# GUIDELINE ON THE ROLE AND FUNCTIONING OF THE TECHNICAL WORKING GROUPS

**Part One: Background, Context and Purpose of the Guideline**

Technical Working Groups (TWGs) were established by the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) in 2004 to serve as coordinating bodies and dialogue mechanisms. They bring together Government, development partners and civil society representatives to support the attainment of national development goals set out in the Rectangular Strategy, NSDP and associated sector, thematic and reform programmes of the Government. Informed by the 2010 TWG Guideline, nineteen TWGs currently function across a range of sectoral, thematic and reform programmes.

The over-arching objective of the TWGs is to support Government efforts to: (a) implement sector plans and reforms; (b) mobilise and coordinate all resources; and (c) deliver development results in order to manage all resources to the attainment of priorities of national and sector strategies and plans. TWGs therefore play a supporting and facilitating role and are not intended to substitute for or to duplicate the functions of ministries and agencies.

In order to further promote high levels of performance, TWGs need to periodically review and adapt their partnering arrangements in order to effectively support RGC in achieving development results. A review of TWG performance that was completed in early 2015 identified good practices as well as a number of challenges that can influence TWG ability to realise these objectives. These included the need to adapt to the changing partnership environment together with issues of management, leadership, organisation and implementation. As Cambodia's development rapidly gathers pace and the country moves towards Lower-Middle Income Country status, both the national and sector/thematic context for development cooperation are changing. In particular, Government is mobilizing increased domestic resources; ODA is transitioning from grant to loan; there is an increased number and diversity of external funding sources and partners, some of whom are not active in TWG work; and Cambodia now confronts more complex development challenges that require increased cross-sector collaboration.

This Guideline's purpose is to promote good TWG performance through enhanced RGC ownership and effective partnership. This Guideline therefore sets out accountability structures and working practices for TWG works while also serving as an implementation tool for the RGC Development Cooperation and Partnerships Strategy (2014-2018).

TWGs are encouraged to use this Guideline to strengthen their work, including by ensuring they have a suitable Terms of Reference (ToR), a programme of work that is adapted to their current priorities, and working modalities that are appropriate to their circumstances. Provision is also made in this Guideline for CDC to provide support to TWGs based on requests from TWG Chairs.

**Part Two: Accountability, the Role of TWGs and their Responsibilities**

TWGs are mechanisms for coordination, dialogue and support to implementation of sector/thematic programmes and priority reforms. As such, TWGs are under the management of their host ministries and agencies, which are, in turn, accountable for delivering development results in line with national and sectoral plans and priorities. Consistent with ownership principles, the TWG Chair, as the Government's lead representative in a TWG, is the final decision-making authority. However, the Chair should make every effort to promote dialogue and consensus with due regard for the partnership spirit that underpins the work of TWGs.

Development Partners work in cooperation with their Government counterparts and other national partners to align their resources and direct their development efforts to meet the goals and results established in national and sectoral plans and strategies. Their contribution to the TWG is made both collectively, through a Development Partner (co-)Lead Facilitator, as well as individually, in line with the roles and responsibilities set out in this Guideline.

TWGs report to their host ministries on progress and challenges in terms of sector results, including the Joint Monitoring Indicators (JMIs), progress of public sector reforms and strategic cross-cutting or cross-sectoral issues. Any unresolved issues must also be presented to the host ministry for consideration. In the event of issues that cannot be solved within the TWG or through subsequent dialogue and consultation led by the host ministry then they may be proposed as issues for discussion at GDCC. The preparation of the GDCC and the consolidated report on JMIs implementation is led by CRDB/CDC in consultation with DP Co-Lead Facilitators and with technical support from the P&H TWG Co-Lead Facilitators.

This Guideline presents six areas of work that TWGs are required to include in their Terms of Reference and workplans. Activities within each area of work are discretionary. Organizational principles should be determined by each TWG in order to identify, prioritize and sequence its activities based on agreed need, available resources and existing capacity. Sub-groups may be formed to follow up on specific issues, themes or sub-areas.

TWGs are encouraged to identify their scope of work based on the six functional areas identified in the 2014/15 TWG Performance Review. Once selected, TWG functions should be included in a Terms of Reference and translated into activities in an annual workplan. Priority activities are to be incorporated into the TWG's JMI.

### *(1) Alignment, coordination and resource mobilization/utilisation*
Coordination and resource mobilisation are at the heart of all TWG work. The Development Cooperation and Partnerships Strategy sets out principles, approaches and tools to be employed in the strengthening of partnerships. TWG work should include efforts to:

(i)      Ensure alignment of external funding with national priorities and sector strategies;

(ii)     Promote the use of programme-based approaches and appropriate aid modalities directed to the development, implementation, financing, monitoring and review of the sector strategy;

(iii)    Maintain a record of all on-going externally-funded projects in the Cambodia ODA and NGO Databases (http://cdc.khmer.biz) and use this information for coordination;

(iv)     Identify funding gaps and pipeline projects that will address priority activities included in the sector plan or strategy;

(v)      Support the preparation of the Public Investment Plan (PIP) and sector Budget Strategic Plan (BSP).

### *(2) Policy dialogue*
Dialogue should be based on the development and implementation of a sector/thematic strategy or plan that is linked to the Rectangular Strategy and NSDP. TWGs should:

(i)      Identify sector priorities and prepare/implement a sector/thematic strategy that is related to the Rectangular Strategy and NSDP, includes cross-cutting issues and major Government reforms and addresses capacity development needs (including to

strengthen and use national systems);

(ii)     Identify an annual programme of policy dialogue and/or review. If necessary this can be taken forward through a sub-group;

(iii)    Update and/or consult with TWG members on any other policy initiatives that are relevant to the work of the TWG members, including to identify potential synergies or inconsistencies;

(iv)    Promote dialogue on policy implementation, including progress and challenges, so that learning and adaptation can be promoted;

(v)    Include a focus on the major Government reform programmes, cross-cutting issues and other areas of work that require collaboration across Government in order to identify opportunities for dialogue and mutually-beneficial collaboration.

### (3) Cross-cutting issues

TWGs are mainly theme, reform or sector based and are related to NSDP priorities but must also identify cross-cutting issues that the TWG is expected to support, either through activities within the sector or through collaboration with other RGC Ministries or TWGs. In order to respond to the priorities in the Rectangular Strategy, key cross-cutting issues to be addressed by TWGs may include gender mainstreaming, environment and climate change, and good governance, including the strengthening of a service-oriented public sector that is increasingly responsive to the needs of citizens.

Where cross-sectoral themes are to be addressed the following recommendations should be considered:

(i)     Membership of the TWG must be consistent with the issues to be discussed;

(ii)    Sub-group/s may be considered to allow for specific focus on cross-cutting themes that can then be reported to the main TWG;

(iii)    TWGs are encouraged to nominate focal points from within the host ministry to manage respective cross-cutting issues;

(iv)    Meetings among core members of relevant interconnected TWGs are strongly recommended to ensure consistency and to promote follow-up;

(v)    The GDCC provides an additional opportunity to consider inter-ministerial coordination and cross-sectoral linkages and challenges, which should be highlighted in TWG reporting.

### (4) Capacity development and organizational strengthening

Capacity development activities should be located in the context of on-going public service reforms and should focus on improving organizational performance and the strengthening/use of country systems as well as enhancing technical skills. The following TWG activities can promote effective capacity development:

(i)     Develop a coherent capacity development strategy, based on a needs assessment and functional review, that addresses capacity development at policy, organizational and individual levels;

(ii)    Identify and agree on a rational and Government-led programme for providing technical assistance in the framework of a sector capacity development arrangement. Consult the

[Guideline on the Provision and Management of Technical Cooperation](#) to ensure that good practice is applied;

(iii) Establish and monitor indicators that will inform progress toward capacity development. Ensure that all reviews of policy and performance, especially related to the public sector reforms, include a reflection on associated capacity challenges and needs.

### (5) Information sharing

The opportunity to share information and to ensure that all TWG members can perform their individual and collective tasks is the minimum expectation for TWGs. TWGs should:

(i) Use the TWG as a forum to inform other members of on-going work (research, studies, missions, reviews etc) that relates to the functions of the TWG;

(ii) Inform TWG members of other consultations/meetings, especially regarding external support, that have taken place and are relevant to the TWG's work;

(iii) Update other TWG members on the programming or implementation of activities that will impact on the achievement of the TWG objectives as set out in the ToR or annual workplan;

(iv) Share information on the support of other actors (private sector, development partners not present in Cambodia or non-members of the TWG) that is relevant to the work of the sector or TWG;

(v) Consider the scope and performance of information systems that are required to ensure that Government and all TWG members have access to accurate and timely data;

(vi) Promote on-line knowledge sharing with posting of policies, plans, laws and reports together with other relevant information and data.

### (6) Monitoring and progress review

TWGs are under the management of their host ministries and are responsible for reporting on progress and challenges in terms of the TWG's workplan and its support to achieving sector results. This also includes reporting on progress related to the JMIs, public sector reform implementation and strategic cross-cutting or cross-sectoral issues. A regular assessment of TWG performance, together with an honest reflection on challenges, is required to ensure progress towards national and sector goals, including the JMIs. Dedicated meetings or retreats that review TWG performance as well as monitor progress against measurable goals should be a central part of the TWG work programme. These reviews and monitoring exercises should also be linked to capacity development work that ensures that monitoring competencies and systems are in place. The following actions are relevant to TWG work:

(i) Confirm and validate relevant available data sources and systems for NSDP and sector monitoring. Identify additional analytical work that the TWG might support to enhance reporting and monitoring;

(ii) Promote the use of results frameworks across the sector and monitor the results-based JMIs that are linked to NSDP and sector outcome goals. Use this process and results framework to promote dialogue on progress and priority-setting;

(iii) Identify and agree a dedicated modality, such as a periodic meeting or retreat, to review TWG and sector progress, ideally on a joint basis;

(iv) Follow-up issues relevant to the sector or TWG that are raised in other forums, including evaluation reports and need to be taken forward for dialogue;

(v)     Review and strengthen monitoring systems and capacities of associated RGC ministries and agencies.


**Part Three: Institutional Arrangements**

*(a) Composition of TWGs*

The composition of each TWG should normally include members from the Government, development partners and representatives of civil society. TWG Chairs, in dialogue with current members, are responsible in the last instance for determining TWG membership but, in order to achieve purposeful and informed dialogue, it is necessary that TWGs consist of:

(i)     *An RGC-appointed Chair*. The Chairperson is to be appointed by the head of the Ministry/agency and is to function as the authority of the host ministry, able to address all matters arising in the TWG as well as to guide discussions smoothly. The Chairperson needs to be fully committed, must liaise and follow-up with other RGC Ministries and agencies represented in the TWG and should be familiar with the development partner portfolio that supports the sector.

(ii)    *A development partner lead facilitator*. The development partner lead facilitator(s) must be at a senior level within their organization, competent in the field and be willing to relate information to all other development partners. Development partners should manage their own arrangements for nominating or replacing the lead facilitator but, in the interest of continuity, a lead facilitator is normally expected to support the TWG for at least two years.

(iii)   *The TWG Secretariat*. The RGC host Ministry/agency, under the direction of the Chair, will establish a secretariat to support the administration of the TWG, to follow-up on actions agreed at TWG meetings, to facilitate information management and to represent the TWG in the Partnership and Harmonisation TWG.

(iv)    *RGC representatives of all relevant Ministries and agencies*. These TWG members should support cross-Government coordination, especially in the main reform areas, and must be well informed, technically competent, and of a sufficiently senior level to represent the views of their institution, provide required information and to facilitate follow-up action within their own organisation. Members representing RGC ministries or agencies in any TWG should bring information and knowledge from their offices and communicate information, required actions and decisions back to their ministry or agency.

(v)     *Development partners active in the sector or thematic area*. Development partners should be represented at an appropriate and competent level and be able to share information and support the Chair in reaching decisions. Development partners need to bring all information about ongoing and proposed programmes that they support; they should also disseminate deliberations and decisions of the TWG to other members of the development partner community.

(vi)    *A staff member of CRDB/CDC*. The CDC representative will serve as a TWG member to provide advisory support on aid and development effectiveness issues in line with the Development Cooperation and Partnerships Strategy. They will also advise on the use of DCPS tools, such as programme-based approaches and results frameworks, and will share lessons with the Secretariat (see page 7 on external support).

(vii)  ***Focal points for generic and cross-cutting issues***. These should be appointed by the Chair, in consultation with host ministries to which staff are attached, and may include, for example, gender mainstreaming, public sector reforms and environment and climate change members, as deemed necessary in each ministry or agency.

(viii)  ***Technical Advisors of projects/programmes working within the RGC structure***. Embedded TAs, either national or international, should participate and contribute to the TWG as experts and an important resource for capacity development. They should not function as development partner lead facilitator(s) or as spokespersons of RGC.

(ix)  ***Civil society, NGO or private sector representatives***. Each TWG may invite NGOs and other civil society representatives to participate in the TWGs. NGOs and civil society representatives should have an operational role and/or provide relevant assistance and/or services in areas of work associated with the TWG. NGOs should demonstrate capacity and commitment to represent the broader NGO community and must make a commitment to share information about their on-going projects (including through the NGO Database that is supported by CRDB/CDC). In exceptional cases, and at the discretion of the Chair in discussion with the development partner lead facilitator, private sector representatives may be invited to attend the TWG meeting. Their participation as members or observers should be determined based on their ability to contribute to the dialogue.

### (b) Size of TWGs and use of sub-groups

Large plenary meetings have been found to be useful for information sharing but an obstacle to effective and meaningful dialogue. The size and structure of the TWG must therefore be managed to ensure adequate representation while allowing for discussion and a focus on achieving results. It is suggested that:

(i)  An optimum size to facilitate dialogue indicates that some upper limit to membership must be identified by the TWG Chair and the development partner lead facilitator, in dialogue with other members.

(ii)  Where it is necessary to accommodate a larger membership that may hinder effective dialogue, it is desirable to constitute a "core group", which could meet more regularly and report to the plenary during full meetings of the TWG. Development partner facilitators and NGO representatives in such core groups can keep their respective colleagues informed of progress and developments.

(iii)  Smaller "sub-groups" within any TWG may also be constituted to address more detailed issues (as is already being done in some TWGs), thus making the TWG set-up more flexible and adaptable to changing needs and circumstances. Sub-groups can be used on a time-bound, task-specific or permanent basis. Sub-groups have been usefully employed to support implementation of major reforms, to focus on capacity development and to address cross-cutting issues that can be reported back to the TWG plenary for further discussion and agreement on any actions that are required.

### (c) Conduct of Meetings

The following points serve as a checklist for ensuring good TWG performance. They guide the organisation of TWGs and conduct of meetings as follows:

(i)  TWGs must have a Terms of Reference, informed by this Guideline and linked to the NSDP and sector strategy, that details the specific objectives of the TWG and the

manner in which it supports RGC strategies, policies and plans (see Part Two, above).

(ii)    An annual workplan, including to identify priority policy dialogue issues, the JMIs and arrangements for addressing cross-cutting issues, should inform the content of TWG meetings and help to ensure focus and continuity in the meetings.

(iii)    TWGs should meet as often as is deemed appropriate, but at a minimum should meet twice a year. Meetings should have a clear agenda with documentation shared 10 days in advance.

(iv)    Preparatory (and follow-up) meetings between the Chair, the lead facilitators and other members as deemed necessary - as well as within the development partner community - may ensure a focused and productive TWG dialogue and follow-up.

(v)    There must be adequate time for discussion and all TWG members should be provided with an opportunity to inform the TWG of important developments.

(vi)    Challenges that cannot be resolved within the TWG should be referred to the host ministry for deliberation. The GDCC may be employed for further dialogue where the host ministry and TWG feel that they are unable to make progress or that there is an issue that merits further cross-sectoral discussion. This should be highlighted in the TWG report prepared in advance of the GDCC meeting.

(vii)    In addition to regularly scheduled meetings, TWGs may consider holding an annual retreat or annual review meeting to reflect on performance and achievement of results. This can include issues of partnership, TWG organization, management and conduct of work, and any capacity development issues that require attention.

## (d) Implementation support mechanisms

Internal TWG implementation support

The Chair and development partner lead facilitator should meet regularly to follow-up on any agreed actions, especially in advance of TWG meetings. Past evaluations have clearly shown that an informal approach to managing this relationship helps to build trust and establish open communications.

A well-organised, adequately-resourced and properly-led Secretariat within the lead ministry or agency is also essential to supporting TWG work. The Secretariat must be adequately resourced and should:

(i)    Have a clearly structured Terms of Reference and mandate to support the TWG.

(ii)    Organise meetings, keep records/minutes of TWG and sub-group meetings and circulate information before/after meetings as required.

(iii)    Conduct follow-up activities with line ministries and agencies responsible for carrying out actions agreed during the TWG meeting.

(iv)    Serve as the designated contact point for the lead facilitator or other TWG members on behalf of the Chair.

(v)    Draft TWG and JMI progress reports and serve as the coordination focal point with CRDB/CDC.

To avoid adding new layers to the existing structure, this secretariat should be an integral part of the host ministry or agency, such as the planning department. TWGs are expected to mobilise a sufficient level of resources, either from domestic resources or from development partners

(preferably as part of integrated support to capacity development in the Ministry, otherwise specific to supporting TWG work), to support the TWG secretariat functions.

External TWG implementation support

CRDB/CDC provides support to TWGs in its capacity as the RGC focal point on aid coordination and GDCC secretariat. This is consistent with the institutional arrangements set out in the Development Cooperation and Partnerships Strategy as follows:

> CRDB/CDC shall be the RGC's coordinating body with responsibility for overall policy leadership on ODA mobilisation and management ... As Secretariat for overseeing and managing arrangements for partnership dialogue … CRDB/CDC will lead on partnership dialogue with development partners, formulating and monitoring the JMIs and maintaining records on all external and NGO project funding. CRDB/CDC provides … support to TWGs, including in JMI preparation and monitoring.

A CRDB staff member participates in every TWG meeting to provide immediate support and advice on matters related to development effectiveness and aid management. Support can also be provided to implement the Development Cooperation and Partnerships Strategy tools, including programme-based approaches and results frameworks.

CRDB also serves as an information-sharing hub for all TWGs and convenes TWG Network meetings for all TWG Chairs, secretariats, development partner focal points and civil society representatives. These meetings provide an opportunity for learning, information dissemination and agreeing actions related to TWG performance.

## (e) Criteria for formation of additional TWGs

The criteria for formation of TWGs are established as follows:

(i) There must be clearly identifiable targets, drawn from the NSDP or sector strategies that the TWG would support RGC to achieve through its own work.

(ii) Where adequate coordination and RGC-development partner information sharing mechanisms already exist outside of the TWG structure there is no need to create parallel or additional mechanisms.

(iii) TWGs should cover clearly identifiable sectors or themes, with sub-groups where necessary to deal with individual components.

(iv) The subject or theme to be covered should not be too diffused, making it difficult to assign clear responsibilities or to monitor progress across several RGC ministries or agencies (cross-cutting issues should be mainstreamed across sectors and TWGs).

(v) Prior to the formation (or possible dissolution) of a TWG, the host ministry, in consultation with CRDB/CDC where necessary, is to prepare a proposal to be submitted for a decision by the Royal Government of Cambodia.

## Part Four: Principles for Effective TWGs

Experience over many years in managing – and frequently reviewing - the partnership mechanisms established in Cambodia have identified a number of important principles that must be adopted in order to ensure effective. These are included in the Development Cooperation and Partnerships Strategy (2014-2018) and are re-produced here for emphasis:

(i) Government will lead an inclusive development partnership with all development actors

that is focused on achieving development results by working together while respecting diversity amongst partners.

(ii)     Government and development actors commit to building a relationship based on trust and mutual respect that is guided by appropriate frameworks for managing for results and for effective monitoring.

(iii)    The NSDP and respective sector/thematic strategies will guide resource allocation, programming, dialogue and monitoring arrangements for all development actors. ODA-funded projects shall be directed to promoting sustainable and equitable socio-economic development by enhancing the productive capacity of the economy and strengthening human capital.

(iv)    The principles of the Paris Declaration remain valid. All ODA funding modalities are permitted based on dialogue and agreement between the Royal Government and its development partners in line with the global norms and agreed practices established in Paris (2005), Accra (2008) and Busan (2011).

(v)     ODA management arrangements at sector/thematic level should become increasingly harmonised over time as development partners move towards more common approaches to programming such as through a program-based approach arrangement.

(vi)    Capacity development remains one of the principal objectives of development cooperation. Technical cooperation, which is usually to be provided as grant financing, must be directed to institutional and human capacity development under the leadership of RGC. Guidelines issued by RGC in 2008 continue to be applicable and state that, inter alia, technical cooperation must be consistent with capacity objectives associated with a RGC strategy/plan and sensitive to the operating environment. Capacity initiatives and the provision of technical cooperation should, to the fullest extent possible, be linked to the major reform programmes of the RGC.

These principles are consistent with the findings of the 2014 TWG Performance Review, which identifies strong RGC ownership, committed leadership of the TWG Chair, active DP Lead Facilitator support, technical and managerial capacity of the Secretariat, trust and communication, and dedication of sufficient time and effort as the main features of a well-performing TWG.

### *Use of Partnership Principles*

A number of TWGs have usefully developed Partnership Principles that complement the Terms of Reference to set out working practices within a framework of mutual accountability. Partnership Principles can be useful to set out the manner in which dialogue is to be managed and to establish practical and common arrangements for programme management (e.g. priority setting, programming of resources, reporting & review). In order to promote ownership, partnership and a focus on achieving results any effort to formulate Partnership Principles should take account of the following considerations:

(i)      TWGs are coordination mechanisms for supporting Government in delivering development results in line with national and sectoral plans and priorities.

(ii)     Partnership Principles should be located in a policy and institutional context related to the NSDP and sector policy objectives. Ideally they will be linked to a Programme-based Approach that emphasises Government ownership and leadership.

(iii)    Before leading the negotiation of a set of Partnership Principles, the TWG Chair must be convinced that s/he can lead the process with credibility and that there is clear value-added to the exercise in terms of strengthening partnership and in delivering

results.

(iv)     Partnership Principles should also be consistent with national partnership frameworks, i.e. the Development Cooperation and Partnerships Strategy, as well as international commitments, including the Paris Declaration (2005), the Accra Agenda for Action (2008), and the Busan statement on Development Effectiveness (2011).

(v)      Partnership Principles should identify objectives, i.e. a broad statement of what is to be achieved. They should identify partnership actions, responsibilities and commitments of all TWG members required to attain these objectives. Detailed activities should be omitted but included in a workplan or monitoring framework.

(vi)     The concept of mutual accountability should be acknowledged, meaning that both parties indicate how they will work together to plan, implement and review. Partnership Principles must also be balanced with commitments of all parties in proportion to their role and capacity.

(vii)    Language in the style of 'to the maximum extent possible', or 'progressively' and 'over a period of time' should be avoided as they make principles and objectives virtually meaningless and render the whole exercise worthless.

(viii)   Specific targets, timelines and monitoring arrangements are encouraged or, where incremental progress is indicated, a clear definition of what this means in practice should be included.

(ix)     Partnership Principles should ideally be associated with a monitoring framework, identifying clear targets and timings that can be included in an annual review.

(x)      On issues related to capacity development and technical cooperation, the Guideline on the Effective Use of Technical Cooperation should be referenced.