

# **Final Evaluation**

Strengthening Community Development and Local Governance in Pursat Province

Funded by EU-NSA

## **Concern Worldwide Cambodia**

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As always in such work the active and positive participation of the villagers who attended focus groups was key to developing understanding and it is hoped that the partners will share the final results with them.

H. Dalzell  
December 2012

## Abbreviations

(A)CD	(Assistant ) Country Director Concern Cambodia
AK	Anakot Kumar
AMK	Anghkor Mikroheranvatho Kampuchea
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CC	Commune Council
CFMC	Community Forestry Management Committee
CFW	Cash for Work
CIP	Commune Investment Plan
DAC	Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development
D&D	Decentralisation and Deconcentration
DIPECHO	Disaster Preparedness – European Commission Directorate-General for Humanitarian Aid
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EPDO	Environment Protection and Development Organisation
EU	European Union
FIM	Food, Incomes and Markets Programme
IFS	Integrated Farming Systems
HH/FHH /MHH	Head of Household/Female head of Household/Male Head of Household
(L)NGO(s)	(Local) Non-Government Organisation(s)
MDG	Millennium Development Goal
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
MFI	Microfinance Institution
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MTR	Mid-term Review
NGO	Non Government Organisation
NP-SNDD	National Programme Sub-National Democratic Development
NRM	Natural Resource Management
NSDP	National Strategic Development Plan
PIN	Partners in Need
PK	Ponlue Komar
SILIC	Support to Initiatives for Livelihood Improvement in Cambodia
SORF	Support Organisation for Rural Farmers
SHG/SHG's	Self Help Groups
SRI	Strategic Rice Initiative
SP(C)	Social Protection (Committee)
ToR	Terms of Reference
VA /VAs	Village Association(s)
VDC	Village Development Committee
VGf	Vulnerable Group Feeding
WUG	Water Users' Group

## Executive Summary

The project is the last in a line of rural livelihood projects operated by Concern in Cambodia. It was managed in conjunction with four local NGO agencies in Pursat and funded by the European Union from January 2011 to December 2012.

The overall objective was to support the achievement of Cambodia's MDG 1 (eradicate extreme poverty and hunger) through participatory community development processes. The specific objective was to promote the development interests of the poorest in 100 villages in Pursat province and increase their representation and participation in the development process.

The expected results were:

**R 1:** The poorest have a voice in their communities and have effectively participated in the Local Planning Process within the government's framework of the National Programme Sub-National Democratic Development (NP-SNDD).

**R 2:** Community based institutions have increased their capacity to support livelihood improvements of their members.

**R 3:** Target communities have developed community based social safety net mechanisms to support the poorest households during critical food hunger periods.

**R 4:** LNGO partners have improved capacity to resource and implement community development initiatives.

The project was reviewed at mid-term in January 2012 and arising from the review two studies were commissioned in July 2012. The first was on Market Value Chains and the second on Social Protection. The study reports should be read in conjunction with this evaluation report.

The evaluation process was participatory and included meetings with all stakeholders other than the EU Programme Manager in Cambodia who was not in Cambodia at the time of the evaluation. The meetings included contact with 87 of the 100 Village Associations in the project. In all meetings the stakeholders presented their evidence of what activities had taken place and what changes had occurred. Their information was checked with information provided by Concern and partner NGOs.

The project was very relevant to the needs of the beneficiaries and this ensured good fit with the policies of Concern, The European Union and The Royal Government of Cambodia. It was very well managed in terms of financial control, input management and activity implementation. The monitoring system (Appendix 2) was very comprehensive and provided timely information to all concerned parties. Most planned activities had been completed by the end of October 2012 with the remaining likely to be completed before the end of December 2012. Project management combined appropriate flexibility with good control systems. Arising from this strong management performance, almost all the sub-targets for each result area were met in full or exceeded. If a target was not met it was because project design had been changed to meet changes in the project environment. In such cases alternative targets were set and met.

There were four immediate objectives. The first was to improve the participation of poor villagers in the local political process. It was clear that this had been achieved not only in terms of plans developed and meetings attended but also in terms of the confidence shown by beneficiaries in their interaction with commune authorities and in their ability to represent their issues with government.

The second immediate objective was about livelihoods and the indicator was a reduction in food insecurity for 4,000 families or 40% of the target beneficiaries. Unfortunately, due to an

error in collecting endline data, it was not possible to report with accuracy against this indicator. However, the endline did show marked improvements in food security and a greater improvement in the food security of female-headed households and poorer households than for better off families. This indicates good targeting and gender awareness. The improvement was marked in terms of the number of families experiencing food insecurity and in the number of months of insecurity. The villagers were convinced that the improvement was due to the project and specifically, in order of diminishing importance, to increased on-farm production, off-farm income generation and access to rice banks. The main reasons for increased production on and off- farm were quoted as being, in descending order of importance, training, loans and savings. Better irrigation facilities were also very important.

The third immediate objective was a Social Protection component with the indicator that by the end of the project 80% of the destitute, as defined in the baseline, would be receiving social protection support. This objective was met through the development of rice banks, food distribution schemes and the work of village level Social Protection Committees. Whereas the targets were met the numbers of destitute were small and there were doubts about the sustainability of the scheme although the issues arising should be capable of being resolved.

The fourth immediate objective related to the development of the capacity of local institutions to manage development. The results varied with different institutions. Thus rice banks seemed to be quite good, as did Community Forestry Management Committees. The Market Coordination teams seemed to be weakest. Village Associations varied somewhat but all seemed to have strong motivation and reasonable administration skills. Whether they will be strategic enough to keep pace with unfolding social and economic changes remains to be seen. Self Help Groups also varied a lot in capacity but those with strong cohesiveness look as though they will continue to flourish. Although strictly speaking not community groups, the partner NGOs have all developed their project management skills during the course of this project. However they have not yet articulated their theories of change and do not seem to have set themselves any role other than project implementers.

There were two indicators for the wider project objective to support the achievement of Cambodia's MDG 1 (eradicate extreme poverty and hunger) through participatory community development processes. They were that the share of the poorest quintile in national consumption has increased and that 20% of households have moved up one category or more according to wealth rankings conducted in 2010 and at the end of the action. The first indicator was impractical in terms of measurement and linkage to the project. However the second indicator was relevant, measurable and attributable. It was exceeded and this indicates very good overall project performance. Just over thirty four percent of families moved up at least one wealth ranking while fifty seven percent stayed the same and eight and a half percent dropped at least one category.

It was not possible to find a set of control figures at either national or provincial level for wealth ranking changes. However, the result achieved is well in advance of the change reported by AMK Cambodia's largest poverty focused rural microfinance bank, in a study of change from 2008-2012. As with progress towards the specific objective, all stakeholders felt that performance against the overall objective was almost entirely due to the project. The reasons given for the change are set out in the following table.

<b>Reasons for positive change.</b>	<b>213 families</b>	<b>%</b>
Diversified Livelihoods	195	92
Successful IGA	203	95
Increased Assets	189	89
Access to credit	85	40

Other	62	29
<b>Reasons for No change or Negative change. 408 families</b>		
Illness/ Death of a family member	288	71
Unsuccessful IGA	277	68
Debt	206	50
No employment opportunities/landless	240	59
Other	91	22

The reasons for change were not mutually exclusive. For example, increased assets can come from access to credit and adding a successful IGA is a means of diversifying a livelihood. However, several issues seem to arise.

Negative change. There are three major contributory factors, all of which may increase debt and compound a difficult situation.

- Illness or death of a family member. The SILIC evaluation suggested a new initiative in water and sanitation to reduce this risk and a programme has been started. It is too early yet for it to have had any effect on illness. Even then more effort may be needed to take advantage of improvements in the government's health service and including free treatment. There are issues to overcome. They include shortage of resources and the need to pay inducements. Consideration could be given to insurance to cover medical costs.
- Unsuccessful IGA. This is inevitable and especially so when considering small enterprises started by very poor people with very little human and economic capital. Accordingly it would be appropriate to develop rescheduling and write off policies for loans. As an example any family with a loan and which suffers from the death of an income earner could have the loan written off. This could probably be self-insured from the interest earned on loans but the rate may have to be reviewed.
- Landlessness exacerbated by lack of employment opportunities. Two possible avenues are open to address this issue. The first is an advocacy response to try to secure land for the landless. The second would be to look at training to equip people for gainful employment opportunities outside the village and assist families to have migrant workers without destabilising the family base.

Positive change. The two main causes quoted are successful IGAs and diversification of the livelihood. Presumably both are facilitated by access to capital. In all assessments during the Mid-term review and the Value Chain Study, technical training and expansion of enterprise scale came out as the main factors leading to increased income. The wealth change survey was quite limited in assessing reasons for change.

The sustainability of the positive achievements is dependent on four factors

- Finance. Is there a reliable mechanism to generate enough money to maintain the benefit?
- Ownership. Do the beneficiaries and other stakeholders value the benefit enough to want to maintain it?
- Project to Policy Links. Is there an official government policy, if necessary, which recognises and implements the processes and manages the institutions needed to maintain the benefit?
- Community institutional capacity. Do the necessary community institutions exist and do they have adequate capacity to survive without external support?

Differing aspects of the project have different apparent levels of sustainability as summarised in the table below. The overall picture emerging is positive and probably better than for most rural livelihood projects.

The project monitoring process was extremely good in promoting efficient implementation but it was not good at measuring effects at levels beyond completed tasks. Thus the payment of grants was well monitored but incomes arising from the grants were not. Monitoring of incomes could have identified negative issues and perhaps prevented problems for those whose wealth ranking dropped.

A good baseline was developed although it was not as comprehensive as a full livelihoods baseline would have been. The endline was a repeat of the baseline but this led to a problem with assessing changes in food insecurity.

Project result area	Sustainability factor			
	Finance	Ownership	National or local Policy Approval	Institutional Capacity
1. VAs in VOICE	With fund	Without fund	Commune	
2. Income Generating Activities			Not necessary	
3. Social Protection				
Rice Banks			Broad approval	
Committees				
CFW & VGF			Emerging	
4. Local Institutions				
SHGS			Not necessary	
MCTs			Not necessary	
CFMCs				
WUGs*			Not necessary	
Partner NGOs			Long term uncertainty	

\* does not include evaluator input

Note. Green indicates strong confidence about sustainability, yellow indicates a good chance of sustainability and red indicates serious doubt

The main deficiencies in the endline process were that it did not:

- build in controls against which to judge progress
- work with a panel process so that the same families were interviewed as at baseline and hence differences could be analysed with confidence
- include a family livelihoods survey in both endline and baseline so that various aspects of vulnerability, assets, inequality and livelihood options could be analysed together with reasons for change.

Concern has recent experience of phasing out of work and based on this will develop a detailed phase out strategy from Pursat. This will include briefing of the PIN agency which will start follow up work with two of the partner agencies.

The partner agencies in this project identified six lessons which should lead to changes in future work. It was interesting that of the six points raised five were linked to issues relating to internal administration and management and only one – environmental risk management – was a programme issue. This is reflective of the situation that capacity building has focussed

on administrative and financial management and implementing issues rather than on programme development issues. The biggest lapse on the part of the partner agencies is that none of them have developed a sustainable development plan

It was also interesting that partners did not list positives in their learning. For example the villagers were very clear that they had grown hugely in confidence through the VOICE Training and it was palpable. They also were clear on what contributed most to positive change for them as outlined in the efficiency and effectiveness section. One of the most interesting points to emerge during the evaluation was that many people consider that the development and growth of leadership has underpinned progress in all project result areas. This is significant for two reasons. The first is that it emerged in several discussions when other answers were being sought and can thus be judged to be important and internalised in beneficiaries. The second is that it is a 'soft' achievement as opposed to more tangible items such as a canal or rice bank. It is also a real capacity achievement of which the project should be proud.

Not enough time has been invested in analysing positive achievements and their causes so that good achievements can be repeated in future work

**Conclusions and Recommendations** The project was efficiently implemented and was good from the point of view of effectiveness and impact. There has been good progress in pro-poor growth based on training and asset provision and this had led to improved and diversified livelihoods for many families. As almost one family in twelve dropped in wealth ranking greater attention should be paid in future work to identifying lower risk strategies for landless and very vulnerable families.

The achievements in reducing food insecurity and improving wealth rankings are impressive and have contributed a great deal to reductions in vulnerability. While there are questions over some aspects of benefit and institutional sustainability, the outlook is quite good and above average for this type of project.

Participation by, and accountability to, beneficiaries was good and has resulted in a lot of human and social capital development.

The project has made a significant contribution to the practical development of the Local Planning Process in the Project Communes.

The capacity of community based organisations and the locals NGOs developed well during the project but there are still deficits which should be addressed. The key organisations for consolidation of project gains and for ongoing development are the SHGs.

The monitoring system was good as far as it went but was hampered somewhat by deficiencies in the logframe on which it was based. The deficiencies should have been identified in the approval process within Concern and the European Union.

The following main recommendations should be considered along with the recommendations from the studies in July 2012 on Social Protection and Value Chains.

1. VOICE
  - Document clearly the benefits coming to Village Associations from their involvement in the Local Planning Process. This should include changes in knowledge, resource gathering and influence. Use this information to plan the next strategies for VOICE.
2. Influence
  - Complete the documentation of the impressive effectiveness and impact of the programme in the four result areas. Quite a lot has already been documented in case

- studies, reviews and the July studies. The case studies could be strengthened with more evidence.
- Disseminate the information widely to other NGOs and in forums and use it for advocacy influence with government and donors.
3. Income generation
    - When promoting income generation there should be clarity on whether the outcomes anticipated are support to a main livelihood or the creation of a main livelihood. The strategies to be used will differ for each objective.
    - To be really effective in promoting income generation the agencies should have a staff member with good business experience or have access to such a resource on a regular basis.
    - Further develop the supply of technical training from government departments.
  4. Community Based Institutions
    - The respective roles of the various organisations and their relationship to each other should be clarified. This should be to ensure that the most strategic organisation is the SHG which is built on solidarity. Other organisations would then be seen as providing support to the SHGs.
    - The process whereby an SHG qualifies for a loan fund, if at all, should be clarified. There is evidence from other projects that SHGs which raise funds solely from savings are strong.
    - To improve participation and build a broader leadership base, attempts should be made to enhance human capital by training in basic literacy and numeracy using a method similar to 'REFLECT'.
    - Consider the formation of an SHG Federation to enable SHGs to learn from each other and gain benefits of scale in sourcing materials.
    - Consider the formation of commune or district producer groups to enable producers to get benefits of scale in input purchase, technical expertise, marketing and processing. Such groups would exist solely for the benefit of producers and would replace the MCTs.
  5. Monitoring and Evaluation
    - More monitoring of outputs e.g. rice yield increases, IGA results.
    - More ongoing analysis of monitoring data.
    - Include household livelihood surveys in the baseline and endline and carry them out with the same families. Include control families in the lines.
  6. Sliding families
    - Identify them by closer monitoring through SHGs of failing enterprises and families suffering health shocks/deaths.
    - Develop write off policies for such families where the fault is not theirs.
    - Develop non-entrepreneurial strategies for the landless which could include training for non-exploitative employment.
  7. Partners' management ability.
    - Partners should each develop a comprehensive strategy for sustainable development in their work area before the end of the phase out period. This should include thought on their long-term role in helping to develop Government capacity and strengthen Civil Society.
    - Give more responsibility to partners to manage the higher levels of the logframe.
  8. Contingency Planning.
    - Using skills learned from the DRR training any future intervention should include contingency planning for likely shocks such as floods or droughts. Such plans should include response management plans so that the effect on ongoing work is minimised.

1. **INTRODUCTION.** This evaluation is of a project which is the last in a line of rural livelihood projects operated by Concern in Cambodia. The rationale behind successive projects has evolved as the context in Cambodia changed from the early nineteen nineties. Thus the first projects involved resource transfer and development – the establishment of a large community based forest, the creation of rice banks and cattle banks and the provision of basic health care and education services. As economic conditions improved and government became more capable of providing basic services, Concern’s emphasis changed to that of building the capacity of communities to develop their livelihoods and so the health and education projects closed and the in-kind banks gave way to credit schemes. The forestry work became the basis for legislation to entitle communities to manage forests in their communes. By 1998 a new livelihoods programme was developed as Capacity Building for Rural Development. This was succeeded in 2003 by the Community Livelihoods Initiative Programme (CLI) and credit work was separated from Concern into the Bank of New Shining Light (TPT) which then became AMK which now has the largest number of clients in rural Cambodia but also has by far the smallest loan size of any MFI in Cambodia. Concern retains a minority share in AMK which is under separate and independent management.

Forestry work as a separate project stopped in 2005 and the CLI programme was followed in 2006 by the Support to Initiatives for Livelihood Improvement in Cambodia Programme – SILIC. SILIC operated in four provinces and gave way at the end of 2010 to the current EU funded ‘Non State Actors (NSA) and Local Authorities in Development in Country Interventions – Cambodia’ (EU-NSA) project at the start of 2011. In the course of this project Concern decided to withdraw from Cambodia as the country is consistently outside the lowest forty on the UN Human Development Index.

The current project is managed in conjunction with four local NGO agencies in Pursat and is funded from January 2011 to December 2012. The overall objective is to support the achievement of Cambodia’s MDG 1 (eradicate extreme poverty and hunger) through participatory community development processes. The specific objective is to promote the development interests of the poorest in 100 villages in Pursat province and increase their representation and participation in the development process.

The expected results are:

**R 1:** The poorest have a voice in their communities and have effectively participated in the Local Planning Process within the government’s framework of the National Programme Sub-National Democratic Development (NP-SNDD).

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**R 4:** LINGO partners have improved capacity to resource and implement community development initiatives.

The project was reviewed at mid-term in January 2012 and arising from the review two studies were commissioned in July 2012. The first was on Market Value Chains and the second on Social Protection. The study reports should be read in conjunction with this evaluation report

## 2. METHODOLOGY

The evaluation was governed by the Terms of Reference (ToR) as set out in Appendix 1 and which follow the standard evaluation parameters of assessment against the DAC Criteria of Relevance Efficiency (including Economy), Effectiveness, Impact and Sustainability and Replication. In addition the ToR includes requirements to:

- help develop a phasing out strategy
- review coherence with Concern Worldwide’s Policies and Guidelines
- assess Monitoring and Evaluation quality
- draw together lessons learned, information shared, dissemination & networking

To meet the requirements of the ToR the following methodology was used.

**Process** The logic was to meet each of the different layers of project stakeholders and discuss their interests with them and also to discuss the upward and downward linkages with their normal interfaces.

**Table 1 Evaluation Process**

Stakeholder	Groups met
<b>Beneficiary households:</b> reasons for joining groups, group governance and changes; perceptions of benefits, capacity and plans	8 SHGs covering some 120 families
<b>Village Associations (VAs)<sup>1</sup>:</b> reasons for VA formation, roles, responsibilities, relationships with commune councils and changes, capacity and plans	87
<b>Other CBOs such as Rice Bank Committees, Market Coordination Teams, and Community Forest Management Committees:</b> capacity, performance, usefulness, plans for development	74 Rice banks 23 MCTs 6 CFMCs
<b>Commune Councils (CCs) and District Councils:</b> perceptions of LNGO support and changes in commune - perceptions and understanding of extreme poverty, changes in villages through institutions, impending policy changes	11 Commune Council Chiefs 3 District Chiefs or Deputy Chiefs
<b>Partner NGOs:</b> senior management & field staff perspectives on programme issues and organisational relationships, capacity and plans	4 partners 30 staff members
<b>Concern:</b> overall programmatic understanding, fit with Concern policies	The 6 senior programme staff members

### Sources of evidence –verified in meetings

- Quarterly reviews and the project continuous monitoring form
- Reports from partners
- Baseline and Endline
- CBO records

<sup>1</sup> The term Village Association was used by the project in a somewhat misleading way. It is an association elected by the members of the SHGs and the poorer families in the village and thus represents the poorer section of the village rather than the entire village as the term implies.

### **Working method**

- Look at the evidence of what was done and what changed. Verify it in focus groups with individual beneficiaries and their institutions
- Analyse what it means
  - Was the change useful?
  - Why did it change?
  - Will it last?
  - How can it spread to others?
  - What would you do differently if you started again?
- Determine if change was due to the project or for other reasons
- Discuss emerging findings focussing on high level changes and sustainability
- Agree conclusions and recommendations where possible

The evaluation started with a briefing by Concern staff in Phnom Penh and study of the main project documents including the baseline and endline drawn up by Concern in early 2011 and October 2012 respectively. This was followed by field work in Pursat province consisting of meetings with each partner and their stakeholders. Meetings with SHGs were village based and with other CBOs were office based. Two and a half days were spent with each agency. As far as possible meetings involved participatory appraisal techniques. All CBOs were asked to verify data presented by the partners and partner data was also cross checked with that presented by Concern.

At the end of the fieldwork a workshop was held in Pursat. It was attended by two senior managers from each partner, the Concern CD and Programme Director, the Programme Manager, the former Programme Manager and the PM&E Officer. The Concern Project Support Officer was on leave but was consulted about the endline study on Food Insecurity. The workshop focussed on data still required; findings on Efficiency, Effectiveness and Impact; discussion on Sustainability; Lessons to be Learned; Phase-out; and emerging findings and recommendations.

### **3. RELEVANCE**

There is a very good fit between the project and the National Strategic Development Plan (NSDP) and the NP-SNDD 2010-2019 which are two key instruments for Cambodia in seeking to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. As the EU funding mechanism for the project has close coherence with these government policies and plans, there is very good coherence with EU policies.

Having been designed in close consultation with them, the project meets the expressed needs of the target group in terms of livelihood strategies and coping mechanisms. It lays strong emphasis on the inclusion of the poor in local government planning processes, solidarity among the poor for self help; the development of community based institutions, the improvement of livelihoods and building the capacity of LINGO partners.

There are very definite benefits from synergies with other Concern work including the DIPECHO supported DRR programme; Concern's membership of provincial NRM networks, the National Working Group on D&D; the Joint Action Group for DRR; and Concern's work in Aid Effectiveness through the Alliance 2015 partnership.

The project lays strong emphasis on enabling extremely poor people to become involved in the Commune Planning process which is part of the government policy on decentralisation and de-concentration of decision making. At the time of project inception it looked as though there was a shift probable in Government policy to create decision making hubs at the District as opposed to the Commune level. Had this policy been implemented the EU-NSA project would probably have had to change tactics and become more engaged at the District level.

The project aims to reduce extremely poor people's vulnerability, improve their assets and the return on them and at the same time strengthen their voice in their communities. It is thus very relevant to Concern's threefold understanding of poverty in terms of vulnerability, assets and equality. This is discussed later in greater depth.

#### **4. ECONOMY AND EFFICIENCY**

The project has been very well managed in terms of financial control, input management and activity implementation. The monitoring system (Appendix 2) was very comprehensive and provided timely information to all concerned parties. It was used effectively in the management of work. Most planned activities had been completed by the end of October 2012 with the remaining likely to be completed before the end of December 2012. Concern will provide a full statement of completed activities in early 2013. The project budget was increased from 686,540 to 712,205 to allow for underestimates of some costs. The EU contribution remains the same in absolute terms but the additional money was contributed by Concern. Consequently Concern's share of the budget has risen from 34.98% to 38.29% and the EU share from 64% to 61%. The addendum was approved by the EU and the project should be completed in line with the amended budget.

In addition to observations during field work and discussion with CBOs and beneficiaries, a formal review of economy and efficiency was undertaken by asking each partner and Concern to independently, as a staff team, answer a questionnaire (Appendix 3) with sections on input and activity management, output achievement and inter-agency collaboration. There was a very consistent response from the partners, all of whom felt that a lot of attention had been paid to getting the right inputs at the right prices and that efficiency was very high. However Concern staff members were rather more circumspect in their assessment while still being positive. The main findings were as follows.

##### Input management.

- There were delays in signing MoU's between Concern and the partners and these delays slowed implementation but once the MoU's were signed inputs were provided in a timely manner. The one exception was in grants to VAs but this was caused by reviewing the method of grant making to ensure that it complied with EU policies and to maximise success. The VAs made loans to SHGs. All the grants have been disbursed.
- Costs were not exceeded without prior approval and at times extra inputs were provided within the original budget.
- Input monitoring was very thorough through a combination of monthly visits, the quarterly review process and the rigorous filling in of the continuous monitoring form.
- The directors of the four partners met with the Concern Country Director every quarter. A regular internal audit was carried out by the Concern finance team. An internal control system for both Concern and the partners was set up. The budget and a summary finance report were shared with stakeholders in a workshop held at the start and end of each year. This led to a high degree of accountability and transparency in activity management.
- The partners were satisfied that the training in procedures led to good efficiency in implementation but Concern felt that this was true only in about 60% of cases. Problems arising were sorted out at each quarterly review.

##### Activity management

- The logframe was used to manage activities. During a joint annual planning workshop each agency developed a work plan based on the logframe. This was then broken down into monthly and weekly plans for all staff. Progress was monitored using a comprehensive set of monitoring forms and processes developed by Concern in

consultation with partners. It proved to be an extremely good system for inputs and activities.

- Most activities were carried out on time. However, based on technical assessment and design by Concern and the Provincial Department of Water Resources and Meteorology (PDWRAM), canal development was delayed and as a result less activity was carried out than planned.
- Initially spending was slower than anticipated but it speeded up as problems in implementation were identified and sorted out in the ongoing review process.
- During the quarterly review with each agency, plans were developed to correct any activity deficits and to make any appropriate changes. The EU delegation was consulted if major budget changes were required.
- Management showed flexibility as needs changed. Based on community demand, more rice banks were developed than originally planned. Ten new rice banks were planned but based on the demands, community contribution and the price of paddy rice during the harvest season 28 new rice banks were built within the original budget.

A separately funded vulnerable group feeding scheme was set up to deal with problems caused by serious flooding in some project districts in 2011. To minimise the impact of the feeding programme on the development programme, a cash for food operation was implemented with the cash being handled by AMK.

#### Linking activities to outputs

- As a result of efficient project implementation, beneficiaries made good use of training, physical infrastructure, cash grants and of opportunities to interact with the commune committees. This led to good project effectiveness as discussed in a later section of this report.

#### Partner Contribution / Involvement

- Partner involvement worked well in relation to implementing the project. However as discussed later, there was not such strong involvement on outputs being achieved or on identifying and disseminating learning.

Efficiency can be judged by comparing actual achievements with the section of the logframe above inputs and activities and normally titled outputs. The project logframe<sup>2</sup> was somewhat confusing as the output section, termed Results, was more a statement of completed activities without stating outputs such as yield increases in rice production and incomes from newly established off-farm activities. This led to an absence of detailed information to demonstrate that improvements due to the project were primarily responsible for the very good progress towards the higher level objectives.

Achievements in each of the four result areas are discussed below

Result area 1. The poorest have a voice in their communities and have effectively participated in the Local Planning Process within the framework of the NP-SNDD. This result area had three indicators of which the first was that 'Executive members of each of 100 VAs would regularly attended meetings of their respective commune and district councils, raise issues

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<sup>2</sup> There was an inconsistency in the logframe in that the fourth indicator for the specific objective 'Community based institutions have increased their capacity to support livelihood improvements of their members' was the same as the proposed Result 2 and both had the same means of measurement.

and relay information gathered/decisions made back to their communities.’ Performance is shown in Table 2 and was corroborated by both Commune Council members and beneficiaries.

**Table 2 Attendance at Commune Council (CC) meetings in 2011 and 2012**

Year	LNGO	Number of Commune Councils in the target area	Number of meeting held by CCs	VAs attending CCs meeting	Average number of VA leaders per meeting	Total VA leaders attended
2011	PK	7	46	25	1	25
2011	EPDO	6	55	28	1	28
2011	SORF	5	60	22	1.9	42
2011	AK	7	62	25	1.6	41
	<b>Total 2011</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>223</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1.36</b>	<b>136</b>
2012	PK	7	42	25	1	25
2012	EPDO	6	47	28	3	84
2012	SORF	5	32	22	2	44
2012	AK	7	56	25	1	25
	<b>Total 2012</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>177</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>178</b>
	<b>*Total 2011- 2012</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>400</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>1.68</b>	<b>178</b>

\* The same villages were involved in each year

The VA and SHG members were able to recall useful feedback from commune meetings e.g. information about illegal logging and fishing, information about land disputes which led to demarcation taking place in one village, advance information about road construction which enabled villagers to fell their trees before contractors removed them with heavy equipment and information about stopping domestic violence.

The second indicator was that 100 Village Priority Plans would be developed each year and presented to the Commune Council. This was met in full.

The third indicator was that sixteen Commune/District forums would be facilitated and representatives from each VA would have attended at least two. The results are set out in Tables 3a and 3b. Caution must be exercised with the terms. The Commune Forum is a forum in the Commune and involves all governments departments but only includes VAs from project villages and not all commune villages. Equally the District Forum does not include all communes in the district but only those with project VAs in them.

In total 17 district and Commune Forums were held. PK and EPDO did not organise District Forums and AK and SORF did not organise Commune Forums. All AK VAs attended at least one district forum while some 66% of SORF VAs did. All EPDO VAs attended a Commune Forum and some 50% of PK VAs did. Benefits included sharing ideas with other villages in the commune, sharing with other communes in the district and exchanging information with various line ministries which do not attend commune meetings.

**Table 3 a. Commune Forums organised in 2011 and 2012**

Year	LNGO	Target for commune forums	Commune forums held	VAs attended commune forum	Total VA leaders attended
2011	PK	1	2	6	17
2011	EPDO	2	2	4	5
	<b>Total 2011</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>22</b>
2012	PK	2	2	12	44
2012	EPDO	6	6	28	94
	<b>Total 2012</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>138</b>
	<b>Total 2011 - 2012</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>50</b>	<b>160</b>

**Table 3b District Forums organised in 2011 and 2012**

Year	LNGO	Target for district forums	Number of district forums held	VAs attended district forum	Total VA leaders attended
2011	AK	1	2	24	119
	<b>Total 2011</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>119</b>
2012	SORF	1	1	14	28
2012	AK	1	2	25	83
	<b>Total 2012</b>	<b>2 districts</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>39</b>	<b>111</b>
	<b>Total 2011 - 2012</b>	<b>2 districts</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>230</b>

Result area 2. Community based institutions have increased their capacity to support livelihood improvements of their members. The results against the chosen indicators are set out in Table 4.

**Table 4 Support to livelihood improvements**

Indicator	Performance from M&E records and verified by community institutions and individual beneficiaries
R2.1 100 Village Associations have increased their capacity (e.g. ability to support groups, resource mobilisation, accountability, external linkages) to support livelihood improvements of their members.	This is duplicated under the specific objective indicator and will be dealt with later.
R2.2 25% of SHGs have facilitated at least one feasibility study with no assistance by the end of the action	142 SHGs carried out independent feasibility studies and this represents 30% of all SHGs and is 5% ahead of target
R2.3 12 small scale irrigation systems rehabilitated with WUGs established	Only eight were developed as there were problems with planning. However 10 additional culverts and two spillways were installed. Total infrastructure costs were lower than expected and some unused budget was transferred to the rice bank line.

R2.4 40 IFS demonstration plots established and 1,000 farmers trained in IFS	23 plots were established in 2011 and 21 in 2012 being a total of 44 and thus exceeding the target.
R2.5 24 SRI demonstration plots established and 600 farmers trained in SRI	19 plots were established in 2011 and 21 in 2012 being a total of 40 and thus exceeding the target
R2.6 2,000 households have received grants and training for on and off-farm production/income generation activities	2,569 households of which 1,852 were female headed received grants during the project. They were spread across 188 SHGs in 78 VAs
R2.7 25 CFMCs supported with technical assistance from FAC	24 CFMC in 24 villages received technical support and training from FAC. 299 CFMC committee members and CF members were trained in 2012. A total of 1,946 ha of forest area were covered in 25 CF villages and 4,911 households benefited.
R 2.8 20 MCTs have received training and financial support for business actions	4 new MCTs were established in 2011 bringing the total in the project area to 20 and all received training.
R2.9 4 workshops to identify constraints in existing value chains have been conducted	4 workshops were held in 2011 (1 with each partner) plus a joint one in March 2012. There was a survey of IGAs in July 2012 followed by a two-week study of Value Chains generated in the project.
R2.10 Producers have been facilitated to attend 4 product exhibitions	5 exhibitions were arranged in 2011 and 3 product exhibition events were held in 2012 at provincial level as joint exercises among all four partners. 32 producers attended in 2011 and 72 in 2012. Approximately 33% were women.

It can be seen that performance in completing activities was good in almost all areas relating to income generation.

Result area 3. Target communities have developed community based social safety net mechanisms to support the poorest households during critical food hunger periods. Performance against the selected indicators is shown in Table 5.

**Table 5 Support to the poorest households**

Indicator	Performance from M&E records and verified by community institutions and individual beneficiaries
R3.1 420 poorest households have benefitted from CFW	Among 590 households accessing cash for work 256 were Category 3, 240 were Category 4 and there were 94 others.
R3.2 1 reflection workshop on community social protection measures has been facilitated	The workshops took place with each partner and there was a detailed study in July 2012 which resulted in a separate report
R3.3 50 villages have functioning SP mechanisms (e.g. Pagoda fund, SP committee) 71	75 of the 100 project villages now have a social protection committee. Destitute people 278 Female 206 Male 72 Getting VGF food 80 59 21 Social protection 171 128 43 Getting both. 227 or 82% of destitute people.

R3.4 10 new rice banks established	Due to demand from VAs 19 new banks were created in 2011 and 12 in 2012 being a total of 31 including 28 funded by EU-NSA and 3 funded by DIPECHO-7 within EU-NSA target villages.
R3.5 60 rice banks have developed and implemented sustainability plans (10 new + 50 existing)	Of the 81 rice banks in the project 70 follow sustainable management parameters. The other 11 are in the EPDO area and are moving to sustainable management.

As with the other areas of implementation project performance was very good for this result area.

Result area 4. LNGO partners have improved capacity to resource and implement community development initiatives.

The indicators and achievements are set out in Table 6 and the training provided by Concern is detailed in Table 7.

**Table 6 Local NGO capacities to resource and implement community development**

Indicator	Performance from M&E records and verified by community institutions and individual beneficiaries
R4.1 4 LNGOs have developed and submitted proposals for external funding	A total of 33 project proposals were submitted to different donors in 2012. Out of this, 10 proposals have been approved, with a combined budget in excess of 800K and 8 are pending. The remaining 15 proposals failed to elicit a positive response from donors.
R4.2 Each partner has defined a clear sustainability strategy for community development in their target areas	Not yet done. This is a very important area for the phase-out period and will be a means of distilling learning.
R4.3 4 LNGOs have received orientation on relevant policy changes (e.g. NP-SNDD 2010 - 2019 and the National Forestry Programme) and Cooperative Development and Social Protection	A lot of training has taken place. Evidence was produced in the form of certificates and course materials.
R4.4 4 LNGOs have received refresher training and support on DRR, HIV/AIDS, HAP, gender mainstreaming and meeting facilitation skills.	See Table 7 below

**Table 7 Training of Partners by Concern**

Training topics	Year
1 System of Rice Intensification (SRI)	2011
2 DRR refresher training	2011
3 Equality and HIV/AIDS refresher training	2011
4 Technical training on Small Scale Irrigation Systems	2011
5 Contextual analysis	2011
6 Sub-national Government Structure and Sub-national Plan for Democratic Development	2011
7 SHG concept	2011 and 2012

8	SHG bookkeeping and facilitation skill	2012
9	Accountability and Complaint Response Mechanism	2012
10	Value chains	2011 and 2012
11	Participatory Hazard and Vulnerability Capacity Assessment and DRR/Climate Change	2012
12	Monitoring and Evaluation	2012
13	Integrated Farming System (IFS)	2012
14	Institutional Capacity Assessment	2012

The partners were satisfied with the quality of the training.

In addition to the results predicted in the logframe Concern developed a communications strategy to meet the needs of the EU for visibility and to ensure that useful information was disseminated. (Table 8)

**Table 8 Communications Strategy Objectives**

<b>Communication Objectives</b>	<b>Indicators of achievement</b>
Communities and sub-national government institutions recognise the contribution and support from the EU in their community led and owned development processes, functioning as an effective PR tool.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Feedback at MTR and Evaluation stages demonstrate that communities and sub-national government recognise EU contribution to community development processes.</li> <li>▪ Signage and stickers in place on infrastructure and other project outputs.</li> </ul>
Project impact demonstrated to peer civil society organisations in Cambodia (local and international) as well as national level government institutions so to influence policy and practice.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Lessons learned are disseminated during ongoing peer group and government meetings.</li> <li>▪ MTR and evaluation results disseminated.</li> </ul>
EU residents, taxpayers, and policy makers realise the changes that EU support can produce at community level within developing countries such as Cambodia, so to encourage future financial support.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ MTR and final evaluation executive summaries published on Concern Worldwide websites, in line with HAP commitments and standards.</li> <li>▪ Concern website highlights impact and key lessons learned from the action.</li> </ul>

It was apparent during field work that the main visibility requirements had been met. Partners are aware of the EU role and of its development principles. A series of very good photographs was produced and has been used by Concern in Cambodia and Europe as have the videos produced in 2012. Many case studies have been prepared by Concern and partners and disseminated widely. Concern and partner staff member have presented project experience at a range of forums and technical meetings in Cambodia. The M&E system has been adopted by several other Concern countries and has been used in planning by two other international NGOs.

## 5. EFFECTIVENESS.

Project effectiveness can be judged by assessing progress towards the achievement of the specific objective set out in the logframe.

The project specific objective was to promote the development interests of the poorest in 100 villages in Pursat province and increase their representation and participation in the development process. There were four indicators for this objective with one for each of the areas of VOICE, Livelihoods, Social Protection and Institutional Capacity.

### VOICE Component

The VOICE indicator for this objective was that the number of community issues raised, included and addressed in the Commune Investment Plan (CIP) increases by 10 % over the baseline. The actual performance was much higher than this as indicated in Table 9.

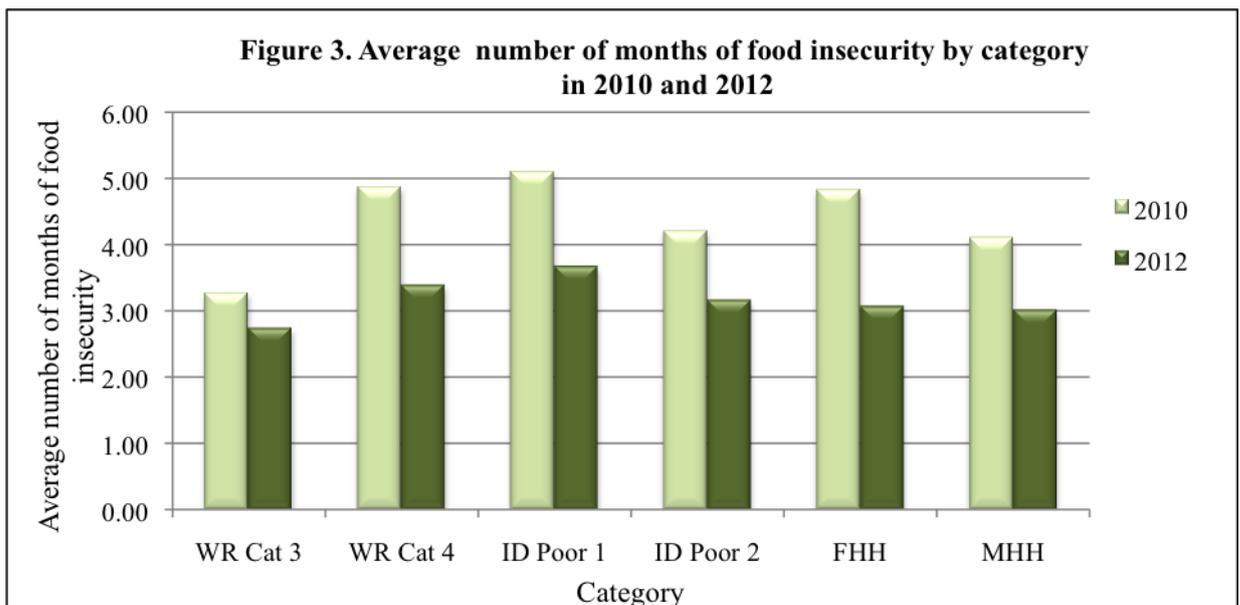
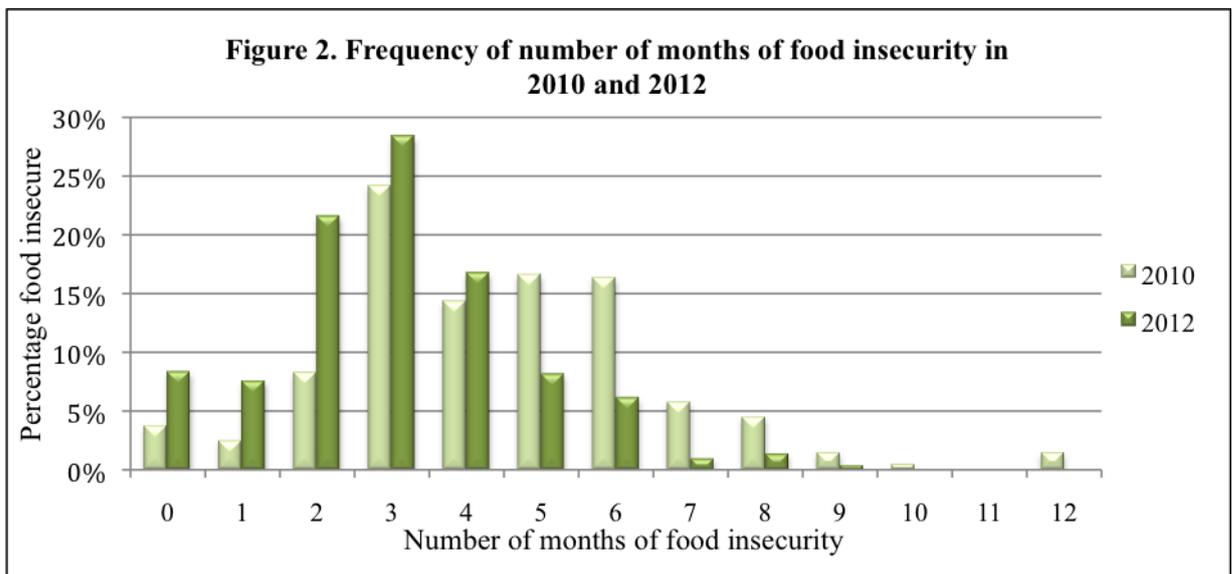
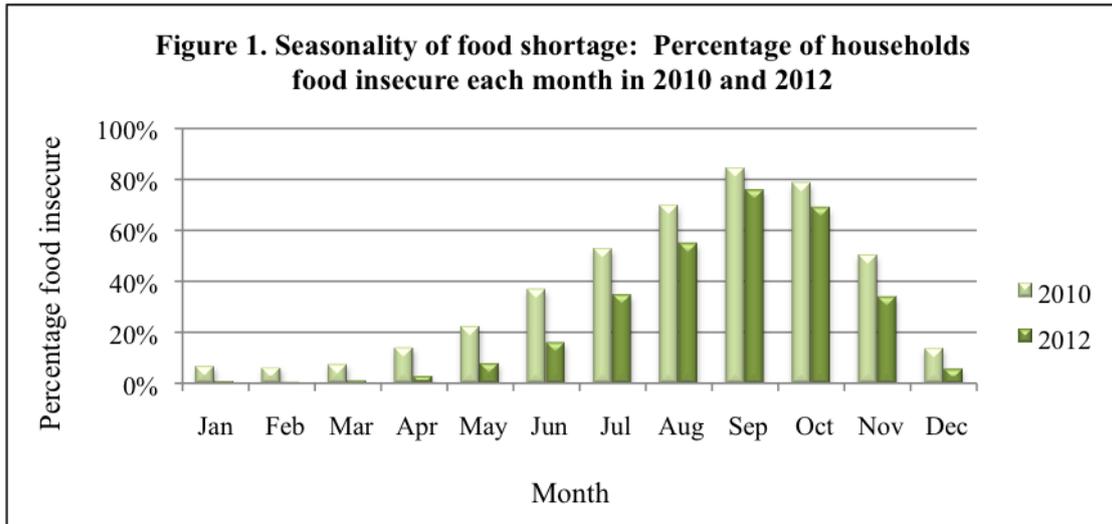
**Table 9 Increases in Village priorities include in Commune Investment Plans**

<b>Community Investment Plan (CIP) details</b>	<b>2010-11</b>	<b>2011-12</b>	<b>Increased in Village priorities addressed</b>
Village priorities raised at Commune Councils	4,310	3,337	
Village priorities included in CIPs	3,263	2,548	
Percentage of priorities included in CIPs	76	76	
Priorities addressed through CIP (includes all resources)	874	1,580	706
Percentage of VA priorities addressed	27	62	81

Whereas the figures look very impressive they are somewhat misleading. The issues recorded are for the entire villages and not just the priorities of the VAs. The priorities included and addressed include all activities in the commune regardless of the source of inputs. Thus there may well be an infrastructural input from a non-partner NGO operated WASH project which does not relate in any way to any activity developed as a result of the VOICE process in the EU NSA project. The results do show that the Communes now have much better information about all the initiatives taking place even though they do not manage them or invest in them. In these circumstances it is difficult to know exactly how many VA issues have been included and resourced from commune funds. This would be a much better indicator of how much the VAs had accessed from the CIPs.

### Livelihoods Component

The specific objective livelihoods related indicator was that 4,000 of the poor and poorest HH have reduced the number of months in which they are food insecure, through on and off farm production/income generation activities and community actions. The results of a comparison of the baseline and endline are presented in Figures 1-3.



The results show considerable reduction in food insecurity and also show that this reduction has been greater for Female Headed Households and for families from the poorer wealth categories. This indicates good targeting and good gender balance.

Unfortunately the endline interviews of a representative sample of 500 families did not ask a specific question about family change in food security over the last two years. Rather it mirrored the baseline and only asked questions about the number of months of food insecurity experienced in 2012. As the survey was carried out with different families from the baseline it is impossible to say with accuracy how many families reduced the number of months in which they are food insecure as defined by the project.

However the reduction in the number of families with 5 or more months of food insecurity can be used to assert that at least 3,135 families reduced their period of insecurity. This is some 29.8% of the total number of families. It is most certainly an underestimate as there must be families who moved from 4 to 3 months, 3 to 2 and so on but it is impossible to calculate for all categories less than five months how many in each category moved from more than five or less than five in the baseline.

The results which did emerge from the endline are very encouraging and almost certainly meet the indicator of 4,000 families. It is also almost certainly as a direct result of the project. Evidence for this assertion was sought from focus group meetings with VAs, SHGs, and Rice Bank Committees. The groups included representatives from 87 of the 100 project villages. They were all convinced that the reduction in insecurity was due to the project. They cited the lack of improvement in non-project villages. They claimed that improvements in their own food production, income from trading and support from rice banks were by far the main contributing factors to their improved food security.

More detailed analysis was then carried out with six SHGs to assess the relative importance of each factor. Each person in each of the groups was given six stones and asked to proportionally allocate them to the activity which they felt had been most important. Based on the number of votes cast, each activity was then awarded a top middle or bottom rank for that group. The ranks for each group were then combined to give the results shown in Table 10.

**Table 10 Importance of different factors in reducing food insecurity**

Rank	Contributory factors to reduced food insecurity		
	Increased on farm activity	Increased off farm activity	Access to a rice bank
Top	5.5	0.5	0
Middle	0.5	2.5	3
Bottom	0	3	3

The results are interesting in that beneficiaries see production increases as more important than the useful contribution of rice banks in smoothing food availability through the hunger period. This raises a question about the change from the project proposal to reduce the investment in irrigation infrastructure in favour of greater investment in rice banks. It should be borne in mind that one factor in the decision was a bureaucratic problem in getting government approval for canal design when a project engineer did the design work.

When asked what led to the improvement in on-farm and off-farm production the results shown in Table 11 emerged. The results arose from the same system of ranking as used in the

preparation of Table 10. The results are very similar to those found in the Value Chain study in July 2012<sup>3</sup>.

**Table 11 Factors leading to improved food production**

Rank	Contributory factors to increased production		
	Training	Loans	Savings
Top	4	1	1
Middle	0	3.5	2.5
Bottom	1	1.5	2.5

As a result of canal and culvert development a lot of extra paddy was produced by families participating in the project. The area irrigated before SSI during wet season was 393 hectares and later 650 hectares were added as a result of the improvement work bringing the total to 1043 ha. Of this land 387 hectares can now be irrigated during the dry season compared with 75 hectares prior to the improvement work. Further paddy production improvement came for the adoption of the System of Rice Intensification (SRI) technology on this irrigated land. The total increased production is summarised in Table 12.

**Table 12 Paddy yield increases due to irrigation and adoption of SRI**

Type of rice	Area Cropped (ha)		Yield (MT/ha)	Total Yield (MT)	Increase
Wet season	After SSI	1,043.00	2.88 <sup>4</sup>	3,003.84	1,272.46
	Before SSI	1,043.00	1.66	1,731.38	
Dry	After SSI	312.00	2.88	898.56	801.06
	Before SSI	75.00	1.30	97.50	
Total paddy rice (MT)					2,073.52
Total milled rice (MT)					1,244.11
Number of Families that can be fed per year from the increased production (@900 kgs/Family/Year)					<u>1,382.35</u>

This is probably an under estimate as SRI has been adopted by non- project farmers

While these calculations are approximate they do indicate that a very considerable proportion of the improved food security was project driven. This is especially so when consideration is given to the fact that a considerable percentage of extra poultry and vegetable production in the income generating sector is consumed by the producer families.

<sup>3</sup> Report on the Documentation of Value Chains for Evaluation of EU funded Non State Actors (NSA) and Local Authorities in Development in Country Interventions – Cambodia. H. Dalzell. July 2012

<sup>4</sup> Based on SSI tracking sheets for 814 households whose average yield after the SSI and SRI is 2.875 t/ha. based on 312 hectares of yield results. Rice yields reached 3.77 in SRI trials on demonstration plots.

### Social Protection Component

The indicator was that by the end of the project 80% of the destitute, as defined in the baseline, would be receiving social protection support. The support came from rice banks, pagoda funds and the resources managed by Social Protection Committees set up by villagers with assistance from the project. Apart from the rice bank assistance, support was given as follows.

**Table 13 Social Protection provided to the destitute**

Source of support	Persons assisted in 2012	Male	Female
Vulnerable Group Feeding	80	21	59
Social Protection Committee	171	43	128
Total assisted allowing for some people receiving both types	227		
Total number of destitute people	278		
Percentage assisted	82 as against target of 80		

A study of the Social Protection Component of the project was undertaken in July 2012. It found that the service was well targeted and useful but did not meet all the needs of the destitute people. It also found that the funds given to Social Protection Committees were not being managed to keep pace with inflation. More discussion of this result will be considered in the later section on sustainability.

### Capacity of local institutions component

The indicator was that community institutions would have increased their capacity to implement community development initiatives according to spider graph analysis. Basic information was collected on VAs. It is presented below but not as a spider graph as the differences do not show clearly in such a format.

A first attempt at scoring for SHGs is presented below but no formal scoring was presented for other community institutions which are therefore assessed below based on discussions with them against their management criteria.

In addition to CBO information, partner agency capacity was scored in a self assessment exercise. While not being community organisations this information about them is discussed in this section.

- a. Village Associations. Progress during the project was measured by a comparison of self assessments carried out early in 2011 and in October 2012. The results were as follows.

**Table 14 Capacity Development of Village Associations**

Parameter	Score in 2011	Score in 2012	Increase during the project
Organisation	14.35	15.13	0.78
Management	13.00	14.31	1.31
Resource mobilization	14.46	15.25	0.79
Linkage and networking	12.96	14.82	1.86
Participation and representation	15.49	15.86	0.37
<b>Total (equivalent to % as the total mark possible is 100)</b>	<b>70.26</b>	<b>75.37</b>	

The increases were small but would probably have been slightly higher had EPDO not had to use new and inexperienced staff to carry out assessments in their work area. During meetings VA representatives were challenged to justify the scores and improvements for each parameter and generally they provided convincing evidence of improvement. Examples given were the quality of records (books shown), confidence in carrying out calculations during the checking of partner data with VA data, and level of participation by women in the meetings.

However the question arises as to whether the current capacity is sufficient to manage successfully without further external assistance. It was apparent that leadership and management skills vary widely between groups.

It was also apparent that in many villages the skills are concentrated in a few people who assist in the management of several institutions. The SILIC evaluation report suggested that it would be worth trying to develop skills through the Reflect approach to literacy and numeracy. This has not been done but it remains a valid recommendation.

VA representatives who attended evaluation meetings brought their records with them and generally showed good ability in accessing them to answer questions. They seemed confident in their ability to continue to manage the associations on the lines developed so far. Most SHGs stated that VA meetings were participatory and that VAs supported them. It was apparent that due to shortages of literate leaders the VA committees tend not to rotate personnel. In the longer term this is likely to lead to undemocratic practices.

Whereas they could document resources mobilised to date they were not very clear how they will mobilise resources when project support stops. Of course mobilisation of money from NGOs is easy and thus it cannot really be used to measure resource mobilisation skills. Resources obtained from the Communes were mainly infrastructural and comprised of roads, latrines, ponds and wells.

However, it was very difficult to ascertain what resources had been obtained from the Commune Councils which would not have been achieved without the inputs from the VAs. This was partly a problem with the recording systems but also a problem that whereas the Council will initially give resources for well presented as opposed to poorly presented plans, there will probably come a time when politics means that they must give resources to lesser plans to retain political goodwill with all villages and party members. All Councils met asserted that there is no favouritism to villages with VAs. They also stated without exception that they found VA plans very helpful and that when they gave resources VAs managed them much better than villages without a VA.

Without exception SHGs met during the evaluation valued the VAs highly. This was primarily because of the developing relationship with the Commune Councils and the two-way VOICE which is emerging. This aspect of the VA-Commune interaction seems to be more effective than the resource transfer aspect.

b. Self Help Groups. Altogether there are 476 active groups. Some SHGs merged to combine two small groups into a more viable unit. All those visited during the evaluation and during the mid-term review were very clear about their purpose of solidarity, self help and access to loans for income generation purposes. They were proud of their membership and it clearly met their aspirations. They were happy to show their record books all of which seemed to be well maintained although many with external support.

SHG management capacity is very variable. The assessments carried out on a scoring system developed by Concern are shown in Table 15

**Table 15 Self Help Group Capacity Assessment**

Criteria	SORF	EPDO	PK	AK	EU-NSA
Regular Meetings	5.52	2.47	3.88	4.57	4.11
Regular Attendance	6.55	4.55	5.34	6.81	5.81
Regular Savings	5.41	2.72	4.38	6.55	4.76
Meeting Quality	6.08	3.40	4.51	6.87	5.22
Rotation of Office Bearer	2.95	1.79	5.13	1.00	2.72
Prioritization of Loan	6.83	6.43	6.86	7.24	6.84
Regular Repayment	5.95	3.23	4.48	7.23	5.22
Overdue and Default	6.00	4.29	4.53	6.79	5.40
Loan Utilisation	7.44	7.57	6.78	7.09	7.22
Rules	5.46	3.16	5.48	7.71	5.45
Total	58.20	39.62	51.36	61.86	52.76

Based on this table capacity even at best, is not very good. The notable weak point is in rotation of office bearers and this is due to the lack of well educated literate people in the groups. It indicates the need for some, form of literacy and numeracy development possibly using the Reflect method which would build on the high degree of motivation members have and use their vocabulary and requirements to develop adequate literacy and numeracy for the job they would need to do in the group.

SHGs relationship with the VAs is strong and has a high degree of mutuality. However, as small independent institutions SHGs they have limited power and opportunity for growth. Thought should therefore be given to developing some form of federation which would build power and possibly enable them to borrow from credit institutions.

c. Rice Bank Committees. The summary data for rice banks is given in Appendix 4. There are 81 banks with a total stock of just over 459 tonnes of rice of which some seventy-three percent was donated by the project with the rest being raised from interest and community contributions. Of the 4,898 members 3,714 got loans this year. The average loan was equivalent to some 60 kg of milled rice or enough for as family of five for 24 days.

The Rice Bank representatives had good awareness of their records and had the ability to find information in them. They have the following five criteria for sustainable bank management;

- A good building which is pest free. Almost all banks had taken steps to pest proof their buildings following a less than satisfactory review in January 2012. This was seen in many banks during the evaluation and indicates very good progress and understanding.
- Maintain good records. The books produced during meetings were fit for purpose.
- Develop a clear annual plan for loans, interest rates and repayments. This is being done by all banks.
- Ensure that members follow the rules. Inevitably a small number of members do not pay on time. This seems to be under control with no serious defaults and rescheduling of repayments for those with genuine difficulty.
- Maintain sufficient stock for all members. This has not been achieved to date and so not all members receive loans and those who do receive less than they need. This problem may be resolved over the next few years as bank stocks increase due to interest and further member assessments for contributions. At the same time members should need less rice from the banks as their own production and incomes rise. No bank has tried to develop a three to five year projection of needs and availabilities. This planning should be part of a sustainable development strategy for partner NGOs.

All but 11 of the 81 banks follow the sustainability plans. The 11 not yet following them are in the EPDO project area. They are moving to managing sustainability but need some further support and EPDO will provide this after the end of the project. In overall terms rice bank management seems competent and adequate.

d. Market Coordination Teams. The summary data for MCTs is given in 5. There are twenty teams providing assistance to 655 families.

These teams were the least convincing of any group met during the evaluation. It was more difficult to get precise information from them and whereas they have records of who they help, there is very great variation in the numbers of villages and people served by each team. Their record keeping does not require them to show how much they have traded and how much is for the benefit of SHGs. Activities undertaken also vary widely as shown in Table 16.

**Table 16 MCTs use of the project grant**

Activity	Number of MCTs
Loan to VA/SHG members	5
Loan to non VA/SHG members	3
Running individual business	16
Running collective sale/buying with community producers	8
Interest rate	1 - 2%
Average fund per MCT in \$	650

Some teams run several activities. A two percent interest rate is below the MFI standard charge and a one percent rate will not enable the MCT to inflation proof the fund.

The numbers of families assisted by MCTs varies a lot from MCT to MCT. The totals are as follows:

**Table 17 Households Benefitting from MCTs**

	M	F	Total
Credit activity	18	29	47
Marketing service	188	420	608
Total beneficiaries	206	449	655

There is a clear conflict of interest between how much profit MCTs make for themselves and how much benefit they pass on to the SHGs or individuals on whose behalf they trade and manage the funds of the MCT. When - if - they hand over funds and responsibility to a newly elected MCT after 5 years they will pose a threat to the new MCT as they have developed contacts with other traders and wholesalers and retailers and may not want to retire from their business. It is difficult to see a role for them as lenders as they lend to SHGs money which could otherwise have gone directly to SHGs. They are outside the direct control of the SHGs and VAs.

e. Community Forestry Management Committees. Altogether there are 25 CFMC committees all of which are eligible for recognition by government. Some have achieved full recognition while all the others are in the process of seeking it. Twenty of them are in the process of developing long-term CF management plans with technical support from FAC. CFMCs link with other implementing NGOs such as RECOFTC and HARVEST in the same target area to boost the process of CF management planning. Between them they are responsible for 1,946 ha of forest with authority to collect fines for illegal logging and to allow CF members to have access to Non Timber Forest Products. Their work seems to be highly valued by the

villagers and given that they can raise funds and have official recognition they seem to have developed a lot in the last two years.

f. The partner NGOs. These agencies carry out regular self assessments using a format developed by the NGO Forum (GPP) but with additions suggested by Concern. A comparison of the baseline with the endline revealed the information in Table 18.

**Table 18 NGO Capacity changes during the project**

<b>Partner</b>	<b>Average score at endline</b>	<b>Increase score during project</b>	<b>% increase</b>
EPDO	88.44	28.15	47%
SORF	87.04	18.7	27%
PK	95.22	16.06	20%
AK	67.96	21.48	46%
<b>Overall average</b>	<b>84.67</b>	<b>21.10</b>	<b>35%</b>

The scores are very high and the percentage increase is also very high. This is because the GPP system has many boxes where compliance gives a one hundred percent score e.g. Clear Mission Statement. Such scores do not seem to be very useful for management of progress. However, during the quarterly reviews the more management related factors of capacity building have been reviewed. In the opinion of the evaluator good progress has been made in administrative and implementing areas but the agencies are weak in development planning and strategic thinking about development interventions. As the latter is their core business more attention to it is necessary.

Summary of effectiveness When measured against the logframe effectiveness has been good.

The VOICE achievement is strong in the area of developing the relationship with the communes and using the local planning process but weaker in the procurement of resources. This is largely due to the shortage of resources at commune level.

The reduction in food insecurity is strong and almost certainly due in the main to the project. A deficiency in the endline survey methodology makes it impossible to measure the indicator as stated but it is almost certain that the target was achieved.

The target set for provision of social protection to destitute people was 80% of all destitute in the project villages and it was met. However, the total number of people served is very low at some 227 out of a total of almost 280.

There was mixed progress on the development of community based institutions. As some institutions did not have formal measurements carried out progress can only be judged. For Rice Bank committees, Social Protection Committees (July Study) and CFMCs it was good. For VAs and SHGs it seems to have been reasonable but there is a great deal of variation between institutions. For the partner agencies measurement was obscured by the methodology but progress seems to have been good in administration and organising but weaker in strategic planning of development. For the MCTs performance is varied and there is a lack of clarity on their role and effectiveness.

## **6. IMPACT**

The overall objective of the project was to support the achievement of Cambodia's MDG 1 (eradicate extreme poverty and hunger) through participatory community development processes. This was to be indicated by two measures:

- a. Share of poorest quintile in national consumption has increased
- b. 20% of households have moved up one category or more according to wealth rankings conducted in 2010 and at the end of the action

The first indicator was found to be impractical. There is no readily available national or provincial data to serve as a baseline and endline for the period of the project. In any case the project was of such short duration that it would be unlikely to show a demonstrable impact of this nature in its lifetime.

Accordingly discussion on impact will focus on the second indicator for which results from a comparison of the baseline and endline were as follows.

**Table 19 Changes in Household Wealth Ranking during the project.**

Partner	Number surveyed	Positive %	None %	Negative %
AK	286	22.38	65.03	12.59
PK	115	37.39	58.26	4.35
EPDO	78	42.31	51.28	6.41
SORF	142	51.41	43.66	4.93
<b>Overall</b>	<b>621</b>	<b>34.30</b>	<b>57.17</b>	<b>8.53</b>

Results for each partner agency were better than the target and the overall result was 75% better than the target. It is difficult to find a set of control figures at either national or provincial level. However, the result achieved is well in advance of the change reported by AMK<sup>5</sup> in a study of change from 2008-2012. While it seems to be a very positive result it must also be noted that more than one family in twelve dropped at least one wealth ranking category. As with progress towards the specific objective all stakeholders felt that performance against the overall objective was almost entirely due to the project. The reasons for change are set out in Table 20.

**Table 20 Reasons for Wealth Ranking Changes**

<b>Reasons for positive change</b>	<b>213 families</b>	<b>%</b>
Diversified Livelihoods	195	92
Successful IGA	203	95
Increased Assets	189	89
Access to credit	85	40
Other	62	29
<b>Reasons for No change or Negative change</b>	<b>408 families</b>	
Illness/ Death of a family member	288	71
Unsuccessful IGA	277	68
Debt	206	50
No employment opportunities/landless	240	59
Other	91	22

<sup>5</sup> Personal Communication from AMK Research Dept in November 2012

The reasons for change were not mutually exclusive. For example, increased assets can come from access to credit and adding a successful IGA is a means of diversifying a livelihood. However, several issues seem to arise.

**Negative change** There are three major contributory factors, all of which may increase debt and compound a difficult situation

- Illness or death of a family member. The SILIC evaluation suggested a new initiative in water and sanitation to reduce this risk and a programme has been started. It is too early yet to have any effect on illness. Even then more effort may be needed to take advantage of improvements in the government’s health service and including free treatment. There are issues to overcome. They include shortage of resources and the need to pay inducements. Consideration could be given to insurance to cover medical costs.
- Unsuccessful IGA. This is inevitable and especially so when considering small enterprises started by very poor people with very little human and economic capital. Accordingly it would be appropriate to develop rescheduling and write off policies for loans. As an example any family with a loan and which suffers from the death of an income earner could have the loan written off. This could probably be self-insured from the interest earned on loans but the rate may have to be reviewed.
- Landlessness exacerbated by lack of employment opportunities. Two possible avenues are open to address this issue. The first is an advocacy response to try to secure land for the landless. The second would be to look at training to equip people for gainful employment opportunities outside the village and assist families to have migrant workers without destabilising the family base.

During the project a study was carried out on monitoring families sliding downwards.<sup>6</sup> The report identified the problem shown in the current results and proposed a large number of solutions all of which are already included in the project activities.

**Positive change** The two main causes quoted are successful IGAs and diversification of the livelihood. Presumably both are facilitated by access to capital. In all assessments during the Mid-term review and the Value Chain Study, technical training and expansion of enterprise scale came out as the main factors leading to increased income. The wealth change survey was quite limited in assessing reasons for change. Furthermore the data was entered in an Excel File which limits analysis. It would be good for the project to have access to a more user friendly analytical tool.

When the wealth ranking shifts were analysed the pattern which emerged was as shown in Table 21

**Table 21 Analysis of Wealth Ranking Changes**

Shift between categories	positive	negative
4-1	6	
4-2	24	4
4-3	53	34
3-2	90	10
3-1	15	
2-1	11	

One hundred and five families moved out of category three into a higher category and fifteen of them moved up two categories. Eighty three families moved upward out of category four and twenty of them moved up at least two categories. Only eleven families moved up from

<sup>6</sup> Concern Worldwide Cambodia “Category 4 Sliding” Report. Soklay Loung November 2010

category two. This would seem to indicate that targeting of benefits is good but that more effort needs to be made with category four families.

Ten families moved downwards from category two into category three and four dropped into category four. Thirty four families dropped from category three. The analysis of families dropping down calls for closer monitoring and for interventions to try to prevent the drop or at least to minimise it as suggested above.

During meetings with SHGS individual beneficiaries told of the very real changes which are summarised by the wealth ranking statistics. These include housing improvements the ability to pay for medicines when family members are ill, being able to look after elderly relatives, the ability to send children to secondary school, the upgrading of IGA from chickens to pigs with much greater profits, and so on – real, meaningful and highly valued changes.

## **7. SUSTAINABILITY**

While the project enabled the poorer sections of the community to make substantial impact on their inclusion into local government processes and to improve their food and livelihood security these impacts must continue without project support if they are to be really useful.

In assessing impact sustainability consideration must be given to four factors:

- Finance. Is there a reliable mechanism to generate enough money to maintain the benefit?
- Ownership. Do the beneficiaries and other stakeholders value the benefit enough to want to maintain it?
- Project to Policy Links. Is there an official policy, if necessary, which recognises and implements the processes and maintains the institutions needed to maintain the benefits?
- Community institutional capacity. Do the necessary community institutions exist and do they have adequate capacity to survive without external support?

The factors will now be considered for each of the four project areas.

VOICE The finance required to meet travel and subsistence allowances for VA representatives attending commune meetings is quite small. Some VAs own funds which they manage for SHGs loans and on which they charge interest. They should not have any problem in raising money to attend Commune Councils. Those which do not have funds could seek contributions from SHGS, Rice Banks and MCTs. Opinion among VAs and SHGs was mixed on whether or not this issue could be managed successfully by all VAs. It was also divided among NGO partners and Concern.

There was unanimity among partners, Concern and all stakeholders that the VOICE process is useful and should continue. Feedback from Communes was very similar to that of the SHGs and the VAs themselves. Although it was sometimes difficult to get very precise examples of the benefits coming to villagers from the enhanced local planning process the enthusiasm for it was palpable in all SHGS and VAs.

Under Local Planning laws the Commune Councils have the right to call groups to attend Council meetings and to participate actively in preparing commune plans. Each of the hundred project Village Associations has formal written certification that they are recognised by their Commune and this gives them strong official policy approval. At the outset of the programme it looked as though the power given to Commune Councils might be diluted with a shift upwards to District Councils. This has not materialised and the District Councils remain underfunded and with very limited capacity. The decision, counter to the SILIC final evaluation, not to work on developing close working relations with the Districts seems to have been justified.

The VAs vary in organisational capacity though all have the basics of understanding the Local Planning Process, record keeping and village plan preparation. They all seem confident that they can survive without further project support. Whereas there were mixed views on this among partners and Concern all parties thought there was high probability that most VAs would survive on their own. This judgement seems to be backed by experience in other areas of the country where support to VAs was withdrawn.

Income Generating Activities The various activities such as vegetable and chicken production, running small shops and mat making, generate cash incomes and hence financial sustainability should not be an issue for them at their current scale of operation. However if entrepreneurs wish to increase scale so that the enterprise becomes the main livelihood source as opposed to a subsidiary, then an external source of finance is likely to be required. However, at that point the activity should be capable of generating sufficient profit to qualify for commercial finance from an MFI.

The families which carry out these activities have strong ownership for them and hence the activity will survive as long as it produces a surplus.

Official policy backing is not needed for the continuance of these small businesses.

Whereas each family can manage its business without any formal institutional linkage there was evidence from the Value Chain Study in July 2012 that the development of producer groups could lead to increased production levels, better matching of seasonal supply to annual demand and to better trading surpluses arising from more processing and better trading margins. It does not seem likely that the MCTs will fulfil these functions. For more details on this see the Value Chains Study report.

Community based Social Protection The components are Vulnerable Group Feeding, Cash for Work projects, Rice Banks and Capital Funds managed by Social Protection Committees. The work of the Committees is described in detail in the report of the July 2012 study. The main conclusions were that they can probably survive at their current level of operation although this is below the basic needs of the beneficiaries, that they could be more productive with more imaginative management of capital funds and that they could usefully be replicated in other villages if capital funds were available.

Both Vulnerable Group Feeding and Cash for Work schemes are useful for targeted support to poor people but they depend entirely on external funding. The Cash for Work can be used to very good effect in creating assets, such as canals, which stimulate sustainable increases in incomes and food production.

The Rice Banks are deemed very useful by SHG members. As they charge rates of interest almost the same as commercial MFIs they should not face problems in securing financial sustainability. Almost all banks need to grow their rice stock to meet the needs of all members. Evidence of the strong local support for them and ownership of them comes from the expansion of the banks started during the project from the planned ten to a total of twenty eight.

Although no formal approval is needed from government to start a rice bank they are recognised in the National Social Protection Policy as useful.

Almost all the Rice Bank Management Committees follow the suggested management practices for sustainability. The committee members and all partners felt that the committees will be able to maintain and grow the banks and Concern was close to agreeing but had some reservations. What was not clear in the thinking of any stakeholder was the long term need for the banks. Currently they perform a very useful function in preventing severe food

shortage in the months leading up to rice harvest but they do not produce food. Their role is thus mainly that of expenditure smoothing although it does also include expenditure reduction. However as food production increases, and as income improves through more off-farm income generating activity, then the food gap should diminish and the need for the rice banks, other than as a disaster reserve, should lessen.

The Capacity of other Community Institutions Although NGOs are not strictly speaking 'community organisations' they are assessed in this section. Water User Groups were not met during the evaluation and thus have not been included in this assessment.

a. Self Help Groups. The groups have capital funds and have built up additional reserves from their own contributions and from interest accrued on loans. Some groups have capital funds on loan from their VA and others own the funds which were donated directly to them. They should be financially sustainable with good management though they would need additional capital sources if they wanted to significantly expand the scale of their activities.

On the surface it seems that ownership of the groups by the members is strong. However some doubts have been expressed about this as many groups formed in order to qualify for a loan rather than to create solidarity and generate funds through savings. The creation of new SHGs in project villages will have to be thorough this latter route and there can be little doubts that such groups will have stronger cohesion and ownership than the 'form for loan groups' Even then almost every group met during the evaluation was confident of maintaining itself post-project.

The groups do not depend on national policies for their existence but formal recognition could strengthen them if they wish to seek formal credit at subsidised rates from banks or MFIs.

Based on cursory inspection of the records of the twenty four SHGs met during the evaluation and of those met during the Mid-term Review, it seems that they generally have the capacity to manage their current activities but, as suggested in the section on effectiveness, there is a lot of room for improvement through literacy/numeracy training and possible federation.

b. Market Coordination Teams. By general consensus among the partners and Concern these are the weakest institutions despite being financially strong through having an interest free capital fund and income from members each month.

Ownership of the teams is varied as the number of villages they serve and the mix of lending, trading, producing and market information services they undertake varies. The balance of benefit between team members and the SHG members is difficult to ascertain and no doubt varies between MCTs. However, it does seem that it is probably in favour of the team members.

The MCTs do not need policy approval or recognition. Their administrative capacity is less well clearly defined than for most other organisations and many seem to operate with very little accountability. Certainly very few of them had clear records of their business accounts or of benefits to SHGs in terms of volumes traded and price benefits. Those that claimed to have records were reluctant to show them.

There were very few examples of creative business capacity around organising producers, supply and demand management and the possibility of adding value through processing. Part of the capacity deficiency may arise from the lack of capacity in Concern and partners to 'think business' and to see marketing in terms of enabling beneficiaries to derive a major portion of their income from commercial farming and/or off farm activity.

c. Community Forest Management Committees. These committees have formal policy links through a Prakas and Dekra which had their origins in the early work of Concern in promoting community forestry in Cambodia.

By virtue of their formal recognition by Government they have the means to raise income to meet their costs through fines and the issue of permits for collection of non-timber products.

They seem to have strong ownership by villagers. Indeed in one ranking exercise with a group of 28 VAs the CFMC activity was awarded the maximum vote possible and well ahead of any other activity.

While it was not possible to judge their management capacity they should be able to develop adequately as they have support from the Forestry Administration Cantonments (FAC).

d. Partner NGOs. The agencies are dependant on external project funding. All have found some further support but this will be a recurring issue for them. It is likely to constrain their development as they are probably going to survive as project implementing contractors rather evolving into sustainable development promoters.

They are respected by all project stakeholders but this 'ownership' is of little value to them in raising financial support. They operate with government approval. The proposals of a couple of years ago to make NGO law more restrictive have been shelved but are likely to come to the front again following the next round of National elections.

Many NGOs in Cambodia have funding, reach and influence disproportionate to their membership base and public approval. This is due to the very limited development of civil society in Cambodia and the low capacity of government. This may become contentious as civil society strengthens, government capacity develops and policy about NGO roles becomes clearer.

NGO partner capacity assessments have been presented above and while the partners are now strong at administration and implementing work they lack capacity in understanding and managing sustainable development. Improvement in this latter area would markedly improve their ability to raise funds in an increasingly competitive environment.

Sustainability Summary In light of the above review of sustainability factors, and taking into consideration the independent scoring of each factor for each project result area by Concern and by each partner, the following summary table of sustainability has been created by the evaluator. Overall the assessment is quite positive.

The main points are  
From the columns:

- Finance. Cash for Work and Vulnerable Group Feeding are entirely dependant on external funding. Apart from benefits they generate most benefits should not cease due to lack of finance.
- Ownership will not be a problem for sustainability except possibly for WUGs and more likely with MCTs.
- Most benefit areas are in line with government policy. The greatest vulnerability, though probably not serious for a couple of years, is that for NGOs. Even then it is likely that they will become more regulated rather than stopped.
- Institutional capacity is close to fit for purpose for most groups but weakest in MCTs. They need radical reform to raise their impact significantly and other institutions may be more appropriate. The other institutions should be able to improve with experience.

**Table 22 Sustainability Assessment**

Project result area	Sustainability factor				
	Finance		Ownership	National or local Policy Approval	Institutional Capacity
1. VAs in VOICE	With fund	Without fund		Commune	
2. Income Generating Activities				Not necessary	
3. Social Protection					
Rice Banks				Broad approval	
Committees					
CFW & VGF				Emerging	
4. Local Institutions					
SHGS				Not necessary	
MCTs				Not necessary	
CFMCs					
WUGs*				Not necessary	
Partner NGOs				Long term uncertainty	

\* does not include evaluator input

Note. Green indicates strong confidence about sustainability, yellow indicates a good chance of sustainability and red indicates serious doubt

From the rows:

- VAs, and thus the VOICE process, seem to have a good chance of sustainability especially those which have their own funds. Inevitably performance will vary depending on local leadership
- Income generating activities will continue, albeit with some failures. However, without some institutional development of apex bodies, performance will not improve significantly
- Social protection. Rice banks will continue as long as needed. The Social Protection Committees will face problems which will cause some to fail unless they get external support. CFW and VGF will only take place where there is external support
- Of the local institutions the SHGS and CFMCs have good prospects for continuance while the MCTs and WUGs are weak. The WUGs have very focussed needs with big benefits for members and so will probably survive. The utility of the MCTs is under question and hence their survival is in doubt. The NGOs will continue for the next few years with their current funding projections but are vulnerable to donor practice and government policy changes

## 8. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

The monitoring process developed for this project was extremely good in promoting efficient implementation. Among its main strengths were that it was:

- logframe based
- developed with the partners
- implemented after user training
- kept up to date

- e. used in management of implementation on a very regular basis
- f. used to bring senior managers of partners and Concern into discussion together on a quarterly basis.
- g. detailed
- h. both activity and finance related
- i. used to plan changes in implementation as need arose.

As it was based on the logframe it inherited weaknesses in the logframe. These were largely related to the absence of output measures as opposed to measures for completed activities. Thus the payment of grants was well monitored but incomes arising from the grants were not monitored to any extent or with any accuracy. As the grants on the whole proved useful no major problem arose but had they proven ineffective then it would have been too late to correct the problem by the time it was discovered. Many of the people who dropped in wealth ranking suggested it had to do with failed IGAs and this would have been discovered early with better monitoring.

Whereas Concern had dedicated staff for the monitoring role the partners generally did not and so spent less time on analysing data than did Concern. Even then Concern staff members admit that they did less real time analysis than they could have done and that more would have been useful.

In terms of monitoring the project was very good subject to the caveats above. However, there were several problems with the information prepared for the evaluation. This is not to detract from the much appreciated efforts put by in by Concern and partner staff in to draw up endlines and to make information available.

The first issue was with one of the indicators used for the overall objective which stated that the 'share of poorest quintile in national consumption has increased'. This is too vague, difficult to measure and almost impossible to attribute to the project. It has therefore been ignored. A more specific objective would probably have made it easier to develop a measurable and attributable indicator.

A second issue arose with the failure of the endline team to ask the one simple question which would have indicated how many families had reduced their food insecurity. The endline did produce a range of interesting data and analysis and was useful in understanding other changes in food insecurity. In future the indicator could be broadened to demand this sort of information but the analysts must make sure they ask questions which will measure the indicator.

The main deficiencies in the endline process were that it did not

- build in controls against which to judge progress
- work with a panel process so that the same families were interviewed as at baseline and hence differences could be analysed with confidence
- include a family livelihoods survey in both endline and baseline so that various aspects of vulnerability, assets, inequality and livelihood options could be analysed together with reasons for change.

The work of the Concern M&E advisor and the Programme Support Officer would be made easier and enhanced with access to a good statistical analysis programme such as SPSS.

## **9. PHASING OUT STRATEGY**

Funding from the EU ceases at the end of December 2012 by which time it is anticipated that all activities will be complete and all funds spent. Concern will phase out of FIM work in the

area between then and the end of March 2013. It is important that a clear phase out strategy is developed and managed. It should include the following:

- formal handover of finances and physical infrastructure with clear definition of ownership
- documentation of handovers
- dissemination of relevant handover information to communes, districts, provinces and all community stakeholders
- clear statement of roles and responsibilities of all CBOs and partner agencies in ongoing management
- clear understanding of the role of Partners in Need (PIN) as they assume work with EPDO and SORF and another Concern partner, AARR, which is not an EU-NSA partner. PIN should receive copies of the phase out strategy and key handover documents.
- development of sustainable development strategies by partners This is a final piece of capacity building for them

Concern recently phased out of work in Siem Reap and Kampong Cham Provinces and did so on the basis of a comprehensive exit strategy, which is attached as Appendix 6. This can be adapted for the withdrawal from Pursat as long as it is adjusted to include all the above points and for changes in context.

The plan should be finalised by the end of December.

## **10. COHERENCE WITH CONCERN POLICIES**

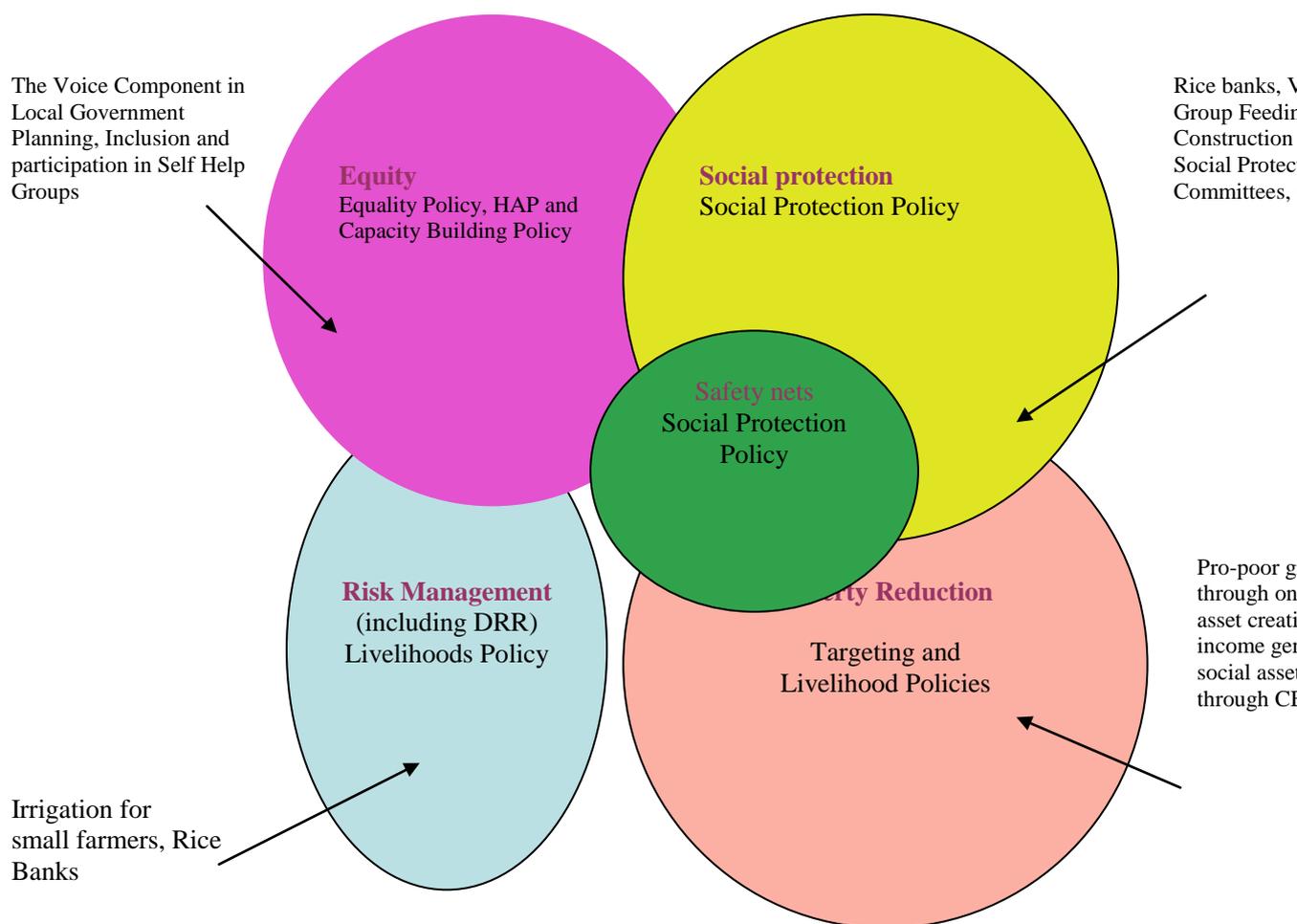
The project was specifically designed to reduce the vulnerability of the poorest people in rural areas in Pursat Province; to improve their assets and the return obtained on them; and to give these people a voice in the local planning process which determines their access to government policies and resources. It thus mirrors very closely the thinking in the document 'How Concern Understands Poverty' and addresses the three key elements of vulnerability, assets and equality.

The targeting of benefits to very poor people has been very good and care was taken to ensure that steps were taken to meet the needs of destitute people. This is in line with Concern's Social Protection Policy. The progress made in reducing food insecurity was striking and especially so for households headed by women and for households in the lowest economically active category. The levels of food insecurity experienced by these groups are now almost identical to those of the rest of the community having been much worse at the start of the project. Such benefit creation achieves the purposes of Concern's Equality Policy and especially the gender aspects of it.

The poorest people were assisted to form Self Help Groups and to plan for their own economic development. This brought a high level of participation as did the formation of a series of community based organisations such as Rice Bank Committees, Social Protection Committees and Village Associations. It also created a great deal of social capital. The involvement of the SHGs and VAs in the preparation of Village Plans and piloting them through the Commune Councils brought much inclusion and improved political processes. All of this approach and the creation of assets to improve incomes follow Concern's Livelihoods Policy very closely.

Overall the good coherence with Concern Policies with can be summed up in Figure 4

**Figure 4 Project Coherence with Concern Policies**



After Grosh, M., del Ninno, C., Tesliuc, E. and Ouerghi, A. (2008). For Protection and Promotion: The Design and Implementation of Effective Safety Nets. Washington, DC: World Bank.

## 11. LESSONS LEARNED

The following points were cited by the partners as problems for which they need to find solutions.

- a. Canal planning takes a long time involving slow design and negotiation processes with local government. It may be speeded up by delegating design to the local authority. At least one year's lead time should be allowed between starting negotiation and starting work.
- b. When an emergency, such as flooding, occurs during project implementation it can have a major negative effect on project implementation. This may be due to the disruption caused by the event but also a response project may have to be started and then competes with the original project for staff time. The difficulty can be reduced in several ways
  - use cash for food instead of doing food distribution
  - use an external agency such as an MFI to do the cash distribution

- make contingency plans on how to reallocate some management staff to the new project so that both projects are well managed even when additional staff are hired
- c. Environmental shocks such as poultry disease and drought can be very negative. For each risk a risk minimisation plan should be developed. By way of example the recurring chicken problem can be reduced by vaccination and keeping birds inside. It can be further reduced by selling all chickens before the onset of the rains when disease is likely. It is in this area of risk assessment and management that DRR analysis tools can be useful.
- d the guidelines for MCTs were not clear and this led to a lot of confusion and variation in practice. Much of this issue relates to a lack of clarity about what the MCTs were supposed to achieve and how realistic it was. This was related to a lack of clarity about whether the agencies wanted to see income generation as a small supplement to on-farm livelihoods or a replacement for them. The underlying cause is probably that neither Concern nor the partners had any real business experience or understanding. It is important that this skill deficit is addressed in any future income generating project work.
- e. There has been a lot of staff turnover especially in EPDO with a lot of their good staff members being recruited by the USAID funded HARVEST project. The cutbacks by Concern in anticipation of withdrawal also led to staff changes but the replacement staff members were well qualified and this probably did not affect the project very much. Staff turnover is always likely to be a problem with project funded work and part of the answer lies in having good terms and conditions for long contract core staff. Another useful tactic is to give an impermanency allowance to project staff but pay it only if the contract is completed.
- f. Some of the M&E formats were quite complicated and staff found it difficult to understand them. It was agreed that in time they learned how to use them. It was also agreed that the system improved efficiency a great deal. The lesson seems to be that it is important to have good M&E and that it must be adequately resourced. Front line staff can provide data and analyse some of it but there must be some back up resources to do a lot of the real time monitoring and analysis for decision making.

It was interesting that of the six points raised five were linked to issues relating to internal administration and management and only one – environmental risk management – was a programme issue. This is reflective of the situation that capacity building has focussed on administrative and financial management and implementing issues rather than on programme development issues. It is significant that the biggest lapse on the part of the partner agencies is that none of them have developed a sustainable development plan for their area which considers the following main issues.

- What link should be developed with the District/Province?
- How to raise finance for SHGs – savings, grants, donor loans, MFIs/banks. Should they start with savings only and no grants ever? That way they could replicate easily.
- Which assets are most lacking and limiting for the different wealth categories in the villages? Possibly literacy and numeracy for leadership? How best to address them?
- What IGAs are best for your area?
- How can people organise for effective strength – SHGs into Federations, producers into producer cooperatives for inputs, training, credit and marketing?
- How can best use be made of government agencies for technical training?
- How can NGOs phase out totally?
- How can the landless be helped in addition to business?
- What responses, such as training for employment outside the village, would assist the landless?
- The possible role of health and crop insurance
- The best balance of pro –poor growth; risk minimisation; equity generation through VOICE; and social protection including safety nets (see Figure 4 above)
- Thought on their long term role in helping to develop Government capacity

These sorts of issues are core to the process of enabling poor people to escape from poverty and should be addressed before embarking on further projects. The development of an agency strategy should involve discussions with villagers and CBOs. Any strategy should also be open to ongoing review and to setting targets for learning by trying more than one approach in a project.

It was also interesting that partners did not list positives in their learning. For example the villagers were very clear that they had grown hugely in confidence through the VOICE Training and it was palpable. They also were clear on what contributed most to positive change for them as outlined in the efficiency and effectiveness section. One of the most interesting points to emerge during the evaluation was that many people consider that the development and growth of leadership has underpinned progress in all project result areas. This is significant for two reasons. The first is that it emerged in several discussions when other answers were being sought and can thus be judged to be important and internalised in beneficiaries. The second is that it is a 'soft' achievement as opposed to more tangible items such as a canal or rice bank. It is also a real capacity achievement of which the project should be proud.

Not enough time has been invested in analysing positive achievements and their causes so that good achievements can be repeated in future work

## **12. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**Conclusions** The project was efficiently implemented and was good from the point of view of effectiveness and impact. There has been good progress in pro-poor growth based on training and asset provision and this had led to improved and diversified livelihoods for many families. As almost one family in twelve dropped in wealth ranking greater attention should be paid in future work to identifying lower risk strategies for landless and very vulnerable families.

The achievements in reducing food insecurity and improving wealth rankings are impressive and have contributed a great deal to reductions in vulnerability. While there are questions over some aspects of benefit and institutional sustainability the outlook is quite good and above average for this type of project.

Participation by, and accountability to, beneficiaries was good and has resulted in a lot of human and social capital development.

The project has made a significant contribution to the practical development of the Local Planning Process in the Project Communes.

The capacity of community based organisations and the local NGOs developed well during the project but there are still deficits which should be addressed. The key organisations for consolidation of project gains and for ongoing development are the SHGS.

The monitoring system was good as far as it went but was hampered somewhat by deficiencies in the logframe on which it was based. The deficiencies should have been identified in the approval process within Concern and the European Union.

**Recommendations** These recommendations should be considered along with the recommendations from the studies in July 2012 on Social protection and Value Chains. These other recommendations are attached as Appendix 7.

9. VOICE
  - Document clearly the benefits coming to Village Associations from their involvement in the Local Planning Process. This should include changes in knowledge, resource gathering and influence. Use this information to plan the next strategies for VOICE.
10. Influence
  - Complete the documentation of the impressive effectiveness and impact of the programme in the four result areas. Quite a lot has already been documented in case studies, reviews and the July studies. The case studies should include evidence.
  - Disseminate the information widely to other NGOs and in forums and use it for advocacy influence with government and donors.
11. Income generation
  - When promoting income generation there should be clarity on whether the outcomes anticipated are support to a main livelihood or the creation of a main livelihood. The strategies to be used will differ for each objective.
  - To be really effective in promoting income generation the agencies should have a staff member with good business experience or have access to such a resource on a regular basis.
  - Further develop the supply of technical training from government departments.
12. Community Based Institutions
  - The respective roles of the various organisations and their relationship to each other should be clarified. This should be to ensure that the most strategic organisation is the SHG which built on solidarity. Other organisations provide support to the SHGs.
  - The process whereby an SHG qualifies for a loan fund, if at all, should be clarified. There is evidence from other projects that SHGS which raise funds solely from savings are strong.
  - To improve participation and build a broader leadership base, attempts should be made to enhance human capital by training in basic literacy and numeracy using a method similar to 'REFLECT'.
  - Consider the formation of an SHG Federation to enable SHGS to learn from each other and gain benefits of scale in sourcing materials.
  - Consider the formation of commune or district producer groups to enable producers to get benefits of scale in input purchase, technical expertise, marketing and processing. Such groups would exist solely for the benefit of producers and would replace the MCTs.
13. Monitoring and Evaluation
  - More monitoring of outputs e.g. rice yield increases, IGA results.
  - More ongoing analysis of monitoring data.
  - Include household livelihood surveys in the baseline and endline and carry them out with the same families. Include control families in the lines.
14. Sliding families
  - Identify them by closer monitoring through SHGs of failing enterprises and families suffering health shocks/deaths.
  - Develop write off policies for such families where the fault is not theirs.
  - Develop non-entrepreneurial strategies for the landless which could include training for non-exploitative employment.
15. Partners' management ability.
  - Partners should each develop a comprehensive strategy for sustainable development in their work area before the end of the phase out period. This should include thought on their long term role in helping to develop Government capacity and strengthen Civil Society.
  - Give more responsibility to partners to manage the higher levels of the logframe.
16. Contingency Planning.
  - Using skills learned from the DRR training any future intervention should include contingency planning for likely shocks such as floods or droughts. Such plans should include response management plans so that the effect on ongoing work is minimised.

