not think he can do anything about this situation, he just hopes the policemen will not come again soon.

To the question if the family is afraid, Mrs. Wan sharply replies;

I am not afraid! If I'm afraid I'll stop living and if I stop living I'll have no food to feed my children, so I can not be afraid.

Mrs. Wan's experience, specifically the lack of information on *why* she needs to pay and *where* the money goes, strongly suggests a corrupt practice. The lack of communication between the payer and taker breeds accusations of corruption and contributes to the folklore of corruption. However, Mrs. Wan often pays the policemen out of fear of losing the fishing boat, yet she knows that paying may encourage them to return. The outcome is a negative attitude towards the bureaucracy; when Mr. and Mrs. Wan describe the situation it is evident that it confirms their low trust and already strong stereotypes of *all* bureaucrats and powerful as corrupt.

7.2. Resistance?

Mrs. Wan is a woman who like others mention that corrupt practices are a contradiction to traditional Khmer norms and values. The women in the area are generally aware of the moral wrong in the corrupt practices they are exposed to and they participate daily in the folklore of corruption. They try to protect their own property and money and are amused if they succeed in cheating the officials and avoid paying. Mrs. Wan explains with a wry smile that sometimes she actually has money but avoids paying the policemen because she needs to buy rice for the family.

Mrs. Wan's morality and experience of unfair treatment shows her fundamental moral perceptions of a demand for being treated fair and her demand for justice. It is clear that Mrs. Wan does not trust the policemen and she has a deep lack of confidence in a lawful equal system. This brings Mrs. Wan to further interpret the request for money as illegitimate. She assumes the money she pays is spent on wine, food or cigarettes and does not reach the government. In spite of the serious situation she would face if the policemen burned the family's fishing boat, she sometimes refuses to pay. Instead she only has contempt for the policemen, confirming corrupt practices as socially objectionable. As Miller et al. rightly point out, the demand for equality is not merely to be treated equal to other citizens but as equals to officials.¹

Miller et al. argue in accordance with the material in this report, that citizens have a range of passive and active strategies to deal with civil servants.² However, some reactions by citizens like Mrs. Wan are not acknowledged as resistance by Miller et al., among others. James Scott on the other hand operates with the concepts of 'everyday forms of peasant resistance' covering resistance of relatively powerless groups. Scott's concept of resistance includes 'dissimulation, false compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage', and he states further: 'they require little or no coordination or planning. They often represent a form of individual self-help and they typically avoid any direct

symbolic confrontation with authority or with elite norms'.³ Scott's concept of 'everyday forms of resistance' is especially suitable for the explanation of poor citizens' means of resistance to corrupt practices. The described situation with Mrs. Wan might hereby be analyzed as a passive everyday form of resistance.

To Mrs. Wan, however, what Scott identifies as 'everyday forms of resistance', is mainly a survival strategy. She is conscious of her strategy and is in a position where she feels that a more expressive and active resistance is not possible without the risk of immense consequences. Mrs. Wan, like other poor citizens, expresses joint concern that active resistance is unlikely because they do not trust the laws, and thereby do not feel safe to protest even though they perceive the payment as morally wrong and illegal.

7.3. Low incentive to increase productivity

An often stated way out of poverty is through increased economic growth and higher productivity. It is also frequently stated by the middle-class and those who are well-off that poor citizens are lazy and to blame for their poverty in opposition to rich people who are rich through hard work described in the expression '*khom twea kar ban mean*' (work hard, become rich). However, poor farmers do frequently choose not to increase their productivity for calculated reasons.



Man repairing motorbike while children are watching

The case below (Box 7) describe Mr. Sokha's lack of incentive to increase his productivity as a direct result of his lack of connections, low trust in neighbors and government, and corruption within the police. The case illustrates that where increased productivity could be possible and desirable, a strategy of low-intensity work and low product-outcome is most cost-efficient.

Box 7: Interview with Mr. Sokha

Mr. Sokha is a 69-year old farmer. He lives in a rather large wooden house on piles with his twelve year younger wife, a daughter, her husband and their children in a rural area. The family has a beautiful garden with different colorful flowers combined with fruit trees. Mr. Sokha is a former school teacher but after a minor altercation with a superior he now lives off his farm-land close to the river. He demonstrated much knowledge of the political and social situation in the country and let it be known that he regularly listens to the radio, reads newspapers when someone brings one back from the provincial town, and participates in public forums organized by NGOs if they pay his transportation. He is happy to discuss sensitive subjects in private but will not allow the interview to be taped out of fear of consequences for him or his family.

Mr. Sokha explains that he is sad that there is no incentive for him to increase his production of fruit, rice and vegetables and says that the standard of living in the area is very difficult to understand:

This area is very good for agriculture because we are close to the river, but we can not cultivate the land because we have no markets to sell our products. [...] We can grow beans, rice, corn, tobacco, tomatoes, and so on, but there is no reason to invest in it, because we have nowhere to sell the products. We can bring the products to the market [at the provincial capital], but it is too expensive to bring them there and we loose all the profit. [...] I can grow many tomatoes and I want to export them and use them for something. Like the Vietnamese, they can them but we have no technical knowledge to do that. [...] We do not expect the government to do much, just help find a market to sell our products.

Mr. Sokha and his son-in-law have around 100 rice bags stored in the house. They will either use the rice themselves or sell it to a middleman when the prices are higher. Usually the middleman comes to the house and buys the rice and sells it at a profit, but now the price is too low so they will keep it stored. Mr. Sokha knows how to invest and get the most out of things but feels that society is in big troubles at the moment which hinders investment and development. He explains:

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I have 10 hectares of land but only cultivate 1 hectare. Some of the land is covered with forest. I want to get a bank loan to cultivate all the land, but now the political situation is not so good, so I prefer to wait. I have a bamboo forest and I want to export bamboo but that is much too difficult now. If I want to sell now, I need to pay at many checkpoints and that eats up all the profit. I have tried that before with bad result. [...] The middleman will not buy bamboo now because of the difficult political situation. If I take the bamboo to the river [for transportation] my self the police officials will come and want money. I do not know why, it is not illegal to export bamboo because it is my own and for domestic use, for use by Cambodians. I just know they will ask for money. [...] It is very difficult to say what I think about this, it is a very normal thing in Cambodia, this kind of act is called corruption. I do not have the power to be against that.

Mr. Sokha complains much about the political situation at both national and community level and feels the level of corruption has worsened compared to the 1960's. He is very concerned about the lack of solidarity in society which he mentions by himself.

Today there is no solidarity but stealing, conflict, arguing and killings in the communities and at national level. [...] It not only affects my family, it also affects society. [...] Without solidarity we can not develop the country. The spirituality of the leadership and the morality of society and culture have declined since the 1960's. People loose confidence in each other. Khmer society is affected by the cruel ideas of the Pol Pot era when all social structures were destroyed. We still have the remains of the Pol Pot era today.

Mr. Sokha makes clear that he is a man with knowledge and initiative to improve his livelihood through increased productivity of his agricultural land but finds that local power relations hinder this. He experienced corrupt practices when he tried to sell his surplus and has calculated that with a lack of influential network *and* trust in the surrounding community his best strategy is to only farm enough land for personal use.

Mr. Sokha further feels that there is a lack of both particularized *and* generalized trust in the surrounding community whereby joint resistance against corrupt practices or cooperation in farming is impossible from his point of view. The result is that Mr. Sokha uses his knowledge to maximize the standard of living for his own family, limited to producing food-products but lacking monetary turnover for further investment.⁴

7.4. Power structures make resistance risky

Situations like the two cases described above are nationwide phenomena where poor citizens easily fall victim to exploitation whereby their best strategy is to restrain initiative. The situation is further exacerbated by the strong patronage structure which creates unequal power positions which are abused by some groups. Several reports and observations from the study show that the police in particular take advantage of their powerful positions, but that local authorities in other sectors also take their bite, as shown in earlier chapters.

Corrupt takers use citizens' lack of influential networks, knowledge of the law, and their powerlessness to oppress them and take money without providing a reason. It is difficult for ordinary citizens like the Wan Family and Mr. Sokha to protest this practice because they are afraid of the consequences and lack patrons to intervene and protect them. The Wan Family, Mr. Sokha and others mention that neighbors usually do not help each other because they are just as poor, limiting the ability to create horizontal networks and generate particularized trust in opposition to the local pressure in the communities. However, Mr. Wan does rely on fishing with his neighbor, suggesting that some particularized trust *is* present among neighbors.

Like the Family Wan, many families do not own the land they live on. The family was evicted from their previous land by 'powerful' people who suddenly claimed the land and they found resistance impossible. A similar experience happened to another woman a short time ago. She explains that she sold the land only because her family was afraid of losing it to 'powerful' people:

We were afraid that if we did not sell the land, then they [district chief] would take the land for free. We were afraid because they have power. They [district chief] just said that if we did not sell, they would take the land anyway. However, if we agreed to sell we would get a small amount of money to buy things to eat. Also we would be able to stay here until they needed the land. We had land title but felt that we should get some money for the land.

Woman, mid-thirties, accessible-rural area.⁵

As the above citation illustrates, the woman is afraid of losing everything if she does not obey. Poor citizens like her cannot afford active resistance since they do not have an influential network. Instead they use everyday forms of resistance, like bargaining, the same way they bargain at the market to lower a price. Other ways of resistance include lying to the police about not having any money (as Mrs. Wan sometimes does), entering a discussion if possible and not too risky, or

simply walking/driving away (often used in traffic) without reacting to the policeman's demands.

The (perceived) constant demand for money whenever citizens contact civil servants in the local bureaucracy and institutions have resulted in the Family Wan having no birth or civil registration of any of their children and Mr. Sokha decreasing his productivity. However, strategies like these are not sustainable in the long run and just produce further hindrances for resistance and development.

The consequences of the unequal power relations between citizens and civil servants are most often handled by trying to be pleasant to the official even though they might act unpleasantly, softly negotiating an affordable solution by taking the initiative for the payment, pleading, and ultimately accepting unsatisfactory treatment to avoid further risks. The lack of active resistance should therefore not be seen as an acceptance of the practice but rather an outcome of the low trust in the society to ensure fair treatment, helplessness and a weak position.

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- 1 Miller et al. 2001:79. This differentiation between passive and active forms of resistance is especially important in authoritarian and post-authoritarian countries according to Miller et al.
 - 2 Miller et al. 2001:93-132.
 - 3 Scott 1985:29.
 - 4 More comprehensive studies on constraints to poor farmers' investment in producing cash crops are encouraged.
 - 5 Nissen 2004.

CHAPTER 8

Active strategies

As illustrated earlier in Part Two, both ordinary citizens *and* civil servants create stereotypes of the bureaucrat as corrupt. Furthermore, citizens and civil servants agree that corrupt practices are a problem in the public sector. The discrepancy between ordinary citizens and civil servants is therefore not whether corrupt practices take place or not but rather what their options are to restrict the practice.

Chapter Eight presents an analysis of active strategies in response to corrupt practices in the local bureaucracy and institutions. The chapter has four main findings. First, civil servants show more comfort in arguing with other civil servants on corrupt payment than do ordinary citizens. Second, the patronage system has a dualistic function which makes resistance possible and hinders resistance at the same time, resulting in some citizens choosing not to work as civil servants. Third, the habitual use of informal procedures is a common way to achieve success within the bureaucracy. Fourth, creating networks is the primary strategy to either avoid or reduce the amount of the corrupt payment, leaving the poor with limited access to services.

8.1. Resistance by Civil Servants: Possibilities and Limitations

Even though civil servants immediately represent corrupt practices they are surprisingly in a position where resistance is more accessible than for most ordinary citizens. The interview in Box 8 with Mr. Sen illustrates how the patronage structure influences the possibility of resistance.

Box 8: Interview with Mr. Sen

Mr. Sen, 26, is a teacher at the provincial teacher training center. He is not married and lives in a small wooden house on the outskirts of a provincial town, together with his younger brother who attends secondary school. Mr. Sen explains how he deals with the police if he is stopped on his motor bike:

The traffic police always stand at the road and stop you and ask for money. They keep the money in their own pocket instead of in the government treasury. Sometimes I complain and they let me go because they are afraid that I know someone. I complain when I cannot see the sign because it has been hidden by a

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tree, an umbrella or something. People from the rural areas typically get stopped because people in the city are more likely to complain. [...] I tell the police that I am a civil servant just like them and therefore have no money to pay them. [...] If people are not government workers they cannot complain.

Mr. Sen's statement of resistance is interesting because at the same time he explained how all teachers, except himself, takes money from students in order to supplement their salary. Mr. Sen estimate that about half of the students pay bribes to get better grades on their exams. He does not really view this as a problem for the student who does not bribe and explains that they will pass but just not get as good a grade. Mr. Sen does not seem overly concerned about this practice. He further explains how the bribe is calculated:

They [the students] pay depending on how good they are. If they think they are bad in all subjects they pay all the teachers, about \$30. If they think they are bad in only one subject they just pay that teacher, about \$5-10. [...] If the student gets a 5 on his exam the teacher will change it to a 7 or 8, so they get a higher score. It is a very common practice. We get \$30 in salary, how can we live off this?

The dualism in Mr. Sen's statement fits very well with the previously discussed observations of civil servants belonging to both the 'victim of circumstances' model *and* the 'culture of corruption' model by denying taking corrupt payment themselves but reporting that others do.

Mr. Sen explains that he can resist a request from the police with the argument that he is also a civil servant and they do not know his contacts. The strategy of using the system of patronage for resistance becomes apparent in this explanation. Being employed as a civil servant requires a network with a patron in the decision-making structure who ensures security for the client who, on his part, reciprocates by offering general support and assistance, including personal services, to the patron.¹ The police are aware of this, since they themselves are civil servants and also rely on their patron for protection and benefits. Compared with the Wan Family and Mr. Sokha, Mr. Sen has other advantages in resisting corruption: he is well-educated, he is clever and can construct good arguments, and he is not afraid of the police.

On the other hand Mr. Sen cannot actively resist or report corrupt practices taking place at his own workplace even though he states that he is not part of that practice. Even if that is in fact true and he perceives the practice as wrong, his

chances of resistance are small. The absence of resistance at one's own workplace is explained through metaphors by another teacher during a focus group discussion:

We are a small sheep herd complaining to the tiger, and all those on the top are tigers. Therefore we would not get any result from complaining.

Secondary school teacher in semi-urban area.

Another civil servant explains why it is problematic to complain about corrupt practices within one's own sector:

In some cases the civil servant is honest and reports [a corrupt case]. Then the case goes to the concerned ministry but when they check the case everything looks right, because the documents have been 'corrected' by the inspector [from inside the Ministry's 'Department of Inspection']. So many want to report but it is impossible. [...] Nothing happens to the civil servant but his relationship to the head [of office] will be bad and he [the reporter] will be blamed for many mistakes.

Civil servant employed in provincial government.

These cases again refer to the patronage structure where civil servants cannot question their patron out of risk of destroying personal alliance networks. James Scott describes the importance of clients to maintain patron-client ties: 'the dynamics of personal alliance networks are as crucial in the day-to-day realities of national institutions as in local politics; the main difference is simply that such networks are more elaborately disguised by formal facades in modern institutions'.² Mr. Sen and other civil servants are hereby in a position to actively resist other civil servant's request for payment due to the patronage structure but the structure also obstructs their resistance against corrupt practices within their own sphere.

Mrs. Panny (Box 3 and Box 9 below) is a clear example of how, after leaving the public hospital, she could take initiative to reduce corrupt practices in the health sector, but even then needed to be very cautious of what she said. However, this example is an exception to everyday resistance, illustrating that very drastic steps must be taken by citizens to resist corrupt practices.

Box 9: Interview with Mrs. Panny

As a former midwife at a provincial hospital and the wife of a former high-ranking official, Mrs. Panny, 55, should be relatively well connected. However, she lives on the outskirts of a provincial town in a mid-size house with 10 people including her husband, children and grandchildren. She will not allow the interview to be recorded, and says directly that she is afraid of government officials' sanctions if her name comes out.

Mrs. Panny explains that some years ago she chose to stop working for the public hospital as a protest against the wrong ongoing procedures there and now operates her own clinic for women in her house to the great annoyance to her former hospital director. She is very frustrated with the corrupt practices at the hospital and states:

It has become tradition that [...] the doctors do not pay attention to the patient if they do not pay some money. If the patient does not pay they [the doctors] have many other things to do. Sometimes the patients die because of this. I only think this to myself. The doctors have no national conscience. Many patients come here [to her private clinic] because they do not have money to pay the hospital [...] All the patients are afraid of telling that they pay in secret because if they get sick again the hospital will not treat them.

Mrs. Panny is now becoming a member of an organization working for women's rights. She says that it is impossible to see the problems from the outside but that from the inside it is all rotten. Her intention is therefore to establish an office for the NGO in the town to control medicine receipts, expenditures, and health treatment, etc.

In response to the question as to whether takers know the practice is wrong Mrs. Panny answers with more and more eagerness in her voice:

The doctor and nurses all know it is wrong and a bad thing to do, but society lets them do that. If they do not do that they have no money to pay their leaders and get promotions. [...] Most people say [...] [they take money] because the salary is very low but why do people who have a car and a good house, etc., take corruption money? It is not just because the salary is low. [...] Why do they still cheat when they live ok? Why do they complain about their low salary? It is difficult to change their attitude but we can do it!

Mrs. Panny's strategy to leave the hospital and join an NGO is not a sustainable solution to resist corrupt practices and unfair treatment of citizens by civil servants in general. Many young educated citizens do, however, have a rather similar way of avoiding being enrolled in what they describe as 'the corrupted bureaucracy' by simply not applying to jobs as civil servants. A young well-educated man explains:

It is not possible to be a civil servant and not be corrupt. Nobody wants a person at his workplace who is not corrupt because it is a threat, so the person will soon be taken away. Having a person who is not corrupt will destroy the whole system of distributing the money going around. I do not want to work as a civil servant myself because I do not want to practice corruption, but poor people do not know what is right and wrong or how to resist it.

Educated man working in private company, 26 years old.

The result of educated citizens opposing corrupt practices by not wanting to work as civil servants is obvious. If this trend continues the local bureaucracy and institutions will lack capable personnel and become even more top-controlled. Thus, the situation is less likely to change due to the strategic use of networks.

8.2. Informal procedures

Dualism in the activity of the bureaucracy is pronounced in corrupt societies and results in informal versus official procedures. A clear distinction between official and informal procedures, analogous to the public and private sphere, is not always possible because personal network relations affect the procedure with which a case is treated. Cases are treated within the official system using informal procedures illustrated by Mr. Sieng, the policeman in Chapter Two who explained how to get a promotion through the back door, Sothear, the high school student, who described how to get better grades, and by the frustration among the women voiced in Chapter Four about not having access to jobs or services because they do not know the right people. Informal procedures were further highlighted and explained during an interview with Mr. Seima (Box 10 below).

Box 10: Interview with Mr. Seima

Mr. Seima is a relatively high-ranking official working within a provincial cabinet. The interview with him took place at his office and the answers were very general and Mr. Seima acted like he was holding back information. The interview ended after only 30 minutes. Thus, while saying goodbye, Mr. Seima whispered: *This was a formal interview, maybe you are also interested in an informal interview?*

A couple of days later the so-called informal interview was conducted at Mr. Seima's nice looking two-story house where he lives with his wife upstairs while his son and daughter-in-law lives downstairs.

Mr. Seima explained during the second interview how there are two sets of systems; the formal system and the informal system. His description showed that the informal system functions within the official system but in such a way that the official system is more of a sham and illusion while the informal system is the actual place where things happen. He further explains the advantage for citizens in creating networks:

Making an appointment [with an influential official] is based on the people in that group. If they are relatives or have a good relationship then the appointment does not cost money. The department chiefs receive much money for appointments.

Other people, ordinary citizens as well as civil servants, repeated the description of the informal system functioning within or parallel to the official system in various combinations. In most descriptions, power and money defines the patron of the informal procedures while the clients show loyalty and respect as commonly described in theories on patronage structures. The informal social networks function as a 'shock absorber' for corrupt practices 'smoothing' them into gift-giving practices carried out by women. This confirms the connection between vocabularies used for the practice which earlier chapters illustrate is determined by the relation between the payer and taker.

8.3. Network becomes 'the strategy' in resisting corrupt practices

While living with, socializing with and interviewing people in small communities for five months the importance of personal networks, described as '*ksai royak*', as a strategic entrance to the informal system became evident.

An interesting observation at the many weddings was that the guests were not only friends, neighbors and relatives. Wedding guests were also local patrons who can help arrange an appointment, as Mr. Seima described above, or a job, promotion, document, better grades, information, license, start a business, or simply secure a position in society through contacts. These *'ksai royak'* relations produce a vertically-integrated group with shifting interests rather than horizontally integrated groups with durable interests.³ *'Ksar royak'* relations are furthermore closed to people outside that specific group.

Table 11: Personal network cushion against corruption

N=2000	Aware (%)	Net Opinion (%)
Kinship and being friends reduces the amount of a bribe necessary to get something done	97%	+46%

Table 11 above verifies that it is a good strategy to invite local patrons to a daughter's wedding. 97% of respondents in the quantitative survey report that they are aware of that 'kinship and being friends reduces the amount of a bribe necessary to get something done' and a significant Net Opinion at +46% agree that it reduces the amount paid. Investing in relationships can therefore be interpreted as cost-effective in the long run and a strategy to avoid paying bribes.

Ordinary citizens who accuse the 'rich' and 'powerful' of being corrupt are the same who show respect and try to establish relations with this group of people. A telling experience from a pagoda illustrates this well:

Box 11: Observation of 'calculated' strategy

It is Khmer New Year festival and people are gathered in the local pagoda conducting ceremonies, offerings, and blessings. There are many people coming and going while a layman reports over the loudspeakers the contributions made by participants. After the monks have eaten breakfast, which is food offered by the people, the leftovers are arranged for people to eat sitting on the floor of the ceremony room. After breakfast comes the deputy governor of the district with his wife and another high-ranking official. They are greeted by the layman over the loudspeakers and seated on blue plastic chairs in front of the ceremony room. None of the newly-arrived enters the ceremony room. Many greet the deputy governor by holding their palms against each other in front of the chest/head while bending down to be lower than the three persons seated, a traditional Khmer way of showing respect. A primary school teacher with close relations to the researcher greets the deputy even though he regularly complains about the deputy's misuse of power, land grabbing and corrupt behavior. After about 30 minutes the three people leave.

The experience illustrates that in spite of accusations, rumors and a lively folklore of corruption against the deputy governor, smoothing network relations by showing respect is a necessary strategy. Smiling at the ‘rich’ and ‘powerful’ should not be mistaken for trust or moral acceptance but simply as a calculated strategy.

Connecting to a network-hierarchy becomes a strategy to deal with the bureaucracy and a possible alternative to paying bribes. It is furthermore a socializing mechanism between the citizens in the local community who have something to exchange, be it money, power, knowledge, sexual services, status, connections, labor, or a bribe. The patron-client clusters serve both as a mechanism to bring together individuals who are not kinsmen and as the building-block for elaborate networks of vertical integration. These networks can ensure easy access to the bribe-taking service provider for ordinary citizens, limit time, favor clients, and generally provide access to a service otherwise not accessible.

Networks are inclusive *and* exclusive, with the poor indisputably placed lowest in the social network hierarchy. They have no power and no economic capital and thereby nothing to exchange to create an influential network. The poor do not have access to the services the informal system provides, and thus the stronghold of the informal system has a social lopsidedness.⁴ However, as Ruud states, it is not the poor as such who are affected by corrupt payments, but those without adequate contacts/networks,⁵ often being the poor.

Besides marriage alliances, families will often focus on getting one or two of their children through the education system and employed as civil servants as an investment in future contacts. It becomes a survival strategy for families if they can ‘help’ certain people in exchange for influence. This could eventually increase the particularized trust among families. However, there is evidence that because of the struggle for contacts, shifting possibilities, and changing alliances, citizens are reluctant to openly admit dependency and relying on *one* network. Citizens never know how strong their alliance is in reality or if others who use the same network have a different agenda.

1 See Scott 1972:92 on defining patron-client ties.

2 Scott 1972:92.

3 Scott 1972:101.

5 See Miller et al. 2001 or Scott 1972 further on this point.

6 Ruud 2000:284.

PART FOUR

A MULTIDIMENSIONAL SOCIAL PHENOMENON

It is often said that corruption is the abuse of trust in the interest of personal and private gain.¹ However this study demonstrates that corrupt practices in Cambodia are much more than that. Corrupt practices are also about personal power relations, about defining ‘us’ versus ‘them’, gender, about what is morally wrong and unequal, and about how informal systems are more influential and powerful than official systems. The conclusion is that corrupt practices are fully a multidimensional social phenomenon and should be treated as such.

Part Four consist of two chapters presenting the conclusion of the report after first listing recommendations from the workshop in eliminating the practice. This part suggests some starting points for future strategies and actions to be taken in eliminating corrupt practices in Cambodia.



Street vendor in Phnom Penh

¹ See for example Alatas 1999:49, Miller et al. 2001, Rose-Ackerman 2004, among others.

CHAPTER 9

How to change the practice

During the field research, participants provided many suggestions for recommendations and visions for future anti-corruption initiatives. The November 2004 CSD workshop likewise provided recommendations for action. These recommendations are listed in this chapter with special emphasis on clear transparent bureaucratic procedures and further awareness-raising, information and education activities for ordinary citizens *and* civil servants on their rights and obligations. Annex IV lists the recommendations from the CSD 1998 survey, many of which are still valid.

There is good reason to pay special attention to organizational reforms but there are also grounds for addressing the climate of norms and behavior. It is not only personal profit that moves people and changes behavior. Values and norms count, which is well illustrated by the variation of behavior modes illustrated in this study. It is henceforth crucial to integrate the suggestions and strategies of ordinary citizens in the coordinated anti-corruption initiatives.

9.1. Recommendation: Clear transparent bureaucratic procedures

According to the participants of the workshop, informal systems and procedures are becoming habitual practice and the most effective way of succeeding when dealing with the bureaucracy. As Chapter Eight demonstrates the use of informal systems through personal networks and contacts is the strategy used when citizens request a service. Neither participants in the study nor at the workshop found the common practice of informal systems positive for the development of the country. Instead the practice is perceived as hindering transparency and concealing responsibility.

A particular concern frequently mentioned by participants is the influence of political parties in the decision-making process at both national and local level. Citizens describe that they are forced to join the ruling political parties to access services in the local bureaucracy and institutions. This practice enhances the informal systems.

Some of the major concerns mentioned by participants regarding the use of informal systems were:

- People with qualifications cannot get a job if they do not have the right network. Society thereby loses qualified personnel to build up the human

resources within the local bureaucracy and institutions and at the national level.

- Laws are not followed equally by all groups leaving money, status, rank, and level of contact to determinate the courts final judgment. Governmental institutions furthermore rank extremely low in citizens' integrity perception, further promoting the use of informal systems.
- It becomes impossible to follow official (non-corrupt) procedures because everyone is expected to use networks and corrupt practices. Using informal systems becomes faster and more reliable.

Mentioned recommendations to change the practice are:

- Strengthen the implementation, enforcement and knowledge of the laws at all levels of society. Ensure that laws are applied equally to all citizens. Adopt an anti-corruption law.
- Make official budgets and documents available to the public, e.g. publicize budgets and tender agreements in the local media, require forums to inform citizens of future planning projects in the area, etc.
- Establish and strengthen public committees and structures to control official projects.
- Create an independent committee to deal with corruption reports from civil servants and citizens at the national and local levels. Ensure security for the reporter.
- Inform citizens clearly at each office as to the cost and time for each service. Award institutions with high productivity.
- Change/strengthen bureaucratic procedures so success through informal systems is difficult and unreliable. Reduce the number of gatekeepers collecting unjust money.
- Strengthen partnership between donors and government. Donors must increase control over budget spending, have strict control over reports and auditing, and enforce higher requirements.
- Pay salary to civil servants on time. Increase the salary of civil servants to lower the incentive for corrupt practices. All civil servants must declare their assets.
- Increase the risk of being caught when conducting corrupt practices and enforce high punishment no matter the level of the person in question.
- Increase the number of women working in the bureaucracy at national and local level. Promote equal status and relation between men and women.
- Civil society organizations must monitor the activities/procedures at national and local level. Publish reports on strong and weak issues and make them easily accessible to the public.

- Private sector must increase integrity of management structures, adhere to sound business ethics, and create a ‘code of ethics’ for all employees.

9.2. Recommendation: Awareness raising, information and education of civil servants and ordinary citizens

The study shows that there is a generally high awareness with a very low acceptance of corrupt practices. However, participants continually repeat that more awareness raising, dissemination of information, and knowledge sharing is essential to empower ordinary citizens to resist corrupt practices.

Chapter Five demonstrates that the vocabulary used depends on the relationship between taker and payer. No participants ever mentioned corrupt practices as a favorable practice. However, the initiative is frequently taken by the payer. This practice is a strategic initiative to try lower the amount but is built on the perception that all bureaucrats are corrupt and enforce/uphold corrupt practices.

Some of the major concerns mentioned by participants regarding lack of awareness were:

- Citizens are unsure/unaware of their rights when dealing with local bureaucracy and institutions. This makes them vulnerable to marginalization and exploitation and provides them with unrealistic ideas of what the bureaucrat can actually do.
- Civil servants lack knowledge of proper bureaucratic procedures and henceforth confidence in denying citizens demands, especially if the citizen has high-ranking contacts.
- Citizens and civil servants do not have information on how and where to report corrupt practices. Lack of awareness further affects the vocabulary and moral valuation of corrupt practices determined by the relationship between the taker and payer.

Mentioned recommendations to change the practice are:

- Educate civil servants of their rights, duties, and limits. Increase the integrity of civil servants through a ‘no tolerance’ policy to gift and bribe.
- Raise civil servants awareness and information of the consequences of corrupt practices for the people, national development, and economic growth.
- Support local communities to advocate. Create forums where citizens can get information and discuss future development planning and projects. Require the voice of the people in all project planning.

- Provide education and information through the media and forums about laws, their enforcement, and consequences.
- Encourage behavioral change among civil servants and ordinary citizens to use the official procedures instead of the informal system. Encourage behavioral change not to accept/pay corruption.
- Build up local participation groups and inform citizens of their rights. Help organize opportunities for resistance against corrupt practices and assist in officially reporting corrupt practices.
- Strengthen good ethics, cultural values and high integrity practices among civil servants and ordinary citizens, e.g. through movies, books, school material, media program's etc.



**One of the working groups formulating recommendations
on how to fight corruption at the CSD Workshop
18 November, 2004**

9.3. Priority actions against corrupt practices

As the report has shown, law enforcers, and the health and education sectors are particularly subject to corrupt practices. These institutions are located in local communities and visited by citizens frequently. When asked through an open-

ended question in the quantitative survey what actions citizens would take to address corruption in Cambodia a clear signal evolves. The previously mentioned wish for transparent bureaucratic procedures at the workshop is supported by the survey where 71% mention ‘change/dismiss/jail corrupt officials’ as either their first or second priority, while 42% mention ‘enforcement of the (corruption) law’ (Table 12).

Table 12: Priority actions against corruption¹

N=2350	Percentage of cases
Change/Dismiss/Jail corrupt officials	71%
Enforcement of the (Corruption) law	42%
Issue an anti-corruption law	21%
Provide higher salaries to civil servants	11%
Change government leadership	10%
Other	9%

Only 10% mention higher salary for civil servants as a means to combat corrupt practices. This low figure suggests that citizens have low sympathy for those they perceive as corrupt bureaucratic officials. This raises further questions regarding the argument some participants put forward that they only pay corruption out of pity for the poor civil servants. The payment might instead be viewed as a means to build network relations without publicly revealing one’s strategy.

Table 12 shows congruence with citizen’s low acceptance of corrupt practices with the high score of ‘change/dismiss/jail’ of corrupt officials. This clear-cut result is encouraging in its suggestion that future corrupt practices might not be accepted as a normal part of life by ordinary citizens, instead do citizens demand justice.

1 Question: If you were in a position of authority and you could do something about corruption in Cambodia, what action would you take first, and what would you do next?

CHAPTER 10

Conclusion

Corruption refers to bad people who are not cooperating with the poor people. Applying pressure is corruption.
Mid-fifties rice farmer in accessible-rural area.

I just know that corruption is when someone asks for extra money from the people when they get a salary.

Young women working at a small drink stall in accessible-rural area.

Sometimes high-ranking officials meet other high-ranking officials and say ‘ahh I need some wood’ and they arrange with each other and I can do nothing to stop it. This problem is corruption.

Military man, 27, accessible-rural area.

What makes discussions on corruption difficult is the fact that the term contains so many connotations and always depends on the relationship between the payer and the taker. The term ‘corruption’ has therefore been used openly focusing on the practice more than the term itself allowing an emic and epic perspective of citizens’ interpretation of the practice and showing that it is indeed experienced *and* reacted upon in local communities.

It is obvious that the way ordinary citizens talk about corruption, experience corrupt practices and view a corrupt practice (or non-corrupt practice) may deviate from the United Nation, Transparency International, or the Prime Minister’s formal definition. However, the discourse among some policy makers in Cambodia that ordinary citizens have little contextual knowledge of corruption is naïve. That paradigm simply reflects the gap between policy makers at the national level and the people who are affected by corrupt practices at the local level.

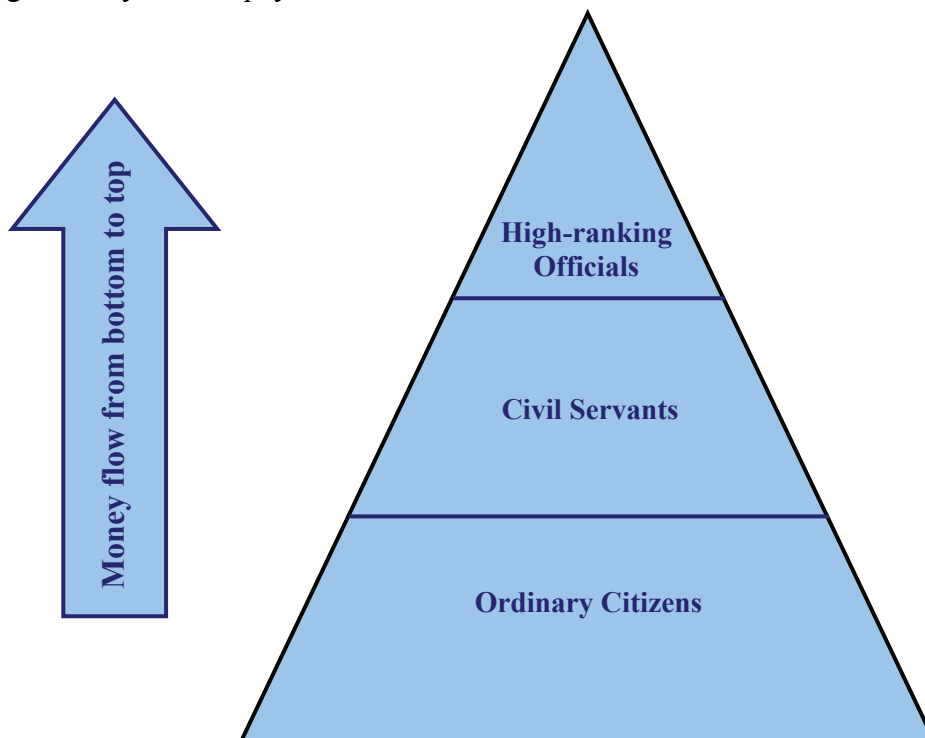
10.1. Citizens theorize on corrupt practices

It is evident that ordinary citizens discuss and theorize on corrupt practices. They have a relatively broad understanding of the social consequences of the practice gained through regular experiences from paying themselves, being denied a service because of lack of money/network, or through the folklore from family members and neighbors. When a poor woman sees her child die after being refused treatment at the public hospital she naturally turns her frustration and grief towards the corrupt practices in the public health sector.¹

However, citizens are aware that the demand for money does not come from the civil servants in the local bureaucracy and institutions alone. Civil servants have together with their families invested in their job and promotion with money paid to higher officials from whom there is an ongoing demand for further payment. Citizens are generally aware of this connection and, in spite of complaining privately about the practice, recognize that a payment or influential network is required to receive a service. That the payer takes the initiative for the payment is therefore not an expression of approval but illustrates the habitual practice corruption has become where perceptions of a high level of corruption encourages further corrupt practices. This increases social inequality because poor households refrain from contacting the bureaucracy, be it hospitals, civil registry, schools, courts, or police.

A state with endemic corrupt practices is especially brutal to the very poor. They have no resources to compete with those willing to pay bribes and have little room for resistance. Corrupt practices in Cambodia are viewed by participants as an institutionalized system of immorality and inequality. The research clearly shows that corrupt practices are condemned, socially disapproved of and that no one is willing to defend corruption, even from the native's culturally sensitive point of view.

Figure 2: Pyramidal payment flow



The pyramidal social order maintains a strong patronage structure where money is paid up through the structure and the taker is always more powerful than the payer. While wealth inequalities provide the means to pay bribes, power inequalities provide the means to extort them.² As one moves up through the system, there are fewer transactions and larger amounts involved. This structure is not unique for Cambodia. The uniqueness of corrupt practices in Cambodia is the extent with which it has serious consequences for ordinary citizen's everyday life, and they are aware of it even though they lack opportunities for active resistance.

10.2. Stereotypes and networks are 'the strategy'

Citizens create stereotypes of civil servants as being rich and corrupt versus themselves as 'victims of circumstances'. The stereotypes function as a strategy to protect citizens from losing face in the local community after being turned down for whatever reason (the request was not possible at that office, she/he did not have enough money for the service required, the civil servants were busy, the request would take long time, or it was against the law). The stereotype perception of all bureaucrats as corrupt makes room for further corruption accusations in the folklore of corruption to avoid losing face for not receiving the service requested. Few citizens frequent the state institutions often enough to solely form their own perceptions but the constructed 'failure of bureaucracy' accusation is spread to the household and neighbors through folklore, generating low generalized trust in society.

Low generalized trust, with the outcome of increased corruption and no trust in the legal system, brings a notion of inequality to citizens. The consequence is that poor citizens in particular react mainly with passive everyday forms of resistance strategies or otherwise avoid frequenting the local bureaucracy and institutions because of lack of money for (perceived) corrupt payments. As an old man stated about resistance:

The [poor people, 'neak kro'] did not protest or complain just got very angry, because to protest you need money, to complain you must pay money, and spend time earning money again.

Old man in accessible-rural area.

More well-off citizens try to strategically create individualized solutions. They build personal networks to make the bureaucratic processes run more smoothly by accentuating potential exchange opportunities; teachers who can give higher grades to some students in exchange for a higher job position, policemen who can 'avoid' investigating certain cases, businessmen who can give favorable prizes if they win a tender, NGO workers who do not criticize a questionable case, or

health workers who favor some patients access in exchange for a future reciprocal favor. Citizens and civil servants strategically ‘work’ the system to get the most out of it, either in the form of personal economic profit or networks for future use and this is directly reflected in the vocabulary used to describe the practice.

The secrecy of the transaction functions as a means to protect both the payer and the taker. The payer has constructed stereotyped models of the rich as corrupt but neglects payment to lower-ranking officials with whom they often have a personal relationship. The taker risks losing status and respect in the local community which prevents him admitting to corrupt behavior and moves him to blame the higher officials instead. Both the payer and taker thereby sustain the stereotypes they have constructed as a means of protecting themselves against social disapproval.



Woman selling snack at the market

10.3. Vision

A fundamental issue for reducing corrupt practices is behavioral change among government officials and the elite, as well as among civil servants and the general population. A change in perceptions towards lower acceptance of corrupt practices has already been seen when compared to a 1998 survey. This change is a positive sign and must be further encouraged to accumulate behavior change.

Schools are a major transmission mechanism of cultural values and are generally perceived to have a large socializing effect on youth. The findings that the school system is among the most corrupt institutions in the country and the 33% likelihood of paying a bribe conditional on contact is therefore alarming and sends a negative signal to youth and their families.

The recognized institutionalization of corrupt practices further hinders behavioral change. It is evident that low-level corrupt practices are not divorced from high-level corrupt practices. The practice of gift-giving is viewed as likely to encourage corruption at the bottom and conversely, it is unlikely that lower officials trained by experience (and perceptions) in bribery and extortion will suddenly give it all up when they get promoted. Wider horizons simply present new opportunities.³ A former District Governor expressed the link between high and low level corrupt practices very clearly when stating:

You know, in Cambodia every system is corrupt. It is a general case happening in Cambodia. That is the structure from the top to the bottom. You know, you can write article to say this, but you cannot write to stop them.

Former District Governor in provincial town.

The practical recommendations from participants to work towards clear transparent bureaucratic procedures *and* awareness raising and education hereby becomes relevant in the target of behavioral change against the obstacles. The tempestuous ride against corrupt practices only succeeds with a combination of will, public pressure and behavioral change.

1 Nissen 2004.

2 Miller et al. 2001:13.

3 Miller et al. 2001:12.

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Annexes

- Annex I: The high cost of living is by far the most serious concern of Cambodians
Definitions of Rural-Urban
- Annex II: Payments for services actual average amounts
Number of respondent households paying for particular services: official costs & bribe payments
- Annex III: Correlation between corruption severity indicators and most dishonest institution rating
- Annex IV: Recommendations from CSD 1998 Survey

ANNEX I

Table A: The high cost of living is by far the most serious concern of Cambodians

N=2000	Percentage (CSD 2005)
High cost of living/poverty	51%
Bad roads	13%
Safety concerns/crime	11%
Cost and quality of health care	10%
Illegal immigration	7%
Cost and quality of education	4%
Corruption	2%
Drug abuse/ trafficking	2%
Political instability	1%
Total	100%

A list of problems was read to respondents and they were asked to indicate how serious they considered each problem to be.

Table B: Definitions of Rural-Urban

	Remote-Rural	Accessible-Rural	Semi-Urban	Urban
General Description	Population point far from the Main Road	Population point not far from the Main Road	- Outskirts of Provincial Capital - District town - Main Population point	Provincial Capital
Market facilities	Far from any Market	Not far from a Big or Medium-sized Market	Medium-sized Market	Big Market
Road Access	- Bad Road - Far from the Main Road	- Accessible by Road - Not far from a main road	- Easy Road Access - Good Road	- Easy Road Access - Good Road
Transport services	No transport Services	Limited transport Services	More extensive transport Services	Many transport Services
Other Services (Schools, Health Centers...)	No provision of other Services	Limited provision of other Services	More extensive provision of other Services	Many other Services
Utilities (Electricity, piped Water)	Not Available	Utilities only through private facilities (generators)	Partly covered by institutional utility Service Provision	Mostly covered by institutional utility Service Provision

ANNEX II

Table C: Payments for services actual average amounts

	Off + Unofficial						
	U/R				SES		
	U	S-U	A-R	R-R	B A	A	AA
Public electricity services	\$223	\$113	\$228		\$79.5	\$173	\$361.5
Private electricity services	\$106	\$89	\$65		\$61	\$80	\$99.5
Water	\$83.5	\$57.5	\$44	\$102	\$44	\$63	\$92.5
Public education	\$244	\$151.5	\$64	\$52.5	\$58.5	\$110	\$203
Private education	\$306	\$191.5	\$130.5	\$116	\$89.5	\$188.5	\$354.5
Public health services	\$33	\$41.5	\$25	\$21	\$15	\$23.5	\$75
Private health services	\$131	\$78	\$64.5	\$60	\$47.5	\$79	\$140.5
Public registry	\$38.5	\$2	\$3.5	\$3	\$2.5	\$11	\$21
business licensing	\$48.5	\$116.5	\$8.5	\$16	\$14.5	\$25.5	\$53.5
Land administration	\$141	\$9.5	\$4		\$9	\$2.5	\$69
Construction permit	\$97		\$4.5		\$37.5	\$53.5	\$69
Traffic police	\$16.5	\$9	\$10	\$1.5	\$6.5	\$11	\$15.5
Police excluding traffic police	\$38.5	\$31.5	\$22.5	\$7	\$18	\$46	\$23
Customs	\$59	\$150.5	\$22.5		\$11	\$39	\$47.5
Judge/Courts	\$243.5	\$81.5	\$820		\$1563	\$65.5	\$105
Total	\$1809	\$1122.5	\$1516.5	\$379	\$2057	\$971	\$1730

Calculated from only those households that use the particular service

Table C: Payments for services actual average amounts (continued)

	Bribe							Total	
	U/R				SES			Off + Unoff	Bribe
	U	S-U	A-R	R-R	B A	A	AA		
Public electricity services	\$3	\$3	\$10		\$1.5	\$11	\$2.5	\$210	\$4
Private electricity services	\$18	\$108	\$8		\$61.5	\$18	\$4.5	\$82	\$30
Water	\$11		\$10.5		\$10.5		\$11	\$67	\$11
Public education	\$111	\$61	\$30	\$13	\$32	\$53	\$86	\$102.5	\$55
Private education	\$83		\$18		\$100	\$45		\$232.5	\$76
Public health services	\$49.5	\$15.5	\$8.5	\$1	\$11.5	\$6	\$32	\$27.5	\$15.5
Private health services	\$50		\$1		\$1.5	\$50		\$76	\$25.5
Public registry	\$22.5	\$7	\$4	\$2.5	\$3.5	\$8.5	\$14	\$9.5	\$8
business licensing	\$5	\$27.5	\$26		\$9	\$63.5	\$15	\$38	\$24.5
Land administration	\$43	\$68.5	\$6.5	\$8.5	\$14	\$35	\$17.5	\$24.5	\$20.5
Construction permit	\$29		\$7.5		\$19	\$10	\$35.5	\$55	\$24
Traffic police	\$97	\$17	\$22	\$101.5	\$12.5	\$7	\$122.5	\$11	\$53.5
Police excluding traffic police	\$173.5	\$154	\$44	\$70	\$41	\$92.5	\$88	\$25.5	\$72.5
Customs	\$75	\$300.5	\$27	\$44	\$24	\$41.5	\$179	\$34.5	\$90
Judge/Courts	\$308.5	\$275	\$423	\$12.5	\$139.5	\$138.5	\$658	\$578	\$357.5
Total	\$1079	\$1037	\$646	\$253	\$481	\$579.5	\$1265.5	\$1573.5	\$867.5

Table D: Number of respondent households paying for particular services: official costs & bribe payments

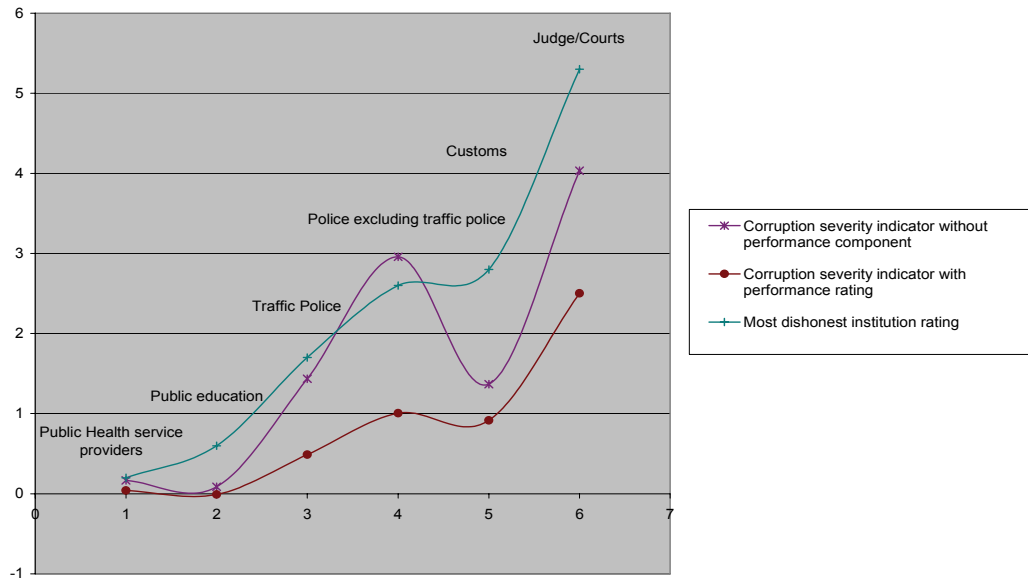
	Off Costs & Bribe payments							
	U/R							
	U		S-U		A-R		R-R	
Public electricity services	206	14	29	1	5	2		
Private electricity services	42	1	62	1	56	3		
Water	229	3	57		147	1	3	
Public education	237	130	153	59	974	271	68	23
Private education	146	8	49		83	1	3	
Public health services	86	14	55	5	426	59	29	4
Private health services	290	1	188		1267	1	97	
Public registry	70	32	52	13	259	108	23	10
business licensing	20	1	10	2	31	9	3	
Land administration	11	6	11	3	54	17		3
Construction permit	6	10			5	3		
Traffic police	34	37	15	11	59	45	9	4
Police excluding traffic police	7	12	8	3	28	51	3	7
Customs	4	1	2	5	27	15		2
Judge/Courts	3	6	2	1	7	11		1
Total	325		210		1360		105	

Table D: Number of respondent households paying for particular services: official costs & bribe payments (continued)

	Off Costs & Bribe payments						Total	
	SES						Official Costs	Bribes
	B A		A		AA			
Public electricity services	60	3	103	3	77	11	240	17
Private electricity services	45	2	57	1	58	2	160	5
Water	124	1	176		136	3	436	4
Public education	677	173	491	181	264	129	1432	483
Private education	58	5	114	4	109		281	9
Public health services	300	40	200	20	96	22	596	82
Private health services	868	1	619	1	355		1842	2
Public registry	178	67	137	55	89	41	404	163
business licensing	11	5	20	3	33	4	64	12
Land administration	32	10	22	7	22	12	76	29
Construction permit	2	3	6	4	3	6	11	13
Traffic police	37	20	38	39	42	38	117	97
Police excluding traffic police	20	27	9	28	17	18	46	73
Customs	8	7	16	7	9	9	33	23
Judge/Courts	4	4	4	7	4	8	12	19
Total	956		661		383		2000	

ANNEX III: FIGURE A¹

Correlation between Corruption severity indicators and most dishonest institution rating



1 Calculated in the quantitative report as the proportion of respondent who single out a particular institution as the most dishonest amongst a list of 25 institutions, the ratio of actual average bribe payments and actual official payments (Table 2B), and the actual average bribe amounts (Table 2A). See CSD 2005:71-74.

Annex IV

Recommendations from CSD 1998 Survey

- Launch massive campaigns educating rural residents, urban poor and women on what corruption is and how much it costs in reduced social, political and human development.
- Sponsor public awareness campaigns emphasizing citizens' rights to good governance and providing examples of successful efforts to eradicate corruption.
- Train opinion leaders throughout civil society on the costs of corruption and ways to combat it.
- Write and implement counter-corruption school curriculums for primary and secondary and tertiary level students.
- Re-design training of government employees and health workers to reduce tolerance of low level corruption.
- Organize fora that bring National Assembly and Cabinet members together with average citizens to discuss how corruption affects everyday life.
- Generate the political will needed for the National Assembly and the government to raise civil servants' salaries and to pass a national counter-corruption law that provides clear guidelines, independent and objective monitoring, and effective enforcement.
- Establish a National Integrity Working group that will work to lobby the Cambodian government on ways to combat corruption.



Royal Danish Embassy
Bangkok



World Bank

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Center for Social Development
P. O. Box 1346
St. 57, No.19
Sk. Boeung Keng Kang 1
Chamkar Mon
Phnom Penh
Kingdom of Cambodia
E-Mail: csd@online.com.kh
<http://www.online.com.kh/users/csd>