

## **Summary & Lessons Learned**

### **Creative Industry Support Programme, Terminal Evaluation**

#### **Programme Background and Rationale**

In order to promote both the social inclusion and cultural rights of indigenous peoples, as well as provide sustainable income generation and employment creation, the Millennium Development Goals Achievement Fund (MDG-F), under financing from the Government of Spain, supported the Creative Industries Support Programme (CISP) in Cambodia. The CISP, under the auspices of the MDG-F Thematic Window for Culture and Development, was approved in April 2008 and has a three-year duration (September 2008-September 2011), with a total allocation of US\$3.3 million.

Within the MDG-F, a results-oriented monitoring and evaluation (M&E) strategy was established to measure contributions to the MDGs and multilateralism. The strategy seeks to (i) support programme to attain development results, (ii) measure contributions to MDG-F objectives, MDGs, and aid effectiveness mechanisms, and (iii) support scaling up and replication of successful programme through evidence-based knowledge and lessons learned.

#### **Background of the Assignment**

In Cambodia, a mid-term evaluation, with a formative focus, was conducted in 2010. The final evaluation of the CISP, which is summative in nature, will draw upon the information provided within baseline surveys and the mid-term evaluation in order to observe changes throughout the duration of the programme. Consequently, the final evaluation will contribute to the overall evaluation for the MDG-F Thematic Window for Culture and Development, in order to assist the MDG-F Secretariat in understanding the overall impact at both national and international levels.

In order to complete the assignment, a combination of methods were used, including: desk review of international conventions, national legislative and policy frameworks, and programme documents; key informant interviews; fieldwork, composed of focus group discussions (FGDs) and village visits; and, report writing and analysis, informed by a series of evaluation questions and levels of analysis.

#### **Description of Intervention**

In Cambodia, the CISP involves four UN agencies—UNESCO as “Coordinating Agency”, ILO, UNDP, and FAO—working in partnership with four ministries of the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC). Each agency and its RGC counterpart work according to their organizational strengths. UNESCO and the Ministry of Culture and Fine Arts (MoCFA) collaborate on outputs and outcomes related to the preservation and promotion of Khmer and indigenous culture, while ILO and FAO—in partnership with the Ministry of Industry, Mines and Energy (MIME), and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), respectively—work together toward improved income generation and employment creation, community development, and livelihood improvement. UNDP, along with the Ministry of Commerce (MoC), oversee the commercialization component of the CISP, responsible for marketing cultural products and assets and creating sustainable business ventures. The following table highlights the participating UN organizations, the respective agencies’ contributions to the joint programme, their respective government counterparts, and the focus of their CISP-relate activities.

Under the objectives of the Thematic Window for Culture and Development, as well as the aforementioned outcomes of the CISP, the joint programme was designed to promote the cultural diversity and heritage of Cambodia with the aim of harnessing the social and economic potential of its cultural assets and products.

Thus, in order to support the social and economic potential of Cambodia’s heritage and diversity, the CISP focused its efforts on traditional basket weaving and performing arts in all four provinces, as well as a series of

other cultural products and assets specific to the peoples and practices of each area, including: jars and pottery (Ratanakiri); resin production (Preah Vihear, Mondulakiri); and, textile weaving (Mondulakiri, Ratanakiri).

The CISP not only operated in partnership with four national RGC counterparts—MoCFA, MIME, MAFF, and MoC—but, initiated partnerships with five national-level and nine local-level NGOs throughout its course of implementation. Initially, the CISP was designed to collaborate with business development service (BDS) providers; however, the lack of these providers within the country led to various agreements with NGOs which focus on similar target groups and services, such as training on business skills and marketing, handicraft production, and sustainable natural resource management.

As previously mentioned, the CISP was designed as a three-year programme (September 2008-September 2011); however, as would be expected for a joint programme, delays resulted from the hiring of programme staff, as well as the coordination of activities among all agencies. Thus, although the official start date was 10 September 2008, actual implementation began later. Staff mobilization was mainly finalized by December 2009, which was followed by a literature review and initial field visits. Programme Field Coordinators, responsible for the coordination and logistical arrangement of activities at the provincial level, began searching for suitable local-level implementing partners in mid-2009. Implementing partners then assisted with the initial scoping visits to local communities, to identify potential target areas and select programme beneficiaries; however, for many implementing partners, contracts and the actual implementation of training activities did not begin until mid-2010.

## Levels of Analysis

A series of evaluation questions, of interest to both the CISP team and MDG-F Secretariat, were provided within the Terms of Reference (TOR), as well as levels of analysis and evaluation criteria. The final evaluation sought to understand three primary evaluation criteria: (i) design, (ii) process, and (iii) ownership. The evaluation questions within each category were then used to generate answers for each level

The CISP not only seeks to improve upon the culture sector, but achieve broad-based social, political and economic changes within the communities involved. Thus, the final evaluation will also assess the specificities of the culture sector, in order to measure the programme's lasting effects. In order to measure these effects

## Findings, Conclusions, and Lessons Learned

Considering the initial delay in beginning programme activities, it should be noted that the CISP was still quite effective in delivering upon the majority of its expected outputs. As previously documented, the attainment of development outputs may be found within **Error! Reference source not found.** (p. **Error! Bookmark not defined.**). Additionally, significant progress toward its expected outcomes were also made, as programme outputs contributed to: the preservation of Cambodia's heritage, cultural diversity, and living arts while promoting their social and economic potential (Outcome 1); improvements in livelihoods, particularly for indigenous groups and women, from enhanced creative industries (Outcome 2); and, improved commercialization of selected cultural products and services in domestic markets (Outcome 3).

Although a series of results were documented at both the output- and outcome-level, the sustainability of the CISP is highly questioned. This doubt mainly arises due to the short time-frame of the joint programme. Although three years in duration, the actual implementation of activities for local communities began in early 2010, which would constitute an actual implementation period of approximately 20 months (for the earliest contracts signed). Additionally, due to difficulties in establishing timely contracts with all local implementing partners, some activities initiated implementation as late as August and September 2011, just weeks prior to the close of the joint programme.

## Recommendations, MDG-F Secretariat

First, recommendations have been outlined for the MDG-F Secretariat in New York, concerning the management and oversight of future joint programme. Recommendations were then provided for the CISP, as a whole, as well as individual UN agencies; these mainly focus on the continuation and sustainability of programme activities.

### One-UN, One-Procedure

As highlighted within the findings, the financial and administrative burden placed on local-level implementing partners was quite extensive, considering that the operations of these organizations are often constrained by limited financial and human resources. Partners were asked to provide separate reports to each UN agency, albeit in a common format, prior to the disbursement of funds. Additionally, funds were not actually controlled at the level of the joint programme, as they were separately handled by each agency; in turn, causing several implementing partners to be subject to twelve different payment schedules.

The recommendation within the mid-term evaluation mentioned the lead UN agency could, in effect, care for the management and disbursal of programme funds. This would simplify the financial management of the fund for all involved, including local-level implementers, who could then submit one financial report to one unified programme, rather than separate UN agencies. This proposal is preferred due to its simplicity (i.e. funds would simply be transferred to one agency and the procedures of that agency would then be adopted); however, it is possible that certain agencies may not agree in handing over their financial autonomy to another UN organization.

It is also possible that each joint programme hold its own financial officer, autonomous from any involved agency. This option would require the building of an institution and related procedures though. Although the addition of one financial officer does not seem overly complicated, it should be considered that reporting formats would also need to be designed, as well as the actual financial management process to be followed.

### Implementation Guidelines

Although the joint programme began in September 2008, implementation guidelines were only provided in July 2009. This was a major constraint as initial delays may have been more easily adjusted if programme staff were aware of the official decision-making and planning procedures. In order to avoid delays and confusion over lines of authority, implementation guidelines should be provided prior to programme inception. These guidelines should also be translated in the local language as soon as possible, in order to provide technical ministries and local programme staff with an acceptable and readily available document when they join the programme. Additionally, the programme document originally developed for the CISP did not include human and financial resources for (i) communications and advocacy, and (ii) monitoring and evaluation; however, the implementation guidelines noted that both were essential to the implementation and management of MDG-F joint programmes. As the implementation guidelines were only provided in July 2009, both the communications and M&E strategies were late in their implementation, as the CISP needed to reapportion programme funds for staff and work plans. Thus, it would be best to mention the importance in outlining communications and M&E resources and strategies within future 'Requests for Proposals'. This would inform programme designers on the importance of these two oft-overlooked management aspects.

### Lines of Authority

The MDG-F should consider if its current management structure is most appropriate—i.e. the organization of a Programme Management Committee, responsible for the overall guidance of the joint programme, as well as the appointment of a Programme Coordinator, selected by the lead UN agency. As mentioned within the MDG-F implementation guidelines, lead UN agencies should not manage the joint programme; thus, limiting the authority the Programme Coordinator has in making technical and operational decisions, as this responsibility lies with the PMC, which convenes on a quarterly basis. This structure has its limitations, if one considers that technical and operational decisions must be made on a daily basis during the inception phase. Allowing the

Programme Coordinator to make technical and operational decisions may lessen the probability of delays during inception; however, this could also diminish other UN agency's sense of ownership in the process. Nonetheless, the power of decision-making would not lie solely in the hands of the Programme Coordinator, but with the entire team, which happened by default.

## Recommendations, CISP and Concerned UN Agencies

As the joint programme is coming to a close, recommendations concern issues of programme continuity and sustainability; rather than drawing upon what could have been changed during programme implementation.

### Continuity and sustainability

At the time of writing, interest and complementary financing had not been obtained from other donors; thus, the joint programme will draw to a close on 31 October 2011. Thus, the continuity and sustainability of programme interventions, as well as the livelihoods of beneficiaries, are currently at jeopardy. Recommendations were provided to the CISP team, prior to the finalization of this report, and it was found that all were actually in line with the activities already conducted by the programme. The italicized sentences simply highlight the activities conducted by CISP, in line with each recommendation, in its effort to sustain its activities after the programme's closing.

Without the presence of future complementary activities, each of the concerned agencies within the CISP should attempt to incorporate certain activities within their overall national strategies or programme. If financial support is not possible, agencies should provide technical assistance to national and sub-national government counterparts or civil society organizations.

*UNESCO:* Currently, a national cultural policy does not exist in Cambodia. This absence allows the arts and culture sector to be at risk, as there is no high-level policy document safeguarding the cultural identity of Cambodia's Khmer majority, ethnic minorities, and indigenous groups. Additionally, by not setting goals and strategies for the arts and culture sector, there is a risk that innovations will stall in these areas and inhibit new careers, educational opportunities, and economic growth. Thus, in accordance with the joint programme's model of aligning itself to national strategies, UNESCO should continue to provide technical support to the MoCFA, regarding the formation of a national cultural policy. By looking to the conventions, national policies, and legal frameworks supported throughout the span of the joint programme, UNESCO could incorporate its CISP-related work within the design of this important policy document. This could, in essence, create possibilities for the continuity and sustainability of the cultural outputs and outcomes achieved during the joint programme. Furthermore, systematic implementation guidelines outlining the roles and responsibilities of line departments, as well as the policy's relevance to the MoCFA's current strategy, would be helpful in executing this policy.

*Continuity and sustainability measures:* UNESCO held a national workshop on cultural policy, which was organized in mid-2011. The discussion during the workshop was considered fruitful, which can be seen as a possible result of the close work between the CISP team, the MoCFA, and other CISP-supported partners. As a result of the workshop, a draft cultural policy is currently being prepared.

*CISP Staff:* From the information obtained during interviews, it was understood that a number of local implementing partners are interested in continuing CISP-related programme activities, after the closing of the joint programme. These national- and local-level implementing partners are currently in the process of finalizing and submitting project proposals to various donors. In order to ensure these partners have the greatest number of possibilities available, it would be helpful if CISP staff, prior to the closing of the programme, advise partners on the most relevant organizations that could provide either funding or additional contacts for funding sources.

*CISP Staff:* According to the Cambodia Official Development Assistance (ODA) website, administered by the Council for the Development of Cambodia (CDC), the Asian Development Bank (ADB) has initiated a

development intervention in Kampong Thom, which seeks to improve income generation and local employment through the enhanced production and sale of Khmer handicrafts and locally processed foods.<sup>1</sup> As a number of programme features are similar to those of the CISP, it would be possible for joint programme staff to meet with ADB programme staff to advise them on the inclusion of previously supported CISP producer groups, as these beneficiaries may need further assistance and training. *Continuity and sustainability: the CISP team met with the ADB project team during the inception of the JFPR 9156-CAM, and the ADB team invited CISP representatives to join their final inception workshop. After speaking with ADB project representatives, it was understood that CISP-supported target areas may be incorporated within the ADB project.*

Considering the vast number of constraints and initial delays during its inception phase, the Creative Industries Support Programme was, nonetheless, able to deliver upon its expected outputs and outcomes, as well as addressing the goals set within the Thematic Window for Culture and Development.

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<sup>1</sup> “Improving Market Access for the Poor in Central Cambodia (JFPR 9156-CAM)” has a time-frame from 5 April 2011 to 2 March 2014, and will be implemented in Kampong Thom province, with an overall budget of US\$2.08 million.