

Regional Dialogue on Open Data in the Mekong Countries: Challenges and Opportunities

Date: Monday, October 27, 2025

Time: 8:00 AM – 4:30 PM

Location: Sunway Hotel Phnom Penh

Background

The Mekong region has seen significant growth in open data initiatives, reflecting a broader commitment by governments and civil society to promote transparency, accountability, and citizen engagement. Governments in these countries are actively developing policies and programs to support open data, aiming to strengthen public service delivery, facilitate evidence-based decision-making, and foster sustainable development. However, meaningful consultation with CSOs in policy development remains limited, presenting ongoing challenges. At the same time, civil society organizations, researchers, and key stakeholders are leveraging open data to inform advocacy, improve program effectiveness, and engage communities. Despite these advances, challenges remain, including issues of data accessibility, quality, standardization, and the effective use of data by CSOs and regional partners. Addressing these challenges and seizing emerging opportunities will be critical to realizing the full potential of open data in the Mekong region.

This dialogue brings together CSO representatives, regional experts, and Open Development Cambodia (ODC) partners and members of Cooperation Committee for Cambodia (CCC) to share experiences, discuss challenges, and identify opportunities for collaboration in open data across the Mekong countries.

Key Objectives

- Share trends and developments in open data across the Mekong region
- Discuss challenges in implementing open data initiatives
- Identify opportunities for collaboration among CSOs and regional partners
- Strengthen regional networks and knowledge exchange on open data
- Collect and consolidate inputs from CSOs to inform the formulation of a collective CSO input report on the draft Open Data Policy for submission to the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications.

Expected Outcomes

- Increased understanding of open data trends and challenges in the Mekong region
- Identification of practical steps for enhancing open data implementation
- Strengthened partnerships between ODC, regional CSOs, and other stakeholders
- Recommendations for future dialogues and collaborative initiatives

- A comprehensive CSO input report on the draft Open Data Policy submitted to the Ministry of Post and Telecommunications.

Expected Participants: 50, including CSO representatives, researchers, and key organizations working on or interested in open data initiatives.

Tentative agenda

Time	Topics
08:00 – 09:00	Registration, Coffee, and Networking
09:00 – 09:10	Welcome Remarks <i>Mr. Thy Try, ODC Executive Director</i>
09:10 – 09:20	Welcome Remarks <i>Ms. Sin Putheary, CCC Executive Director</i>
09:20 – 09:30	Opening Remarks - Why should the government consider CSOs as key stakeholders? - How can an Open Data policy explicitly mandate the use of public data for independent monitoring and evaluation by NGOs and media, solidifying their role as essential accountability partners? - What are the challenges for CSOs to implement Open data policy? - Given disparities in digital literacy between urban and rural areas, how can an Open Data strategy be designed to ensure data is accessible, relevant, and useful to marginalized communities, not just urban tech developers? - How can a robust Open Data policy be leveraged to accelerate Cambodia's own <i>Digital Economy and Society Policy Framework 2021-2035</i>, moving beyond infrastructure and into demonstrable public value? - For Cambodian NGOs already engaged in data work, what is the single most impactful step they can take right now to prepare for, and proactively advocate for, the successful implementation of a forthcoming Open Data policy? <i>Ms. Stephanie Chow, First Secretary – Political, Australian Embassy in Cambodia</i>
09:30 – 09:35	Group Photo
09:35 – 09:40	Introduction of Participants & Objectives of the Dialogue <i>Ms. Wen-Ling (Amy) Lai, Program and Strategy Associate of ODC</i>
09:40 – 10:10	Session 1: Open Data Trends in the Mekong Region <i>Presented by Ms. Pyrou Chung, Director of Open Development Initiative, EWMI</i>
10:10 – 11:10	Session 2: Challenges in Open Data Implementation - Panel discussion with ODC team, OD Vietnam, and OD Thailand Speakers:

	• Ms. Nga Nguyen, National Coordinator of Open Development Vietnam, Open Development Initiative, EWMI • Ms. Saowalak (Aey) Jingjungvisut, Partnerships and Communications Manager, Open Development Mekong, EWMI Q&A Moderator: Mr. Poren Chiang, Digital Law Researcher and Advisory Committee Member of Cambodia ICT and Digital Forum (CamIDF)
11:10 – 12:00	Session 3: Opportunities and Future Directions Interactive discussion / brainstorming session Speaker: • Ms. Tran Thi Tuyet, Program Manager, Institute for Policy Studies and Media Development (IPS) Q&A Moderator: Mr. Vamoeurn Nimol, Researcher and Lecturer, Institute of Technology of Cambodia (ITC)
12:00 – 13:30	Lunch and Networking
13:30 – 14:30	Session 4: CSOs' contribution to Cambodia's Open data policy Presentation: around 15 minutes Questions for discussion: 1. How can the Open Data Policy legally define the role of CSOs to ensure their access to government staff and data is mandated and protected? 2. What criteria should be used to designate the most capable CSO Fellows? 3. How can the success of this partnership be measured? What are the key performance indicators? 4. How can the CSO-Government partnership be leveraged to solve the crucial challenge of cross-ministerial data linkage? 5. As the national Open Data initiative matures, how can the policy be designed to decentralize CSO collaboration and capacity building? What structures are needed to enable local CSOs and community groups to effectively partner with, validate, and utilize data being released by sub-national (provincial, municipal) governments? Presented by Mr. Thy Try, Executive Director of Open Development Cambodia
14:30 – 14:45	Coffee Break and Networking
14:45 – 16:15	Session 5: Implementation accountability and long-term sustainability Presented by: Mr. Poren Chiang, Digital Law Researcher and Advisory Committee Member of Cambodia ICT and Digital Forum (CamIDF) Presentation: around 15 minutes Breakout discussion: around 45 minutes Breakout 1: Mr. Thy Try, Executive Director of Open Development Cambodia

	Breakout 2: <i>Ms. Wen-Ling (Amy) Lai, Program and Strategy Associate of ODC</i> Breakout 3: <i>Mr. Vamoeurn Nimol, Researcher and Lecturer, Institute of Technology of Cambodia (ITC)</i> Plenary Wrap-up: around 10 minutes / group Questions for discussion: 1. Since there is no existing policy, what are the sanctions and correctives actions for ministries that fail to comply with the Open Data Policy's mandates for release and quality? 2. What can be the formal avenues for citizens to challenge a refusal to release open data? 3. Given that highly disaggregated data can risk re-identification and expose vulnerable individuals (indigenous communities or specific victims), what mandatory, multi-layered anonymization and data suppression protocols must the open data policy adopt to legally and ethically protect the privacy of small population groups while maximizing data utility? 4. What specific security and de-identification protocols must be included in the policy to protect sensitive data (personal data, data related to national security, and what is the definition these sensitive data)? 5. How can the policy explicitly (and/or implicitly) promote the release of disaggregated data to benefit marginalized groups?
16:15 – 16:30	Closing Remarks <i>Ms. Sin Kimsean, Representative of the ODC Board of Directors</i>