Summary & Lessons Learnt

of

## Promoting Climate-Resilient Water Management and Agricultural Practices in Rural Cambodia Project in Cambodia, Mid-Term Review

# Summary:

“Promoting Climate-Resilient Water Management and Agricultural Practices in Rural Cambodia” is a four-year project (2009-2013) – also called NAPA Follow Up project. It is funded by UNDP and GEF/LDC Fund (Global Environment Facility/Least Developed Countries Fund), and implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF). NAPA FU project was one of the first initiatives in Cambodia to translate adaptation agenda from policy level into practice at provincial and commune levels, following up to the ‘National Adaptation Programme of Action for Climate Change (NAPA)’ launched by the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) in 2006.

As per the monitoring and evaluation (M & E) plan of the project, an independent mid-term review (MTR) was due at the end of two years of project implementation. In fulfilment of this requirement, this evaluation[[1]](#footnote-1) was undertaken during May and June 2012 by a team of two independent consultants to assess the effectiveness and results of the four-year project. The review assessed the overall performance against the following GEF performance indicators for climate change adaptation and attempted to analyse the external and internal factors that have contributed to or hindered the project implementation and outcome, and draw lessons from these.

The evaluation also used a balanced score card method to rate[[2]](#footnote-2) the overall achievements on a scale of 1-5 (in descending order) against these indicators[[3]](#footnote-3):

* Achievement of objectives and attainment of outputs
* Financial planning and cost-effectiveness
* Coverage
* Impact and sustainability
* Replicability
* Implementation approach
* Stakeholder participation, country ownership, and acceptability
* Monitoring and evaluation

Overall Findings:

In the two years since inception, the project has been well embedded in the government system, and is driven by the latter, with participation from key line Ministries. The project has succeeded in facilitating close working relationship at provincial level among key line departments.

The project has done well to create general awareness in the provinces and villages about climate change and how it affects communities, and has been instrumental in getting provincial investment programmes in Preah Vihear and Kratie, and commune investment programmes in at least ten communes incorporate climate change agenda.

The approach taken by the project in defining roles and responsibilities of various implementing agencies was highly appropriate and in the long run sustainable. Integrating the project with provincial administration (PA) may have sometimes caused delays in implementation of the project. Going into the future, creative ways will have to be found to speed up decisions related to recruitments and procurements without undermining the integration with provincial administration, while the decentralisation/ deconcentration issues are resolved nationally.

The project has done well to create general awareness in the provinces and share lessons on climate change (CC) at a technical level. However, its ability to influence national debates and policies remain weak due to its preoccupation with implementing a large number of activities, not all of which generate relevant evidence-base for developing convincing policy messages.

Assessment against GEF Criteria:

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| Criteria | Finding | Rating |
| Achievement of objectives, planned outputs and results | 1. In the remaining duration of the project, it needs to review and re-design how activities like income generation, household water supply, communal irrigation structures are planned, with whom they are planed, clear analysis of who benefits and how it generates adaptation solutions, and how these are implemented.  2. Implementing staff would require greater orientation to outcome-oriented planning, monitoring and implementation. | 4 (Satisfactory) |
| Financial planning and cost-effectiveness | 1. Implementation of the project suffers from delays, mainly due to complex array of unclear procedures at PA level, some of which are beyond the project’s control.  2. The project staff need to use cost-benefit and effectiveness measures in planning and implementing all activities. | 4 (Satisfactory) |
| Coverage | Geographically the project has selected appropriate area for its work. However, currently the project is spread too thinly and targets a handful of resource-rich farmers – especially for the household support - from several villages in each commune. Even successful interventions using this approach can only provide limited valid data which the entire community can relate to compared to what could have been possible if an entire village community – albeit small – was taken as a unit of intervention. | 3 (Good) |
| Impact and sustainability | The potential impact the project could make has been constrained by how the project has gone about selecting certain activities and beneficiaries in a scattered manner that has militated against a consolidated impact. | 4 (Satisfactory) |
| Replicability | NAPA FU has been relatively (in comparison with implementation of activities on the ground) weak on systematic synthesis and dissemination of lessons emerging from the project. In order to generate evidence-based advocacy and communicate messages, the project needs to reorient some of its activities toward producing credible data to show how communities are generating adaptation solutions and increasing their resilience to climate change. | 4 (Satisfactory) |
| Implementation approach | The approach taken by the project in defining roles and responsibilities was highly appropriate and in the long run sustainable. This may have sometimes caused inefficiency in implementation of the project. Going into the future, creative ways will have to be found to speed up decisions related to recruitments and procurements without undermining the integration with PA, while the decentralisation/ deconcentration issues are resolved nationally | 2(Very good) |
| Stakeholder participation, country ownership and acceptability | In the two years of the project implementation, it has been well embedded in the government system, and is driven by it, with participation from key line Ministries. However, in terms of participation of communities at the grassroots level, social mobilisation is currently weak and is driven primarily by needs of the project, rather than being internally driven by communities. | 3 (Good) |
| Monitoring & evaluation | The project is good on use of routine monitoring using tools, such as: output log, field visit, spot check, audit, Project Implementation Reports, quarterly and annual progress reports. However, capturing outcome through case studies and systematic evidence-based data needs strengthening. | 4 (Satisfactory) |

Recommendations:

R1: UNDP needs to support the implementing agencies at provincial and district level in participatory processes and social mobilisation, especially with regard to understanding of local vulnerability, community power dynamics, household economy and participation of poor in development activities.

R2: In the remaining duration of the project, the project needs to review and re-design how activities like income generation, household water supply, communal irrigation structures are planned, with whom they are planed, clear analysis of who benefits and how these generate adaptation solutions, and how these are implemented.

R3: In order to generate evidence-based advocacy and communicate messages, the project needs to reorient some of its activities toward producing credible data to show how communities are generating adaptation solutions and increasing their resilience to climate change. One approach would be to take an entire village community – albeit small – as a unit of intervention. Through the latter approach, the project could enable a community to undertake a total village analysis – of their livelihood needs, resource requirements, bio-mass requirements, production and withdrawals from natural resources, vulnerability to climate changes, and development and adaptation needs. This would also help generate bottom-up adaptation solutions taking into account a community’s multi-faceted needs.

R4: In order to address the delays caused by complex array of unclear procedures at PA level, the project needs to have regular dialogue with the office of the provincial Governors at senior level and resolve bottlenecks that arise.

R5: Implementing staff would require greater orientation to outcome-oriented planning, monitoring and implementation. The project staff need to use cost-benefit and effectiveness measures in planning and implementing all activities.

# Key Lessons Learnt

There are six key lessons that emerge from the findings of this review:

1. Social mobilisation: The project has targetted entire communities for several adaptation interventions like rice seed purification, awareness raising and communal irrigation projects which are making difference to the communities, albeit in a limited way, in finding adaptation solutions. However, in terms of participation of communities at the grassroots level, social mobilisation is currently weak and is driven primarily by needs of the project, rather than being internally driven by communities.

2. Limitations of spreading too thin: The potential impact the project could make has been constrained by how the project has gone about selecting certain activities and beneficiaries in a scattered manner that has militated against a consolidated impact. The project is currently spread too thinly and targets a handful of resource-rich farmers – especially for the household support - from several villages in each commune. Even successful interventions using this approach can only provide limited valid data which the entire community can relate to, compared to what could have been possible if an entire village community – albeit small – was taken as a unit of intervention. Through the latter approach, the project could enable a community to undertake a total village analysis – of their livelihood needs, resource requirements, bio-mass requirements, production and withdrawals from natural resources, vulnerability to climate changes, and development and adaptation needs. This would also help generate bottom-up adaptation solutions taking into account a community’s multi-faceted needs.

3. Lessons shared at technical level: Being a pilot project, its key rationale lies in ability to systematically draw and disseminate lessons, and engage in dialogue with policy makers and planners at provincial and national level to ensure scaling and replication of successful ‘models’. Towards these ends, the project is yet to grow beyond engagements at technical level. The project’s ability to influence national debates and policies remain weak due to its preoccupation with implementing a large number of activities, not all of which generate relevant evidence-base for developing convincing policy messages.

4. Learning from earlier experiences: The early warning system (EWS) is a key element of adaptive strategy. However, given that previously installed EWS collapsed due to lack of financial support from the Government, unless the project is able to successfully lobby with provincial administrations for financial support after the project duration, the sustainability of the system will remain a question.

5. Diversification for adaptation: Introduction of new variety or rice and seed purification techniques has been successful adaptation interventions. These measures need to be supplemented by crop diversification which allow farmers to grow crops and trees which can withstand varying water regimes in the same growing season as insurance against total crop failure in the event of serious environmental shocks. Likewise, interventions towards diversification of livelihood options and demonstrating household water supply systems have been planned and implemented in an *ad hoc* way, with little coherent analysis of either the issues these were trying to address, or the value these models added to finding adaptation solutions, especially for the vulnerable sections of the rural community.

6. Irrigation structures: The main emphasis of the project so far has been on creating communal irrigation structures which are needed in the area anyway, and ought to be part of any on-going development work. Design, maintenance and utilisation issues which dogged irrigation structures in the country in the past remain to be addressed. While assured irrigation is one of the elements of CC adaptation, besides structures, an integrated approach involving efficient soil and water management, adjusting/diversifying cropping patterns and farming practices in response to climate changes are necessary to increase the resilience of farmers.

1. The phrase ‘mid-term review’ and ‘evaluation’ are used in this document interchangeably [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Rating 1 (excellent) - Achievement 90-100%; Rating 2 (very good) – Achievement 75-90%; Rating 3 (good) Achievement 60-74%; Rating 4 (satisfactory) – Achievement 50-59%; and Rating 5 (unsatisfactory) – Achievement 49% or less. [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. The GEF performance indicators have a total of 13 criteria (Terms of reference, Annex 1). However, some of these criteria have been merged together in this review as several of these were intricately linked – for example, GEF defines Stakeholder participation, Country ownership and Acceptability as three separate criteria, while in this evaluation these have been combined into one. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)