JOINT EVALUATION OF DCA/CA
CAMBODIA PROGRAMME
List of Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AC</td>
<td>Active Citizenship</td>
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<tr>
<td>ADHOC</td>
<td>Cambodian Human Rights and Development Organisation</td>
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<td>ART</td>
<td>Action Research Team</td>
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<td>CA</td>
<td>Christian Aid</td>
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<td>CCA</td>
<td>Climate Change Adaptation</td>
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<td>CCC</td>
<td>Cooperation Committee for Cambodia</td>
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<td>CCFC</td>
<td>Coalition of Cambodian Farmer Communities</td>
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<td>CCIM</td>
<td>Cambodia Center for Independent Media</td>
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<td>CDP</td>
<td>Commune Development Plan</td>
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<td>CDWN</td>
<td>Cambodian Domestic Workers Network</td>
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<td>CEDAW</td>
<td>Convention to End All Forms of Discrimination Against Women</td>
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<td>CIP</td>
<td>Commune Investment Plan</td>
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<tr>
<td>COP</td>
<td>Conference of the Parties (of the UNFCCC, in this case)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Danida</td>
<td>Danish International Development Assistance</td>
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<td>DCA</td>
<td>DanChurchAid</td>
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<tr>
<td>DIPECHO</td>
<td>‘Disaster Preparedness ECHO’ (ECHO is European Commission's Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department)</td>
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<td>DRR</td>
<td>Disaster Risk Reduction</td>
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<td>ELC</td>
<td>Economic Land Concession</td>
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<td>FS</td>
<td>Food Security</td>
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<td>GADC</td>
<td>Gender and Development Cambodia</td>
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<td>GPP</td>
<td>NGO Governance &amp; Professional Practice (program of CCC)</td>
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<td>HAP</td>
<td>Humanitarian Accountability Partnership</td>
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<td>IDEA</td>
<td>Independent Democracy of Informal Economy Association</td>
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<td>LANGO</td>
<td>Law on Associations and NGOs</td>
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<td>LICADHO</td>
<td>Cambodian League for the Protection and Defense of Human Rights</td>
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<td>LWD</td>
<td>Life With Dignity (formerly LWF)</td>
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<td>MOEYS</td>
<td>Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports</td>
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<td>MOLVT</td>
<td>Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training</td>
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<td>MOWA</td>
<td>Ministry of Women Affairs</td>
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<td>RGC</td>
<td>Royal Government of Cambodia</td>
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<td>RO</td>
<td>Regional (country) office of DCA</td>
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<td>RtF</td>
<td>Right to Food</td>
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<td>UNFCCC</td>
<td>UN Framework Convention on Climate Change</td>
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Notes to the Reader:

1) The evaluation agrees to findings and recommendations of the two programme reviews (FS in 2012, AC in 2014). It will not repeat identical findings except when it can add new elements and it does not repeat recommendations, except where it can add more specifics.

2) The evaluation found the overall performance of the programmes to be very satisfactory. For the reason of providing sufficient explanation to the recommendations, the text below puts much emphasis on unexplored opportunities and how they may be explored in the future country programme and only more briefly describes results.

3) The evaluation team is aware that some recommendations go beyond what is contained in the current experience and skills in the mainstream NGO community Cambodia. These recommendations on the other hand are put forward in order to meet the strong societal challenges, which have remained unaltered for a long time, but increasingly seem to be under transformation. Experiences and skills in Cambodia to implement the recommendations are available in Cambodia. The issue is to organize it.
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  3. Some considerations on building large organisations of rural people and DCA roles herein
  4. The Participation Ladder
Recommendations for Future Action

These are the main recommendations. Each is detailed in the main text.

1. Continue integration of livelihoods and AC programmes, with the double aims of:
   a. Effectively support emergence and building of powerful, sustainable organisations for livelihoods improvements, advocacy and as schools in good (internal) governance. They are of and by rural poor and include branches for women and youth.
   b. Support livelihoods improvements for social activists.
2. Increase the attention and support given to organisational development in key partners, especially those that include development of networks of rights holders, on the path to become complex organisations.
   a. Develop likely ‘change pathways’ for this support, in line with the expected adoption of overall ‘Theory of Change’ approaches. Do so in a continued, participatory process.
   b. Use these pathways and their steps to gauge progress and modify the process, based on learning and changing context.
3. Emphasize, in work with partners, the need for them to become more connected to movements and citizens in Cambodia, to develop their constituencies and funding based upon this. Follow up continuously.
4. Reduce the number of partners, based on cessation of the focus (through a partner) on gender-based violence, geographic and thematic concentration through cessation of activities in Ratanakiri and a move away from implementation through second tier partners (partners of partners).
5. Adopt water governance as a focal area that integrates immediate livelihoods issues, strong rights- and governance issues and advocacy connected hereto as well as DRR and CCA. Focus on community, commune and district levels.
6. Continue international advocacy on human rights, land rights, climate change, gender issues and potentially include water governance.
7. Support activism on land rights and other issues with use of smartphones for recording of geo- and time-referenced documentation (pictures, video and sound), and support general awareness and knowledge about security in the use of smartphones, social media and Internet.
8. In order to sharpen the focus on participation, use the ‘participation’ ladder to score activities and initiatives and seek higher levels of participation, whenever possible.
Executive summary

Context: The programme period saw dramatic events in Cambodia, following the latest national election, ending with a seemingly return to the old. The pressure for change is increasing however, and there is strong needs to build capacity and foundations for lasting positive development. CS has a key role in this.

Achievements: The DCA/CA programmes have adapted well to the changes in the context, in line with the programme mid-term reviews undertaken. There is strong support to human rights activities and advocacy, the work on land rights have built stronger activists and communities and can record some (partial) victories. Strong support has been provided to independent media and the development of communication through social media, which also (unlike many traditional projects) reaches large portions of the youth population.

There is (local, in project areas) progress on access to information, reduction in gender-based violence and access to public funds for women and children.

Work on national advocacy has seen some positive results, such as the non-passing of the law on agricultural land management and the passing of positive laws on disaster management law and migration, support to development of the RGC position at the UNFCCC COPs, as well as changes in three critical articles in LANGO.

The LANGO on the other hand is but one tool in tightening government (governing party – as the de facto government) grip on power. Civil society response to the tightening calls for changes in some approaches and also for an even more increased support to networks and social movements, especially those that may provide long-term pull in direction of accountability and other elements of participatory, democratic governance and not least, those that attract youth. The support may be in many forms: legal representation, organisational development be it in a networks or more formal structures, communications, livelihoods support to activists etc., but probably the most important could be provision of lessons learned from similar activities in DCA/CA focus countries or those of peer organisations.

International advocacy has been supported through e.g. work with RGC on Climate Change policy, advocacy against an especially bad case of Economic Land Concession, which initially benefited under an EU programme, advocacy on the CEDAW implementation. There is also good international network with NGOs on DRR and CCA.

The support to agricultural improvements is found to be too piecemeal and do not live up to best practices in Cambodia, also not in building sustainable local CBOs. This is regrettable, as the country has a pressing need for many active rural citizens and strong organisations for and by the rural poor, which could be built based on skills development in livelihoods.

Partnerships: DCA/CA has an extensive partner base, which represents the full range of both programmes as well as the Regional Migrants’ Rights Programme. The partners find DCA/CA very supportive; not only as reliable and flexible funders, but also as somebody you can talk with and find practical solutions. This makes DCA/CA stand out among donor-NGOs.
Partners in Cambodia are highly reliant on donor funding and organisational development has been partly directed towards capacity development in this area. Donors are however, withdrawing from Cambodia. The limits, in terms of scale and scope, to a CS that is largely providing ‘contract work’ for donors is becoming obvious, in the changing context. This has implications for DCA/CA partner practices and they have been moving in direction of changes on this point. It also has implication for local NGOs that will need to establish better roots and support within Cambodia, through memberships, support groups and the like. Some of the DCA/CA partners (e.g. CCIM and CCC) are very well aware of this and are taking concrete steps to address it.

**Impact:** At the *individual level* the positive impact of the programme is obvious. Many, already strong activists and NGO leaders have gained additional strength and skills. They have also experienced to be treated as equals, which is not always the case in dealing with donors.

The support to agricultural improvements has only limited and local impact. It is in need of different approaches, based on exploratory, participatory learning of sustainable agriculture, with concurrent development of strong CBOs and capacity to deal with markets. Enhancement of Cambodia’s agricultural sector requires addressing agricultural and trade/business policies and market dynamics. In the Cambodian context with stiff competition from agriculture in neighbouring countries, it may be a starting point to improve local markets first, before moving to more difficult levels. One challenge along the way may be the interface between agricultural development and the laws and policies that govern it. This is two-sided; it may promote development if an organisation of rural communities/farmers is recognised, but it may also lead to being overtaken by a combination of corrupt businesses and politicians/government representatives.¹

At the institutional level, many CSOs have obtained better management and skills. Capacity has also been built in some government agencies, such as districts and commune in access to information and in disaster management.

It is impossible to separate the wider societal impact of the programmes from overall trends. The programmes have certainly contributed to positive legal developments. DCA/CA support to land-rights in all likelihood has also contributed to some victories, all of which still need to be carefully defended. The increasingly tight grip of the ruling party on all elements of governance finds many expressions. On this background it is difficult to point to general successes for rights-holders increasingly enjoying *upholding of their rights or duty bearers better performing their duties*. The government is only in limited ways accountable to the people and does not uphold rights/interests of the people on the most important issues. As several DCA/CA partners were instrumental in the public advocacy event following the 2013 elections, it is fair to ascribe some of the partial success in this field to the programmes. The fact that such powerful expression of public opinion took place has long-term impact, both on the governing party and its reactions, and in terms of increased confidence of the population in the power in their solidarity.

**Sustainability:** The results at institutional level are impressive in the very difficult context. Because of this context and its lack of stability it would be guesswork to gauge the durability of the institutional effects of the programmes. At the *individual level* the strengthening of the activists, through their

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¹ Africa (Tanzania, Uganda and other countries) provides less fortunate cases of this
(partial) successes, their increased strength through networking and capacity building appears to be sustainable if they can uphold decent livelihoods together with their activism. At the societal level the situation appears transitional. With the impact of the programmes at limited scale it is guesswork to assess its sustainability.

**Way forward:** The pressing need for involvement of large number of active, rural citizens involved in local rural development and for improved livelihoods and in advocacy for their rights calls for 'strong medicine'. The evaluation finds that there are very good preconditions (based on the experience of many farmers, communities and NGO-workers) to support emergence and growth of large organisations of and by rural communities that over time may well be able fill a large part of this need.

Their networks and other forms of organisations must include special fora/organisations for women, landless households and for the youth. They will need continuous and well-informed support to their development, in order to maintain democracy and avoid the many pitfalls along the way. The skills for this do not exist within the existing partner group, possibly with the (future?) exception of CCC.

DCA/CA has suggested *water governance* as a focal area. It is critical for food security (e.g. as in fishing, irrigation for agriculture or provision of clean drinking water), and has very central governance problems at its roots. It also connects directly to CCA and DRR, and the field is home to some powerful and very capable regional and international NGOs (e.g. International Rivers Network), and good practices can be found in some neighbouring countries. For DCA/CA it would increase synergies between the thematic activities, between some partners, and connect advocacy at the local and national levels.

The good experiences with *international advocacy* on the issue of land grabs should be expanded into the field of investments and their screening, possibly in collaboration with an experienced peer organisation, or from within DCA/CA’s network in the ACT Alliance or ACT Alliance EU (formerly APRODEV). In the increasingly global access to information international advocacy and information availability becomes ever more powerful. Investors’ growing concern for CSR could be exploited. The success in international gender advocacy should be followed up and expanded.

The programmes need better attention to youth issues. There is however a lack of formalised (and even of less formal) partners in this area. With this in mind and considering the strong tradition of DCA/CA to work through partners, it appears the best way to strengthen the youth element may be: a) youth associations for farming communities, as part of the rural organisations, b) increased support to movements, as they emerge, c) continued support to independent media and other that use social media.

**New technologies:** There is a need to strengthen partners’ strategic use of social media and ICT for better quality monitoring, documentation, networking and advocacy. Part of this is being able to take geo- and time-referenced pictures on site, in order to strengthen evidence in advocacy and potentially in court cases. It could also save/improve efforts in monitoring of activities.

Cambodia lacks mechanisms for leaking of information. It could be very useful in advocacy.

Several partners are very active in developing and applying social media in information sharing and advocacy. The use of social media appears to be in no need of further support, but security around it is. Some partners have experience and capacity, and DCA could help spread this skill set to other partners.
Methodology

The review was conducted in a highly participatory manner. Participation involved open consultations with staff and project participants when the consultants sought information or viewpoints, as well as open discussion of initial findings and recommendations, 'along the way' and during the debriefing in order to 'test and refine' them and make them of optimal use for DCA/CA Cambodia. The consultant appreciated the inclusion of DCA/CA staff on the team, which contributed to the participatory approach. The team left it to the Cambodian members to ask most of the questions during field visits, with team leader only following and adding if anything was found missing. This serves to make atmosphere less formal and also makes it clear to the groups being interviewed that the person asking knows the context. The sequence of questions always included elements of triangulation, sometimes in a more informal chat after a session.

Key points for early drafts of debriefing notes was developed jointly with participating DCA/CA staff. The consultants were solely responsible for all elements of the final report.

The consultant added (to the ToR) emphasis on two issues;

- In the overall context: How societal changes in Cambodia (increasing numbers of youth, increasing political activity, emerging middle class, outside influences, reduced donor attention) are being handled by partners, and in how far and in which ways does DCA/CA assist them in this respect.

- Regarding Sustainability: It may be useful to also look into Partners' possible growth as self-governed, self-financed, locally rooted organizations, moving away from donor dependency (as indicated in lessons learnt from the Active Citizenship programme).

Work at Country Office level:

Initial review of existing documents (such as programme documents, programme reports, monitoring reports, project and partner evaluations, evaluation of the migrant worker programme, etc.) took place very early in the assignment and observations from this process were used in first round of interviews and discussions with DCA/CA management and staff in Phnom Penh. In these interviews the consultant sought to obtain additional (to secondary information) insights especially into the issues relating to outcomes, coherence, country programming, sustainability and context. The consultants also sought impressions and information about progress towards outcomes of the projects, as well as other aspects the stakeholders wish to cover, prior to initiation of the fieldwork in the identified provinces.

Towards the end of the assignment the team worked with DCA/CA management and representatives on the issues related to the move towards country programming and more strategic directions in advocacy.

Field work:

Selection of partners and project to be visited was agreed with DCA/CA, taking into account that the same two main consultants in the team also visited DCA in Cambodia one year ago.

Themes and conducts of FGDs were chosen to encourage free information flow, with mainly open-ended questions and issues.
Gender: The review addressed the issue of gender at field level, through interviews, FGDs and direct observations, in one case in gender-specific FGDs. It also identified gender-relevant information and themes in monitoring reports, intermediary reports and in interviews with partner s and other stakeholders, at national and local levels.

1 Relevance

The programmes and their strategies are by and large relevant to the target groups and their needs. As will be discussed further in sections 5 and 6 there may be scope for better addressing structural causes of rights violations and continued poverty challenges. This may be possible through targeted support of stronger, more organised CS, which is based on basic livelihoods interests, but still aims at upholding and expanding human and social rights. In a context of the dominant clique thriving with land grabs, evictions and low wages this may well be a needed remedy, albeit far from simple.

The programme, as all social activities in Cambodia, has faced the challenge that the extreme poor migrate internally in the country or abroad to find income for subsistence and remittances. This, combined with the corrupt practice (in most places) of allocating status of ‘ID-poor 1 and 2’ (the extreme poor), to supporters of the ruling party makes targeting of the poorest difficult for most partners. DCA has taken steps to address this challenge, which is not yet practiced across the board.

The programmes have addressed a multitude of causes of inequality, discrimination and impoverishment, such as land grabs, gender inequality and lack of accountability and human rights violations in governance.

In some cases, the programmes have done so by a “1 to 1 response”, i.e. addressing lack of accountability by an access to public information project. While this seems logical the approach often fails to build sufficient empowerment, by relying on traditional ‘message delivery’ in capacity building and not employing methods that more effectively build confidence and activity (social capital), such as exploratory learning (see more in sections 4, 5 and 6). In other cases, livelihood partners do take a somewhat more holistic approach to empowerment such as LWD and Banteay Srei. An illustration of the alternative “ 1 to more than 1” would be delivery of capacity in livelihoods skills through one or more farmers from a strong organised community (with farmers groups, savings and marketing activities, and success in advocating the commune council), through exchange visits. This would not only cover the need of the activists for technical information (while showing in practice that it works), but also expand the inter-farmers network and build solidarity. Another example (as already applied) in the use of exchange visits and study tours. In such event both the visitor and the guests learn more, both on planned and unplanned subjects, and they form social networks that are stronger than anything obtained in typical training. The latter is expensive, but may be cost-effective in the long term. DCA/CA is already beginning to promote farmer-to-farmer learning, through exchange visits. However, it is important to note that this is DCA/CA led rather than partner initiated.

The programme strategies are fully in line with DCA’s strategic goals and in line with international human rights and humanitarian standards. They serve to strengthen several national strategies, such as deconcentration and decentralisation, disaster management, gender policy, land management and others.
The activities very closely adhere to and seek to exploit national and local frameworks. The national frameworks for human rights are weak, and getting even weaker through the passing of the LANGO. DCA/CA actively supported the campaign against this law.

In the case of commune planning a recurring/persistent problem is that social activities proposed by local people and their CBOs may make it into the commune development plan, but invariably (within the DCA/CA programme and in the overwhelming majority of cases elsewhere) are dropped in the investment plan, in which funds almost exclusively goes towards infrastructure. The social activities are then left for NGOs to pick up in the district integration workshops, meaning the NGOs may serve as gap-fillers for government. The ruling party then claims the results. There exist however, some important examples (such as CEDAC/FNN; which were much stronger until recent changes in their strategies, and partly Srer Khmer) in Cambodia, of community organisations being able to set agendas in dealing with the commune councils. It requires well-organised, inclusive and empowered CBOs (See 6.1).

The **programme objectives** of:

1. Rural communities affected by food insecurity become more resilient to economic and environmental shocks and stresses that impact on their livelihoods and access to food;
2. Rural communities affected by food insecurity are empowered to claim their rights to land and other productive resources, and to services essential to livelihoods;
3. Government structures increase their accountability, transparency and openness to dialogue, and implement policies for sustainable and equitable rural development; and
4. Programme Partner’s capacities, advocacy and networking strengthened in support of Programme objectives.

And

1. Target communities experience reduced vulnerability to gender based violence and other human rights abuses through improved prevention, documentation and provision of appropriate services and assistance;
2. Target communities increase participation and influence in decision-making on social, economic and political affairs contributing to more accountable governance and more equitable development;
3. Increased accountability of the government for full range of rights, and greater openness to participation of civil society in decision-making; and
4. Programme partners’ capacity, advocacy and networking strengthened in support of programme objectives.

are well covered in the project (and partner) portfolio. There are several projects aimed at each objective, there has been continuous attention to each and there have been positive developments in the support to each partner and objective, through learning and timely attention to the learned. Some project designs have been changed along the way, e.g. funding from Salling to Banteay Srei (from buying a piece of land for demonstration to general training). The support to LICADHO in the Danida Innovative
Partnerships project was modified based on experiences and the support to CCIM has been modified in light of changing needs.

In the absence of an aggregated monitoring report that mentions this aspect, the team found it not possible within the given time frame to assess whether disaggregated data were used strategically, neither in targeting, nor in interventions.

The evaluation finds that even if participatory approaches are praised by DCA/CA and partners and more often than not also practised; they are not always followed sufficiently ‘on the ground’. This may be because of convenience or lack of experience with these methods that are alien to formal Cambodian public life. The work on ensuring accountability to the rights holders has some initial results, but there is still considerable work to do (see also in 2.1 and 6.2 about partnerships). CCFC has introduced procedures for sharing work program and budget information with the communities.

Within the Active Citizenship programme there is clearly good targeting, not least due to the partners’ extensive experience. Similarly good targeting is found within the land-rights aspects of the FS programme (most likely based on the good networking of the partners); activists and communities in need are supported and participation of others from the community is actively pursued. This however, meets the reality of patron-client relations. The land grabs often are arranged through the channels of the ruling party (the de facto state). As formal leaders in the community almost invariable are members of this, many protests against the land grabs are ascribed to the ‘opposition’, which in the eyes of the ruling party means those who want to take over the state power and the privileges associated with this. Hence the formal leaders (duty bearers) try their best to suppress the activities of the land rights activists. This is hard to overcome, but has been done in other communities, starting out with ‘innocent’ agricultural and marketing activities.

In such activities (livelihoods for the sake of livelihoods), undertaken under the FS programme the group of beneficiaries (as observed in the field visits) appeared to be together mainly for the purpose of the project and its inputs. The prevalence of migration (See about targeting in section 1) makes this issue more complicated. Still, better targeting practices than the ones observed have been developed in Cambodia, and their experiences can be tapped (e.g. a GTZ (GIZ) manual for targeting, developed around 2004). The central issue likely is the level of true participation in the capacity building/skills development and the group formation. The most convenient approach in capacity building is that of ‘message delivery.’ During field visits the traces of this could be observed several times: The ADHOC support to land rights activism in Banteay Meanchey has included hands-on support (very useful) and capacity building. The activists readily admitted NOT to remember anything from the latter, when asked for details. In ADOVIRs work with farmers in Battambang, an agricultural officer had introduced the main new technology. He had only learned about it in a training session and never practiced it. In conversations with the farmers who had adopted the technology, they expressed that they would

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2 An interesting exception was observed in Svay Rieng, where the village chairman obviously was very active against the land grab. Another is a network of community fishery activists, who petitioned to central government and national assembly. Some commune councillors participated.

3 The term ‘Capacity Building’ in itself is quite non-participatory; it implies that one party builds the capacity of the other and knows what needs to be built; it does not recognise that learning goes both ways, and new ideas and practices best are developed in common.
actually prefer to learn from an experienced farmer (e.g. as trained by CEDAC/FNN) who is practicing sustainable, multipurpose farming. They had heard about this. In participatory, exploratory learning participants are asked to find solutions by themselves, doing experiments (which may be suggested or developed by participants). They experience successes through finding the right solutions. Often this is combined with formats where decisions on what to do is taken in groups and defended towards/discussed with other groups. This builds empowerment, and can for example have strong mechanisms in building more equal gender relations, and empower women. This is in contrast to more simple and often used lecturing on e.g. women’s rights. Participatory, exploratory learning is quite straightforward to apply in practical training, and requires some more creativity in e.g. passing of legal information. The approach will be very suited in finding ways of implementing the observation from the FS review: ‘There is a need to sharpen (disaster) response initiatives with a view toward increasing innovation’ and the evaluation would add; this approach sharpens innovation and creative approaches in all respects, and it is needed also in DRR, CCA and development of social movements. Experiences from large scale programmes that have applied this concept (inspired by e.g. Paolo Freire and his Pedagogy of the Oppressed⁴), such as the regional IPM programmes in Asia which were joint government-donor programmes, and covered most Southeast and South Asian countries in the late 1990s (and now continuing for government funds or as grassroots rural organisations in several of those countries), show that many rural people that graduate from this kind of skills development initiative build organisations and continue the exploratory learning when addressing wider societal issues while actively advocating for rights.

Within the programmes, synergy has been promoted through partner platforms, through exposure visits within Cambodia and two very successful exposure visits to a neighbour province in Thailand. At implementation level, individual partners mainly implement the projects as stand-alone. This is no fault of DCA/CA, but rather a result of the dominant project funding landscape, combined with partner priorities. A notable exception is the land rights activities, which to a large extent have been able to obtain assistance from partners in the AC programme. This may be a consequence of the tradition of the main HR organisations to provide free services to anyone in need, but is still commendable.

The DCA/CA have made progress in promoting synergy between the FS programme and the AC programme. This is mainly visible through the livelihoods support to active citizens in the FS programme. The FS programme has a strong element of rights, by including advocacy for land rights, where also partners from the AC programme play important roles. DCA/CA has however, not sufficiently attempted to develop the food security activities using approaches that promote autonomous advocacy on more general livelihoods issues that are affecting any rural community (health, education, water etc.). The general advocacy activities of course do provide some skills in advocacy. The point is that methods used in FS skills development not sufficiently entice participants to go ‘outside the box’ and are less effective than best practices in providing the courage to do so. This

⁴ People’s Action for Change, which was a partner in RtF from 2013 – mid 2015 was very focused on Freirean concepts. They worked closely with grassroots groups, including FNN (under the cross-sector network). Cross-sector network members conducted an exchange visits to Southern Thailand using funding from DCA/CA to learn about experience of land rights activists there.
may be ascribed to the absence of a partner that has this skill set. It does however; still represent a missed (so far?), strategic opportunity. (See further in section 6).

The programme strategies and the way they were implemented have contributed well to implementation of the rights-based approach, which has become firmly rooted in all partners. Despite progress (e.g. through the work of the partners GADC and CDWN), there are still considerable challenges, in the very patriarchal tradition of Cambodia.

Assessment matrix, for the work carried out in relation to DCA policies:

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<tr>
<th>DCA Policy goals</th>
<th>Results in Cambodia Programmes</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>RtF 1</strong>: Rights holders in rural communities can access knowledge, services and inputs necessary to secure livelihoods, and can access social protection schemes in situations where governments do not fulfill their obligations. At household, community and national levels, equitable access to food is achieved by also addressing social and cultural barriers.</td>
<td>Some communities have received knowledge on public services (API project), agricultural methods (DPA; LWD), savings (DPA; LWD), but through efforts of the programme, not because duty bearers are delivering. There is no equitable access to food.</td>
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<td><strong>RtF 2</strong>: Rights holders are empowered to fight for their rights and understand how to counter the dynamics of exclusion. They can use this knowledge to become engaged in and influence decision making processes and budget allocations to gain control of productive resources (including land, water, livestock, inputs and knowledge) to secure income generation for sustainable and resilient livelihoods.</td>
<td>Rights holders are obviously empowered on the – key-land rights issue and have influenced decision making, also through support from HR NGOs. Very limited access to public budgets despite formal systems that exist. There are still some contextual obstacles for them, especially for women to participate in fighting for their right due to insufficient support from their husbands and they face difficulty in livelihood.</td>
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<td><strong>RtF 3</strong>: Governments take on their obligations to respect, protect and fulfill the right to food by creating an inclusive framework, establishing adequate institutions and monitoring mechanisms. In times of disaster, governments should ensure timely assistance as stipulated in the Voluntary Guidelines endorsed by the UN Committee on World Food Security.</td>
<td>Government does not take on these obligations. Disaster response is improving, but the official side of it is often left to Cambodian Red Cross, which is tightly linked to the ruling party.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>RtF 4</strong>: DCA, partner organizations and Action of Churches Together Alliance (ACT alliance) are transparent and accountable, document violations of the right to food and actively advocate for governments to fulfill their obligations regarding the right to food.</td>
<td>DCA and partners very much do so.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Active Citizenship policy; thematic priorities**

| AC - Direct Participation of Poor Men and Women in Local Governance | Everybody can vote, participation beyond that is severely limited. Some activist groups seek participation at commune level. Budget almost invariable not used to support their proposals. |
| AC - Women’s Political Participation | Everybody has the right to vote, but women are under-represented at all level, the more the higher the level. Tradition that limits women’s participation in under change, albeit slowly. |
The programme has actively supported this change, as well as women’s participation in politics. There is still discrimination against women in Commune Councils. Women councillors have less opportunity to show their capacity in public within their community.

**AC - Equal Participation in Elections**

Formally this is in order. There are widespread violations. DCA/CA actively supported demands by mass movements for fair vote counting in latest elections. However, women are underrepresented in representative bodies. Few women stand for office and the public vote more for men. Recent electoral reforms (prior to 2013 election) effectively disenfranchised the migrant population by requiring voters to return to home province to vote. The cost of doing so is prohibitive for many, particularly those whose interests are underrepresented.

**AC - Space for Citizen Action**

The programme actively supports the defence and expansion of this space, even in an increasingly repressive context.

**AC - Accountable and Equitable Public Services**

Public services are very few in Cambodia. Almost all programme activities try and improve the accountability and equitability, despite difficult conditions.

**AC - Dialogue between conflicting groups**

There is no current open conflict, except between political parties. The programme (through partners) is very active in promoting dialogue in this. A possible internal conflict is lurking, that of persecution of ethnic Vietnamese in Cambodia.

**AC - Equal Participation in Private Sector Funded Initiatives**

The programme has actively (and successfully) supported communities that were exclude by a large private investment. The problem is however, growing.

**AC - Strengthening Associations**

The programmes have actively strengthened networks and associations of land rights activists, rural producers and among NGOs, and informal sector groups (e.g. CDWN, CYN).

**Programme Policy on Gender; Gender equality focus**

**Equal rights for women and men**

Formally recognised. The programmes work actively to implement. Both men and women have equal right to participate in the program. Most of GADC target areas have shown significant increase of integration women and children issues in CIP. And the context has also changed, with some communes including women and children issues in CIP. Budget allocation for CCWC has also increased. The problem or limitation is the effectiveness of implementation of CIP and function of CCWC.

**Women’s participation in decision making at all levels**

See above. Women formally participate in decision making at all levels.

**Men more active in working towards gender equality**

Good effects among activists, but still challenges. Main obstacle for women is insufficient support from their husbands to participate in all project activities. It is due to cultural constraint that women have to prepare food for their families, not spend much time out of home. The sharing of house work is however, also increased in some target communities and the men also increase support to women to participate in community activities.
Gender mainstreaming internally and externally | Active work with partners. Internally strong mainstreaming.
---|---
Specific initiatives addressing structural gender inequalities | Work with GADC and CDWN (in the regional migrant programme) is effective in this respect, but Gender Core Groups are insufficiently supported by CCs. Gender disaggregated data analysis and gender concerns were incorporated into the strategic areas of the National Youth Policy and in the strategic action plan for the policy, which is attributed to GADC’s advocacy interventions.

2 Effectiveness

2.1 Programme achievements

The achievement within each objective are assessed to be:

For FS programme:

1. Rural communities affected by food insecurity become more resilient to economic and environmental shocks and stresses that impact on their livelihoods and access to food;

   Some communities have achieved progress in reduced food insecurity through improved farming and activities such as savings. This has quite a small scale. The programme has learned and improved along the way but not all activities appear on level with best practices available in Cambodia. This finding is in line with the midterm review by DCA, in 2012. Linking to markets seem to have been strengthened in some cases, compared to the review. Some partners are in the process, with the rights-holder, to form networks, which will also include marketing activities.

2. Rural communities affected by food insecurity are empowered to claim their rights to land and other productive resources, and to services essential to livelihoods;

   In the overall, grim picture of land grabs in Cambodia, the communities supported by the programme have achieved some impressive (albeit partial) successes. These are tenuous and need continued attention.

3. Government structures increase their accountability, transparency and openness to dialogue, and implement policies for sustainable and equitable rural development; and

   Here, progress is slow or absent, as is the case for almost all efforts in this field by other development agents. The government and the ruling party (which is the de facto governance structure) have tightened central control after the 2013 election surprise. There seem to be some progress on the land issue, with some local councillors and village chairmen supporting the communities, and some cases of provincial land commission trying to uphold the law.

4. Programme Partners’ capacities, advocacy and networking strengthened in support of Programme objectives

   Clear, positive results as described further in 2.2
For AC Programme

1. **Target communities experience reduced vulnerability to gender-based violence and other human rights abuses through improved prevention, documentation and provision of appropriate services and assistance.**

   There are clear and positive results in reduction of gender-based violence in project areas, and services in this connection are improved. There may be scope for improved institutionalisation through integration of the work with the commune committee for children and women.

2. **Target communities have greater participation and influence in decision-making on social, economic and political affairs contributing to more accountable governance and more equitable development.**

   There are clear results in access to information (on fees to be paid and their sizes) in targeted communes. In all communities the participation in decision-making is mainly symbolic; CBOs can suggest activities but they are not being funded. In some target communes there is some budget for activities related to women and children.

3. **Increased accountability of government for full range of rights, and greater openness to participation of civil society in decision-making**

   Accountability of the government (ruling party) system is being reduced, through passing of laws to that effect, and not least through practices.

4. **Programme Partners’ capacities, advocacy and networking strengthened in support of Programme objectives**

   Clear, positive results as described further in 2.2

The programme framework very clearly reflects a rights-based logic, and includes rights issues also in the food security programme. During the execution a process of integration or exploration of synergies has taken place.

From evidence collected at RO, in the field and in partner interviews the RO has been effective and flexible in implementation of the two programmes. Strategic planning has been undertaken in a good mix of conceptualisation, partner consultation and final clarification. The monitoring by project officers appears to have been fruitful for DCA/CA and for partners as well. It appears a bit odd that there is no aggregated monitoring report at RO level. It may not be needed for reporting to back-donors or headquarters, but could be useful in learning (and for evaluations as part of the learning!). Monitoring of outcomes continues to be a challenge, between wanting to know as much as possible, what monitoring is actually possible (‘baselines’ is a recurring problem), a multitude of donor requirements, own wishes of learning, etc. There are many, sometimes conflicting requests and interests, and balancing this with what is practical or feasible is a recurrent problem, as in all monitoring. There seems to be a need for some renewed conceptualisation (at headquarter level), possibly in conjunction with the likely adoption of a ‘Theory of Change’ set of working approaches. This may cure some of the problems, all of which are common to donor-funded development, but will not change donor requirements. The Cambodia RO has the added burden of double reporting, to DCA and CA.
The strategic policy work on *Climate Change Adaptation* has had productive interactions with the RGC and strengthened its participation and profile in the COPs and the Cambodia Climate Change Strategic Plan and National Strategic Development Plan.

The participation in the Southern Voices on Climate Change network and the Global CS network on DR appears to be a very promising ways of furthering, through global advocacy, actual and ground level action of CCA and *Disaster Risk Reduction*. DCA/CA has promoted the Joint Principles of Adaptation (JPA) as a tool for more effective advocacy on CCA both at national and local level and published climate change manual for support of capacity building and participatory local planning, while promoting CCA/DRR mainstreaming in the development plans. At the international level DCA/CA engaged with the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction through joint CSOs statement on DRR, produced a policy brief for COP21, and influenced Cambodia Intended Nationally Determined Contribution (INDC) through shared joint CSO perspective statement.

It also jointly organizes a regional pre-COP21 process: ‘Road to Paris’, identifying a joint call and perspective for new global agreement in Paris or at COP21, and it supports and help coordinate the government and CSO delegates to participate COP21 in Paris with clear and consensus-based expectations.

DCA/CA has provided important contribution to specific *humanitarian operations*. The response has been targeted at the most vulnerable flood victims. It has been implemented through partners that are also partners for long-term development and it has been coordinated with the ACT Alliance members. In Cambodia it has been implemented in accordance with DCA humanitarian contingency plan. The humanitarian assistance delivered has been in line with the stated goals and objectives of DCA.

The AC programme can also report a success in lobbying UN Women in Geneva in November 2013 to take recommendations from the Cambodia NGO CEDAW shadow report. Most of the recommendations were then made to the Cambodian government.

The monitoring of the programmes consist of a) written information produced in predesigned formats, such annual reports from partners, follow-up reports on recommendations from mid-term and action plans from reviews, and this is combined with b) monitoring visits to partners and projects, platform meetings, which also provide impressions and information on progress and performance as well as other meetings. It appears clear to the evaluation that the country manager and the management as such is very well informed about progress, problems, issues, processes etc. and have used the information for timely action. Some programme indicators have lost relevance due to changes in the programme and are not used any more.

### 2.2 Partnerships

The DCA/CA office has an *extensive partner base*, which has been acquired over several years. There are partnership agreements with five partners. The partner base represents the full range of both programmes as well as the migration programme. In the FS programme, there is an apparent shortage of partners who aim at large-scale skills development in farming and associated marketing and building of CBUs. This appears to be due to a lack of vision towards such development, probably rooted in the usual project implementation mode. In such a mode it is difficult to develop and maintain a strategic, long-term focus, which however is required when attempting to support long-term development.
processes. Several partners in the FS programme have a clear focus on land rights, which is indeed a pressing issue for rural livelihoods.

The programme periods under evaluation has seen some reductions in number of partners, in accordance with overall DCA policy and recommendations from recent Danida review. The evaluation was able to interview one partner, which had been discontinued (CYN). The partner had full understanding for the DCA/CA decision, which was based on technical grounds.

Newer partners clearly appreciate the organisational capacity building they have been offered. One, long-time partner expressed a desire for less attention in this field. The partners platforms are viewed similarly; useful for new partners (and newer staff in old partner organisations) who also expand their networks through the platforms but less so for long-established organisations, with existing networks.

The **partners find DCA/CA very supportive**; not only as reliable and flexible funders, but also as somebody you can talk with and find practical solutions. This makes DCA/CA stand out among donor-NGOs.

Only CCIM has made significant efforts to involve supporters in funding. CCFC is developing a membership system. Such steps are important, and a strategic need for the development of all partners.

DCA/CA has taken it upon itself to introduce **accountability and transparency in partner relations with rights holders** (in line with CCC’s GPP programme). The evaluation sees this as a very positive step, as democratic and accountable governance is largely unknown in Cambodian tradition and also absent in most current practice, even among CBOs and CSOs. Nepotism, for example, is frequently found in local NGOs. Accountability and other elements of democratic governance are, for many, a desired goal, but also a practice that has to be learned, in theory but even more so in practice. This could be a future focal area for DCA/CA, but will require additional and partly new skills (see section 6). The programme has supported the partner IDEA in developing by-laws. This is a commendable step, and points to a potential deepening of the organisational support needed. Some current partners have plans of venturing into business, alongside growing as member-based CS organisation. This is like mixing oil and water. It may be done, but requires skill and constant attention, and some additives (governance tools and mechanisms) may help. Even then, it is only one of typical challenges facing constituency-based organisations as they develop (See more in section 6).

**Partnerships with duty bearers** are tenuous, and mainly based in activities that provide funds for collaboration. One positive example is the work on gender equality by GADC. Here it is reported that village chief now helps call for meetings and there is a level of joint planning with the commune council, and even a (very small) budget for social issues from the Commune Investment Plan.

The distance to local authorities is hard to overcome in a context where results provided by CSO’s are claimed by the governing party, while democratic inputs into planning processes (e.g. CDP/CIP) are almost invariably neglected by the authorities and the ruling party while voluntary organising is seen as ‘opposition’. Even then it is indispensable to build trusted relations to elements of the government and political system who are willing to participate in increased accountability and participation, and who possess needed skills in practical governing and management of government functions. According to observations of members of the team, (in several other contexts) there are increasing numbers of officials who want to professionalise governance and deliver real services.
3 Efficiency

From the limited data the evaluation had available (and due to its short time duration) it was not possible to make any detailed analysis of efficiency. The country office is developing its thinking on how to measure efficiency. The evaluation found the observable efficiency to be good, and cost-effective. Some of the recommendations here are aimed at further increasing efficiency and effectiveness.

With the challenges facing CS and the people of Cambodia combined with the shifting of many donors away from Cambodia, the programmes could well use additional funds. This is made even more pressing with the proposals of this evaluation to increase the role of Project Officers in organisational development of partners.

The human and financial resources were adequate for the programme in its current shape and scope. Addition of slightly more resources could have gone a long way towards the RO being able to better support organisational development of key partners. And the evaluation sees this as a very cost-effective way of increasing impact and sustainability.

Risks have been identified, even as they multiply in the on-going increase of repression. Currently a process is on-going of assessing the risks from the LANGO and the cyber-crime laws and seeking to develop a joint strategy for civil society to effectively challenge the shrinking space. At the field level, one risk of promoting simplistic single-technology-based models, for increasing agricultural production (in the DPA/ADOVIR project in Battambang) has been overlooked. The partner in question should have the technical capacity to identify it, but has mainly undertaken monitoring of management aspects of the project.

4 Impact

At the individual level the positive impact of the programme is obvious. Many already strong activists and NGO leaders have gained additional strength and skills. They have also experienced being treated as equals, which is not always the case in dealing with donors. Several groups of activists have performed advocacy by petitioning the national assembly, the senate and the prime minister’s office, despite firm opposition from their home district- and provincial governments (for these it is embarrassing not to be able to ‘handle it’ locally). They readily express that they now are less afraid.

At the institutional level, many CSOs have obtained better management and skills. Capacity has also been built in some government agencies, such as districts and commune in access to information and in disaster management. It is too early to gauge impact of this. A worrying sign is the repeated statement for communities they see no sense in using the (government) complaints mechanism that is associated with contact to the commune councils. It has no effects.

It is impossible to separate the wider societal impact of the programmes from overall trends. The programmes have certainly contributed to positive developments, such as the non-passing of the law on agricultural land management and the passing of a disaster management law and the migration law, which is a progress, as well as changes in three critical articles in LANGO. All this has happened in coalitions with many other actors. DCA/CA support to land-rights in all likelihood has also contributed to some victories, all of which still need to be watchfully defended. DCA/CA has also been supportive in organising the National Farmer Forums.
The increasingly tight grip of the ruling party on all elements of governance finds many expressions, such as in e.g. the LANGO, the draft cybercrime law, and laws that concentrates judicial power. Press freedom has been further limited, as expressed by the fact that Cambodia ranks 144 out of 180 in the 2014 Press Freedom Index, which according to Reporters Without Borders is a drop of 27 places in only two years. On this background it is difficult to point to successes for rights-holders increasingly enjoying upholding of their rights or duty bearers better performing their duties. There is however clear evidence that popular sentiment is for increased rights, as expressed in numerous and effective demonstrations not least after elections in 2013. Also other popular gatherings and advocacy activities appear to grow in number and quality. There appears to be more pressure from the population (very wide and diverse segments of it) for expanding political space, and stronger efforts by the ruling clique (not even the entire party) to limit this space. Hence, the tightening should be seen as an expression of the weakness of the ruling clique.\(^5\)

As several DCA/CA partners were instrumental in the public advocacy, it is fair to ascribe part of the partial success in this field to the programme. The fact that such powerful expression of public opinion took place has long-term impact, both on the governing party and its reactions, and in terms of increased confidence of the population in their own power.

The rights-holders, in the given situation, are pleased with the temporary results, but clearly view their defence, not to mention expansion, as needing continued struggles. This makes it imperative to continue and improve support to the activists, their networks and their families.

There are some positive results from the livelihoods support to activists already and other activities in the FS programme have improved local livelihoods in additional communities. It still appears quite limited in scale, and has only local impact on reduced poverty.

The programmes have clearly helped land rights activists in networking with each other (among communities which are geographically widely separated), and with HR NGO’s. This is likely to have long-term positive effects, and is a clear case of empowerment.

On issues of gender, especially the activists and rights holders in gender projects report clear attitudinal changes, both in decision-making and division of labour at HH level. It appears impossible to assess any wider impact, as so many factors muddle the effects of the programmes. Among these are the very large numbers of young women now gaining economic empowerment through employment in factories, and here also experiencing solidarity and activism in many cases.

Two unintended negative effects could be observed;

a) in providing farming skills to some communities and activists, a simplistic promotion of high-input crops was promoted. This will with great likelihood lead to economic loss for the farmers (through the ‘pesticide treadmill’\(^6\)), after some initial success. It is one reason for the recommendation in 6.1 (2),

b) in a DIPECHO project some groundwater-fed ponds have been constructed. People with tractors and tanks can come and collect water here. For poorer people it is quite far. They then have to buy from a

\(^5\) This was expressed in one, international press article as ‘The prime minister has a firm grip on the steering wheel, but the wheels are coming off’

\(^6\) http://www.panna.org/pesticides-big-picture/pesticides-101
private service provider, who collects at the pond. This provider apparently does not pay for maintenance of the pond.

The table summarizes the **numbers for direct beneficiaries** for the past 3 years as provided in programme reports. It should be noted that figures for 2014, AC programme includes the estimated numbers of listeners to CCIM broadcasts. Many beneficiaries may not be different from year to year.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>AC Male</th>
<th>AC Female</th>
<th>FS Male</th>
<th>FS Female</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2012</td>
<td>14.618</td>
<td>21.479</td>
<td>35.571</td>
<td>45.501</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>55.550</td>
<td>57.465</td>
<td>45.369</td>
<td>27.955</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>369.843</td>
<td>414.244</td>
<td>50.333</td>
<td>58.828</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>440.011</td>
<td>493.188</td>
<td>131.273</td>
<td>132.284</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### 5 Sustainability

The results at institutional level are impressive in the very difficult context. Because of this context and its lack of stability is would be guesswork to gauge the durability of the institutional effects of the programmes.

The activities and partners of the programmes contributed to the law on agricultural lands being put aside for the time being and towards adoption of the new migration policy, where Cambodia has developed a (good) Labor Migration Policy, 2015-18. DCA/CA and partners (LSCW and IDEA in particular) are through the Labor Forum with ILO, UN Women, and other civil society organisations working towards the ratification of ILO Convention 189 (Also known as ‘Decent Work for Domestic Workers’), which relates to domestic workers.

In other areas previous progress was rolled back, as described above. On the gender issues, it seems clear the programme has contributed towards *long-term changes in attitudes among rights-holders* directly involved in programme activities. It has also motivated partners (e.g. CCFC and CCIM) to develop a gender policy.

The continued effectiveness of the HR-partners will in part depend on DCA/CA support, both to operations and to organisational development. (See more in 6.2).

At the individual level the **strengthening of the activists**, through their (partial) successes, their increased strength through networking and capacity building appears to be sustainable if they can uphold decent livelihoods together with their activism. Positive gender effects at household level are quite likely sustainable, as they fall in line with an (weak) overall trend of increased gender equality in society. Still the programme is significant as icebreaker and leading light.

ART (with support from Focus on the Global South) and CCFC are supporting groups of land activist that are strong and act together, and clearly express will to continue.
In the livelihoods/agricultural support the groups observed very mainly together because of the project in case. Or as expressed in the midterm review: “The programme has been successful in establishing (Or strengthening existing – Evaluation comment) community-based groups such as farmers and fishers associations, savings and credit groups, women’s groups, youth groups, and advocacy groups. It is likely that this will add to the building of social capital in the communities over the long term. However, while there have been reports of savings groups and other CBOs breaking barriers to go beyond their usual mandates of generating savings and providing loans to claiming rights to essential community services such as schools, there is a lack of indication that these groups have developed the ability to tap into the potential of these community structures to empower the poor; rather these groups appear to act as conduits for the delivery of services that are planned in NGO partner programmes”.

This observation is one reason for the considerations in 6.1

6 The way forward

The evaluation recommends developing the upcoming Country programme while taking into consideration the changing context and the lessons learned and new ideas (if these are found valid):

The new suggestions are:

6.1 Further integration of the programmes.

It is strongly recommended to continue integration of livelihoods and AC programmes, with the double aims of:

1) Effectively support emergence and building of large, sustainable organisations of and for rural poor that can.

- Represent, with the clout of many empowered members, the interests of these groups in public life (policy development, planning, and implementation of public programmes, judicial processes, markets and trade).
- Provide venues for learning good governance ‘in own house’.
- Build/strengthen local capacity to adapt to shocks from weather or markets, and the improved social organisation that is a key in disaster response.
- Constitute a power base that can challenge rights violations and other impunity and make commune councils accountable in the use of public funds.
- Be inclusive, also of the poorest, e.g. through savings groups of and for the poorest, and through community commitments to employ the local poorest in agricultural enterprises that will emerge and production and marketing improves.
- Provide improved markets access and production development support to rural people.
- Provide improved local livelihood options based on management of and improvement of the natural capital. This could contribute significantly towards reducing outbound migration, also of youth.
- Create strong organisations for rural women, as part of the overall organising but with special attention, e.g. in savings activities, marketing or other – as decided by the women
in meetings with women separately to ensure that their issues and needs will be addressed. Such organisations could be e.g. a ‘farmers’ network/union’ and ‘smallholders representation’ or the like. In the history of many countries such organisations have played a key role in rural development and indeed in furthering of democracy and rights. They represent their members in all issues of rights, provide technical backstopping, have marketing branches (or separate marketing organisations), etc. But there are also many examples of ‘crashes’ along the way. Examples worth studying – without in any way providing blueprints - could be Modragon (Spain) or AMUL (India) and Thailand provides the Northern Farmers’ Network and the Forum (Assembly) of the Poor (in the 1990s).

Either through own capacity or through partnerships DCA/CA may want to acquire skills and experience in support to organizational development of such large, complex member-based CSOs. They may emerge from existing networks, grassroots movements or even individual projects. It will require attention to avoid nepotism, ‘kingdom-building’, political takeover, etc. LWD would be automatically excluded as a candidate; its policy of always working through the VDC would amount to a political affiliation, per definition. (See some further issues and explanations in Annex 3, which is an expansion of an annex to the review of DCA’s Right to Food policy in 2012).

This should be seen partly as an expansion on the recommendation from the mid-term review: ‘It may strengthen and increase the achievement of the empowerment objective for the program if support to grassroots and community-based organisations that implement activities using a pro-poor empowerment approach is increased.’

2) Support livelihood improvements for social activists. The optimal way is through linking up to experienced farmers with multi-purpose farms, from well-organised communities. This serves both to provide cost-effective and sustainable agricultural skills and to increase rural social networking: Most likely it will likely expose the communities of the activists to stronger, more organised communities. It thus is an example of effects beyond the sometimes-used “1 to 1” approach in ‘capacity building’ (see Annex 2). Such experienced farmers could be contracted directly, or through e.g. an ex-CEDAC operative with proven skills and network, or a company/an NGO representing the latter.

6.2 Use tool to score (and develop) participation

The evaluation recommends DCA/CA to formalise the use of the ‘participation’ ladder to score activities and initiatives and seek higher levels of participation, whenever possible. Participation is already deeply ingrained in DCA practices, and also built into DCA toolbox. Partners uniformly praise DCA on this point. As with any human activity it is however, it is still useful sometimes to take a fresh look. The ladder represents a useful tool for measuring and scoring levels of participation, thus providing step up compared to less formalised assessments.

As an example: The observation by the review of FS programme and by this evaluation that groups formed in FS activities are mainly there for the sake of the project in question would score them at the level of ‘incentive based participation’. Groups that should be able to improve governance through claiming their rights to participation, accountability, market access, land etc. would need to be at least between the two last steps, and preferably at the last, in order to be sustainable and have sufficient power. The ladder helps in making the gap evident and also point out the elements needing attention.
The land rights activists, on the other hand, in several cases appear to practice a high degree of participation and could be scored on the highest step. They face other challenges to their sustainability as an organisation (single-purpose of the organisation, and difficult food security situation are some).

6.3 Partnerships and their development

Partly as a consequence of the above, partly following observations of the spontaneously need arising in development of some partners; DCA/CA may want to increase the attention and support given to organisational development in key partners. As they grow and diversify many critical decisions need to be taken, some of which may be fatal or highly detrimental, if a non-sustainable path is followed. Some examples: How to run a business wing of a CSO in ways so both advocacy and member based democracy and the business thrive, even they are very different in nature? How to maintain trust in the leadership, when a network of farmers becomes a large organisation, with many branches? How to avoid political takeover or internal corruption?

In the latest Danida review of DCA it as recommended to work with such partners in developing ‘change pathways’ for the organisation and for the support to its organisation setup. This is in line with the likely adoption of the overall ‘Theory of Change’ approach.

This could be done either through one of the current DCA/CA partners (the evaluation could not identify a likely candidate, but this will also require more in-depth assessment and discussion) or through more hands-on support to e.g. the emerging network of farmers groups, coming from work of some partners (and others).

Part of the work with partners should also emphasise, is their efforts to connect closer with their constituencies and potential supporter sin Cambodia, both for increased legitimacy and increased networking, but also for seeking higher degree of self-financing and weaning from donor dependency.

One further, seemingly untapped opportunity, could be crowd-funding, which may very well be possible for cases of activists being arrested or more ‘innocent’ purposes.

In the new country programme it may be advised (in line with 6.1) to identify 1-2 partners who could lead the development of organisational development of larger, local organisations.

The recent review of the AC programme proposed: ‘by the end of the current programme cycle in 2015, DCA/CA should consider exiting the gender based violence component’. The evaluation finds this a technically valid suggestion (under the assumption that the portfolio has to be reduced). It also strongly suggests including the issues of women’s empowerment into the support the mass-based rural organisations, with the concrete steps mentioned in 6.1.

The AC review further recommends ‘DCA/CA should instead (of the above) concentrate its efforts on engagement in democratic development, advocacy by community based organisations and emerging social groups, advocacy for increased allocation of national budget to pro-poor and gender-sensitive programmes, women in politics and freedom of expression, association and assembly. A stronger emphasis should be made on building partnerships that can utilize possibilities for addressing social media and people’s participation’. Again the evaluation agrees and would like to emphasize the youth aspects of this.

There may be scope of reducing the number of partners (and thus the work load in country office on supervising partnerships), if a mechanism of having key partners sub-contract others could be
implemented. This however, requires careful consideration and delicate approaches in (possible) implementation and should decrease administration costs, as contracts would be from a partner to an organisation that now will be outside the programme.

Working among indigenous people in Ratanakiri requires special skills and long-term presence/experience. This seems to fall somewhat outside the scope of the programmes and DCA experiences in Cambodia. Also the province is far away from other programme areas.

DPA is mainly included for its work with small, local partners. The evaluation found this to be of insufficient quality and also entailing high transaction costs (through two layers of DCA and two Cambodian partners). This could be reason for discontinuing the support, but would further reduce the field presence on the issue of improving food production and associated livelihoods. As an alternative DCA/CA could shift to core funding of this partner.

6.4 Water governance as a strengthened focus is spot-on.

Water governance as a strengthened focus (as suggested in draft country programme concept note) is spot-on. It is critical for food security (e.g. as in fishing, irrigation for agriculture or provision of clean drinking water), and has very central governance problems at its roots.

The topic is already attempted by CBOs to become included in many commune development plans, while reaching all the way to regional governance of the Mekong and its tributaries and watersheds. At the same time all stakeholders (government, agencies, CSOs) claim a desire to improve the situation. It also connects directly to CCA and DRR, and the field is home to some powerful and very capable international NGOs. For the latter three reasons it may be fertile ground for donor-paid activities. For DCA/CA it would increase synergies between the thematic activities, partners, and geographic areas and connect advocacy at the local and national levels.

It would be advisable to try and include the issue of landscape-scale water harvesting7. Groundwater levels are dropping all over Cambodia and will continue to drop with the excepted climate change effects. These are related to deforestation combined with less frequent but heavier rains. Both of these lead to increased run-off end reduced infiltration of water into the ground and the groundwater. Yet there will probably be more total rainfall. This calls for improved water governance at least at commune, but better at district or even provincial level. It will also challenge current governance practices, which favour private gains (within the ruling party and flowing towards its top). The issue is obviously central to the country’s development. Solutions will benefit all and implementation will need coordinated efforts of many agencies and CS organisations as well as the general public. It also connects to the history of Cambodia (The Angkor period) in powerful ways and may expose the flaws in current water (and general) governance, also in this light.

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The best focus for DCA/CA in this is probably commune/district level, as there would be strong synergy with on-going land rights activities and other community work, and not least with the approach described in 6.1. This would be a detailing of the recommendation from the 2012 review: “3: Strengthen DRR and CCA analysis, implementation and capacities across partners and develop more rigorous DRR and CCA responses to hazards and vulnerabilities faced by target areas”.

6.5 International advocacy

The (at least partially) successful case of advocacy against the sugar-ELC in Kampong Speu and its EU support shows the importance and potential of international advocacy.

There appears to be an added possible strategy in the provision of information about foreign partners/customers in ELCs, human rights abuses or other illegal activities, to companies that screen (conduct due diligence) potential investments for institutional and private investors. If these report malpractices in a company its attractiveness to investors will drop, and hence its share value. These screening companies usually gather most of their information from Internet searches (and sometime field visits). They will be pleased to receive first-hand information, as it increases their credibility and hence their value. This is closely related to the EITI (Exotive Industries Transparency Initiative), which may also be useful in Cambodia (one reason being that many ELCs are for mining purposes).

As indicated above the focus on water governance include potential for coordinated regional and international governance, e.g. through like-minded in the Mekong region or wider, internationally. There are for example, strong organisations in Thailand and India on this issue.

The international grassroots networking on CCA fits very well into this (and could be expanded to the similar network on DRR), while the support to RGC capacity development may be reconsidered, based on outcome of COP 21 and the extent of adoption of a ‘bottom-up model’.

The success in international gender advocacy should be followed up and expanded.

6.6 New technologies.

Several land rights activists, legal specialists and others expressed a need for being able to take geo- and time-referenced pictures on site, in order to strengthen evidence in advocacy and potentially in court cases. They could be able to place this on map, with existing technology.

Cambodia still has no information package to farmers and others, on prices, weather forecasts and early warning for disasters. It appears likely some large donor may support such a package and the system to deliver the information, possibly based on the pilot developed in the DCA/LWD DIPECHO project. DCA/CA and partners may seek a role in this and/or continue pushing for it, and implementation in ways that are optimal for the population.

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Several partners are very active in developing and applying social media in information sharing and advocacy. The use of social media appears to be in no need of further support, but security around it is.

The evaluation found the attitude of many to security in the use of smartphones, Internet and social media to be somewhat casual. With the increasing repression, the prime minister’s threats during the Arab spring, and the cases of Arab governments using intelligence from electronic surveillance in the crackdown, there is urgent need for skills development and their application in this field. The draft cyber-crime law adds urgency, but is not the only reason. Some partners have experience and capacity.

6.7 Carry over into the new country programme

Several activities need to be carried over, to avoid ‘giving up’ or even make progress in the face of increased repression. These concern land rights, human rights defence, defence and use of free expression.

Others should be continued because there is still so much to do, and they concern empowerment on larger scale. These are the basic livelihoods activities, but the programme should focus on those that will be growing into viable organisations, which can claim rights and become universities of participatory, accountable governance (See Annex 3). The evaluation suggests a more proactive role of DCA in supporting this build-up and strengthening of partners that may be growing into large organisations with integrated livelihoods and rights platforms, but experience ‘growing pains’ (IDEA, and the emerging farmer network from several DCA/CA partners). This could call for more direct support from DCA, which again would require some internal restructuring (at least of tasks assigned) and would benefit from some capacity building, definitely in the form of exploratory learning of DCA/CA staff and partner leaders. This has to be internalised and relevant training materials do not exist. 10

The work on accountability of duty bearers should be lifted from ‘right to information’ to pursuit of interventions on budget monitoring at sub-national (and possibly national) level and advocacy on national budget for pro-poor, pro rural development and gender- and youth sensitive programmes. An obvious target could be the uses of the CIP. Many communities and partners are already active in the CDP, but experience disillusionment when the CIP is decided. There are very strong elements of corrupt practices in this. As indicated, stronger CBOs can help here, in coordinated efforts with more professional NGOs.

The existing programmes do provide some tentative links to the migration programme. It may be possible to expand these, by a) the focus on organisational development, which concerns both organisations of farmers in the communities and development of e.g. IDEA, b) the emphasis on improving livelihoods in combination with advancement of rural rights. This should keep more youth from migrating, especially if a youth-supporting element is included. The youth could have improved livelihood options as farmers, but potentially also as employees in local producer groups or enterprises.

9 https://www.cambodiadaily.com/elections/few-see-arab-uprisings-influencing-cambodia-40746/
10 In Denmark, a group of NGOs and other practitioners are developing some concepts and experiences for this. Still at early stage...
Funding and other support for grassroots partners and social movements faces further challenges, not least caused by the LANGO. DCA/CA may want to think quite far ‘outside the box’ and use experiences from other countries and international partners in order to support these critical (for the democracy in the country) partners. But in some cases simple contractual arrangements may possibly do.