

Strengthening Democratic and Decentralised Local Government" in Cambodia (DDLG) Project

Summary of Terminal Project Evaluation

The project "*Strengthening Democratic and Decentralised Local Government*" in Cambodia (DDLG) has been jointly funded by and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the European Commission (EC), with assistance in kind being provided by the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC).

The DDLG project was designed in 2004, with implementation starting in 2006 after the Pro-Doc was signed off by the main partners (UNDP and EC) in January of the same year. Implementation was planned over a 5- year duration to be subsequently completed in 2010. The associated financing agreement between UNDP and the EC made available the allocated €10M EC budget for a 60-month period.

A no-cost extension, which was formally agreed between UNDP and EC in April 2010 through an addendum to contract, has lengthened the agreement to 72 months, with the project implementation cycle concluding in December 2011. The evaluation mission and this associated report covers the entire implementation period of the project as defined by the associated EC-UNDP financing agreement and addendum to contract.

The evaluation mission confirms that the DDLG project has substantially contributed and its sustainable outputs will continue to contribute to the UNDP (CPAP) and UNDAF. In terms of UNDAF (Outcome IV) "*...the promotion of accountability and responsiveness to the needs and rights of people and participation in democratic decision-making*", the outputs of the DDLG project (components 1,2, & 3) have substantially and practically supported this outcome area.

Within the context of the CPAP the combination of the component outputs have resulted in a very credible and substantive outcome that has addressed the associated CPAP outputs and the CPAP outcome area in the context of "*...the development of mechanisms and capacities of local government improved to promote voices, accountability and partnership at national and sub-national level.*"

In a national context considering its overall design, DDLG has provided not only an extensive contribution to the policy and levels of the D&D but has managed to introduce evolutionary change to the D&D environment, influencing the strategic options for reform and the modalities in which the reform can be implemented. **A key factor to its success has been its flexibility to adapt to changes witnessed in the D&D environment in Cambodia, which has been fully supported by the UNDP / EU partnership.**

At commune level; though the ICC component and the local government network that has been developed and solidified by the NLC/S and the PACS, the project has been able to build horizontal cooperation's amongst communes, has helped to build confidence in terms of citizens perceptions of local government, and has been able to improve livelihoods at commune level (ref Annex I to III). This has been achieved through the application of a multi-facetted approach that has built local government capacity through small project works, in parallel to training and D&D dialogue support provided through the NLC/S and PAC's.

At Provincial level; the project has assisted to establish and develop 24 legally independent local government associations (LGA), providing a basic system to enhance democratic governance. As articulated within the MTR these associations of local governance can have an important and influential role in democratisation and local government development,

Within the context of Cambodia, since the LGA network consists of a number of members of differing political affiliations, the system can act as a counterbalance to centralised government, providing a strong "voice" across the political spectrum.

Of importance to note is, that the NLC/S, which is, now, though the support provided by DDLG to its Board, Executive Committee and the secretariat, has firmly established itself and a highly influential institution within the D&D environment today. The network through its implemented BPA system will strive to improve sub-national governance through the exchange of ideas, concepts and examples to solve common solutions.

At national level; there has been significant institutionalisation of the processes and systems developed by the project which has provided not only substance to the overall D&D process, but through component 4 has inbuilt sustainability for project outcomes.

The DDLG project has been designed, revised, and implemented to support the government's endeavours in its D&D policy formulation and implementation at both the national and sub-national level. Having clearly started at an early stage within the process, it has been well positioned to influence and advise the government on two distinctive levels namely; (1) National, (2) Commune

Given the conservative pace of the D&D reform in Cambodia and the flexibility of the UNDP/EC partnership, the intervention and associated activities have remained relevant for the project cycle. Issues with the project design, which did not include cross-cutting policy support to mainstream component outputs into national D&D policy and implementation practices nor a gender integration component has slightly reduced the overall impact of the intervention.

The individual components of the project adequately support and add value to the concepts of democratic decentralised local government as articulated within the above-mentioned RGC strategy and clearly promote the concepts of good governance as defined by UNDP.

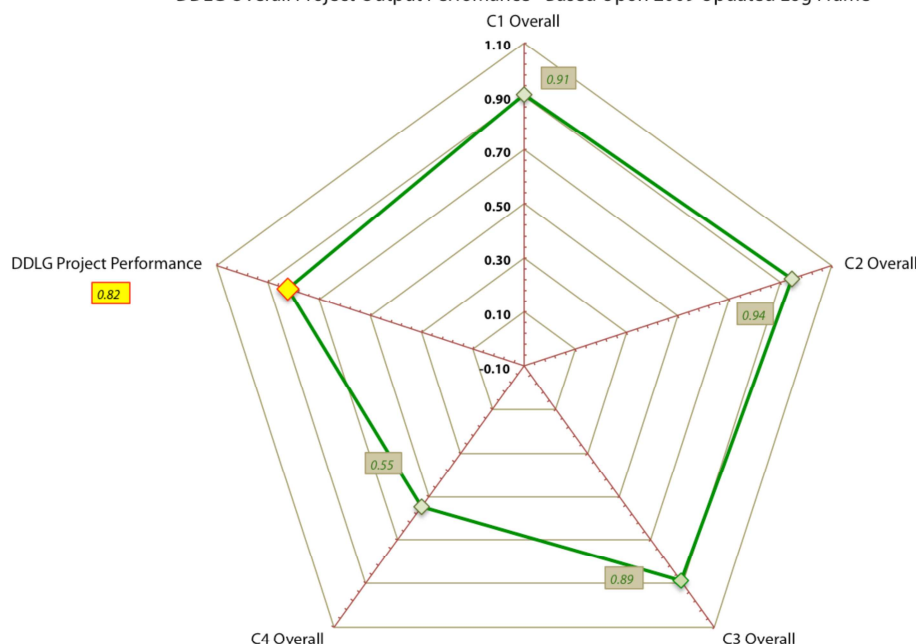
The unique mixture of project components that assimilate government development planning and financing systems to citizen participatory planning, link together communes through effective councils that can exchange experiences, ideas and expertise to solve problems, and also assist the government to develop policies and practices that can better serve local government through continuous enhancement of D&D policy has assured that the DDLG intervention has maintained relevance and leverage throughout its project cycle, having impacted well upon the D&D environment, developing a sustainable and measurable outcome.

The overall evaluation of the DDLG project cannot emphasise enough the **high level of qualitative outputs that have been attained and which have impacted greatly upon the Cambodian D&D process.** Within Components 1&2 the work of the project has assisted to elevate the LGAs to being an essential D&D institution. DDLG as through effective capacity building developed with the NLC/S a comprehensive M&E system that is being utilised to assess and monitor the capacity of the CCs'. The ICC component has produced innovative and suitable guidelines, introducing new practices that are being mainstreamed into GC policy and an updated of the MoI PIM.

The overall outcome of the project, the combination of the successful realisation of outputs (components 1,2, and 3) in the context of quality and alignment to the RGC D&D strategy has helped to improve the livelihoods of commune citizens through; increases in household budgets, access to markets, access to education and health care, and improvements in social conditions.

Output performance been high. Using individual component analysis techniques (see sections 4.0 to 7.0) an overall **output performance of 82% for the DDLG project is estimated.** On a component basis, all components performed at a similar level, except for component 4, which due to various reasons some within and some outside the control of the project did not meet delivery as per the log frame indicators.

DDLG Overall Project Output Performance - Based Upon 2009 Updated Log Frame



The evaluation, in accord to the implemented strategy of the project and UNDP, found that the footprint of the DDLG at provincial and commune level was more or less invisible. **DDLG has successfully promoted and maintained throughout its project cycle an effective process to assure sustainability through national ownership and the utilisation of national systems as opposed to developing parallel systems and an identity. Within this respect, whilst at commune level DDLG is not widely known its unique outputs, ICC and the LGA (NLC/S & PACs) are held in esteem.**

As is recognised by the evaluation, components 1 and 2 have supported the establishment of the LGA network, particularly with respect to the NLC/S secretariat, which has developed since 2007 into a fully functional organisation.

Likewise, the ICC component, although being designed and implemented at sub-national level, has fully engaged Mol at national and sub-national levels to deliver training, technical support, and M&E. The component modality has enabled the Mol to enhance its work, by assisting to develop new systems and process to allow for both inter-commune and inter-district cooperation to occur.

At a 'policy level' the ICC modality and associated systems are currently being integrated within the RGC PIM, this providing a new tool for the Government to implement its D&D policy and reduce rural poverty. Binding all this together as been the "stand alone" policy support component that has been implemented to meet the demands of the dynamics of the D&D environment, namely providing TA to the NCDD secretariat.

The positioning of the advisor and the leverage this develops supports the mainstreaming of the outcomes generated by C1, C2, and in part C3 to be incorporated into the overall 10-year sub national development plan NP-SNDD and the associated action plan IP3.

The **qualitative impact of the DDLG intervention as a whole should be considered high** within the context of; (1) the changes witnessed within the D&D environment, (2) the operations of the Mol in terms of commune development project planning and implementation, (3) the main streaming of project outputs into the national D&D policy though an internal project output related to a component, and (4) livelihood benefits at commune level though the implementation of pilot and effective pro-poor inter-commune micro development projects (ref: Annex 2,3 &).

Various lessons learnt can be drawn from the intervention, which mainly relate to the operations within the

UNDP CO, project management, and coordination, recommendations include: -

(1) Since the UNDP seeks to strategically partner with EC within a number of areas, a need arises whereby specific EC PCM and F&C knowledge and systems knowhow need be internally owned, training should therefore be organised internally.

(2) UNDP, given their unique position should seek to greater influence the EC CSP/NIP (2007 – 2013) since the area of D&D has been omitted as a focal area for funding. This of course can be addressed through a follow-on partnership funding arrangement for the ACCESS. Given the positive contribution that DDLG has made to the D&D reform process and its high impact in terms of the strategic area of poverty reduction, similar partnership arrangements through ACCESS ideally should be undertaken by both IPD's.

(3) At project level weakness within the context of indicator formulation, utilisation and maintenance of the log frame as a project management tool, and inconsistent progress reporting are evident. However, the DDLG management did update the log frame in 2008 and introduced RBM planning and reporting mechanisms in alignment to UNDP enhanced project management systems. Such issues, especially in relation to the utilisation of non UNDP project management tools (i.e. PCM) can be mitigated though internal training and support that can be effected though the mobilisation of short –term expertise.

(4) It is essential, that any future project should during its inception phase develop a coherent monitoring system based upon verifiable indicators. Emphasis though the project cycle should be placed upon capturing best practice and success stories.

(5) Cohesion within multi-national project teams is sometimes difficult to develop and maintain. Within the context of Cambodia, with an ever-growing level of national capacity such issues has become important to manage within the context of development projects. Therefore, greater effort needs to be placed upon team work and internal coordination of projects, especially those that have multiple components such as the DDLG which include the utilisation of retreats and formal monthly project meetings that involve CO and project staff.

(6) Given the positive output of the DDLG project, the UNDP should commission a consultancy to capture some of the most important best practices that have been initiated and realised given that much information has not been efficiently recorded. **Such examples should also be offered for inclusion in the Global UNDP knowledge base, under pinning the outcome of the DDLG that has verifiably though promoting good governance practices in Cambodia improved the livelihoods of the rural poor.**

(7) Based upon the positive achievements that have been realised by the DDLG project, especially in the context of the promotion of democratic voice at the sub-national level and the successful establishment of the NLC/S and PAC's, the identified follow-up project (ACCESS) which is being funded by UNDP provides an ideal opportunity for the IDPs' to further support the D&D process in parallel to supporting the IP3 thus assuring an essential counter-balance to the RGC within the context of democratisation and sub-national governance reform and capacity building.



Improving Livelihoods of the Rural Poor in Cambodia