

Effects of One Window Service on Public Service Delivery and Good Governance: Case study of Cambodia OWSO

13 – 15 March 2019
Bali, Indonesia

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Contents

1. Introduction

- General Background
- State-building
- Advent of Decentralisation

2. Literature review

3. The Case of Cambodia's One Window Service Office

- Background & purpose
- OWSO Key Implementers
- Operations: achievements, challenges & recommendations

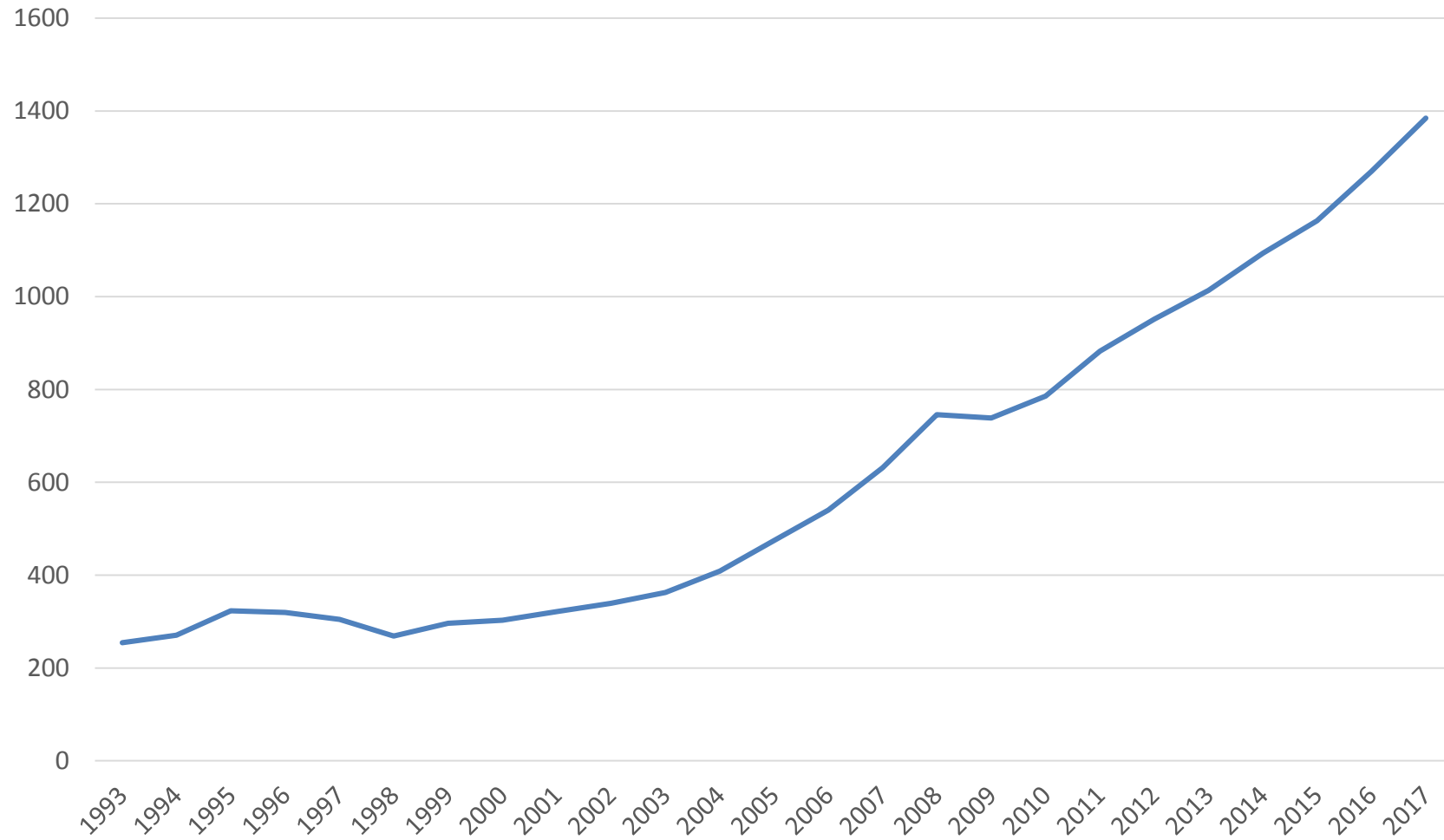
4. Concluding remarks

Introduction

- Total geographic area: 181 035 Sq. km
- Population: 16 Million (2017)
- Capital: Phnom Penh
- Major Export: Rice, fish, timber, garments, rubber...etc.
- Currency: Cambodian Riel (KHR)
- GDP growth rate: 7.20 (2014)

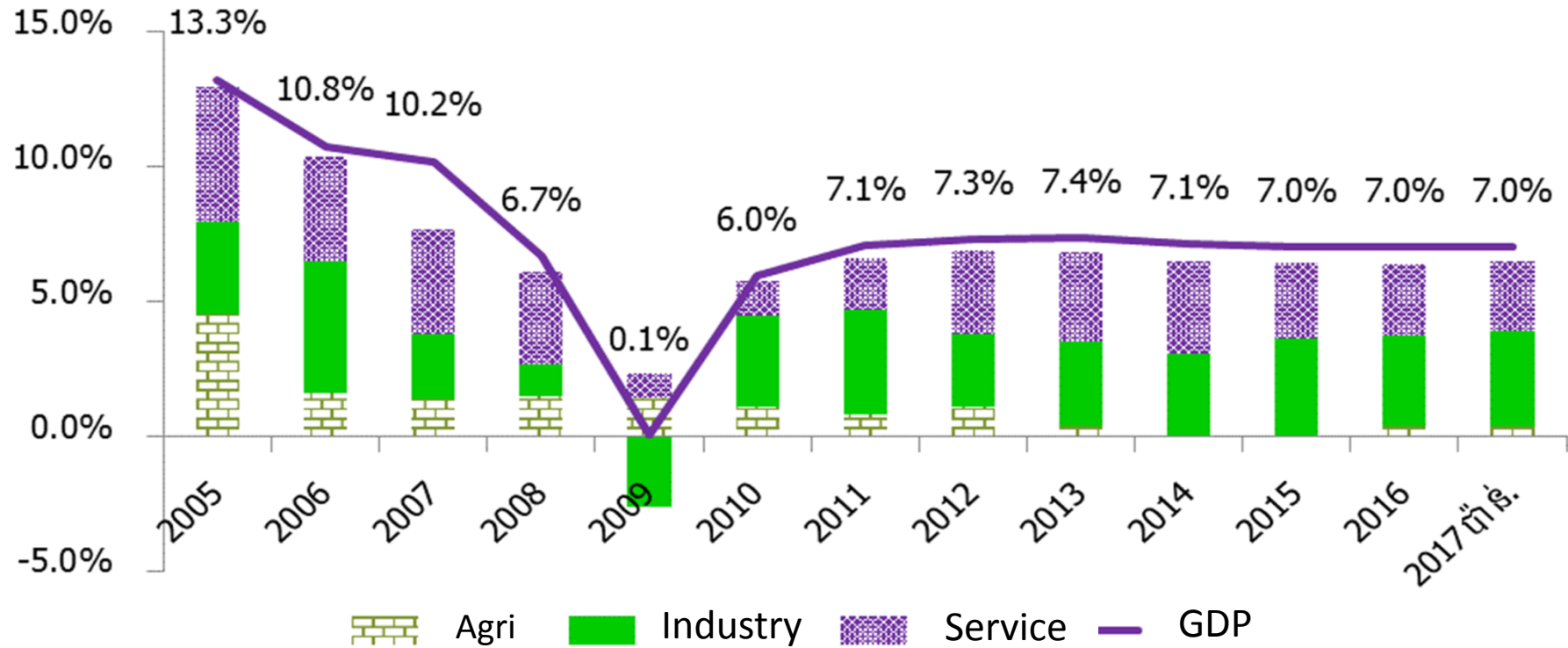


GDP per capita (current US\$) in Cambodia from 1993-2017



Source: WDI (WB 2018)

Gross Domestic Product (GDP) by sectors 2005-2017



Source: Ministry of Economy and Finance (2018)

State-Building

- Starting from 'zero': in 1979, there was no state structure, no ministries, no statutory authorities, no schools, no markets, no hospitals and no police force.
- People were recruited to their new positions based on general knowledge/education.
- There have been three deliberate and planned changes to state organizations over the period from the 1980s to the present.

State-Building (cont')

1. The major change was in 1993:
 - Shift from one-party government to a liberal democratic one
 - In bureaucratic terms, there was considerable growth in the number of ministries and other state organizations due to the establishment of multi-party government. The basic structure of government has been constitutionally established and remained today.
2. In promoting reform, some changes and initiatives were introduced between 1998 and 2004:

State-Building (cont')

- Establishment of State Secretariat of Public Function (SSPF) in the late 1997
 - It is concerned with civil service personnel administration and records and deals with matters such as recruitment, training, appointments/ advancements, dismissals/retirements, sanctions against civil servants, family status and payroll.
- The complete collapse of the Khmer Rouge organization and management in early 1999 through the Win-Win strategy of the government, and former Khmer Rouge administration and military were integrated into the single administrative system
- Establishment of the Council for Administrative Reform (CAR) in 1999
 - It has the mission to initiate, enhance, proceed and follow up the implementation of policies and administrative reform programme in accordance with the direction of the Supreme Council for State Reform.
 - Importantly, the establishment of the Council for Administrative Reform (CAR) was to implement the civil service census, the development of New Career Path System and Remuneration, and the Computerization of the Payroll System (HRMIS – Human Resource Management through Information System) (CDC 2002; Taliercio 2004; UNPAN 2004). Such key reform initiatives are believed to provide foundation for the subsequent public administrative reform.

Advent of Decentralisation

- Decentralisation & de-concentration reform in Cambodia was being considered as early as 1992-93.
- It was formulated in policy and was inscribed in law in 2001. It's the most significant public administrative reform and the politically most important democratic program.
- The objective of the government's decentralisation and de-concentration reform initiative is to achieve broad-based and sustainable development and to strengthen the vibrant local economic foundations.

Advent of Decentralisation (cont')

- Decentralised autonomy was given to local governments so as to have more responsible and accountable to people's needs:
 - (i) to strengthen and expand local democracy; and
 - (ii) to promote local development and
 - (iii) to reduce poverty – improving local service delivery.

Advent of Decentralisation (cont')

- In 2005, there was an adoption of Strategic Framework for Decentralisation and De-concentration.
- The de-concentration process involved the transfer of executive and financial powers from line ministries to integrated provincial and district authorities based on the principles of “democratic participation” and “public sector accountability”.
 - Assurance of improved effectiveness & efficiency of implementation of national policies & public expenditure through local participation,
 - The provision of autonomy to sub-national levels can be both essential & obligatory.

Advent of Decentralisation (cont')

- NCDD is responsible for the implementing of decentralisation and de-concentration.
- NCDD is composed by:
 - The Ministry of Interior
 - The Ministry of Economy and Finance
 - The Ministry of Planning
 - The State Secretariat of the Public Functions/ the Council for Administrative Reform – Ministry of Civil Service

2. Literature review

- “Public sector performance is fundamentally about governments being able to deliver on their policy commitments for the benefits of their citizens”
- “significant improvements in public sector performance are being evidenced across the developing world today, as government officials and political leaders find new and innovative ways to tackle long-standing public management challenges (World Bank 2018, p.10,11)

- Successful reforms are not just about “best practice”, but require credible commitment, effective coordination and cooperation, which require to understand both the form and functions of institutions, capacity building and power asymmetries, the rule of law and role of law (WDR 2017)
- “Decentralization holds great promise for improving the delivery of public services – but outcomes depend on its design and on the institutional arrangements governing its implementation” (World Bank 2001)

- From the 1980s, it has been argued that decentralization is about improving government and public service delivery across developing countries through the efficiency both in allocating resources and increasing productivity and accountability – however, the result is mixed due to the differences in policy design and institutional arrangement across the developing countries such as participation mechanism, budget and operations oversight, human resource management, fiduciary accountability and anticorruption (World Bank 2001)

- Most literatures introduce NPM approach for improving public sector performance such as outcome-based measuring, performance-based budgeting, incentives-accountability-competition emphasis, customer/citizen-centric view, ICT and so on.
- However, the more incremental approach or trial and error approach may be more flexible and best fit for particular context and challenge, which is well-known in the Chinese saying “crossing the river by feeling the stones” (World Bank 2018)

The Case of Cambodia's One Window Service Office

Background

- There are several mechanism of improving public service delivery, according to the Policy on Public Service Delivery (2006), but the most visible and well-known result of public service reform is the One-Window Service Office (OWSO).
- OWSO was initiatively developed by the European Union co-financed Asia Urban Project during the early 2000s, and two municipalities in Siem Reap and Battambang were selected as the pilot phase of implementation :
 - First – December 2001 – March 2004,
 - Second – December 2004 – November 2007

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ស្រុកបាត់ដំបង ខេត្តបាត់ដំបង

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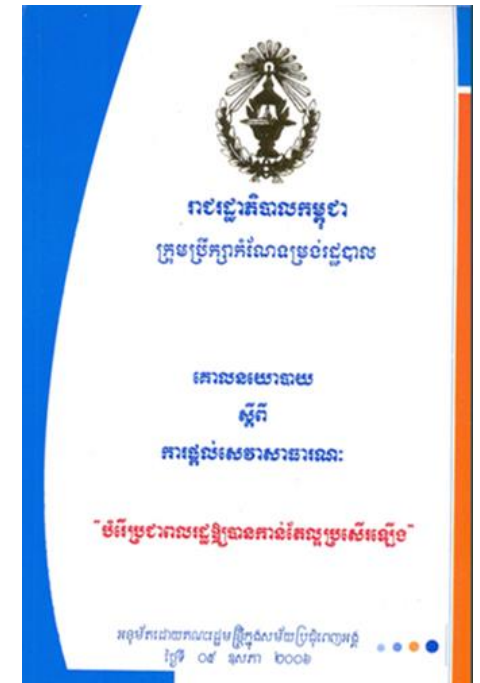
- In 2009, the World Bank under the Demand for Good Governance Project started implementing the OWSO model in other provinces/municipalities.
- Between 2009 to 2014, OWSO has been expanded to 24 Municipalities, 8 Khans and 2 Districts
- In 2017, around 52 offices of OWSO have been established throughout the countries, especially at the local district levels (GIZ 2017; OWSO 2017)
- Such number accounts for 26% of total target number of 197 (towns, districts, khans) (DFR 2017)

Objective of OWSO

- To bring the government & public service closer to the people
- To promote good governance at sub-national level – responding to local people’s demands and small business through an efficient, transparent and accountable manner
- To provide platform for complaint mechanism for district administration
- To promote local participation in decision-making
- To reduce poverty through local development. (OWSO 2017)

Legal frameworks for improving public service delivery

- Law on General Statute of Public Enterprise (1996)
- Royal Decree on Legal Statute of Public Establishments with Administrative Characteristics (1997 amendment in 2015)
- **Policy on Public Service Delivery (2006)**
- Royal Decree on the General Principle of the Establishment and operation SOA (2008)



Legal frameworks (cont.)

- Decision of the RG on the Establishment of One Window Office and Citizen's Office (Ombudsmen) at Khann and District Level (2008)
- Prakas by MoI on the Establishment of OWO and the Ombudsmen at targeted cities, districts and Khann (2009)
- Sub-decree on the Public Service Delivery at the Sub-National Administration (2013)

Legal frameworks (cont.)

- Compendium of Information on Public Service (2008 – to present)
- Sub-decree on the establishment and operation of Public Service Evaluation Committee – ***Guide on Public Service Standard (2013)***
- Joint-Prakas between MEF and concerned ministries on Public Service Delivery



NPAR 2015-2018

Continuance of
Further Deepening
Reform for
Effectiveness



NPAR 2015-2018 (cont.)

Vision

☛ *“to transform public administration into an effective public service provider and a reliable partner towards serving people better.”*

Goals

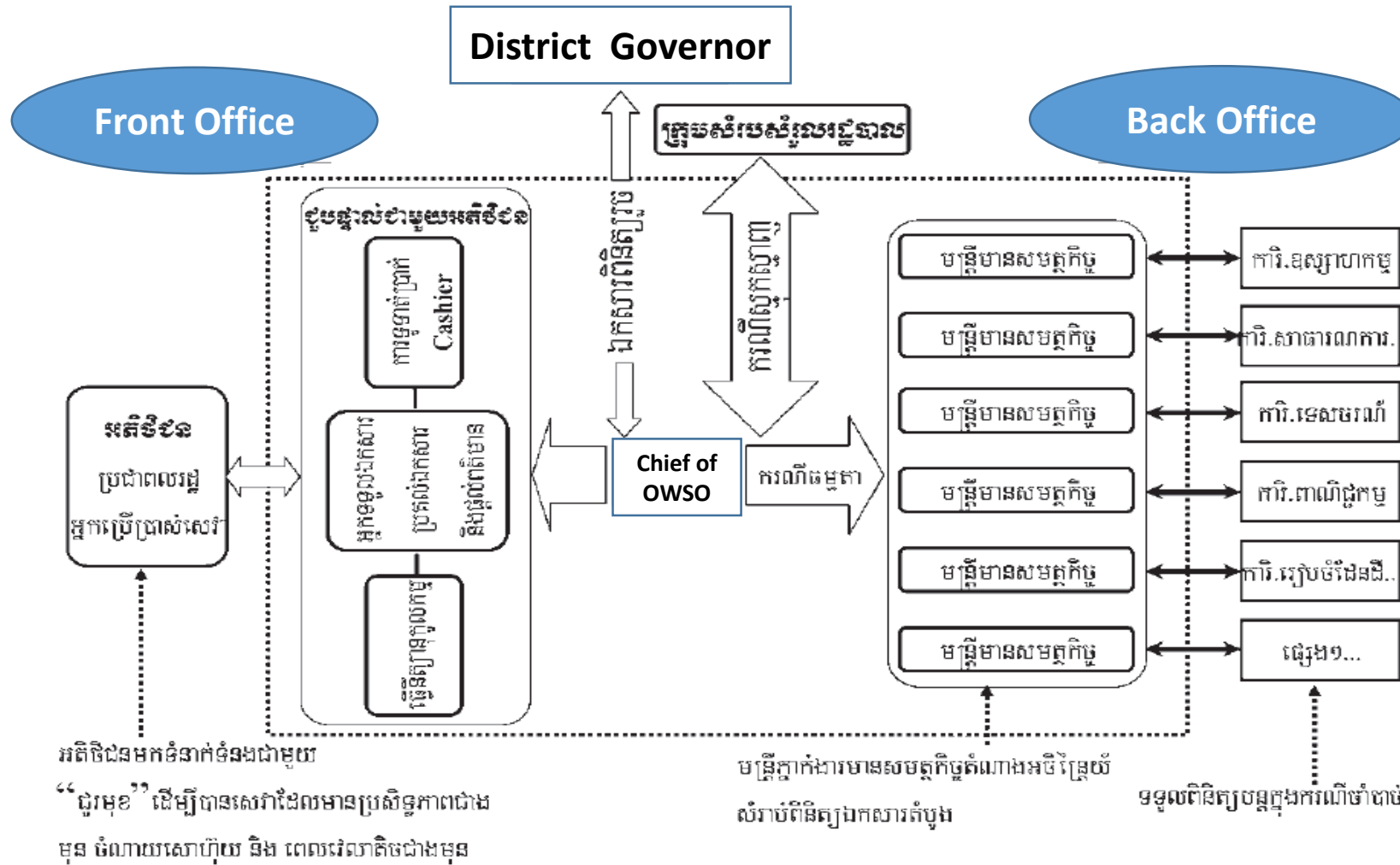
1. Public service delivery with quality
2. Human Resource Management and Development enhancement
3. Pay system with equity, productivity, effectiveness, coherence and consistency

Mechanisms for Improving Service Delivery

(Policy on Public Service Delivery 2006)

- 1) Improvement of the process of public service delivery
- 2) One Window Office**
- 3) Deconcentration
- 4) Decentralization
- 5) Public establishments with administrative characteristics
- 6) Public Enterprises
- 7) Contracting
- 8) Special Operating Agency
- 9) Privatization

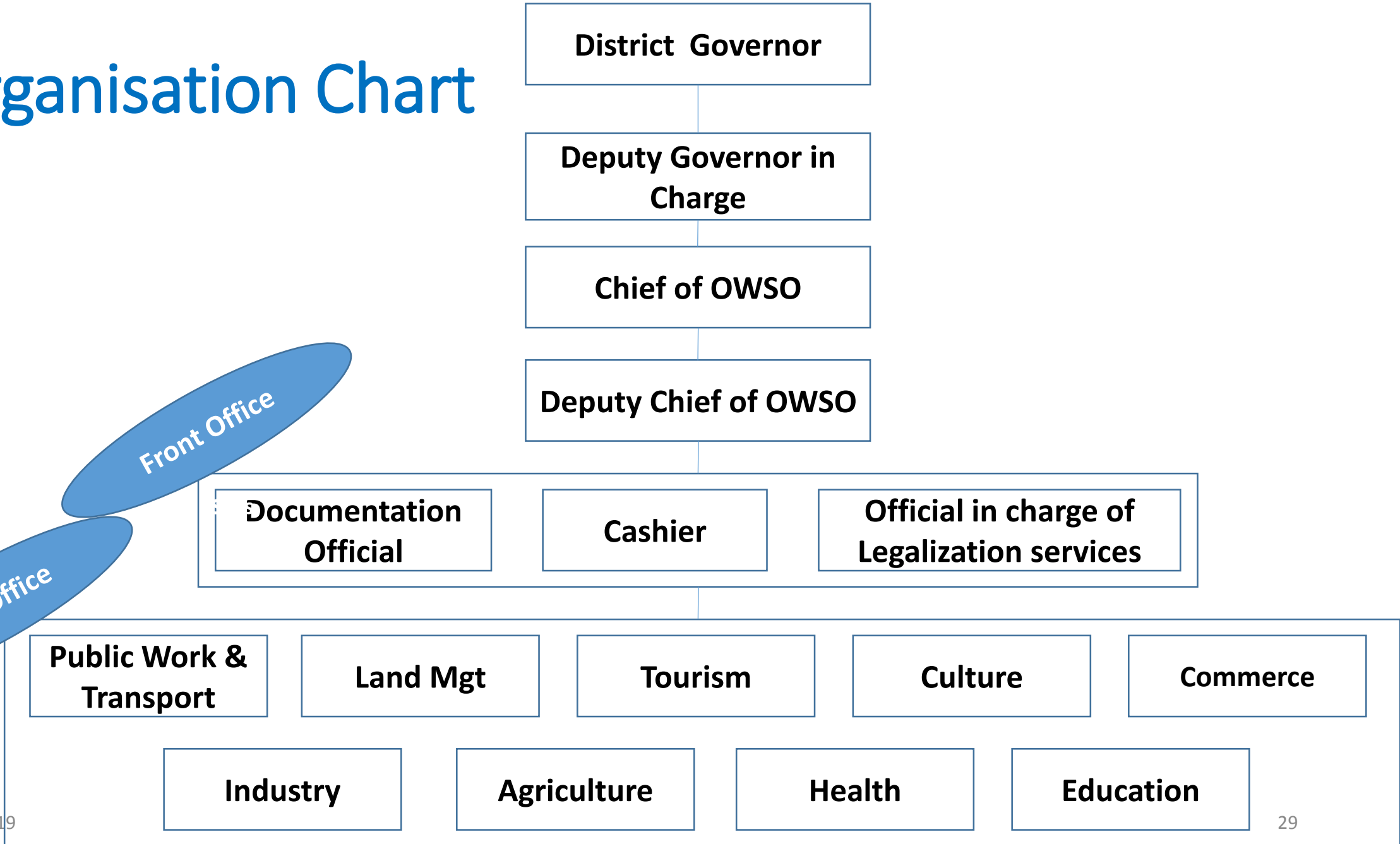
One Window Office



Organisation Chart

Front Office

Back Office



Background & purpose









OWSO Key Implementers

- The National Committee for Sub-national Democratic Development (NCDD) is formally responsible for the OWSO program, and as such facilitates coordination with relevant line ministries.
- In such regards, NCDD has established the Inter-Ministerial Technical Advisory Group (TAG) to support the implementation of the OWSO/DO.

OWSO Key Implementers

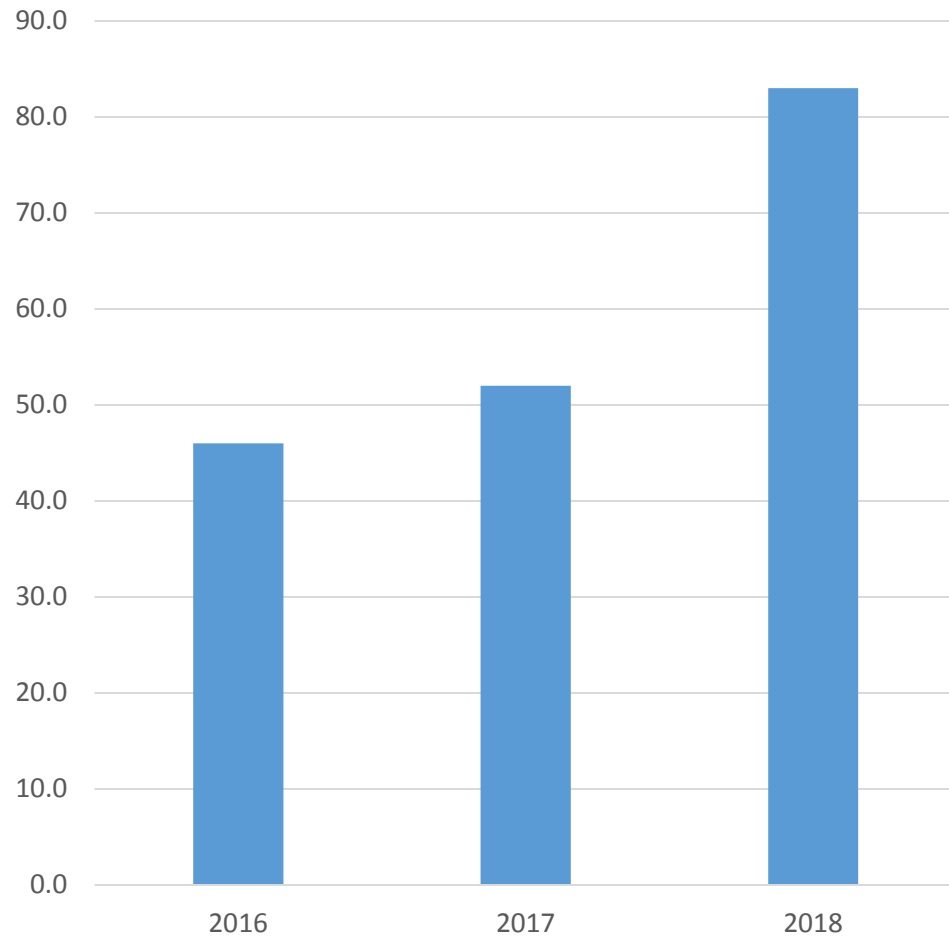
- The TAG is chaired by a Secretary of State from MOI:
 - Representatives from all the key ministries that have delegated functions to OWSO,
 - Ministry of Economy and Finance and Ministry of Civil Service.
- The TAG, by working closely with District Support Team (DST) and NCDD, is responsible for reviewing and advising on new policies and guidelines related to OWSO/DO including the delegation of functions, fee setting, coordinating with relevant ministries, line departments and sub-national administrations, and monitoring the progress in the implementation of the OWSO/DO.

Operations and achievements

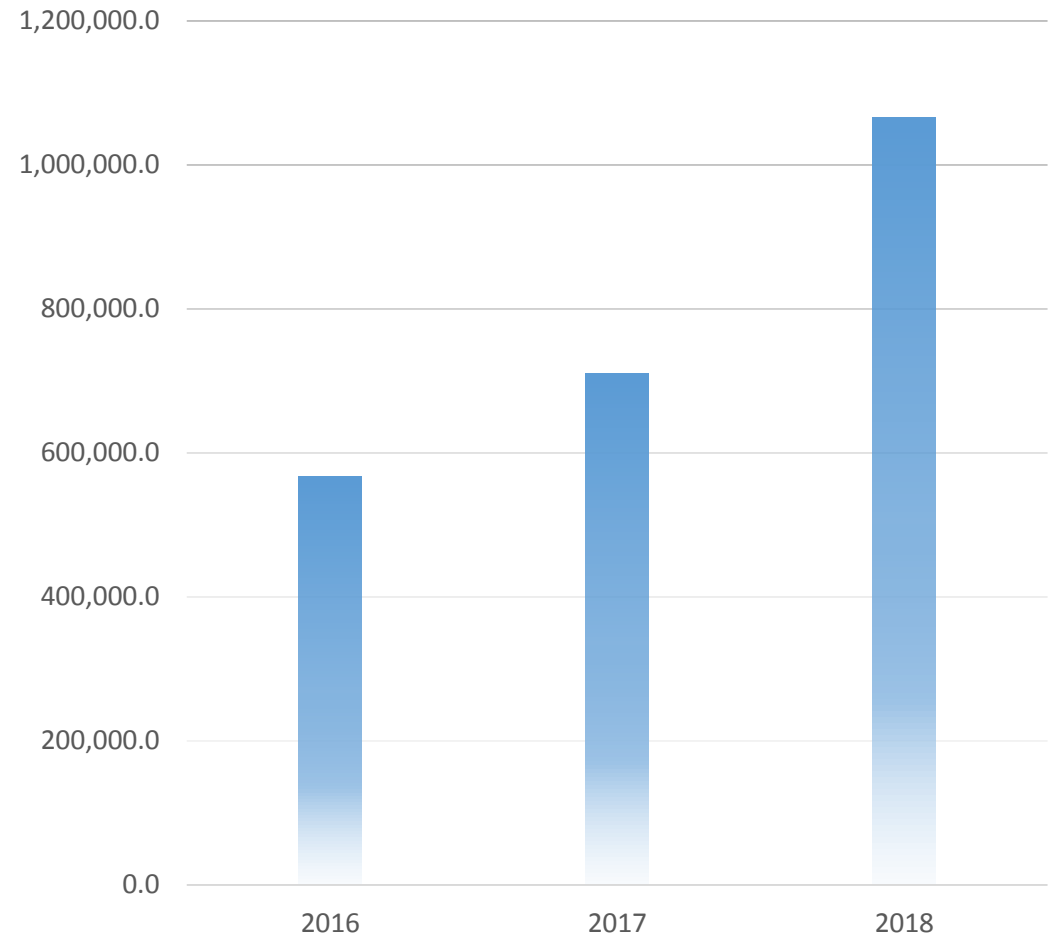
- The relevant ministries and sectors involved in OWSO are:
 - Ministry of Industry and Handicraft,
 - Ministry of Mines and Energy,
 - Ministry of Commerce,
 - Ministry of Tourism,
 - Ministry of Public Work and Transportation,
 - Ministry of Culture and Fine Art,
 - Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction,
 - Ministry of Health,
 - Ministry of Agriculture,
 - Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports
 - Ministry of Environment,
 - Ministry of Social Affairs, Veteran, and Youth Rehabilitation,
 - Ministry of Rural Development and
 - other service sectors such as legalization service, administrative service, birth-death-marriage registration service.
- The 14 sectors of public services:
 - Legalization
 - Tourism
 - Culture
 - Commerce
 - Public work
 - Industry and handicraft
 - Construction
 - Agriculture
 - Health
 - Education
 - Vital records
 - Cadastre (land entitlement)
 - Administrative work
 - Mines and energy

- In 2017, around 52 offices of OWSO has been established throughout the countries, especially at the local district levels (GIZ 2017; OWSO 2017)
- Such number accounts for 26% of total target number of 197 (towns, districts, khans) (DFR 2017)
- In 2018, the number of OWSO has been increased to 83 which accounts for 42% of the countrywide towns, districts and khans
- Among the 14 sectors, the number of services which has provided by OWSO across the country has been increased from around 566,755 in 2016 to 710,536 in 2017 and 1,064,987 in 2018 respectively.
- While the revenue is seen to be increased from 14,022,645,043 riels in 2016 to 15,012,433,520 riels in 2018 (DFR 2017, DFR 2019)

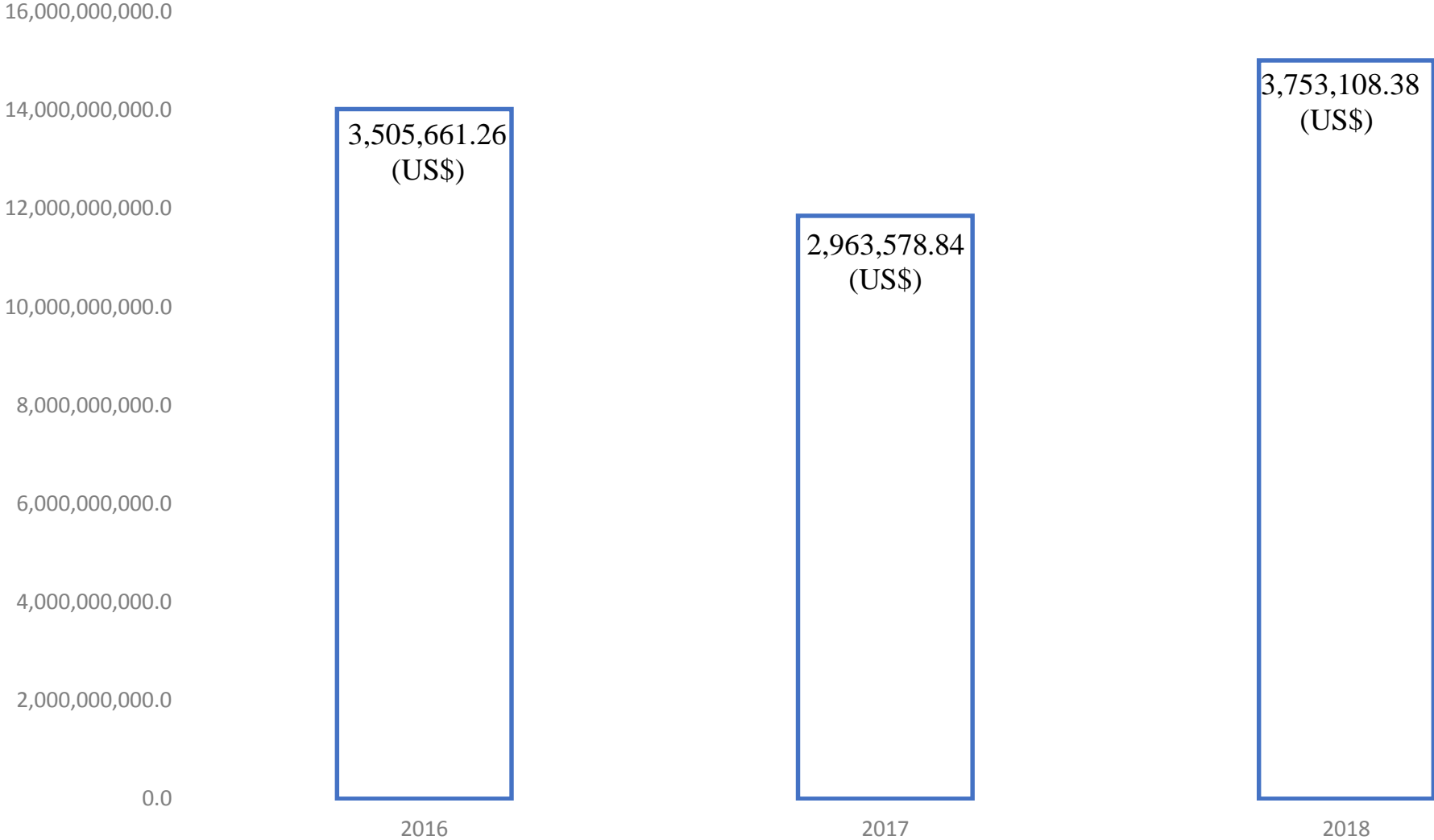
NUMBER OF OWSO



NUMBER OF SERVICES



Revenue from OWSO across the country



Operations: achievements & challenges

- At large, the service provided by OWSO is efficient, effective and transparent with fee display and timeframe.
- The organisational structure of the OWSO is tied up to MOI guidelines, and consists of a front office, commonly staffed by provincial or municipal government employees, and a back office, staffed by personnel assigned by their respective line departments from either the district or provincial level.
- More than that, the OWSO staff receive supplement salary of doubling their formal salaries which is based the collected revenue

Operations: achievements & challenges

- The key element of OWSO implementation is human resources who are required to be appropriately selected, trained and managed to ensure quality, reliability and integrity of service delivery
- Staff are divided into front office and back office under the supervision of OWSO Chief, and oversighted by district governor and NCDD respectively.
- In such division of staff may require different sets of skills such as skills in dealing with customers and receiving and redirecting requests are much relevant to the front office staff. While the back office staff are required to deal with the administrative process and services of their line ministries.
- However, they must possess the common principles of transparency, accountability and integrity

Operations: achievements & challenges

- Some independent surveys in 2011 show that more than 90 % of respondents are satisfied with OWSO service, however, there are still 5% of them claiming that informal payments still exist
- Some other surveys show people are both satisfied and dissatisfied, staff are both friendly and unfriendly
- **In such differences among OWSO, it is believed to be the result of some factors such as (Plummer 2015)**
 - Leadership (good example of OWSO chief, district governor pursues high standard of service and code of conduct)
 - Identified misconduct is quickly sanctioned and enforced
 - Modernized buildings, equipment to support the new functions

Operations: achievements & challenges

Other Challenges for staff performance: (Plummer 2015)

- Remoted location of OWSO affects travelling cost and time
- Attitudes and behaviours cannot be changed within short period of training
- Selection criteria are difficult to select skilled staff due to line ministries inside process (skilled staff remains in the ministries)

Operations: achievements & challenges

- Rather, personnels maintain their civil service grade from their original unit (in fact, they maintain their line department job title in addition to their role in the OWSO).
- There are challenges in integrating line department staff into the structure because they continue to view their accountability to the line department rather than the OWSO head.
- Time spent assigned to the OWSO does not count towards years of service for purposes of promotion and there is no career path within the OWSO.

Operations: recommendations

- It is recommended that incorporating the OWSO into the district/municipal government would be ideal.
- Creating a formalized structure for the OWSO would help strengthen accountability to the OWSO head and create a career path for OWSO staff.
- OWSO staff should be locally selected to reduce travelling difficulties, but the another challenge of unfamiliarity with process transactions in line ministries
- OWSO staff compensation may cause salary asymmetry among civil servants, then comprehensive salary reform is needed, and District governments should be encouraged to explore non-monetary staff incentives in addition to salary top-ups.
- More capacity building is needed for the principles of accountability, transparency and integrity and with clear structured and long-term training in the strong message of disciplinary sanction (Plummer 2015)

Concluding remarks

- Cambodia has been successful with its *post-conflict reconstruction* and the decentralisation reform has played a large part in this.
- **Local democratization** is progressive and promising though it remains hybrid at the national & sub-national levels.
- **Quality public service delivery** has been improved and innovated in response to local needs by sub-national administration, **particularly at OWSO.**

Concluding remarks

- OWSO experience review in Cambodia offers important lessons learned, not only for continued replication and assignment of functions to the district level, but for governance practices through decentralisation and de-concentration overall.
- OWSO appears to represent a significant improvement over government service delivery in Cambodia, as evidenced by improved perceptions by customers and relevant government staff.

Concluding remarks

- However, more focus of human resource capacity as well as incentives (monetary and non-monetary) are significant
- The commitment of the Royal Government of Cambodia in supporting OWSO is a hopeful sign which is believed to keep public service reform contently made in alignment with contemporary changes socially, politically and economically.

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Effects of one window service on public service delivery and good governance

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Abstract

Keywords: one window service, public service delivery, public integrity, corruption and good governance

This paper examines the process of one window service reform of Cambodia and evaluates the effects and outcomes of the one window service on public service delivery and good governance. It also explores the challenges of the One Window Service Offices (OWSOs) to recommend possible guidelines for improving service delivery of the OWSOs. The study employs literature research and interview with high level government officials in charge of OWSOs. The review of the literature is done to study the past research and reports on the implementation of OWSOs and the perspectives of the public and the OWSOs' staff towards the OWSOs. The field study is conducted as a supplement to the literature review. The findings from the review of the literature and semi-structured interview show that the consumers of the services are significantly satisfied with the services provided by the OWSOs. The OWSOs have made the administration service provision easy, quick, effective, full of quality, transparent, corruption-free, accountable, simple, cheap and responsive for citizens. It also benefits citizens, local authorities, civil servants at different levels, and the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC). Nevertheless, despite this remarkable success, there are still some shortfalls existing in the OWSOs. The study also provides recommendations to improve the service delivery at the OWSOs and for the future policy making.

1. Background of the study

Given a long history of a political mode characterized by patronage and favoritism in the work of the government, building a 'transparent and open' practice in day-to-day business in government institution is undoubtedly a challenge. In the OWSO initiative, transparency in service provision has resulted in better performance and standards of the services, fewer intermediaries in the process and a significant reduction of unofficial payments (Corsel &

Plummer, 2013). The OWSO initiative is focused on two primary elements of governance reform. First, the delegation of services from provincial line departments to district one-stop shops to shift services closer to citizens and second, the adoption of transparency and accountable principles in the delivery of these services.

Cambodia has made substantial progress in its state building and over the past decade has enjoyed remarkable economic growth. Cambodia has earned the status of a lower middle-income country in 2015. The country has enjoyed increased gross national income per capita, reduction in poverty, improvements in health and education sectors. Poverty has gone down from 35 percent of the population in 2004 to 25 percent in 2007, and down to 13.5 percent in 2014 (NIS, 2015). Poverty rate would fall to around 10 percent in 2018 due to an estimated 1 percent point reduction per year. Thanks to a sustained impressive economic growth in the past. The sustained growth of 7 percent per year has pushed per capita GDP from \$753 in 2008 to \$1,433 in 2017 (ADB, 2018). However, the country continues to face a number of development challenges including public service delivery and good governance. Corruption is still a main issue, posing as a barrier to reforms and development.

The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) introduced a number of reforms to help foster its economic growth and facilitate the democratic development within the country. One of the most noticeable reforms is the Decentralization and Deconcentration reform, aiming to facilitate the development of democracy in the country through improvements in local service delivery. As a result of this reform, commune/sangkat elections have been held in 2002, 2007, 2012, and in 2017. The RGC is committed to implementing the reform agenda of Decentralization and Deconcentration (D&D), which is an important component in improving the delivery of public services. The World Bank is supporting these efforts through strengthening good governance, the Demand for Good Governance (DFGG) project, whose objective is to reinforce the need for good governance, the priorities of the reform by strengthening institutions, supporting partnerships and sharing lessons and experiences.

To realize the vision of D&D in shaping the structures and administrations of the local governments and in achieving effective public service delivery, in 2008, the RGC, introduced a new mechanism called the One Window Service Office, with pilot projects in Siem Reap and Battambang towns and subsequent expansions following its success. The National Committee for Sub-National Democratic Development (NCDDS) is the Executing

Agency for the OWSO component of the DFGG Project. The OWSO is to function as a medium helping achieve efficient delivery of administrative services to the public in a quick, transparent, and corruption free manner. The OWSO is a single office at the local level providing certain delegated administrative services that are commonly sought for by the local citizens and small businesses. The office operates under the oversight of the district governor and is managed by an OWSO Chief. Services, delivery times and fees for the services are all clearly posted in the Front Office.

OWSO is a relatively common administrative reform implemented to increase efficiency and transparency in the issuance of common government permits, licenses and registrations and reduce the burden of regulatory compliance, thereby bringing the state closer to the people and providing an incentive for business and property owners to formalize. By now, the RGC – through Ministry of Interior – has established 46 OWSOs throughout Cambodia with another six offices to be operating soon (GIZ, 2017). With this approach, the RGC is able to bring services closer to the people, a component of the Sub-National Democratic Development.

a. Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are two folds. It examines the process of one window service reform of Cambodia. It then evaluates the effects and outcomes of the one window service on public service delivery and good governance.

b. Research questions

Based on the objectives, this study asks two main research questions:

- How did the government of Cambodia undertake the reform?
- What are the effects and outcomes of the reform including public service delivery, public integrity, good governance and corruption?

2. Research Methodology

The study involves both literature and field research. The review of the literature is done to study the past researches, government policies and sub-decree on the establishment and on the implementation of the OWSOs and the perspectives of the public towards the OWSOs. The field study is conducted as a supplement to the literature review. Semi-structure

interviews were conducted with OWSO's officials to explore the historical development, the progress and challenges within the OWSOs. Data is extracted from publications of the OWSO to observe trend and backup arguments.

3. Reviews of Previous Studies on OWSO

As highlighted in the policy framework, the objective of OWSO/Do initiative in Cambodia is to provide more *efficient, transparent, and accountable administrative services* at the district level. To obtain these, attitudinal change is recognized as a significant aspect that can ascertain and sustain public services oriented towards transparent, user-friendly, and corruption-free spirit. Changes in attitude are required on both the service providers (i.e. OWSO officials and national government institutions) and service users (i.e. individual citizens and business owners).

Erin and Plummer (2015) suggest that changes needed in the public service delivery in Cambodia, which is traditionally characterized by 'patron-clientism', should include the following:

For OWSO officials, at regular staff level, it is of vital importance that the staff of each OWSO is institutionally encouraged and trained to adopt (or less strictly put, adapt) to an attitude of professional service providers. Such adjustment represents a huge change from typical and conventional attitude commonly seen among most government agencies. As stated in the policy, such professionalism includes punctuality, full-time work on business day, friendly and respectful customer service, and no demand for informal fee. The management and leadership of the OWSOs also need to be more committed to exercising the set standards and enforcing disciplinary actions. They need to enhance accountability and transparency as well as citizen participation, through which feedbacks and suggestions are solicited and respected. Because accountability mechanisms in Cambodia are weak, engaging openly & actively is important example of new attitudes that contribute to the OWSO success. At the national level, it is required that officials from relevant line ministries be (more) open to the spirit of power sharing and delegation of functions to sub-national government institutions.

Attitudinal change is also necessitated for public service users, either individual citizens seeking civil registrations or small businesses obtaining commercial licenses. Traditional power relations between Cambodian people and the state have remained influential in

shaping how citizens view government officials and/or state institutions as a whole when they seek public services. Strictly put, the people see themselves seeking for help/support from the government; hence, their behavior is accordingly determined. It is crucial, therefore, that public service users are aware of their right as citizen and more willing to make demand for better services, avail themselves of complaint mechanism and conform to set regulation.

To improve the performance of and encourage more access to services offered at OWSO/DO, citizen outreach to raise public awareness of the services availed at each OWSO and, hence, the willingness to use the services is of crucial importance. These activities are aimed at encouraging citizens and business owners to use public services offered at the OWSOs and DOs as well as to bring about public awareness on service quality they can expect. For example, existing studies similarly find it is still a challenge in terms of public awareness about OWSO services and understanding of their rights as service users, including making complaint when they are not satisfied with any service or when any irregularity takes place. Access to OWSO services is also found to be limited to only a small proportion of population, dramatically concentrated around the district or town centers where the OWSOs are located (see for example, Nuom (2009) and Erin & Plummer (2015)).

Common practices employed by the OWSOs when District Administrations launch the new service is the ‘traditional Khmer style’ in the form of street parade to disseminate information in markets and public places. Furthermore, outreach activities after the opening of each OWSO later attend to receiving feedbacks on the quality of services, which is vital for continued high performance of the OWSOs. It is, therefore, important to inquire into what have been done, what have worked, and what have not and need improving in relations with citizen outreach and public awareness raising. Feedback from service users suggests that it is very helpful for users if detailed information (in brochures) including supporting documentation requirements and price lists, encourage customers to come to the OWSOs, with better preparation, and potentially help them avoid making unnecessary extra trips to the OWSOs to provide more documents.

Erin & Plummer (2015), through analyzing the surveys of citizens in the OWSO sites, note that outreach and public awareness building is more effective when having NGO participation than when the government agency works alone. In districts where the OWSOs and district administrations implemented outreach without NGO support, awareness of the

OWSO among a random sample of citizens was 24%, and only 4% of the sample were aware of the DO (Green Goal, 2011). In contrast, in sites where the NGOs helped conduct outreach in 2011, awareness of the OWSO was almost 70% of the sample and about 15% for the DO (API, 2012). For those sites that received NGO assistance in 2013, surveys found that on average, 95% of citizens were aware of the OWSO and roughly 50% were aware of the DO (CCSP and VNBK, 2014). It also was found that for the ‘accountability’ aspects of the outreach, citizens felt more comfortable speaking in the ‘citizen hours’ and posing questions about the services if they were facilitated by an NGO rather than led directly by the local government. However, it is important to note that outreach activities conducted by NGO partners need to be more cost effective (Erin & Plummer 2015). For example, NGO partners spent approximately US\$16,000 per district, while OWSO/DO operational costs (excluding salaries and salary incentives) are only about US\$6,000 on average per year per District.

Amidst challenges, it is recommended that incorporation of OWSO into the district/municipal government would be ideal. Creating a formalized structure for the OWSOs would help strengthen accountability to the OWSO head and create a career path for OWSO staff. At the same time grades assigned within the OWSOs should remain relatively “flat” to maintain the positive atmosphere of mutual help. District governments should also have flexibility to hire some back office staff locally or use contract workers or volunteers which would address the challenges in asking people from outside the district to commute every day.

It is also recommended to allow district governments to suggest suitable staffing patterns in the context of progressively harder budget constraints moving towards full cost recovery. It should be recognized that many of the permits being issued by the OWSOs are not highly technical (for example, sign board permits and some business operating permits), and thus may not require someone from the line department to process. OWSO documents (OWSO, 2014) disclose that MOI is considering assigning some OWSO fees as district revenues to be used towards OWSO operations beginning in 2013. This could usefully be combined with encouragement to local governments to move towards cost recovery, but they need flexibility over staffing patterns in order to come up with locally appropriate solutions that reflect the mix and level of services demanded by citizens in that locale.

Another recommendation is to increase the capacity of the district administration by beginning to include them in hiring decisions. For example, the deputy governor or OWSO

chief could be one member of the hiring committee considering applications. This would reinforce overall D&D reforms that make the district/municipal governments a focal point for local governance.

District governments should be encouraged to explore non-monetary staff incentives in addition to salary top-ups. Ensuring the OWSOs remain clean and pleasant, supplying educational opportunities (especially IT literacy), and “soft” rewards such as “Employee of the Month” recognition or team-building exercises are non-monetary ways that staff morale can be maintained with minimal budgetary impacts.

The National Committee for Sub-national Democratic Development (NCDD) is formally responsible for the OWSO program, and as such facilitates coordination with relevant line ministries. Towards this end, NCDD established the Inter-Ministerial Technical Advisory Group (TAG) to support the implementation of the OWSO/DO. The TAG is chaired by a Secretary of State from Ministry of Interior (MOI), and includes representatives from all the key ministries that have delegated functions to OWSOs, as well as those from Ministry of Economy and Finance. The TAG, by working closely with District Support Team (DST) and NCDD, is responsible for reviewing and advising on new policies and guidelines related to OWSO/DO including the delegation of functions, fee setting, coordinating with relevant ministries, line departments and sub-national administrations, and monitoring the progress in the implementation of the OWSO/DO. The TAG focuses on coordination at the national level; it meets regularly with DST staff to discuss and resolve implementation issues. At the provincial level, coordination is generally handled by the provincial governor.

Anecdotal evidence shows that coordination between the OWSOs and line departments is vital and appears to require third party facilitation. As discussed above, OWSO staff face operational bottlenecks that require coordination with provincial line depts. In most cases, if there are strong local leaders (Provincial or District Governors), coordination occurs on an informal basis, but is largely reactive to problems. In some districts, NGOs are playing an important role in facilitating line department meetings, allowing for a more consistent dialogue. However, in both cases, solutions to operational problems are being worked out province by province without a comprehensive solution at the national level.

Improved service by the OWSO appears to be generating some interest among line ministries to replicate improvements. The creation of better service models is intended to raise customer expectations, and one of the benefits of the reform is that it creates pressure on other service units to improve their performance. This objective is intimated by the title “Demand for Good Governance” and this approach does appear to be germinating some competitive pressures. For example, the Ministry of Land has encouraged their line departments to post a list of fees. This work will however require a much more concerted effort to overcome bureaucratic resistance and inertia; it is understood that these instructions are being ignored because they are not a legal requirement. To respond to this, the following mechanisms have been proposed:

- Facilitate regular Inter-Ministerial coordination meetings to raise the issues faced by operational staff upwards so that they can be addressed on a systematic basis. DST could play an important role in creating mechanisms for OWSO operational staff to raise issues with policymakers at the national level. While they are doing this in an overall way through the TAG, a dedicated forum specifically to discuss implementation challenges would allow lower level staff to raise concerns directly to senior officials in a more conducive way.

- Replicate lessons learned from the OWSO experience in other line ministries/departments and communes. The posting of fees and the enforcement of opening hours has had a positive impact on service. These are relatively easy measures that could practically be enforced in line departments or for commune-level services. Where lack of incentive payments make enforcing a full day unrealistic, it may be practical to have limited opening hours that would provide a dependable, predictable number of hours per day that customers can seek services or information. This would be in line with efforts by the Ministry of Economy and Finance and the Anti-Corruption Unit to clarify fee structures across government.

4. How the government has undertaken the reforms of administrative services

In 2001, the RGC launched the decentralization and deconcentration reforms with the enactment of the Law on Commune/Sangkat (C/S) Administration and Management and the Law on Commune/Sangkat Elections. The Commune/Sangkat Council elections aim to

provide autonomy to local governments so that they can better represent the interests of the people. Following this reform, sub-national reform started in 2005 as the government adopted the Strategic Framework for Decentralisation and Deconcentration, which helped pave the way for the adoption of the Organic Law in 2008. The Organic Law dictates the Administrative Management of the Capital, Provinces, Municipalities, Districts and Khans, under which two additional layers of sub-national government, i.e. the district/municipal council and the provincial council, are formed. These councils are indirectly elected by commune councilors and they are to be delegated functions, authority and resources from the central authority under a unified administration.

As the decentralisation reform is being implemented in full swing, involving all sub-national levels, the priority focus now has been improving public service delivery. One of the initiatives selected to demonstrate innovative good governance approaches is the implementation and subsequent expansion of the One-Window Service Office (OWSO) and District Ombudsman (DO) to selected municipalities/districts throughout the country. By now, the RGC – through Ministry of Interior – has established 46 OWSOs throughout Cambodia (OWSO, 2017). The government targets to open OWSO throughout Cambodia by 2019.¹

The Royal Government of Cambodia has actually paid significant attention to combating corruption. In 1992, the RGC adopted the criminal law act which includes three articles on corruption related acts of embezzlement, bribe taking, and bribe giving. In 1999, the RGC first established the Unit Against Corrupt Practices which was in 2006 restructured and renamed as the Anti-Corruption Unit. In 2010, the Kingdom made its first separate anti-corruption law.

The RGC recognizes good governance as the key to fighting corruption, to poverty reduction, and to sustainable and inclusive growth (RGC, 2013). The government has promulgated and implemented the Rectangular Strategy, with good governance as its core cornerstone and anti-corruption as the first of its four focused reform areas, implemented through the Governance Action Plan which covers four crosscutting areas of reforms social

¹ Interviews with Advisor to OWSO in February, 2019

development and justice: (i) combating corruption, (ii) judicial and legal reforms, (ii) civil service reform covering decentralization and de-concentration, and (iv) reform of the armed forces, especially demobilization.

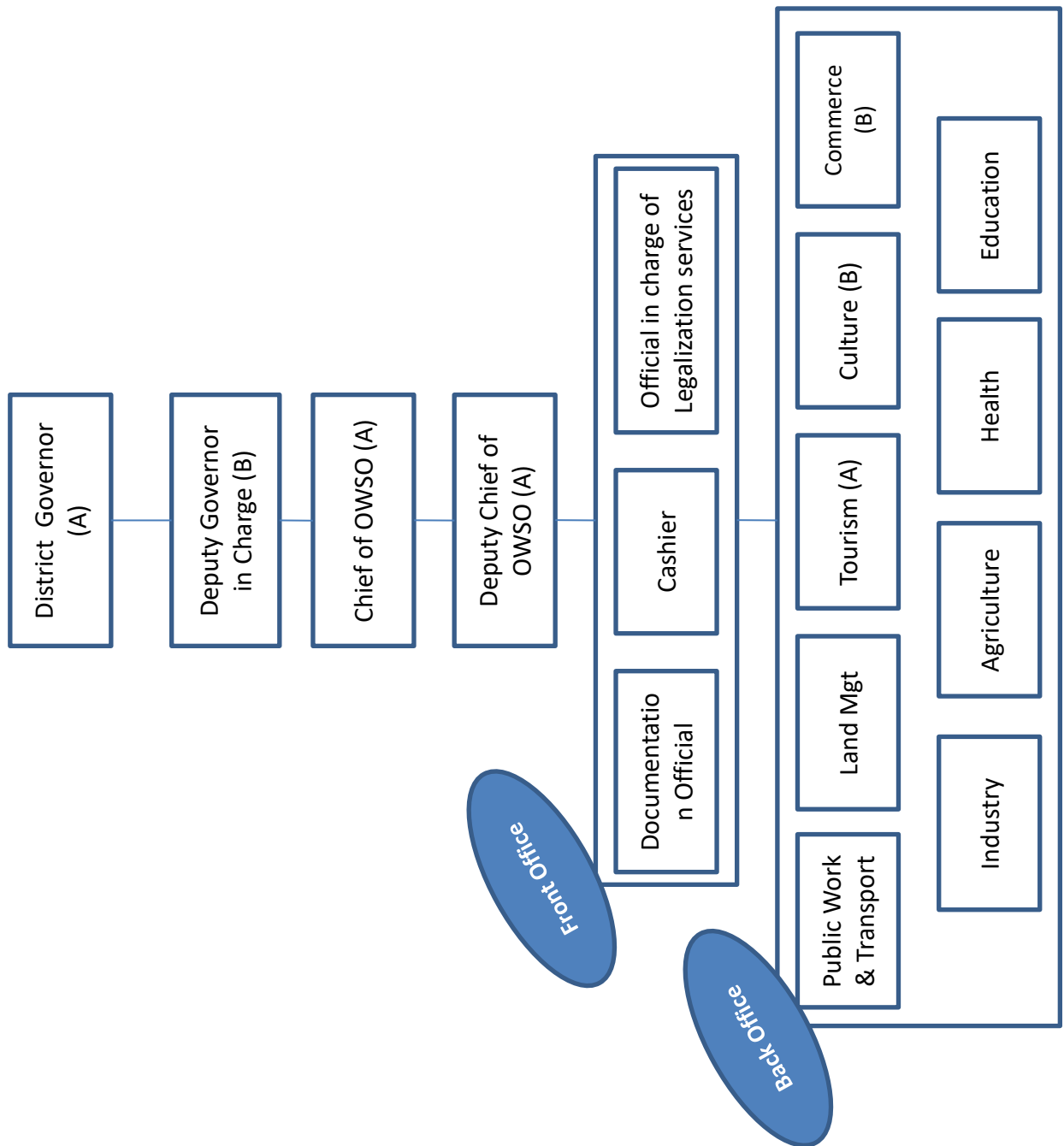
Literature shows that corruption remains an important obstacle to Cambodia's development. It is estimated that corruption in Cambodia is as high as 10 per cent of GDP (ILO, 2014 as cited in Ear, 2016). According to Transparency International's Corruption Barometer 2013, the top five most corrupt institutions are: judiciary, police, registry and permit services, land services, and medical services (Ear, 2016). Corruption opportunities tend to increase where there are more interactions with officials, either within the courts, traffic stops, licensing and registration services, medical check-ups with healthcare officials, etc.

One Window Service Office Project (OWSO) is a component of the Demand for Good Governance Project (DFGG), funded by World Bank's Grant and Government's Contribution. One Window Service Office is an office that provides public services to the citizens, businessmen, small entrepreneurs, students, etc. The public services provided through the One Window Service Office are effective, efficient, transparent, accountable, timely, reliable, inexpensive and with good quality. There is evidence that reforms supported by the project have reduced costs and improved service standards (World Bank, 2017).

OWSO has the following structure, roles and responsibilities that aim at (OWSO, 2010):

- Promoting good governance, administration reform by enhancing administration services provided by province and capital, district and commune, by bring bringing all types of services together at a place.
- Improving services so as to reduce corruption building trust from the public toward the administration system.
- Promoting participation from the people through their recommendations and constructive feedbacks toward improved administrative services.
- Bringing the administration closer to the people for ease in timely and effectively providing services to people, with transparency and to respond to people's needs.

Figure 1: OWSO Organisation Chart



5. Effects of the Implementation of OWSO, Challenges and Ways Forward

5.1 Effects of the Implementation of OWSO

5.1.1 Citizen Outreach to Better OWS

At the launch of each OWSO site, officials from the OWSO and district administration use traditional way of public awareness raising, including street parade, with music and flags, announcing the opening of the OWSO on loudspeakers. This is followed by a large public

forum to explain the new services in more detail. During each activity, promotional materials are also distributed. At the national level, the Ministry of Interior (MOI) OWSO/DO national support team also promotes the OWSO/DO on mass media including television and radio. After the OWSOs are launched, the district administration organizes monthly ‘citizen hours’, during which a group of 20-30 citizens meet and talk with the District or Municipal Governor on any topic. This allows citizens to ask questions about the OWSO or raise any concerns they may have about operations (Erin & Plummer 2015). Later, with financial support from the Non-State Actors Component of the Demand for Good Governance (DFGG) project of the World Bank, a pilot was funded for a NGO to support 5 OWSOs to conduct their public outreach. In addition to helping with the events the local government was arranging and the NGOs recruited and trained volunteers, usually students, who went door-to-door in the community to explain the new services.

Citizen awareness was reported higher for OWSO services than for the functions of the district ombudsman. Awareness of the district ombudsman increased from a baseline of 4 percent in 2011 to a range of 31–86 percent in 2014. Strengthening the media and scaling up one-window service offices (OWSOs) throughout the country would contribute to the objectives of supporting decentralization and promoting citizen’s partnerships. In the priority area of decentralization and citizen partnerships, increased awareness of services provided by OWSOs ranged from 57 to 98 percent, as reported in four surveys carried out in 2013–14 (PRIA, India, and SILAKA, Cambodia, 2013).

5.1.2 The operation of OWSO

The OWSO-DO reform Cambodia is a key building block in the government’s overall D&D strategy as it provides a model of citizen friendly, transparent and accountable service delivery at the district level that will pave the way for further D&D reforms (Thon et al, 2011). The objective of the OWSO is to provide administrative services under one roof in a quick, transparent and corruption free manner. It consists of four major goals: responding to the needs of stakeholders; providing certain administrative public services in a timely, transparent, accountable, responsible, and efficient manner; offering an avenue for mediating complaints and concerns of stakeholders with regards to administration performance; and promoting citizen awareness and participation (OWSO, 2014 as cited in Pho et al, 2015).

Before the establishments of the OWSO, most services fall within line ministries' authority. They are diverse and do not have limits in terms of range, except that some bigger services require decision from the ministry level while smaller service transactions are done through provincial line departments (Thon et al, 2011). With the OWSOs, small administrative functions are delegated from line ministries to the OWSOs and most services available at the OWSOs in the municipalities and districts relate to the registration of vehicles, commercial operations/ small businesses, and legalization. The offices consist of a 'front office' for interacting with citizens, giving out forms and collecting documents, and a 'back office' which consists of 'competent agents' who are delegated here from the relevant line ministries that have transferred functions to the OWSOs. The OWSOs provide around 30 different services (over 200 permits/licenses/functions), among others the registration of motorbikes, small shops and licenses for constructions for houses up to 500 square meters. The requirements and procedures for issuing the services at the OWSOs are dictated by regulations coming from the line ministries. OWSO staff (front office) are trained in these requirements and back office staff are assigned from the respective line departments to issue licenses/permits. The fees for the various services are publicly displayed for all to see in the OWSO and the service is provided in a timely and consistent manner.

The OWSO operates under the oversight of the District Governor and is managed by an OWSO Chief. Ministries that have delegated functions and staff to the OWSO include Ministry of Industry, Mines and Energy (MIME), Ministry of Commerce (MoC), Ministry of Tourism (MoT), Ministry of Public Work and Transportation (MPWT), Ministry of Culture and Fine Art (MCFA), Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction (MLMUPC), Ministry of Health (MoH), Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), and Ministry of Education (MoEYS). The process and decisions on which functions are delegated to OWSO are made internally within each ministry and there is huge variation in the number of functions delegated from each ministry.

Information on stakeholder satisfaction is limited, but satisfaction was reportedly high: 90 percent of clients and 96 percent of elected officials were satisfied with services in new OWSOs. Qualitative feedback from users and citizens as reported in the final evaluation of the OWSO component suggests that the OWSO is considered an improvement over obtaining services directly from the provincial line department, primarily because of lower informal fees and more welcoming customer service (World Bank, 2017, P.14).

5.1.3. Budget and Revenue

Staffing and budget issues are handled through the Ministry of Interior (MOI)'s line department rather than being devolved. According to a study in 2010 on the OWSO pilot projects in Siem Reap and Battambang towns, budget allocated to OWSO comes from the municipal budget, which is a small share of the provincial budget (Thon et al, 2016). Consistently, the allocated budget often falls short of the operation needs of the OWSOs which do not have autonomy over the budget allocation (amount) nor revenues collected. The revenues are transferred to the provincial treasury who will then annually relocate a specific share to the OWSOs.

Currently, all OWSO related staff receive incentive payments equivalent to up to 100% of base salary. This is done in tacit recognition that government staff in "normal" departments do not work full-time and often rely on "tips" to supplement their salary. Staff appointments are made with the approval of MOI, in line with regulations governing all sub-national civil servants. The head of the OWSO has no role in selecting the back office staff assigned to them; however, the district governor is a member of the selection committee.

5.1.4 Stakeholder's Perceptions

Studies conducted to date on Cambodia's OWSO (Weiser & Pak, 2013; API, 2012) indicate that both clients and local government officials are generally more satisfied with services obtained through the OWSO than directly from the line departments. In the 2011 Baseline/Midline Study conducted by Green Goal (2011), a survey of 2,300 respondents in 5 districts (Battambang, Siem Riep, Preah Sihanouk, Peam Ror, Poipet) found that, overall, 93% of clients were satisfied with the services of the OWSO. Preliminary data from a survey conducted in 2012 by the Advocacy and Policy Institute (API, 2012) finds 83% of customers are satisfied with OWSO services, especially related to fees and processing times, and 5% are very satisfied. Only 4% of customers surveyed stated they were dissatisfied by the service delivery performance of OWSO.

An exit report conducted by the People Center for Development and Peace (PDP Center) in 2013 on the works of OWSO/DO in the municipalities of Samrong, Oudor Meanchey province and Preah Vichear town, Preah Vihear province find that almost all the people who

have used OWSO services are satisfied with the staff and services in general. Around 95 percent of the respondents expressed their satisfaction with the OWSO officials for their friendliness and helpfulness, while more than 90 percent said the officials were active (in performing their functions) and punctual. In terms of transparency and demand for informal fees, 92 percent said officials did not ask for unofficial fees while only 7% said officials did (see also similar findings in a 2012 report on citizen's feedback services at OWSO Chhbar Morn, Kampong Chhnang, Pursat municipalities by Advocacy and Policy Institute; OWSO's 2012 Annual Progress Report; Neb Sinthay's (2016) OWSO: Improving Government Transparency and Responsiveness). Thus, available data are quite consistent in their findings that people prefer the services of the OWSOs to traditional service delivery.

OWSO staffs, being given the financial incentives and the opportunity to learn something new as their primary motivation to join the OWSO, report consistently that the working environment is better than in their line departments and district offices. In particular, OWSO staff members appreciate that they are more likely to help each other and work as a team than in their line departments and they are proud to be providing good services to customers (Weiser & Pak, 2013; Demand for Good Governance Project, 2011-2012; DFGG Learning Notes; OWSO, 2014).

5.2 Challenges

5.2.1 Limited services

According to the interview with officials at OWSO, the dimension of service provision is still very limited. OWSO can only register small services such as vehicle registration and micro businesses.² The low participation among SMEs is both a result of tax avoidance and an incomplete delegation of functions to OWSOs. Because businesses have to still comply with some requirements being maintained at line ministries, OWSO has just become another stop for them rather than reducing their burdens. Hence, the private sector does not find OWSO very relevant (OWSO, 2013). Also, a wide range of bureaucratic administrative system was still practicing in the OWSO (Seng, 2013). Many line departments did not completely delegate the power to the OWSO. This lack of cooperation between line departments and OWSO led to the disseminations of the administration.

² Interview with OWSO Officials

5.2.2 Financial Challenges

Furthermore, without proper financial autonomy, OWSO could face serious financial sustainability challenges. OWSOs not only do not have autonomy over their revenues they also have very little say in the drafting of their own operation budgets. Equipment costs are not included in the budget, nor are maintenance costs. However, OWSO now can use fee charged from their service providing to use as the incentive package for their staff (see Prakas No. 14342 PRK of the Ministry of Economy and Finance). And this leads to improved service providing by OWSO staff.³

5.2.3 Limited Capacity and Insufficient Number of Staff

In terms of staffing, some issues were identified. Despite the positive incentives, most staff are assigned rather than volunteering for the positions. In theory, the hiring process is supposed to be competitive. However, positions can only be filled by current staff of the municipal government (for the front office) or the district/provincial line department (for the back office). Given this relatively small pool of potential candidates, there have been few expressions of interest in the OWSO positions particularly if the OWSO is not located in the same town as the line department. In practice, staff is therefore commonly assigned to the OWSO, sometimes against their wishes. This has led to high turnover in some locations, particularly where the OWSO is some distance from the home. A number of the sites also report being dissatisfied with the quality of the personnel assigned by the line departments.⁴ In Battambang, for instance, the district government has moved to placing student volunteers in the OWSO to supplement or replace staff.

6. Discussion on Policy Evaluation – effects of the reform

The objective of the OWSO is to provide administrative services under one roof in a quick, transparent and corruption free manner. The effects of this reform can be measured through the perception of both the clients and the staff of OWSO. The clients' perceived services exceed clients' expected services (Pho, 2015; Seng, 2013; Weiser & Pak, 2013, API, 2012;

³ Interview with OWSO Officials

⁴ Interview with OWSO Officials

& Goal, 2011). The clients received more than they expected from the OWSO. The OWSO is a facility that has many kinds of services provision accomplished with sociability, transparency, quickness, time limit, accountability, less corruption, time and money saving for citizens, small businesses, local authorities, civil servants at different levels as well as the Royal Government of Cambodia to pursue poverty reduction policy by demanding good governance for the local government. The OWSO staff are also satisfied with such reform. This is due to the provision of financial incentives and opportunities to learn new things within in OWSO. In addition, the OWSO staff tend to appreciate new working environment and the good services they have provided to the clients. Although the services provided by the OWSOs are highly satisfactory and reflect the initial objective of the reform, undesirable issues existed. There is a low participation of small businesses. Most small businesses do not consider OWSO an improvement in public service delivery but another stop which is another burden for them since they still need to comply with certain requirements being maintained at line ministries.

Furthermore, good public service delivery, the OWSO has contributed to the improved capacity and performance of the sub-national administrative in delivering public administrative services with quality and in a transparent, accountable and timely manner in response to the needs of citizens. Moreover, it has contributed to strengthening mechanisms for improving access by citizens to information as well as mechanisms for complaints handling at the local level. Finally, the OWSO has made a positive contribution to changing attitudes and practices of staff and officials at the sub-national levels with regard to public service provision to a more professional manner that fully respect the rule of law and ultimately being accountable to the people. Along with the OWSO, the DO has brought good relations between citizens as well as businesspeople and the administration; and contributed significantly to the fighting against acts of corruption.

A look into existing survey reports from different agencies, state and non-state, conducted midway pinpoints that performance of OWSO officials has notably improved. A 2011 baseline survey conducted by Green Goal shows that out of a sample of 79 respondents, 93 percent were satisfied with the OWSO service; 5 percent of the sample responded that they made informal payments, representing a huge reduction. An internal national assessment of OWSOs carried out in 2011 noted that staff behavior improves within 6 months of an OWSO office opening, faster than originally envisaged. The assessment noted improvements in line

ministry official performance with respect to rules and regulations, including being punctual, working full business day, performing their assigned roles and responsibilities. It is also suggested that OWSO staff has improved internal collaboration and customer orientation.

Plummer (2015) identifies certain institutional aspects that have contributed to the aforementioned positive changes in the performance of OWSO officials including attitudinal changes discussed in the previous section.

- **Leadership:** Assessment of seven OWSOs in the DFGG project of the World Bank illustrates that if the OWSO Manager has set a good example, staff tend to follow suit. This trend is enhanced if the Municipal/District Governor also pursues high standards of service in the OWSO and oversees compliance with the code of conduct.
- **Complaint mechanism:** The role of District Ombudsman (DO), though yet to be fully functional as a complaint handling mechanism, has contributed to the enforcement of the transparency, accountability and customer service orientation. OWSO officials are aware that the DO is open to complaint from the public on irregular practices such as informal fee demand and other unacceptable behaviors against the expectations set in the national policy.
- **Modernization:** The RGC efforts to decentralize and deconcentrate functions and strengthen the districts through the OWSO initiative – combined with new functions, buildings, equipment has established a “wind of change” (Plummer 2015, p.2). Within this overall reform environment, staff have become more committed to performance standards.
- **New working structure:** The elimination of some of the hierarchies commonly seen in most of the government institutions has encouraged the ‘accountability’ aspect of public service delivery. Apart from the OWSO manager or deputy manager, all OWSO officials are of the same level, removing the hierarchical relationships that underlie rent-seeking behavior.

After several years of the OWSO implementation, there has not been much change in the objective of the OWSO; however, some working procedures have been adjusted to improve the efficiency of the OWSO. Changes in those working procedures were made based mainly

on the feedback and complaints from operation staff in the OWSOs. In addition these changes, the OWSO has illustrated some lessons in terms of policy making and policy implementation. First, good public service delivery requires transparency. The citizens want to know how well the government is providing services and meeting targets. Second, good incentive system is key to motivating staff to work hard and increase productivity. Third, budgetary autonomy which is allowing government entities to make their decision on financing gives operation staff a sense of belonging.

7. Conclusion

This study of policy-making and implementation for one window service in Cambodia has painted a very positive picture. The OWSO experience review in Cambodia to date offers important lessons learned, not only for continued replication and assignment of functions to the district level, but for governance practices through decentralisation and de-concentration overall. OWSO appears to represent a significant improvement over standard government service delivery and reduce unofficial pay – so called corruption – in Cambodia, as evidenced by improved perceptions by customers and relevant government staff. This has been achieved with relatively simple reforms to existing services. Efficiency and transparency gains have come from more effective oversight of staff (ensuring that they come to work, are responsive to customers, and do not demand informal payments), transparent office arrangements, the posting of fees, and the presence of independent oversight in the form of the DO. OWSO staff are actively innovating, with the help of third-parties, to negotiate more streamlined procedures in the absence of more systematic regulatory review.

Deepening and replicating the reform will require some immediate steps by MOI including most importantly: changing guidelines to acknowledge some of the informal operational arrangements and solutions developed by the district governments; more fully decentralizing the management of the OWSO to allow adjustments of services and staffing patterns to meet local needs; and conducting regulatory review and streamlining so that the OWSO can be made more relevant to SME owners. The stated commitment of the Royal Government of Cambodia to supporting this reform is a hopeful sign that the lessons learned will be applied for the benefit of citizens throughout the country, and keep public policy reform contently made in alignment with contemporary changes socially, politically and economically.

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