

Summary and Lessons Learnt & Recommendations of

The Terminal Evaluation of Promoting Climate-Resilient Water Management and Agricultural Practices in Rural Cambodia Project in Cambodia

I- Summary:

This report is the result of the TE mission which took place in October and November 2013. It was conducted according to the 2012 “Guidance for Conducting Terminal Evaluations of UNDP-supported, GEF-financed Projects”. The TE team prepared this report based on project documents review and the results of field interviews and meetings with senior Ministry officials. Data analysis was conducted in a systematic manner to ensure that all the findings, conclusions and recommendations are substantiated by evidence and fact-proofing. At the end of the TE mission, the team drafted a first set of initial findings. A draft report was then submitted, including the evaluation scope and method, findings, conclusions and recommendations based on the criteria applied for evaluations of UNDP supported GEF financed projects: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impacts and sustainability. The table below entitled “Assessment against GEF criteria” is summarizing the results of the TE mission.

The overall result of the TE mission is very positive: the NAPA FU project has reached most of its initial objectives and outcomes. The TE team considers that the project management enabled substantial achievements at national, provincial and local levels.

In terms of key findings, in relation to the first outcome, provincial development plans in the target provinces have incorporated climatic risks such as annual emergency response action plans, awareness raising activities related to climate change, rehabilitation of irrigation schemes, etc. Commune Councils are more aware of the issues related to the alteration of the climate and the need to tackle it at the local level. This should be followed up in the perspective of any new phase of the NAPA FU project.

11,073 households in 52 villages, representing 55.5% of the target households received timely information on weather forecasts to cope with events such as severe floods. In response, some farmers start changing their farming practices, for instance by replacing late-mature rice varieties by short cycle varieties better fitting with seasonal changes. In addition, 1,470 households corresponding to 75 FWUC and representing 30% of the total target households are benefiting from 62 pump wells, 3 community ponds, 41 rain water harvesting containers and 10 solar pumps. These achievements by the NAPA FU project are not only visible in the field, but also when discussing the impacts of these installations with the beneficiaries.

Both at the national and sub-national levels, the project played a crucial role in supporting climate change priorities in national strategies and policies. From the Ministries to the Commune Councils, adaptation is better understood and taken into account, with lessons learnt from the project that can be disseminated to other areas, among the most vulnerable to climate change in the country.

Notwithstanding these findings and the progress made, many challenges remain and the efforts in promoting climate resilient water management and agriculture practices in rural areas must be continued and scaled-up. This requires increasing resources. This observation goes beyond the sustainability criterion.

The TE team emphasizes the need to ensure the highest sustainability of the project activities. From the assessment against GEF criteria, the evaluators consider that the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness and impacts of the project are satisfactory. The table below summarizes the results for the TE for topics such as M&E, IA & EA Execution, Assessment of Outcomes, and Sustainability.

Assessment against GEF Criteria

1. Monitoring and Evaluation	Rating	Findings
M&E design at entry	3 (Moderately Unsatisfactory)	There is no sophisticated design on M&E to be implemented in the project, but rather a simple though comprehensive M&E system. This limits the assessment of the outcome and impacts of the project.
M&E Plan Implementation	4 (Moderately Satisfactory)	While the M&E design at entry was not very sophisticated, it must be said that at the end, because of various good monitoring procedures being prepared and implemented during the project lifetime, the overall M&E plan implementation is positive.
Overall quality of M&E	4 (Moderately Satisfactory)	Despite limited in-depth study on each activity and its impact, and the limits of the M&E design, the quality of the follow-up and continuing evaluation is acceptable. This is due to the use of various monitoring tools including output log, field visits, spot check, audit, Project Implementation Reports, quarterly and annual progress reports, and the involvement of the experts of the PSU.
2. IA & EA Execution	Rating	
Quality of UNDP Implementation	6 (Highly Satisfactory)	The coordination and implementation of UNDP with line ministries and NGOs is visible. The implementation proved to be successful with the use of a technical sharing approach between the key stakeholders involved across the country.
Quality of Execution - Executing Agency	6 (Highly Satisfactory)	The coordination mechanism being assigned to the Ministry is one of the key reasons of the project's positive overall outcome.
Overall quality of Implementation / Execution	6 (Highly Satisfactory)	The implementation from the national to the local level was of high quality. Each level served differently in the progress made, on various technical issues.
3. Assessment of Outcomes	Rating	
Relevance	2 (Relevant)	The design for a first-of-its-kind project in relation to the NAPA has enabled to trigger various other climate change projects or actions across the country. The relevance of the project and of the outcomes are noteworthy.

Effectiveness	5 (Satisfactory)	The achievement and mechanism being used by incorporating other projects including IFAD/RULIP and PADEE were effective in the sense that it mainstreamed adaptation and allowed to promote resilient agricultural practices in other projects.
Efficiency	5 (Satisfactory)	The outcomes such as irrigation systems, water tanks, and solar pumps were efficiently reached: the project was able to rely at low costs on the existing national and local structures, despite the limited budget. The quality of the investments (climate proofed infrastructures) to resist to extreme events such as floods is sizeable and recognized as such by stakeholders.
Overall Project Outcome Rating	5 (Satisfactory)	The project has introduced new technologies into the areas which had brought new adaptive practices and positive impacts to the targeted areas. It improved the livelihoods of the farmers, through integrated farming systems and farmer groups. The overall project outcome rating is good.
4. Sustainability	Rating	
Financial resources	3 (Moderately Likely)	The continuation of the project into another phase under Canadian support is a sign of short-term financial availability, efficiency and proper financial resources management. Apart from this, there are a range of financial potential supports from other institutions like the ADB (PPCR) and other financial injection from CCCA. In addition, the financial sustainability issue has been addressed by UNDP through special studies, workshops, discussions with other donors, and preparation of another strategy on climate change for the Ministry. 30 PDoWRAM officials and FWUC members have benefited from trainings about fee collection and financial management of the facilities. A sustainable financial support has been designed for solar pumps, but it is still lacking for ensuring the operation and maintenance of the irrigation systems.
Socio-political	4 (Likely)	Promotion of climate change concepts initiated alertness to the Government which brought in the integration of climate change, made obvious with the recently launched CCCSP. Another important reform, the D&D reform strategy, must be pinpointed as it is seen as key to foster local institutions and facilitate the sustainability of the project at the local level.
Institutional framework and governance	4 (Likely)	The Project Support Unit (PSU) at the national level and the project coordination mechanism at the commune level paved the way for a good institutional framework and improved governance practices. The MAFF Climate Change Working Group is a firm establishment for climate change in the ministry in the long run, while the D&D reform is seen as improving local governance and enable institutional sustainability.
Environmental	4	The environmental sustainability of the project is high,

	(Likely)	given the purpose of the project itself.
Overall likelihood of sustainability	3 (Moderately Likely)	Although the quantification of specific impacts at household level is a missing puzzle, changes can be observed across the visited sites to the benefits of the targeted groups, especially irrigation system users, seed purification groups, crop variety and pattern changing.

II- Key Lessons Learnt & Recommendations

From both the TE mission and the documents produced by the project, a number of lessons learnt have identified that could be taken into account for any similar initiatives. The key lessons learnt are described hereafter.

II-1 Key Lessons Learnt:

II-1.1 Responses to significant needs

In general terms, NAPA FU has addressed a crucial need to cope with climate change. The support brought by the project corresponded to the needs of the beneficiaries. For instance, positive impacts of technical solutions have been observed (gain in time, increase of productivity). Concerning the third outcome, most of the stakeholders of the project at the national and sub-national level had not really known about climate change before the commencement of the project. The third outcome responded to this need, since most of the concerned parties, provincial decision makers, farmers, commune councils members, are now aware of the climatic risks and trends. The need to adapt and to become resilient to phenomena that will worsen is better understood by the beneficiaries, and solutions or options to cope with it as well. The project mainly concentrated on the local level, as shown in the logical framework (the two firsts outcomes are dealt locally and only the third outcome have a national reach). The project showed that this way to proceed is relevant to address the needs of local populations, even if two approaches at local and global level are complementary and crucial to ensure the sustainability of the project. Finally, the three outcomes interacted properly to contribute to the overall project objective.

It must be added that there are still some differences between communes. For instance, the early warning system is more successful in Bos Leav, Kracheh Province, than in other places according to the interviews with the different commune councils. It may be due to the fact that the need was greater in Bos Leav, which has led to a higher involvement of the local stakeholders.

II-1.2. Project interactions

Working with various projects (e.g. RULIP) at the same time can help the operation of the project to be more effective than a standalone project. Synergies can be developed between projects with sharing knowledge and experience. In the cooperation between NAPA FU and RULIP, MAFF PSU, UNDP and IFAD have mutually benefited from shared technical expertise in agriculture and climate change

However, this may lead to some kind of competition between projects, a situation found in many countries, leading to a risk of disengagement of some stakeholders. If this was particularly true at the

beginning of the project, the situation enhanced afterwards. At the end of the project, the situation has significantly improved with a good complementary in funding activities between the two donors.

Project interactions should also be sought with the PPCR and the Asian Development Bank. This requires most probably to be dealt at a high level given the difficulties on the ground to cooperate effectively with ADB's activities. It may appear frustrating in some cases to see that earlier or current activities implemented by the NAPA FU or other projects are not sufficiently taken into account in the PPCR.

Another important interaction should be with the project entitled "Strengthening the resilience of Cambodian rural livelihoods and sub-national government system to climate risks and variability". This UNDP/GEF project is at the identification phase and it could benefit from the inputs and lessons from NAPA FU.

II-1.3. Cross cutting issues and coordination efforts

Due to the introduction of climate change concepts, some continuing coordination efforts are required to adequately capitalize the past, present and future efforts in order to produce an increasing visible integration of climate change issues into national and local strategies and policies within various institutions. From this perspective, partnering institutions such as UNDP/SGP, LGCC of UNCDF, Asian Development Bank, NGOs and Governmental institutions such as MoWA, MoWRAM, MoE, CCCA, NCCC, NCDD, have been engaged and have created noticeable achievements over the past years.

II-1.4. Monitoring, follow up and investment needs for mainstreaming activities

Key factors to the success of the mainstreaming activities are to follow up continuously with tangible investment support, a strong focus on community participation and hand-holding support from local authorities. Without investment support, it can demotivate the mainstreaming efforts of the stakeholders especially at provincial, district and commune level.

Additionally, the investment might be interpreted poorly unless an appropriate assessment of the impacts has been measured effectively and empirically. This will lead to various challenges in terms of generating and managing data for evidence-based result reporting.

II-2 Recommendations

II-2.1 Users' groups sustainability

Making the users groups sustainable is a must. For example a transparent and accountable management needs to be followed up and supported strictly by formalizing group accounting systems. Those measures suppose that everybody has a clear vision of the stakes of a group management. Therefore, efforts have to be continued in the same direction to raise awareness and enable these groups to become autonomous and no more dependent from the project.

II-2.2 Set-up fee collection mechanisms

Given the positive impacts of the project, it is urgent to focus on the maintenance of the investments. The best way to maintain the tanks, ponds, and above all irrigation systems is via fees collection mechanisms. While some preliminary ideas have been elaborated by the NAPA FU project to consider introducing such fees, this should be enforced.

This has been discussed at length during the evaluation with many stakeholders. The willingness is

there to implement such a payment mechanism, but it is not clear when this will be implemented. The PSU, with the support of UNDP, MoWRAM and MAFF, should work at two different levels to push for the implementation: at the communal one, to set up a fee collection regime under the responsibility of the communes, and at national level with some clarifications in the legislative documents and existing laws.

While fee collection is mentioned in the law, the legal and institutional conditions at the national level remain weak. It is recommended not to wait for a national framework but work with the commune councils and water users' groups in the two sites, before considering a scaling up of such mechanisms.

II-2.3 Market linkages

The link between farmers, local traders, suppliers, technicians, etc. should be further promoted. It seems that communication between the different stakeholders of the rice sector can be improved. A better knowledge of the impacts of climate variability on rice sector by the local traders or suppliers would indeed be beneficial.

The sector needs also to improve the level of coordination between different stakeholders in order to be more efficient and more organized. With the development of measures to forecast and disseminate data about weather and climate, it should be easier to organize the supply chain for food products taking into account climatic events (drought, flood). Not only farmers, but also food commodities traders do take into account weather forecasts to optimize food storage capacities and uses.

II-2.4 Continue to indirectly enforce the communes

The project is enforcing the communes by supporting them in having responsibilities, when some investments are handed over to them for example. This is especially important in the context of the D&D and the NCDD (National Committee for Democratic Development).

This goes together with further networking with communities to share best practices, building partnerships and finally scale up the project activities to the whole country. It is therefore highly recommended to continue such cooperation with the commune councils in the future, in line with the D&D reform.

II-2.5 Improve the monitoring and evaluation process

There is a low amount of quantitative data from the M&E, and while the positive results are visible qualitatively speaking. The quarterly reports are very relevant and this should be continued.

Still, it is difficult to assess them and impact assessment should be more emphasized. The PSU is currently working on this topic, in order to benefit from a technical assistance on impacts assessment. It is expected that an operational M&E system is expected to be implemented in the second phase of the project starting with this Impact assessment study.

The next phase of the project will foster the M&E system, starting with the impacts assessment study. It is recommended to focus on a result-based and impact-based M&E system.

II-2.6 Prepare linkages with new climate adaptation and resilience projects

At least three new projects on climate change adaptation and resilience are expected in the coming months. The first one is the second phase of the CCCA, and given the existing strong interactions

between both the first phase of the CCCA and NAPA FU, there is a high level of confidence that the second phase of CCCA will rely on the outputs of the NAFA FU.

The two other projects to be started are the PPCR and the UNDP/GEF project “Strengthening the resilience of Cambodian rural livelihoods and sub-national government system to climate risks and variability” at the identification stage. The PSU should work on strengthening the linkages with the key institutions involved in the PPCR, especially the Asian Development Bank, and be kept informed about the formulation of the new UNDP/GEF project on resilience.

II-2.7 Tackle the problem of arsenic

Measurement of arsenic concentration has to be done to determine the level of contamination over time, using various labs. The level and the trend should then be compared with national and international guidelines on the matter. Before those compulsory measurements, it is necessary to communicate to the villagers near the affected tanks and adapt water management to the presence of arsenic (orient the water demand towards non drinking uses when possible).