

# SUCCESS STORY

## Accountability Through LAAR Project

**Key strategy in Cambodia seeks to achieve growth, employment, equity and efficiency**



*Women engage in commune council planning.*

*Increased transparency in financial management by councilors allows citizens to have the satisfaction of knowing their CCs are planning and implementing activities meant to respond directly to their concerns.*

A key part of the strategy of Cambodia's transition to a prosperous future based on economic growth and liberal democracy centers on decentralization of government through the 2002 establishment of local administrative units called commune councils (CCs). From 2005 to 2010, Pact also worked to help increase the government accountability with the Local Administration and Reform (LAAR) project. Government officials in CCs in eight provinces drew on LAAR capacity development activities to improve their administrative and community outreach skills. This led to the creation and maintenance of 2,260 village notice boards that play valuable roles in communicating information about CC activities, increasing public awareness and generating confidence by improving transparency. In addition, CCs have held a total of 658 public forums with 52,128 participants, giving citizens the opportunity to directly question their local representatives and forge a democratic space.

Due to the CCs, ordinary Cambodians are increasingly confident to question and voice their concerns and priorities in the presence of government officials. Councilors listen to citizens, and make efforts to understand, record their comments, and use the combined input to prioritize commune projects. Through LAAR, Pact helped develop the capacity of CCs, local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and citizen committees, supporting locally-driven efforts to increase public participation in commune planning and institutionalize good governance principles and practices at the local level. LAAR used a multi-dimensional approach to empower local civil society to support Cambodia's decentralization process as well as improve governance in the commune councils based on four principles: participation, partnership, transparency, and accountability at the local and national levels.

Pact built the capacity of 13 provincial and local level NGOs in order to offer organizational and administrative training for 356 commune councils in eight provinces. These groups eventually worked with 3,164 commune council members to improve their ability to fulfill their mandates and institutionalize good governance practices. Pact supported the commune councils as they applied their new skills developed through LAAR by awarding over 650 grants to local administrations to implement social development projects.