NGO regulation: Draft law to drop within five months
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NGO regulation

A draft version of a controversial proposal for a law to regulate NGOs could be ready for public consultation by the end of the year, an Interior Ministry official said yesterday.

Mey Narath, deputy director of the Ministry of Interior’s department of political affairs, said a draft law for NGOs would be “finished in four to five months”, at which time a forum would be held to obtain comments from Cambodia’s NGOs. He said a final version of the law would likely not reach parliament until 2013.

At a meeting with civil society groups last Thursday, Mey Narath pledged his support to increase collaboration between the government and NGOs. However, some groups fear an NGO law could be used to stifle organisations that are critical of the government.

Ou Virak, president of the Cambodian Centre for Human Rights, said the law may allow the government to hamper an NGO’s operations by placing restrictions on financing.

Hang Chhaya, executive director of the Khmer Institute for Democracy, also questioned the government’s motivations, but said the time had come to “move on and find a novel way to engage with the government”.

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