



**United Nations Development Programme**

**CAMBODIA**

**Monitoring and Evaluation Mission**

*00/nμ -a)*

*P ~or~~aoeo.*

**of**

**RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND RESETTLEMENT PROJECT (PHASE III)**

**INT1981920 A**

**Report of the Evaluation Mission  
07 February 2000**

**Mission Members**

Ms Hun Hinn, Community Development Worker, RDRP

Mr Men Oun Sereyvuth, Counterpart, RDRP

Ms Seak Pheap, VDC member, RDRP

Mr Tin Fesol, Assistant Project Manager, RDRP

Ms Uch Kim Nary, VDC chief, Pursat province (Seila programme)

Mr Robin Biddulph, Consultant, Team Leader

Ms Hem Sakhon, Director, Chumraen Chiet Khmer (NGO in Koh Andet district of Takeo)

Mr Ly Savuth, Deputy Director of Administration and Personnel, Ministry of Rural Development,  
Counterpart to Team Leader

*Final Report submitted 7 February 2000*

## **Preface**

On behalf of the Mission I would like to extend my thanks to all those people involved in the project who participated in this evaluation. I hope it will be of service to all concerned.

I would also like to extend thanks to all eight members of the evaluation team, who worked long hours both in the villages and also in the games room at Tram Khnar discussing our findings and trying to understand all that we had seen and heard.

This evaluation was completed at a time when many of the people working on the RDRP project were celebrating Christian or Muslim religious festivals, including a number of Experts on the project who had returned to their country during the evaluation. I would like to thank them for the efforts they made to engage in the process by e-mail when they were away and for their contributions to discussions when they returned.

The earlier draft of this evaluation was sent out for comment. I have where possible responded to the comments which were made. The numerous minor amendments are too many to list. The main substantive change is an insertion of some discussion of the role of central government and rural development institutions, and also of the relevance of 'phase out' to the current project: these are both incorporated into the 'Follow up' section immediately prior to the recommendations.

One minor style point raised was with regard to the use of the first person in the narrative. In most instances I have amended this either to a passive structure, or used 'The Mission'. However, during the report-writing and the incorporation of comments I worked alone or with the cooperation of only Mr Ly Savuth. In these cases I judge it more appropriate for the analysis to be clearly identified as my own, rather than one which has been shared and discussed by the whole team.

My particular thanks go to the Project Management, the National Project Coordinator and the UNOPS Associate Portfolio Manager who all gave generously of their time inside and outside normal hours.

**Robin  
Bidduiph**  
Phnom Penh 7

February 2000

2

***Final Report submitted 7 February 2000***

Contents

**I EXECUTIVE SUMMARY (page 4)**

**II PROJECT CONCEPT AND DESIGN (page 10)**

- A. Context of the project
- B. Project document
  - 1. The problem and the technical approach
  - 2. Objectives, indicators and major assumptions
  - 3. Beneficiaries (identification, involvement in the formulation and implementation of the project)  
Modalities of execution (selection of the executing agency, the implementing agency and the recipient institution, work plan)

**III PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION (page 20)**

- A. Activities
- B. Quality of monitoring and backstopping

**IV PROJECT RESULTS (page 41)**

- A. Relevance
- B. Efficiency
- C. Outputs
- D. Immediate Objectives
- E. Development Objectives
- F. Effectiveness
- G. Capacity Building
- H. Impact
- I. Sustainability
- J. Follow-up

**V CONCLUSIONS (page 49)**

- A. Findings
- B. Assessment

- 1.Relevance
2. Performance
3. Success

## **VI RECOMMENDATIONS (page 52)**

## **VII LESSONS LEARNED (page 57)**

Appendices: 1. Schedule/persons met; 2.Terms of Reference; 3. Method; 4. Acronyms

### ***Final Report submitted 7 February 2000***

## **I. EXECUTIVE**

### **SUMMARY Background**

The Rural Development and Resettlement Project (RDRP) is a unique tri-partite cooperation project between the Government of Japan, Cambodia and four ASEAN countries: Indonesia; Malaysia; Philippines; Thailand. Funding and substantive management are provided by the Government of Japan and technical Experts are provided by the ASEAN countries. Phase 1 of the project was 1992-4 and consisted of quick impact infrastructure construction. Phase 2 of the project was 1994-8 during which time an integrated rural development project was developed. Phase 3 of the project continues the project that was established during Phase 2 and intends an increased role for the Ministry of Rural Development for the management of the project.

Funding for Phase 3 is channeled through the Japan Human Resources Development Fund of the UNDP and in-kind through the Japan International Cooperation Agency. The current evaluation is commissioned by the UNDP and covers Phase 3 of the project up to the current date.

### **Evaluation Method**

The evaluation method was predominantly qualitative, giving precedence to the perspectives of villagers as experienced through ten village studies, each of 30-48 hours duration. This qualitative information from this small sample was shared with others working on the project and was also compared with the more global, quantitative documentary information held by the project. The period of evaluation has been 5 weeks, comprising one week of orientation and briefings, three weeks of field research and one week of writing and final interviews. During the three research weeks a team of eight people was assembled comprising four stakeholders at different levels within the project (from villager to Assistant Project Manager) and four people with experience of other development programmes in Cambodia (including the Team Leader

and a counterpart from the Ministry of Rural Development).

Villages were selected by the project management using criteria provided by the Mission. The intention was to begin by looking at villages with a high level of success, and then to explore further issues that arose relating to the Terms of Reference for the Mission. After each phase of research the Mission decided that attempting to see more of the project's successes should remain a priority.

During the evaluation all of the RDRP training centres were visited, teachers and some students on all current courses were interviewed. The evaluation team also met with the Minister of Rural Development, the National Project Coordinator, the Provincial Rural Development Committees of Takeo and Kompong Speu provinces and representatives of the Embassy of Japan, JICA and the UNDP.

*Final Report submitted 7 February 2000*

Analysis involved relating the (largely qualitative) findings from the studies and interviews to the quantitative data available within the project documentation, to the broader general knowledge of the project provided by the Mission members who work on the project and to the broader general knowledge of development in Cambodia provided by the other members of the Mission.

**RDRP Project Approach and Scope**

Within the current project time frame, RDRP intends to alleviate poverty, through improved incomes and livelihoods, in the provinces of Takeo and Kompong Speu. In the longer term it intends to contribute to the institutionalisation of a system of effective rural development in Cambodia.

An integrated approach is adopted which includes the sectors of agriculture, health, education and income generation. Technology transfer is from the ASEAN experts to their direct counterparts on the project and to the beneficiaries with whom the project works. The counterparts are mainly government officials seconded mainly from national ministries to work within the project structure in close cooperation with the ASEAN experts and JOCV volunteers.

The project operates four centres (Kompong Speu Main centre; Takeo sub centre, Kong Pisey sub centre, Samrong Tong sub centre) which serve as bases for vocational training courses and for a range of extension activities. The project also supports integrated development in 113 villages, including 8 commune based development centres. There are 1,319 villages in Kompong Speu and 1,116 villages in Takeo province, therefore this represents 4.6% of villages in the two provinces.

At village level, participation is organised through three mechanisms. Firstly, the formation of Farmers' Groups, secondly, the construction of Meeting Huts which are designed to serve as both a meeting forum and a storage space and thirdly, through the establishment of village managed credit-in-kind which is called Partner Revolving Materials. Thus it is intended that each village should have its own physical and social infrastructure which will enable the long-term management of development by villagers requiring minimal support from rural development institutions. Village Development Committees have been a later addition to the project's village level approach. These represent the project harmonising its approach with the national Rural Development Structure which has evolved since the project's inception. The village-level approach is being augmented with a new focus on the commune level, where centres have been constructed providing decentralised training courses and from which management and extension services can be provided by the commune.

## Findings

**Meeting Huts** are a distinctive feature of the RDRP integrated project approach, which cannot be found in other major development programmes in Cambodia. Villagers in the study villages highly appreciated them and commended them. Meeting Huts can serve as a long-term resource for villages, and especially to support whatever form of local governance emerges from the current

<sup>1</sup> The Mission considers the JOCV volunteers to be "Experts" and therefore in the text of this report, where the word Expert is used without the prefix ASEAN it includes both the ASEAN Experts and the JOCV volunteers.

### ***Final Report submitted 7 February 2000***

local government legislation. Potentially, they represent a significant contribution to the rural development landscape in Cambodia.

The formation of **Farmers' Groups** is also found to have great potential value for rural development in Cambodia. These potentially provide increased representation for villagers by creating administrative subgroups within the village. This enables increased accountability and access for rural villagers. This responds to a situation frequently seen in Cambodia where a Village Development Committee tends to be perceived as serving one part of the village more than others, and where mistrust can lead to reduced participation. In order for the Farmers' Group system to fulfil this potential it is important that it be implemented such that the Group Leaders have genuine responsibilities and do not get bypassed by the central village leadership.

The use of a villager-managed system of in-kind credit is also an important initiative for sustainable rural development in Cambodia. Potentially, it can overcome both the lack of external development funds available to village level development and also the occasionally usurious rates of credit which are available to poorer villagers from the private sector. The long-term effectiveness of the **Partner Revolving Materials** in playing this role depends on the capital being maintained and on repayment rates being high. This was the case in the

villages that were visited by the Mission members. There is not currently information available on overall repayment and participation rates to compare this with other villages. The introduction of village-managed credit with support from government is also being managed on a large-scale in the Community Action for Social Development (CASD) programme supported by UNICEF. Mutual learning between CASD and RDRP would provide potential lessons for both parties. Of particular interest might be the areas in Battambang province where the CASD approach is being integrated with the decentralised development funds administered through the Commune Development Committees under the auspices of the Seila programme.

The **integrated approach** is seen to be of greatest value in the relations between the agricultural extension activities and the provision of Partner Revolving Materials at village level. A similar situation exists with some income generation activities in villages. From direct observation in the villages the integration of the health and education components into the same approach does not seem clear. The logic of the project management is that poverty alleviation cannot be addressed if health and education issues are not adequately addressed. This is certainly true. However, the comparative advantages of the health and education Experts and the RDRP village management approach may not be best realised by harnessing the two together in integrated village management. It may be that Health Experts, for instance, may have more to offer by providing support to district or provincial level public health activities, or alternatively that a more standardised approach to the village health component be developed.

The activities of the **agriculture** sector in the villages have introduced a wide range of activities and initiatives, many of which are new to the farmers concerned. In the villages that were visited the farmers particularly reported the benefits of instructions in chemical fertiliser use which had resulted in greatly increased yields. Other clear successes involved seeds imported from other countries and experts' knowledge being used to identify opportunities to grow crops which local farmers had not thought of. Much very effective and highly regarded training has been given. The overall achievements of the project are not clear because there is a lack of documentation on the extent of

uptake of new technologies and on the lessons which have been learned from the many trials and demonstrations.

During Phase 3 of the RDRP renewed efforts have been made to track the progress of former trainees in the **income generation** field. With the exception of one course, all fields reported in the recent Project Performance Monitoring Report are achieving levels of employment within the field of study of 20% or more, with a maximum of 35%. Furthermore, a resourceful and practical approach is being taken to improve these figures. This looks likely to yield good results if it is sustained. On the one hand, links with the private sectors are being actively pursued by the Experts, and on the other hand courses are being increasingly made mobile and taken to villagers so that they can learn while staying in their own homes. Other organisations engaged in vocational

training in Cambodia are undergoing major changes in their operations: the experience of ASEAN experts in successful institutions in their own countries will continue to be of great value in the attempt to ensure that poor and marginalised rural people may gain improved access to the benefits of the urban boom.

**Situation of the poorest and most vulnerable.** An early lesson of Cambodia's rural development experience has been that the situation of the poorest people in villages and the situation of the rural poor in general are very different. Strategies required to help the very poorest need to be substantively different to those required to help the comparatively better off. The focus of the RDRP project is on working with the rural population as a whole and not on working with the poorest and most marginalised people. In the villages visited, it was the poorest villagers who were the small minority of people who did not participate in utilising the Partner Revolving Materials. Likewise, the poorest were not usually able to attend income generation courses, nor to invest large amounts of time in vegetable growing (for a very poor family it is likely that to have something to eat for the afternoon that you must either find the food or earn the money in the morning).. There may be some incremental changes which can be made in order to give poorer people more "access to the benefits of the project. However, a wholesale change in approach to target the most vulnerable would not be an efficient way to build on the experiences of the project so far.

**Situation of returnees.** In the ten villages visited the Mission members sought out the returnees who had resettled in those villages. The majority had been born in the village that they had returned to and had been allocated a small piece of agricultural land by the village chief. Some were relatively well off, some were relatively poor, but none were amongst the poorest and most vulnerable in the village (though one family had a 19 year old child who was very sick - they had run out of money to spend on medicine, but were debating whether to spend most of their harvest on the child - it is possible that they may become destitute if the child continues to live and be sick). Most of the returnee families who were interviewed had been able to participate in the activities and had benefited from access to the Partner Revolving Materials. It appears from this small sample that returnees to this part of the country were more easily assimilated than in parts of the northwest where they arrived in great numbers and were often placed in separate sub-village communities making integration more difficult. None of the villages visited had more than three returnee families.

**Capacity Building.** The seconded Royal Government of Cambodia officials who have been working on the project - either as field development workers in rural villages or in the training centres - spoke of the immense amount that they had learned from their experience on the project.

***Final Report submitted 7 February 2000***

A number said that before they had come to work on the project, they knew almost nothing, but that since then they had learned a lot. Many, in fact, expressed their confidence that they could now carry out their duties without the assistance of the Experts. This is clearly a substantial contribution to the Cambodian human resource base for rural development.

**Institution Strengthening** The project has been managed with close cooperation with the



National Project Coordinator who is an Undersecretary of State at the Ministry of Rural Development. Cooperation at other levels has mainly been the circulation of reports to provincial authorities and attendance at coordination meetings. Thus, the project has maintained excellent relations with provincial and district officials, but these officials have not had a role in the direct management and administration of the project. The project management expects guidance from the current evaluation on strategies for working more closely with government. The key to this being effective will be good quality dialogue between the project and the relevant officials.

The Provincial Rural Development Committees of the two provinces represent an appropriate level of management for RDRP to work with in order to both hand over responsibilities and expand the impact of the programme. The Governors in all provinces in Cambodia have recently been changed. The Governor of Takeo and the Third Deputy Governor of Kompong Speu have both had three to four years experience of managing provincial level development programmes which are well-funded and which operate through government structures. They have both expressed their willingness to take responsibility for the project. On the other hand, they both spoke from their former experiences stressing the need for comprehensive training for the staff who will do the work and also very clear agreements about roles and responsibilities of the donor, any project staff and the officials themselves .

It is important that dialogue also occurs at other levels of government and not just with the peak figures in the provincial administrations. One way in which this may be facilitated is to invite district and commune officials to become involved in the monitoring and analysis of the project within their jurisdictions - enabling them to begin to take responsibility for the work, but without being involved in line management and without moving them away from their own structures. This may be seen as a first step in a gradual process of the project parting company with the existing counterparts who come from national level and establishing new partners within the two provincial administrations.

### **Recommendations in summary**

1. Strengthen village management by
  - developing standard training packages for Farmers' Group Leaders and Village Development Committees and deliver these to all Farmers' Group Leaders.
  - producing more comprehensive written rules for the management of Partner Revolving Materials
2. Involve district and commune officials more in monitoring and supporting work in current target areas
3. Reassign Experts to Advisory positions with Cambodians assuming line management responsibilities

*Final Report submitted 7 February 2000*

4. 2000 should be a formulation year for a project of long-term support to Kompong Speu and Takeo based on learning from RDRP and other successful programmes in Cambodia. Provincial Rural Development Committees, ASEAN Experts and RDRP project management should share a lead role in the formulation.
5. Contributions of Experts should be strengthened through engagement on 2-3 year contracts with orientation including 2 months full-time language learning

9

*Final Report submitted 7 February 2000*

## II PROJECT CONCEPT AND DESIGN

### A. Context of the project

Rural Development is a relatively new field in Cambodia. The first Cambodian development NGOs were only formed in 1991 and the Ministry of Rural Development was only established in 1993. A range of new organisations and projects are therefore experimenting in order to find effective and efficient way to institutionalise development efforts.

As Cambodia transits from being a centrally planned state economy in a state of war and isolation to being a market economy in a state of peace lessons from other countries in a similar position become increasingly relevant.

The first phase of the Rural Development and Resettlement Project (RDRP) was initiated following a proposal by Mr Koji Kakizawa, Vice Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan at the Post-Ministerial Conference in Manila on 24 July 1992. For Japan, the ASEAN partners and Cambodia it was, in the words of one of the UNDP Assistant Resident Representatives, "a development demonstration of their political good will towards each other".

The period covered by this evaluation is August 1998 to January 2000. However, for the project to be understood during this period it is necessary to understand some of the history of the project since its inception and also the something of the national situation over the same period.

**Cambodia Security Context 1992.1999.** At the time that the project was initiated, Cambodia's future peace and development were by no means assured. The original project Main Centre in Kompong Speu had to be changed because of the security threat by the ongoing guerilla war and the barbed wire perimeter fence and support to 37 armed police guards assigned to the Experts' accommodation centre were thoroughly justified by the situation at the time.

During the early 1990s large and small development organisations began working in the

areas of Cambodia which had attained peace first, To a large extent this skewed rural development efforts in favour of the more accessible and less poor areas. By the time of the National Election in 1998 the country was largely at peace, but the onset of the first election to be administered by Cambodia— under its new constitution did create tension and concern, as did the wave of demonstrations following the announcements of the results. Only during 1999 has the national security situation become genuinely and completely stable and peaceful. The conditions now exist for development investment to be planned according to socio-economic priorities without any need to worry about security issues arising from war.

**National Institutional Context 1992-99.** The institutional context for development is very different to the security context. In the security field there has been a gradual transition from insecurity to peace in a linear progression which has become easier to understand and to predict. Meanwhile, the political, legal and administrative spheres in Cambodia have become more complex and more difficult to understand. The Council for Agriculture and Rural Development, the Cambodia Development Council, the Ministry of Rural Development, the Seila Task Force are all relatively<sup>2</sup> new national level bodies whose roles are still evolving. Meanwhile the Ministry of Interior is freed

<sup>2</sup> All have been formed since the RDRP project was initiated in 1992.

### ***Final Report submitted 7 February 2000***

from many of its internal security priorities and the Ministry of Planning is no longer the central instrument of a Soviet style command economy. Both of these Ministries are therefore finding new roles for themselves in the field of Rural Development. There are therefore changes underway which cannot be assumed to be complete.

Analysis of national development institutions is further complicated by the fact that government salaries are largely at a negligible level. Most development initiatives proceed with international donor funding. It therefore becomes difficult to know which initiatives represent Royal Government of Cambodia priorities and which reflect donor agendas (and therefore may not endure). <sup>3</sup>

One institutional priority for the Royal Government and the donor community alike is administrative reform. The civil service and the military services are currently overstaffed and underpaid, and therefore often do not function reliably - especially in instances where travel away from offices is required. It is not currently possible to predict what level of salaries will be paid to government officials. In cases where projects are funding local salary supplements for officials who are required to work full time it is therefore difficult to arrive at an appropriate level of salary supplement for officials who are required to work full time<sup>4</sup>.

*Local Context for Development.* At provincial and local levels the situation is also changing and unpredictable. Commune and village chiefs have been a source of stability in rural Cambodia over the past twenty years. They have the lead role in local conflict resolution and in the customary tenure system which underpins almost all land ownership by rural farmers. New commune administration and electoral laws are being drafted, however, public debate

on these new laws has been limited and it is not yet clear what the impact of the changes will be. Early drafts, for instance, have not specified what form of government or representation will exist at village level - so it is difficult to know whether village chiefs will continue to have a role, and if not, whether village development committees will have to evolve broader responsibilities.

The Seila programme is a UNDP supported 'policy experiment' in decentralisation being undertaken by the Royal Government of Cambodia in five provinces with national support. It is provoking valuable debate between those who favour a more centralised approach (with line Ministries dominating and administering through their provincial departments and district offices) and those who favour a more decentralised approach with more funds and more decision-making authority delegated to provincial Governors and Commune councils. The outcome of these debates is still unclear.

<sup>3</sup> For example, a 5-year Socio-Economic Development Plan was prepared by the Ministry of Planning with technical assistance from the Asian Development Bank. It proposes to achieve a double real GDP from 1994 to 2004 through "the achievement of poverty alleviation and broad participation in the development process through a focus on participatory rural development". It cannot, however, be assumed that Government policy makers have a strong sense of ownership of the objective, the strategy or the assumed link between the two. <sup>a</sup> To the Mission's knowledge, all major rural development programmes at the present time have adopted this practice, including for example the World Bank's North-East Village Development Project, the UNDP's CARERE project supporting Seila, the GTZ Provincial Development Project in Kompong Thom and the European Union's PRASAC.

### ***Final Report submitted 7 February 2000***

#### **Project History**

**Phase 1.** The Rural Development and Resettlement Project began with an initial construction phase of twelve months which was completed in February 1994. Government of Japan regulations do not allow Japanese Official Development Assistance to be used for paying salary supplements to counterpart staff. However, in the case of assistance to Cambodia it was decided that the extremely low salaries of Royal Government staff necessitated this. In order to circumnavigate this restriction, funds were channeled through the United Nations High Commission for Refugees.

**Phase 2** began in April 1994. As UNHCR's operations were winding down an alternative conduit for the funds was found in UNDP/OPS<sup>5</sup>, with whom a Management Services Agreement (MSA) was signed. Each contributing country provided 10 Experts to work with Cambodian counterparts.

At the end of the Financial Year to 1998 the funding period was extended from March to May.

At this point, because contracts were complete, and also because of caution regarding the elections and transition to a new government, Experts returned to their countries..

During Phase 2, Cambodian officials seconded to the project carried out surveys of the target area prior to the arrival of the Experts, who were then given two months<sup>6</sup> to develop and submit plans that would be relevant both to the prevailing situation and to their own expertise. Project proposals and budgets were then submitted to the Project Manager for approval. At the same time as facilitating the contributions of the Experts the Project Management also developed the project as an integrated rural development programme. A text book and various other reports were produced highlighting the unique features of the project which might be valuable for replication within Cambodia and beyond.

**Phase 3** of the RDRP was established in August 1998. Budgetary restrictions from the Japanese treasury required a shift of the funding such that money was no longer simply managed by UNDP, but was actually lodged in a UNDP administered fund. Funding was therefore shifted to the JapanUNDP Human Resources Development Fund and a budget of 1.26 million dollars was allocated for the 1998 financial year. The Fund is managed from UNDP New York. In this regard, the UNDP Country Office in Cambodia acts mainly as a liaison between the project and UNDP New York.

The Record of Discussions was finally signed in December 1998. Only at this point were the ASEAN Experts and JOCV volunteers who constitute the key technical assistance component of the project able to be dispatched. They arrived in small group over a period between 1st February and 25th March 1999

Phase 3 was foreseen as a continuation of the poverty alleviation programme in Takeo and Kompong Speu provinces, but with an increased emphasis on enabling the Ministry of Rural Development to take over the project.

<sup>5</sup> At that time OPS was part of UNDP, unlike the current situation where it is an independent entity - UNOPS. <sup>6</sup> For returning Experts the period of time was one month.

### ***Final Report submitted 7 February 2000***

#### **B. Project document<sup>7</sup>**

**Formulation.** The transition to being funded through a UNDP administered fund included the requirement to develop a project document. Both UNDP who administer the Fund and JICA who field the substantive project management share a logical framework approach to project formulation. However, the development of the project document was difficult and the final product is not highly regarded by any of the concerned parties.

The chief concern of the Project Management team is that the project document does not adequately make provision to understand, describe or measure poverty, and therefore does not do justice to the complexity of the poverty alleviation approach which is underway. For the project management, therefore, the project document represents a mechanism by which funds were adopted rather than a central element of the design and management of the project,

The chief concern of the UNDP Country Office team is that the project document does not contain benchmark indicators that could enable the progress of the project to be measured against expectations.

It seems therefore that the formulation of the project document was rather difficult as it represented an attempt to integrate an existing project into a UNDP project format, but without the time, resources and flexibility required for a full consultation and formulation process. The need to get the project document approved in order that the existing project could be funded created a certain time pressure. The difficulty of reconciling an approach that predicts outputs and outcomes and an approach which is contingent and attempts to flexibly maximise the use of the skills and experience of a varied group of Experts was a source of some of the difficulties. While the project management does not have a strong ownership of the document, and specifically not of the outputs, indicators and objectives as drafted in the document, it does however remain committed to tracking those indicators.

The evaluative comments on the project document which follow should be understood in the context of the formulation process outlined above.

## **B.1 The problem and the technical approach**

### **Problems**

The problems analysed in the project document are raised in relation to agriculture, poverty, employment and health & education. Institutional issues are mentioned in the project justification where "the current weakness of the Government of Cambodia in its administrative capacity for rural development in both financial and technical aspects" is noted. However, institutional issues are not addressed as problems in the way that directly poverty-related technical issues are.

7 Of UNDP's six areas of concentration, the project document demonstrates concerns with the following: poverty alleviation and grass roots participation in development; management development; technical cooperation between developing countries; transfer of technology.

### Agriculture

- Low productivity of rice production due to 'poor nutrient soil' and 'the single rice planting method, only with local varieties of rice'
- 'Farming is chronically affected by flooding and/or water pan during the rainy seasons and hard pan during the dry seasons. This is due to the low water retaining capacity of the land , because of specific soil texture'

### Poverty

- Low levels of income, knowledge and skills, as well as motivation and sustained effort are low.
- Financial and technical assistance is not available to villagers to improve the situation
- Leadership for poverty alleviation is weak

### Employment

- Job opportunities outside the agricultural sector are limited.
- The access to the training opportunities is limited.

### Health and Education

- Villagers have suffered from poor access to public health and education institutions.

[source: project *document*]

The approach for Phase 3 is described as a continuation of the approach for Phase 2. Capacity building is through a system of counterparts at field level: "ASEAN experts and Japanese volunteers will transfer their technology and know-how to Cambodian counterparts through training in their responsible areas of cooperation." Sustainable poverty alleviation is through organisation of farmers groups who manage revolving materials that are used to respond to local development priorities.

While never explicitly stated, the approach assumes that:

- Royal Government of Cambodia officials seconded to work with ASEAN Experts will learn skills, which will be relevant when they return to their jobs within the administration.
- If a poverty alleviation system can be designed which can be largely managed by villagers and is based on profitable economic activity it will be able to survive with minimal support from Government institutions (from Minutes of March 24th 1998 JCC meeting "To establish an appropriate program to be easier handling to Cambodian 'future leaders'").

## **2. Objectives, indicators and major assumptions**

Objectives. In UNDP parlance, immediate objectives refer to what may be achieved within the duration of the project, whilst development objectives are long-term achievements/results which may evolve due to the impact of the project activities, but not achieved by the project itself.

Development objectives in the project document:

14

*Final Report submitted 7 February 2000*

1. Rural Development System is institutionalised
2. The improved livelihood of villagers in Takeo and Kompong Speu provinces become stable

Immediate objectives:

1. Income level of villagers in Takeo and Kompong Speu provinces is improved
2. Quality and levels of villagers' livelihood in the two provinces are improved

Thus, while some direct impact on poverty alleviation within the life of the project is aimed at, the institutionalisation of such a system are expected to follow at a later stage. This is consistent with the problem analysis and approach which prioritise the achievement of direct poverty alleviation at village level and focus only on capacity building rather than institutional strengthening. The assumption, again, is that if the activities within the villages are relatively self-sustaining and indeed expanding, that there will not be a need to invest a great deal of attention into existing government structures.

Unusually, there is nothing in the project document to indicate how much of an improvement there will be in the income level of villagers, or by how much livelihoods will be improved. Likewise, there is no indication of how these objectives will be measured.

Overall I would say that the immediate objective is rather too ambitious and that this creates a rather weak link between the outputs and the development objective. More realistic immediate objectives which might better relate to project outputs would be:

- Improve the incomes of the population in the villages where the project is implemented
- Diversify the livelihood strategies of the population in the villages where the project is implemented

**Indicators.** Indicators within the project document are described in relation to anticipated outputs. Similar to the objectives, there is no attempt to predict the level of outputs that are anticipated, only to aim at achieving some positive output. The outputs are, however, easily measured.

*Project management capacity is strengthened*

- Number of community development workers trained
- Number of trainees trained in/outside Cambodia
- Number of trainees by gender

*Agricultural productivity is increased, increased productivity achieved*

- Introduction of new agricultural products (mushrooms etc)



- Quantity of yield per hectare
  - Quantity of new arable land
- Income and employment opportunities are increased*
- Number of courses conducted
  - Number of trainees
  - Number of trainees by gender

15

### ***Final Report submitted 7 February 2000***

*Opportunities for villagers to receive an education are improved<sup>8</sup>*

- Number of school building repaired and new schools built
- Number of English education classes conducted
- Number of students of English education classes
- Number of literacy education classes conducted
- Number of students of literacy classes
- Total number of students by gender

*Access of villagers to health services is improved*

- Number of consultations
- Number of vaccinations under the Expanded Immunization Programme
- Number of health-related training sessions
- Number of trainees in health-related sessions by gender
- Number of wells and lavatories built

*Knowledge, information and facilities necessary to villagers available in an integrated manner*

- Number of integrated villages
- Number of training sessions conducted
- Number of beneficiaries

### **Links between outputs, indicators and objectives.**

In a number of cases the outputs are almost exactly the same as inputs. For example, the indicator for development services to be provided in an integrated manner is the number of integrated villages. There is no way of telling from this information what it is that makes the services integrated, nor whether some villages may have more or less integrated services.

Possibly related to the former point is a large gap between the outputs and the impact. The number of courses and number of trainees is not sufficient to demonstrate that income and employment opportunities have increased.

The reservations of the project management and the UNDP country office about the logical framework within the project document are justified.

### **Sectoral objectives outlined in internal project reporting**

ASEAN and Japanese Experts working on the project produce quarterly reports which are consolidated by sector. Given the lack of ownership of the project document, it is relevant to take note of these sectoral objectives, which are framed in terms of general and specific objectives as follows. These are in loose harmony with the project document. They also are not accompanied by indicators for impact. These are incorporated in this report under section 2 on implementation.

<sup>8</sup> The original project document specified "Access to education is improved". This was amended in the year 2 document submitted by the project manager 19 July 1999.

***Final Report submitted 7 February 2000***

**3. Beneficiaries (identification, involvement in the formulation and implementation of the project)**

The description of the beneficiaries in the project document is extremely ambiguous and to a degree evasive (obliquely referring to the earlier phases of the project rather than the current one): "The Project started in 1992 and aimed at assisting disadvantaged and vulnerable families including returnees and internally displaced people, demobilised soldiers, as well as the local population, towards the improvement of their present living conditions in the rural areas of Kompong Speu and Takeo provinces"<sup>9</sup>

On the one hand, it states that the earlier phases aimed at assisting disadvantaged and vulnerable families. On the other hand, 'as well as the local population' means that there is no specific requirement that disadvantaged and vulnerable families be targeted. Likewise, the reference to returnees and internally displaced people only requires that they not be excluded, and does not imply that they should specifically be targeted.

The Project Managers strongly feel that the correct approach to rural development is to work on behalf of the whole population, and that targeting specific groups is antithetical to community development. They would have preferred that the project have become the "Rural Development Project" rather than retaining the word resettlement. While this issue is historical it also anticipates the last remaining resettlement issue in Cambodia - that of demobilised soldiers. While appreciating the need for structural adjustment, including as a priority the reduction of RCAF numbers, the project management are concerned that any approach which targets demobilised soldiers would undermine their overall, broad-based approach.

**Project Area.** The project document refers to the provinces of Takeo and Kompong Speu, but does not indicate what areas within those provinces are to be covered, nor does it indicate what the criteria are for identifying beneficiary targets. In practice, survey data collected by project counterparts is used as background information and Experts and counterparts then follow up this information and make decisions about where they will work; these decisions have to be

approved by the Project Manager.

**Beneficiary Involvement in Project Formulation.** It is very much stressed in the Project Document that at local level the IVM approach "encourages alleviation of poverty through a democratic participation process". With regard to the formulation of the project at project level, there is no indication in the project document that the proposed beneficiaries have been directly involved in the formulation.

**Gender.** An analysis of gender issues is not immediately apparent in the project document. The word gender appears three times, where it is specified that course attendance should be recorded according to gender. There is no indication that any importance has been given to differentiating the roles of men and women in any part of the project formulation process. There is no indication that any importance has been given to analysing the relations between men and women in the formulation process. The only indication that any special provision should be made to ensure that both sexes should benefit is the requirement to break down course attendance by sex.

<sup>9</sup> This quote is taken from the Progress report submitted by the Project Manager 22 July 1999. The project document has the same sentence, but divided into two with a full stop after the word people and before the word displaced. I have assumed that this is a punctuation error and used the later version of the sentence.

*Final Report submitted 7 February 2000*

**4. Modalities of execution (selection of the executing agency, the implementing agency and the recipient institution, work plan)**

The JCC is the "supreme decision-making body" of the project<sup>9</sup> and provides a forum for interested parties to input into project management decisions. The emphasis of the project monitoring and evaluation system outlined in the project document is the provision of relevant and timely information for the JCC, therefore 4-monthly reports are to be submitted to each JCC meeting. It is required to meet three times a year and to conduct one annual project visit. During the period under evaluation (August 1998 to January 2000) the JCC convened once (on 6 March 1999) and also carried out a monitoring visit (5-7 October 1999).

The Japan International Cooperation Centre (JICE) is sub-contracted by UNOPS and does administration and logistics, and some substantive work. JICE was pre-selected by the Government of Japan for this sub-contract, and UNOPS waived requirements for competitive bidding.

The rather complex funding arrangements make the role and responsibilities of the concerned agencies unclear. UNOPS is an executing agency for the project, and according to the project document, it is responsible for the "smooth and appropriate disbursement of Fund in accordance with the accounting rules and regulations of UNDP". However, it is unable to

exercise full execution

responsibility because of the current funding arrangements. For example, the Project Management is provided by the Government of Japan which is normally an execution responsibility. There is no mechanism to reconcile the executing function assigned to UNOPS with the substantive responsibility which is taken by the Government of Japan.

A reduction of the number of agencies involved in the project would be desirable in order to clarify lines of responsibility and to ensure that each agency can be properly held accountable for the duties which it fulfils. UNOPS appears to be the most redundant link in the chain and also the organisation which is most vulnerable in the sense of being given responsibilities which it is not in a position to fulfil. If there were a way in which UNDP could arrange Direct Execution with a subcontract to JICE this would undoubtedly be an improvement". Alternatively, National Execution might enable clearer and more appropriate lines of responsibility.

The positions of JICA and UNDP are as follows. The Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) is an independent foundation established by a law of the Government of Japan to manage all Japanese grant assistance and technical cooperation. JICA therefore provides the substantial project management to the project, under the supervision of the Government of Japan. The UNDP has a responsibility for ensuring the smooth and appropriate disbursements of funds by UNOPS and from the UNDP administered Japanese Human Resource Development Fund (JHRDF). Aside from this, its responsibilities are related to monitoring, evaluation and advice (but not supervision, which is to come from the Government of Japan).

<sup>10</sup> Co-existent with the Tri-partite Meetings between the UNDP, UNOPS and the Royal Government of Cambodia (represented by the National Project Coordinator from the Ministry of Rural Development).

<sup>11</sup> Feedback on the first draft of this report from UNDP and UNOPS suggests that this probably will not be possible, though this is not stated conclusively.

***Final Report submitted 7 February 2000***

If there is any way that UNDP could mobilise resources or mechanisms which could ensure continuity of funding by covering gaps or delays over a longer time period this would add great value to the UNDP support to this unique initiative.

Funding delays have occurred in both financial years of the project. Difficulties in negotiating the approval of the project document and the different financial years of the UNDP and the Government of Japan have been part of the reason for this. The evaluation has not really investigated this issue in great detail, but it appears that JICE has had to advance funds in order to enable the continuity of the project. If the recommendations of this evaluation are followed it may be possible to facilitate a fairly speedy approval of a continuation of the current project (the existing document very slightly modified, plus a detailed work plan for reformulation including strategic objectives). With regard to the approval process for the reformulated project it will be necessary to ensure that a clear timetable is worked out which will give all parties the best

chance to fulfil their responsibilities in a timely manner.

*Final Report submitted 7 February 2000*

### **III PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION**

During the period under evaluation the RDRP project has expanded the coverage of its village level integrated projects from 72 villages to 113 villages, and the number of integrated commune development bases has increased from 2 communes to 8 communes. A total of 41 training courses have been carried out in 12 different fields with 23 of these located in the training centres and the remaining 18 in integrated village or commune project sites. The total number of trainees has been 626. Teacher training and literacy training activities have benefited 188 women and 109 men. Additionally, the project has facilitated the construction of 14 new schools and the repair of one existing school in the district of Angkor Borei (utilising funds from the Japanese Grant Assistance for the Grass-Root Project).

#### **A. Activities**

##### **A.1 Local Development Leadership Institution Building**

###### **A.1.1 Farmers' Groups, Village Development Committees and Village Development leadership**

Within the RDRP integrated project (IP) approach Farmers' Groups are the basic unit with whom the project initially engaged at village level. Village Development Committees have been a part of the Cambodian development picture since 1994-5 when a number of organisations in different parts of the country began forming elected committees - usually to coordinate development activities at village level. The Ministry of Rural Development quickly took notice of this phenomenon and supported its extension throughout the country as a part of a Rural Development Structure. Guidelines for VDC formation were first issued by MRD on 21 December 1994 under Decision 36 which first instituted a rural development structure in Cambodia. This was amended in September 1995. The Rural Development Structure was further amended under law by a Decision 02 signed by the Prime Minister 1 t. January 1999. Thus, for RDRP project management, the Farmers' Group is a more central part of the project design, whereas the Village Development Committee represents part of the project's later harmonisation with national policies as they have evolved.

#### **Findings of villages studies**

In all of the villages that was something which people called a village development committee. In 6 out of 10 of these villages all of the members were male. In a further 2 of the villages one woman had recently been appointed to join the 'VDC' but had not yet received any instructions or training and was not yet active at all. All of the chiefs were male. Seven out of the ten village chiefs were village chiefs, and the other three were all VDC members.

The method of forming the 'VDC' varied considerably from village to village. This included appointments by RDRP staff, appointments by the local authorities, elections with 7 candidates including the village chief and deputy and elections with 12 candidates.

Farmers Groups were found to exist in 8 out of 10 of the villages. In most of the villages, however, the roles of the Farmers' Groups seemed to be minimal compared with that of the VDC chief. Most activities, and especially the PRM were managed by the VDC chief dealing directly with the villagers. Only in one village were there Farmers' Group chiefs who kept documentation on the

***Final Report submitted 7 February 2000***

PRM and were responsible for administering and collecting the PRM and then handing it into the VDC chief.

Table. Findings from 10 villages visited on local development leadership

Village	Comments
Trapeang Kokoh (P) 1995	VDC is 2 men (village chief and deputy). One woman was recently added. All appointed by the commune chief.
Prey Tamuch (T) 1999	VDC is 6 men appointed by the commune chief in January 1999. One woman recently appointed also, but no responsibilities. All villagers were members of Farmers' Groups.
Ong Sangkream (I) 1998	VDC is 5 men. Village chief is chief and village deputy is deputy. Election in half the village. The 10 Farmers' Groups seem to be only on paper - help to call people to meetings etc but substantive management is at village level
Trapeang Krus (I) 1998	VDC is 5 men. Elected from 10 candidates. Two farmers groups, but VC (=VDC chief) does everything. Meeting Hut information in English. There is a Woman's Association but it is not active.
Samphao Lun (I) 1999	VDC is 5 men. Elected from 10 candidates (3 women, 7 men). 8 farmers groups (1 woman leader, 7 men). Group leaders used for distribution of some seeds <a href="#">etc. VC/VDC</a> chief do the management. Adequate records of activities and repayments. Bad feeling had led to removal of one VDC member. Another VDC member complained about VDC not being open and needing to be.
Ampil Thum (I) 1998	VDC is 5 men. The village chief is the accountant and the deputy village chief is the secretary. There are 7 Farmers' Groups all of which are headed by men, but most of the work is arranged by the VDC. There is a woman's association in name but it is not active.
Angtason (P) 1996	From 1996-9 RDRP worked with village chief. VDC election in Sep 1999. VDC is 2 women and 3 men. Village chief is VDC chief. It was elected from '12 candidates - 6 men and 6 women. There are 8 farmers groups: 1 woman leader, 7 men.

Tropean Kabas (P) 1996/7	VDC first elected in 1996 - some discontent about that election (too quick); next election in 1999 - no complaints. 7 candidates in the 1999 election, but results kept being tied so everyone was elected. 3 women, 4 men. There are also Farmers Groups - originally there were 17 of them, but this changed to 5 when the PRM started and this has increased to 6 as the PRM expanded. There is 1 woman and 5 men as Farmers Group leaders. The FG leader who was interviewed was very active in the PRM, keeping records for her group and doing all of the distributing and collecting.
Balaing Reachea (T) 1999	VDC is 8 men. They were chosen by the RDRP Experts and CDWs and Counterparts. There are no farmers groups in the village.
Chress (T) 1999	VDC is 8 men. The chief (who is the village chief) was chosen by election. The remaining members were chosen by him, and are mainly close relatives of his. There are no farmers groups. The VDC are also the model farmers.

### ***Other information gathered***

Experts on the project explained that they had wanted to form VDCs in accordance with the Government's regulations but that they had met with difficulties when they tried to invite

21

### ***Final Report submitted 7 February 2000***

cooperation with the Provincial Departments of Rural Development (PDRD). Often PDRDs would reply that they had no means to be able to assist in this work and would request financial support from the project. Of the two provinces they found that Takeo was more cooperative.

Regarding the fact that Farmers' Groups had not been formed in some of the villages the Project Manager explained that some of the Experts are new in the programme. It was for this reason that they sometimes do some things differently.

Importantly, the project is increasingly focusing resources on the commune level as well as the village level. Partly this is achieved through assigning project counterparts and community development workers to the commune level, and partly through the direct involvement of a number of commune officials in the monitoring and management of the project.

### **Conclusions**

The organisation of Farmers' Groups is a potentially valuable contribution to governance in rural Cambodia. While VDCs have many strengths they also have some important weaknesses.

In a Cambodian village, most people are rice farmers, or *neak tveu sraie*. People who do paid work as officials (*neak tveu kaa*) whether with development organisations, government or private businesses are different. Generally, there is a low level of trust for *neak tveu kaa*. Even

though VDC members are rice farmers, once they are elected to the VDC other villagers will see them both as rice farmers but also as officials. There will be suspicion and mistrust. However, because many people prefer to avoid conflict (especially with people from the authorities, and often the VDC contains village chiefs) they do not speak out publicly about their doubts. Instead they just avoid participating.

The formation of Farmers' Groups in villages could be very important as a way of improving the accessibility and the accountability of VDCs. If everyone has a Farmers' Group leader responsible for their part of the village then it is possible for them to ask questions about the VDC without risking confrontation.

Also, because records are kept at two levels within the village - at VDC level and also at Farmers' Group leader level it is more difficult for there to be real corruption or mismanagement. This is because the Group Leaders are able to check the VDC and the VDC are able to check the Group Leaders. This is much easier than somebody who has no official responsibility and does not have access to documents trying to check the work.

It should also be noted that it is very common in Cambodia for NGOs and larger government sponsored programmes to have met difficulties in overcoming similar problems. In the case of VDCs, VDCs of 5, 7 or 9 people are formed, but in practice many of them do not operate as committees. Instead it is just the chief or a chief and a deputy who do all of the work. Similarly, many organisations have credit activities in which the rules say that the credit recipients must be formed into groups and guarantee each other's loans. Again, however, in practice it is normal for the groups not to be used very much but for the VDC chief, village chief, or activity committee chief to manage everything directly with individual participants. One of the reasons for this is that for

***Final Report submitted 7 February 2000***

development workers working in a village it becomes much more easy and convenient to try and speak to just one villager rather than dealing with several of them.

For this reason, the introduction by RDRP of Farmers Groups as an important component for rural development in Cambodia is potentially very important. However, in order for this to be extended from the RDRP project to other projects the Farmers' Group approach needs to be more thoroughly institutionalised within RDRP. In only one of the ten villages visited did the Mission feel that the concept had been effectively realised. Experts consulted on 17 January supported the idea that clearer rules and documentation regarding the training and the responsibilities of Group Leaders should be provided within the project. The benefits of strengthening Farmers Groups are partly long-term and indirect. There is not an immediate incentive for a development worker to spend time working with more people than she or he has to. Similarly, a VDC chief may feel it is less risky to keep as much power to herself or himself as possible, so again she or he may not feel an incentive to share responsibilities. It is this lack of



immediate incentives for using the Group structure (or any other more broadly-based form of village organisation) which the project needs to overcome.

Regarding VDC formation, the Project Manager and many of the Experts are aware of the rules for VDC formation. Similar to the Farmers' Groups, it appears that some clearer guidelines are required in order to ensure that all field workers understand that these rules should be followed. The issue of cooperation with the Provincial Departments of Rural Development in VDC formation is unfortunate, and perhaps represents an opportunity for the Ministry of Rural Development to facilitate negotiations between the project and the two Provincial Departments of Rural Development.

### **A.1.2 Meeting Huts**

Meeting Huts are designed to give a forum for debate in the village. All of the villages that the Evaluation Team visited had Meeting Huts, and they constitute a central component of the project approach<sup>12</sup>. In all cases villagers expressed satisfaction with the Huts, which are being used not only for development meetings and training sessions, but also for holding festivals within the village.

The Meeting Huts usually cost between \$1,000 and \$1,500. Materials are purchased and delivered by RDRP with villagers contributing labour. In some villages villagers choose to do the work directly and in others money is collected and someone is hired to do the labour. In only one out of ten villages visited by the Mission did VDC members know the cost of the materials which had been purchased. However, when the team asked villagers to estimate the cost of the materials it was usually quite close to what had been spent by the project. During the consultation with Experts it was suggested that

<sup>12</sup> During the consultation with CDWs and CPs the case of not all villages having Meeting Huts was raised. The Project Manager explained that there had been 'several' villages where the project had not constructed Meeting Huts. This included 'not more than 3' where the village already had a festival hall and 5 where the construction was suspended following the theft of materials.

### ***Final Report submitted 7 February 2000***

Villagers are asked whether they would like to have meeting huts in their villages, and they agree to do this. Their contributions and their expressions of satisfaction are an indication that this is a valuable approach that may be worth consideration in other areas of the country.

### **A.2 Partner Revolving Materials**

Partner Revolving Materials (PRM) are the means by which the project intends to enable rural people to find a self-reliant and sustainable way of managing their own development. It is

intended that capital in the form of materials is provided to farmers. After an agreed period the capital is repaid with an interest of approximately 10% over six months (the equivalent to approximately 1.6% per month) in money.

When the capital is repaid the villagers use this money to purchase the same materials. On the other hand, the interest may be spent in any way that can help the development of the village. In this way, the existence of the PRM creates a decision-making opportunity that can be a foundation for the development of local governance. This is intended to take place in the public forum provided by the Meeting Hut.

### **Findings from village studies**

All ten villages visited had received fertiliser PRM. Of the ten villages chosen by the Project, 4 had only been working for less than a year, and therefore the PRM had not yet been repaid. However, in all cases the 1999/2000 crop was good and all parties were optimistic about achieving full repayment.

In one of the villages where the fertiliser PRM had been long-established (Trapeang Kabas 1997) there had been a significant increase in the membership of the activity with an original participation of 52 families expanding to approximately 90 out of 96 families. In another long-established village (Trapeang Kokoh, 1995) interest from the PRM amounting to 1,350,000 riels had been invested in painting the Meeting Hut, repairing the village road, purchasing a microphone and loudspeaker system; repairs to the Meeting Hut. In another longer standing village (Angtason, 1996) the PRM had increased from 83 bags to 113 bags in the first year, but had fallen to 112 the next.

In the three other villages where the fertiliser PRM had only rotated once or twice the interest had been reinvested in order to expand the capital.

Pig PRM was also common to all of the villages visited. Normally the interest was used to purchase more pigs. In some cases pigs had died, but farmers had bought replacement pigs and were confident of making a profit. Apart from these, there were PRM for seeds (eg sweet pepper and water melon), for chickens and ducks and for materials for food preservation.

In all of the villages visited there were a small minority of people who did not participate in the PRM. This small minority always included the very poorest people in the village - usually landless people who had either gone through a period of sickness/death in their family or a divorce. This was mainly self-selection. In other words, people were so poor that they knew that they could not guarantee that they would be able to repay any capital and therefore did not dare to borrow. In some cases, the very poor villagers wanted to borrow but the VDC would not let them because they could not guarantee the loan. This is normal for loan activities in Cambodia. Even where there is

full membership at the beginning the poorer families usually withdraw after the first year or two because they have not been able to repay. Credit can usually only be deployed to assist the very poorest if it is part of a set of measures specifically designed to meet their circumstances. This does not occur with the PRM nor with the vast majority of loan activities in Cambodia.

In one village the VDC chief reported that all of the families except three had participated in the PRM. It was only during direct interviews with villagers that it was discovered that there were actually three more families who had participated in the first year but had not participated during the second year. In the same village a returnee family reported that they had not dared to borrow in the first year. They said that the next year when they saw that it was not a problem they applied to the village chief when the fertiliser was delivered. They said that he told them that they could not have fertiliser because their name was not on the list. He told the interview team that these people had come too late but that they would be able to borrow the next year.

For the majority of villagers who did participate and who did repay, however, there was a high level of appreciation for the activity. The materials (especially fertiliser, pigs, food preservation materials) were found to be relevant and effective capital for the farmers. There was some confusion with some activities in one village where villagers claimed that they had been given materials and then only told at a later date that these would have to be repaid. The concept of a Meeting Hut seminar to decide how to spend the money was not usually mentioned by villagers or VDC members.

### Management

The quality of management of the PRMs varied greatly from village to village. In some villages there were no records at all, whilst in other villages records were kept perfectly. A change of the Counterpart in one village coincided with the inability to accurately account for some of the PRM money. It seemed that the Counterparts had been managing the activity more than the VDC, and had not really prioritised building the capacity of the VDC members to manage the activity.

### Ownership and documentation

One village chief late at night asked the Mission members whether the organisation could take the PRM capital back. He said that he had heard many times that the materials were for the community, but he still doubted this and wondered if there was a possibility that the project might come and either reclaim the capital or take some of the interest. He said that there was no documentary proof to demonstrate clearly who owned what. A related point arose in a discussion which took place when two evaluation team members fed back to 6 villagers and about 20 development workers in a Meeting Hut after an overnight stay. The team asked what happens if there is a natural disaster, for instance a drought and nobody can repay. A VDC member replied that whatever happened the activity must be repaid, and therefore people would have to find the money any way possible. He then added that he would also check with the commune chief and the development workers. A CDW on the other hand answered that if

there was such a problem then there should be a meeting of all of the participants. He said that if they decided that they really did not have the means to repay that they could postpone repayment for the next year or until it would be reasonable to repay. It seemed that a lack of documentation at the village level led the village leaders to have doubts about the ownership and the scope of their responsibilities relating to the PRM.

*Final Report submitted 7 February 2000*

**Other information**

During the consultation with Experts, one Expert challenged the conclusion that PRM did not reach the poorest. On the basis of the direct observations of the teams in the villages, however, it is impossible to draw any other conclusion. Indeed, given the general unwillingness of the very poor to borrow and of the better off to take responsibility for lending to them, this is not altogether surprising. On the other hand, it was also the case that many of the poorer (though not the poorest) families were borrowing and benefiting from the PRM.

In order to get a more accurate understanding of how successful and how sustainable the use of PRM is it is necessary to look at overall figures which show:

- Repayment rates in all villages
- Membership in all villages

Repayment rates (augmented with information on how the money repaid was used) can tell the story of whether the activity is being maintained successfully, or whether it is in decline.

Membership rates are also important, because sometimes an activity will grow in the sense that the repayments will be complete and the capital will expand, however at the same time as this happens the membership also declines as poorer families withdraw for different reasons and it becomes an activity for the fewer better off families.

Currently the Project Manager is having difficulties in collecting such information. Having requested it repeatedly, he has received information on just 24 out of 113 villages. This information is in the format of Village; Input by village; Input by Project; Output. Even if all of this was complete it would not yield the necessary information on the current state of the PRM capital in each village (increasing or stable or decreasing?) nor on the current membership (increasing or stable or declining?).

The Project Manager explained that there had been a number of cases where PRM had been lost due to problems of misuse of funds by either village leaders or counterparts/community development workers. There were about seven such cases. He also explained that in about 20 out of 47 villages with pig PRM there had been a need to replace all of the capital because the pigs had died. He explained that one lesson which had been learned was not to buy piglets which are too young and too small. Other project staff explained that a second lesson was to be more strict in enforcing repayment. When villagers know that they will be compensated if all of the pigs die, far more pigs die. Conversely, when it is known that there will be no compensation and that the owner will have to purchase a replacement, the survival rate increases.

## Conclusion

On the one hand, in Cambodia there remains a demand for credit at reasonable interest rates which can support local investment and growth. Additionally, it is widely recognised that if communities can control the interest arising from such investments it may provide a source of funds for self-funded, self-managed development. On the other hand, the Cambodian countryside is littered with deserted rice stores marking the location of rice bank and fertiliser bank activities which have collapsed due to either natural disaster, breakdown of trust or misuse of funds by the person in charge.

### ***Final Report submitted 7 February 2000***

At present, neither the findings of this evaluation nor the records available to the project management are able to demonstrate conclusively that the PRM initiated by the RDRP is fundamentally sustainable. The findings of the evaluation suggest there is reason for optimism, but the collection of accurate data on this will be essential if RDRP is to demonstrate the effectiveness of the IP model to a wider audience.

### **A.3 Agricultural Activities**

Virtually half of the Experts (16 out of 33) working on the project are agriculture experts with a range of specialities which includes rice growing, vegetables, subsidiary crops, asexual plant production, mushroom culture, livestock, fishery and sericulture. As with the other fields the intention is to introduce technology which is appropriately modified for Cambodian conditions.

An exposition of the objectives of the agriculture sector is presented in the quarterly sectoral report:

#### General

These agricultural projects generally aim to produce crop productivity, boost self-sufficiency and food security. It also generally aim to promote developmental approaches in improving the welfare of the rural community.

#### Specific

1. Improve rice productivity of local varieties through the establishment of rice technology demonstration, conduct training in improved rice production technology; and the introduction of high yielding varieties.
2. Provide technical assistance through home and farm visits in particular to all project beneficiaries.
3. Provide agricultural inputs in form of Partners Revolving Materials (PRM) for crops, fish culture and livestock production.
4. Train CDWs, CPs and farmer beneficiaries in improved technology in crops,

nursery management and fruit tree growing, asexual plant propagation, fish culture, livestock production.

*[source: Quarterly Accomplishment Report March to June 1999 in Agriculture compiled by Ruben Miranda, Rice Growing Expert, RDRP]*

***Findings from village studies***

In most villages farmers reported that there had been training in the use of fertiliser. It was this which appeared to have been the single most important intervention to them. Many farmers said that they had previously used chemical fertiliser but that they had not known when to use it or how to use it. Since the lessons which they had received the farmers explained that their yields had increased. Another element of the rice growing technology had been pest control, with farmers saying that they had learned to pay more attention to watching for pests and that they knew better what action to take in the case of different sort of pests at different times. These findings were true in a number of villages, and most strikingly in Tropean Kabas.

In the village of Ampil Thum the team members were particularly struck by the collection of organic materials by villagers. Every household, without exception, had arranged an area for collecting

27

*Final Report submitted 7 February 2000*

organic materials for use as fertiliser (and also, villagers explained, for good sanitation of the general area). In one case a woman with no draught animals was able to point out that even she had some manure in her container which she had collected from other people's animals along the road.

Other initiatives regarding rice culture had had less impact. In a number of villages the farmers had been taught to transplant seedlings in straight lines with measured gaps. Again, Tropean Kabas was a good example. The first year the farmers had followed the lesson, and had also used some high yield variety seeds. After the first year, however they said that they stopped using the introduced seed varieties and reverted to their traditional seeds. During the second year many farmers once again transplanted in straight lines, and even using the traditional seeds they noticed that the yields improved. However, they reported that during the current 1999-2000 season that everyone had reverted to random transplanting because even though the yields had been too high it had been impossible to organise the labour. Nevertheless, the villagers had experienced the increased yields through this method, therefore the new knowledge remains as a source of potential for future use.

For vegetables and subsidiary crops we encountered mixed results. We tried to find lessons that had been learned about what can be grown by Cambodian farmers, especially using ideas from the other ASEAN countries which might be new in Cambodia.

Often, however, the longer term results were not clear. For instance, in both Trapeang Krus and Samphao Lun there had been training in growing Sweet Pepper and other crops. In

Trapeang Krus in particular there had also been an increase in the amount of Sweet Pepper, cabbage, cauliflower etc that was grown. However, when we asked what was different about the way that they grow vegetables now since the agriculture training many farmers answered that they did not do anything differently, but simply grew their crops in the traditional way. When we tried to identify the key lessons from the teachers the VDC members in Trapeang Krus explained that the important new things were to dig deeply in order to aerate the soil and also to mix different sorts of pesticide together and not just use one. Other villagers did not mention these technologies. However, many farmers who were spoken to reported that they had only started growing these crops recently and that they had learned from watching other farmers.

Some promising activities involved the use of seeds imported from other ASEAN countries. In one village the VDC chief was growing imported long bean seeds and being very impressed with the vastly increased yields<sup>13</sup>. Other imported crops had also been planted but it was too soon to see the results.

A number of other activities had not gone so well. A nursery which had been destroyed by drought and never been replanted. A groundnut crop which (except for one farmer's crop) had been destroyed by drought and ants. A number of places where people had learned about growing mushrooms, but had either never used the lessons, or had used the lessons once or twice and then stopped using them. Fruit trees that had been distributed to farmers but had been allowed to die.

<sup>13</sup> The VDC member on the team asked to buy seeds from him. He said he would prefer to give them to her because he liked to see people growing things.

*Final Report submitted 7 February 2000*

In these cases there did not seem to have been any follow-up - either to draw lessons about why things had succeeded or failed, or to mobilise people to try again.

Regarding fruit trees, the village of Balaing Reachea was particularly interesting. There, trees had not been distributed as PRM or as donations, but as long term credit. Each person was to repay 300 riels per seedling per year for 4 years. Villagers told the team members that when seedlings die they have been replaced by the owners. Possibly the requirement to pay back even a small debt provides the incentive to make people think about persisting with the fruit trees and not just forgetting about them when they die.

In the case of pigs, most farmers recalled training in feeding the pigs and in selecting the appropriate ones for purchase at the market. Many also mentioned the importance of vaccine and were pleased that the RDRP project workers had gone to their village in order to vaccinate the pigs. On the other hand, when asked about whether they would continue to vaccinate their animals if the RDRP project workers stopped coming it was much less clear what the farmers

understanding was. A number said that they would still vaccinate their pigs whenever they got sick, which implied that they did not really understand what the vaccination was. Discussing alternative suppliers of vaccine, it seemed that the private vets who visit the villages do not have cold chain facilities.

### **Other information**

The agriculture CDW on the team raised another example of where the project had introduced technology to a village which had been new and had been successful. This was the case of sugar cane growing. The Expert had seen that the conditions in the village were suitable for sugar cane and that the villagers had no experience of this. He therefore obtained seeds from elsewhere in the province and gave the villagers instructions in growing it. This had been the successful introduction of a 'new technology' for those villagers who had no experience of growing sugar cane, and this was facilitated by the application of the Expert's knowledge of his own country and other parts of Cambodia.

The issue of fertiliser use was raised with Experts. In particular, the mismatch between the amount of fertiliser being recommended by the RDRP workers (approximately 2 bags of urea and 1 bag of NPK per hectare) and the amount issued per farmer as PRM (usually between half a bag and 2 bags per participating family, depending on the policies in that village). The agricultural Experts supported the idea that larger amounts of fertiliser could be issued in order to give the farmers the means to fully follow the lessons that have been taught.

Conversely, the issue of intensive application of chemical fertiliser was raised, particularly in relation to the impact on soil quality and on fish populations. The RDRP Experts explained that they are currently examining the possibility of developing organic alternatives because of exactly these concerns. They also explained that farmers on the project are taught about the risks of chemical fertiliser and are also taught about the importance of using organic materials mixed with the chemicals fertiliser.

The issue of the national IPM programme administered by the Ministry of Agriculture with FAO support was also raised with Experts. They explained that some Experts occasionally go to meetings, for instance at IRRI, but that there could be closer cooperation with this programme.

One resource that the project has which may be currently under-utilised is the sub-centre at Samrong Tong. For long periods in the project's history this area has been somewhat insecure and therefore ASEAN Experts have not gone there. The centre is on the border of two districts and has a reservoir which is one hectare, two hectares of land in its compound and a further 18 hectares of scrub which was donated to the project. In six years the project assistant who works there has extended services to two or three nearby villages. With some input from someone with the right technical expertise and dynamism this facility could



possibly achieve a far greater impact.

## **Conclusions**

RDRP experience seems to indicate that there is still a very widespread ignorance amongst farmers about how to make the best use of fertiliser. It seems that in most cases, even without extra fertiliser and without adopting new techniques and varieties, that farmers could increase their yields by changing the way that they use fertiliser. It also seems that this information has been spread not only Expert to farmer but also farmer to farmer. It will be interesting to understand to what extent there remains a demand for farmers throughout the country to understand more of the very basic information about fertiliser use. Discussions with other concerned institutions (Ministry of Agriculture, Cambodia IRRI Australia Project etc) would yield more comprehensive understanding of the situation nationwide and also about possible strategies.

Generally in Cambodia rural development organisations tend to have a rather confused approach to fertiliser. This seems to consist of educating farmers about the damage which chemical fertilisers do, at the same time as providing them with larger quantities of chemical fertilisers than they have ever previously used. Given the high dependence of the RDRP programme on chemical fertiliser, it would be beneficial for the programme to develop policy with regard to the use of chemical fertiliser use. Again, institutions involved in agricultural development could usefully be consulted.

Looking more broadly at the range of agricultural activities within the project, it is again difficult to draw conclusions about impact and success. In the villages that were visited there were many trials which had failed (for instance had been interrupted by floods and droughts and never restarted), There were also cases where it was difficult to discern what had been learned from the project and what had already been known and used by the farmers. (I suspect that a number of the people who said that they were just following their normal practices would with more research time have been found to have incorporated some of the suggestions from the RDRP workers).

In a project that is highly experimental and seeks to introduce new ideas and modify existing technologies the failure of one or even of many trials is not a failure of the project. This is in fact part of the success of the project, *providing lessons are learned from the experience*. At present it is not possible to discover from RDRP project documents what RDRP has learned about (for instance) farmers' adoption of mushroom growing or factors which influence the survival rate of seedlings which are distributed. This reflects the current reporting priorities of the project: these tend to be quantitative and somewhat output focussed. Thus, the number of people who have been trained in mushroom growing or the number of fruit trees grown is what is reported. However, the number of people actually growing mushrooms and the number of fruit trees surviving are not reported (some Experts are currently recording such information, but this practice is not yet universal and not yet shared in a systematic project-wide manner).

The follow-up of agricultural activities has been made rather difficult by the short planning cycles of the project. The following table illustrates the sort of timeframes which are necessary to realistically monitor the outcomes of agricultural extension outputs.

Year 1	Year 2	Year 3
"Learning to be effective"	"Learning to be efficient"	"Learning to expand"
Extension workers extend new technology to model farmers and give them intensive support to enable them to follow the new technology.	After successful implementation under expert tuition the model farmers then repeat the technology without input from outsiders	Other farmers seeing the success over two years, and seeing that a farmer can do this without assistance, adopt and implement the technology
Does the trial work? Need for modifications?	How many model farmers continue the trial?	How many other farmers are adopting the technology that was modeled?

Even this timeframe is very optimistic, because if there is a need for modifications that will add another agricultural season (so normally another year), likewise if weather conditions obstruct progress for a year or two. While the project does not currently institute long-term systematic monitoring of each new technology, the capacity and experience of the Experts suggests that systems for this could be introduced and extended to relevant counterpart authorities.

#### **A.4 Health Activities**

Of the 33 Experts assigned to RDRP, 6 are from the health sector - all are [specialists in](#) public health. In the Health Experts' consolidated report, the following objectives are outlined:

##### **General**

The people have work together spirit to develop of their village for health programs integrated.

##### **Specific**

All the village people:

- Have strong consciousness and spirit to develop of village integrated program.
- To collaboration on environment health and hygiene sanitation for them village.
- Work together to build of new Meeting Hut as place for village integrated activities.
- As member of village people can doing take for personal hygiene.
- Can take care of all installation that got Rd & RP support.

*[source: 2nd Quarterly Report July September 1999 Public Health "Growing Up" Pong Muhartano Djunaedi, Public Health Team Leader, RDRP]*

Other project documentation (eg. Project Performance Monitoring Report) refers to "9 basic

health services" which RDRP carry out namely health education; prevention and control of local endemic diseases; expansible immunisation programme; maternal and child health and birth spacing programme; provision of essential drugs; nutrition and food production programme; environmental sanitation programme; village health volunteer training; establish meeting hut service.

*Final Report submitted 7 February 2000*

### **Findings from the village studies**

Different aspects had been stressed in different villages. In two out of ten villages a system of village health volunteers (VHVs) had been established. In one village 8 VHVs were given responsibility for 18 families each and in another village 10 VHVs were given responsibility for, on average, 8 families each. Their job had been to extend health information to others in the village. An informal approach was used with no schedule or targets for the VHVs. In one of the villages all of the villagers who were interviewed said that they had received information from the VHV - either at their house or in conversations in groups. In the other village all villagers also said that they had received some health education messages, but that they mainly reported that these had come through direct contact with the Expert. Information mainly included hygiene and sanitation messages.

In almost all villages there was construction of latrines. Sometimes, but not always, a latrine was constructed next to the Meeting Hut, especially, it was said, for guests. Latrines were available to individual households. In some cases this was for 'demonstration' purposes and families were required only to contribute the labour to dig the pit and the materials to complete the walls and roof. In other cases the latrines were provided as long-term credit with interest-free repayment over a 4 year period.

Classroom lessons were used in some villages. In one case villagers recalled a 3-day training course from 2 years previously which had focused on sanitation and AIDS prevention. More normally, lessons were for one morning only. In four of the villages there were lessons for pregnant women and for parents of small children. These were practical lessons for which there were also donations (including items such as buckets, plastic scoops, towels, bar of soap) - the Expert then demonstrated how to wash a child using soap. A number of interviewees reported that since the lesson they have kept the soap for washing their children and that now they use this instead of the washing powder or just water without soap which was what they did before. One family was carefully rationing the soap using it only once every 2 or 3 days in order that it would last longer. Some people said that they would try to buy more soap when the bar issued by RDRP had finished, but they thought that most other people would not. Women who attended the classes for pregnant women (and received nail clippers and toothbrush and toothpaste) chiefly recalled the lessons about brushing their teeth. Only the women who attended these lessons received the gifts. One woman who was interviewed had not been pregnant at the time of the lesson, but had watched. She could not recall anything in the lesson which would be useful to her for her pregnancy.

In one village the officials from the commune health centre visited regularly in order to vaccinate infants and children. A mother showed the interviewer the card which is jointly produced by UNICEF and the Ministry of Health which recorded the dates of her 12-month old son's vaccinations and also his weight. She explained that this had happened before RDRP, and that RDRP staff now work with the commune health worker.

### **Other Information**

One Expert explained the focus on sanitation. He explained that when he does rapid assessments of children by checking their eyes and the flesh on their forearms he finds that they are in good condition. Just by observation he sees standards of nutrition and health which can be favourably compared with poor parts of his own country. The point where Cambodian villages seem to be

32

*Final Report submitted 7 February 2000*

comparatively deficient is in hygiene and sanitation, and therefore this is what the project addresses.

One counterpart also explained that there is First Aid training as part of the health activities. This is confirmed in the Project Performance Monitoring Report (see Sok Mok village under 'Summary of Activities').

It is difficult to obtain more substantial information on the achievements of the health sector through the project's records. The approach seems to focus on diarrhea related disease and on skin disease prevention. However, without a record of the prevalence of these before and after the project it is difficult to understand the extent of the project's impact. Furthermore, where vaccinations by a commune health centre are counted as outputs of RDRP it is difficult to know what the impact of the project really is when it is unclear whether the CHC was already providing this service.

### **Conclusions**

Many of the positive impacts of the health programme are long-term and rather difficult to measure. Experts are disseminating concepts of cleanliness and sanitation that may only really take effect once they are much more broadly accepted.

The health element of RDRP is seen as an essential part of an integrated programme. However, it was difficult to see which of the activities constituted an essential part of the programme. The different approach in different villages seemed to reflect the preferences of the Expert rather than to be a response to the particular situation of that village. If there is no particular circumstance that is being addressed, nor any common approach to health in the villages, it may be that the public health sector activities as currently programmed do not represent an essential element to the integrated approach.

One possible alternative approach to the health component of the integrated project would be to analyse the situations of the poorest people in the villages. Many of the poorest villagers in Cambodia are those who have become indebted and had to sell their land as a result of that indebtedness. Frequently, that indebtedness can be traced back to a health crisis within the family. The NGO coordination and advocacy group MEDICAM argues persuasively that health services in Cambodia do not currently prevent poverty, but on the contrary cause it. If health is to be approached from a poverty alleviation viewpoint it may be worthwhile to focus on reducing health spending as a key issue. This would mean studying the sorts of illnesses which people spend money on and providing education in the most effective and financially prudent ways of coping with such illnesses.

***Final Report submitted 7 February 2000***

**A.5 Income Generation Activities**

**General**

The main purpose of project activities to improve the living standard of Cambodian, remain the objectives of our project. The activities undertaken prolonged generating their income through vocational/technical training

**Specific**

1. To generate man-power among returnees, idps, demobilized soldiers and local community to be potential skilled workers for labor market.
2. To paste the time gap exist in between the activities undertaken by other experts such as in agriculture field, with useful activities.
3. To keep balancing and fully utilizing the man-power between male and female by providing varieties of activity for both gender.
4. To create opportunity and possibility in local community for a better entrepreneurship surrounding.
5. To develop a long-term future plan strategy for technical-based community in favor of an upcoming developing country as Cambodia.

*[source: 2nd Quarterly Report Jul-Sept 99 Income Generation Submitted by Mohamad Zuki Abu Bakar, Technical Team Leader, RDRP]*

**Information from villages**

Courses in food preservation had been taught in five villages. Some courses had been all women, some had been attended by both men and women. In one of the villages five better off people (three men and two women) had formed a group using PRM to obtain the equipment, that they needed and with the facilitation of the RDRP Expert had begun producing for elite markets in Phnom Penh. In two of the other villages the team met women who had experimented with using the lessons which they had learned at their homes. This was not for sale, but for family consumption, including as special food for festival days. Most people who had attended the courses said that they had not used them at all. The most frequent reason

they gave was that they did not have the materials (eg pineapples) or the equipment (eg gas stove) which were used in the training. On the other hand, the participants all said that they had been happy to learn and to know more than they knew before.

Students from two of the villages had attended motorcycle repair courses. In one village, four men had been selected. One of them had already learned for a year in Phnom Penh and used to get paid work in the area for fixing engines before he did the course. He has continued to get work since. The others (who included the village chief's son) had not got work as motorcycle mechanics since learning. The more experienced student explained that the others had not been that interested in the lessons. In another village 14 people had learned motorcycle repair: one of them was interviewed and said that he could not get work because he needed more capital to buy equipment.

In another village two men had learned construction and another had learned carpentry and all three had got work and were away from the village at the time of the visit.

34

*Final Report submitted 7 February 2000*

In one village four women had learned sewing at the nearby commune centre. None of them had used the lessons to make a living. Two very poor women had wanted to learn so that one of them could go to Phnom Penh and work in a factory and help to support them both. They had applied to the village chief but he had not chosen them. Other villagers explained that the four who were chosen by the village chief all came from big houses with tiled roofs and that this included the village chief's daughter. These young women were not so poor and did not want to travel away from their homes to work.

In some villages they had never heard of the training centres and the possibility of attending training courses in those centres.

**Information from outside the village**

In all the centres (including the commune development centre which was visited) the project assistants explained that they took responsibility for recruiting the students for the courses. They said that they did this through village chiefs and through the counterparts and CDWs who worked at the centres. When the research team interviewed students at the centres there were a number of them who had come from far away - including Battambang, Pursat and Kompong Cham provinces to attend the courses. Others explained that they had heard about the courses through friends who worked in provincial offices. One explained that he heard through his uncle who was a project assistant at the centre.

All of the students interviewed were satisfied with the quality of the lessons and the teachers. There was only one course where students were waiting for sewing machines to be delivered in order that they could learn to be machinists and not just do hand-stitching, however the delivery of that was expected imminently.

The October 1999 Project Performance Monitoring Report contains information on the employment rates of students attending courses, as follows:

Bricklaying & Cement Craft	30
Carpentry and Joinery	<del>22</del>
Domestic plumbing	<del>32</del>
Motorcycle repair	<del>30</del>
Motorcycle repair (short term)	<del>20</del>
Metal fabrication	<del>30</del>
Electrical installation	<del>05</del>
Automotive technology	<del>25</del>
<b>Grand total</b>	<b><del>24</del></b>

The project assistant in Samrong Tong sub centre explained that only 2 of the 16 students who had learned sewing in a course there had been able to get jobs in garment factories, but that all of the others wanted to. He said that the reason for this was that the other students did not have the money to pay unofficial fees in order to get the jobs.

During the consultation with the Experts the possibility of targeting poor people more effectively was raised. While it was accepted as a general principle, it was also noted that for some of the courses that there was a need for a certain level of educational ability which might restrict access to

***Final Report submitted 7 February 2000***

some of the poorer families. It was pointed out for instance that people who wish to work in garment factories need to be literate and have a certain basic education. Furthermore, that anyone who is planning to go into business on their own needs to have a certain amount of education.

The issue of paying food and accommodation supplements was raised. ASEAN Experts made the point that this strategy had already been tried once, but that it led to people who were not committed to learning joining courses in order to obtain the allowances. As a result, the money assigned for this was reassigned to purchase tools for the trainees on the completion of the course. Nevertheless, there was general support for the principle that in order to enable the poorest to learn that there was a need to assist them with food, and if away from home to assist with accommodation. More broadly, however, it was also explained that the principle strategy for overcoming access issues is to decentralise the course provision by using mobile teams to teach courses in villages or at commune centres.

The evaluation mission raised the possibility that courses should be assessed by the students in order to get feedback on their quality and relevance. This was supported by all of the Experts, Counterparts and Community Development Workers with whom it was shared.

Experts with experience from their own countries' training institutions suggested that six months was the appropriate period of time after the completion of a course to collect follow up information from graduate trainees. The use of village authorities to be the focal points for the collection of such data and the possibility of paying a small incentive in order to facilitate it were also mentioned as feasible measures.

With experience the Experts and their counterparts are finding ways to increase the practical content of courses, largely by reducing the theoretical content. As a result, the three month metal fabrication course also includes moulding as well as welding; the electric engineering course includes motor technology as well as wiring; the automotive course includes diesel as well as petrol engines. All of these upgrades have been introduced as a follow-up to demand expressed by the Malaysian Business Council in Cambodia.

There were conflicting opinions given about what could be realistically expected from a student who had just completed a 3 or 6 month training course and now wished to compete for paid work on the private job market. Some Experts were confident that people who had learned well could earn \$80-\$120 per month, others felt that training courses could more realistically be expected to lead to lowpaid apprentice positions. It will be useful if for each course the expected outcome for successful students is predicted at the beginning and that the actual outcomes are then monitored in relation to this.

Probably the most interesting and dynamic aspect of the ASEAN Experts input to income generation at present are the initiatives which are being taken to build links with the private sector. The Malaysian Business Council in Cambodia has over 50 members and has been engaged in dialogue by ASEAN Experts. There has already been some success in linking students with jobs, and importantly, the Experts are assisting the centres to develop an improved awareness of what skills are currently in demand. For example a number of companies have spoken of the difficulty of

***Final Report submitted 7 February 2000***

obtaining competent technicians in the field air conditioning and refrigeration. In the longer term it may be possible to get courses sponsored by companies who then recruit the graduates.

A number of stakeholders, including the project management, Experts and students expressed the view that support was needed for graduate students who wish to go into business. It was felt that access to capital was a major restriction on them. Two alternatives were suggested. Firstly the establishment of an equipped workshop in one (or both) provincial towns and using this as an 'incubator' in which trainees could work in the private sector and build up their experience and their capital, prior to investing in their own business. Secondly, credit in kind extended to trainees to enable them to invest in relevant equipment, which they would then repay with interest, effectively enabling the centres to have their own PRM.



## Conclusions

The current average employment rate of 24% for graduates of the income generation courses can not be considered reasonable and cost effective. Neither is it reasonable that many of the students are not poor people from the target area, but are people who have travelled from elsewhere in the country and have sufficient money to fund themselves through the courses. However, the measures which are being taken by the project to rectify this situation are appropriate. During

Phase 3 there have been relevant efforts to collect more data about employment rates and this information has provided considerable stimulus to the people on the project to achieve improvements.

It is likely that the project could improve the selection of students in a way that enabled more of the poorer people from the target areas to get access to the benefits of the training courses. Allowances alone will not be sufficient to address this issue, in fact they will make it more complicated if they are not supported by a more careful and rigorous selection procedure. This should probably involve letters from Farmers' Group leaders, results of participatory wealth ranking and direct house visits by centre staff in order to confirm the living conditions of the candidates. Certainly, if you ask the village chief, of course you will get his sons and daughters: a fact confirmed by the VDC member on the team whose daughter had learned sewing and now works in a garment factory.

I

Links with the private sector seem extremely promising and a significant increase in employment rates over the coming year may be expected as a result of this. However, the changeover of Experts does present a threat to progress in this direction. Whilst counterpart staff are also being introduced to private sector companies and associations, a new set of Experts would to some extent need to start again with the building of relationships.

For trainees wishing to start new businesses, initial capital is clearly important. However, it is not certain that the RDRP project has a strong comparative advantage in assessing the risk for new business loans. An alternative and possibly more sustainable strategy would be to make links with rural credit providers. They could be introduced to the training courses and the market by the Experts and then they could use their own expertise to decide about the viability of the small business which is being planned. Experts approximate that loans of up to \$500 are required to enable graduates of the training courses to set up their own businesses (depending on the nature

works well, the centres could at a later stage review the option of attempting to establish revolving credit at rates which would be competitive. The interest could then be used to provide start up capital on a sustainable basis. By using existing credit providers as an interim measure, the project would reduce the initial risk and ensure that decisions are made on the basis of what is realistic in the market.

## **A.6 Education Activities**

Two Experts were assigned to the project from the Education sector. Unfortunately one of these (a JOCV) had to return to her country. The objectives for the Education sector laid out in the RDRP Experts' quarterly report are:

### English Language

1. To improve English language techniques for English teachers
2. To improve Basic English for non-English teachers
3. to provide English course for vocational trainees

### Primary Education

1. To confer a basic knowledge of Khmer and Math and to instill a greater self-confidence in rural women.
2. To work with local teachers to improve teaching methods, making them better suited to rural women.
3. To improve the teaching conditions for the first grade through cluster school activity.

[source: *2nd Quarterly Report July-September Educatio Submitted by Naruemon Chamnanmoh, RDRP*]

## **Findings in the villages**

In none of the ten villages which were selected for the Evaluation Mission to visit were any activities or impacts of the education sector encountered.

## **Other information**

The RDRP Education Expert felt that, despite the lack of actual presence, that education did constitute an integral element of the IP approach. She felt that if the activities were continued that the area that should be expanded within the programme was literacy training. Other Experts made the point that while the villages chosen by the project management as successes did not contain education activities, this did not mean that they did not exist in the programme. One of the agriculture Experts praised the literacy work that she had seen in one of the villages where she works.

## **Conclusion**

The RDRP project has enabled education Experts to make a positive contribution in Cambodia. However, it is difficult to conclude that it constitutes an essential part of the existing integrated model.

*Final Report submitted 7 February 2000***B. Quality of monitoring and backstopping**

The following are the key elements of backstopping, monitoring and evaluation within the project:

- Monthly reports from Counterparts, which are consolidated into monthly output reports for the two provincial administrations.
- Quarterly reports from Experts which are consolidated into sectoral quarterly reports, and also into a quarterly report by the Project Manager for the JCC.
- Annual Monitoring visit, which is undertaken by the JCC and consist of two days of field work and one day follow-up meeting and the production of an annual monitoring report.
- Fundamental data surveys were conducted in 1995, 1996, 1998. These involve the collection of basic data from villages in the target area by Counterparts and Community Development Workers.
- Training Course Records- records are kept of the age, sex, village, commune, district and province of everyone who attends an RDRP training course. These are kept centrally in the Phnom Penh office and also in the Centres.
- Monthly meetings of Experts with Project Management.
- Monthly meetings of Counterparts and Community Development Workers with Project Management
- Ad hoc sectoral meetings - these are called by the Project Manager and when they occur they usually follow on from one of the monthly meetings.
- External studies and evaluations including those commissioned by JICA . Terms of reference or mission reports were not available for any of the external missions, neither were summaries of findings in either English or Khmer. The following are taken from quarterly report calendars - it is not clear which were Missions to RDRP and which were other Missions which also visited RDRP.
  1. 10/6/98 Euro Consultant SORCA
  2. 15/10/98 JOCV mission (returned to Japan 19/10/98)
  3. 19/11/98 Japanese Mission for security control
  4. 21/1/99 JICE auditing mission
  5. 27/1/99 4 Japanese professors mission
  6. 26/2/99 JICA Resident Representative Mr Matsuda at project activity sites
  7. 7/3/99 Mr Soma of JICA headquarters mission
  8. 17/3/99 Japanese Mission composing MOFA, JICA & Japanese NGOs
  9. 12/7/99 Mission from University of Utara Malaysia 10. 13/8/99 NGO
  - Collaboration study of the project (discussed with EofJ) 11. 23/9/99 IDCJ Mission
  12. 24/9/99 Thematic Evaluation Mission on JOCV cooperation for Vocational Training 13. ?1999 CEDAC study commissioned by JICA

### **Backstopping support to Experts, Community Development Workers and Counterparts**

Experts generally reported high levels of access to the project management. An environment was created whereby they were encouraged to innovate and to discuss innovation with the project manager and arrive at joint decisions with him.

Community Development Workers and Counterparts likewise found that the Experts provided an extremely supportive and interesting learning environment. Some Community Development

### ***Final Report submitted 7 February 2000***

Workers and Counterparts would have preferred more programme guidelines, especially in cases where Experts were new to the programme. They felt that this would ensure that programme lessons were widely shared rather than some new Experts learning old lessons a second time and not always building on the project's experience.

A number of Community Development Workers and Counterparts also expressed the opinion that there should be more monitoring of work in the field by the project management. This seems to relate to the former point.

#### **Monitoring of direct outputs**

There is regular and clear reporting of direct outputs. This information is readily accessible in the Phnom Penh Office and is shared with national and provincial institutions. Outputs here include such things as the number of meeting huts constructed, the number of bags of fertiliser loaned out as Partner Revolving Materials and the number of people who have attended training courses.

For the reasons which are explained above regarding the project formulation, there is not always consistency between the planned outputs in the project document and in the project document. Furthermore the reporting of outputs and impacts by different Experts/Community Development Workers/Counterparts is quite inconsistent (see Summary of Activities in the October 1999 Project Performance Monitoring Report).

#### **Monitoring of results**

A noted weakness at the start of phase 3 was the lack of follow-up regarding the progress of extrainees. While a system for monitoring this has not been put into place great efforts have been made to trace former trainees and discover whether they are in business on their own, in paid employment or are unemployed. These efforts have yielded some useful information, though they do not always include analysis of the reasons why people are or are not working.

For other activities, and this particularly applies to agricultural extension, there is no systematic collection of the results of the activities. Thus, it is possible to know how many people went on a course to learn about growing mushrooms, but it is not possible to know

how many of those people have taken up mushroom growing, and of those, how many have succeeded in producing a crop. Similarly, it is possible to know how many trees have been distributed from centres, but it is not possible to know how many of these trees are alive and how many have died.

This weakness also relates to the lack of a clear and logical link between the outputs and the impacts in the project document.

### **Monitoring of Impact**

Annual survey data includes questions to village chiefs about the number of poor people in their village. This data shows dramatic reductions in poverty in target villages (from about 70% to about 30%) while poverty in the non-target villages remains stable (at around 70% and rising). Unfortunately, this does not seem credible. A more credible way of measuring poverty will be desirable. This is an issue which is currently being debated by the Ministry of Planning and a number of other agencies, and which RDRP could usefully engage in. It may be appropriate to use

40

### ***Final Report submitted 7 February 2000***

Department of Planning staff rather than project Counterparts and Community Development Workers to collect survey data.

## **IV PROJECT RESULTS**

***"establishes the extent to which the project's planned results have been achieved, beginning with the outputs, which are normally measurable, and extending to the immediate objectives and the development objectives which must be logically linked to the outputs"***

### **A. Relevance**

The employment of Experts (from other ASEAN countries and also Japanese JOCVs) remains relevant to the situation in Cambodia. A dynamic and thoughtful exchange between technical experts working directly with the poor of Cambodia can only bring continued benefits, not only to Cambodia but also to the other countries who are participating in the tri-partite project.

Building the capacity of assorted Cambodian officials from various Ministries and departments has also added to the human resource base of the country at a time when this is widely regarded as low.

Partly due to security concerns RDRP has developed a target area on the border of two provinces, with Experts travelling out of an accommodation centre to work with officials

seconded mainly from national level. Now that the Royal Government of Cambodia has brought into law a Rural Development Structure with terms of references for all levels it is appropriate where possible for government to government assistance to be channeled through that structure. A move from a current 'project approach' to an 'institutional support approach' which avoids as far as possible the creation of parallel structures is now desirable. Given the approaches and achievements of other rural development programmes in Cambodia at the time of the commencement of Phase 3 (ie August 1998) and the stated intention within the project document to increase the involvement of the Ministry of Rural Development it is necessary to conclude that moves towards an institutional support approach would have been relevant at that time.

#### *B. Efficiency*

At project level, management for what is a large and complex project appears simple, efficient and supportive. Indeed, it is highly likely that at the overall project level that there will be efficiency losses if a change is made from the current project approach to an institutional support approach.

The major efficiency issues arise from the one-year-at-a-time budgeting and planning of the project, which results in nobody being able to plan with confidence beyond the following March. Experts during their initial months are not as efficient as when they have been in the country for a year or more. At present some of the teams of Experts are completely new, and therefore their time is less efficiently spent than if they had been working on the project for longer. Major efficiencies could be achieved by extending the project period and by signing Experts onto two or three year contracts. Crucially this would enable their first two or three months to be spent on full-time language learning.

41

#### *Final Report submitted 7 February 2000*

One way to reduce the inefficiencies caused by short-term thinking imposed by the one-year-at-a-time scenario is by having clear guidelines and rules, and by having thorough orientation and training of new staff in their new roles. The Project Manager explained that the reason that some villages did not have Farmers' Groups and as late as 1999 were forming VDCs in very original ways was that some Experts who had newly arrived had not yet been able to learn properly about the project. From discussions with Experts, CDWs and Counterparts it seemed that there were possibilities to improve the initial orientation and training of both Cambodian partners and ASEAN Experts<sup>14</sup>. Similarly, CDWs requested more effective instruction in their end of year training courses, which they generally found tried to cover too much ground in too short a period of time.

#### **C. Outputs**

The project has not set itself benchmark targets against which to measure its progress and therefore it is impossible to judge progress against initial intentions<sup>15</sup>.

Generally the quality of the outputs which the monitoring team encountered were high: students on training courses expressed satisfaction with what they were learning, villagers who had worked directly with RDRP workers on health and agricultural activities were pleased with the exchanges which they had had, and even in cases where people had not been able to put the lessons into practice they still talked of their pleasure in learning new things. PRM materials which had been purchased had also been of a high standard, with people especially mentioning that the fertiliser purchased was better than they buy from merchants (where a proportion may be removed or mixed with dirt etc).

#### **D. Immediate Objectives**

The project has not set itself targets by which progress towards immediate objectives may be measured. In the ten villages visited by the team there has been clear progress towards improving the livelihoods and incomes of the majority of villagers. This has included most returnee families, because in these villages these were people who were not amongst the poorest and most vulnerable - some were quite poor, but others were quite well off.

f

<sup>14</sup> It should of course be noted that giving Experts more freedom to find an approach which most suits their own personal experiences and ideas is also a form of efficiency. To some extent there is a trade off between enabling the individual Experts to be as efficient as possible and enabling the programme to be as efficient as possible.

<sup>15</sup> The October 1999 Project Performance Monitoring Report in the section entitled "Expectation of the outputs comparing with the initial plan" first describes the way that in Phase 1 (1992-4) rural infrastructure had been constructed. Then it explains that in Phase 2 Experts had made workplans in one month if they were returning Experts and in two months if they were new and then explains that for Phase 3 this same approach has been continued. The text then continues to say that there is no necessity to change this. This text does not seem in any way to relate either to the outputs which are mentioned in the project document or to the outputs which are reported each month to the two provincial governments.

#### ***Final Report submitted 7 February 2000***

The benefits of the project to the poorest and most vulnerable have been limited because those people have not participated in the PRM, do not have their own riceland, do not have spare labour to grow vegetables etc (they are usually remote from water sources and often have to find something to eat immediately for that day) and are not chosen by the village chief to attend training courses. Nevertheless, in villages where agricultural yields have substantially increased the market for paid labour at transplanting and harvesting has increased and therefore there have been indirect benefits. They have also benefitted from public goods such

as roads which have been repaired and from donations such as buckets and soap to wash the children.

It should be noted that while the project document refers to improving incomes and living conditions in the provinces of Kompong Speu and Takeo the impact is limited to about 92 villages in Kompong Speu and about 41 villages in Takeo, whilst there are 1,319 villages in Kompong Speu and 1,116 villages in Takeo. The project is therefore working in 4.6% of the villages in these provinces. At district level, one out of the eight districts in Kompong Speu has received substantial assistance from the project and in Takeo three of the ten districts have received substantial assistance (plus 15 schools constructed in another district separate from the integrated project area). In order to achieve major impact against the immediate objectives there would need to be considerable expansion of the scale of the intervention in these provinces.

#### ***E. Development Objectives***

The experience gained within the current target area is of potential benefit to the broader population of Takeo and Kompong Speu provinces. The village level management institutions which have been developed through the evolution of the RDRP project are a major step towards the institutionalisation of a rural development approach within the two provinces. The commencement of a commune focus is likewise building on this achievement. What is currently absent, and will be necessary if the project is to fully integrate with the rural development structure ordained by the Royal Government of Cambodia will be the engagement of the Provincial Rural Development Committee in the coordination and management of the project.

#### ***F. Effectiveness***

The strongest indications that the project approach had been effective were in the links between the village managed credit-in-kind (PRM) and the agriculture activities, especially rice farming technology, but also some subsidiary crops and vegetables. The paucity of reliable monitoring information on the PRM makes it very difficult to draw conclusions about the broader effectiveness of this beyond the ten villages that the evaluation team visited (which were selected for their relative success - see Appendix 3 on method).

The agricultural inputs would, however, have been far more effective if there had been more careful control of the experimentation, with an emphasis on reflecting on results and drawing lessons at each stage. Indeed, a formal review of each trial (whether of unfamiliar varieties or unfamiliar techniques) by the farmers would have greatly enhanced the effectiveness of the experimental approach.



*Final Report submitted 7 February 2000*

As components of an integrated approach there is little evidence that the health and education activities have made an effective contribution. The absence of education activities in the villages meant that it was impossible to evaluate their effectiveness, whereas the variety of different approaches in the villages where there had been health inputs made it difficult to draw any conclusion about the role of health within the integrated approach. Interviews with villagers did not suggest that knowledge or practices had been introduced which would make a significant difference to their health or their standard of living.

The monitoring information on employment rates shows a fairly low (24%) level of employment for students of training courses, furthermore the findings of the evaluation team indicated that most students were not from poorer families, and indeed a certain minority were from other provinces. Indications were that the experience of the Experts and the strategies being adopted to address this may yield better results in the future.

## **G. Capacity Building**

The capacity building approach of the project is very much focussed on direct learning from the Experts, who are then able to provide a learning environment for Community Development Workers, counterparts, trainees and villagers. The extent to which this is formal or informal is then dependent on the Experts. This has worked well for most of the counterparts, who now describe themselves as largely ready to take over responsibility from the Experts if that is required.

While this rather unstructured approach to capacity building has been fruitful for many of the staff working directly with Experts, it has left the possibility of inconsistency. This is particularly the case at village level, where in some cases the Farmers Groups and VDCs appear to have had rather thorough training and in others they seem to have relied on the RDRP workers to take the responsibilities and their own capacity has not been built so much.

The establishment of training programmes, performance standards and monitoring systems for village level leaders would enable the project's capacity building achievements to be consolidated across a broader base.

## **H. Impact<sup>16</sup>**

At village level, there was a lack of attention to power dynamics and to inequality within villages. This was most clearly seen in the way that goods were distributed. In a number of the villages visited this was done in a way which favoured the VDC chief (who was normally the village chief) because he was able to choose himself who would be the beneficiaries. In others distribution was

<sup>16</sup> *Has the project had any significant unforeseen effects, either positive or negative? Why? With what implications? What were the losers and/or winners (special groups such as the immediate beneficiaries, women, other and key individuals) if any at the end of the project? What was the impact on the environment? What was the impact on the recipient institution?*

44

***Final Report submitted 7 February 2000***

in a random way (such as by delivering things at the centre and letting them be distributed on a first come first served basis).

Unfortunately, this is a common weakness in development programmes in Cambodia and RDRP is certainly not weaker than most others in this respect. However, the damage that can be done by bad feeling and conflicts regarding distribution of benefits should not be underestimated. If other villagers see that the VDC seem to be benefiting more from all of the activities this will make them much more reluctant to participate in what they perceive as injustice. In one village visited, the work had begun with a successful communal effort to repair the village road - most interviewees recalled with pleasure and pride the work which they had put into this. However, there was a problem later when groundnuts were distributed by one VDC member amongst a small group of people - others saw this and were extremely angry. Even though the RDRP workers became aware of this and held a meeting to smooth over the problems, and even though the VDC member resigned, there were still a number of interviewees who said that if the VDC called them to work on the road again now that they would not do it.

Some conflict is inevitable when assistance is introduced to a village, but the importance of being fair and being seen to be fair should not be underestimated. In the same village the villagers had contributed money to the construction of the Meeting Hut, and various people had complained that the figures did not add up, with the clear implication that the village chief was keeping money for himself. Another VDC member (who himself expressed some discontent with the management style of the VDC chief and village chief) suggested that a board be constructed at the Meeting Hut and that all of the villagers names and contributions should be recorded on it, in order that everyone could see clearly who had given what and where the money had gone. The implementation of such ideas, and a very careful approach to the distribution of benefits can prevent negative social impact as well as having a long-term beneficial impact on local governance.

Regarding environmental impact, the main concern of the Evaluation Mission came from the intensive use of chemical fertiliser. (One member of the research team is head of a local NGO which supports farmers to farm organically and which avoids any use of chemical fertilisers). The RDRP agriculture experts themselves noted this issue and explained that they are embarking on some work to try and find ways of farming organically.

The overall impact of the project on the recipient institution, namely the Ministry of Rural

Development has been positive, providing a source of confidence and valuable support for national rural development. The project has been largely managed outside the institutions of provincial and local government inside a separate project structure. If the CDWs and counterparts currently working on the project return to their work in the government structure then the capacity building assistance will translate to an institutional impact.

## I. Sustainability

The main strategy for sustainability employed by the project has been the use of Partner Revolving Materials as a source of funds for villagers to be able to manage their own development. Assuming that the PRMs are generally in good shape (with stable membership and high levels of repayment) this will be realistic once the Farmers' Group Leaders and VDC members are better trained in

45

### **Final Report submitted 7 February 2000**

managing the activities on their own and once there is clear documentation regarding the ownership of the capital and procedures for deciding how to spend the interest.

There is potential for the training centres to become self-financing either through doing courses on contract for companies who pay to have trained staff provided to them or through staff and students doing contract work as part of the training. At this stage, the links with the private sector, the management of the centres and a legal framework for this are not yet fully established.

The Provincial Rural Development Committees in both provinces were interviewed and both expressed a strong interest in taking over responsibility for management of the project. However, they also said that there would need to be intensive training of the relevant staff and also very clear hand over agreements in order for this to happen. The Provincial Governor in Takeo and the Third Deputy Governor in Kompong Speu were both particularly eloquent in this regard. In both cases, they would need to understand a lot more about the project - its achievements and its processes - before being in a position to decide what elements of it are worth continuing and then taking them over.

With regard to financial sustainability, the Provincial Rural Development Committees in Takeo and Kompong Speu do not have experience of managing large development budgets. However, the experience of those PRDC members who have worked in provinces where the PRDC does have some financial responsibility will be valuable. Nevertheless, it is highly likely that some financial management support and some financial monitoring at provincial level would be required - this might for instance include an expatriate Expert or Volunteer located within the province in order to monitor and countersign releases until an adequate system of financial accountability has been introduced (which might require about three years). The way in which

funds might **be** channeled **to** the PRDCs is addressed in the section on follow-up below.

## **J. Follow-up**

### **Immediate follow-up**

A follow-up to this consultancy **has** been provisionally suggested. This will be a week long. The service which is suggested is training in support of the implementation of an improved monitoring and evaluation system. However, given the findings and recommendations of this evaluation, especially the suggestion that the year 2000 should be transitional, it may be that there are other ways in which this week could be used. It may, for instance be useful to discuss the reformulation process.

The project management should have a lead role in formulating the terms of reference for this follow-up week, For this, harmonisation with the forthcoming JICA formulation mission is seen as important.

### **The role and function of central government and rural development institutions**

One specific question raised in the feedback to the earlier draft of this report was the role and the function of central government and rural development institutions. If, as a follow-up to this

46

#### ***Final Report submitted 7 February 2000***

evaluation there is to be a transition to government management of the RDRP then it is important to consider these issues prior to making decisions about how to proceed. The first point to be made is with regard to the role of major development projects which are attempting to strengthen government institutions. It is essential that the nature of the project is that the project enables government officials to perform their correct function within the government structure, and not to be taken away from their correct government role in order to work for project priorities. It is this basic principle which makes an evaluation of the role and function of central government and rural development institutions a pre-requisite of development planning (and which makes a year for reformulation of RDRP a necessity).

The key debate about the role and function of central government and rural development institutions at present is the debate about decentralisation. This is not a question of one path or another, but a question of degree. Essentially, decentralising more responsibilities to provincial level means that the provincial governor and the Provincial Rural Development Committee have more responsibilities, and have more funds over which they have the right to make decisions. In such a model the line ministries have a support role - providing information and technical support to the provinces. In a less decentralised system it might be expected that there will be more emphasis on Ministries running national programmes and giving directions to line departments within provinces.

In either case, there will be some national programmes run by the Ministries and there will be some decentralised development funds which Provincial Rural Development Committees will be in a position to make decisions about.

The current thrust of Cambodian policy towards decentralisation - demonstrated by the Seila experiment - therefore requires Provincial Rural Development Committees to develop the capacity to make decisions about allocation of funds according to their provincial priorities, and requires Ministries to develop the capacity to provide support and advice to PRDCs and to their respective departments. It is probably easier for PRDCs to learn their new role in a decentralised system than it is for Ministries, whose historical understanding of their role mainly relates to giving direction rather than support. Within CAREERE and Seila there are some relevant documents (obtained from UNCDF) on the roles and functions of central government in a decentralised system.

The role of the Ministry of Rural Development in such a system is complex. The Ministry of Rural Development has some line service provision responsibilities (such as rural roads and drinking water), and it also has a more general coordination and facilitation role. The position of the Ministry of Rural Development is made more complex by Decision 02 of the Royal Government of Cambodia, which requires the Provincial Rural Development Committees to report to the Ministry of Rural Development. This seems to be problematic, because the provincial governors are members of staff of the Ministry of Interior, and therefore they are now required to report to one Ministry for some of their responsibilities, but to another Ministry for others.

My own analysis of this situation is that the long-term role of the Ministry of Rural Development is most likely to be as a provider of information and facilitation services to local and provincial governments, and as a monitor of the quality of local governance. In this regard, therefore, the Ministry's long-term interests may be best served by **developing the capacity to strengthen local development structures** (such as village development committees, commune development

***Final Report submitted 7 February 2000***

committees and - potentially - farmers groups) and also **developing the capacity to monitor and evaluate development activities** throughout the country in order to be able to provide policy advice to both provincial and national governments in the field of national government. Thus, if the RDRP were to adopt to work through PRDCs, the new project might most usefully focus on mechanisms which enable the Ministry of Rural Development to fulfil these roles.

Such an analysis would give PRDC the lead management role, the Ministry of Economics and Finance the lead fund-holding and allocating role and the Ministry of Rural Development the lead monitoring and evaluation role.

There remains a further issue, which is the definition of the parameters of responsibility for the Provincial Rural Development Committees. To what extent are PRDCs to develop provincial policy and to what extent are they to implement national policy? Who will be responsible for developing the mechanisms for allocating funds at provincial level (for instance between line departments and commune development committees)?

### **Phase out and reformulation**

One conclusion of the 1999 evaluation of the Seila Local Planning Process was that the CARERE project had been ill-served by a rather rigid policy of reducing the amount of inputs (both technical assistance and investment funds) over time. This conclusion rested on the contrast between the 5year project intervention and the larger development objective. This may be relevant when reformulating RDRP.

If the project intervention is intended to assist institutional strengthening and national policy making, then there is likely to be a high requirement for technical assistance at the end of the project when policy lessons are to be drawn. This may be higher than at the beginning when plans and strategies are being put in place, especially as new unexpected issues may arise in the course of the project. Likewise, if institutional strengthening and capacity building are the main activities of a project, it is likely that the capacity of the relevant institutions to utilise development funds effectively will be greatest at the end not the beginning of the project. This is particularly relevant in the case of RDRP which will potentially expand its concern from 4.6% to 100.0% of the two provinces.

The national project of institutionalising a rural development system is likely to take much longer than 5 years. There is still considerable debate and contest about the path that will be taken in order to achieve this. At this point in time, therefore, there are strong arguments to suggest that the development objectives will not be best served by a phase-out strategy which includes a gradual diminution of resources in what is already (given the larger national project) a quite limited period of time. Given the current situation of the institutions in the two provinces, the national development institutions and the national budget it may be more realistic and more in harmony with the trajectory of national development to anticipate five years of constant assistance, with a view to continuation beyond that into a phase-out period.

## **V CONCLUSIONS**

### **A. Findings**

The most important findings from this evaluation are that

- ASEAN Experts have ideas and energy which can assist Cambodian Rural Development.
- Elements of the integrated project approach are potentially valuable for Rural Development in

- Cambodia, specifically Meeting Huts, Farmers Groups and Partners Revolving Materials.  
More information and more detailed information on the Partner Revolving Materials is required in order to enable a proper evaluation of the likelihood of the PRM being replicable and sustainable.

The Terms of Reference specifically ask for areas of mutual learning to be highlighted from other development initiatives in Cambodia.

### **Village-managed credit (in cash and in kind).**

The findings of various other studies (eg Learning from Rural Development Programmes in Cambodia, Charya et al. 1998) has been that credit activities tend to favour the better off families in villages and that over time the membership of poorer families decreases. This requires careful monitoring.

Another factor regarding credit-related activities is the possibility of failure due to natural disaster and to lack of repayment caused by mistrust or actual corruption. Credit-related activities are often regarded as quite high-risk for this reason and therefore may not be the most suitable way for local development structures to be introduced to development management. A recent evaluation of the CARERE/Seila Local Planning Process concluded that for these reasons local development funds in Seila communes should not be spent on credit-related activities.

On the other hand, Community Action for Social Development is a UNICEF supported project currently operating village-managed credit in 157 villages (including 9 villages in Kompong Speu and 43 villages in Takeo). It works with a standard interest rate of 4% per month, with the interest being divided as follows:

- 25% for provincial, district and commune levels
- 25% for the village development committee
- 10% for the provincial administration
- 15% to revolve in the village capital
- 10% for village savings
- 5% for social welfare
- 10% for inflation.

There are clear similarities to the approach of RDRP in this, and therefore comparative analysis may yield interesting results.

### **Decentralised Finance and Management**

The Seila programme, supported by the CARERE project has piloted a system of decentralised finance and management. In this system funding is decentralised to commune and provincial levels. Decisions on spending at commune level are restricted to the option of 'public goods'. While the meaning of this term is contested, the general rule is that it refers to small-scale

### ***Final Report submitted 7 February 2000***

infrastructure. A major reason for this is that if there are too many options for the commune development committee, the level of technical support which can be provided by the project and the higher level government agencies will be overstretched. In other words, as a first step it will be advisable to specialise in only rural credit, or only small-scale infrastructure, but that to attempt both may be unrealistic. UNCDF will be a source of expertise and documentation relating to this issue.

Clearly, what this suggests is that the decentralised funding system which Seila has used could be adopted in Takeo and Kompong Speu, but with funding being allocated for PRM rather than for village infrastructure. Currently there is an experiment ongoing in Battambang province in three districts looking to harmonise the Seila model and the Community Action for Social Development model. Lessons for this may be of particular relevance for Takeo and Kompong Speu as it seeks to build on RDRP.

The key lesson from the decentralised model in the Seila areas is the capacity which exists at commune and provincial levels. Exposure of stakeholders in Takeo and Kompong Speu to these will be valuable in enabling them to visualise an RDRP substantively managed by the Provincial administrations.

### **Technical Support and Private Sector relations**

Another strength of the Seila programme at its best has been the technical support. Simple designs have been made for culverts, schools, ring wells and other local infrastructure and bidding procedures have been introduced as a way of facilitating the incorporation of the private sector into local development.

The lack of indigenous technical capacity **has** been a major constraint in enabling this system to function well. Extended exposure of elements of the Malaysian team to the Infrastructure Advisors and to the Technical Support **Staff** in the Seila provinces may yield new possibilities both for the Experts and for the graduates of their courses.

### **Vocational Training**

SKIP is an international NGO working in four district centres in Pursat provinces. They have carried out highly professional vocational training in these centres since the early 1990s. According to their Director, they are currently undergoing a modification in their strategy. Previously they had taught 2-year courses from which they achieved 70% employment rates. Major constraints had included the retention of trainers: people with good skills moved on to get other jobs. Another constraint was that because the course was quite long the market for the skills which had been taught had often changed by the time the course had finished. As a response SKIP are planning to move towards shorter courses of several months. Recruitment is from a target area where the NGO also carries out community development. Again, therefore, there is potential benefit in cross-learning between the two programmes.



Also of possible relevance is the learning from the GTZ programme in Kompong Thom which recently shut down its vocational training course. UNDP have also mentioned national policy on vocational training in their feedback to the earlier draft of this report: they would therefore be the relevant organisation to approach in order to identify the location of such policy.

50

*Final Report submitted 7 February 2000*

### **Food Preservation Training**

The integrated food security project supported by GTZ in Kampot province includes food preservation training which has been successful in introducing techniques which are directly relevant to the agricultural products in the villages. There has also been some highly regarded food preservation training by a Thai expert under the auspices of the Seila programme in Battambang and Banteay Meanchey provinces. Again, there may be potential for cross-learning.

### **Monitoring and Evaluation Systems**

Most of the leading NGO support organisations in Cambodia (Oxfam GB, Church World Service, Private Agencies Cooperating Together, Australian Catholic Relief) operate broadly similar monitoring and evaluation systems which enable them to track the institutional development of the organisations which they support. This system can easily be adapted for use by an NGO (and therefore also by a project such as RDRP) to monitor the level of capacity building of Village Development Committees and Farmers' Groups. The Programme Advisor at Oxfam GB would be a relevant contact point in this regard.

The CAREERE/Seila logframe was developed midway through the project and therefore does not represent the ideal with regard to a well-formulated Monitoring and Evaluation system, nevertheless it would provide interesting background reading for the RDRP management. The GTZ Kampot integrated food security programme is also reported to have a strong internal monitoring and evaluation system.

## **B. Assessment**

### **B.1 Relevance**

As an initiative to introduce different approaches from different ASEAN countries 4o Cambodia at a time when Cambodia is emerging from war and isolation, RDRP has not just been relevant but necessary. It is particularly valuable that the technical assistance has come from people with field experience in countries with similar conditions who have come to Cambodia and have worked directly in the field with Cambodian villagers and officials. During Phase 3 an 'institutional support approach' would have been more relevant than the 'project approach' which was followed,

### **B.2 Performance**

The project's performance is broadly comparable with that of other development programmes in the country (including multi/bilateral; international NGO; local NGO). It therefore takes its rightful place alongside the whole range of organisations who are currently working in Cambodia and introducing new ways of approaching development to rural Cambodians.

### **B.3 Success**

The harmonious and constructive cooperation of the parties to the tripartite agreement is a major achievement and one that should be built upon. Undoubtedly the project has made an impact on alleviating poverty and improving livelihoods in the 113 villages where the IP is being implemented and also for the people from various other areas who have attended training courses.

## **VI RECOMMENDATIONS 1.0**

### **Major recommendation**

- 1.1 Before embarking on a new phase, the project should undergo a transition year, during which current achievements are consolidated and more stakeholders are engaged in a formulation exercise which draws on lessons learned from RDRP and also from other successful programmes.

### **2.0 Consolidation RDRP of achievements**

*Strengthening of Farmers Groups, Village Development Committees and Partner Revolving Materials*

- 2.1 Develop guidelines for Farmers' Group formation and for selection of Farmers' Group leaders (each Farmers' Group to be represented by one woman and one man)
- 2.2 Develop more comprehensive written rules and procedures for management of PRM (including guidelines for managing an annual meeting to decide how to spend the PRM interest - with participation of all the Farmers' Group representatives in the Meeting Huts)
- 2.3 Engage Ministry of Rural Development to assist in facilitating a functioning working arrangement between RDRP and the provincial departments of rural development

whereby VDCs will be correctly formed and recognised throughout the target area

- 2.4 Develop and administer training courses for all Farmers' Group Leaders and all VDC members in their roles and responsibilities (including in PRM management and extension)

*Strengthen monitoring of key issues, especially through use of local authorities and technical officials in a monitoring and support role.*

- 2.5 Train CDC representatives (one man, one woman) in monitoring PRM activities, including an annual monitoring visit to each village (fee of 10,000 riels from the PRM)

- 2.6 Using CDC monitoring visits, collate comprehensive data on repayment rates and participation rates in PRM

- 2.7 Assign Experts as advisors to the district offices of agriculture and rural development in Kong Pisey, Tram Kak, Bati and Samrong districts in order to build their capacity to monitor and support extension activities in their districts - possibility of these officials receiving support from the project. (Through discussion with Provincial Rural Development Committees).

- 2.8 Introduce a monitoring system for agricultural extension which logs:

52

***Final Report submitted 7 February 2000***

- Each new trial or demonstration initiated within the project
    - The direct result of the trial
    - The reasons for the result
    - The extent to which the technology has been extended further
    - The reasons for this
- 2.9 Engage in dialogue with rice growing Experts about the possibility of piloting with at least one Farmers' Group a fertiliser PRM which allocates each farmer sufficient fertiliser to be able to apply it in the quantities recommended by Experts (approximately 3 bags per hectare).
- 2.10 Ensure that all possible resources are given to the current initiatives from some Experts to pilot organic farming. Ensure that results from this initiative are shared widely.
- 2.11 Introduce monitoring of income generation courses which includes a system of grading which uses future anticipated employment as the standard
- Eg.     A = Can earn wages of \$60+ or start own business  
          B = Can get regular paid employment in the field  
          C = Can do extra jobs to supplement income

D = Will not use lessons from this course to improve income or wellbeing  
At the end of each course the trainer should grade the student according to this scale and also the students should grade themselves (as well as completing an evaluation of the course). Six months after the course is complete follow-up information should be obtained explaining current actual situation and reasons.

### *Strengthening Cambodian management*

- 2.12 Reassign all Experts to the role of advisor, with Cambodians taking over line responsibility for all decision-making up to (but not including) APM level.
- 2.13 A simple review system should be considered, whereby Experts write a 6-monthly report on the progress of their counterpart, and counterparts write a 6-monthly report on the advice and support which they are receiving from their Expert. (Formats for this may be obtained from other Expert programmes in Cambodia)
- 2.14 The appointment of Cambodian counterparts to the Project Manager and Assistant Project Managers should be considered.
- 2.15 Appoint centre managers in each centre and provide them with training in financial and project management, with the aim of enabling each centre to be able to become independent and self-sufficient in the long term (within 5 years) either within government or as an NGO or a private business.

### *Improve the poverty targeting where possible*

- 2.16 Carry out participatory wealth ranking in all project villages and use it as the basis for selection of students on training courses where appropriate.

53

### ***Final Report submitted 7 February 2000***

- 2.17 Restrict access to training courses to rural villagers from within the project target area.

### *Miscellaneous*

- 2.18 Introduce a system whereby all construction (eg Meeting Huts, culverts) proceed with advice from construction Experts or their colleagues.
- 2.19 Given the focus on reformulation, and notwithstanding the improvement of monitoring of key issues noted above, it is not recommended that an attempt be made to introduce a new, comprehensive monitoring and evaluation system to cover the transition year. The focus must be on ensuring a monitoring and evaluation system is formulated integral to the

new project.

### **3.0 Reformulation Process<sup>17</sup>**

- 3.1 The new project must be designed in a way which maximises compliance with existing Royal Government of Cambodia regulations and institutions and also compatibility with other major programmes which are also aiming to assist the Royal Government in institutionalising rural development. Where appropriate, the project leadership should play a facilitation role in ensuring that other major programmes adopt the same approach.
- 3.2 In conjunction with the National Project Coordinator and other interested parties a terms of reference for the formulation process should be developed. Broad parameters should include a budget (which should not decrease with each year), a time span and the overall goal of strengthening the poverty alleviation work of the Provincial Rural Development Committees of Kompong Speu and Takeo. The terms of reference should include a workplan that makes clear the level of time commitment which will be expected from the formulation team.
- 3.3 Focal points should be appointed from the PRDCs in Kompong Speu and Takeo and should have a lead role in the formulation process. The focal points should be gender-balanced (perhaps one man and one woman per province).
- 3.4 A core team should be formed to lead the formulation process over the period April 2000 to January 2001. This should include representatives from Takeo and Kompong Speu PRDC, ASEAN Experts and the Project Management (both JICA and JICE). The core team should be gender-balanced.
- 3.5 The core team should facilitate the involvement of a much larger group of officials and villagers from different areas and levels in Takeo and Kompong Speu. This should include the facilitation of exchange visits between Farmer Group members in RDRP and villagers in other programmes - staying in villages and not in hotels. Exchanges at CDC level will be particularly valuable.

<sup>17</sup> The recommendations presented here are in broad outline. If such a process is to be adopted, I would be able to provide many more detailed recommendations regarding the design of the process and how it could engage with other actors in Cambodian rural development.

- 3.6 Reformulation process should consider structural issues (eg how are different sectoral contributions to be integrated; who makes spending decisions; how is money allocated to the bodies making spending decisions; how are funds released etc) and content issues (

eg extension and village-managed credit; small scale infrastructure; large scale infrastructure). Lessons from other programmes may be central for structural issues, but lessons from RDRP will be central in the dialogue about content.

- 3.7 Reformulation process should include sectoral studies which review relevant elements of national development, for instance, representatives of Provincial Departments of Health and ASEAN health specialists should cooperate to review Ministry policies, MEDICAM policy positions, the state of health services in the provinces and the work of NGOs in the sector (especially the work of poverty-focussed public health NGO Enfants et Developpement in Bati district of Takeo). Cross-visits and studies should create linkages with programmes such as those supported by UNCDF, UNICEF, ACLEDA, SKIP, GTZ.
- 3.8 The integration process which takes place at district level in Seila provinces should be studied as a potential means of approaching integration within government structures.
- 3.9 Ministry of Planning should be consulted with regard to the selection of poverty indicators that are recommended by the Royal Government (with a view to cooperating with provincial planning departments and district planning offices to carry out poverty surveys in the target areas).
- 3.10 Individual Expert positions should have job descriptions which should be sent to the ASEAN partners in good time in order to enable Experts to be selected for specific positions.
- 3.11 As formulation process begins to clarify likely locations for Experts, the Royal Government of Cambodia should be encouraged to take responsibility for making accommodation available for them.
- 3.12 RDRP should make preparations for upgrading orientation procedures so that they are appropriate for Experts on longer contracts - this will mainly include preparing 2-month full-time Khmer language courses.

#### **4.0 Recommendations to other stakeholders**

- 4.1 In order to create the conditions for effective development' assistance it is recommended that all parties to the tri-partite agreement make a long-term commitment (at least five years) to continue cooperation in the next phase of what is now called RDRP.
- 4.2 ASEAN governments are recommended to release Experts on contracts of 2-3 years.
- 4.3 The Cambodian government is recommended to establish guidelines for salary supplements for government staff who are working within the administration but utilising funds from overseas. This should be based on what it is anticipated that the Royal Government will pay from its own treasury following administrative reform. A suggested level would be use of a

motorcycle for

***Final Report submitted 7 February 2000***

commune level officials, \$40- plus use of a motorcycle for district level officials, \$60- plus use of a motorcycle for provincial level officials<sup>18</sup>.

- 4.4 All parties are recommended to review the project design with a view to simplifying and clarifying responsibilities, especially ways of expediting funding arrangements.
- 4.5 Given the unique nature of the project and the difficulty of securing long-term funding, UNDP is recommended to investigate ways in which resources and mechanisms could be mobilised to cover gaps and delays in funding and thereby facilitate long-term planning by the project management and counterparts.

<sup>18</sup> This is loosely based on the rates of \$40- for district officials and \$80- for provincial officials in Seila provinces: retention rates of district staff at this level over three year period have been excellent, so perhaps this is even a little high.

*Final Report submitted 7 February 2000*

**VII LESSONS LEARNED**

The major lessons from the experience of the Rural Development and Resettlement Project thus far are:

- The major contributions which technical Experts from countries with comparable histories and geographies can make to national development (south to south cooperation).
- 2. The importance of being able to take a long-term perspective for planning, monitoring and evaluation in order to maximise the benefits of such cooperation.