

The Kingdom of Cambodia

Nation - Religion - King

National Assembly

General Secretariat

**Five Year Strategic Plan
General Secretariat of the National Assembly
2003 – 2008**

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1. Introduction

This strategic plan describes how the National Assembly General Secretariat proposes to work more effectively to support the National Assembly in its overall work. The strategy has been developed to address the important issues that the Secretariat needs to deal with if it is to respond more efficiently and effectively in its support role to the National Assembly. To meet this aim, the strategy will be updated and reviewed on a regular basis in order to respond to the changing needs of the National Assembly and its Members.

The strategy is also designed to help parliamentarians and parliamentary staff develop a clearer understanding of the work of the General Secretariat, so that improvements in working practice can be identified and built into future revisions of the strategic plan. This means that rather than being a document carved in stone, the Strategy also aims to create a process of strategic thinking and dialogue within the General Secretariat and National Assembly. The objective here is to constantly consider how services can be improved, with the overall aim of helping the National Assembly better represent the people of the Kingdom of Cambodia.

2. The National Assembly of the Kingdom of Cambodia

2.1. Background

For more than two decades during the 1970's and 1980's Cambodia was devastated by war and the atrocities committed by the Khmer Rouge regime. The Paris Peace Agreement of 23 October 1991 brought relative peace to the country, and since then, considerable effort has been made to rebuild the Nation and rehabilitate its people through a process of national unification and reconciliation. Following the Paris Peace Agreement, the main civil war factions agreed that **His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk** should hold the Royal position of President of the Supreme National Council.

Following the result of the UNTAC¹ organized general election of May 1993, a Constitutional Assembly was inaugurated on 14 June 1993 under the Highest Royal Chairmanship of **His Majesty King Norodom Sihanouk** – the master of national reunification and reconciliation and the President of the Supreme National Council.

On 30 June 1993, the Constitutional Assembly under the leadership of **Samdech Bovor Setha Son San** prepared a draft Constitution for the Kingdom of Cambodia, and the National Assembly was created on 24 September 1993 after the King signed and promulgated the Constitution. This equipped the Kingdom of Cambodia with a Constitutional Monarchy, and established that the Government of Cambodia should function within a framework of a parliamentary democracy.

The National Assembly of the first mandate, led by its new President **Samdech Chea Sim** adopted the Internal Rules of the National Assembly on 28 October 1993 during the first meeting of the first session of the Assembly.

¹ United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia

The National Assembly of the second mandate was established in accordance with the spirit of the Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia following the second general election of 24 July 1998. The National Assembly of the second mandate, consisting of 122 members, began its first session on 24 September 1998 under the Highest Royal Chairmanship of **His Majesty, King Norodom Sihanouk**.

During this second term legislature, the President of the National Assembly, **H.R.H. Samdech Krom Preah, Norodom Ranariddh** has tried tirelessly through his leadership to develop National Assembly procedures that are in line with international standards of parliamentary best practice. As a result, the National Assembly has become a symbol of the Nation's progress towards a genuine evolving democracy, in respect of the Constitution and Human Rights. The United Nations and several bilateral partners through their ongoing support and assistance to Parliament have recognized this progress over the past years.

The third general election is planned for 27 July 2003. Twenty-three (23) political parties have registered and more than six million people are expected to cast their vote at one of the 12,826 polling stations to elect the next 123 Members of the National Assembly. The General Secretariat is committed to providing the new Members of the National Assembly with the highest standards of service during the next five-year legislature.

2.2. The roles and duties of the National Assembly

The Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia² outlines the Articles governing the National Assembly. The Assembly is an organ which has legislative power, and performs its duties as provided for in the Constitution and laws in force.

The most important roles and duties for the National Assembly are to:

- enact laws
- debate and pass draft/proposed laws
- oversee the application of laws
- amend laws already in force

In undertaking these duties the National Assembly has a responsibility to take into account the interests of the people it represents.

The National Assembly has a legislative term of five years and consists of at least 120 elected Members of Parliament. The Assembly convenes for two sessions a year, with each session lasting for at least three months. In between sessions, the work of the National Assembly is managed by the Permanent Standing Committee, which is chaired by the President of the National Assembly. The Permanent Committee is made up of:

- The Chair of the National Assembly
- Two Vice-Chairs of the National Assembly
- Chairpersons of all nine Commissions of the National Assembly

² The Constitution of the Kingdom of Cambodia (amended version 4 March 1999).

In order to carry out its roles and duties effectively the National Assembly has established nine Commissions. These are:

1. Commission on Human Rights and Reception of Complaints
2. Commission on Finance and Banking
3. Commission on Economy, Planning, Investment, Agriculture, Rural Development and Environment
4. Commission on Home Affairs, National Defense, Investigation and Anti-Corruption
5. Commission on Foreign Affairs, International Cooperation, Information and Media
6. Commission on Legislation
7. Commission on Education, Religious Affairs, Culture and Tourism
8. Commission on Health, Social Affairs, Labor and Women's Affairs
9. Commission on Public Works, Transport, Telecommunication, Post-Office, Industry, Energy, Mines and Trade

3. The General Secretariat of the National Assembly

3.1. Role of the Secretary-General

The Secretary-General acts as Chief Executive of the National Assembly Administration and directs all the services that are provided to both the National Assembly as an Institution, and to its elected members. The Secretary-General advises and supports the President of the National Assembly, the National Assembly, its Permanent Committee, and its Commissions in all procedural and administrative matters.

The Secretary-General reports directly to the President of the National Assembly and the Permanent Committee. The Secretary-General and the Deputy Secretary-General are the two most senior officials of the National Assembly Secretariat and are appointed by Royal Decree.

The Secretary-General has overall responsibility for the work of the General Secretariat. Three Director Generals support the Secretary-General in his work – the Director General for Inspections; the Director General of Services and Technical Works; and the Director General of Administration and Management (see Appendix B for full details). The ten departments the Secretary-General has responsibility for are:

- Research
- Legislative Procedure
- International Parliamentary Relations
- Protocol
- Provincial Parliamentary Representation
- Communications
- Administration
- Procurement
- Human Resources
- Finance

The Research Director, and Legislative Procedure Director report directly to the Secretary-General. The remaining departments report either to the Director General of Services and Technical Works; or, the Director General of Administration and Management. A deputy director aids each departmental director. Department's of the Secretariat have between three and five offices managed by an office chief.

The Director General for Inspection reports directly to the Secretary-General and is responsible for ensuring that all administrative and financial affairs follow the National regulations and those of the National Assembly. In addition, the Director General is responsible for advising all directors on administrative and human resource management.

A group of technical, legal and socio-economic affairs advisers provide support as necessary. These specialists and advisers assist the President of the National Assembly, the Secretary-General, Commissions, and individual Members on request.

The Secretary-General has responsibility for the safe keeping of all official Parliamentary documents, as well as maintaining the records of proceedings of the National Assembly and for keeping custody of these records and documents. This role extends to responsibility for maintaining all the official records and minutes of meetings for the plenary sessions; the Permanent Standing Committee; and the nine Commissions of the National Assembly (listed in Section 2.2). The Secretary-General also has responsibility for promoting and maintaining external relations.

3.2. The role of the General Secretariat

The general services that the General Secretariat provides to the Members of Parliament, Commissions, the Permanent Standing Committee, and the President of the National Assembly are divided into three (3) categories, as follows:

3.2.1. Procedural and legislative professional support services

- Review, analysis and research on draft laws and proposed laws and other legal research.
- Provision of technical assistance and advice relating to parliamentary procedures and the preparation of meetings.
- Provision of protocol advice and assistance for international activities and internal legislative procedures.

3.2.2. Administrative, technical and logistic support services

- Travel services.
- Building maintenance and repair.
- Transportation and communication.
- Printing and publications.
- Communication with Municipality and Provincial Offices of Members of Parliament.

3.2.3. Management

These are internal activities that include:

- Overall management of all human and material resources.
- Development and application of financial and administrative management policies, procedures and systems.
- Development of Human Resources Management policies, procedures and systems.

A more comprehensive summary of the General Secretariat's functions and duties is provided in Appendix A.

3.3. Staffing Profile of the National Assembly

The National Assembly has its own staff which are independent of the Government Civil Service apparatus. They remain however under the law of the civil servants of the legislative body, and also a specific law that governs the rules and general conditions of their work. The staff of the National Assembly has increased from 299 employees in the first legislature to more than 500 in the second legislature. In the current situation there are 546 employees working for the National Assembly, categorized as follows³:

- 395 officials and support staff (260 men and 104 women) of permanent status
- 30 contractual officials/support staff (27 men and 3 women)
- 121 'floating' non-permanent status staff (88 men and 33 women)

4. The General Secretariat's Vision

The vision of the General Secretariat is:

To ensure that Members of the National Assembly have access to all services necessary to carry out their full constitutional responsibilities in an effective and efficient manner by the end of 2008.

To achieve this vision the General Secretariat is committed to carry out its responsibilities in a strictly non-partisan way and to serve the Institution and all Members equally regardless of their party affiliation. The new law on Statutes for the civil servants of the Legislative Body constitutes a foundation that will support the Secretariat in achieving this vision.

To continue to develop toward the necessary high level of professionalism and expertise, the General Secretariat recognizes the need to call on professional technical expertise and material assistance from donors in a number of key areas. Learning and experience from the past few years shows that the General Secretariat

³ As of May 2003.

has not yet met the high expectations of the leadership, the Members of the National Assembly and its serving Commissions.

In order to become a well-functioning Institution that provides the National Assembly, elected Members, and Cambodian citizens with a responsive, non partisan professional service, the Secretariat will adopt the following two complementary strategic approaches.

- First, the Secretariat will make maximum use of all currently available resources to strengthen management capacity, improve operational services, establish the required policy infrastructure, and acquire needed equipment and material assets.
- Second, the Secretariat will try to obtain additional assistance from donors and other partners and will direct those resources in a coordinated, integrated manner, based on the documented plans and priorities approved by President of the National Assembly.

In a more concrete manner, these two approaches will be combined to:

- Strengthen the skills of the current human resources, develop managerial capacity and focus on the need to improve the ability of the procedural and legislative researchers.
- Provide adequate and modern working tools to staff; and ensure the on-going review of organizational structures and systems at all levels in order to adapt to new situations.
- Develop more effective communication processes to link procedural, legislative, and subject matters considered by the Assembly and its commissions.
- Actively seek additional assistance and donations from national and international partners and utilize these resources in an appropriate manner based on well-planned program designs that are approved by the Permanent Standing Committee.
- Encourage the participation of civil society in parliamentary activity.
- Integrate gender equality considerations in all managerial undertakings.
- Seek opportunities to initiate and maintain open, regular cooperation with the Senate at all levels.
- Consult and include staff in institutional projects such as reviews of internal procedures, new members orientation programs, and design of space in new parliamentary buildings.
- Improve communication with staff to help them acquire a sense of pride for the parliamentary institution.

The General Secretariat will also ensure that activities undertaken in the context of special assistance projects with aid agencies are in line with the broad strategies in this plan and that they will avoid duplication of effort, and the redundant use of resources. See Appendix C for details of the activities.

5. The current potential to develop and improve services

5.1. Staff competence and capacity

Since the formation of the Secretariat in 1993, staff and officials have developed a range of competencies based mainly on their work experience in an attempt to provide a satisfactory level of service to the National Assembly. The Secretary-General and senior managers are supportive of staff training and development, and the staff have a reasonable understanding of the role of the National Assembly and of the Secretariat. Members of Parliament understand the need for Secretariat staff training and support this need.

Through a process of donor support, managers and professional staff have participated in different training programs and have developed a general understanding of their roles and responsibilities, in addition to understanding the challenges the National Assembly experience when attempting to perform its duties effectively and efficiently.

Previous staff development programs have been aimed at building the expertise of managers and staff in particular professional fields such as legal training provided through the Konrad Adenauer Foundation (KAF), Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Canada-Cambodia Legislative Support Project (CCLSP), and the International Parliamentary Union (IPU). Larger capacity building projects, in particular the five-year CCLSP and the three-year United Nations Development Programme emphasized developing staff capacity and competencies more generally. These programs and other initiatives have offered training in a variety of topics such as general management, library services, computer skills and foreign language courses. Additionally, middle and senior-level managers were trained at the Royal School of Administration, and studied English language at local centers of education. A smaller number of private institutions have also provided training and study tours abroad to help Secretariat staff gain direct experience of work in other countries with more developed parliamentary systems and processes.

Working conditions for staff members are considered good compared to some other civil servants, and staff respond enthusiastically to training programs. Overall, staff are considered to be motivated; and in most areas, the level of staffing is considered sufficient.

An important factor to consider in terms of staff capacity and competence is to fully acknowledge that until recently staff of the National Assembly were appointed to their positions based on party-political affiliation. However, recent improvements in staff policy has meant that a non-partisan General Secretariat Parliamentary Staff now supports the work of the Secretary-General, and that staff are appointed and promoted on individual merit.

Significant momentum has been built in terms of developing staff capacity at both a specific and general level and it is now important to focus these improvements into priority areas that contribute to the overall improved efficiency and effectiveness of the National Assembly.

5.2. Buildings and Facilities

A building for the Commissions of the National Assembly was officially opened in December 2000 and equipped with the necessary office equipment. This building is used as offices and Meeting Rooms for the nine Commissions and the Members of Parliament. The National Assembly Hall for Plenary Sessions was renovated and returned to use in November 2002 and is now equipped with modern technical facilities and features. A new building for the National Assembly is due to be completed in the next few years.

5.3. Services provided to the National Assembly

The General Secretariat has provided administrative and financial services to the National Assembly as well as legal and legislative analysis relating to draft laws, proposed laws and the establishment of procedures for plenary sessions of the Permanent Standing Committees, and National Assembly Commissions. Examples of this work include arranging protocol services for the reception of foreign parliamentary delegations; arranging international organizational visits to the National Assembly; recording and preparing minutes of meetings; and organizing meetings and standardizing procedural forms.

5.4. Support to Public Consultations

The General Secretariat has developed experience in organizing public forums that enable exchanges of ideas between Members of Parliament and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) on draft and proposed laws and other issues. This experience is limited, but is a good start in assisting the National Assembly to become more effective in its future outreach initiatives.

Provincial Offices of the National Assembly located in 24 municipalities and provinces throughout the country provide a communication link between voters and their Members of Parliament.

5.5. International Relations

The Secretariat General has established good relations and is linking cooperatively with the General Secretariats of many foreign parliaments. These include:

- International Parliamentary Union (IPU)
- Asia Pacific Parliamentarian Forum (APPF)
- Asian Inter-Parliamentarian Organization (AIPO)
- Association of Asian Parliamentarians for Peace (AAPP)
- Assemblée Parlementaire de la Francophonie (APF)

Relationships such as these facilitate the exchange of ideas and knowledge and allow the Secretariat to learn about good practice from other institutions.

6. Obstacles to the development of effective quality services

A number of obstacles have been identified which prevent the General Secretariat from developing and delivering quality services to the National Assembly. These obstacles have been grouped according to the most appropriate 'program' heading and are reported on in detail below.

6.1. Human Resource Management and Development

In accordance with similar practice elsewhere in the Cambodian civil service, Parliamentary staff have in the past been selected and appointed based on political quotas in line with the spirit of national reconciliation. This situation resulted in many staff positions being filled by individuals who do not necessarily have the knowledge, skills and experience to adequately carry out their roles and responsibilities. As a consequence, a very significant number of staff do not possess the professional skills to meet the requirements of their jobs.

This situation has resulted in skill shortages in areas such as legislative analysis expertise, administration, communication, management of human resources, handling information, financial management, report writing and writing official minutes. The Baseline Study indicates that despite some improvements in these areas, a significant gap still exists in employees' capability to perform their role and responsibilities according to normal expectations. Another consequence of the partisan appointments system was the level of 'mistrust' that developed between Members of Parliament and the staff of the Secretariat, and this has caused low self-esteem amongst some Secretariat staff.

The political quota system for appointing staff is starting to change, and hiring employees based on merit has already started. The 'Law on Statute for Civil Servant of Legislative Group'⁴ states that employees of the three institutions⁵ falling under this law, will execute their work in a non-partisan manner and will be selected on the principle of merit and competence. This represents a crucial turning point and has the potential to change the inherently politicized way of recruiting staff in both the National Assembly and the Senate. Although this new Law has recently been adopted by Parliament, detailed specific regulations have yet to be developed.

There is an important need to update and develop Statutes, Internal Rules and Manuals of Procedures to help govern the work of the Secretariat. The National Assembly Secretariat has no human resource policies or procedures to guide managers in managing their employees. As a result, management of employees is not standardized with predictable consequences. Vacant positions of officials and staff have neither been largely advertised nor filled by way of a fair, open and proper process.

⁴ 13 February 2003.

⁵ Constitutional Council, Senate and National Assembly.

No specific job descriptions exist to inform staff about their duties and areas of activity. The appointment of officials is not governed by established and clear guidelines and the recruitment of women staff to the Secretariat has not reflected the spirit of gender equality. Addressing this latter point is of particular importance for the Secretariat to demonstrate its commitment to gender equality. A very small number of directors and senior managers are women and there is a real need to develop specific recruitment policies aimed at increasing the number of female staff in the Secretariat, specifically to senior positions.

Management capability has been improved during the last two legislatures, but has not yet reached a satisfactory level. Managerial responsibilities remain centralized and delegation to subordinates remains limited. Staff meetings aimed at exchanging ideas and finding ways to alleviate minor issues rarely happen. There is no effective communication or exchange of information between units, nor are there regular meetings in which senior managers can work together as an effective management team.

There are no clear guidelines or directives designed to control expenses, equipment or logistics; and there is a need to improve the transparency and accountability in each of these areas of work. Monitoring the productivity of past work also needs to be improved and financial auditing exercises need to be regularly conducted.

As in most areas of the Cambodian civil service, salaries for civil servants are low and do not reflect the economic realities of living in Cambodia today.

6.2. Provision of services to the National Assembly

Generally speaking, Parliamentarians acknowledge the good services offered by the Secretariat, but indicate that currently these services do not fully meet the demands of the National Assembly. The level of knowledge and skills of General Secretariat staff, for example in priority areas such as the analysis of draft laws and proposed laws, legal research, report and administrative writing, preparation of minutes of proceedings etc. remains low.

Despite the many efforts to improve these services, Members of the National Assembly continue to express their lack of satisfaction with the quality of the work produced by the General Secretariat. Furthermore, professional relations between the National Assembly civil servants and Members of Parliament still need to be improved, especially in terms of creating respect, and appreciating the value of the work carried out by parliamentary staff.

6.3. Information Services

Disseminating information relating to the activities of the National Assembly has not been particularly effective. This has mainly been due to two reasons. The first reason is the lack of a separate radio and television station, and the necessary Information Technology resources that would allow information to reach the public throughout the Kingdom of Cambodia. The second reason is the low level of national funds allocated to the Secretariat for its dissemination duties.

There is a need to improve the production of parliamentary records and develop ways to improve public access to these records. Many staff lack any experience of how a modern parliamentary information system functions. There is a lack of useful documentation specifically designed for Members, staff and the public on the various working aspects of the Cambodian Parliament. Furthermore, new Members elected to Parliament can find little relevant literature to induct them in the workings of the parliamentary system, or information that clearly describes the roles and responsibilities of various departments, committees and other relevant procedural functions.

The monthly National Assembly Information Bulletin is somewhat limited in scope. It focuses mainly on protocol and international relations and provides little detail about the legislative activities of the House. There is a need to include in the bulletin an executive summary (in English and/or French language) to enhance its usefulness at both a local and international level. The above constraints are primarily due to a lack of human and material resources. Equipment is old and in many cases obsolete: printing facilities are unable to cope with the demand. As a consequence, the Secretariat is not able to fully support Members and Commissions in this important information dissemination role.

6.4. Public Relations

Relations with the public, as well as some national and international institutions are not considered satisfactory. There is a lack of communication with the population generally and no systematic means of undertaking official consultation exercises with civil society. The main reason for this is because the General Secretariat does not possess sufficient public relations expertise and experience.

This situation is made more difficult because officials and support staff of the parliamentary offices in municipalities and provinces are frequently unclear about their duties and responsibilities in providing services to the National Assembly, as well as being ill-equipped to do this work.

6.5. Information Technology

The General Secretariat of the National Assembly is essentially an information-driven organization. However, the existing facilities require upgrading and it lacks a proper up-to-date informatics network – the normal working tools in any well-functioning legislature. In most areas of work, personnel are required to share computer workstations. A small number of computers are connected to the Internet but there is no computer network to allow the transfer and sharing of data. This situation means there is no reliable mechanism for creating or maintaining an ‘institutional memory’ and no reliable and safe system for storing official parliamentary documentation or retrieving it once stored.

In a Parliament intending to modernize its operations and give members of the National Assembly accurate, timely and complete information; staff are at a great disadvantage because of this information technology gap. This may be the single most significant obstacle to making institutional progress in the Secretariat in the medium to longer-term. Furthermore, the effectiveness of computer training

programs is significantly reduced when participants return to their work place and cannot apply or practice their newly acquired skills because the availability of equipment is so limited.

6.6. Buildings and facilities

The General Secretariat does not have adequate premises to do its work. Office accommodation is dispersed over a number of different buildings, work areas are too small for effective working and in many cases staff are required to share offices. Departments are unable to communicate in a meaningful way, and working time is lost through the need to hold meetings at different locations. The lack of suitable information technology and lack of IT networks contributes greatly to this problem.

7. The Secretariat's Priorities

The General Secretariat has identified a number of key priorities that will need to be addressed if it is to realize its vision. These priority areas focus on developing and delivering a better service to the National Assembly. They are as follows:

- Strengthen the human resource capacity of the General Secretariat and the administrative system so that parliamentary services are provided in a way which meet the expectations of the National Assembly.
- Upgrade information systems, and communication technology and techniques to better disseminate information to Members of Parliament, so that Members can perform their duties as parliamentarians by communicating more effectively with the population.
- Improve public relations with the general public and civil society, including establishing a mechanism for public hearings.
- Improve the capacity and skills of the provincial and municipal office staff.
- Furnish the General Secretariat with appropriate office space.
- Establish effective relationships with national and international institutions aimed at supporting the National Assembly in its overall aims and objectives.

These priorities have been developed into a number of goals which are detailed in the section below.

8. Strategic Goals

In order to achieve its vision within a five-year period, the General Secretariat has developed seven strategic goals in 7 program areas. This is an ambitious number, however, some of the goals are specific and quite achievable in the short to mid-term. The Strategic Goals in full are:

Program Goal 1: Human Resource Management and Development

Strengthen the capacity, professionalism and expertise of the National Assembly Civil Servants to allow them to fully meet the expectations of Members and Commissions of the National Assembly.

Program Goal 2: Management structure, systems, policies and procedures

Improve the overall management of human and material resources by developing effective structures, systems, policies and procedures.

Program Goal 3: Information strategy and systems

Develop an information strategy that includes planning and installing a modern information system and information technology infrastructure with equipment to serve the National Assembly.

Program Goal 4: Information dissemination

Enhance the information and educational programs and products of the Secretariat to better inform all Cambodians and the international community of the role and activities of the National Assembly.

Program Goal 5: General Secretariat office accommodation

Acquire appropriate and improved accommodation, on a concentrated site, that allows for effective and efficient management and the facilitation of inter-departmental contacts.

Program Goal 6: Provincial and municipal offices

Support and equip municipal and provincial offices to better manage public complaints and enquiries, as well as responding to citizens requests for assistance.

Program Goal 7: Relations with national and international institutions

Improve the Secretariat's capacity to develop and maintain relations and contacts with national institutions, non-governmental organizations, the public, civil society, the press, foreign parliaments and Parliamentary Commissions.

These goals, although distinct in terms of program areas, are designed to be complementary to each other.

In the following section, the strategic goals are presented in more detail, and the activities that need to be taken to achieve each goal are identified.

9. Strategic Goals and Activities

9.1. Human Resource Management and Development

Program Goal 1

Strengthen the capacity, professionalism and expertise of the National Assembly Civil Servants to allow them to fully meet the expectations of Members and Commissions of the National Assembly.

Parliamentary efficiency and effectiveness anywhere in the world relies on having well trained, skilled and motivated staff. Strengthening the capacity and professionalism of Secretariat staff to deliver satisfactory services to the National Assembly is an essential feature of this strategic plan. Such initiatives must start with improving and developing Human Resource Management and Development policies and procedures, which focus on fair, open and equal processes for the selection and promotion of staff – especially women. Developing the capacity and skills of staff to deliver a more professional, quality-orientated service to the National Assembly is essential not only for improved services, but also for the motivation of the parliamentary staff themselves.

Many of the services that need to be improved are specific. Capacity building initiatives need to be undertaken to improve services in translation and interpretation, recording and transcribing, minute taking, archiving, and communicating with stakeholders in English. Complementary to this approach is the need to train people to develop systems for recording and transcribing parliamentary sessions, archiving material and creating the necessary safe storage and security systems needed to protect important documentation and material. Central to this objective is the need to mobilize donor support for the supply and installation of appropriate systems, and the training of staff in these professional support roles.

Major Activities

- Develop and implement human resources policies and procedures to guide managers in managing Assembly employees with respect to the ‘Legislative Civil Servants Law’ and regulations, including developing fair, open, competence-based staffing and promotion processes.
- Establish standardized job descriptions for all National Assembly positions.
- Take necessary and specific measures to promote and ensure increased participation and the appointment of women in all work activities, so there is equality with male staff at all levels and positions e.g. managerial and specialist roles.
- Design and deliver training and development programs based on the priority needs of the leadership, Members and Commissions to enhance the capacity and competency of managers, specialists and employees.

- Identify with donors, suitable national training courses (or overseas courses when necessary) for official translators and interpreters, and other relevant expertise.
- Ensure established donor support projects are effectively coordinated and specifically respond to capacity building needs and priorities of General Secretariat staff.
- Train legal assistants and analysts to assist Members and Commissions in executing their legislative review and oversight duties.
- Deliver skills-based training to help staff meet their specific responsibilities (e.g. report writing, preparation of minutes, computer skills).
- Design and deliver training programs to meet the specific requirements of provincial and municipal Assembly office staff.
- Establish an in-house multidisciplinary team for Human Resource Development to assess training needs, provide regular training, and match in-house training needs to capacity building available elsewhere, in order to increase the capacity of officials and support staff of the General Secretariat.

9.2. Management structure, systems, policies and procedures

Program Goal 2

Improve the overall management of human and material resources by developing effective structures, systems, policies and procedures.

Effective management structures, systems, policies and procedures are key to a smooth running General Secretariat. These characteristics are the mainstay of management and administration and enable both human and material resources to be utilized in an optimum way, and importantly, to ensure transparency and accountability in financial matters. Once improved structures, systems, policies and procedures are adopted as the standard way of working, it would be reasonable to assume that other improvements in service would automatically follow. In order to achieve this, however, there is a need to look at the existing structure of the Secretariat organizational units and adjust them in ways that bring about an improvement in overall effectiveness and efficiency.

In many cases, General Secretariat departments need support to bring about improvement (in terms of quality and performance) in their systems, policies and procedures. In some cases, specific and clear strategies need to be developed that support departments through this change process, but this can only be done after thorough needs assessments have been conducted.

Focusing specifically on improving the Secretariat's service to Members of Parliament, many of the recommendations concentrate on improving information flow, and the need to simplify procedures that smoothen the procedural process and distribution of legislative documents. This requires the standardization of

communication and procedural channels between Parliament and line ministries to ensure that there is sufficient access to information that enables and enhances legislative review processes. Supporting Members of Parliament to become more efficient in their own work is also a key function of the General Secretariat; this can include organizing briefings on social and development matters; and arranging talks on draft laws by independent experts.

At a more basic level, there is a need to prepare background documentation for newly elected Members, that clearly describes their role, the workings of Parliament, and the services available to them through the Secretariat. The range of needs is broad. However, much of what needs to be done at a basic level has already been identified through the Baseline Study and other ongoing analyses.

Major Activities

- Update and develop procedures, regulations and policies on issues such as staff recruitment and promotion (with a concern for gender equality), use of logistics etc.
- Develop and implement comprehensive and financial management guidelines approved by the Permanent Standing Committee.
- Prepare a strategy to introduce a more appropriate recording and transcribing system for plenary sessions and commissions, seeking donor support for installation of new systems, and updating of existing systems.
- Develop and implement specific regulations for the application of the new 'Legislative Civil Servants Law'.
- Develop simplified procedures and rules, and a rationalization of administrative procedures aimed at improving information flow.
- Prepare documentation that clearly describes the role of Members of Parliament, the workings of Parliament, and the services available to them through the Secretariat.
- Review and update the roles and responsibilities of organizational units and adjust Secretariat structures for improved effectiveness and efficiency.
- Establish a process in which Members of Parliament are supported in their work by helping to organize briefing sessions on social policy matters and draft legislation.
- Improve security systems (for both personnel and materials, documents etc.) in preparedness for a more 'open house' style Parliament (e.g. organizing exchange visits with other parliamentary institutions and training staff accordingly).
- Arrange for study tours in foreign parliaments, universities, institutes etc. so that staff can learn best practice of other legislatures.

9.3. Information strategy and systems

Program Goal 3

Develop an information strategy that includes planning and installing a modern information system and information technology infrastructure with equipment to serve the National Assembly.

Having a well-functioning, modern communication infrastructure is essential if the General Secretariat is to improve its overall service to the National Assembly. Developing a strategy for the installation of a communication system that enables the timely exchange of information and increases the level of internal networking is an important first step in achieving this goal. This approach needs to be complemented by developing the capacity of staff in information technology skills, by providing thorough customized training and appropriate documentation. Achieving this goal will allow the creation of systems designed to electronically document the workings of Parliament through the introduction of electronic catalogues and electronic libraries.

Main Activities

- Undertake a comprehensive review of the current Information Systems (IS) and Information Technology (IT) situation in the National Assembly in cooperation with the Senate.
- Conduct a thorough informatics needs analysis relating to the administrative, material and legislative needs of the Assembly.
- Develop a short and long term IS plan and IT infrastructure plan covering the design, purchase, installation and implementation of new systems.
- Obtain donor funding to realize the IT plan.
- Undertake a phased and progressive installation plan focusing on the most urgent IT needs.
- Develop and implement an informatics training plan in accordance with the introduction and implementation of the IT plan over the next five years.

9.4. Information dissemination

Program Goal 4

Enhance the information and educational programs and products of the Secretariat to better inform all Cambodians and the international community of the role and activities of the National Assembly.

The systematic and efficient distribution of legislative information and documentation is the hallmark of any well-functioning parliament. In order to achieve this, there is a

need to establish new information dissemination systems and services, and upgrade those that already exist.

Information dissemination services should have both an internal and external focus, with a view to produce and prepare documentation and other media material that meets the needs of specific groups and the population more generally. A necessary part of this process is to train staff in operating, managing and maintaining the services once established.

Main Activities

- Develop proposals for the establishment of an independent radio/television station for the National Assembly and seek donor support for the purchase of equipment.
- Design or install (if appropriate) the most practical and efficient mechanism for printing official Assembly publications (e.g. *Hansard*, minutes of proceedings) and other documents in a timely way.
- Develop proper archive facilities, an e-catalogue and e-library using literature and materials from local research institutions and train staff in development and use.
- Redesign and update the Internet-Intranet National Assembly Web-site.
- Train staff in managing, operating and maintaining information dissemination technology and equipment.
- Improve the quality of bulletins so they provide useful information on the legislative process.

9.5. General Secretariat office accommodation

Program Goal 5

Acquire appropriate and improved accommodation, on a concentrated site, that allows for effective and efficient management and the facilitation of inter-departmental contacts.

A suitable working environment is a necessary requirement of a well-functioning General Secretariat. When office accommodation is dispersed over multiple sites, working practice becomes inefficient and slow. Departments cannot communicate in a meaningful way, and valuable time is lost through the need to hold meetings at different sites. The storage of documents and material that should be centrally available also creates difficulties for effective inter-departmental working. Moreover, a considerable motivating factor for staff is providing them with good and pleasant office accommodation that meets their basic needs.

Suitable office accommodation is also important if the General Secretariat is to provide a broad range of services to Members of Parliament. These requirements could include reading rooms, library areas, archive space, storage areas, meeting

rooms, plenary session hall, commission rooms (with adequate space for the public and press), increased individual office space, circulation areas and a range of other facilities that well-functioning parliaments consider as the minimum for effective working.

Main Activities

- Undertake a thorough General Secretariat accommodation needs assessment taking into account the requirements of Members of Parliament and the proposed Information (IS and IT) strategy.
- Undertake visits to other parliamentary institutions to develop an understanding of effective use of office, meeting, circulation, storage space.
- Contribute to the identification and detailed design of appropriate offices and work areas for the current and projected number of General Secretariat staff to enable departments to function effectively.
- Seek support from donors for the provision of facilities, furniture, equipment and fittings necessary for new Secretariat accommodation.

9.6. Provincial and municipal offices

Program Goal 6

Support and equip municipal and provincial offices to better manage public complaints and enquiries, as well as responding to citizens requests for assistance.

Much of the work of the General Secretariat in supporting the National Assembly takes place in the capital city Phnom Penh. However, there is a real need to improve the capacity, both professionally and materially of the Provincial Offices of the National Assembly (located in 24 municipalities and provinces throughout the country) if they are to act as a communication link between voters and Members of Parliament. When improvements in these areas are made, then improvements in the representation of the Cambodian people by Members of Parliament will follow.

At this stage in the strategic plan, it is recognized that improvements must be made at the 'center' if effective structures, systems, policies and procedures are to be disseminated effectively to municipal and provincial offices, but this is not to suggest that improvements at this level cannot be made – the first step is to understand the needs of these offices in a more detailed way.

Main Activities

- Review the role of Assembly municipal and provincial offices in order to evaluate and confirm their needs.
- Develop a realistic service improvement plan including budget requirements.

- Establish effective communication processes with the Assembly in Phnom Penh to maintain up-to-date information on parliamentary activities.
- Provide the required, documentation, office supplies and equipment to allow the municipal and provincial offices to effectively carry out their work.

9.7. Relations with national and international institutions

Program Goal 7

Improve the Secretariat's capacity to develop and maintain relations and contacts with national institutions, non-governmental organizations, the public, civil society, the press, foreign parliaments and Parliamentary Commissions.

Improving relations with all parliamentary stakeholders (both internal and external) is considered one of the most important goals if Parliament is to succeed in its aim to better represent the people of the Kingdom of Cambodia. In order to achieve this aim, there is a need to develop a number of approaches to ensure that good relationships are developed at all levels of society. Encouraging public and civil society awareness of proceedings and engaging stakeholders in consultation exercises through regular public hearings and 'open' House policies is an important part of this process. Inviting groups that have specific interests (such as women's associations, law students, human rights groups, disability rights groups etc.), to exchange views with Members of Parliament is an important and effective way for Members to understand and represent the views of the Cambodian people.

Improving relations with national institutions, foreign parliaments and other key stakeholders (ADB, KAF, IMF, IPU, APF, WB, UNDP, CIDA etc.) through participation in the *National Good Governance Programme*; and working toward the aims of the Association of Asian Parliaments for Peace (AAPP)⁶ are necessary features of a well-functioning Parliament for both Members of the National Assembly and the General Secretariat. The importance of developing good relations with foreign parliaments is especially important in the sense that they are very good sources of technical, advisory and material support – and specific strategies should be developed to capitalize on this fact.

Much of this goal can be achieved through strengthening the existing Parliamentary public information service by establishing a public information office that takes responsibility for the creation of an effective public relations and communication strategy aimed at engaging all stakeholders.

Main Activities

- Establish a public information unit that undertakes responsibility for developing a comprehensive communication strategy (covering print, audio and visual media), liaising with media services, preparing and developing official publications

⁶ The AAPP seek to strengthen the culture of peace, democracy, and good governance; as well as promoting, protecting and respecting human rights in the region.

designed to increase public outreach, and agreeing contracts for the production of radio and TV productions.

- Organizing and facilitating public forums and other means, as requested by the Assembly, aimed at providing and gathering information, as well as sharing views, relating to legislation and/or to social and legal issues. This includes organizing regular public hearings in an 'open' House format.
- Training staff in public information and public relations roles.
- Building contacts and increasing cooperation with international donors (such as UNDP, IPU, CIDA, KAF, AIPO, AAPP, APPF, APF, and foreign parliaments) with a view to sharing knowledge, and seeking technical, advisory and material support.

10. Conclusion

The five-year Strategic Plan of the General Secretariat for 2003 - 2008 aims to implement effective and efficient management systems and to develop professional and support staff to meet the standards of service that Members of Parliament and the National Assembly deserve. In this Plan, the General Secretariat has set itself some ambitious targets, and this is reflective of the improvements in service that it wishes to make.

In making every effort to realize its strategic goals, the General Secretariat will endeavor to apply the principles and practices of good governance in order to function to the highest level of professional international parliamentary standards. With the active support of Members of the National Assembly, a neutral, non-partisan staff with improved capability, the necessary material assets, and the help of donors; the National Assembly General Secretariat intends to progress step-by-step in becoming a significant contributor to strengthening the democratic process in Cambodia within the mandate it has been given by the National Assembly.

Phnom Penh...../.....2003

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H.R.H. Norodom Ranariddh
President of the National Assembly

Phnom Penh...../.....2003

Respectfully submit this document to
H.R.H. President of the National Assembly
for your approval.

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Kol Pheng, Ph.D
Secretary-General of the National Assembly

Functions of the General Secretariat of the National Assembly