CEDAC Staff Members Attend Energy Workshop

October 27, 2009

Three staff members from CEDAC – Mr. Sok Thea, Mr. Meas Somica and Ms. Charlsea Ewing – attended a workshop entitled " Powering 21st Century Cambodia with Decentralized Generation" that was organized by the Rivers Coalition Cambodia (RCC) and funded by the NGO Forum on Cambodia. The workshop featured 8 speakers from national and international NGO's, members of the research and development sector, and the Cambodian government and private sectors as well. Many representatives from local NGO's, local stakeholders and government agencies attended the workshop.

There were a number of topics covered during the day long workshop. They included a briefing on the current energy situation and demands in Cambodia; the impacts of climate change and sustainable solutions for mitigating these impacts; information on and comparisons of centralized and decentralized energy systems; information on various renewable energy systems including biomass, solar, and small-scale hydropower; and discussions on influencing the policies of the energy sector.

Cambodia is at a crossroads. The policy decisions made in the immediate future will be vital to secure the country's energy sustainability for the long term. Cambodia has the unique advantage of learning from the mistakes made by other countries and the ability to embrace the successes demonstrated by those countries. The speakers at the workshop showed a balanced analysis of centralized and decentralized energy systems. A centralized energy sector is a grid system where the supply and the transmission of energy are controlled by one centralized government, such as the current system. Centralized systems use large-scale production such as large hydropower dams and coal-burning power plants to fuel a national grid. A decentralized system uses multiple suppliers – from small-scale hydropower systems to solar energy and wind turbines – and allows for competition. The advantage of a decentralized system is that the energy is scaled to meet the needs of the users and the energy is delivered to where it is demanded. Decentralized systems avoid the environmental and cultural impacts often associated with large-scale production systems such as coal-burning power plants and large hydropower dams.

The workshop also provided a forum for questions and answers as well as open discussions among participants and speakers alike. There were several excellent questions raised. Numerous handouts were provided including a new publication, "Powering 21st Century Cambodia with Decentralized Generation," which provides excellent information on the decentralized energy options for Cambodia.

The workshop was and excellent forum for sharing and gaining knowledge on Cambodia's energy future. The participants enjoyed the opportunity to learn about new ideas and participate in discussions.