Abstract

Corruption is endemic in Cambodia after decades of drastic civil wars and political instability. It pervades the Cambodian government and society, permeating every sector from the uppermost levels of government ministries and departments to private enterprises and the most grassroot level of the society, involving elites and top officials to front-line workers. For several decades, various parties in Cambodia, including government and society, have exerted efforts to combat corruption, but progress has been slow as there is a lack of understanding of what policies are practically feasible, given the pre-existing conditions and constraints, and a subsequent deficit in strategic implementation of the anti-corruption reforms. It has been argued that the newly introduced anti-corruption policies constitute “constraints” to the society, as the new policies resemble a new set of collective actions aimed at increasing the cost of corruption. As people are often demotivated to comply with these new constraints, corruption will continue as the way of life in Cambodia.

The aim of the study is to investigate the role of awareness as a deterrent of corruption and the role in anti-corruption movements in Cambodia. The study will first examine the key dimensions of existing anti-corruption laws implemented by the Cambodian law enforcement agencies. An analysis of the substantive and procedural aspects of the anti-corruption laws will provide insights on attitudes and understanding of corruption by key institutional actors. The study will also review the sequence of events in the anti-corruption movement in Cambodia, covering government efforts to curb corruption, initiatives to combat corruptibility by civil societies and non-governmental organizations, and events arising from public participation and responses. In addition, the study will identify the factors affecting actors’ corruption awareness through a survey. To sum up, the objective is to examine how the role of awareness as deterrent influences corruption by understanding the interactive and cyclical nature of corruption awareness through the dimensions of cognition, emotion/affection, and reflexivity.

This study, on the whole, seeks to provide a deeper understanding of corruption in Cambodia through a focus on the role of awareness as a deterrent of corruption behaviors. It is hoped that this study can contribute to the emerging field of corruption awareness study.