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ODI

REFORMING SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT IN PHNOM PENH

May 2016   *Lisa Denney*

Australian Government
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Australian Aid

WORKING POLITICALLY IN PRACTICE SERIES
– CASE STUDY NO. 8 –

REFORMING SOLID WASTE MANAGEMENT IN PHNOM PENH

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Foreword

For several decades, The Asia Foundation has been implementing development programs through a highly responsive, politically informed, iterative 'searching' model of assistance. Variations of this approach have been an important element in the Foundation's work going back to its founding in 1954. While each program varies, this model is broadly characterized by a heavy emphasis on contextual knowledge and relationships, combined with multiple small, nuanced, and carefully targeted interventions working closely with local partners. This stands in sharp contrast to the conventional, pre-designed project approach that has long been the standard in the development industry. However, where the problem is highly complex or politically intractable, a more flexible, experimental, politically informed approach is more likely to yield a successful outcome. In this kind of program, the emphasis is on building relationships; gaining an understanding of the landscape of power, interests, and potential for alliances among key actors; and remaining open to revision of strategy and tactics as new information and unexpected opportunities emerge.

The Partnership between the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) and The Asia Foundation offered a unique opportunity to trial, analyze, and learn from program initiatives that have taken a politically-informed searching approach to reform. By providing resources to implement, analyze, and reflect on such programs, the DFAT-TAF Partnership has helped to sharpen the discourse that is now taking place on these topics within the development community.

To help improve the quality and objectivity of this work, the Foundation turned to the Overseas Development Institute (ODI), one of the world's most preeminent development think tanks. The ODI has been providing analysis of different approaches to development assistance for more than 50 years. More recently, ODI has been linking its analytical work on politically informed and iterative approaches to its provision of strategic advice and training to different organizations on how these approaches can be implemented in practice. ODI's work focuses on the dynamics underpinning sectoral reforms in a variety of African and Asian countries, focusing on service delivery, justice and security, agriculture, water, transport and more. In collaboration with the Asia Foundation, ODI conducted action research on three programs over a period of 18 months, providing insights into how these programs developed over time and documenting their learning in real-time.

Reforming Solid Waste Management in Phnom Penh is the second of these case studies. Current literature has helped explain why a politically-informed approach can be useful to development programming, and has provided broad principles for working in this way. But little has been written about the nuts and bolts of how this approach plays out in practice. This case study tells a detailed and nuanced story explaining how the Foundation operationalized a politically informed approach to the reform of Phnom Penh's solid waste management sector. The results of this work are still emerging, but initial signs suggest movement toward greater competition that should result in improved performance and better outcomes in this sector. Though the full impact story is not yet complete, interesting insights can already be gained regarding the choices made by the program team, and the corresponding evolution of the program strategy.

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Acknowledgements

Contents

Abbreviations

CNRP	Cambodian National Rescue Party
COMPED	Cambodian Education and Waste Management Organization
CPP	Cambodian People's Party
DE	Development Entrepreneur
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
EDC	Electricité du Cambodge
GIS	global information system
GPS	global positioning system
ITC	Institute of Technology Cambodia
JICA	Japan International Cooperation Agency
MoE	Ministry of Environment
MoI	Ministry of Interior
MoU	memorandum of understanding
NCDD	National Council for Sub-national Democratic Development
PPWMA	Phnom Penh Waste Management Authority
PSIL	Program Strategy, Innovation and Learning (Unit)
SWM	solid waste management
TAF	The Asia Foundation (also the Foundation)
TOC	theory of change
ToR	terms of reference
UPWD	Urban Poor Women's Development
USP	Urban Services Program

Executive Summary

The disappointing results of many conventional development programs have prompted debate about the need to 'do development differently' by being more politically-smart, problem-driven, iterative, and adaptive. Yet while an emerging body of literature builds the evidence base for why these can be more effective ways of working, less has been written about how to work differently.

This is one of three country case studies published as part of a collaboration between the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and The Asia Foundation (the Foundation) that has sought to deliver action research on reform initiatives that explicitly aimed to 'work politically in practice.' This entailed conducting research in real time alongside programs that actively sought to work in a more flexible and politically savvy manner. The research aims to provide practitioners with examples of how programming that is political and flexible can be implemented in practice, and the associated challenges. Because this case study was written in 'real time', it does not seek to demonstrate results of working politically, but focuses rather on the process. It should also be noted that what it has been possible to include in this case study has been influenced by the local context.

The three case studies under examination were funded under the Foundation's Partnership with the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) of the Government of Australia. The DFAT–TAF Partnership was developed in 2012, specifically to provide the space for testing approaches to programming that work politically in practice. The Cambodia initiative formally began in July 2013, although did not get underway in earnest until October 2013. It ran for two years until September 2015.

THE PROBLEM

Following a period of investigation and analysis of various developmental problems that the Foundation could focus on, the Cambodia initiative sought to improve solid waste management in the capital, Phnom Penh, with the aim of making the city cleaner. This problem has two main dimensions: the volume of waste, and the nature of collection.

In 2009, a new landfill was opened in Phnom Penh, designed to operate for 25 years. After just 5 years, the landfill was almost half full. Between 2009 and 2014, the amount of waste entering daily increased from approximately 800 to 1,475 tons. Current projections suggest that just 5 years are left in the lifespan of the landfill—meaning it would achieve less than half of its planned lifespan. Making matters worse, the amount of waste entering the landfill does not even constitute all of the waste in Phnom Penh, as much of this remains uncollected due to problems with waste collection services.

Waste collection services in Phnom Penh are dominated by a Cambodian company, CINTRI, which, in 2002, signed a 49-year single provider contract with the government to provide waste collection for the entire city of Phnom Penh. Complicating matters, the terms of CINTRI's contract with the government are confidential, making monitoring difficult. CINTRI receives payment for services through a fee charged as part of the electricity bill for each residence. Due to inaccessible communities, traffic congestion, labor problems, and an expansion of the city of Phnom Penh, many households do not receive regular waste collection services (and some do not receive service at all). Yet, if residents refuse to pay the fee for waste collection, they risk having their electricity cut off. Fee collection, therefore, largely occurs regardless of CINTRI's service coverage—with no connection between performance and payment.

Waste collection is thus characterized by a single company with a long-term confidential contract that is difficult to monitor, a fee structure that does not encourage improved household waste collection, garbage collectors whose conditions do not incentivize performance, and communities that are difficult to access and do not always understand the importance of sanitary waste disposal.

THE EVOLVING REFORM STRATEGY

Since solid waste management was a new area for the Foundation in Cambodia, the reform team commissioned three pieces of research from partners to build their knowledge of the waste management

sector and key actors. The research focused on the composition and volume of the city's waste, the legal and policy frameworks pertaining to waste management, and the potential for composting and waste value recovery processes at the landfill.

Initially, the Foundation reform team considered how the poor record on waste collection services could be improved through introducing a competitive market, with reform efforts focusing on Phnom Penh City Hall (City Hall). However, slow progress in building this relationship and greater traction with a reform-minded senior staff member within CINTRI led to a shift in strategy. From early 2014, the program aimed to improve CINTRI collection services, putting in place a more reliable schedule, equipping garbage trucks with a global positioning system (GPS), and using a global information system (GIS) to map uncollected waste piles. A joint project was then launched between the Foundation, City Hall, and CINTRI to trial these improvements in an inner-city neighborhood (Khan) to demonstrate its effects.

Shortly after this, the Foundation launched a second pilot in an outer-city Khan where collection service was intermittent and not able to reach all parts of the community. While this was of less interest to City Hall, the reform team saw this as delivering greater developmental benefit than the inner-city pilot.

After approximately 6 months of working with the waste collection company, the Foundation became less certain that a technical fix to the existing collection arrangements would solve the core problems relating to poor waste collection services. At the same time, relations with City Hall and the Ministry of Environment were deepening, and through these relationships, the team learned of a growing appetite within government to reform the waste management system, including by amending the single provider collection contract. In late 2014, the Foundation decided to pursue a two-track approach to the problem, with some of the team redoubling efforts to push for reforms within CINTRI, and others exploring the potential for more thoroughgoing reforms within the waste management sector.

In January 2015, the relationships that the Foundation had cultivated yielded important information, suggesting the time was ripe for fundamental reform in the sector. The Foundation was well placed to carry out background research and feed in ideas to help shape the government's plans. The strategy thus shifted to focusing on creating a competitive waste collection system that the team felt would drive improved performance. This strategy remained in place until the end of the program in September 2015,

and received encouraging signs from government—with the Council of Ministers announcing a review of the CINTRI contract in February 2015 and City Hall hosting a meeting to outline reforms to the waste management sector in September 2015, drawing directly on the advice and research conducted by the Foundation and its partners.

HOW THE PROGRAM WORKED FLEXIBLY AND POLITICALLY

These shifts in strategy were possible due to the initiative's flexible and politically engaged ways of working. In this case, working politically involved drawing on individuals that either had, or were able to build, political relationships, and had a high tolerance for uncertainty and change. In the Cambodia case, working politically manifested as building an understanding of, and aiming to influence the interests and incentives of key stakeholders to achieve change that would carry developmental dividends. This meant a strong focus on building relationships with stakeholders and experimenting with different kinds of change to achieve a cleaner Phnom Penh through improved solid waste management.

The Foundation drew on the technical expertise of a range of partners—nongovernment organizations (NGOs), research institutes, and private companies—to test a range of solutions to the problem. These partners did not necessarily have to work flexibly themselves, as they were commissioned to complete short-term, discrete tasks, but the core Foundation team shaped their potential solutions through this portfolio of activities. These activities not only helped the Foundation learn more about the specific technical aspects of waste management reform, but also helped to build relationships with key counterparts (such as City Hall officials). This process of learning through pilots and commissioned research meant that the Foundation was not perceived as coming in with all the answers, but rather learning alongside their counterparts. This seems to have met with a better reception than the alternative. The Foundation placed a strong emphasis on obtaining knowledge through multiple channels—from formal research, to news and social media, to relationships with those inside the sector, government, and CINTRI. Importantly, being politically and technically informed was then translated into being politically active—leveraging acquired knowledge to influence and shape the reform agenda.

Iteration was encouraged by a process called Strategy Testing, introduced across all the initiatives under the DFAT–TAF Partnership. Strategy Testing required teams to hold quarterly meetings to examine the current theory of change, the context (and how

it might have changed), and whether the reform strategy remained relevant and feasible. This provided the team with a regular opportunity to critically reflect and change course, as necessary. Moreover, these quarterly meetings encouraged a wider culture of critical reflection that characterized the course of programming. This was enabled by a Program Manager who was comfortable with high levels of flexibility and uncertainty in programming, and senior Foundation staff who played the important role of challenging team decisions from an outsider's perspective.

Being able to continually revisit the reform strategy in response to changing dynamics is, of course, a significant improvement over conventional programming. However, it does not mean that the strategies chosen are necessarily more effective—the results of the strategies pursued cannot be determined at this stage, given the real time nature of the research, and will need to be assessed in the longer term.

EARLY RESULTS

While events in 2015 suggest that the waste collection contract is set to be amended by the government, it is not yet a certainty. In the context of a highly politicized and opaque reform process, it is difficult to determine the extent to which the team's actions have influenced this process. However, it is apparent that prior to the inception of the Foundation program, no significant efforts had been made to revoke the CINTRI contract, despite long-running dissatisfaction with waste collection services. The Foundation's commissioned research reports, evidence from the inner and outer Khan pilots, and technical recommendations were presented throughout the project to Cambodian government officials, first at the municipal level, and later at the Ministry of Environment. This information, coupled with the team's focus on relationship building, was used by key actors, in particular City Hall, at various stages to push forward the possibility of contract revocation and the re-shaping of waste collection services in Phnom Penh.

In addition, and perhaps most importantly, it is too early to tell whether contract revocation will lead to better solid waste management practices and a cleaner Phnom Penh—the initiative's ultimate goal. Based on the teams' assessment of the context,

the revocation of the single provider franchise is expected to be the first necessary step in improving waste collection services by properly linking private operators' performance with profit (and thereby allowing for managed competition within the system). However, only time will tell whether this is sufficient to guarantee improved performance and thus reduce waste on Phnom Penh's streets.

CONTRIBUTION OF THE CASE STUDY TO DEBATES ON WORKING POLITICALLY AND FLEXIBLY

This case study tells the story of how one program operationalized working flexibly and politically. In so doing, it provides practical examples from which other practitioners seeking to work in these ways can draw. An emphasis on drawing together staff and networks with strong political relationships, and the ability to leverage these relationships for influencing reform, offers insight into how programs might work politically in more closed or authoritarian settings. 'Working politically' in such settings is likely different from more open political contexts.

Similarly, the use of Strategy Testing—perhaps the most innovative aspect of the initiative—provides a framework for regularly revisiting and critically questioning current strategies and activities, and the theories of change on which they are premised. While the degree of iteration within the Cambodia initiative was possible due to the flexible DFAT–TAF funding arrangements supporting it (and thus, another program would need to consider whether Strategy Testing could be as effective within its funding modalities), it was also due to the supportive management structures that the Foundation put in place to advance it internally. This suggests that working flexibly requires change and an appetite for flexibility on both the part of donors and implementers.

While this case study has not explored the success of the reforms that the initiative supported, the ways of working exhibited within the initiative provide an extremely useful counterweight to the rigidity of much development programming. These offer practitioners useful examples of how flexible and political programming can be operationalized, and aim to trigger further exchange about how such ways of working might look in practice.

1. Introduction

1.1 ORIGINS AND PURPOSE OF THE ACTION RESEARCH

The disappointing results of many conventional development programs have prompted debate about the need to 'do development differently' (Wild et al. 2015)—including by 'thinking and working politically' (Hudson and Leftwich 2014), being problem-driven, iterative and adaptive (Andrews 2013), politically smart and locally led (Booth and Unsworth 2014), and entrepreneurial (Faustino and Booth 2014). Yet, while an emerging body of literature builds the evidence base for why these can be more effective ways of working, less has been written about how to work differently.

This is one of three country case studies conducted as part of a collaboration between the Overseas Development Institute (ODI) and The Asia Foundation (the Foundation) that has sought to deliver action research on reform initiatives that have explicitly aimed to 'work politically in practice.' This has entailed conducting research in real time alongside programs that have actively sought to work in a more flexible and politically savvy manner. While this research has the limitation of not being able to point to longer-term results in the way that post-hoc research can with the benefit of hindsight, it has the advantage of telling the story of the reform as it happened. That is, with all the bumps and murkiness that characterize development programming, but that often get written out of post-hoc research due to the tendency to neaten and rationalize decisions and processes after the fact, and because much of the detail is simply forgotten. The research was therefore conducted very much 'in the weeds' of programming. It is these 'in the weeds' issues that are most in need of clarification within wider debates on 'thinking and working politically,' that are of most use for practitioners, and to which these case studies thus aim to contribute.

The three case studies under examination were funded under The Asia Foundation's partnership with the Australian Government Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT). This DFAT–TAF Partnership was developed in 2012, specifically to provide the space for testing approaches to programming that work politically in practice. Within this, the Foundation has

implemented a number of initiatives across 12 countries plus regional programs, including Cambodia, that focus on addressing critical development challenges through flexible and adaptive programming. Within the Foundation, the Program Strategy, Innovation, and Learning (PSIL) Unit was DFAT's program counterpart, and its staff managed the Partnership budget and reporting, as well as provided management oversight for the country-level initiatives. The PSIL Unit was also key in promoting learning across the initiatives and providing peer support such as organizing exchanges between the Cambodia and Mongolia initiatives.

It is important to note that these cases document reform initiatives that were explicitly flexible in design—as agreed by both the funder and the implementer. It is this intention that has made such experimentation with working politically and flexibly possible. Those wanting to borrow from these cases should be aware that their ability to do so may be limited where funders or implementers do not provide the same degree of support for these ways of working.

1.2 APPROACH AND METHODS OF THE CASE STUDY

Research for the Cambodia case study involved two country visits of 2 weeks each; with follow up phone calls with the program manager between visits, and phone calls with the Foundation team in August 2015 to capture the final stage of programming. The first visit took place 1 year into implementation in October 2014, and the second 6 months later in April 2015. Following a 3-month extension of the Cambodia initiative, a final stage of research was carried out remotely in August 2015.

In-country visits, conducted by the author, involved semi-structured interviews with reform initiative staff, partner organizations, targets of reform, and others in the solid waste sector (see Annex 1 for a list of interviews). Most respondents were interviewed twice, with the Foundation team interviewed on multiple occasions. The author was accompanied by a reform team member for the few interviews where translation was needed. Time was also spent during the visits observing the Foundation team and sitting in on meetings. In addition, the author had access to

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1. Strategy Testing is the innovative monitoring system that the Foundation developed to meet the needs of flexible programming, and is set out in further detail in section 2.

initiative documentation—including quarterly Strategy Testing reports,[1] notes of meetings, and internal research. It should also be noted that what has been possible to include in this case study has been influenced by the local context.

This research sought to unpack two issues. First, was the 'external story'—the wider political economy context in which reforms were being undertaken, both at the broad political level, as well as at the level of the reform itself, and unpacking the interests and incentives that shaped the problem being addressed. Second, was the 'internal story'—how decisions were made within the reform team in relation to strategy, activities, staffing, relationships, knowledge, and learning. This component helps explain how and why the reform initiative unfolded as it did, reveals the degree to which the initiative adapted according to shifts in the external story, and thus demonstrates particular approaches to working politically in practice. Despite the 'front row seats' that the action research afforded, documenting results was particularly difficult, given the real-time nature of the research prohibiting a longer-term view. In addition, in the Cambodia case, due to the scarcity of programming on solid waste in Phnom Penh, there were no clear counterfactuals that could be used to demonstrate variations in results across different program approaches. As a result, the case study focuses more on the process of working politically and flexibly, than on the outcomes.

What the case study found was an approach to working politically that derived from the individuals involved and their ability to work flexibly, with a high tolerance of uncertainty and a focus on relationships. These individuals were further enabled to act in these ways due to the flexibility encouraged—or even required—by the DFAT–TAF Partnership. In the Cambodia case, working politically manifested as building an understanding of, and aiming to influence, the interests and incentives of key stakeholders to achieve change that would carry developmental dividends. This meant a strong focus on building relationships with stakeholders and experimenting with different kinds of change to achieve a cleaner Phnom Penh through improved solid waste management.

This paper proceeds in three parts. First, the nature of the problem selected for reform—solid waste management in Phnom Penh—and the wider context that shapes it is set out. Second, the reform initiative is introduced, including the key players and the evolution of strategy and activities over time. Third, the issues and challenges that emerge to inform debates about working politically are drawn out—including around learning, knowledge gathering, management, and relationships. These insights are intended to contribute to building knowledge about what working politically in practice can look like and the challenges associated with doing so.

2. The Context and Focus of the Reform

The Cambodian 'working politically in practice' initiative has sought to improve solid waste management in the capital, Phnom Penh. This section describes the broad conditions under which the reform initiative worked, how the focus of reform was selected, and the problem the reform initiative attempted to address.

2.1 CONDITIONS IMPOSED ON THE REFORM INITIATIVE

The DFAT–TAF reform initiatives have all operated under a set of conditions imposed by the PSIL Unit. Some of these conditions—such as the overall budget envelope and timeframes—were in turn imposed by DFAT, which funded the initiatives. These have played an important role in setting the bounds of what was possible within the initiatives.

First, all initiative activities initially had to come to an end by June 30, 2015; however, the Cambodia initiative and several others were extended to September 30, 2015. The reform initiatives under the DFAT–TAF Partnership occurred in two rounds—starting in July 2012 and July 2013, respectively. The Cambodia initiative began in the second round, giving it a total running time of 2 years. However, delays during start up meant that, in practice, the Cambodia initiative did not get underway in earnest until October 2013—giving the initiative a total timeframe initially of just 20 months. As one team member put it, "[we are] on a short leash, in terms of time." In the end, the team was given a 3 month extension so that the initiative ran for 1 year and 11 months. This clearly had implications for what could be achieved in such a short timeframe.

Second, while the overall budget envelope was determined by DFAT, the PSIL Unit set the budgets for individual initiatives. In the words of the Cambodia Program Manager, the initiatives were "starved of funds" in comparison to traditional programming approaches in order to prompt creativity and innovative ways of working. The intention was to alleviate the pressure felt in some high value donor programs to push money out the door, and focus instead on building relationships and investing strategically in 'small bets'. For the Cambodia initiative, this meant a total budget of \$853,790[2] over the life of programming, with slightly higher spending in Year 1 compared to Year 2. From this amount, implementation activities, staff time, implementing office costs, and headquarters overheads had to be covered. Compared to the total budget for most standard multi-year aid interventions in the health and sanitation sector, the scale of the Cambodia initiative was quite small.

Third, within these limits on time and finances, the initiatives were pushed to focus on concrete reforms that would produce significant service delivery improvements. This was in contrast to incremental reforms or abstract goals. Rather, the initiatives were guided to find a problem ripe for change that would deliver tangible developmental benefits.

Fourth, the PSIL Unit required all initiatives to complete quarterly Strategy Testing documentation. Strategy Testing is an innovative monitoring system that the Foundation developed to meet the needs of flexible programming.[3] It required teams to specify an initial theory of change (TOC) that constituted a 'best guess', given the current state of knowledge, and it was then assessed by the team at least every 3 to 4 months in Strategy Testing sessions. These sessions encouraged teams to critically reflect on the existing TOC, which was updated if they determined the situation or their approach required change. A timeline highlighting key moments in the reform process, including events, decisions, and roadblocks was also maintained. The Strategy Testing documents were intended to capture the team's sharpening understanding of the development problem requiring reform, and track shifts in strategy in response to the changing context, new information, or opportunities that arose. On quarterly submission of these forms, the PSIL team would respond with comments and push teams for further analysis, where necessary. These doubled as both a program management and reporting tool, enabling

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2. All dollars in this paper are US dollars.
3. For a detailed explanation of the purpose and how to use Strategy Testing, see Ladner 2015. Templates for Strategy Testing documentation are also included in this report: http://www.asiafoundation.org/publications/pdf/1546.

'light-touch' reporting that gave the regionally located PSIL Unit a view into all of the Partnership activities, while also encouraging critical reflection and learning as a wider culture of programming. These conditions aside, initiatives were given the freedom to pursue reform areas and strategies as they saw fit.

2.2 ISSUE SELECTION

The Cambodia office underwent a shift in focus from rural to urban services in early 2013, with the arrival of a new Country Representative. Organizational dynamics, as well as the Cambodian context influenced this shift. Internally, the Foundation had been discussing the importance of urban services in Asia, and this issue was mentioned in the DFAT–TAF Partnership Agreement. In addition, the Associate Director of the PSIL Unit was actively supporting a reform initiative in Mongolia that focused on urban services, while also providing strategic advice to the Cambodia team, resulting in a cross-fertilization of ideas between the two initiatives.

Within Cambodia, there was recognition of the growing urban population and the governance challenges that this creates. The second mid-census population survey, conducted by the Ministry of Planning's National Institute of Statistics, estimated that Phnom Penh grew by 12.4% between 2008 and 2013 (Holben 2014). This demographic trend is only likely to strengthen in the coming years with estimates that the city's population will reach 2.9 million by 2025 (TAF 2013a). The Country Representative thus saw urban services as a timely and pertinent topic. In addition, despite the growing urban population, the majority of donors and non-government organizations (NGOs) working in Cambodia have continued to focus on rural development issues. As a result, a shift towards urban services also enabled the Foundation to fill a critical gap in support.

At the earliest stages of planning, therefore, in May 2013, the focus was on making urban services in Phnom Penh more affordable and accessible for all (TAF 2013a). The first concept note produced highlights that:

> In Phnom Penh municipality, among all households, 15 percent of households lack access to clean water; 28 percent lack a sewerage system; 40 percent have no garbage collection; and 20 percent have no toilet at home. For the poorest households the figures are twice as high. (TAF 2013a).

The concept note goes on to lay out an ultimate outcome of 50,000 people gaining affordable access to one or more new basic services. Following a 3-day rapid assessment of service delivery in the city by the former Managing Editor of the Phnom Penh Post, the working theory of change focused on how elite interests could be brought to bear on the lack of services for the urban poor through leveraging elite interests in land value and labor retention in manufacturing businesses, where many of the poor work (TAF 2013a).

However, it was not until the Program Manager started in August 2013, that the team narrowed their focus to specific urban services efforts. Water was a problem, but one that was already receiving substantial donor and NGO assistance. Electricity was seen as another big problem, but entrenched political interests made it a difficult entry point. Ultimately, transport and solid waste emerged as the front runners. These were both seen by the Foundation to be pressing problems that few were doing anything about. By late August 2013, the team selected a focus on solid waste management. In part, this was due to the fact that the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) was planning a pilot program to support the transport sector, providing a city bus service in Phnom Penh (Holben 2014). This pushed the team to focus their energies on the solid waste sector, where no such support was currently being provided. In addition, working in the solid waste sector allowed the team to address what they felt to be an emerging priority. This was identified in a 2012 UNICEF/City Hall survey which highlighted that 40% of households in Phnom Penh did not have access to waste collection services (PPCH and UNICEF 2012: 20). The team felt that solid waste was a more feasible sector to work on than electricity, a less crowded space than water or public transport, and potentially transformational given the problems faced by the city. The team's selection of solid waste reform was thus informed by a wider Foundation interest in urban services (and solid waste specifically in Mongolia), an assessment of organizational comparative advantage given the density of programming on other urban services issues, potential for achieving transformative change, and political viability.

2.3 THE PROBLEM

The problem of solid waste in Phnom Penh is apparent when walking around the city—especially the outer *Khans*.[4] It is even more apparent when one visits the landfill that is struggling to keep up with the volume of waste deposited every day. The problem can be broken down into two key issues: i) the volume and composition of waste and capacity of the landfill; and ii) the nature of collection. Importantly, these

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4. Khans are the name given to districts in the Phnom Penh municipality. Each Khan is represented by a Governor and is made up of subdivisions known as Sangkats. See Annex 2 for Cambodian administrative structures.

Phase 1 of Dangkao landfill nearing capacity in October 2014 (Lisa Denney, 2014)

problems have not remained static throughout the life of programming. The 'problem' is introduced here for the benefit of the reader, but it is important to note that the team had neither as full an understanding or as clear a focus at the outset of its work, as will become apparent in the sections to follow.

2.3.1 Volume and composition of waste

In 2009, a new landfill, Dangkao, was opened in Phnom Penh, comprising 31 hectares and designed to operate for 25 years. After just 5 years, the first phase, comprising 14 hectares, was full. The second phase, comprising 17 hectares, has been in use since 2015. Since opening, the amount of waste entering the landfill has increased from approximately 800 tons per day in 2009, to 1,475 tons per day in 2014, with some forecasts estimating that this will increase to 2,200 tons per day by 2020 (COMPED 2014). As the city's population grows and becomes wealthier (thus producing more waste), these figures are likely to become more alarming. Indeed, the population of Phnom Penh more than doubled between 1998 and 2008 from 570,000 to 1,240,000—a growth rate of 8% per year (Ministry of Planning and UNFPA 2013: viii). Moreover, population statistics in Cambodia are politically sensitive and the city's population is widely thought to be significantly higher than official statistics. Current projections suggest a worst case scenario of just 5 years left in the lifespan of the landfill—meaning Dangkao would achieve less than half its planned lifespan.

In addition, current levels of waste entering Dangkao do not represent all of the waste generated by Phnom Penh. A number of problems with collection mean that large amounts of waste are not collected in areas meant to receive service, with piles of garbage routinely building up and presenting a health and environmental risk to communities. While some piles are eventually collected by the waste collection company, CINTRI, others become 'old garbage,' which CINTRI drivers often refuse to collect. These piles are scavenged by informal waste pickers who make money from selling valuable plastics and metals. What is left remains uncollected. Uncollected waste tends to attract more waste, as people see the area as a dumping site, and so the problem grows.

On top of this, parts of several outer Khans do not receive waste collection services at all. This has become a particular problem since Phnom Penh expanded in 2013 to include three new Khans, increasing from nine to 12 Khans (although only some of this expansion constitutes 'new' land, the remainder resulted from re-zoning).[5] Only some of the new Khans are covered by the existing waste collection service and those not covered resort to burning or burying their rubbish, or throwing it on unused land or in waterways. A technical advisor working with the Foundation team estimated that approximately 100–200 tons of waste remain uncollected every day in Phnom Penh.

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5. The three new Khans involved some new land that was previously part of the provinces being designated part of Phnom Penh, but it also involved splitting some existing Phnom Penh Khans. These latter new Khans already received some degree of CINTRI service and have continued to do so.

The composition of the waste is also important. A 2003 JICA survey found that 60–70% of the waste collected in Phnom Penh was organic[6] (Kokusai Kogyo 2015). Supported by the Foundation, the Institute of Technology of Cambodia (ITC) updated this survey in 2014, finding that 51.9% of waste collected in the city was organic (ITC 2015). This suggests that waste value recovery methods, such as composting, could drastically reduce the amount of waste in the landfill. Yet, despite 25 companies conducting feasibility studies for such facilities between 2011 and 2013, no concrete investment plans emerged.

2.3.2 Nature of collection

Waste collection services in Phnom Penh are provided by CINTRI, initially a subsidiary company of the Canadian firm CINTEC, but owned by a Cambodian businessman since 2006 (a controlling stake in the company was sold to a Chinese investor in March 2015). In 2002, CINTRI signed a 49-year, single provider contract with the government for provision of waste collection for nine Khans within the city. While some smaller companies and organizations are responsible for other forms of waste collection (for example, the Cambodian Red Cross disposes of medical waste, some larger markets have separate waste collection contracts, and one Khan has a separate contract for industrial waste collection) there is, in essence, a single-service-provider market (COMPED 2014: 114). As one reform team member noted, "CINTRI already have 98% of the pie."

In addition, the terms of CINTRI's long-term, single provider contract with the government are confidential. It seems few in government are privy to the details, making management of the contract difficult. Indeed, the project team learned that CINTRI had delivered just one Annual Report to City Hall since its contract began in 2002, and reports submitted just once per year do not contain data on revenues. No other known source contains information on CINTRI revenues. City Hall lacked the ability to monitor CINTRI, according to their contract. The project team was told the contract sits with the procuring body, the Council of Ministers; therefore, in addition to CINTRI's dominance in the sector, City Hall lacked any legal remedy to incentivize improved performance from CINTRI.

This situation is further exacerbated by the payment scheme for CINTRI's contract. While the contract is with the government, payment comes from user fees charged to residents as part of their monthly electricity bill from Electricité du Cambodge (EDC). While fees vary, especially for businesses and foreigners, generally, household collection fees range from $0.80

to $1 per month (rates have not changed since 1997). These fees are automatically charged to electricity bills in all Khans where CINTRI provides service, often regardless of whether a particular household receives service. Citizens who refuse to pay the waste collection fee (including on the basis that they are not receiving service) can have their electricity cut off for not paying the full bill. CINTRI claims that people who contact both CINTRI and EDC, and demonstrate they are not receiving collection services, can have the fee removed. However, this appears to have happened only where communities have jointly lobbied—not in individual cases. In fact, one of the Foundation's own team members had their household's electricity cut off after not paying the CINTRI collection fee due to lack of service.

Fee collection therefore largely occurs regardless of CINTRI service coverage—with no connection between performance and payment. While this creates the potential for perverse incentives for CINTRI, it does not necessarily translate into large profits, at least from household collection. CINTRI's profits are largely an unknown. The company claims to barely break even on their residential waste collection (this is verified by City Hall which accessed an audit conducted by the Ministry of Economy and Finance). A collection fee of $0.80 to $1 is extremely low (although it seems that CINTRI does not actually provide services to all of the households that pay for them, thus increasing their margin to some degree). Moreover, as the company collects more waste (with a growing urban population and higher household waste production) CINTRI also pays more in dumping fees at the Dangkao landfill. City Hall (which manages the landfill) charges CINTRI $0.75 per ton, with each truck carrying 20 tons of waste. With households unwilling to pay more for waste collection, despite discharging higher volumes of waste,[7] CINTRI has little incentive to improve performance. However, the value of the contract for residential waste collection must be viewed in light of the additional revenue streams it enables. It is understood that CINTRI's profits come from the commercial waste collection that it carries out, and for which higher service fees are charged. As it is the same trucks that collect the commercial and residential waste, these commercial services are provided at little additional cost to CINTRI. It is likely that the value of the contract, therefore, lies not primarily in the residential waste collection services, but in the commercial waste collection services that monopolizing residential collection allows.

The lack of service is a particular problem for the outer Khans, where service—if it is provided at all—is

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6.   Biodegradable plant and animal waste.

7.   A survey of 205 households carried out by the Foundation in Khan Daun Penh found that only 42% of respondents indicated a willingness to pay more for waste collection. Of this 42%, 76% indicated they would be willing to increase their current contributions by up to only $0.50. (TAF 2015d).

especially poor. Some communities are not covered by CINTRI's contract and receive no formal waste collection services. Others are technically covered, but because they are further out, collection is irregular and schedules are thrown into disarray by traffic congestion—meaning that trucks rarely show up at the scheduled time. In addition, some neighborhoods are inaccessible to garbage trucks, as roads are narrow, dirt, and prone to flooding. Some neighborhoods have tried to overcome this by piling rubbish on roadsides where CINTRI does collect, but residents of those areas have resisted the rubbish piles outside their houses. As a result, inaccessible neighborhoods tend to burn or bury rubbish, or throw it in public areas or waterways, blocking drains and exacerbating flooding. The problem is thus one both of poor collection, but also lack of community awareness of the hazards of disposing of waste in these ways (PPCH/UNICEF 2012).

Finally, waste collection is disrupted by CINTRI workers themselves, whose poor conditions, combined with a lack of oversight, has led to drivers stealing fuel from vehicles, collection routes being cut short, and waste not being thoroughly collected. In February 2014, CINTRI staff went on strike, demanding higher pay, health care, and overtime on weekends (Palatino 2014). After 3 days, City Hall forced CINTRI to reach an agreement with the workers as garbage remained uncollected throughout Phnom Penh. Waste collectors secured a minimum salary of $80/month (up from $65) and drivers a minimum of $120/month (up from $110) (Phak 2014). A second strike took place in August 2014, prompted by CINTRI's efforts to prevent workers from stealing fuel, which they saw as supplementing their meager incomes. Again, CINTRI was forced to accede to labor demands due to government pressure. A third strike also saw City Hall urge CINTRI to adhere to labor demands. As of April 2015, CINTRI waste collectors and truck drivers were receiving salaries of $100 and $160 respectively— an average increase of approximately 50% from the beginning of 2014. Despite these improvements, the fact remains, as one of the team put it, "you don't go into picking up trash in a third world country because you have other options." CINTRI is now paying more in labor costs, without increasing their collection fees.

Waste collection is thus characterized by a single provider with a long-term confidential contract that is difficult to monitor, a fee structure that does not encourage improved household waste collection, garbage collectors whose conditions do not incentivize performance, and communities that are difficult to access and do not always understand the importance

of sanitary waste disposal. Indeed, it is an area in which others who have tried to engage in reform have failed.

From 2003–2005, JICA undertook planning and consultations for a project working on solid waste in Phnom Penh which was intended to run from 2006–2009. This planning took place during the early stages of CINTRI's contract with the government, when the company was foreign owned. The project was to work with the Phnom Penh Waste Management Authority (PPWMA) that had been set up in 2001 to be responsible for solid waste management in the city, supporting PPWMA to provide waste collection services (JICA imported 16 trucks for this purpose), and improving management of the landfill. In addition, JICA was to strengthen the relatively weak PPWMA and develop it along similar lines to the Phnom Penh Water Supply Authority (at the time, widely considered to be one of the city's best public utilities and receiving significant JICA support). The planning stage had already seen JICA assisting the PPWMA in providing waste collection services to a community outside of CINTRI's contracted zones. Scaling up of these activities was predicated on termination of the CINTRI contract—which City Hall had indicated was likely to happen. In fact, however, the CINTRI contract continued with coverage zones expanding, forcing JICA to end its project. The PPWMA was later dismantled and made into a division under the authority of City Hall. The reasons for City Hall's turnaround were not apparent, and since then, JICA has not engaged with solid waste management in Phnom Penh. One possibility is that CINTRI's political involvement by way of donations and connections with powerful politicians prevents change in the sector. The problem the reform initiative sought to address, therefore, is far from simple.

2.4 THE WIDER REFORM CONTEXT

The problems of waste collection exist within a difficult wider political context. While Cambodia's emergence from conflict in the 1990s (following genocide in the 1970s) held the promise of democratic transformation, it is widely acknowledged that the country has been characterized by the strong presence of the Cambodian People's Party (CPP) in both political and economic spheres (Curley 2014: 128; Öjendal and Sedara 2011: 1). Democratization has remained superficial (Öjendal 2005: 287). The Prime Minister, Hun Sen, is one of the longest serving world leaders, having been in power (under various governments) since 1985. Hun Sen and the CPP have cultivated mutually supportive relationships with various rich business owners—

many of whom have been granted the title *Oknha* in return for providing significant support for government development projects (Verver and Dahles 2015). Indeed, the owner of CINTRI is an *Oknha*. Yet the 2013 national elections may have signaled an important turning point, potentially paving the way for progress on issues such as solid waste management.

In the general elections of July 2013, the primary opposition party—the Cambodian National Rescue Party (CNRP)—won 55 seats in Parliament, nearly doubling its previously held 29 seats and transforming itself into a serious political actor that the incumbent CPP has to contend with. The CPP won 68 seats, down from 90 in the previous election—equivalent to a loss of approximately 2.56 million votes (VoA 2015). The CNRP was particularly successful in urban areas, including Phnom Penh. Demonstrations followed the elections, with roughly 20,000 protesters claiming that voting irregularities had assured the CPP of their narrow victory. This was the first time since 1993 that an election saw the number of CPP seats decrease in the National Assembly. One effect of this is that since the elections, the CPP appears to be making greater efforts to respond to popular demands. This dynamic has the potential to result in issues like solid waste management being taken more seriously by the government—even if only for the self-interested purpose of staying in power.

It is not yet clear how significantly Cambodian politics is likely to change in the wake of this newfound interest in public opinion. At least two key developments stemming from the 2013 election may herald change towards more citizen-oriented governance.

First, in January 2015, the CPP held a party conference—the first since the 2013 elections—to discuss party reforms. Reportedly, the conference took a self-critical tone, openly questioning why the CPP lost votes in 2013 and what could be done to improve the party's public image (Kuch and Khy 2015). The changes have also seen some degree of continuity, however. While 306 new members were added to the CPP's central committee to improve representation, it remains dominated by older generations with a few

younger additions that include Hun Sen's three sons (Mayr and Chan Chakrya 2015: 1).

The second development that can be traced, in part, to the outcome of the 2013 elections, is the progress being made by the National Council for Sub-national Democratic Development (NCDD), housed within the Ministry of Interior (MoI). The NCDD was set up in 2008, and is part of wider efforts since the United Nations administration of Cambodia (1992–1993) to devolve power and deconcentrate functions from the center to provincial and municipal levels, including by holding local elections (Öjendal 2005: 290; Rusten 2004: 13). While the first local elections were held in 2002, progress on decentralization and deconcentration has been slow. Yet, since the 2013 elections, the NCDD has redoubled efforts to deliver improved services to local populations—widely explained as being due to the CPP's need to be seen to be responding to popular demands in order to maintain power in the 2017/18 local and national elections.

The wider political context is thus one in which there has traditionally been little space for reform. In particular, for the Foundation's reform efforts, this limited space has manifested as a general lack of political will to address the problems of solid waste. In part, this is due to institutional confusion over who in government has responsibility for solid waste management. A combination of City Hall, the Ministry of Environment (MoE), Ministry of Interior (MoI), Ministry of Public Works and Transport, Ministry of Tourism, City Hall's Waste Management Division, and Khan Governors all wield some responsibility for aspects of solid waste management. This has meant that waste management often falls between the institutional cracks, with no one authority taking ownership of the issue. It is also due to wider perceptions of government as simply not proactive or responsive. This is in part due to internal government culture and recruitment practices, as well as incentives created by the common practice in the mid-1990s (to approximately 2010) of NGOs and donors providing salary top ups for civil servants working on their projects. These factors have combined to create little political interest and thus stasis around solid waste management.
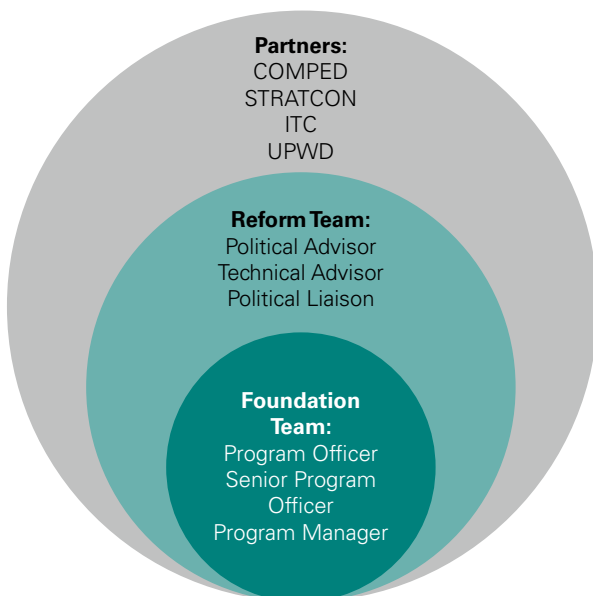
3. The Reform Initiative

This section introduces the reform team and describes how the reform strategy evolved over time, as well as the activities undertaken and the partners engaged in support of this.

3.1 THE REFORM ACTORS

The Urban Services Program within the Foundation was small, with just three full-time staff. There was therefore a need to build a wider network that could push for solid waste reforms. This resulted in a reform network that can be broken into three layers—the core Asia Foundation team; the reform team that was built to provide insider knowledge and promote reform; and wider partners (see Figure 1). The roles of each of the reform team members are set out below. The importance of personal connections, disposition, and political know-how in working politically and flexibly were paramount in the selection of team members.

Figure 1: Layers of the reform actors

Partners:
COMPED
STRATCON
ITC
UPWD

Reform Team:
Political Advisor
Technical Advisor
Political Liaison

Foundation Team:
Program Officer
Senior Program Officer
Program Manager

3.1.1 The Foundation Team – Full time Asia Foundation Staff:

Program Manager (PM): The PM was recruited for the Urban Services Program in October 2013. He had previously worked on reforms in The Asia Foundation's Philippines office and, while not having an urban services background, had worked across a number of reform areas and was familiar with the 'Development Entrepreneurship' model that the Philippines office has developed as a flexible way of working towards reform. The PM provided overall program management, as well as maintained a number of the key relationships with consultants and wider networks. The PM also clearly led in entrenching the iterative programming philosophy that the Foundation sought to promote through Strategy Testing.

Senior Program Officer (SPO): The SPO had been working with the Foundation in Cambodia for over 5 years, previously on wider governance programming. As a more senior staff member, and with previous experience working in government and civil society in Cambodia, the SPO was viewed as having the political etiquette necessary for maintaining relations with government and knowing the appropriate channels to get things done.

Program Officer (PO): The PO was recruited internally for the Urban Services Program from the Foundation's grants division, showing real potential for being able to work on a reform program, with the 'right kind of attitude'—that of being a proactive 'go-getter'. The PO assisted with administrative functions, as well as managed a number of partners.

3.1.2 Reform Network:

Political Liaison (PL): The PL was involved in the Urban Services Program as a part-time consultant from early 2014. Within the wider network, the PL was the most actively engaged, regularly attending meetings and representing the reform initiative at government and

partner meetings. He thus sat somewhat between the layers of 'the Foundation team' and 'Reform network'. He had a background as a consultant in the private sector as well as the development industry, and some good political connections within the Ministry of Environment, which came to be seen as key to reforms.

Technical Advisor (TA): The TA was a senior staff member in CINTRI, working on research and operations. He had been working for CINTRI for just over a year when he first met the Foundation team in late 2013. As he had been heavily involved in reviewing internal management and staffing procedures and implementing reforms, he was seen as a potential reform-minded 'insider' within the company. The TA had excellent technical knowledge, having completed his PhD in Environmental Engineering, with a focus on solid waste. He was not contracted by the Foundation, as he was a full-time CINTRI employee up until March 2015, when he resigned to set up his own consultancy. He was considered a key ally and part of the reform team, providing technical inputs and oversight to Foundation-supported research.

Political Advisor (PA): The PA was a researcher who has worked with the Foundation on multiple projects. He conducted research for the Urban Services Program but was also considered part of the reform team, providing informed political guidance, with good connections in the influential Ministry of Interior as well as on the NCDD, on which he sits. Through these connections, he kept the Foundation briefed on potential windows of opportunity for reform and key political developments.

The wider reform network was managed by the three Asia Foundation staff, in a 'hub-and-spokes' management arrangement, with the Foundation team acting as liaison for the wider reform network (the reform network did not meet as a whole). This approach was, in part, necessary due to the sensitivity of the relationships. While information flowed freely between the Foundation team and the Political Liaison, the team drew on other relationships on a more issue-specific basis.

In addition, there was a wider circle of individuals and organizations that the Foundation drew on, as necessary through grants, contracts or informally to implement specific activities (discussed in the following section), and to get strategic advice and (often technical) information. These included the Director of StratCon—the firm that undertook research for the Foundation on options for waste value recovery, as well as the Foundation's Program Director

for Economic Reform in the Philippines, and the Associate Director of the PSIL Unit. The Foundation's Cambodia Country Representative also provided input on issues of organizational risk and entry points to parts of government.

The team brought together a number of promising young reformers, but there were some acknowledged gaps. The team was light on technical knowledge about solid waste issues. Despite this, they were able to delve into an impressive amount of detail, and the Technical Advisor was brought in, and research partners relied on, to help fill in any gaps.

Almost everyone involved in the team was in their early-30s or younger, and this posed a challenge in permeating the hierarchy of Cambodian politics. But this dynamic reflects wider Cambodian trends: over 65% of Cambodia's population is under 30 years old—making it the youngest population in Asia (UNDP undated). As one team member put it, "we don't have a 20-year background of working on reform processes in the country." This meant that while the reform team as a whole had some important political relationships, these were overwhelmingly personal rather than professional, and tended to be with mid-ranking, rather than senior, politicians and civil servants. The personal nature of these relationships is in keeping with how political networks often work in Cambodia. While arranging informal meetings tended to happen more quickly and were more frank than when formal channels were used, contacts were often indirect (such as brokering meetings through personal contacts); it could thus take longer to arrange formal meetings, and immediate action often did not result from the meetings that took place. As the Program Manager put it, "we had to work through proxies constantly instead of being able to strike right at the heart of the decision-making structure."

3.2 STRATEGY AND ITS EVOLUTION OVER TIME

From late August 2013, when the Foundation team narrowed their focus from urban services to solid waste management, the overall goal of the reform remained consistent—to make Phnom Penh a cleaner city. However, the possible ways to get to this goal evolved over time. While a number of options were set out initially as potential solutions to the solid waste management challenge, they reflected both the team's initial lack of technical knowledge of the sector, as well as a lack of certainty about what would prove politically possible. Early strategies thus included ending the long-term, municipality-wide contract held by CINTRI, strengthening City Hall management and oversight, and encouraging greater citizen participation

on solid waste issues, with City Hall seen as the main target of reform. As relationships were built and more knowledge was acquired, multiple strategies were considered and then narrowed down.

However, as the team engaged more actively with CINTRI, strategy shifted towards strengthening CINTRI processes to improve waste collection. Over the course of 2014, emphasis moved towards this latter strategy—that of improving current delivery structures—and working 'with the grain,' as it were. This was rooted in a belief that increased government pressure on CINTRI (for example, that related to ongoing labor strikes), was compelling the company to improve performance in order to retain its contract.

This approach had some success, with CINTRI initially an eager partner in tracking garbage trucks and delivery routes. However, a lack of traction within CINTRI for more comprehensive reforms led to a re-evaluation of this approach in October 2014. Differences of opinion within the team about the best approach, as well as concerns about weakening the relationship with CINTRI, led to a dual track approach— that of simultaneously pursuing two strategies, with two different theories of change. Part of the team continued to push efforts to reform the current system, with a focus on CINTRI performance, while others started to develop a proposal for what a multi-provider collection system might look like if the CINTRI contract was amended to enable more than one provider.

External events then took over, with the team learning in December 2014 of the government's interest in revising the long-term, city-wide contract held by CINTRI. In February 2015, this became public knowledge, when the government formally announced a review of the contract and plans for discussions on an alternative collection system. In 2015, therefore, the team realigned their strategy to focus primarily on providing independent views to City Hall and the MoE, drawing on the research and pilot projects which examined why the current waste collection model was not working. This strategy was also used to inform City Hall and MoE plans for what a new waste collection system might look like, including that of waste value recovery. The result has certainly seen City Hall and MoE accept the need for change, push for review of the contract with CINTRI, and explore waste value recovery options. However, whether the newfound political will in these quarters can ultimately affect change in Cambodia's complicated political landscape remains to be seen.

Below, the logic behind each of these shifts in strategy, and the activities implemented in support of them, are discussed in detail. Some of these shifts were active decisions made during the team's quarterly Strategy Testing sessions, while others emerged over time as deepening relationships led to new information and different actions. These shifts may then have crystallized during Strategy Testing sessions, but in essence emerged before them, though not always explicitly.

3.2.1 Building knowledge and relationships with a focus on City Hall

After deciding to focus on solid waste management under the Foundation's Urban Services Program, the team initially (from October 2013 to January 2014) balanced its activities across a range of options, as they considered the most strategic actions. The primary target of reform was seen to be City Hall, with changes in the behavior of citizens and within CINTRI a secondary focus. To make this work, citizens would need to be sensitized about when to put their rubbish out for collection, and CINTRI would need to develop a reliable collection schedule. With these steps in place, the focus would then be on supporting City Hall to monitor the compliance of citizens as well as CINTRI, and enforcing guidelines which would be developed on appropriate waste disposal.

Early strategy documents from late-2013 highlight the following as potential solutions:

- Ending the waste collection contract;
- Putting industry standards in place in City Hall and encouraging the staff to actively monitor collection services;
- Engaging citizens with messages about appropriate waste collection services;
- Developing a concrete investment plan for an operational waste-recovery facility to reduce the overall volume of waste at the current landfill site.

This was explicitly a strategy to test out options and build relationships. The focus was to build relationships with City Hall and CINTRI, and observe the technical and political dimensions of the solid waste problem. Activities undertaken during this period focused on commissioning research, helping to build the team's technical knowledge, and also allowing the Foundation to test out partners to determine their potential for becoming more actively involved in the reform efforts.

Between January and February 2014, the team commissioned three organizations to carry out research to provide technical insights to the team. A study on solid waste generation and composition, as well as growth forecasts for waste volume was contracted out to the Institute of Technology of Cambodia (ITC). They conducted a household survey, collected data at the landfill, and gathered household, business, and market samples to enable waste characterization and waste volume measurement. The research was meant to be completed in July 2014, but delays, feedback, and additional work required meant the final report was only published in April 2015. This research provided the Foundation with an updated understanding of the amount and composition of the waste being dealt with—as the last study of this kind was carried out in 2003 by JICA (Kokusai Kogyo 2005). This knowledge was essential in developing plans for collection and waste value recovery.

At around the same time in early 2014, the Cambodian Education and Waste Management Organization (COMPED) was also contracted to carry out research on the institutional and legal frameworks governing solid waste, and opportunities for waste value recovery. This research served two functions. First, it provided important information that helped the team to better understand the various players involved in waste collection, as well as the legal and institutional frameworks that may affect either reform, or are likely to be affected by reforms. It also set out an option for waste value recovery (focused on composting). Second, this research was intended to provide COMPED with the opportunity to test out relationships with CINTRI (which the Foundation had thought would prove very opaque) and City Hall. The initiative team saw COMPED as potential reform leaders, making the second objective of the research more important than the first. COMPED had good technical knowledge and some important political relationships, including with CINTRI. However, in practice, it emerged that COMPED had poor relations with key City Hall counterparts who were central to the Foundation's solid waste management work. As a result, COMPED was not engaged more extensively. COMPED's report from its commissioned research was published in October 2014.

Finally, Stratcon, a Singapore-based environmental development and consultancy firm, was contracted to conduct research into the potential for waste value recovery in Cambodia. This research highlighted significant obstacles to getting this component of the project off the ground—including the lack of manpower and technical skills required. This research

was ultimately more useful for the relationship it helped to develop with the Stratcon Director, who became an accessible technical expert with whom the Program Manager could test ideas.

3.2.2 Shifting to work with, not against, CINTRI

Difficulties in building relationships with City Hall led the team to shift their strategy and pursue greater engagement with CINTRI. The team used personal connections to gain access to important players in City Hall. For instance, the Deputy Director of the Waste Management Division in City Hall (who remained the team's main point of contact throughout the initiative) was found through a friend of one of the Foundation team members who was working in City Hall. An approach through such personnel connections helped to avoid the slow-moving, formal bureaucracy normally involved in getting government meetings in Cambodia. Through the Waste Management Division, the Foundation sought to build a relationship with the Deputy Director of Administration in City Hall—who was described as the 'gatekeeper' to the rest of City Hall, and was believed to be close to the Deputy Governor of Phnom Penh in charge of waste management.[8] The Deputy Governor was in his first term and was understood to be more reform-minded and willing to consult than most at his level. He was thus identified by the team as a key stakeholder with whom to engage, and potentially open up access to the Governor of Phnom Penh (the Mayor), who had set solid waste management as a priority for 2014. But the hierarchical nature of Cambodian politics meant that the process of arranging meetings and building these relationships was slow.

In contrast, the Foundation was having more success in cultivating a relationship within CINTRI through a reform-minded 'insider' (the Technical Advisor). The decision was thus taken to try to work with CINTRI, rather than to work against them in an effort to revise the company's contract. This was based on an assessment that the team's initial assumption about CINTRI's role in the problem was insufficient. The Foundation had initially postulated:

> *CINTRI's politically protected … control of guaranteed revenues irrespective of performance is the root cause of the poor performance of solid waste collection in Phnom Penh. (TAF 2014a).*

However, as the team learned more through its research and relationship building, they determined this conclusion was incomplete. Opening the sector to greater competition would 'not be sufficient to lead to transformative change' (TAF 2014a). Rather, as

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8.   There are six Deputy Governors of Phnom Penh. Henceforth, when the Deputy Governor is referred to, it is the Deputy Governor with responsibility for waste management.

their knowledge of the complicated mix of problems deepened, the team came to see necessary changes as additionally requiring the following:

- A modified fee structure that links revenues to performance;
- Regular monitoring of performance by City Hall;
- Increased revenues in the system (for example, through increased fees, municipal subsidy, or waste recovery); and
- Modified operations to address waste collection needs in the outer Khans.

In part, the decision to engage with CINTRI reflected the greater progress made in building relations with them, rather than with City Hall. This was also a strategic calculation on the part of the team—working with CINTRI was yielding useful information that enabled the team to learn more about the sector, its problems, and potential solutions. Maintaining relations with CINTRI was thus at least partly pursued because it was an effective source of information. Yet, the engagement was also "sincere" in the words of the Program Manager. On the basis of CINTRI's willingness to engage, the team assumed an openness to change.

Wider politics played a role as well. This relationship with CINTRI was unfolding after labor strikes, during which City Hall had pushed CINTRI to the negotiating table. The team thus perceived CINTRI to be more willing to undertake reforms in order to maintain its contract, which looked increasingly under threat. This is not to suggest that engagement with City Hall ceased. The strategy that emerged sought to bring City Hall and CINTRI together to improve solid waste management.

3.2.3 Waste value recovery is put on the back burner
While the team saw improvements in waste collection in inner and outer Khans as important for cleaning up the streets, and ensuring better health, sanitation, and environment standards for Phnom Penh, they recognized that these were short-term fixes unless the problem of waste disposal could also be addressed. As set out earlier, a key problem is the sheer volume of waste being produced by the city's population, and the lack of adequate landfill facilities. As a result, the Foundation program also sought to investigate the possibilities of waste value recovery and encourage government investment in this area. The research commissioned by the Foundation, and undertaken by Stratcon, highlighted the technical inputs and steps needed to make progress in this area that were not available to the Foundation.

In addition, as the team built relationships and acquired more information about the waste sector, it became apparent that there had been substantial commercial interest in the prospect of waste value recovery in Phnom Penh, with 25 companies conducting feasibility studies since 2011. These studies had yet to result in any investment, though. The team made little headway in investigating blockages that may have been preventing investment—including the financial interests of key political figures. It became clear around March 2014 that there was little traction around waste value recovery as an option.

On this basis, and given limited resources and staff time, the team decided in April 2014 to put the waste value recovery component of the initiative on the 'backburner' for later consideration. As already stated, the Stratcon research helped to build what became a useful relationship between the Program Manager and Stratcon's Director, allowing the Program Manager, on an ad hoc basis, to call on Stratcon's technical expertise and the knowledge the company had gained from working in Cambodia.

3.2.4 Brokering City Hall-CINTRI relations through an inner Khan pilot
In order to broker relations between City Hall and CINTRI, the team believed that a pilot location would demonstrate how the problems of solid waste collection could be solved in one part of the city. From the outset, the Foundation team considered waste collection in the outer Khans to be the priority, and they were therefore keen to locate the pilot there. The outer Khans are areas receiving limited, and in some cases, no waste collection services, leading to roads and waterways being strewn with waste. Therefore, the team viewed the waste problems confronting these communities to be of a different scale to those faced by people in the inner Khans, where collection services were certainly inconsistent and unreliable, but nonetheless better. Improving waste collection in the outer Khans was thus seen by the team as more transformational.

CINTRI supported the Foundation's outer Khan focus, where it was also keen to improve collection. City Hall, however, was more interested in service provision in the inner Khans. It is in the inner Khans where the Prime Minister and the political and business elites live, as well as where Phnom Penh's tourism industry is centered, making the cleanliness of the inner Khans of higher political interest than that of the outer Khans.

Likewise, communities in the outer Khans tend not to complain about the state of service delivery as much as those in the inner Khans, in part because they often burn or bury their waste, or throw it in waterways. Also, those in the outer Khans are often farther removed (less educated, time poor, etc.) from the channels of complaint through Khan Governors than people living in more urban areas.

The decision was made in March 2014 to focus initial reform efforts on the inner Khan of Daun Penh, with the aim of obtaining buy-in from City Hall. While this decision required a short-term trade off in potential social welfare gains, the team acknowledged it nonetheless allowed them to build greater trust with City Hall and greater technical insight on the problems of solid waste management.

Following the signing of a memorandum of understanding (MoU) between the Foundation, City Hall, and CINTRI in April 2014, work commenced on the pilot, using a combination of global positioning system (GPS) and global information system (GIS) technology to provide information on the location of waste piles and trigger improved monitoring of CINTRI collection. The use of GPS/GIS technology was an idea adapted from the Foundation's Mongolia initiative that had begun developing similar technology and software to track garbage trucks. In addition, the GPS/GIS combination was seen as an incentive that could be offered to both City Hall and CINTRI for their involvement in the pilot, and would ultimately help to demonstrate the importance of objective data to monitor the performance of waste collection services.

The pilot proceeded in three steps. First, CINTRI was required to develop and share a collection schedule and routes for the Khan with City Hall and the Foundation. This was shared, but City Hall claimed it was too vague and requested it be re-done with more detailed, 30-minute increments for specific blocks. While CINTRI claimed this would not be feasible, a new schedule was developed, which the Foundation was to help promote to the public through leaflets and community awareness raising once the schedule had been approved by City Hall. City Hall, however, only approved the new schedule in July 2015, leaving the Foundation with no time to conduct awareness raising, given the program's end date of September 2015 (although published schedules were distributed in August 2015). Despite these delays, the Foundation conducted a small survey in Daun Penh in February 2015 to provide a baseline on existing community awareness about waste collection practices. This survey provided scope for conducting a second survey to see whether promotion of the new schedule and procedures had been successful.

Second, 24 CINTRI garbage collection trucks were fitted with GPS devices in Daun Penh to monitor their routes, time of collection, number of stops, etc. In the early stages of the pilot, CINTRI garbage truck drivers resisted this, attempting to destroy three of the GPS devices (and succeeding on one occasion). The GPS devices were seen by staff as a CINTRI management monitoring device to check on when trucks start and stop their engines (a strategy employed by drivers to save fuel that could be sold at the end of a shift—a practice that CINTRI management was trying to prevent because it resulted in higher truck maintenance costs).

Third, the Foundation hired a group of interns to conduct twice daily patrols of Daun Penh and take photographs of uncollected waste piles, which were then entered into the GIS system. This provided near-real-time mapping of waste build up in the Khan that City Hall could monitor, and use to prompt CINTRI to carry out additional collection where needed. While the long-term vision of the Foundation was for City Hall and local Khan and Sangkat officials to take responsibility for this monitoring, the pilot project used the interns for this function. The GPS and GIS combination tracked whether the problem of waste build up was due to citizens putting their waste out for collection at the wrong times, or whether CINTRI was not following their collection routes and timetables. Information from the GPS/GIS combination was also shared among CINTRI district managers and City Hall, Khan, and Sangkat authorities who could view the data through a WhatsApp group on their mobile phones.

The pilot, which ran until December 2014, compiled monthly data showing levels of uncollected waste within the Khan. The pilot was successful in reducing waste in three of 11 Sangkats (sub-districts) within the Khan—with some initial qualitative research suggesting it was successful in those Sangkats where officials were actively engaged in promoting awareness of proper collection procedures to their communities. It was assumed City Hall would be interested in using the data to monitor CINTRI's contract performance, and that CINTRI would be interested in improving performance to retain their contract but, in practice, City Hall did not use the data available. An initial lack of uptake was thought to relate to lack of knowledge about how to use the system; therefore, in late 2014, the Foundation held a training session for City Hall staff. Yet their use of the system remained relatively weak. This suggested to the Foundation team that, in fact, City Hall was not committed to monitoring contractor performance.

Sangkat chief, Chbar Ampov (Lisa Denney, 2015)

In mid-2015, however, CINTRI and City Hall entered into a new agreement in another inner Khan. Claiming that the costs of maintaining the GPS devices provided by the Foundation were too high, CINTRI purchased cheaper models and fitted them to additional vehicles. CINTRI also hired two focal points for each Sangkat within the new Khan to educate citizens about appropriate waste disposal and collection schedules. While the Foundation's initial investment in GPS/GIS technology may no longer be in use, the principles of monitoring performance and improving awareness among citizens of how they might contribute to better solid waste disposal did appear to take hold within CINTRI and led to them expanding its use to monitor collection services at their own cost—suggesting some degree of willingness to improve performance.

Other activities with City Hall also continued. A clean-up day was organized in central Phnom Penh, mobilizing communities to pay greater attention to solid waste issues. In addition, the Foundation funded development of two television public service announcements about appropriate waste disposal as part of efforts to sensitize the public to improvements in waste collection and how to comply with collection. These public outreach efforts were not taken forward, however, because neither CINTRI nor City Hall had produced a reliable collection scheduling system.

The Foundation also sought to extend its government relationships—for instance by holding a meeting with Khan Governors in July 2014 to build a better understanding of solid waste challenges being faced across the city. Eight of the 12 governors attended the meeting, which provided the team with more detailed insights into community-level problems, as well as mechanisms at the local level to deal with problems. This meeting did not, however, lead to more sustained relationships between the Foundation and the governors.

As part of the ongoing strategy to work with CINTRI to improve its services, the reform team regularly interacted with the Technical Advisor, assisting in developing collection schedules, getting the GPS devices up and running, and coordinating with CINTRI when the Foundation team's interns documented waste piles that required additional collection services. This close working relationship made the reform team cautiously hopeful about the appetite for change within CINTRI. Yet, as the pilot wore on, it became increasingly apparent that the reform-mindedness of the Technical Advisor was not widely representative of CINTRI management, who seemed resistant to change, despite growing pressure from City Hall. It thus became increasingly apparent that it would not be possible to achieve improved solid waste management by pushing changes through CINTRI, despite initial efforts in this direction.

3.2.5 An outer Khan pilot proves possible

Importantly, the decision to focus initially on the inner Khans did not prevent the team from pursuing work in the outer Khans, although it did delay it. Following the decision in April 2014 to focus the City Hall/CINTRI pilot on an inner Khan, the team turned their attention to finding civil society partners to work on waste collection in outer Khans, where the team continued to feel the biggest developmental dividend lay.

The Foundation team spent some time getting to know the various organizations working on solid waste management (of which there are a few) in Phnom Penh. Through this process, they came across Urban Poor Women's Development (UPWD), a civil society group which works on community development, including some sanitation and environmental issues, but not specifically on solid waste management. Nonetheless, their connections with local communities in outer Khans meant that the team felt that they could build the necessary momentum for reforms at the community level. By mid-2014, the team had discussed the idea of a pilot in an outer Khan with UPWD.

As a result, the Foundation chose to support UPWD with a grant of $14,000 in October 2014, to work for 6 months in Chbar Ampov, an outer Khan, where UPWD had long-term experience and had established working relationships and trust with the community. Launching this outer Khan pilot through a civil society group ensured that the team could address what they saw as the more pressing and important waste management challenge in the outer Khans, while maintaining and strengthening relations with City Hall through the inner Khan pilot.

Chbar Ampov is one of three new Khans added to Phnom Penh in 2013. It is a very poor neighborhood with a large migrant community. Crime and violence—especially domestic violence—are key challenges that UPWD has worked on. Due to the lack of toilets in most households, community members disposed of feces in plastic bags thrown in the road, waterways, or unoccupied land until 18 public toilets were built in 2014. The lack of sanitation was also causing high rates of illness among children, with community leaders claiming that several children per day required medical attention. To address these problems, the Foundation's project aimed to find innovative ways of overcoming the challenges of waste collection.

Outer Khans face particular challenges with waste collection because their streets are often too narrow for garbage trucks, and are prone to flooding. The Foundation and UPWD thus decided that the grant to UPWD would be used to pilot paying community members to collect waste in push carts and then deposit the collected waste in a central dumpster, where CINTRI could collect it. Households covered by the project paid 1,000 riels (approximately $0.24) per month to community leaders to pay the cart pushers. In addition, community consultations were held to educate the community about the dangers of not properly disposing of household waste, how waste should be properly packaged, and how the pilot would work. This brought the community, CINTRI, and Khan and municipal authorities together to discuss the problems of solid waste. Initial clean up days were also held in the Khan's villages to help clear waste that had built up over many years.

The cart pushers—all female—were mostly mothers who had seen what the poor standards of sanitation had done to the health of their children. Both they and community leaders reported fewer children getting sick since the project began. The cart pushers worked in teams of two, collecting waste from their neighborhoods twice a day. In practice, it was difficult and took some time to reach agreement on the location of the central dumpsters. This meant that in two of the three communities involved, the cart pushers took collected waste to the main roads where CINTRI collects waste—however, the collection trucks often did not come on time due to traffic jams, and so they dumped the waste in an area where CINTRI would collect it.

Waste piles in Chbar Ampov before the October 2014 pilot (Lisa Denney, 2014)

Waste piles in Chbar Ampov during pilot in April 2015 (Lisa Denney, 2014)

By the end of the pilot, however, all three communities had designated dumping sites. UPWD engaged with CINTRI, who increased collection in the Khan, and with the Khan authorities who were able to apply additional pressure on CINTRI. Through these relationships, UPWD successfully advocated for 10 families in the Khan to have their long-standing waste collection fee debts to CINTRI written off on the grounds that service had not been provided. The outer Khan pilot project was much more focused on bottom-up solutions to waste management than the rest of the reform strategy, although it still fit within the overall goal of making Phnom Penh cleaner.

Asked about the reasons for including the outer Khan pilot, the team explained wanting to trial an approach for communities that cannot be accessed by CINTRI (although CINTRI claims to have their own carts to ensure collection in such difficult-to-reach neighborhoods, communities report that no such carts are used). While the team acknowledged that community-based solutions are not always sustainable or scalable, they wanted—in their words—"to make a small bet in this direction." If external funding could be obtained, this model could be rolled out in other outer Khans. In addition, the Khan Governors and Councils could be sensitized to the approach and roll it out themselves in their own communities. To support such a roll out, the Foundation produced a manual on how the pilot was run for distribution to City Hall and Khan Councils. Indeed, while paying the cart pushers might be unsustainable (although currently the community is continuing to pay them at a lower rate and for less regular collection), the pilot has certainly helped to improve the cleanliness of the community, with environmental and health benefits to its residents.

3.2.6 Strategic relationship building with City Hall

In August 2014, an opportunity presented itself to build relationships with City Hall by supporting them in the development of a proposal for a Rockefeller Foundation project, 100 Resilient Cities. The Foundation approached City Hall to offer to partner with them. The proposal focused on issues including flooding, pollution, sewage, and solid waste—potentially providing a means of funding to continue the reform initiative beyond its initial June 2015 deadline (later extended to September 2015). More importantly, however, the proposal also enabled the reform initiative to build closer relationships with City Hall, and the Deputy Governor, in particular, who had been appointed by the Governor to lead this effort. While there was time pressure to submit the proposal, City Hall's strong commitment to the effort demonstrated the establishment of good relations between the Deputy Governor and the Foundation, and since then, informal meetings and sharing of information have been commonplace. This would later prove invaluable in programming.

In December 2014, Phnom Penh was selected as one of The Rockefeller Foundation's 67 resilient cities selected to date—chosen for support in becoming more resilient to the physical, social, and economic

challenges of urbanization. Plans for how this would be carried out in practice have stalled since early 2015, but City Hall has remained insistent that the Foundation be involved, again indicating that a trusting relationship has been developed.

3.2.7 Putting contract review back on the table

After focusing for several months on improving CINTRI performance and City Hall's monitoring of the CINTRI contract, a Strategy Testing session in October 2014 saw a significant shift in strategy. Discussions centered on whether the team felt that the existing strategy of working with City Hall to encourage monitoring, and working with CINTRI to improve management systems, was making sufficient headway. Key to discussions was an increasing sense that the Minister of Environment (new since the 2013 national elections) was reform-minded and potentially open to considering a cancellation of the CINTRI contract and a re-bidding process for the city's solid waste management.[9] If this were true, the Program Manager felt that the reform team could achieve the most impact by influencing the planning for the new waste collection system—including how many companies would be involved, how monitoring of performance would occur, how fee structures would work, and so on. With this information, the team considered the pros and cons of reintroducing the strategy of contract review that had characterized the reform at the earliest stages (when engaging with CINTRI to carry out internal reforms was not considered an option).

Yet, none of the team or their networks had met the Minister of Environment himself (though the Political Liaison had connections with advisors in the Ministry) and making an offer to government about what alternative collection arrangements could look like under a re-bid would almost certainly mean a marked deterioration in relations with CINTRI, which had been key to date. Given the time invested in building this relationship, there was risk in this approach, so the team wanted to be reassured that this change in approach would pay dividends.

A difference in views within the team as to whether to change direction led to a compromise—the team would continue to focus on the current strategy, redoubling efforts in the coming months to see how much further reforms could be pushed within both City Hall and CINTRI. On the City Hall side, this was to involve drafting performance standards and articulating more clearly what monitoring mechanisms might look like. On the CINTRI side, it meant grappling with middle management and labor dysfunctions, as

well as addressing the issue of the waste collection fee structure. To facilitate this, the Political Liaison was seconded to CINTRI to work with the Technical Advisor in order to try and gain further information and move internal reforms along.

At the same time, the team sought technical and legal skills to begin drafting what a re-bid process might look like, and what terms, conditions, and safeguards might need to be built into this to ensure the best possible service delivery arrangements. The team agreed that both strategies would continue in parallel until the end of the year. In addition, the team would start to build relationships with the Ministry of Environment—for instance, by presenting findings of the research commissioned by the Foundation. This would allow the team to get a sense of the Minister's appetite for reform. In January 2015, the team would then be in a better position to make a decision about whether to pursue a strategy that would either end or improve the current contracting arrangements (i.e. only one provider holding the long-term, municipal-wide contract for services), although no specific criteria on which to base this decision were agreed.

This shift in strategy reflects the team's perception of a marked change in the balance of power between CINTRI and City Hall, in City Hall's favor. While the team had seen fear of contract revocation as having the potential to incentivize improved performance within CINTRI, the team increasingly felt that government was willing to consider alternative waste collection options. The team discussed a number of potential actions the reform initiative could take to influence these dynamics. For example, the Foundation could make public the GIS data from the inner Khan pilot (at that time only shared between the Foundation and CINTRI and City Hall) in order to trigger media coverage and public outcry about waste piles— an advocacy strategy that could move the government to greater action. However, there was no consensus that such public outcry would, in fact, occur and the damage it could do to relations with both CINTRI and City Hall was considered to outweigh the benefits.

More broadly, ending the long-term, municipality-wide contract held by CINTRI was seen to be potentially transformational by opening up space for other reforms. The team recognized that a multi-provider waste collection system would not solve all the issues contributing to solid waste problems, and that contract monitoring and citizen behavior would remain problems to be addressed. Indeed, these issues had been the focus of the reform strategy through 2014 when it seemed that review of the contract was not a feasible

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9.   This impression was due to the reformist stance the Minister had taken on seizure of land concessions and stories about people's engagement with him. It was later confirmed through the political connections of the Political Advisor and Political Liaison.

strategy, and CINTRI appeared more willing to engage in reforms. However, these issues were seen by the Foundation team as second-order issues, which could be addressed more meaningfully in a context where a single, long-term, municipality-wide contract was not held by just one provider. That is, monitoring contract performance would be more meaningful if there was a genuine threat of loss of service for non-performance. Similarly, disposing of waste correctly would be more meaningful if there was a reliable collection schedule. For this reason, working to amend the contract was seen to be a sound strategy. Although it would not solve all waste management problems, it would put in place conditions through which efforts to solve the residual problems would be more fruitful.

3.2.8 Contract review takes over

In November 2014, City Hall won The Rockefeller Foundation *100 Resilient Cities* bid with technical proposal support from The Asia Foundation's Urban Services Team. This required a number of further meetings with representatives from City Hall, one of whom revealed to the Program Manager that if there was a vote to remove CINTRI's control over municipality-wide services, they would "be the first to cast that vote." At least within City Hall, then, it seemed that there was some appetite for change in waste collection.

This perception only deepened. In December 2014, the team secured a meeting with the Ministry of Environment, including the Minister himself, to present the research conducted by ITC on waste volume and composition. While the MoE had some concerns about the methodology used for the research, and felt that it did not reveal information that was new to them, the meeting was critical to providing the reform team with a much clearer understanding of the ministry's position on waste collection services. At least one MoE official suggested in the meeting that he was not satisfied with a single service provider dominating the sector, and was keen to see change. While this was not explicitly articulated as the Minister's vision at that time, it sent a relatively clear message that the MoE was open to a new waste collection system.

This was further cemented in December 2014, when the reform team members were attending a workshop on solid waste management. The Program Manager and his colleagues overheard a lively conversation in Khmer, which turned out to be a senior MoE official expressing his frustrations about CINTRI's service. This confirmed to the team that not only was the MoE keen to end the long-term, single provider control over municipal waste collection, but also that CINTRI had received a *dekas*[10] from the Prime Minister providing CINTRI with the (non-binding) right to negotiate an 80-year extension to its existing 49-year contract.

At the same time, the secondment of the Political Liaison to CINTRI was not moving forward as hoped. While he was busy working on developing a new website that would provide up-to-date information on collection routes and schedules, there was little engagement with CINTRI during this, and it appeared unlikely his secondment would yield new information. This evolving political context, the team's proactive efforts to gain inside knowledge of it, and the lack of progress being achieved through CINTRI's reforms, consolidated the team's view that the contract review approach was more likely to deliver reform. As of January 2015, efforts were concentrated on this single strategy. This then involved feeding information and ideas into City Hall and the MoE as they planned for a revised waste collection system.

While the single provider system remained in place, political shifts continued to suggest its days were numbered. In January 2015, the Ministry of Interior (MoI) and MoE announced a sub-decree specifying that outside Phnom Penh, responsibility for solid waste management would be devolved to the provincial and municipal level, with $5 million made available to support local authorities in contracting their own choice of waste collection suppliers (although at the end of 2015, this had yet to be implemented).[11] This reflects an increased willingness, as part of wider decentralization efforts, to transfer certain powers from central to local government. This opens up the space for more issues that are currently controlled centrally to be decided at the local level. In addition, solid waste is widely acknowledged as a particularly good starting point for decentralization. This is, in part, because solid waste has fewer entrenched political interests than some other sectors, but also because it provides a visible dividend that politicians can point to in demonstrating progress to the electorate. This kind of visible dividend has significant value in the post-2013 Cambodian political context. Yet decentralized waste collection was still not a reality for Phnom Penh. In February 2015, the team's concerted efforts to build political relationships resulted in them learning further details of the CINTRI contract. With this information, it became apparent that, despite the fact that it is widely believed that CINTRI's contract was signed with the Council of Ministers, it was, in fact, signed with the former Governor of Phnom Penh.

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10. A *dekas* is a form of official non-binding recognition or decision in Cambodian government.

11. This initiative has been delayed due to difficulties in disbursing the funds to municipalities, with the Ministry of Economy and Finance developing guidelines to facilitate this, and some concern that if these guidelines were not finalized by the end of the Cambodian financial year (December) that the money might not be available in 2016.

Later the same month, the potential for change emerged in relation to decentralized waste collection. In mid-February 2015, the Council of Ministers announced a review of CINTRI's contract, for which Hun Sen indicated his support two weeks later (Vong and Cchay 2015). It was not clear what the review would entail, and importantly, revocation or cancellation was not officially mentioned. However, the reform team's political connections with City Hall and MoE indicated a willingness on the part of at least some in government to push CINTRI to accept a multi-provider system. Under this, Phnom Penh would be divided into either its 12 Khans, or by clusters of those Khans, and shared among several waste collection companies. The Deputy Governor asked the Foundation to prepare background information for his comments to the Council of Ministers on the contract review, enabling the Foundation's team to feed in information from their research and pilots, and suggest how contracting of solid waste collection might be better designed, governed, and monitored to encourage improved performance.

Some interviewees external to the reform initiative suggested that the review might not result in change, with CINTRI and the government striking a deal to allow CINTRI's contract to continue. However, the Foundation team believed, on the basis of their relationships with City Hall and the MoE, that change was afoot. On that basis, they suggested that any new system should be structured according to three to four 'clusters' of Khans—primarily because allowing each of the city's 12 Khans to procure and monitor their own waste collection service would be unwieldy as Khan Councils lack the management capacity to perform such a function, and it is unlikely that waste collection for a single Khan would prove profitable—especially in the outer Khans where collection is more difficult and residents are less willing to pay for service. Instead, the reform team advocated a clustered approach, where more profitable inner Khans would be combined with less profitable outer Khans to make up three to four clusters across the city. This would ensure that each cluster represents a profitable opportunity for waste collection companies. It would also be more appropriate, given the scarcity of waste collection companies in Cambodia—something that the Foundation and the government believe would change if the single provider system is removed. City Hall was keen on this clustered approach; however, the MoE advocated for a Khan-by-Khan contracting system.

At the time of preparing this report at the end of 2015, no further statements had been made about the review. The position of key players, like the Minister

of Interior, remains unknown. The Foundation team learned that the CINTRI contract has jurisdiction in Singapore and New York, leaving open the possibility of CINTRI taking legal action there if they feel the terms of their contract have been breached. This is likely something the government will be keen to avoid. 2015 was marked by moves and counter-moves on the part of the government and CINTRI, attempting to increase the stakes for each in cancelling or retaining the current contract. Following the announcement by the government of the review of CINTRI's contract, in March 2015, CINTRI sold a controlling stake in the company to a Chinese businessman. While the reasons for the sale are not known, it has been suggested that it makes cancellation of CINTRI's contract more complicated for the government, given Cambodia's valued relations with China. In July 2015, Electricité du Cambodge announced that it would no longer take payment for waste collection services as part of the electricity bill, forcing CINTRI to develop its own payment system (although it is not clear whether this will happen in practice). To some extent the pressure being placed on CINTRI seems to be improving performance (if only to ensure they retain their contract). For example, the reform team reports that hand cart collection is now underway in some hard-to-reach communities and trucks have been improved.

While the reform team's activities largely wound down in May, a workshop was held in August 2015 to launch the research undertaken by ITC and COMPED, with government, CINTRI, civil society, and journalists in attendance (Turton 2015). This workshop underlined the problem of solid waste collection and disposal, and was intended to keep political attention focused on these issues. Questions were asked about the possibility of a multi-provider collection system, with City Hall commenting that it was working on this. A follow-up meeting was hosted by City Hall in September 2015 where a number of changes were announced, many of which built on the Foundation's reform efforts to date.

City Hall asked CINTRI to select the number of Khans in which they can realistically deliver services, and indicated that all collection companies will have to pay for focal points in each Sangkat to liaise with the public on problems such as waste build up, fee complaints, collection issues, and so on. In addition, action plans are to be developed at the Khan level by Khan authorities and the waste collection provider to determine the necessary labor and equipment to service the area, which will then be included in Khan-level sub-contracts. This is to include more widespread pushcart services for areas without road access. CINTRI responded that

they could deliver services to all 12 Khans but it is unclear whether this will be accepted by City Hall, and if not, how this sits with the existing contract, which as far as is known, remains in place. City Hall also announced that two new landfills will be opened with assistance from the MoE. This should ease the problem of long transport delays in dropping waste at the landfill and thus allow for improved collection service. While it is difficult to determine the degree to which the Foundation's reform attempts led to these particular announcements, it is striking the degree to which many of the changes announced mirror the reforms that the team has been working toward.

Space for change also appeared to open up in relation to waste value recovery—a component of programming that the reform initiative decided was not ripe for reform back in April 2014. In early 2015, it emerged that City Hall was considering proposals from a number of waste-to-energy facilities, which could help to address the overall volume of waste being produced by the city. Progress halted, however, due to requests made in the proposals for government subsidies related to the energy feed in tariff in order to make the venture financially viable. This appeared to come as a surprise at City Hall, where those responsible were not keen to provide such subsidies, and the Foundation's team was asked by the Deputy Governor to provide regional comparisons of renewable energy pricing to assist in this regard. As of April 2015, the process again became stuck, with the Governor of Phnom Penh sitting on his decision about which waste-to-energy proposal to support. At the September 2015 meeting, City Hall announced waste-to-energy proposals would not be taken forward, given the prohibitive cost of such systems. Instead, City Hall will contract a private company to undertake composting at the landfill.

4. Issues and Challenges

While the previous section has set out what the reform team did and why, this section explains how the team worked by exploring a number of process issues related to the reform network's roles, management, knowledge gathering, learning, and working politically.

4.1 REFORM TEAM ROLES AND MANAGEMENT

The Foundation team in the Cambodia case is small, with just three full-time Asia Foundation staff members. As a result, they have drawn on a wider Cambodian reform network. Each player in this reform initiative has been leveraged to perform a particular role, and to fill particular gaps—whether that be technical skills, political connections, or understanding Cambodian politics.

4.1.1 The Asia Foundation's role in reform

Unlike some other models of 'working politically' (see for instance, Booth 2014), in Cambodia, the Foundation has played the leading role in the reform effort. While in other contexts, the Foundation has a local partner to spearhead the effort, no Cambodian organization was found to take on this role, in part due to politics and capacity in the Cambodian context.

Yet despite the team's concerns about taking on the lead role, it did not prove to be problematic. The Foundation was viewed as neutral by both City Hall and CINTRI, as well as by civil society partners. This was helped by the low profile approach taken by The Asia Foundation in Cambodia, where it is not associated with particular policies or advocacy positions. Nonetheless, concerns were raised about sustainability if the Foundation acted as the reform lead, and also about reputational risk from any problems with reform attempts. In addition, some team members raised the possibility that City Hall and CINTRI did not oppose team activities because they thought the Foundation was not influential enough to threaten vested interests. Given this, it was possible that what appeared to be acceptance by key actors was actually strategic complacency—they did not believe the Foundation could actually affect change.

The process of learning the technical aspects of solid waste management challenges turned out to be useful in building relations with City Hall. Foundation staff members' initial lack of technical knowledge meant that their first priority was building technical knowledge and relationships in the sector. This required a lot of effort early on—commissioning research, reaching out to technical specialists, and finding the appropriate counterparts within government. Thus, it probably took slightly longer to launch the reform strategy but this likely aided City Hall's learning, and perhaps even CINTRI's. In fact, the process of learning through pilots and commissioned research meant that the Foundation was not perceived as having all the answers but rather as learning alongside their counterparts. This may have actually worked better than would have been the case if the team had greater initial knowledge.

The drawback, of course, is that acting as the reform lead rather than facilitating a local reform network means that when the initiative ends, so too does the momentum surrounding the reform. While the initiative appears to be leaving in its wake a committed government reform process, it is unclear how that will unfold in as murky a political context as Cambodia's. Continuing to have a trusted external voice to push the reform process along and provide strategic interventions when needed, would no doubt be helpful to encourage sustainability.

4.1.2 Flexible contracts and grants

In terms of the wider network and partners that the Foundation drew on, these were largely flexible enough to work within the changing reform strategy through flexible TORs and directly sourced small grants and contracts. This flexibility included a high level of personal interaction with contractors and grantees to ensure they were on track in contributing to broad outcomes.

Both consultants (the Political Liaison and Political Advisor) had broadly articulated terms of reference and understood that their roles may well require a range of tasks. In this way, the formal TORs were underpinned by a wider agreement about what was required to achieve reform. Grants and contracts had more specified TORs, but, in general, these were for relatively discrete, low budget activities (perhaps with the exception of the ITC contracted research, which was the biggest investment of the initiative). These grants and contracts were essentially 'small bets', allowing the initiative to trial multiple activities

that were, in themselves, relatively set, but that as a portfolio, represented a diversity of approaches.

Given the importance of political know-how and disposition to working politically and flexibly, five out of the seven grants and contracts for this initiative were highly selective, and therefore sole sourced. In each case, the Foundation team spent significant time finding the right person or partner—one that possessed technical ability but also relationships and a reform-minded disposition. Such ways of working required the knowledgeable use of The Asia Foundation's procurement procedures—for example, writing justifications for sole-sourced contracts that explained why a specific expert had been selected for a role, rather than relying on open tendering. Budget limits on grants and contracts for sole sourcing also had to be navigated. Of course, 'working politically' cannot be at the expense of oversight and accountability, but oversight and accountability have to be applied in a manner suited to political and flexible ways of working. Interestingly, how funding was spent under the reform initiative was not dissimilar to the Foundation's strong reliance on grants to local organizations across many of its programs and country offices, including those not funded by the DFAT–TAF Partnership. In this case, what was unique about the ways in which such civil society partners were brought on board was the focused use of sole sourcing, based on decisions about viable partners, and the piecing together of multiple partners on multiple projects to create a diversified or multifaceted approach to solving a single problem.

4.1.3 Management
Each grantee or contractor had a contact within the Foundation team, who was responsible for day-to-day communication, while the Program Manager had overall budget responsibility. Good working relationships existed between the Foundation team and all grantees and contractors, with regular informal communication, at times on a daily basis. In part, this was possible because the relationships with grantees and contractors were divided among the three Foundation staff. This also enabled the building of personal relationships between these partners and the staff responsible for them, which facilitated important knowledge sharing. This would not likely have resulted from a more centralized reporting system in which a single Foundation contact point would not have sufficient time to build relationships with each grantee and contractor.

Within the Foundation team, personnel management tended to be 'light touch'. The Program Manager

described his approach as "hands off", preferring improvisation to detailed planning. This meant that staff had to be able to work well independently, without the need for constant direction. They also had to be fast learners who could get up to speed quickly with 'good enough' technical knowledge and have excellent communication skills, enabling them to build relationships with key stakeholders. While the team was largely familiar with what each member was doing, they had a high degree of discretion in how they approached their areas of responsibility. In practice, this means that not all good programmers will necessarily be good at working politically and flexibly, and teams will need to be specially crafted if the aim is to work in these ways.

Due to the short timeframe and limited funds the reform initiative had available, towards the end of the initiative, the Program Manager was increasingly preoccupied with writing proposals for further funding. In addition, the Program Officer left for a new job in the final months of programming, leaving just two full time Foundation staff during the final reform push. The uncertainty of future funding clearly impacted the team and meant that towards the end of programming, priorities such as securing future funding and job security necessarily distracted the team from the reform itself.

4.2 RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE GATHERING

Most of the changes to the reform strategy over time were due to the team acquiring new information and adjusting their understanding of the problem. This suggests that the role of knowledge is especially critical in working politically and flexibly. Information was attained through a number of means: commissioned research, activities, news and social media, and—most importantly—relationships. Good quality, up-to-date knowledge was an important currency for the reform team, as this had largely been missing on solid waste management in Phnom Penh. This enabled the Foundation to usefully position itself as a reliable information provider to government (both City Hall and the MoE) as well as CINTRI.

The commissioned research improved the reform team's technical knowledge and also served two additional purposes. First, it provided a launch pad for building political relationships. For instance, the ITC research on the volume and composition of waste provided a hook to obtain a meeting with the Minister of Environment—a relationship that proved critical when the contract review approach was adopted in the later stages of the reform initiative. Second, it

provided the opportunity to test out partners to see whether they might be suitable for other work on the reform initiative. For instance, this was the approach taken with COMPED; the Foundation team initially contracted research to test their viability to become the reform lead. While this role was not feasible, given COMPED's poor relations with a key City Hall counterpart, using research commissions to explore possibilities was a small investment which, at the same time, delivered useful technical knowledge.

Non-research activities also contributed to the team's knowledge. For example, conducting activities like clean up days, producing advertisements for City Hall and, conducting the inner and outer Khan pilots, all enabled the reform team to become more familiar with the challenges of waste collection throughout the city. They also helped to build relationships with City Hall, Khan Governors, and CINTRI that yielded important knowledge. This kind of activity-based learning was not only implicit—in the way that everyone continues to 'learn through doing'—but also an explicit strategy by which the team used activities to fulfill not just their actual purpose, but also to serve additional functions. This is critical when working with small budgets and short timeframes, as it strategically leverages resources and time to achieve results at multiple levels. Thus, activities like the inner Khan pilot enabled not just the Foundation to learn more about the solid waste collection challenges but also enabled City Hall and CINTRI to learn about these challenges through their engagement. The Foundation built closer relations too with both of these partners, yielding further information and knowledge about aspects of the problem. Investments could thus be seen to deliver at multiple levels.

In addition, the Cambodian reform team staff checked local news and social media sites daily, keeping up to date with widely reported political events that could play an important role in shaping reform possibilities. Facebook, in particular, is popular with Cambodian political commentators and such social media information sources were important in ensuring that reform team staff were up to date with the latest political developments. Local staff who are aware of, and already linked into such fora, are thus an invaluable asset. Importantly, time was specifically set aside for these activities—sending the message that being aware of political developments was an initiative priority, not merely something to be done in one's spare time or outside of office hours.

Finally, all staff pointed to the relationships they cultivated as the most important source of information. It was through relationships (and through informal, rather than formal, meetings) that many of the key bits of information that altered the reform strategy were obtained—most notably about the government's appetite for breaking the current single provider system. Importantly, many of these relationships were brokered through informal, rather than formal, channels. For instance, links to the MoE were through one of the reform team's school friends. Links to the Ministry of Interior—although never fully utilized—were through a reform team member's relative. Also, the Technical Advisor was seen as a useful CINTRI insider because of his connections with the company's owner. Thus, the people brought into the team were recruited not only for their technical knowledge or competence, but also for their political connections and their ability to build relationships at the political level. According to the Senior Program Officer, "In this project almost 70% of my work is to establish good relationships and take care of good relationships." As both the Program Manager and Country Representative were expatriates, local staff played critically important roles in brokering relationships. In part, this was a language issue as neither expatriate spoke Khmer. However, it was also a cultural issue. The Program Manager spoke of his reliance on the Senior Program Officer, in particular, when navigating the intricacies of political dialogue in Cambodia.

Because the information that came to the team was often through relationships, it usually came informally to one individual, rather than as a formal communication to the team as a whole. Those within the team who had personal connections to the Deputy Governor, City Hall Waste Management Division, CINTRI, etc. were thus likely to acquire particular bits of information that others in the team were not likely to have. One potential danger with this way of working is that knowledge may stay with the individual, rather than be passed on to the whole team, and prevent a strategic response to important new information. In the Cambodia case, this did not appear to have been a problem, and information flowed freely among the core Foundation team and the Political Liaison. This occurred despite there being no formal process such as team meetings for sharing the new information that individuals picked up from their contacts. Instead, as team members explained, when one of the team learned a new piece of information, they shared it with the other two team members, and the Program Manager would decide whether it was sufficiently important to prompt a group discussion on strategy. In the opaque political environment of Cambodia, it was often difficult to verify the validity of information, and the team had to be savvy about how much they relied on it.

4.3 LEARNING AND ITERATION

As is apparent in section 3, working politically and flexibly to achieve a cleaner Phnom Penh has involved many twists and turns in strategy. Few development programs have the ability to change course so easily and so regularly. In the case of the Foundation's 'working politically in practice' initiatives, this was, in part, facilitated by Strategy Testing. As set out earlier, Strategy Testing served as a quarterly reporting function to the Foundation's regional PSIL Unit, but more importantly, was also a new programming tool to encourage reflection on programming choices, ensure ongoing relevance to the context, and enable iterative approaches. While some staff may well have already been acting in similar ways, Strategy Testing formalized the process within the DFAT–TAF Partnership initiatives. In the Cambodia experience, dedicated Strategy Testing sessions were held on a quarterly basis and provided a space for the team to come together for half a day to a day to discuss the status of the initiative, how activities were going, where problems remained, and whether current approaches continued to be the best ways to achieve the desired reform.

Between Strategy Testing meetings, team members were encouraged to continue this kind of thinking—reflecting on and assessing the relevance of the current course of action so that this became the program culture. As a result, some shifts in strategy were decided through discussion at the Strategy Testing sessions themselves, while others emerged throughout the course of programming and were formally captured during Strategy Testing sessions but may have guided programming prior to this. In this way Strategy Testing was broader than just the Strategy Testing sessions. While the sessions were the formal process for triggering learning and adaptation, Strategy Testing was also more broadly an approach or way of working that encouraged much more regular, critical testing of strategies and their assumptions. Conceiving of Strategy Testing as simply the sessions alone misses this wider culture of critical reflection that makes the sessions meaningful.

The sessions provided a forum for the team to come together to discuss the overall reform—an important function, given that team meetings did not tend to happen otherwise, although there were regular discussions between individual team members. In addition, the sessions went beyond simply an update on activities, to a genuine interrogation of approach. In the words of the Program Officer, *"Strategy Testing is to remind us what is the goal and how we ... [achieve] our goal ... how we get there."* All team members, however, were not always comfortable with this.

Strategy Testing will undoubtedly face some resistance as it attempts to dislodge people from their everyday ways of working—but, as in the Cambodia case, it can enable a frank discussion of options and their benefits and drawbacks. This is strikingly different, and a vast improvement, from programming approaches in which strategic thinking may go into the design, but then implementation carries on without revisiting the design and the assumptions on which it was predicated.

The fact that Strategy Testing doubled as a reporting mechanism freed up more time for the Program Manager to get on with the reform, rather than the administrative work supporting the reform. The Program Manager noted that compared to the 80–90 page reports he had produced previously for a donor, which required "a lot of grunt work that doesn't move the program forward," the Strategy Testing documentation was simply a summary of a useful discussion with the team. It was thus both 'lighter touch' and perceived as more useful for programming.

There were, however, some important factors that enabled Strategy Testing to work in this manner. First, Strategy Testing relies on leaders to implement it not just as a tool, but as a learning culture. In the Cambodia case, the Program Manager led the Strategy Testing sessions and was clearly key to pushing staff towards new ways of thinking and working. The rest of the Foundation team (and the Political Liaison, who attended Strategy Testing sessions) embraced this, but had varying levels of risk tolerance, and it took some adjustment to get used to the levels of uncertainty that regular shifts in strategy can create. One staff member new to Strategy Testing explained how after sessions they often felt disconcerted—like the ground had been pulled from under their feet.

There is a danger that without strong leadership behind Strategy Testing to inculcate it as more than simply a series of meetings and forms, it could risk becoming a tick box exercise, with programs choosing to stay on track and simply deciding the current strategy is best. Alternatively, Strategy Testing could also risk creating morale problems within the team—with frequent changes in direction without energy and excitement, sapping team drive to get on with implementation. One way that the Foundation aimed to prevent such risks was by having the PSIL Unit review all Strategy Testing documentation, using this as a way to monitor initiatives, as well as to ensure that the critical

engagement which the Strategy Testing process was meant to encourage, was happening in practice.

In addition to having a Strategy Testing leader, is the importance of ensuring some degree of external challenge to the reform team. A key role in Strategy Testing in Cambodia was that of the Country Representative, who joined some of the Strategy Testing sessions. His input importantly provided a slightly 'bigger picture' view that was not as clouded by the details of every day program activities. The Country Representative was thus able to raise questions about how current activities related to the early ambitions of the initiative.

This counters a potential hazard of working 'with the grain' of reforms and as 'insiders.' Working within the institutions which one is trying to change makes it easy to get caught up in the status quo, internalizing assumptions and modes of thinking that from the outside would be easier to question. Ensuring some degree of external 'challenge' in Strategy Testing sessions, such as that provided by the Country Representative, played an important role in guarding against this. This was especially relevant when the Foundation itself is part of, or leads, the reform team (in contrast, to where the Foundation operates as a coordinator of the reform team and can play this role of challenging assumptions more easily). It therefore seems incredibly useful to include someone in the Strategy Testing sessions with less direct engagement in the reform and a slightly wider view. This role could be played by a Country Representative, a strategic advisor, an 'action researcher' following the reform, or even someone external to the Foundation, but who has a close relationship with them. The PSIL Unit also played this questioning role when their staff attended some Cambodia Strategy Testing sessions and also reviewed all of the initiative's Strategy Testing documentation.

Finally, one limitation of the DFAT–TAF partnership, at least in Cambodia, that affected Strategy Testing, was the short timeframe of the reform initiative. This meant that the reform team had a very condensed time period in which to build relationships, acquire both technical and political insider knowledge, and synthesize that into an evolving strategy that fit what was known at the time. This condensed time period meant that decisions had to be made quickly—in some cases quicker than was comfortable for staff—in order to achieve as much as possible within the limited time available. It also meant that the basis for decisions was largely the subjective perceptions of the team, rather than established criteria against which to measure performance. That is, in many cases, when strategies were embarked upon, criteria by which to judge their effectiveness were not set, and thus deciding whether to continue or to change course was not always guided by predetermined criteria. Of course, all strategic decisions ultimately involve a large degree of judgment, but putting down some markers as to what a team intends to get out of a particular strategy at the outset could help in making decisions further down the line about the effectiveness of the strategy, and whether it should be continued or abandoned.

These have been referred to as 'actionable metrics' (Faustino and Booth 2014: 18), drawing on business entrepreneur literature – although as these authors note, 'metrics' should be loosely translated as 'measures' or 'criteria' as they will often not be quantifiable (and indeed, recognizing the role of non-quantitative indicators is critically important). While it is a significant improvement on conventional programming that the reform team was constantly revisiting their strategy to respond to reform dynamics, it does not mean that the strategies being chosen are necessarily more effective. Some team members indicated that they would have liked more time to research and investigate potential strategies before committing to jump from one to another— which would require longer timeframes. This may, of course, reflect team members being pushed beyond their comfort zone by flexible programming, but it might also reflect the drawbacks of demanding quick adaptation to a changing context without developing criteria by which to judge the emerging results of strategies or investigate whether new approaches are the right ones.

4.4 WORKING POLITICALLY

The phrase 'working politically' has become, at times, unhelpful shorthand that hides a variety of modes of working. This sub-section clarifies what 'working politically' meant to the reform team in Cambodia, before examining how the team operationalized this way of working.

With the Program Manager having worked previously with the Foundation in the Philippines on a program that devised the 'Development Entrepreneurship' (DE) model, it is not surprising that this influenced the Cambodian reform and that the Foundation team described their ways of working as DE. This is not to say that there was a rigid model which the team was trying to apply, but rather that the concepts and roles inherent in the DE model were talked about, and they framed the Cambodian team's thinking about their ways of working. Therefore, what they meant requires elaboration.

The team clearly saw the problem of solid waste management as political in nature—it was not about technical capability or financial constraints as those could be overcome with the right incentives. Rather, they saw the problem as lack of political motivation, given entrenched interests. Thus, there was a perceived need to 'work politically'. In the words of the Program Manager:

> You can't hope for this kind of political support to fall out of the sky in the way of "champions" because politics in these places is biased against people being good politicians who have the public interest at heart. You're just hoping for coins to fall from heaven … [They] do come but they're not reliable.

Working politically therefore required an entrepreneurial approach in which team members had to operate as a "jack of all trades", as the Political Liaison described it. The Foundation team described their approach to building relationships as making themselves useful to those they were trying to get to know. By starting with what key actors in the reform process needed, rather than what the Foundation needed, the team members were able to build trust and use this to build an understanding of the problem, receive privileged information, and feed in ideas. This was about "facilitating, not dictating" change, according to the Senior Program Officer. It is an approach to a problem that begins with understanding power and how those with power can be persuaded, pressured, or incentivized to support a reform.

And because the politics never stay constant, working politically also required that the team work flexibly. As described by the Senior Program Officer:

> Waste management is a business. And business is similar to politics. And nothing stays certain in either forever. Other projects have been more like a formula that stays the same throughout the project—this is not the case in this project. It is more of a battlefield—so we have to move situation to situation—the overall objective stays the same but we move with the situation … Sometimes we plan something realistic and then one month later it's not realistic.

Flexibility was described by the Program Officer as being key to being able to move around political blockages. This was pointed to as a key difference to conventional programming—"they do all their planning up front, then sometimes get blocked. We can get around that."

Operationalizing this approach to working politically required two moves by the reform team—first, being politically informed, and second, being politically active. First, as set out in section 4.3, the team's knowledge gathering took a number of forms, and was often deeply political. Relationships were cultivated for the purposes of obtaining information that could shed light on the murkiness that surrounded solid waste management in Phnom Penh. In the same vein, research was commissioned and activities undertaken for the explicit purpose of building and testing relationships that were seen as useful for gaining information. This meant that activities were not only undertaken for their explicit contribution to achieving the overall reform strategy, but also for their implicit contribution to knowledge and relationships, and for putting the team on a better footing in terms of the unfolding situation. This also meant that the team was well placed to receive privileged information that allowed members to position themselves more strategically to achieve the desired reform.

The second step in this operationalization was doing something with the information obtained—not just being politically informed but also being politically active. Being politically active is made possible—or at least, certainly made more effective—by being politically informed, but it is somewhat distinct. It is possible, for instance, to imagine a team that has accrued excellent knowledge of unfolding political dynamics and is thus politically informed, but does not engage further. The Foundation team was politically active when they translated or leveraged their accrued knowledge into strategic actions that sought to influence the political dynamics at play. For instance, because the team had inside knowledge about the appetite in City Hall and the MoE for renegotiating the CINTRI contract to enable a multi-collector waste collection system, before this information became more widely known, the Foundation had time to develop and feed in ideas. These concerned what the structure of a future system might look like in terms of the number of providers, the division of the city between them, etc. Similarly, partnering with City Hall on the Rockefeller Foundation's *100 Resilient Cities* project was based on an awareness of City Hall's interests and a recognition of the political relationships, information, and access that working on the proposal would enable. A key component of working politically in this case was therefore using activities and opportunities not purely for their direct purpose, but for other indirect purposes—such as building relationships, accruing information, and providing entry points for advice and influence.

It is fair to say that the Foundation team made greater ground in being politically informed than in being politically active—primarily because time constraints meant that there was limited time to deploy their accrued political knowledge. In addition, the relatively closed political space in Cambodia made it difficult for the reform team to access some of the relevant actors, like the Ministry of Interior and the Council of Ministers, to attempt to influence them. This speaks to some of the limitations on being able to work politically in highly centralized political contexts where political power is structured precisely to keep out influences external to the government and the interests of its elite. It was also due to the timeframes available to the team—there was an acknowledgement of the need to reach out to the MoI, but simply not enough time (or staff) available to do so.

There were also limits to working flexibly. For instance, even with the flexibility provided by the Foundation's partnership with DFAT, a number of activities continued even when the team felt they were no longer useful. For instance, delays in completing the COMPED research, which included a strong focus on waste value recovery, meant it was being carried out after the team had decided that waste value recovery was not an area ripe for reform or that they could readily influence. And engagement with CINTRI on internal reforms continued beyond the point when the majority of the team felt this would yield results. This highlights that even in the most favorable of circumstances, complete flexibility is likely an illusion. Considerations like organizational reputation, maintaining relationships with partners and key individuals, and sunk costs all place some constraints on flexibility. In addition, concerns about changing course too often—in a manner that cuts short activities coming to fruition—can encourage continuation of activities.

Working politically in Cambodia was about leveraging acquired political knowledge and active use of that knowledge to build relationships with key individuals whose interests appeared to align for the sake of the reform. The reform initiative successfully engaged key government allies in putting in place a process by which the long-term, city-wide, single provider contract for solid waste management could be reviewed. As to whether the contract will, in fact, be changed, or whether CINTRI's political networks will deliver an alternative compromise, had yet to be seen by the end of 2015.

5. Conclusions

It is, of course, too early to talk about results of the reform initiative in Cambodia. While recent events suggest that CINTRI's waste collection contract is set to be amended by the government, it was not yet a certainty at the time this paper was finalized at the end of 2015. Moreover, it is far from clear whether opening up waste collection to greater competition will, in fact, lead to better solid waste management practices and a cleaner Phnom Penh—the initiative's ultimate goal. Indeed, while the reform team has tried to feed in ideas to City Hall about how contracting processes might be better designed and managed to improve performance, their strategy puts a large amount of faith in the role that competition could play in driving improved performance.

In addition, it is difficult at this stage to determine how much the possibility of contract revocation can be attributed to the reform initiative. While it is clear that the reform team built some important relationships, drew significant political attention to the problems with solid waste collection through its commissioned research and the inner and outer Khan pilots, and provided City Hall and the MoE with useful information to develop an alternative collection system, it is difficult to say if this prompted the review of the CINTRI contract. Rather, the initiative's efforts seem to have coincided with a moment of change within government which has made the reform possible. More directly, the Foundation's reform attempts do seem to have encouraged greater action by City Hall in attempting to shape the future of waste collection services in Phnom Penh. City Hall's September 2015 meeting saw a number of changes introduced, albeit within the context of the unchanged contract, that push waste collection companies (currently still only CINTRI) towards improved service. This meeting saw City Hall adopt a number of the changes which the Foundation had been promoting.

What the reform team members have been able to do is influence the shape that the reform appears to be taking. The relationships the Foundation built with key individuals in City Hall and the MoE mean that the team was able to provide information about the nature of the problem and potential solutions, and this appears to have shaped their thinking in relation to the future waste collection system and (to a lesser extent) waste value recovery options. Whether this will result in changes in waste collection and waste value recovery

in practice remains to be seen, and ultimately can only be assessed in the longer term. In addition, the pilots had some important smaller-scale results—with the outer Khan pilot visibly improving the cleanliness of Chbar Ampov, with important environmental and health benefits for that community. The use of GPS systems on garbage trucks in the inner Khan pilot also appears to have encouraged CINTRI to continue and extend this as a method for monitoring collection, with likely improvements in waste collection.

Yet this case study has been not so much focused on results as on the process of working politically. While others have been documenting the results obtained through working politically (see for instance Booth and Unsworth 2014; Booth 2014; and Booth and Chambers 2014), this case study has aimed to shed light on how practitioners go about operationalizing the investment in good thinking that has defined the need to work politically. This study aims to move the debate beyond the conceptual level to the practical level, enabling others to learn from this experience and trial similarly flexible and politically astute ways of working.

Working politically in practice might best be described as understanding and influencing the interests and incentives of stakeholders to create changes that would result in developmental dividends. In Cambodia, in this case, it is understanding and influencing the interests and incentives of the government, CINTRI, and to a lesser extent communities themselves to alter solid waste collection practices (whether that be through ending the current collection contract or developing improved collection methods) to achieve a cleaner Phnom Penh with environmental and health improvements for citizens. This required understanding stakeholder incentives and interests, which in turn required significant investments in relationship building—at times investing in projects not for their direct purpose (which might be of limited value) but for the indirect purposes of information gathering and relationship building. It also required figuring out which changes were most likely to produce the developmental dividend being sought and, in turn, requiring technical knowledge and an experimental approach to programming and learning. The flexibility to facilitate this manner of working politically was critical and possible due to the institutional support of the Foundation's PSIL Unit and the funding modality provided by DFAT. Without both, the initiative

would have struggled to find the requisite space for experimentation and the ability to change tack when the team deemed this necessary.

This case study suggests that teams or individuals can 'work politically,' based on their own approaches and skill strengths but also that their ability to do so can be enabled or constrained by the wider institutional procedures they must work within. While working politically depends on having the right people involved who understand the flexible, adaptive, and relationships-based mode of working, this can, of course, be encouraged or stymied by institutional realities such as management tools and their stringencies (note that the word 'logframe' has been pleasantly missing from this report), reporting mechanisms, hiring, and contract and grant procurement processes, and funding modalities. The degree to which a team or individual is able to work politically will depend, in part, on how enabling or constraining such features are. This is not to suggest that it is not possible to work politically in more constraining environments—indeed, it is the programming approaches taken by teams or individuals that seem to matter most—but it will likely look different to the way working politically manifested in Cambodia in this instance.

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Annex 1: Interview List

Community Leader, Sangkat Domsleng, Khan Chbar Ampov, Phnom Penh.

Community Organiser, Khan Chbar Ampov, Phnom Penh.

Country Representative, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung Cambodia Office.

Country Representative, The Asia Foundation Cambodia Office.

Deputy Director of Waste Management Division, Phnom Penh Capital Hall.

Deputy Governor, Khan Chbar Ampov, Phnom Penh.

Deputy Secretary-General, Ministry of Environment, Cambodia.

Director and Vice-Director and Composting Project Manager, Cambodian Education and Waste Management Organisation (COMPED).

Director of Research, Head of Department and Environmental Engineering Specialist and Lecturer, Department of Rural Engineering, Institut de Technologie du Cambodge (ITC).

Executive Director, Urban Poor Women's Development (UPWD).

Intern, GPS/GIS Daun Penh Pilot, Urban Services Program, The Asia Foundation Cambodia Office.

Managing Director, RLS International, Phnom Penh.

Operations Manager, CINTRI.

Political Advisor, Urban Services Program, The Asia Foundation Cambodia Office.

Political Liaison, Urban Services Program, The Asia Foundation Cambodia Office.

Program Manager, Urban Services Program, The Asia Foundation Cambodia Office.

Program Officer, Urban Services Program, The Asia Foundation Cambodia Office.

Program Officer, The Asia Foundation Cambodia Office.

Project Formulation Advisor, Urban Environmental Infrastructure/Climate Change, JICA Cambodia Office.

Resettled family, Sangkat Trapang Anchanh, Khan Por Senchey, Phnom Penh.

Sangkat Chief, Sangkat Domsleng, Khan Chbar Ampov, Phnom Penh.

Sangkat Chief, Sangkat Trapang Anchanh, Khan Por Senchey, Phnom Penh.

Second Secretary (Development Cooperation), Australian Embassy Phnom Penh.

Senior Manager (Research and Development), CINTRI Ltd.

Senior Program Officer, Urban Services Program, The Asia Foundation Cambodia Office.

Technical Advisor, Urban Services Program, The Asia Foundation Cambodia Office.

Waste Collectors, Khan Chbar Ampov, Phnom Penh.

Annex 2: Administrative structures in Cambodia
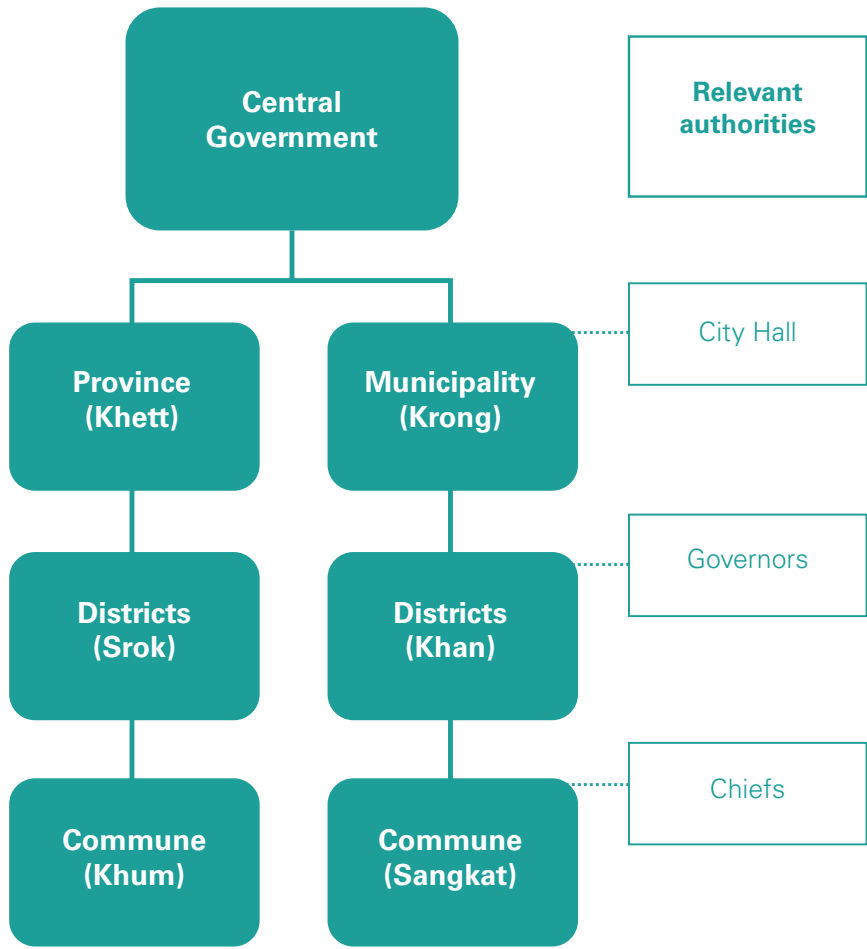
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