



## Bridging authorities and civil society

*"Good Governance" has for years been a buzzword in developing countries - and also in Cambodia. In the current National Strategic Development Plan 2014-2018, developed by the Cambodian government, Good Governance is a key strategy followed by a number of action plans. The National Strategic Development Plan 2014-2018 is now being implemented on all levels of the state sector, including at commune level in Ratanakiri province. However, two Commune Councils in Ratanakiri have chosen to improve their Good Governance with assistance from ICC, and requested the ICC's team in Ratanakiri to organise a workshop for them on Good Governance.*

One of the challenges at commune level in Ratanakiri province is that the Commune Councils experience a limited involvement from community people, e.g. when it comes to the Annual Commune Investment Plan. Although Commune Councils seek participation and involvement from the community people, which is an important element of Good Governance, some community people blame the Commune Councils if they are not satisfied with the process and the outcome. From the community people's perspective, they feel a lack of transparency from the Commune Councils, and information is not provided to them in an understandable and accessible manner.

The ICC iBCDE project (identity Based Community Development and Education) received a request by two Commune Councils to plan and conduct a workshop on Good Governance. Participants were Commune Council members from both communes, village leaders, elderly, and key people from 10 different villages. The workshop was done with a focus on promoting and reaching a common understanding about roles and responsibilities of both the local state sector and the civil society sector. It is quite normal in Cambodia that the civil society sector often demands the state sector to improve or strengthen Good Governance. However, the discussions and reflections during the workshop focused on the importance of both sectors talking and collaborating together. With positive dialogue and collaboration a foundation is made for increased mutual understanding and respect. Hence, with stronger confidence and trust between Commune Councils and community people, the Good Governance is being strengthened.

One of the key learnings from the workshop was that Good Governance is something which can always be improved and strengthened. Therefore, both the state sector and the civil society sector need to continuously work for Good Governance and in close collaboration with respectful dialogue.

The outcomes from the workshop also benefit iBCDE project's work, as a closer relationship was built between the workshop participants and the iBCDE team. This will benefit the further implementation of iBCDE project's work among indigenous people in Ratanakiri province.