

Learning from Rural Development Programmes in Cambodia

Working Paper 4

Chim Charya, Srun Pithou,
So Sovannarith, John McAndrew, Nguon Sokunthea,
Pon Dorina & Robin Biddulph



Working
Paper
No. 4

CAMBODIA DEVELOPMENT RESOURCE INSTITUTE
IN COLLABORATION WITH THE MINISTRY OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT

Learning from Rural Development Programmes in Cambodia

Working Paper 4

**Chim Charya, Srun Pithou, So Sovannarith,
John McAndrew, Nguon Sokunthea, Pon Dorina & Robin Biddulph**



**Cambodia Development Resource Institute
in collaboration with the Ministry of Rural Development
Phnom Penh, June 1998**

Copyright © 1998 Cambodia Development Resource Institute

All rights reserved. No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form or by any means—electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise—without the written permission of the Cambodia Development Resource Institute.

**Learning from Rural Development Programmes in Cambodia—Working Paper 4
June 1998**

Chim Charya, Srun Pithou, So Sovannarith, John McAndrew, Nguon Sokunthea, Pon Dorina & Robin Biddulph

Cambodia Development Resource Institute

56 Street 315, Tuol Kork, Phnom Penh (Postal address: PO Box 622, Phnom Penh, Cambodia)

Tel: (855-23) 368-053 Tel/Fax: (855-23) 366-094 / 426-103 e-mail: cdri@camnet.com.kh

Abstract

This working paper represents a comparative analysis of the joint Ministry of Rural Development and Cambodia Development Resource Institute research project entitled Learning from Rural Development Programmes in Cambodia. The analysis aims to generate lessons learned from a comparison of six development programmes to inform policy-making within the ministry and to contribute to the general debate about rural development in Cambodia. The analysis is structured around four questions: (1) How are benefits distributed? (2) How much has the community assumed ownership of the programme? (3) How can the programme be sustained? (4) How has the organisational structure and approach of the development organisation affected implementation?

The research indicates that the construction of irrigation canals has done the most to transform the economic livelihoods of village communities. While the building of irrigation canals and roads have produced immediate economic gains; the construction of wells, health centres and schools have provided more long-term social benefits. Loan activities, in general, have been more important to villagers as subsidies to subsistence, and do not meet all of their credit needs. Most interventions related to improved agricultural practice have been small in size and implemented as pilot projects at the periphery rather than at the centre of development efforts. Strategies for reaching the poorest through special projects which are strictly limited to the participation of the poor have been the most promising.

People's participation in the development process has been enabled by the creation of village development committees (VDCs) in most development programmes. How effectively VDCs can respond to the needs of village populations to a large extent depends on the size and layout of the village and on whether there is an established pagoda in the village. One cause of concern is that community development is beginning to emphasise only the creation of VDCs, and that other strategies are not being used.

At village level, some programmes are developing effective strategies for sustaining activities, especially through village-level management in the case of credit activities, and through clearly defined and contracted responsibilities for maintenance of infrastructure introduced with local contributions and adequate training. Generally, however, the sustainability of rural development is threatened by the lack of government financing, and the fact that funding from overseas cannot be guaranteed. In these circumstances, the private sector may be able to produce more sustainable options than the government or NGO sectors, and there are some examples of organisations attempting to stimulate this.

While development organisations have dealt primarily with village leaders, an emphasis of building capacity through extended presence in a community has been identified as an important lesson for everyone. Likewise relief efforts that have sought to reduce the vulner-

abilities of communities while increasing their capacities have been seen to be compatible with development because they foster responsible participation rather than creating dependency. An exciting approach to large-scale community development now being pursued by several organisations involves supporting local planning processes within programmes jointly undertaken with government. Local planning processes work well when links between project identification and funding decisions are clear. Among the development programmes studied, some emphasise the importance of output, the direct material benefits to be gained from an intervention, while others insist on the importance of process, the relationships that must be in place for genuine development to take place. There are risks in pursuing either strategy too far without the other. Similarly, organisations that are able to learn from their experience and correct their shortcomings are better able to implement effective programmes.

The juxtaposition of the programmes included in this study has helped to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of various types of approaches: large-scale versus small-scale, government versus non-governmental, relief versus development, and output versus process. In large measure, the differences are more complementary than contradictory. The challenge for rural development programming in Cambodia is for organisations to rise above insular perspectives and to engage in constructive critiques of each other's experience and work.

Glossary

Acronyms

CARERE	Cambodia Area Rehabilitation and Regeneration
CIDSE	Coopération Internationale pour le Développement et la Solidarité
GTZ	Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit
KAP	Krom Akphiwat Phum
LRDP	Learning from Rural Development Programmes
MPP	Minimum Package Agricultural Support Project
NCCDP	Northeast Cambodia Community Development Programme
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OSB	Overseas Service Bureau
PDP	Provincial Development Programme
PDRD	Provincial Department of Rural Development
PFD	Partners for Development
PIC	Project Implementation Committee
PRA	participatory rural appraisal
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VDC	village development committee

Place Names

Banteay Meanchey province	ខេត្ត បន្ទាយមានជ័យ
Battambang province	ខេត្ត ប្រតិបត្តិ
Pursat province	ខេត្ត ពោធិ៍សាត់
Kandal province	ខេត្ត កណ្តាល
Kompong Thom province	ខេត្ត កំពង់ធំ
Kratie province	ខេត្ត ក្រចេះ
Phnom Penh municipality	ក្រុងភ្នំពេញ
Ratanakkiri province	ខេត្ត រតនៈគិរី
Siem Reap province	ខេត្ត សៀមរាប
Stung Treng province	ខេត្ត ស្ទឹងត្រែង
Takeo province	ខេត្ត តាកែវ

Koh Andet district	ស្រុកកោះអណ្តែត
Dan Run commune	ឃុំដានរុន
Kien Sangke commune	ឃុំកៀនសង្កែ
Krangyov commune	ឃុំក្រាំងឃ្នុវ
Romenh commune	ឃុំរមេញ
Beng village	ភូមិបេង
Chek village	ភូមិចេក
Chikeak village	ភូមិជីតាក
Daumpo village	ភូមិដើមពោធិ
Kompong Ko village	ភូមិកំពង់គោ
Kompong Kor village	ភូមិកំពង់គរ
Krachap village	ភូមិក្រចាប់
Meaneak village	ភូមិមាណាត
Samaung village	ភូមិសាម៉ឺង
Spean village	ភូមិស្ពាន
Sre Treng village	ភូមិស្រែត្រែង
Svay Ie village	ភូមិស្វាយរៀង
Thom village	ភូមិធំ
Boeng Khtum	បឹងខ្ពង់
Prek Toch	ព្រែកតូច
Ta Pech	ភូមិតាពេជ្រ
Ta Ung	តាអ៊ុង
Wat Cheuteal Sambo	វត្ត ឈើទាលសំបូរ
Wat Kandal	វត្ត កណ្តាល

Introduction

Rural development programmes initiated by bilateral, multilateral and non-governmental organisations have proliferated in Cambodia as a consequence of the 1991 Paris Peace Accords. While aid agencies routinely monitor and evaluate their own programmes, the development community as a whole has done little to generate lessons learned from their collective experience. The Ministry of Rural Development of the Royal Government of Cambodia and the Cambodia Development Resource Institute therefore undertook a joint project entitled Learning from Rural Development Programmes (LRDP). The aims of the project were:

- To generate lessons from a comparative analysis of selected rural development programmes in order to inform policy-making in the Ministry of Rural Development;
- To build the analytical capacities of LRDP team members;
- To facilitate and contribute to inter-agency debate on rural development in Cambodia.

Much discussion about development tends to be influenced by the need to compete for scarce donor funding. This leads to a degree of positive reporting which severely distorts reality and gives an exaggerated impression of what development organisations have achieved and might be expected to achieve. In this context, the commitment to open, frank examination of issues relating to rural development demonstrated by the leadership of the six partner programmes, which volunteered their participation in this project, deserves full recognition. It is hoped that the cooperative endeavours of the LRDP team and the project partners in these village-focused studies will enable debate which is well grounded in reality.

The research method began with the local community's own perceptions of change, and the importance the community attaches to various aspects of the development process. While the case studies begin with the experiences of local communities, they consider more than this view alone. Because a key objective of the research was to find out what was working or was not working, and why, the approach placed major emphasis on assessing and synthesising the judgements of different actors—beneficiaries, project sponsors, non-beneficiaries and other local people—about the project's performance and impact. The research also tried to weigh the merits of judgements which differed. The intent was to draw conclusions that are clear and generally accepted by knowledgeable groups, rather than to demonstrate strict measures of objectivity.

Providing useful answers to questions of change that have taken place within the lives of various programme participants, as compared to those of non-participants, entailed more than simply gathering and reporting data. It involved a process whereby the research team jointly collected and analysed information and decided where to go next to develop the understandings that were emerging from the particular village experience. In each of the six case studies,

the consequences of development activities in two village communities were investigated and compared.

Each partner was invited to select two villages where they felt their development programme was proceeding well. The research team spent five days in each village, conducting interviews with village authorities, village development committees (VDCs) and other villagers (both those who were participating in the development activities and those who were not). The team spent a further five days in each province conducting interviews with partner programme staff and examining available documentation. At the conclusion of each village study, preliminary findings were discussed with the VDC members. At the conclusion of each case study, initial findings were presented to programme staff in the province and the provincial department of rural development. Further comments were solicited from the management of each of the partners.

Analysis and reporting has been structured around four key questions:

- 1) How are programme benefits distributed?
- 2) To what extent has the local community assumed ownership of the programme?
- 3) In what ways might the programme be sustained?
- 4) How has the organisational structure and community approach of the organisation affected implementation?

These issues are closely inter-related, but in order to maintain clarity they have been treated separately in the case studies and in this working paper. This working paper represents a comparative analysis of the lessons learned from the six case studies (see Appendices 1–6 for executive summaries of the individual case studies). It benefits from discussions and debates that took place during the National Conference for Rural Development held from 17–18 March 1998 at the Council for the Development of Cambodia in Phnom Penh.

The research consists of a series of six case studies which were undertaken between September 1997 and January 1998. The six participating organisations were: Oxfam/Chumraen Chiet Khmer (Takeo), Krom Akphiwat Phum (Battambang), UNDP CARERE/SEILA (Siem Reap), Hun Sen Krangyov Development Centre (Kandal), GTZ/Provincial Development Programme (Kompong Thom) and Partners for Development (Kratie).

Chapter One

Distribution of Benefits

The distribution of programme benefits was a key area of investigation in the study. This chapter assesses the impact of various project activities on the economic well-being and standard of living of village residents. The focus here is on material benefits, in order to avoid overlap with discussions of the impact on human resources and community cooperation which are addressed in following chapters on participation, decision-making and ownership, and on sustainability. In this assessment an attempt is likewise made to understand how different sub-groups within the village, such as those with land or those without, benefited from particular interventions. Poverty alleviation is a major objective of all six organisations, so this chapter also considers programme strategies for reaching the poorest.

1) Impact of Infrastructure Projects on Economic Well-Being and Standard of Living

Of all the infrastructure projects initiated by the six development agencies, the construction of irrigation canals has done the most to transform the economic livelihoods of village communities. Adequate supplies of irrigation water have increased yields under wet season rice cultivation and, in some instances, allowed village farmers to undertake dry season rice cultivation. This has resulted in substantial gains in levels of rice production. Road improvements have resulted in higher farm prices and better access to markets, though the benefits are far less striking than those derived from irrigation. Wells and ponds have provided clean water and reduced illness, permitting villagers to remain in the labour force and avoid costly medical expenses. Health care centres have provided similar benefits. Schools have allowed more children to attend classes, augmenting their knowledge and improving their chances for increased earning power.

Irrigation canals

Among the six development programmes studied, the Hun Sen Krangyov Development Centre, Oxfam/Chumraen Chiet Khmer and Krom Akphiwat Phum have engaged in irrigation projects. By far the largest investment was made in the improvement of the Krangyov commune canals, and here the gains were the most noticeable and the most substantial. Oxfam's support of canal building in the village of Meaneak was more circumscribed, but none the less significant for the rice farmers in this community. While the intervention of both programmes brought great benefits for rice producers in a short period of time, the gains were not always distributed equitably. Farmers with greater access to land and capital for inputs benefited more. The experience of KAP in canal construction was less than satisfying due to unforeseen complications in dry season rice farming. In this instance, and to a lesser extent in

the two others, the newly built canals produced adverse effects and underscored the risks involved in changing water supplies.

In 1995, the Krangyov Development Centre provided food-for-work for the re-digging of irrigation canals that have since increased agricultural output in the villages of Chek and Thom. With an abundant and reliable supply of water and high-yielding rice varieties, village farmers have been able to cultivate both wet and dry season rice, obtaining yields of about three tons of paddy rice per hectare for wet season rice and five to seven tons of paddy rice for dry season rice. Better-off villagers who have sufficient money to clear new land, to supply credit to others for fertiliser and petrol at high interest rates, and to earn money as owners and operators of power machinery, have gained the most from the irrigation infrastructure. As a result of the canal improvement, some lower and once productive areas of Thom village near the lake have now flooded.

Irrigation canals built in 1994 in Meaneak by Oxfam have transformed the local economy by enabling most villagers to cultivate dry season rice. In the 1995/96 dry season, Meaneak villagers planted 161 hectares with rice and obtained good yields of just under three tons per hectare. In the 1996/97 dry season, Meaneak farmers increased the area cultivated to 250 hectares, and thus placed excessive demands on the irrigation system. Of the total area farmed, 85 hectares produced no yield at all due to lack of water available in the canals. Because of their losses, eight of the poorer families in the village incurred severe debts and were more vulnerable than before.

In 1994, KAP supported the food-for-work construction of two irrigation canals in the Battambang village of Spean to permit the cultivation of dry season rice. However, growing dry season rice proved risky because cultivators had no way of protecting their crops from damage by rats. As a consequence, several dry season rice farmers fell into severe debt as a result of the losses they suffered.

Roads

Four of the six development organisations studied have been involved in road construction: the Krangyov Development Centre, Oxfam, KAP and GTZ/Provincial Development Programme. In the more remote villages, the principal impact of the improved roads has been easier transport over what were once muddy and flooded routes. In villages closer to major markets, improvements from road construction have enabled villagers to obtain higher farm-gate prices by reducing transportation costs and increasing competition among merchants who come to the village to buy their products. Those villagers who produce more have been able to obtain more benefits. The improved roads have also opened up new markets for goods produced in the village, thereby stimulating more local income generating activities.

Road construction in Krangyov in 1995 provided better transportation and enabled Chek and Thom villagers to save time and money as a result. In Chek, the new road opened up a market for cash crops and many villagers started to grow watermelons in the dry season. While farmers in both villages stood to gain higher prices for their products, the sale of their harvests was often tied to credit received from merchants for fertiliser and pesticides. This effectively lowered the farm-gate prices that they could negotiate. Due to lower transport costs, the price of manufactured goods for sale in the village was not much different from those sold in the provincial capital or in Phnom Penh.

In 1994, Oxfam provided emergency relief to Samaung villagers in Takeo struggling to survive the adverse effects of a flood. The food-for-work construction of a road from Samaung to Wat Cheuteal Sambo allowed villagers easier access to rice-cultivating areas where they worked as farm labourers. It also provided them with better access to the market. Since the construction of the road, three Samaung villagers have become horse-cart drivers, earning extra income in the dry season.

In the Kompong Thom village of Svay Ie, the improvement of the road undertaken as part of the GTZ/PDP has provided easier transport for residents and goods, especially during times of flooding. In the Kompong Thom village of Krachap, the installation of culverts in the road network has made transportation easier, lessened flood damage to home garden crops and reduced diseases caused by stagnant water.

In the Battambang community of Kompong Ko, villagers encouraged by KAP have taken upon themselves the initiative of repairing the village road. This has made transport easier and increased the numbers of traders coming into the community.

Wells and ponds

Three of the organisations reviewed have supported village well and pond projects: Partners for Development, UNDP CAREERE/SEILA and Oxfam. The benefits of clean water in reducing illness have been particularly evident in the PFD programme, where cases of cholera, typhoid and diarrhoea have dropped in the study villages.

PFD provided direct assistance in drilling wells with financial contributions from villagers. In 1995 and 1996, PFD drilled eight pump wells in the village of Sre Treng and 12 pump wells in the village of Kompong Kor. These pump wells have benefited almost all villagers, particularly the poor, by reducing disease, by saving time spent fetching water, and by saving money from buying water.

In the CAREERE first project cycle of 1996/97, Beng villagers built seven ring wells and Chikeak villagers built eight ring wells. Most villagers received direct benefits from the ring wells, because they provided clean drinking water, a ready supply of water for vegetable gardening, and a source of accessible water in the dry season.

In 1994, Oxfam supported the food-for-work digging of a large pond in the village of Samaung. The benefits of the pond have been particularly important for poorer families who previously had to walk 2 to 3 km per day in the dry season to collect water. Better-off families in the village used to load their water jars onto ox-carts. Now all families have access to water within the village.

Schools

Four organisations have built schools: the Krangyov Development Centre, CAREERE, PFD and GTZ. Benefits of school construction were multiplied when attention was paid to teaching resources. In poor and remote villages, such as Meaneak and Samaung and Sre Treng, the provision of teachers had not been adequately addressed. In like manner, the children of the poorest villagers could not always afford to go school.

In 1994, the Second Prime Minister donated resources to build schools in Krangyov. Almost all children in Chek and Thom are now able to go to primary and secondary school. In 1997, a teacher reported that 15 students who graduated from Krangyov secondary schools were able to enrol at the district college at Prek Toch. Before, no students had gone on to study there from Krangyov.

In Kompong Kor, villagers collaborated with PFD to build a new school in 1996. As a result, extra teachers were assigned to the village. Grades five and six are now taught in Kompong Kor. This is important as many village children used to stop schooling early. In Sre Treng, a new school was likewise built by villagers in collaboration with PFD in 1995. Here there were still problems with absenteeism among both teachers and students. In Sre Treng, grade five had been suspended. Grades one and two were taught by one teacher and grades three and four by another teacher.

In 1994, Oxfam funded the construction of a school with four classrooms in Meaneak. The school in Meaneak and the road in Samaung have improved access to education, but the potential impact of these improvements has been hampered by absenteeism among teachers.

In 1995, the pagoda committee in Svay Ie began construction on a school with two classrooms. The villagers were able to complete construction of the school with a donation from the German government facilitated by GTZ. Three teachers have been assigned to the school.

Health care centres

Two organisations in the study have contributed to the building of health care centres: the Krangyov Development Centre and CAREERE.

The health care centre built on the compound of the Krangyov Development Centre provided free treatment for all villagers who went there. Initially there were few complaints about the quality of medicine and medical services. More recently, patients felt that the quality of medicine had deteriorated and that the medical staff had favoured their relatives and friends over others in the provision of treatment.

In Siem Reap, the CAREERE programme built health care centres in the communes of Dan Run and Kien Sangke with the Provincial Department of Health. Beng villagers from Dan Run went to the communal health care centre mainly to ask for medicine. Chikeak villagers from Kien Sangke paid a nominal fee for a book to record their visits and treatment at the communal health care centre, and received services and medicines for free.

2) Impact of Loan Activities on Economic Well-Being and Standard of Living

In all but one of the development programmes studied, loan activities were key components in achieving stated organisational objectives of poverty alleviation. The question then arises as to the effectiveness of the loan activities in reducing poverty. Rice banks and credit schemes were in general more important to villagers as subsidies to subsistence than as means of transforming livelihoods. There are several reasons for this. Firstly, the loans were not of sufficient volume to bring about major increases in productivity. Second, the loans were not usually provided as part of a clear and coherent strategy for raising incomes in a given local economy. Third, loan activities were not always designed for income generation, but in some cases were intended to respond to emergency situations. This was true of the village relief associations and rice banks established by Oxfam in the villages of Meaneak and Samaung and the rice bank initiated by the GTZ self-help team in the village of Svay Ie. This section considers separately the impact of rice banks and credit schemes.

Rice banks

Among the organisations studied, rice banks were established for two very different reasons. The first was to provide farmers with accumulated supplies of rice to reduce, and eventually eliminate, perennial periods of deficit and to offset seasons of low crop yields. The second was to provide a mechanism for generating capital.

Establishing rice banks to reduce rice deficits

Although rice was produced in each of the 12 villages studied, not all rice cultivating families were able to produce amounts sufficient for their yearly needs. In rice surplus villages, only poorer families with minimum access to land and capital assets experienced annual rice shortfalls. In rice deficit villages, characterised by poor soil conditions and inadequate rainfall, nearly all families suffered from yearly rice shortages. In years of drought and floods the already difficult situations in these villages were exacerbated.

To enable villagers to lessen their vulnerability during annual lean seasons and to build up their capacity to meet recurrent rice deficits, Oxfam established rice banks in the villages of Meaneak and Samaung and the GTZ self-help team started a rice bank in the village of Svay Ie. By providing a means for rice farmers to store their own stocks of rice collectively, the rice banks were intended to minimise the fluctuations inherent in production dependent on seasonal variations and shifting market prices.

To some extent, these rice banks were able to provide members with limited access to low-cost rice in lean seasons, and in years adversely affected by floods and drought. For the most part, though, the amounts of rice that families were able to borrow were not sufficient to meet their needs. It was not uncommon for members of these village rice banks to borrow additional supplies from moneylenders or traders at high interest rates. But if these rice banks were less than fully successful it was principally because they were operating in areas unfavourably adapted for rice cultivation and because they encouraged the participation of all villagers, including the poorest who encountered the most difficulties in repayment.

In 1992, Oxfam initiated rice banks in Meaneak and Samaung. Both communities experienced the regular flooding of their rice fields, and in particularly bad years entire crops were damaged. In 1995, the GTZ self-help team similarly established a rice bank in Svay Ie. Recurrent droughts in this village normally left the rice grains fruitless and the villagers with low yields.

In all three communities the development agencies made initial rice stocks available to all villagers. In 1992, Oxfam provided loans of 86 kg of rice to each family in Meaneak after all of their rice crops had been destroyed by flooding. But due to a successive year of flooding, most villagers were unable to repay their loans and the rice bank stopped functioning. In 1995 Oxfam, in cooperation with the World Food Programme, provided Meaneak villagers with an additional 5,730 kg of rice, enabling the rice bank to begin functioning again. Since then there have been four rounds of credit, with about 80 percent of households participating.

In late 1992, Oxfam established a rice bank in the village of Daumpo, which includes the community of Samaung. Each family was initially provided with 86 kg of floating rice seed. The villagers set the interest rate for borrowing rice seed at 30 percent over the crop season. When Samaung was allowed to elect its own VDC in 1995, the loans of Samaung borrowers were transferred there. At that time, seven Samaung families repaid their debts of rice seed, but the remaining members failed to repay their loans. The seven families who repaid and seven others borrowed from the rice bank again that year. Since then, no one from Samaung has repaid their debts. One reason for the lack of repayment has been continuing low yields. But more importantly, as mentioned by several villagers, the rice store was located in Daumpo and not in Samaung. Currently there are no plans to build a rice store in Samaung.

In 1995, the GTZ self-help team, with assistance from the World Food Programme, provided milled rice equivalent to about 21 tons of paddy rice to the villagers of Svay Ie to establish a rice bank. Each household in the village was able to borrow 5 kg of milled rice per household member, payable at the harvest in the equivalent of paddy rice plus 20 percent interest. By January 1998, as the end of the third cycle approached, 180 out of 186 village households were participating in the rice bank, with repayment at that time expected to be 29 tons of paddy rice. Still, amounts borrowed were not sufficient for everyone's needs. This led households to borrow additional supplies from lenders at the prevailing interest rate of 50 percent for the crop season.

As seen in the accounts above, maintaining rice banks for the majority of villagers in areas where low rice yields are endemic has been extremely difficult. In Meaneak the rice bank has already failed once. It has now been restored under dry season rice farming and enjoys greater possibilities for success. Still, in Meaneak the practice continues, as it did earlier when the rice bank was a seed bank, to give more credit to better-off families with more land than to poorer families with less land. In Samaung the rice bank no longer func-

tions. While this is partly due to low yields, it is partly due also to a lack of community ownership. The construction of a rice store in Samaung could conceivably revive it.

In 1998, wet season rice yields in Svay Ie were exceptionally low. Members of the rice bank were not asked to repay the principal of their loans, only the interest. This meant that in the forthcoming season, members would in effect borrow the paddy rice that they had kept at their homes. A subsequent poor harvest would threaten the viability of the rice bank.

While the attempts to reduce rice deficits through the establishment of rice banks with vulnerable villagers in unproductive areas have been commendable, the results achieved have been less than inspiring. The experiences of the villages reviewed here seem to question the appropriateness of establishing rice banks in areas where rice production is low and unpredictable. It likewise challenges organisations to develop effective strategies for addressing food security issues in poor villages.

Establishing rice banks to generate capital

In the Battambang villages of Spean and Kompong Ko, KAP initiated several loan activities that were transformed into rice banks as a means of generating capital. These were fertiliser schemes in Spean and Kompong Ko and a draught animal scheme in Spean. The fertiliser scheme in Spean was a moderate success, but in Kompong Ko a similar activity never functioned satisfactorily. The draught animal scheme in Spean was the only rice bank of this kind to make a serious difference in the livelihoods of its members. This scheme allowed several participants to build up enough capital to buy a cow for ploughing and harrowing on their own rice land.

In 1994, KAP supported the fertiliser scheme in Spean with 65 land-owning households, each of which received a 50-kg bag of fertiliser. This loan was repaid with paddy rice and new loans of paddy rice were borrowed at 50 percent interest, payable at the harvest. The fertiliser scheme thus functioned as a rice bank. At the end of the first two rounds, all 65 participants had repaid their loans. By the third round, two participants had withdrawn from the activity. The fertiliser scheme which operated as a rice bank enabled participants to increase their rice yields, but the loans were not enough for them to meet the fertiliser costs of their rice production. As a consequence, most participants continued to borrow cash from moneylenders to buy fertiliser for their rice cultivation.

In 1994, KAP initiated the fertiliser scheme in Kompong Ko that functioned as a rice bank. In July 1994, KAP loaned 50 kg of chemical fertiliser to 50 households which had expressed interest in the scheme. Each 50-kg bag was repaid at the harvest with 200 kg of paddy rice. This rice was temporarily stored at the pagoda and then loaned out again to the members at 50 percent interest over the crop season. Since 1995, each scheduled repayment had been extended, and more interest charged, so that in late 1997 each member owed 450 kg of paddy rice. Although no rice had been collected since 1995, paperwork had been maintained, with participants renewing their thumbprints. Frequent Khmer Rouge raids that discouraged members from building a rice store, and the mining of the access road to the village, were reasons given for the rice not being collected and stored in the community, nor sent to Battambang for safe-keeping. February 1998 had been set as the date when each of the participants would have to repay the 450 kg of paddy rice. It remained to be seen whether the members would be able to repay this debt and bring the activity back to life.

In 1994, KAP likewise began the draught animal scheme in Spean to respond to the needs of villagers who had some land but no draught animals. The original plan was to offer the 26 participants 10 cows as the capital for a cow bank. However, an alternative was designed whereby through the establishment of a rice bank, each of the 26 participants would be able to buy a cow within three years. The draught animal scheme allowed rice cultivators to build up enough capital to buy a cow for ploughing and harrowing and for buying seed and some

fertiliser. Even participants who did not buy cows were able to build up capital to support their family's rice production and consumption.

The experience of Spean villagers with rice banks used as mechanisms for generating capital led to the shift of a village rice cooperative to a rice bank when losses were realised. In 1994, KAP began a rice cooperative in collaboration with the international NGO CIDSE. The intention was to enable the poorest 40 families in the village to buy milled rice at low prices during the lean season from August to November, when prices usually rise. Members were able to purchase up to 15 kg of milled rice per week during lean periods at 700 riels per kg instead of the market price of 850 riels. In 1995, the market price of milled rice fell unexpectedly to 500 riels per kg. The committee, concerned that it would not be able to repay the loan, converted the cooperative into a rice bank. Instead of buying rice at low prices members now borrowed rice at 50 percent interest over the crop season, payable at the harvest. At this point, poor families began to withdraw from the activity and better-off participants, including committee members, began to take their place. The shift of the rice cooperative to a rice bank, coupled with gross mismanagement, had undermined the original intent of the activity to assist the poor.

Credit schemes

While the credit schemes reviewed allowed some borrowers to start small income generating projects or to support rice cultivation, the money that they were able to borrow was never enough to effect major economic changes in their lives. Still, most villagers, even the medium and better-off who were shown to be the primary beneficiaries of most credit schemes, had recurrent needs for cash. To the extent that credit activities were able to provide loans at lower interest rates than those of local moneylenders, the schemes took the edge off indebtedness and provided a real service to many families. Nevertheless, participants in credit schemes still borrowed from traders and moneylenders, despite the high interest rates, particularly when they needed money for medical expenses or to finance temporary migrant work overseas.

Borrowing cash in credit schemes

In the credit schemes established by Oxfam, KAP and GTZ, the volumes of cash that participants were able to borrow were relatively low. First-round borrowings in these schemes started at 40,000 to 50,000 riels per family and often remained at these levels. By contrast, the Krangyov Development Centre loaned out relatively large amounts of cash to fewer borrowers. Individual loans of 700,000 riels per family were not uncommon. However, while repayment rates in the Oxfam, KAP and GTZ schemes were quite high, those in the Krangyov schemes were low to the point of preventing the initial loans from being recycled. In the CAREERE-supported Minimum Package Agricultural Support Project, a loan fund allotting \$36 (about 97,200 riels) per sub-group participant had been unequally distributed.

In 1996, Chumraen Chiet Khmer initiated credit schemes in the villages of Meaneak and Samaung. In both cases, villagers were able to borrow up to 50,000 riels in the first round for three months, and up to 80,000 riels in the second round for six months, each at interest rates of five percent per month. In Samaung, a third round of loans of up to 100,000 riels for nine months had begun.

In Meaneak the loan scheme was able to provide credit to villagers at a much better rate than they were able to obtain privately. The size of loans, however, was far too small for villagers to cover their farming costs, and therefore most remained in debt to moneylenders who were charging 100 percent interest for loans of fertiliser, seeds and rice for the crop season, and 15 percent interest per month for cash. In Samaung, unlike in Meaneak, most families

were not in debt to moneylenders. The low levels of indebtedness reflected the villagers' low levels of creditworthiness more than the fact that their credit needs were being met.

In 1994, KAP established a loan scheme in the village of Spean following discussions with the villagers. By late 1997, the scheme was into its fifth round, with interest of five percent per month being paid and the principal repaid at the end of each round. The cash loans of the credit scheme started at 40,000 riels and then remained at 50,000 riels for the next four cycles. The interest was not revolved within the scheme, but deposited in a Battambang bank with the intent of eventually repaying the capital to KAP. Since the money available for loans remained constant, membership in the scheme was not able to increase. Likewise, beneficiaries were not able to increase the size of their loans to desired levels.

In 1996, KAP established a credit scheme in the community of Kompong Ko with the understanding that the capital would be repaid and that money accumulating thereafter would belong to the entire community. In the first round, participants made loans of 40,000 riels each for six months at five percent interest per month. The interest was paid with the principal at the end of the round. All of these loans were repaid. In the second round, participants made loans of 50,000 riels each for eight months at five percent interest per month. The 40,000 and 50,000 riels which the villagers received from the two rounds of credit were not sufficient to cover their farming costs. Rice farmers who were participants in the credit scheme still needed to borrow from private moneylenders.

In 1996, the pagoda committee started a cash association in the village of Svay Ie in anticipation of receiving matching funds from the GTZ self-help team once the first three rounds were completed. To join the cash association, households had to make an initial start-up contribution of 5,000 riels. Donations were also made from pagoda collections. By the start of the third round in late 1997, locally generated funds in the association totalled more than 2,580,000 riels. Nevertheless, the amounts that members borrowed from the cash association, usually 50,000 riels for six months at three percent monthly interest, were not meeting all of their needs. Households which had borrowed money from the cash association often borrowed additional funds from moneylenders.

While the credit activities initiated by the Krangyov Development Centre provided borrowers with large amounts of cash, poor management undermined their effectiveness. Various credit schemes had been initiated in Chek and Thom to enable farmers to have sufficient capital to expand their rice production. The schemes have only been partially repaid, and in some cases have not been repaid at all. This has meant that the original intention of recycling credit money has not been achieved. The result of this is that the people who originally received loans are the only ones who have benefited. The village chiefs often chose people who were close to them, and who they trusted to repay the loans, for the first round.

In Chek, several loan activities were begun without much success. In 1995, loans of 700,000 riels were provided to 11 families for draught animals to be repaid in three years. While there was no documentation available in the village, the new village chief reported that all families had made repayments in the first year but none had in the second year. In 1995, two loans of one million riels each were made by the Canada Bank to enable the purchase of draught animals. No repayments had been made on these loans. In 1995, three loans, reported to be worth 700,000 riels each and interest-free, were made for water pumps. No repayments had been made on these loans. In 1995, credit was provided for fertiliser worth 1.68 million riels. In late 1997, only 350,000 riels (21 percent) of the loans had been repaid.

In Thom, the pattern was similar. In 1995, rice seed and fertiliser were loaned out to families to grow dry season rice. By late 1997, only 12 percent (400,000 riels) of the fertiliser loans had been repaid. Attempts to cultivate dry season rice were not successful. In 1995, credit from the Canada Bank was provided for draught animals. Nine families received a pair of draught animals worth 700,000 riels per pair. By late 1997, none of the families had made more than one repayment and some had made no repayments at all. In 1995, two water pumps

were provided to the village worth 750,000 riels and 650,000 riels respectively. The loans were due to be repaid over a three-year period. As of November 1997, no repayments had been made.

In the CAREERE-supported Minimum Package Agricultural Support Project, a loan fund had been included as a component to help participants finance the cultivation of vegetables and other cash crops. In the villages of Beng and Chikeak, the benefits of the loan fund allocating \$36 (97,200 riels) per subgroup member had been unequally distributed, with some of the 35 participants in village subgroups receiving large shares of the total credit fund and others small amounts or nothing at all. Initial repayments of the loans were due at the crop harvests. In neither village had training been provided by the project to help the participants manage the loan schemes.

Strategies for raising income in credit schemes

By and large, money lent in credit schemes was not allocated as part of a clear and coherent strategy for raising incomes in a particular local economy. This was especially true in the schemes supported by Chumraen Chiet Khmer, KAP, and GTZ, where participants borrowed money at pre-set amounts and used it for generic purposes such as supporting rice cultivation and raising pigs. An underlying principle in each of these activities was that money borrowed should be used for income generating purposes. This guideline was never strictly monitored nor enforced, and many borrowers used at least part of their loans for consumption. The credit schemes of Chumraen Chiet Khmer in Meaneak and Samaung and that of KAP in Kompong Ko included a majority of villagers. The KAP loan activities in Spean taken together incorporated the credit scheme and collectively served a majority of villagers. The cash association in Svay Ie generated from local capital had yet to lend money to most villagers. All of these credit schemes benefited better-off households more than poorer households.

In the Chumraen Chiet Khmer villages of Meaneak and Samaung, cash borrowed from the credit scheme was often used to buy rice and other food for consumption. In both villages a number of families used the money to raise pigs. In Meaneak, 50 of 93 households participated in the first round and 77 households in the second. In Samaung, 31 of 51 households borrowed in the first round, 48 in the second, and 39 in the third.

In the KAP villages of Spean and Kompong Ko, members used the credit largely to support rice cultivation. Some participants in Spean used the money to raise pigs. In Kompong Ko, 74 of 96 households participated in the first round and 78 in the second. In Spean, 200 of 250 households participated in loan activities. Almost half of these households were members of the credit scheme.

In the GTZ village of Svay Ie, members borrowed from the cash association to finance the purchase of fishing equipment, the repair of boats, the undertaking of small trade, the raising of pigs and the making of noodles. In the first three rounds, 88 of 186 households borrowed from the association. Of this total, 70 households were categorised as rich or medium.

In the Krangyov Development Centre, credit in the millions of riels was provided for the purchase of rice seed and fertiliser to support dry season farming over the crop season. By comparison, more clearly delineated loans of between 700,000 and one million riels were made to individual borrowers for the purchase of draught animals and water pumps over two to three years. The loans in the latter instance were thus granted in ways that deviated from the commonly observed pattern. They were not generic loans of relatively small amounts distributed to large numbers of villagers for short periods of time. Rather the loans were designated for specific purposes at levels sufficient to the requirements of the activities including longer-term repayment schedules. By all indications, poor management and not the strategy itself accounted for the failure of these loans to achieve their desired results.

In the KAP community of Kompong Ko, a special scheme was likewise designed to supply credit for a clearly defined purpose to a limited number of beneficiaries. In 1997, in addition to the village credit scheme, KAP provided interest-free loans of 95,000 riels to 10 landless families identified as the poorest in the village. The loans were made to enable these families to lease one hectare of land, to buy inputs for rice cultivation, and to augment their food consumption during the production period. While the project was on-going at the time of the study, the results looked promising. There was a lesson here, too, for organisations seeking to improve their strategies for raising villager incomes through credit schemes. By identifying the income generating activity first and then determining the requirements specific to its purpose, the loans were made to a limited number of families at appropriate levels, thereby ensuring greater chances for increased productivity and ultimate success.

3) Impact of Agricultural Extension Projects on Economic Well-Being and Standard of Living

While infrastructure projects such as the construction of irrigation canals and the building of wells resulted in substantial increases in rice and vegetable production, these gains were at times diminished for the lack of follow-up projects in agricultural extension. In the Krom Akphiwat Phum village of Spean and the Krangyov Development Centre village of Thom, attempts at dry season rice farming ended in failure. In the Oxfam/Chumraen Chiet Khmer village of Meaneak the lack of forethought to form water user groups led to the overuse of irrigation water available for dry season rice farming and crop failures on many village farms. Similarly, the promotion of high-yielding rice varieties by development agencies as a consequence of improved irrigation did not include sufficient training in the use of chemical fertiliser and pesticide. Many farmers applied chemical inputs on the basis of knowledge acquired from shopkeepers. This increased production costs, adversely affected the fertility of the soil, and posed serious dangers to human health. In Spean, it was commonly acknowledged that the death of the former VDC chief was due to pesticide poisoning. In several of the villages, rice farmers suffered huge crop losses each year to rats. None of the development organisations reviewed or their counterparts in government had seriously addressed this issue.

In programmes where agricultural extension projects were implemented, they were normally limited in scope and regarded as pilot activities. In the groups studied the most notable attempts to improve agricultural practice were CAREERE's Minimum Package Agricultural Support and Crop Diversification projects, GTZ's rice and vegetable seed trial projects, and KAP's support of compost making. CAREERE and GTZ also provided training and equipment for village veterinarians to start local practices. The Krangyov Development Centre supported villager training in integrated pest management conducted by the Food and Agriculture Organisation and the government. All these projects were designed by technical experts with little or no consultation from villagers. In most activities, follow-up training was needed, particularly opportunities for mutual learning among the farmers themselves. At the time of the study, the field testing of the extension projects was still on-going and their long-term benefits uncertain.

4) Strategies for Reaching the Poorest

While poverty alleviation is a key objective of almost all the development organisations studied, specific strategies for reaching the poorest are not always articulated explicitly. Nevertheless, within each organisation implicit strategies for reaching the poorest are discernible. Three main strategies were evident in this study: 1) reaching the poorest by assisting the entire community; 2) reaching the poorest by working in remote and impoverished areas; and 3) reaching the poorest through special projects.

Reaching the poorest by assisting the entire community

By and large, the strategy of reaching the poorest by assisting the entire community was the least effective. With respect to infrastructure improvements, benefits were spread somewhat evenly, if not equitably, as all villagers had access to roads, wells, schools, and health care centres. But the construction of irrigation canals primarily benefited better-off villagers with access to large parcels of rice land, draught animals and water pumps. With regard to village loan activities, medium and better-off families had better access to the committee members who provided the loans. Likewise, in most of the schemes reviewed, there was a bias to loan to families who had the means to repay. Poor villagers without access to land or their own sources of income generation were often left out of the activities.

Underlying the strategy of reaching the poorest by assisting the whole village is the assumption that overall gains in community productivity will somehow trickle down to the poor. Except perhaps in the Krangyov Development Centre villages of Chek and Thom and the Oxfam/Chumraen Chiet Khmer village of Meaneak, this has not been the case. The reason for this is that the projects started by the development agencies had not been of sufficient magnitude to transform village economies. But while interventions had largely not generated tremendous increases in productivity, they had reduced the vulnerability of village participants, particularly those who happened to be less vulnerable in the first place.

The only organisation studied to explicitly advocate reaching the poorest through the wider community was KAP. The approach of this Cambodian NGO was to reach the poorest by working through key people such as village chiefs, VDC members, teachers, monks and older people. In this way, KAP seeks to assist the poorest families in a manner which involves the whole village. KAP has had some success with this approach when promoting special projects for the poorest.

In organisations such as CARERE, GTZ and the Krangyov Development Centre, the strategy of reaching the poorest through interventions which involve the whole community is evident though not formally stated. These groups focus on infrastructure development and loan activities directed at the improvement of entire village populations.

Reaching the poorest by working in remote and impoverished areas

Oxfam and Partners for Development are two organisations which have attempted to reach the poorest by working in remote and impoverished areas. This approach was particularly effective when combined with infrastructure projects that provided direct benefits to the poorest, such as the construction of wells.

Oxfam's choice to work in the villages of Meaneak and Samaung was based on a deliberate policy decision to work in the poorest communities of Takeo province. Through discussions with local authorities and direct field visits, Oxfam selected Koh Andet as the poorest district in the province, Romenh as the poorest commune in the district, and Meaneak and Daumpo (which includes the community of Samaung) as the poorest villages in the commune. Since 1991, Koh Andet commune has been prone to serious flooding, which has resulted in the severe impoverishment of Meaneak and Samaung. Oxfam has supported these villages with relief assistance during emergencies, villager-managed loan schemes and the provision of infrastructure. Chumraen Chiet Khmer, the local NGO established by Oxfam in 1996, continues to support these activities.

In Meaneak, Oxfam's provision of irrigation canals has been able to increase the rice productive capacity of the village. While families who own their own draught animals and water pumps are in better positions to benefit from the available water supplies, much of the wealth generated through increased rice production has remained within the community. By contrast in Samaung, relief and development efforts have been able to stabilise the community but not

to transform it. Several Samaung residents reported that if it had not been for Oxfam and Chumraen Chiet Khmer, they would have left the village in search of livelihoods elsewhere.

In the Kratie villages of Kompong Kor and Sre Treng, PFD did not demonstrate any specific strategies for reaching the poorest. However, the selection of a poor province and the determination to work in the poorest areas of the province, no matter how remote or difficult, ensured that PFD and its counterpart staff were working with relatively poor people. Likewise, PFD's emphasis on public health and access to water provided benefits especially to the poorest and most vulnerable of villagers.

In both Kompong Kor and Sre Treng, villagers spoke of a reduction in disease since the construction of wells by PFD. In Sre Treng, the female VDC member explained that previously the village suffered about 10 cases of cholera each year, but that there had been no more cases since the wells were dug in 1995 and 1996. In Kompong Kor, the wells had only been in place for three months, but the VDC members said that they had already noticed a reduction in cases of typhoid and diarrhoea.

Reaching the poorest through special projects

KAP, CAREERE and Oxfam have designed projects specifically for the poorest. While KAP has had mixed success with the approach, CAREERE and Oxfam have yet to make it work. This underscores the difficulty of helping the poorest even in programmes where well-thought and carefully designed strategies are attempted. As such, the lessons learned from all these efforts are instructive for the very reason that so little has been tried, and even less has been effective. A key factor of success requires that the activity be strictly limited to the participation of the poorest. This in turn demands that the implementing agency staff and the village development leadership fully understand and support the special nature of the projects.

KAP designed special projects for the poorest in the two study village of Spean and Kompong Ko. In Spean, KAP established a rice cooperative in 1994 to enable the 40 poorest households in the village to buy low-cost milled rice during the lean season. Membership in the cooperative was limited to these 40 households. In 1995, the price of milled rice dropped unexpectedly and the cooperative was converted into a rice bank that charged 50 percent interest on rice loans through the crop season. As a result, poor households began to withdraw from the scheme and better-off families began to participate. The shift of the rice cooperative into a rice bank undermined the original purpose of the activity.

In Kompong Ko, KAP supported several special projects designed specifically for the 10 poorest families in the village. These included food-for-work pond digging in 1995; an interest-free loan of \$52 to enable one farmer to finance duck raising in 1995; rice distribution in 1996; and interest-free loans of 95,000 riels to enable the landless poor to lease land for rice cultivation in 1997. The interest-free loan schemes were discussed extensively with the participants and responded to needs that they had identified. In Kompong Ko, the special projects for the poorest had received enthusiastic support from the development leadership in the community, and had either been successful or had the potential to be so.

CAREERE's Minimum Package Agricultural Support Project (MPP) in Siem Reap was designed as a one-year pilot to develop an appropriate outreach strategy to improve the ability of 500 poor farm families to attain food security. The underlying rationale of the project was that poor farmers required special extension strategies tailored to meet their specific needs and circumstances. Shunning the conventional view that progressive farmers pass on new practices to less progressive ones, the project plan deliberately limited participation to poor farmers with some access to land. In the study villages of Beng and Chikeak, the majority of farmers selected to participate in the MPP were not poor. While this was supported by the implementing staff as a means to better ensure the success of the pilot, the original purpose of the project was lost.

In 1996, Oxfam provided two water pumps to Meaneak to enable poor villagers without access to pumps to benefit from the newly constructed irrigation canals. While the management of the pumps was given to poor families, the use of the pumps was not restricted to the poor. The current practice, encouraged by the village leadership, of hiring out the pumps to all villagers has been profitable, but has undermined the project's effectiveness as an activity for the poor.

Chapter Two

Participation, Decision-Making and Ownership

The purpose of this chapter is to analyse issues relating to the control of the development programme in order to understand whose interests are being served. Much contemporary development theory assumes that local people are the experts on their own lives and should be given the major say in decisions affecting the development of their communities. Cambodian villagers are often illiterate, have diverse interests, are often tired and busy, and generally feel intimidated from speaking out in large formal situations such as meetings. Participation is examined in order to see whether programmes are adapted to the needs and situations of villagers. Decision-making is examined in order to understand which sorts of people are able to control or influence decisions. This research seeks to identify experiences of organisations in giving Cambodian villagers some genuine influence over development decisions. Where less “participatory” forms of decision-making are employed, the research seeks to identify successes or strengths which arise from them. Ownership is a key concept, which serves as an indicator of the extent to which people at different levels are prepared to take responsibility for the success of activities and to commit resources to them.

A particular focus of interest was the village development committee (VDC). Expected to be an instrument of both the government and the people and also to be a facilitator of village-wide community organisation, VDCs are increasingly central to the strategies of both development agencies and the Ministry of Rural Development. The study sought insight into the way in which VDCs are able to respond to the various demands placed upon them by the development community and to draw conclusions about what can be realistically expected from them.

1) Participatory Rural Appraisal, Participation and Decision-Making

Of the six organisations, four have used participatory rural appraisal (PRA)—Oxfam/Chumraen Chiet Khmer, GTZ/PDP, UNDP CAREERE/SEILA and Partners for Development. PRA is a tool which aims to enable villagers to learn how to analyse their situation and identify solutions in order to improve their lives. In PRA pictures and maps are used so that people who are illiterate can easily participate; small groups are used so that people who do not dare to speak in large meetings can easily participate. In this way, villagers’ knowledge of the situation of their village can influence development activities.

Generally, these four organisations arranged their PRA work similarly, allocating three to four days for data gathering and analysis of the situation and one to two days to raise objectives, prioritise them and consolidate them as a plan. Within the Oxfam project, problems were identified in the villages, but much of the analysis was conducted at the district town and in Phnom Penh by the development workers.

Villagers' participation consisted of presenting information, and of voting to choose priority problems, goals or activities. Sometimes the information gathered in PRA did not have a large, direct influence on activities chosen for implementation in a village (see Local Planning Processes below), but this information could still be important. For instance, PFD uses this information when seeking further partners to work in Kratie, and CAREERE uses this information in development planning at higher (especially provincial) levels.

Although PRA is a valuable strategy, it also has limitations. Sometimes important issues for villagers are not raised in the PRA. For example, in the PFD village of Kompong Kor, villagers spoke a great deal about the number of draught animals which had died in the past two or three years and their need to solve this problem, and about the issue of water pumps which they needed in order to carry out agriculture along the river banks. These problems, which are of key importance for villagers, were not raised in the PRA; nevertheless, the VDC was still trying to address the problem of draught animals.

It is important for organisations to recognise that PRA results may not reflect all of the main problems in a village, and also that PRA results may be influenced by other factors. One clear example of this is that within the PFD programme, clean drinking water is often prioritised by villagers. The director of PFD emphasised that sometimes this is because villagers or facilitators know what PFD is likely to provide, and therefore put it as their first priority. In these cases, he says that when analysing the data it is important to look at what the other priorities are.

Another limitation of the way in which PRA is used by the organisations in this study is that it leads to aggregated village data and village priorities. Final prioritisation is carried out by voting. As a result, minority interests may not be included. For example, in most villages the landless poor are a minority, and therefore their specific needs will not be articulated in the PRA.

Doing PRA at the beginning of work in a village leads to less accurate information, because the villagers do not know the facilitators and the facilitators do not know the situation in the village. If organisations do PRA more than once, for instance by repeating it every year, this can guard against omissions and inaccuracies in data. In the current study, PRA had only been repeated in the CAREERE villages in Siem Reap, but other organisations also said that they intended to do this.

After the initial PRA, organisations do not tend to arrange other mechanisms for people to participate in order to have influence over the programmes. For example, no participatory evaluations of activities had been undertaken in the 12 villages studied. Therefore the extent to which villagers are able to influence programmes at later stages is dependent on the sort of relationships which they have with the village development leadership.

2) Village Development Committees, Participation and Decision-Making

Of the six programmes, five had organised village development committees in their villages. In these five programmes, the VDC was responsible for managing development activities. In order to understand the influence which villagers are able to have over development, it is therefore necessary to understand the relationship between villagers and the VDC and also to understand what influence local authorities and development organisations have over VDCs.

Before discussing the work of VDCs, it is important to note that some organisations did not begin by working with VDCs. Before initiating the Provincial Development Programme (PDP), GTZ supported self-help groups. In this work they cooperated with pagoda *achar* committees because these are already established in villages and are part of traditional Cambodian village life. At the start of their programme, Krom Akphiwat Phum worked with one or two villagers who they called village workers. These were people with leadership ability

who were liked and respected by other villagers. These strategies met with much success, but because the organisations are now focusing on VDCs, such strategies are no longer pursued to the same extent.

How VDCs are selected

In all cases, VDCs had been elected by secret ballot. Normally organisations publicised the election beforehand and people could participate without problems, though it was sometimes difficult for people who could not read. In most cases the voters were required to write the name of the preferred candidate; illiterate people were therefore dependent on people who could read and write, and their vote was not secret. In the CARERE villages, the candidates wore large signs with a number on them, and villagers only had to write the number of their preferred candidate. The use of numbers or simple signs in this way is better for illiterate people, though some members of the research team still thought that some villagers might face problems in copying down the numbers or signs.

While the voting in VDC elections was generally open and fair, the selection of candidates allowed existing village leaders and facilitators to wield a large amount of influence. In one case, in Svay Ie village, the facilitator made sure that only the number of candidates needed for the committee were chosen during pre-selection. He believed that no-one should endure the humiliation of “losing” an election, and that the election should simply validate choices made in informal contact between the facilitator and the community members. There were definite strengths as well as obvious weaknesses to this approach.

Relationships between VDCs and other villagers

In none of the cases were there rules for contact between the VDC and other villagers, but VDCs called meetings according to the needs of the programme. Once activities had commenced, meetings tended to be for disseminating information rather than for allowing villagers to make decisions. If villagers have influence over development management, it therefore comes from informal contacts instead of from meetings.

Informal contact between villagers and their VDCs was made easier if the village was small and if all of the houses were together. Sometimes what the government recognises as a village is regarded by villagers as a number of villages. Where there were two clearly separate communities, Chumraen Chiet Khmer worked with these communities as though they were separate villages. For instance, in the village of Daumpo, Chumraen Chiet Khmer organised one VDC in the community of Daumpo and another in the community of Samaung. By contrast, KAP worked in separate communities but in the case of Wat Kandal village only worked with one VDC. As a result of this, the community of Wat Kandal has six VDC members, Kompong Ko has three VDC members, while the community of Boeng Khtum has no VDC members and is therefore quite remote from the VDC.

One clear lesson is that VDCs need to be able to have good, close contact with the people. In order to enable this, development organisations (including the Ministry of Rural Development) should form separate VDCs for any large communities which are located separately from other communities in their villages.

Sometimes the situation is not as clear as in Daumpo and Wat Kandal. For example, the community of Ta Ung in Meaneak village is about 1 km from Meaneak, but it has only 15 households; forming a separate VDC is therefore not an appropriate solution. A different example is Sre Treng village which contains 184 families and consists of four communities: these are all adjacent, but it is still 8 km from one end of the village to the other. Again, the right solution would not be to establish VDCs in every community. In order to give all villagers direct access to VDC members, organisations should consider ensuring that there are some VDC members from every community within the village. Choosing candidates for a

VDC election may not be effective, because all of the candidates from the main community might prove successful. An alternative would be to organise elections at community level in order to choose representatives from each community to stand in the VDC.

In the KAP programme village of Kompong Ko, villagers have formed a facilitation team to enable better communication between villagers and VDC members. In that village, all villagers were satisfied with the VDC members. Even though this was a small community with less than 100 families this was still an important and valuable strategy.

Relationships between local authorities and VDCs in decision-making

Ten of the 12 villages studied had VDCs, none of which included the village chief. In most cases, the relationship between village chiefs and VDC chiefs was positive. There had been conflict between the VDC and the village chief only in one village, which had led to the commune and village chief organising a new VDC election. In most villages, there was good cooperation between the VDC and the village chief, with the village chief having influence over the VDC but trying to be supportive. Difficulties were seen where village chiefs were able to act as unelected advisers to the VDC, and in this way to dominate it, as was the case in Spean. In the CARERE villages, there were signs that the village chiefs wanted to have influence over the resources which were coming into the village, though in Chikeak this included the village chief supporting the VDC against the commune chief.

Although the sorts of decisions made by the VDCs and the village chiefs were similar, villagers were much more satisfied with the decisions of VDCs. The one programme where there were no VDCs and where village chiefs took decisions (Krangyov), was the programme where the people were most dissatisfied with village development decisions. It must be noted that the partner organisations selected villages where their programmes were proceeding well for this research; however, one major finding was that all five programmes which work with VDCs provided examples of VDCs and village chiefs cooperating without great difficulties.

In a number of villages, VDC members were also government staff; for instance, the head of the village militia in Beng in Siem Reap, the deputy village chief in Krachap in Kompong Thom and the head of a *krom* (administrative group) in the community of Samaung in Takeo. Even though VDCs are new representative committees, they normally include people who have been part of the existing government structure and who have good relations with government officials.

In most villages, the village chief was an older man with a gentle character who exercised little influence over but was supportive of development. This was the case in Meaneak, Kompong Ko, Beng, Chikeak, Svay Ie, Krachap and Kompong Kor. The two villages where the village chief had a stronger character and more influence were Spean in Battambang and Sre Treng in Kratie.

In Spean, the staff of KAP, the members of the VDC and the village chief himself all said that the village chief was an adviser to the VDC. However, according to the observations of the team, the village chief acted more like the chief of the VDC. A VDC meeting scheduled for when the team was in the village was postponed by the village chief because the commune chief had called him to another meeting at that time. The village chief was enthusiastic and wanted to guarantee the success of the development activities. For instance, in the case of the credit scheme, he planned to call people who had not repaid their loans to his house, and if they could not repay immediately, to take their thumbprints and make them promise officially to repay. The VDC members seemed satisfied with this style of leadership.

In Sre Treng, there had been conflict between the local authorities and the original VDC, and it was not possible for the research team to discover what had happened. Some villagers said that the VDC members had taken food-for-work rice provided by the World Food Programme for their own use. Other villagers said that the committee had been honest, but that

the authorities had wanted to control the rice so that they could take it for their own use. It is not clear who was at fault, but the village chief and commune chief organised a new VDC election, and as a result of this almost all the members of the committee were changed.

In Sre Treng, the village chief and the commune chief cooperated closely to influence the development process. A different relationship was observed in Chikeak village in Siem Reap. In the SEILA programme, the commune chief is supposed to allocate money to the VDC chief, who is responsible for purchasing equipment. In Chikeak, however, the commune chief purchased the materials himself, and the materials which arrived in the village were less than those listed in the contract which had been drawn up. During the research, it was the village chief who was most vociferous in complaining about this. In this case, the village chief was trying to protect the processes of the development programme from negative influences.

Both the GTZ-supported PDP and the CARERE-supported SEILA programmes featured agricultural activities. In both of these programmes, the village chief cooperated with the VDC in selecting the participants. In both cases, better-off families were chosen, and in the case of CARERE/SEILA this contradicted the design of the activity. However, in all four villages, it seemed that even if the village chief had not participated in decision-making, similar choices would have been made. The major influence over these decisions seemed to come from government agricultural staff who were enthusiastic for success and therefore supported better-off and more capable households.

The Krangyov Development Centre was the one organisation which did not work with VDCs. In the Krangyov villages of Chek and Thom, the village chiefs and their deputies were responsible for all the development activities in the village.

Generally, villagers in Krangyov said that they were dissatisfied with the decisions of the village chiefs. In particular, they were dissatisfied with the decisions about who could participate in the various credit schemes. One example was the Canadia Bank credit in Chek, where the only two participants were the village chief, who borrowed one million riels, and another member of government staff, the Phnom Ta Pech school director, who also borrowed one million riels.

Village chiefs were given decision-making rights in Krangyov, but they faced problems in their dealings with villagers and higher officials. Even though villagers had the means to do so, they refused to repay their loans when the village chiefs asked them to. With regard to higher officials, the village chiefs requested that loan repayments be recycled, but this has not yet started to happen.

Women's participation in village development leadership in the six programmes

Traditionally, women have not had opportunities to participate in formal leadership processes at the village level. All members of pagoda committees are men, and almost all members of government institutions are men. Most development organisations encourage the participation of women in the leadership of development. The formation of elected VDCs has created opportunities for women to participate in the leadership of development activities. In addition to VDCs, many development programmes include management committees which provide another opportunity for women to participate in leadership and management.

Within the villages studied, it appeared that involvement of women in the leadership of development activities improved the quality of leadership. Women only had a strong direct influence on formal leadership in villages where they were in the majority on VDCs. In most villages, women were a small and largely silent minority within the leadership, but even this was found to be better than no participation by women in village development leadership.

In all the villages where the research was conducted, there were some people, both men and women, who said that women were not good at this sort of work. According to the obser-

vations of the research team, women were more than able to work on development committees. In villages where women were active on VDCs, they did their work well, and in villages where women were not active, the team met women who could have done the work. The ability of women in development leadership work is higher than most villagers, both men and women, believe it to be.

The villages that had women who were most influential and successful in development leadership were villages where the majority of the VDC members were women: Spean in Battambang, Kompong Kor in Kratie and Samaung in Takeo. If organisations wish to enable women to have a successful role in development leadership, they should ensure that there are at least equal numbers of men and women on VDCs.

In six villages—Kompong Ko in Battambang, Beng and Chikeak in Siem Reap, Svay Ie and Krachap in Kompong Thom, and Sre Treng in Kratie—women were in the minority on VDCs. These women were in general not very active and were often poorly informed. However, their participation was still important, and was an improvement on situations where women did not participate at all. In one village, the research team, which comprised men and women, often talked with men and women from the VDC in front of the VDC deputy chief's house. On those occasions, both male and female villagers came to join the discussions. On one occasion, the women in the VDC and the research team went inside a house to talk. At that time, only male villagers came to sit outside the house; even among the children, only boys came near. This example illustrates the fact that women will dare to participate in leadership if they see other women involved. If only men are visible in the leadership, women will be less involved.

The future role of village development committees

VDCs have an increasingly important role in rural development in Cambodia. For most development organisations, and the Ministry of Rural Development, the VDC members are the main leaders of development in the village and are also the main point of contact for outsiders. Our research indicates that leadership of development by VDCs rather than village chiefs is preferred by villagers and is more effective. Likewise VDCs create a valuable opportunity for introducing women into leadership at village level and enable NGO activities to find accommodation with village authorities.

Dangers of limiting community development focus to VDCs

At present, organisations seem to be focusing wholly on VDCs and not thinking of other sorts of local organisation which, in some situations, might be more appropriate. Attempts to tailor VDC composition and formation to existing communities only partly address this point. Alternative approaches to community development such as have been seen with the village workers of KAP and the building on pagoda committees under GTZ are being put aside as organisations focus on VDCs. This is because organisations understand the value of VDCs and wish to support the Ministry of Rural Development as it seeks nationwide solutions to the management and coordination of rural development at the local level. However, it is also important for nationwide development that other innovations are pursued.

In this regard it is particularly important that opportunities are taken to organise and work with the poorest in order that they can find their own solutions and their own leadership. In this study there were only two organisations which had tried to work with poorer groups: KAP working with the ten poorest landless families in Kompong Ko village; and the MPP agriculture pilot in the CAREERE/SEILA programme for 35 poor families with land.

It will not be good for nationwide poverty alleviation if a focus on VDCs leads organisations to not focus on cooperation with the poorest.

National regulation for VDC selection and responsibilities

Although there are VDCs in various programmes they are arranged in different ways. Sometimes organisations have rules for establishing VDCs, but when they implement the committees they do not always follow these rules. National regulations for VDCs would possibly strengthen them as an institution. Regulations specifying who should be present when a VDC election is facilitated, how voting should be conducted, how often VDCs should be re-elected, and equal representation of men and women on VDCs, may be useful.

If VDCs were accorded a non-governmental status, but with government recognition, this could serve as protection against the sorts of problems encountered in Sre Treng, where the commune chief, without consulting PFD or the Provincial Department of Rural Development, organised a second VDC election to replace the people with whom he had come into conflict.

Regulation might prove invaluable in enhancing the participation of women in VDCs. Candidate selection is more problematic. Possibly getting VDC members from another district to prepare candidate lists and VDC elections is the best available solution to avoiding undue influence from local authorities and facilitators.

3) Ownership and Dependency

Analysis of ownership and dependency requires a focus on the issue of responsibility. Dependency exists when people do not take responsibility for development, and when activities depend on outsiders. A sense of ownership exists when people take responsibility for development. According to this definition of ownership, if people simply say that something is theirs, this is not true ownership. If they take care of it, or take responsibility for improving it, this is evidence of ownership in the true sense.

The strongest sense of ownership by a community and its leadership was encountered in Kompong Ko, where a facilitation team had been formed by villagers that consisted mainly of men who had helped with the pagoda committee in the past. This team had cooperated with the VDC in order to build a road to the east of the village. All villagers had voluntarily contributed rice, money or labour to this project, which was established by the villagers without outside funding.

This, however, was a case where community development work had led to mobilisation of resources by a local community. The challenge for many organisations is to bring in outside resources in a way which develops rather than undermines the sort of participation with responsibility which characterises genuine local initiatives.

Information and ownership

Decisions above focused on influence over decision-making, especially related to informal access to village development leadership. Another necessary step relating to this issue is the provision of adequate information to all villagers. If villagers do not know about development they will not be able to take responsibility and ownership. During the research, villages where there seemed to be the highest degree of dependency were also the ones where people most often complained that they did not know what was happening.

In Spean, the sense of ownership of the credit and fertiliser schemes was different. The fertiliser scheme operated as a rice bank, and all the interest payments were recycled as loans to the members. Villagers who lived near the rice store were able to monitor the activity unofficially. In the credit scheme, only the capital was recycled: the interest was sent to Battambang. VDC members said that this money was for use as a village development fund, but members of the credit scheme did not know about this money. Because they lacked information, villagers were dependent on their committees. Their relationship with the credit scheme was no different from the relationship they would have had with a private moneylender.

Because rice cannot be moved without people seeing, villagers automatically have information about the contents of the rice bank and therefore people's sense of ownership and their rights tend to be stronger. In the case of money credit, it is difficult to share information and therefore difficult for villagers to be sure they know what is happening and to feel in charge.

In Spean, a canal was dug using money from households adjacent to the canal, from the funds of a village credit scheme and a fertiliser bank, and from KAP. Generally, villagers were not well-informed about the fact that this was their money, and as a result they did not have the sense of ownership and responsibility that might have been expected from a partially self-funded initiative.

Clear responsibilities and local contributions

In all three government support programmes—CARERE, GTZ and PFD—local contributions were used as a strategy for inculcating a sense of responsibility and therefore ownership of infrastructure. Generally, the team found this to be successful, especially where there were negotiations and agreement with villagers about what their responsibilities were before implementation began.

In the well-drilling and school construction activities supported by PFD in Kratie, various strategies were used to encourage a sense of ownership by the villagers. Discussions were held in the village at the beginning, before a partnership agreement with villagers was made. During these discussions, PFD staff explained their development principles to the villagers. During the negotiations between the organisation and the villagers, the villagers therefore understood their responsibilities. Villagers also were required to contribute their own resources. For the schools, villagers contributed 30 to 50 percent of the costs; for the wells, villagers contributed stone, gravel and sand, money for maintenance funds, and labour for construction. With well construction, a team of four was established to take care of each well. This team received training, tools and spare parts. In this programme, the people therefore were not only given responsibilities, but also the means by which these could be fulfilled.

The PDP in Kompong Thom, which is supported by GTZ, is implemented in a similar way to that of the PFD and SEILA programmes. Before implementation there are negotiations with villagers, and villagers are required to contribute resources to the implementation. In Svay Ie, the people had to repair the village access road before GTZ helped with the construction of two bridges and a culvert. In Krachap, the people contributed to the construction of two culverts, while GTZ assisted with a further 15.

Information rather than control seemed to be the key point in this regard. Villagers were not the ones who were deciding the level of contribution; in fact it was a condition imposed by the organisation. However, because it was discussed and explained, it served to clarify people's responsibilities. Clearly if local contributions were to be enforced without the correct dialogue and respect they could become unjust and counterproductive.

The influence of pagodas

VDCs which had a strong sense of ownership and responsibility for development throughout their villages were all in villages which had pagodas and where the VDC members were either members of the pagoda committee or had close links with it. This was the case in Kompong Kor, Beng, Kompong Ko, Krachap and Svay Ie villages.

Development organisations assessing the amount of time to be spent in a community and the way that the community is approached should set more time aside for developing relations and leadership in villages which do not have an active pagoda and pagoda committee. This is vividly illustrated in Kratie, where the Sre Treng VDC clearly needed far more support and advice than the pagoda-based Kompong Kor VDC.

It is clear that even though there might not be a direct role for pagodas in the implementation of rural development, that they do provide a vital part of the social infrastructure upon which ownership can be built. For the government, therefore, supporting the regeneration of religious life in the countryside may be a key strategy for enabling successful long-term rural development.

High impact, high dependency

The two projects which have introduced the most external resources into villages are the ones which have met with most dependent attitudes and least ownership. In the Krangyov villages of Chek and Thom, a great deal of new infrastructure had been built, particularly irrigation canals. Villagers met by the research team had not been involved in discussions about the infrastructure before it was built, neither had they contributed their own resources to the construction, nor did they have clear responsibilities with regard to the maintenance of the infrastructure. A typical response when asked about deteriorating roads was that when the floods came again, the Second Prime Minister would repair the roads once more. They had not been asked to take responsibility, and neither did they expect to.

It was not surprising that the Krangyov project with its high emphasis on direct external funding, and lack of emphasis on community development and management should have led to attitudes towards the development programme which were dependent (at the same time as generating wealth, which was giving people the opportunity to have increased economic independence). It was more surprising to find such attitudes in the villages of Meaneak and Samaung which had been supported first by Oxfam and then by Chumraen Chiet Khmer, both of which have a strong emphasis on developing the capacity of villagers to take responsibility by analysing and addressing their own situation. In these two villages, the villagers could only visualise development coming from the digging of irrigation channels. There was no conception of alternative strategies for village development. As a result, villagers were dependent on development funded from outside.

At the time the research was conducted in Meaneak, a committee had not yet been formed for maintaining the irrigation structures. Many villagers behaved irresponsibly towards the canals, taking their cattle to drink from them or pumping water directly from the sides and not from pumping points, both of which damaged the canals. On the other hand, when the canals were silted up, some villagers organised themselves to dredge them without payment for their labour. Generally, the only activity which the villagers mentioned as important was the digging of further irrigation canals.

While Chumraen Chiet Khmer could perhaps adopt measures which would promote different attitudes, it is also important to note the importance of the overall context. Meaneak and Samaung are both very poor villages which, following the changes in hydrology since 1979, have struggled to remain viable. Not only in Meaneak but throughout the area, irrigation systems have been the major initiative associated with development which has proved effective. In such a situation irrigation canals will be the dominant idea in people's minds when they think about development, and it will be difficult for an organisation to cultivate attitudes which are characterised by responsibility and self-reliance. To put it more simply, dependency is much more likely to be a problem for organisations which are working in areas where people are in more desperate circumstances.

Ownership of programmes

Although villagers have a sense of ownership of activities or development in their village, they have no sense of ownership of the development programme. With regard to the North-east Cambodia Community Development Programme in Kratie, SEILA in Siem Reap, and the

Provincial Development Programme in Kompong Thom, there is some sense of ownership amongst provincial officials, but very little awareness and no ownership at the village level.

The SEILA programme has been given a Cambodian name, which means “foundation stone,” with the aim that everyone involved in it will recognise it as a Cambodian programme and take ownership of it. Generally, villagers do not know the name of the programme, but, as in the other programmes studied, simply refer to the “organisation” (*angka*). VDC members knew the name SEILA and had received education about it, but when asked for more information about the programme they had to look in their notebooks to see what to say. The head of the provincial planning department who is in charge of the government staff who are implementing this programme had a strong sense of ownership of the SEILA programme.

In the Northeast Cambodia Community Development Programme, government officials who were directly involved in implementation had a sense of ownership. These officials regularly negotiated decisions about implementation with PFD staff in Kratie and in Phnom Penh. Other provincial officials did not seem to have much awareness of the programme.

Conclusions

Generally, the large-scale, process-oriented programmes of CARERE and PFD (plus GTZ, which has the aim of being large-scale) have found effective ways of introducing small but significant outside resources into a village without creating dependency, by requiring local contributions and introducing these in discussions before implementation. KAP’s more intensive personal approach has also created enthusiasm and ownership among the VDC in Spean, and more widely in the community in Kompong Ko.

Although organisations which have a larger impact are more likely to face dependent attitudes, especially in the poorest areas, the team still felt that both Krangyov and Chumraen Chiet Khmer could learn valuable lessons from the other programmes with regard to developing more responsible attitudes to participation.

Chapter Three

Sustainability

Sustainability is used in a very broad sense within this analysis to cover a general examination of the possible future benefits caused by development programmes. In addition to looking at the programmes themselves it is necessary to look at the political, social and economic context within which they exist. In this regard, the role of the government, especially in the funding of rural development, is key; this was a topic which attracted much attention during the National Conference on Rural Development from 17–18 March 1998. This section therefore begins with an examination of national issues with regard to the policy environment for rural development, and then focuses on arrangements for sustaining the six programmes studied, before taking a more activity-based look at ways of achieving sustained benefit from credit and infrastructure projects.

1) The Funding of Rural Development

Three of the programmes studied were government support programmes. In each case, the organisation provided not only capacity building support, but also funded the development activities which were implemented within the programme. In all three cases, there was no provision for continued funding of development once capacity building assistance had stopped. Currently, therefore, organisations are building the capacity of government to provide management and technical support to rural development in the future, but the issue of the funding of rural development is not being adequately addressed.

At present the government is channelling little money to rural development. In the six case studies, none of the activities were funded by government money. During the National Conference a number of people noted that a lot of money, for instance from logging, is collected and expended outside official government channels. They argued that if rural development is to be sustained the government must start to send its own money to local areas along government channels.

A related problem concerning the channelling of funds for rural development is the capacity of government at all levels. Participants in the conference said that if money were sent along government channels some would be lost at each level, with little remaining for local development. The SEILA programme which is supported by CAREERE aims to address this problem. However, once CAREERE support finishes there will be no external monitoring and more money could be lost to corruption. Even now, as evidenced in the study villages, CAREERE is not able to support village interests completely.

GTZ staff in Kompong Thom raised one example of a time when they had sent money to a pagoda committee in order to build a school. At the time contracts and agreements were signed and all the money arrived correctly. However, when the GTZ staff left, one of the

government officials went to the *achar* committee and took some of the money back. He said that he was borrowing the money to buy cattle, but the committee never saw the cattle or the money again. The official also told the committee to make sure they kept silent about this.

One provincial official who had served in the government for nearly 20 years argued that the government should not be given control of money, but that the donor should control it. Therefore, though some progress is being made regarding the capacity of government to deliver money to rural areas, most people believe that this remains a difficult problem to solve. If Cambodian rural development is not to depend on international assistance, there needs to be an effective financial monitoring system from national to village level.

Another problem relating to funding is the fact that there is no guarantee that large amounts of international money will continue to come to Cambodia. One example of this is the postponement after July 1997 of funding by the German government for the Provincial Development Programme in Kompong Thom which is supported by GTZ. In a situation such as this, where funding cannot be guaranteed from either national or international institutions, the private sector and self-help initiatives assume more importance. A good example which the team witnessed, in a pilot testing of this research project, was in World Vision International's programme in Kompong Speu. There, villagers built their own primary school and paid the wages of the teacher themselves. The GTZ and CAREERE village veterinary programmes and the various credit programmes which were managed at village level were other examples of organisations attempting to facilitate self-reliant development.

2) Organisations' Plans for the Sustainability of their Programmes

This section analyses the strategies of organisations for continuing their programmes in terms of plans for funding, human resources (management and technical) and arrangements for contact between participants at different levels.

Programmes which are to be sustained by Cambodian non-governmental organisations

Both Chumraen Chiet Khmer and Krom Akphiwat Phum are Cambodian NGOs which have been formed in cooperation with foreign organisations. In these instances there are two key issues, the first is the plans and strategies of the foreign organisation to enable the Cambodian organisation to become sustainable, and the second is the plans and strategies of the Cambodian organisation to enable development at the local level to be sustainable.

The two foreign organisations (the Australian Overseas Service Bureau for KAP and Oxfam UK/I for Chumraen Chiet Khmer) still fund the Cambodian organisation. Although the Cambodian organisations raise funds from other partners for some of their activities, core programme costs such as for salaries, rent and logistics, and also many of their programme activity costs, still came from OSB and Oxfam respectively. Chumraen Chiet Khmer has been discussing looking for alternative donors, but no action has yet been taken in this regard. The sustainability of these two organisations therefore still depends on their relationship with the foreign organisation which helped to establish them.

OSB and Oxfam have adopted different strategies with regard to human resources. Three Australian volunteers worked for three years in KAP to teach community development. They worked full-time and in close cooperation with the Cambodian team members. The decision for the foreigners to leave came from all team members without outside influence.

For Oxfam, the foreign adviser was based in Phnom Penh and made periodic visits to Koh Andet. The foreign adviser in Phnom Penh taught a Phnom Penh-based Cambodian staff member about managing the programme in Koh Andet. Training for Oxfam district staff who now run Chumraen Chiet Khmer was neither full-time nor direct. The decision for the Oxfam district staff to separate from Oxfam relates to Oxfam's international strategy of discontinu-

ing their involvement in the direct implementation of development. Oxfam district staff were advised to join another organisation to continue their work, but when they could not find one with the same approach they decided to form Chumraen Chiet Khmer.

Chumraen Chiet Khmer personnel are capable in their work, but they are not as able and confident as the members of KAP. Training which involves the teachers taking responsibility for work and participating fully in it leads to more effective skills transfer than situations where trainers are remote, higher authorities. Furthermore, if the people being trained are able to decide whether the training is complete or needs to be continued, this guarantees better results.

Both OSB and Oxfam were extremely active in ensuring that Cambodian staff members had good contacts with other organisations in order to facilitate their work in the future. In Takeo, the village development committees of the four villages which were participating in the programme took turns to host a monthly meeting. The host villages chaired the meeting, with Chumraen Chiet Khmer having a small facilitation role. This level of contact was useful and was likely to continue after Chumraen Chiet Khmer's intervention was complete.

At the village level, neither Chumraen Chiet Khmer nor KAP limits the time they will work in a community. Both of these organisations have similar strategies in building the capacity of villagers. In particular, both stress the importance of teaching VDC members how to write project proposals and to make contact with potential donor organisations. With regard to technical training, nothing observed in the four villages studies could yet serve as a model for other programmes, though the compost training, especially in Kompong Ko, may be valuable if it proves successful.

The Hun Sen Krangyov Development Centre was designed as a five-year intervention. The plan was to provide funding for fuel and for water pump maintenance for up to five years and then to hand responsibility for providing these over to either farmers' associations or investors. According to farmers in Chek and Thom, there are some places where they could pay for the pumping and still make a profit, especially on dry season rice land, and others where it would not be viable, especially on wet season rice land. Krangyov Development Centre management recognise that this will be a difficult plan to implement, and have extended the programme by one year to give more time for this. If this plan is successful for most farmers in Krangyov, it will be a valuable model for other parts of the country.

Programmes which are to be sustained by the Cambodian government

GTZ, CAREERE and PFD are organisations which are building capacity and providing facilitation and technical support for the implementation of government development programmes. In addition to their support, these organisations provide funding. None have plans to provide funding after their non-funding support is finished. Neither does the government have a clear plan to fund these programmes once the organisation stops its support.

All three of these organisations are building the capacity of government officials and villagers in order to arrange a process for future development.

Although PFD works directly with the government it is an NGO. It has a three-year programme and fewer resources than CAREERE or GTZ. PFD's capacity building focuses on what is needed for direct implementation. In the management of their programmes, PFD have not tried to assert many procedures, and instead rely on negotiations and agreements with government officials. The government officials who are partners of PFD are gaining experience of managing development and of direct implementation as a result of this programme. In the future, even if the PFD programme does not continue, this experience will be valuable for sustainable development within Kratie.

Like the other NGOs, PFD encourages relations between VDCs and outside agencies offering assistance. Its strategies at the provincial level are similar, and if there is a need for something within the province, PFD will try to facilitate contacts between the provincial government and relevant organisations. An important partnership for the future will be the one with Community Action for Social Development, which will bring in more resources, and will bring both institutional opportunities and challenges in work with the government.

CARERE has funding for a five-year programme which finishes at the end of the year 2000. CARERE is working with the government in order to implement a process of decentralised development. In order to be sustainable, the government will be required to adopt this programme and continue it after CARERE concludes.

Even if the government adopts the SEILA programme and has the resources to implement it, there are still problems in the sustainability of decentralisation. As a result of the intervention of CARERE, government officials such as commune chiefs have a role in the implementation of village development. Although the aim of CARERE is to decentralise power from higher to lower levels, a possible result could be to extend the power of higher levels over lower ones. During this study, there was evidence of some struggle between the commune and village levels, which led to some resources not arriving in the village. At present, CARERE fulfils monitoring and capacity building functions. Three years seems to be a short period of time to empower village institutions to overcome commune institutions in struggles for resources, especially because in these case studies the villagers did not receive much support from officials at the district and provincial levels.

The Provincial Development Programme in Kompong Thom does not have a clear future. The original intention of GTZ was to implement a 10-year development programme, and at the time of the research there should have been three or four foreign advisers assisting implementation. However, since the factional fighting in July 1997, the German government has withdrawn some of its staff. This has led to some problems in the programme, especially in technical matters, but it has also led to some positive outcomes. Programme staff from national to district level have said that it has been good for Cambodian staff to have been able to take greater responsibility for the programme. The needs and the abilities of the people implementing the programme are clearer than before. However, the future of the programme depends on the policies of the German government.

Whatever happens, it is clear that one effective strategy for sustainable development is the commitment to a 10-year intervention. This enables the programme leadership to learn from their experience, organise the programme according to needs, and have sufficient time to achieve sustainable solutions.

Conclusion

All of the programmes studied were quite young. None had been operational for more than six years, and some had changed a lot in this time. The programmes were in many ways still “learning to be effective” and it is difficult therefore to assess how they will be sustained.

In the government support programmes (CARERE, GTZ and PFD) there was no provision for funding after the organisation stops providing technical support and facilitation. While PFD expected to attract further overseas funding, and GTZ has allowed 10 years to solve this problem, CARERE, with only three years remaining and the aim of persuading the government to fund the SEILA programme, is facing the most difficult challenge. This pressure was possibly leading it to work harder for governmental support than other programmes.

The commitment of OSB and Oxfam gave KAP and Chumraen Chiet Khmer a good chance of securing long-term funding, but the Cambodian organisations’ failure to seek money from other sources leaves them vulnerable if the original supporters are unable to continue assistance.

Where advisers, teachers or others responsible for transferring skills worked directly in the implementation of work and took joint responsibility, this led to better skills transfer and built more confidence in those receiving the training. Where organisations had made unlimited time commitments or long-term commitments, this gave more time for learning and development for people and organisations, and gave better hope of sustainability.

All six organisations prioritised the development of communication and liaison skills between villagers and outsiders in order to improve poor people's access to knowledge and services. Organisations used various strategies to achieve this. Village-to-village communication was particularly strong in Takeo, where neighbouring VDCs hosted each other for monthly meetings.

One danger for decentralisation programmes is that they may enable government to sustain a more centralised approach after the supporting organisation has withdrawn. In this regard, the influence of the commune level is a particular concern in the SEILA programme.

3) Sustainability of Infrastructure

In the programmes studied, organisations were weak in the maintenance of roads, schools and irrigation canals which had been built. Although this infrastructure was only two or three years old, it had often started to deteriorate. Most organisations which had facilitated the construction of this infrastructure had not made any arrangements for maintenance. In areas where some arrangements had been made, initiative for maintenance had come from lower level staff or from villagers rather than from the organisation's policies. Some examples of this were: district rural development staff forming a committee to take care of their new road; VDC members in Krachap contacting two local companies and eliciting their cooperation to repair their road; villagers in Meaneak dredging their silted-up canal.

One special problem relating to schools was that villagers and development organisations believed the maintenance of schools to be the responsibility of teachers. As a result, organisations did not look for community solutions. In Meaneak for instance, Chumraen Chiet Khmer are trying to address the problem of deterioration of the village school by approaching district education officials and asking them to put pressure on the teachers.

In well construction, more attention generally was paid to maintenance. Pump wells require more maintenance than ring wells. Strategies employed by PFD in their well-drilling programmes could be of value for other sorts of infrastructure and in other programmes. Before PFD begin drilling a well, they sign contracts with villagers. For every 20 to 30 families, a separate contract is signed by one responsible villager. The contract details clear responsibilities regarding the use, maintenance and repair of the well. Before the contract is signed, the villagers have to collect a sum of money to serve as a budget for the repair of the well. When the well is installed, organisation staff cooperate with the villagers to train them in repairing the pumps, and one villager receives spare parts and tools for maintenance.

In Sre Treng and Kompong Kor villages, most wells were well maintained, but some had litter and pools of stagnant water around them. If the VDC monitors all the well-use groups, it could lead them to the same high standards. In Spean village, the VDC took responsibility for monitoring the work of the activity committees. This example demonstrated the potential value for sustainability of a VDC adopting a supervisory role over small teams which have stronger ownership for a specific area.

In the case of one well which was well looked after in Sre Treng, the families who used it had formed five small teams, each of about five families. Work on the well rotated among the teams whenever some work had to be done. This initiative came from the four people who formed the team responsible for that well.

For maintenance which relies on labour, the most important factor is dialogue with villagers until clear responsibilities for maintenance and repair *have been agreed before construction begins*.

Sometimes maintenance of infrastructure also requires funding. In both the Krangyov and Chumraen Chiet Khmer programmes, there is an intention to raise money for maintenance of irrigation structures, but during the research these had not been implemented. In Kratie, each well-user had to pay 100 riels per month as a contribution to a fund for repair and maintenance of the wells. Although this is a good idea, it also has weaknesses. If money is just set aside and not used, then there is no profit. If the community does not find a way of using this money profitably, there is a risk that the person responsible for the money will use it for his or her personal profit.

Some villages have used credit activities as a source of money for the maintenance of infrastructure. In the fertiliser scheme in Spean, rice has been sold to enable the re-digging of irrigation canals and the construction of a rice store. Similarly, in Krachap village in Kompong Thom, the VDC has received money from a local company for the repair of their road. The road is not yet in need of repair, and the money therefore had been put into the village credit scheme to be withdrawn when it was needed. The use of credit facilities to provide a village development fund is an important strategy in the sustainability of infrastructure and the sustainability of development in the village in general.

Conclusions

The team found a number of strategies to be effective in ensuring the maintenance, and therefore the sustainability, of infrastructure. These were only designed into well drilling programmes. A key conclusion of the research is that organisations constructing other sorts of infrastructure should learn from and adapt the sort of measures which have been applied in well construction. These include dialogue with villagers *before* implementation to arrange responsibilities; the division of responsibilities between different groups, with each group having a person or team leading it; the drawing up for each group of a separate written contract, detailing responsibilities for maintenance, before implementation; the collection of funds for maintenance from the villagers before signing those contracts; training for leadership in repair and maintenance; the provision of (or arrangement of access to) tools, spare parts and other materials necessary for repairs. These strategies were most obvious in the PFD well-drilling programme, and to a lesser extent where ring wells were drilled under the SEILA programme. The absence of such strategies in the provision of canals, roads and schools led to poor maintenance of these sorts of infrastructure in all programmes.

Another important strategy was the use of credit facilities to provide a village development fund so that money could be allocated for the repair of infrastructure when necessary. A role for the VDC in monitoring the state of infrastructure and the work done by teams or sub-committees in the village was also important for the sustainability of infrastructure.

4) Sustainability of Credit Activities

Most credit activities achieved repayment rates of 80 to 100 percent, and retained most members in the activities. In order to achieve these successes, most organisations have used similar strategies. Activities are managed by an elected VDC with between five and nine members. Sometimes the activity is managed directly by the VDC, sometimes the responsibility is delegated to a sub-committee or a single member supported by the VDC. Borrowers are organised into groups of about five families who guarantee each other's loans. Sometimes the borrowers are required to save money before they can borrow, such as in the cash association in Svay Ie. In the Krangyov programme, these strategies have not been used, but the leadership has recognised that community management of these activities should be arranged.

There are a number of other strategies relating to villager management of credit schemes and ownership. If villagers understand the terms of the credit scheme, they will be more satisfied and less likely to withdraw. Normally villagers are clearer about rice banks than about financial credit. With regard to cash credit, villagers have a clearer understanding when money is recycled in the village rather than being sent somewhere outside the village. A comparison of the fertiliser bank and credit schemes in Spean is a clear illustration of this. In most credit activities, the management committee has the right to take one percent of the value of the loans as payment for their work. This can assist sustainability, but most participants in the activities do not know about this. Enabling villagers to understand the details of credit activities and to check the work of their committees is difficult. At present, the work of committees is checked by organisational staff rather than by villagers. This endangers the sustainability of these activities once the organisations withdraw.

One effective measure in Samaung and Meaneak was the provision of metal safes to the VDC, enabling them to hold money safely in the village. Three different people were responsible for the safe, the keys and the secret combination. This will help the VDC manage money in the future without outside assistance.

Although a number of activities have continued successfully, benefits to the poorer families have not always been sustained. Sometimes families meet with difficulties and are not able to repay their loans. Normally, these are poorer families. Sometimes the managers of activities are more concerned with the continuation of the activity than with guaranteeing benefits to the poorest. The clearest example of this is the rice cooperative in Spean village. The activity committee believed that repaying CIDSE was their first priority, so that when rice prices fell, they changed the activity from being a cooperative for the poorest to a rice bank which addressed the needs of medium and better-off families.

Credit activities in general do not fully meet the needs of the participants. Almost all credit participants encountered by the team also borrowed money privately, either in their villages or at nearby markets. This influences sustainability. If credit activities meet all of the needs of the villagers for credit, this is a strong incentive for villagers to continue them. If credit activities make up only a small portion of their borrowing, they are a far less important influence on villagers' standards of living. In this situation, if an activity runs into difficulties or if there are conflicts, people will quickly withdraw. The research team encountered this problem in both Meaneak and Spean.

Normally, when organisations have designed credit activities they have tried to guard against failure, but little notice has been taken of the needs of the villagers. An exception to this was the activity for the poorest 10 families in Kompong Ko. In order to enable these landless families to hire and farm one hectare of land, KAP allowed them to borrow 95,000 riels per family, almost twice as much as the amount loaned to medium and better-off families in other credit schemes. This suggests that in order to meet people's needs for credit, much larger sums must be loaned.

There are two main reasons why organisations establish credit activities. One is to enable families to increase their incomes, a second is to support poor families in times when their income is insufficient to meet their consumption needs. With regard to income generation, organisations had few new ideas for villagers. Most villagers used these loans for raising pigs. Borrowers often suffered losses as a result of the deaths of pigs.

With regard to credit for consumption, sometimes villagers can predict their needs, but often this is not possible. In Meaneak and Samaung, the village relief associations tried to address this problem. Participants were required to give 500 riels per month, and they had the right to a payment of 10,000 riels if they became seriously ill and 20,000 riels if a relative died. In addition, participants were able to borrow money interest-free from the association for short periods, if they had unexpected needs. Villagers who had good relations with the association were satisfied with this facility. This activity had no clear rules, and depended on

individual negotiations with association members. These solutions therefore need to be implemented in small communities where there is good cooperation.

Most credit activities have between 40 and 80 members. Normally, these activities are established at the village level, but some villages have as many as 300 or 400 families. In small villages such as Samaung and Meaneak, all families can easily participate in one credit activity. One KAP strategy for enabling villagers to participate was to establish different activities according to different needs. Therefore in Spean, about 200 families participated in four different activities. Although the activities were originally designed to meet different needs, they have over time come to be resemble each other. This, and the fact that credit schemes work well in small communities, leads to the conclusion that in some large villages, establishing a number of similar activities in different communities within the village could be effective. One related example is the rice bank in Samaung. If a rice store were built in the community of Samaung, people would start to repay their loans to the rice bank and the activity might be sustained.

In some villages, credit activities had stopped working well as a result of poor rice crops. Organisations cannot guarantee good crops every year. However, if organisations during the design of activities make clear plans for what will happen in years when the harvest is poor, this will be better for villagers. In Kompong Ko, the rice in the fertiliser scheme has not been collected for four years, but the committee has continued to add interest each year, so that the participants each now owe 450 kg of rice. This can lead villagers to fear joining activities.

Conclusions

Generally, organisations have been successful in finding strategies for continuing credit activities, mainly through arrangements for strong, village-level management. However, sustaining a high level of benefits has been less successful. Most credit activities represent a small proportion of the total amount that families' borrow, and there is therefore a lack of incentive for villagers to continue in credit schemes when faced with difficulties. Furthermore, management committees are more accountable to organisation staff than to the villagers, which sometimes leads them to prioritise the profitability of the credit scheme over the benefits to the poorer families. The lack of accountability to the villagers, particularly in cash credit schemes where the assets are less visible, leads to doubts about sustainability of the existing schemes if organisations withdraw.

If loans are to support rice farming, much larger sums need to be made available. In the case of income-generation, little progress seems to be being made in identifying new forms of income generation, with villagers often using credit money to raise pigs and losing money by doing so. Credit for consumption is valuable for vulnerable families to enable them to survive during times when they are most vulnerable. Oxfam/Chumraen Chiet Khmer schemes in Takeo have made interesting progress in this regard, with flexible informal arrangements being made in small community saving schemes.

Credit schemes are vulnerable to poor crop harvests. This problem is exacerbated by the fact that in their design, the credit schemes studied did not have clear plans for what would happen in the case of crop failure. Solutions improvised at the village level are sometimes appropriate, but are sometimes unrealistic and cause anxiety to participants.

Chapter Four

Organisational Structure and Approach

The six organisations in this study differ significantly in the size and scope of their programmes. There are obvious differences between the organisational structure of Chumraen Chiet Khmer, which has three staff, a low budget and works in four villages, to that of CAREERE, which has hundreds of staff, a multi-million dollar budget and operates in over 500 villages. While it may seem presumptuous to even attempt comparisons between such diverse groups, this research has proceeded on the assumption that each of the six organisations has something to learn from the experience of the others. At the local level, all development agencies encounter similar challenges and opportunities.

1) Engaging the Local Community

All community development approaches start with outsiders entering a community and engaging local residents in efforts to collectively improve their situation. How do outsiders in Cambodia best enter a local community? Who do they approach? How do they get to know the people in the community? How long do they profitably spend in the community? How important is it to have a continued presence in the community? Once initiated, how does a development organisation adapt its programme to local conditions?

The development organisations in this study dealt primarily with the village leaders. The Hun Sen Krangyov Development Centre worked exclusively through village authorities, particularly village chiefs. Other organisations, such as CAREERE, Partners for Development and Oxfam, made contact with the village chiefs and then moved to establish village development committees. GTZ relied more on village committees already in place such as pagoda committees. The practice of most groups was to work through village leaders, and this normally took place in formal exercises such as VDC elections and participatory rural appraisals (PRAs). As a consequence, field staff spent little time in the villages and moved on once these tasks were completed. The importance of getting to know villagers and learning about their situation more informally was underplayed. Likewise, once activities had been started, organisations did not allow for opportunities to learn about how projects were being implemented or how the activities might be adapted to local circumstances.

The value of staying in village communities for even short periods of time has been underscored by the method of this research. In several communities, the research team was able to learn about crucial aspects of the programmes that were unknown to field staff. In the Krom Akphiwat Phum village of Spean, the mismanagement of the rice cooperative, which diminished the entire programme, went unnoticed by KAP staff. In the CAREERE villages of Beng and Chikeak, opportunities to help VDCs seek assistance from other donors for local projects went unfulfilled. In the GTZ village of Krachap, an occasion to provide management

and bookkeeping training to committee members in non-GTZ schemes was missed. In the Oxfam village of Meaneak, the inherent conflicts over water use management initially went unresolved. In the Krangyov villages of Chek and Thom, the dissatisfaction of residents with the operation of the loan schemes went unreported to the programme management.

Of all the groups studied, the KAP approach most emphasised the importance of staying in villages and learning from the people. The approach demanded high levels of commitment from staff and a long-term presence in participating communities. It was shown to be very effective in Kompong Ko, where the VDC chief continued to emphasise community cooperation and the inclusion of the poor, but less effective in Spean, where the approach had given way to a more formal management of activities. While the approach is probably best suited to Cambodian NGOs, the emphasis of building capacity through extended presence in a community is an important lesson for everyone.

2) Relief and Development Approaches

Several of the organisations studied have used both relief and development strategies in their attempts to address the needs of rural communities. Relief assistance has taken many forms. Oxfam has provided food-for-work in canal building, established village relief associations to help villagers cope with crises, replaced houses damaged by flooding, and provided miscellaneous household items to people in emergencies. The Krangyov Development Centre has also provided food-for-work in canal construction and given money, food and household items to villagers. KAP has arranged food-for-work activities in canal and pond building. While CARERE, GTZ and PFD have deliberately decided not to become involved in relief activities, other agencies have distributed relief goods in the villages where they are working.

Reflecting upon the experiences of the organisations studied, questions arise as to the relationship between relief and development. Is it possible to administer relief without creating dependency? Or stated more positively, it is possible to provide relief in ways that foster participation with responsibility? The experiences of Oxfam and Krangyov, the two organisations most involved in relief work, clearly illustrate that the provision of emergency assistance can create attitudes of dependency that undermine responsible participation in development activities. This position seems to be corroborated by the experience of organisations who are themselves not involved in relief work but who are affected by the emergency activities of other agencies. In the Oxfam villages of Meaneak and Samaung villagers took little initiative on their own and relied on the development agency for solutions to their problems. In the Krangyov villages of Chek and Thom, the villagers similarly looked to the development centre to maintain the new road that had been built. In the GTZ village of Svay Ie, food-for-work road construction had undermined the improvement of roads that required labour contributions from villagers.

Do we then conclude that relief work is inimical to development? This need not be the case. If we conceive of development as a process by which vulnerabilities are reduced and capacities increased, then relief efforts may be seen as compatible with development. The lesson here is that many disaster relief efforts tend to concentrate on meeting immediate needs, rather than on addressing and lessening vulnerabilities. Likewise relief efforts often fail to recognise and build upon capacities, i.e. the strengths that exist within a community on which future development can take place. In the community of Kompong Ko, the 10 poorest families participated in food-for-work pond digging, and in a subsequent period of flooding received distributions of milled rice. But their involvement in these activities did not deter their active participation in special income generating loans projects. Because they enjoyed the respect of the village leader and were encouraged to participate in discussions about projects designed for their benefit, their capacity for responsible involvement was increased.

3) Local Planning Processes

An exciting approach to large-scale community development now being pursued by several organisations involves supporting local planning processes within programmes jointly undertaken with government. CAREERE, GTZ and PFD work with the government in programmes that stress the importance of local participatory planning, local contributions to project implementation and local management of development projects. In each of these programmes, issues of decentralisation, coordination and project selection are paramount, though each receive a slightly different emphasis. Local planning processes work well when links between project identification and funding decisions are clear.

In CAREERE, the focus is on decentralisation, with efforts centred on planning and decision-making for all villages within a given commune. Project selection is begun in PRA exercises with villagers and negotiated at the commune level. At the village level, coordination among government departments is weak. In GTZ, the emphasis is on coordination, and provincial government agencies work well together and with their NGO partners. Project selection is discussed with villagers, though approval is made by provincial staff and suffers from long delays. At present, the decentralisation of development to commune institutions has not taken place. In PFD, the focus is on a two-track approach. Project selection is preconditioned by the technical expertise of the programme, though opportunities are provided for villagers to pursue solutions to needs not addressed by PFD through the establishment of VDCs and the holding of PRA exercises. Coordination with government departments in project implementation is strong.

Decentralised approach of the CAREERE/SEILA programme

By far the most ambitious of the local planning processes is that of the five-year CAREERE project, which through the SEILA government programme supports the decentralised planning and financing of local development in five provinces. The approach seeks to facilitate a bottom-up planning process that begins with the identification and prioritisation of needs at the village level. Once completed, village plans are consolidated into a commune plan, which determines how limited funds made available for village infrastructure projects will be spent. Through financial assistance provided by international donors and the Cambodian government, the local planning process is intended to continue after CAREERE's support to the programme is completed.

Leaving the question of appropriate levels of funding aside, the key features of the CAREERE approach hold promise for replication in other provinces. One strength of the CAREERE approach is that it links villager participation in the planning process directly to the negotiation and allocation of funds at the commune level. Another is that it requires contributions of cash and labour from the village beneficiaries. A third is that it involves the participation of government workers in the institutionalisation of decentralised decision-making. However, the VDC members and the villagers in Beng and Chikeak who had made contributions to infrastructure projects had yet to see the real link between the development of their village plans and the funding of these projects.

Rapid implementation on a large scale has led to several weaknesses in programme implementation. These include an emphasis on tasks to be accomplished rather than on process; the virtual exclusion of VDC chiefs from commune decisions about the funding of village projects; delays in the release of project funds; and the inadequate training of technical support teams. To a certain extent, the very scale and limited duration of the CAREERE project makes the attainment of its objectives difficult, if not unrealistic.

Coordinated approach of the GTZ/Provincial Development Programme

The GTZ/Provincial Development Programme (PDP) in Kompong Thom supports a coordinated approach to rural development. This takes place among government departments such as rural development; agriculture, fisheries and forestry; and women's affairs. It also takes place among these government departments, NGOs specialising in rural financial institutions, and donor-financed self-help teams. A PDP Project Implementation Committee (PIC), comprised of representatives of all partner groups, coordinates day-to-day PDP activities and approves proposals for the funding of village projects.

Unlike in CARERE/SEILA, commune development committees have yet to be organised. Decisions to fund village projects are thus made at the provincial level by programme staff on a case by case basis, not at the commune level by local representatives within the limits of a fund made available for all the villages within a commune. This allows the smaller PDP to respond to requests from individual villages before the entire commune is organised. At the same time, it fails to place the decision-making power of funding projects in the hands of local authorities and village representatives.

A key element of the PDP is villager participation in a local planning process. The head of the community development working group explained that village development plans have been formulated in most of the 25 target villages. He explained that these were not comprehensive plans but initial attempts to link villagers' needs and priorities with local and external resources. There are three main steps in the process: undertaking a participatory assessment of the community; developing a feasibility study; and submitting a project proposal to the PIC in the provincial capital. As a result of the slowdown in work in the wake of the July 1997 fighting, only three project proposals had been approved at the time of the study.

Despite the disruptions in GTZ/PDP implementation, the programme has several strong features. For one, GTZ envisages the programme as a 10-year activity which requires long-term support for its eventual success. GTZ likewise recognises that different partners have different roles to play in the programme, promoting NGO competence in credit and government technical skills in agronomy and veterinary medicine. GTZ/PDP has also started small, as compared with CARERE, with 25 participating villages in the first two years. This allows time to learn from experience and to build human resources. On the other hand, the programme is spread over 25 communes, which makes it difficult to build mutual learning among villages. While the cutbacks in German technical assistance have not stopped work on the PDP, a huge backlog of village project proposals awaits approval by the PIC and threatens the viability of the programme. Cambodian members of the PIC have been reluctant to make decisions that involve commitments of German funding on their own. They report that they do not know how much money is available in the fund.

In the GTZ/PDP study villages of Svay Ie and Krachap, villager participation in local planning activities, which involved mainly the village leadership, provided opportunities for each of the communities to reflect upon their needs and to work with local authorities in ways that led to tangible results, in both cases the construction of village infrastructure.

Two-track approach of Partners for Development

The local planning process initiated by PFD emphasises community involvement in the identification of local needs through PRA exercises. This enables field staff to obtain valuable information about various aspects of village life in a short period of time. It likewise reminds staff that they should listen carefully to the people. Moreover, it encourages villagers to reflect upon their circumstances and to act together to mobilise resources to improve their lives. All of these elements are similar to those found in the approaches of CARERE and GTZ. There are, however, notable differences.

Unlike CARERE and GTZ, PFD does not fund projects prioritised by villagers. Rather, it provides assistance in the areas of its technical expertise: well-drilling, community water and health education, and school construction. In this sense, local planning and project implementation are parallel activities. While there are inherent weaknesses in this two-track approach, there has been an attempt to fit the needs of the community with the resources of the development agency. PFD's limited funding and specialisation in well-drilling and public health to a large extent predetermine the type of activities that it is able to implement at the village level. By supporting the establishment of VDCs, together with PRA exercises, PFD seeks to give VDC members sufficient ideas and motivation for them to be able to find their own solutions to identified needs.

In Kompong Kor, the PRA exercise had done little to influence the villagers, either in the analysis of their situation or in the collective mobilisation of resources. None of the eight priorities identified in plenary session corresponded to the main activities that were currently being pursued by the VDC members. PFD management plans to repeat the PRA exercise each year, convinced that its usefulness will improve. Presently, the exercise has been more valuable for the field staff than for the villagers.

Compared to CARERE's SEILA and GTZ's PDP, there are likewise differences in PFD's programme framework, the Northeast Cambodia Community Development Programme (NCCDP). While the NCCDP provides a framework for government participation, it is not at the present time managed by the government as are the SEILA and PDP programmes. Still, PFD works closely with the Provincial Department of Rural Development (PDRD), and most programme implementation is undertaken with staff seconded from provincial government departments. These associate staff work for a maximum of three weeks per month with PFD, and then return to work for a least one week with their respective departments. By working with PFD, government staff have an opportunity to work in rural areas and gain practical experience in community development and building village infrastructure. PDRD counterparts are also involved in high-level planning meetings with PFD, which enables them to develop a sense of ownership and responsibility for the programme.

4) Output and Process Approaches

Among the six development programmes, some emphasise the importance of output, the direct material benefits to be gained from an intervention. Others insist on the importance of process, the relationships that must be in place for genuine development to take place. There are potential risks in pursuing either strategy too far without regard for the other. A total reliance on an output-oriented approach runs the risk of undermining sustainability. Without the institutional capacity to manage benefits that have been attained, there is a real possibility that they will be lost. By contrast, a total preoccupation with process-oriented approaches runs the risk of not generating real economic benefits for impoverished villagers. In the final analysis, organisations which aim to reduce poverty must contribute to the improved economic well-being and reduced vulnerability of the villagers with whom they work.

Among the various approaches examined, the Krangyov Development Centre stands out as a prime illustration of an output-oriented approach. The programme seeks to improve the economic circumstances of village communities primarily through the construction of infrastructure. Reasons for the material success of the programme stem from its close proximity to a major water source, its ability to mobilise a large seconded staff, its reliance on local technical assistance, and the patronage of the Second Prime Minister. The lesson here is that substantial material benefits may be realised in a programme that is able to exploit a favourable resource base, rely on a large voluntary or unpaid staff, cut costs in technical assistance tied to foreign donors, and secure the hands-on involvement of a powerful leader.

While the Krangyov Development Centre has achieved notable material success in the commune of Krangyov, its almost complete disregard for participatory processes and local capacity building leave it vulnerable to the sudden withdrawal of outside resources. By contrast, other programmes reviewed in the study place a high value on achieving tangible results by encouraging community involvement and responsibility. For example, since 1993 PFD has drilled wells in about 200 villages and repaired or built a total 150 school rooms. Unlike the Krangyov Development Centre, PFD encourages community cooperation, bottom-up planning and villager participation. Such development approaches, which emphasise human resource and institutional capacity benefits, are termed process-oriented.

By far the most ambitious of the process-oriented programmes examined is CAREERE/SEILA, which in five years seeks to institutionalise the decentralised planning and financing of participatory rural development in five Cambodian provinces. While it is difficult to assess the success of the provincial decentralisation process from the perspectives of the two villages studied, the results of the programme's efforts in these two communities were still minimal. The lesson learned at this stage is that for a programme that holds so much promise, so little has been gained in the first year of village implementation. In itself this is not too unsettling, for it normally takes time to work out the practical difficulties of an innovative programme before it can become effective, much less institutionalised. What is worrying is that CAREERE/SEILA has less than three years to fulfil its mandate. Continued funding of the programme beyond this point at such high levels is doubtful.

Less ambitious than CAREERE/SEILA, though still far-reaching in its own right, is the GTZ/PDP programme. While GTZ/PDP overall has achieved less than CAREERE in the villages where it works, it also holds great promise as a strategy for community centred rural development that is government-managed and NGO-assisted. In one key district, GTZ/PDP has been able to build upon the cooperative activities initiated by the GTZ self-help team. More importantly, GTZ has envisaged the PDP as a 10-year activity and has committed itself to support the programme for this time. The recognition that process-oriented programmes directed at poverty alleviation require a long-term institutional presence makes GTZ/PDP noteworthy, despite the adverse effects of the recent disruption in project implementation.

Oxfam UK/I has experimented with a process-oriented approach with a Cambodian partner NGO, Chumraen Chiet Khmer. This experience has much value for the wider international NGO community in Cambodia as it struggles to find more appropriate ways of assisting Cambodian-led development efforts, particularly at the community level. The lesson here is that the partnership works best when it is nurtured and given direction by both parties.

Krom Akpuiwat Phum is a unique example of a process-oriented approach. Its success derives from long-time presence in communities. Its emphasis on building up trust and confidence as preconditions for development marks it as an organisation with special insights and sensitivities to the Cambodian situation. KAP is widely recognised as a development organisation that has valuable experience from which others can profit. Perhaps its major contribution to the broader development effort in Cambodia would be for it to remain small, to work in a limited number of communities as "learning laboratories," and then to share its experiences with others.

5) Monitoring and Evaluation

A important aspect of learning in development programmes is effective monitoring and evaluation. By gathering accurate information and making decisions based on its significance, organisation are in a stronger position to improve their programmes. There are several examples in this research where agencies have reflected upon their experience and instituted changes to correct weaknesses in their work. Realising that their credit schemes were not benefiting the impoverished, KAP designed special projects for the poorest. Aware that in-

adequacies in project proposal writing were delaying approval of village projects, GTZ/PDP established a technical team to upgrade feasibility studies. Aware of the need for villagers to become more involved in the development process, PFD supported PRA exercises and VDC elections. As a result of discussions that arose from this study, the Krangyov Development Centre considered the advantages of community managed loan activities, and CAREERE looked for ways to improve its Minimum Package Agriculture Support Project.

Organisations that are able to learn from their experience and correct their shortcomings are better able to implement effective programmes. This, of course, sounds very much like a truism. Nevertheless, the working group on monitoring and evaluation at the National Conference concluded that while the monitoring of programme inputs, activities, and outputs occurred frequently, the evaluation of effects and impacts took place much less frequently. The working group emphasised the importance of participatory methods of monitoring and evaluation that incorporated different views from a wide range of stakeholders. It particularly underscored the value of information gained from villagers in partner communities.

While effective monitoring and evaluation systems were largely absent in the organisations studied, all of the groups acknowledged that learning was an important feature of rural development programming. This was readily apparent from a reading of programme proposal documents. However, once the programmes were begun, the imperatives of implementation largely took over and pushed the activities forward without much consideration for what had been learned or what needed to be changed. Most organisations, even the smaller ones, were geared to expand before they had learned how to be effective. In this respect the organisational structures of even the process-oriented groups were rather inflexible.

Conclusion

At the outset of this study there was a clear understanding that most of the development programmes reviewed had been operating for relatively short periods of time. For this reason, a decision was made to focus the research on development processes as well as on impacts. To a large extent the study has been able to document and compare a wide diversity of strategies for rural development. Many of the approaches studied, particularly those experimenting with local planning processes, hold promise for rural development programming on a national scale. At the same time, there was generally a noticeable absence of economic impact at the local community level. Even though all of the programmes were still learning how to be effective, the results from the viewpoint of the villages were disappointing. This does not mean that real economic benefits have not been achieved. Where output was stressed economic impact was attained. The findings of this study indicate that the construction and improvement of canals and roads have produced immediate economic gains, while wells, health centres and schools have provided more long-term social benefits. At the same time, all but one of the programmes examined stressed process over output.

In the light of the observations of this study, a more concerted effort to achieve material outputs at the community level deserves consideration. This lesson is particularly applicable for CARERE/SEILA and GTZ/PDP. While CARERE/SEILA had made sizeable contributions to village infrastructure, allocations to local development funds were small, relative to overall resources, and had diminished each year. Likewise, the GTZ/PDP had scarcely tapped its funds for village development projects. The potential of CARERE and GTZ to make more substantial investments in village infrastructure was clear.

Similarly, the absence of projects aimed at raising productivity, particularly in agriculture, was striking. Most interventions related to improved agricultural practice were small in size and implemented as pilot projects at the periphery rather than at the centre of development efforts. This was true for CARERE's Minimum Package Agricultural Support and Crop Diversification Projects, GTZ's seed trial projects, the Krangyov Development Centre's support of dry season rice farming, Krom Akphiwat Phum's encouragement of compost making, and Oxfam's provision of water pumps. One speaker at the National Conference for Rural Development argued that community development projects needed to have a bigger contribution from agronomists, agricultural engineers and water specialists. This person suggested that perhaps the mission for rural development in Cambodia is to bring the largely separate agriculture and village development communities together.

In many instances, the development organisations centred their poverty alleviation programmes on loan activities in the form of rice banks and credit schemes. But here the lack of clear and coherent strategies was all too apparent. Were rice banks established to reduce vulnerabilities or to raise incomes? Were credit schemes started to subsidise subsistence or to

increase productivity? For the most part, village loan activities operated without a clear sense of purpose. On the one hand, there was a recurrent need for credit among villagers whose incomes fluctuate with each crop season. On the other, there was the genuine lack of investment opportunities for villagers within their impoverished communities. A commonly observed response to credit, that left much to be desired, was for organisations to distribute generic loans of relatively small amounts to large numbers of villagers for short periods of time. A more promising approach to credit identified income generating projects first, and then made loans sufficient to the requirements of the activities.

While many organisations struggled to keep rice banks and credit schemes viable under difficult circumstances, few attempted to develop special projects for the poorest. To an extent this reflected a general lack of innovation about how to deal effectively with rural poverty. It likewise underscored the gaps that existed between the development agencies and the poorest villagers. Even carefully thought-out projects for the poorest often resulted in failure. The findings of this study indicate that this should even be expected. The question is whether development organisations who define their main objective as poverty alleviation are prepared to allocate limited programme resources to helping the poorest, knowing that a large portion of their efforts will be unsuccessful. The observations of the study point to the need to encourage community workers to spend more time in rural communities working directly with villagers, especially with the poor. The practice of most groups to work exclusively through village development committees and village leaders limited their understanding of the needs and interests of the broader community.

Given the rather bleak assessment of economic impacts at the village level, one might conclude that the authors of this report are pessimistic about the future of rural development in Cambodia. This is certainly not the case. Best development practice builds on rigorous study and open debate. There are hard lessons to be learned from the team's investigation, but there are also glimpses of light and promise. In every programme the team visited, the researchers encountered hard-working and committed staff from both government and non-governmental agencies. They met villagers who had responded enthusiastically to the possibilities of development. They witnessed the participation of women in leadership roles and the opening up of village authority structures. They reaffirmed their confidence in the capacity of villagers to take responsibility for their own development.

The case studies documented by the research team underscore the importance of experimentation in rural development programming. Without the benefit of a wide range of varying experiences, it is difficult to develop a body of best development practice. The juxtaposition of the programmes included in this study helps to highlight the strengths and weaknesses of various approaches: large-scale versus small-scale, government versus non-governmental, relief versus development, and output versus process. In large measure, the differences are more complementary than contradictory. The strategies of the six programmes examined in this research, though dissimilar, are in most respects quite compatible; and each has something to learn from the others. The challenge for rural development programming in Cambodia is for organisations to rise above insular perspectives and to engage each other in constructive critiques of each other's experience and work. The research team hopes that the present study has contributed to that purpose.

Appendix One¹

Oxfam/Chumraen Chiet Khmer

1) Background

Oxfam United Kingdom/Ireland is an international NGO which specialises in development, emergency relief and advocacy. It has been operating in Cambodia since 1979. In 1996, Oxfam UK/I completed a change in approach from being an implementing agency to one which supports local partners.

Since 1991, Oxfam UK/I had been implementing a community development programme in two villages in Takeo province and two villages in Battambang province. This case study focused on the work of a local NGO established by the former Oxfam staff who worked on the community development programme in Takeo. The organisation is called Chumraen Chiet Khmer. It is an independent NGO which receives funding and other support as a partner of Oxfam UK/I.

Chumraen Chiet Khmer aims to alleviate poverty in remote areas of the province and to build the capacities of local communities in decision-making and development leadership. Chumraen Chiet Khmer is based at the district town of Koh Andet, and its three staff members are currently working in four of the poorest villages in the district.

Floods and drought have resulted in severe impoverishment of the villages of Samaung and Meaneak which are covered by this study. Oxfam has supported these villages with village relief assistance during emergencies, villager-managed loan activities, and the provision of infrastructure. Chumraen Chiet Khmer continues to support these activities.

2) Distribution of Benefits

Irrigation canals constructed in Meaneak in 1995 transformed the economy of the village by enabling all the villagers to conduct dry season rice farming. As a result, many families have been able to escape from indebtedness and have vastly improved food security. In 1996, more land was farmed than the irrigation system could support, resulting in the failure of crops on 30 percent of the land farmed. As a result, eight of the poorer families (out of a population of 93 families) have now incurred severe debts and are more vulnerable than before.

Loan activities in both villages have benefited most villagers, but not always the poorest households. These activities have not been sufficient to respond to the Meaneak villagers'

¹ Appendices One to Six contain summaries of the case studies for each of the development organisations assessed during the Learning from Rural Development Programmes project. Full case studies (which run from 40 to 60 pages) are available from CDRI.

need for credit, and private moneylenders at the nearby market therefore have gained indirect benefit from the canals.

In Samaung, only 43 of the 51 households were in the village at the time of the research, the others had temporarily migrated to look for a means of earning a living. The families remaining in Samaung said that without the support of Oxfam and then Chumraen Chiet Khmer, they would have been forced to leave the area. A pond funded by food-for-work activities of the World Food Programme in 1994 has been particularly valuable for poorer families, who previously had to walk 2 to 3 km a day in the dry season to collect water, but who now have access to water within the village. Chumraen Chiet Khmer have applied, via Oxfam, for funding for canals to enable dry season rice farming in Samaung. If this is not forthcoming (and there are indications that it may not be), there seems to be little prospect of improvement for the villagers of Samaung.

The construction of a school in Meaneak and a road in Samaung have improved access to education, though in both cases the potential impact of these improvements has been hampered by absenteeism among teachers.

Generally, both villages have seen material benefits rather than human resource or community cooperation benefits.

3) Villager Participation, Decision-Making and Ownership

While the people in the villages had participated in the construction of infrastructure on a food-for-work basis, villagers had not taken responsibility for maintaining this. The road, irrigation canals, school and newly planted trees were all suffering from a lack of attention. It did not seem, therefore, that the programme had fostered self-reliance and a sense of ownership. On the contrary, villagers seemed to be waiting for leadership and assistance from outside rather than acting on their own initiative.

Rice banks and credit schemes were run by the village development committees (VDCs). While the VDCs said that their decisions came from the people in meetings, it seemed that decisions were sometimes unpopular. In particular, participation in the credit schemes was denied to people who did not contribute to a village savings scheme. In both villages, people who lived closer to the houses of the VDC chief and the village chief were more satisfied with the committee and its decisions, whereas more remote households were less content. In both villages, there was a separate community (Ta Ung in Meaneak and Samaung Thom in Samaung) which was up to 1 km away from the main village and which had no representation on the VDC. Discontent was particularly apparent in both of these communities.

4) Sustainability

To date there has been no management of water allocation in Meaneak. People have competed with each other in order to try and pump water first before it runs out. This disadvantages poorer families who do not have access to water pumps and draught animals, and families who live further away from the canals. If there is no rationing of water use, it is likely that there will continue to be farmers who become indebted every year because they invested in agricultural inputs but were not able to irrigate their crops. There is a danger that they will lose their land, and that sustained benefits will only accrue to better-off farmers who own or acquire land near the canals. In October 1997, the VDC began to address this issue.

The credit schemes are well managed, with most of the VDC members familiar with the books, and provision being made for money to be held securely in the village. It is a source of slight concern that the only people outside the VDC who do a thorough check of the accounts are the Chumraen Chiet Khmer staff. If they leave, the only real accountability will be of

VDC members to each other. The apparent lack of income generation activities in Samaung raises concern about the sustainability of the credit scheme there, especially if the size of loans continues to increase. Also of concern in Samaung is the fact that the rice store is not located in the village, which deters people from making repayments to the dormant rice bank.

The commitment, integrity and willingness to learn displayed by Chumraen Chiet Khmer staff and most VDC members are the factors which give most reason to suppose development in these communities will be sustained.

5) Organisational Structure and Approach

Many of the strengths of the programme arise from Oxfam UK/I's staffing policies. Recruiting community development workers in the district made it natural for Oxfam staff to remain there and continue the work after they ceased to be employed by Oxfam. Likewise, the emphasis placed on staff development by Oxfam results in people staying with the organisation for long periods. The two staff who worked together in Koh Andet in 1992 are now respectively an Oxfam programme officer and the head of Chumraen Chiet Khmer. The high levels of trust and cooperation which exist between long-time Oxfam staff members will be invaluable as both organisations address important issues in the future.

The lack of confidence displayed by Chumraen Chiet Khmer staff in their own knowledge, particularly of community development and evaluation, and missed opportunities, such as the fact that water user groups were not formed when the canals were dug in Meaneak, indicate surprising weaknesses. These seem to come from the nature of the partner relationship. While Oxfam regards Chumraen Chiet Khmer as independent, Chumraen Chiet Khmer workers still in many ways behave like members of Oxfam staff. This can lead both organisations to assume that the other is ultimately responsible, and as a result fundamental issues may not be addressed.

Both Oxfam UK/I and Chumraen Chiet Khmer have attempted to achieve community development by visiting communities rather than living in them. This approach severely limits the quantity and quality of exchanges between development workers and members of local communities. It may also contribute to dependency, as important discussions and decisions take place away from the village, causing villagers to wait for the outsiders to come back with the answer rather than searching for it themselves.

Case Study I was prepared by Robin Biddulph (CDRI associate), Chim Charya (MRD), John McAndrew (CDRI), Nguon Sokunthea (CDRI associate), Pon Dorina (CDRI associate—Ministry of Women's Affairs), So Sovannarith (CDRI) and Srun Pithou (MRD). The research team studied development activities in the villages of Meaneak and Samaung (Romenh commune, Koh Andet district, Takeo province) from 3 to 23 September 1997.

Appendix Two

Krom Akphiwat Phum

1) Background

Krom Akphiwat Phum is a Cambodian NGO comprising a team of 12 Cambodian community development workers. There is no director and no administrative staff. Liaison, accounting and administrative duties are carried out in rotation by elected team members. Krom Akphiwat Phum (KAP) originated in liaison with the Australian Overseas Service Bureau (OSB), which funded three volunteers to work in the team as community development trainers. Australian team members withdrew from the team in July 1995, but OSB continues to provide managerial and funding oversight through a grant from AusAID, the Australian Agency for International Development.

The KAP approach stresses the importance of staying in villages and building up trust among community residents. In this way it intends to involve the whole community in helping the poorest. The approach also emphasises the need to learn from the people and to share these lessons with others. The current programme focuses on food security and promoting dignity to build the capacity of village people to organise activities by themselves. KAP presently works in 33 communities in six districts of Battambang province.

Spean community contains 250 of the 280 families in Spean village. The village has been peaceful and secure since 1979. It has had a good all-weather road since 1993 and is relatively prosperous. Wet season rice farming is the main source of income. On average, families have one to two hectares of land and produce yields of about two tons per hectare, but approximately 60 households are landless and need to seek other sources of income.

Kompong Ko community contains 96 of the 230 families in Wat Kandal village. 1997 was the first year since 1979 that the village had been completely peaceful. People have not dared to build wooden houses or communal rice stores until recently. Wet season rice farming is the main source of income. An average family has three to four hectares and produces yields of about one ton per hectare. Ten families have no land and need to find other sources of income.

In both villages, village workers initially cooperated with KAP. When the Provincial Department of Rural Development formed village development committees (VDCs) in the villages, these workers were elected as the chiefs of those committees.

Loan activities involving 80 to 90 percent of the population have been the main intervention in both villages. Each village also has special projects for the poorest. In Spean an attempt was made to set up a rice cooperative enabling 40 poor families to buy rice cheaply during the lean period. When market prices fell, the attempt was abandoned in favour of a rice bank, which helped the better off. In Kompong Ko the poorest families were given inter-

est free loans sufficient to cover consumption and agricultural inputs so that they could each hire and farm one hectare of rice land.

2) Distribution of Benefits

From its own experience, KAP has come to acknowledge that loan activities benefit the better off in the communities. This trend has been exacerbated in Spean as more better-off families have joined activities and poorer families have not.

Spean has frequently been used by KAP as a pilot for projects to help the poorest. Valuable experience has been gained, though the pilots have thus far yielded little benefit. Loan activities in Spean have, however, led moneylenders to lower their interest rates. In Spean, the strategy of working through the better-off families to reach the poorest is not proving effective, while in Kompong Ko the leadership manages loan activities in ways that build local capacity.

In Spean most of the projects have not built up trust, while in Kompong Ko community cooperation and mutual assistance have been improved by the KAP programme. Significant human resource benefits were noted in relation to community organisation and leadership in Kompong Ko, and the project management capacity of women VDC members in Spean.

3) Villager Participation, Decision-Making and Ownership

While there was considerable consultation with the people by KAP staff when activities were formulated in both villages, the situation in Spean is now quite different. People are not consulted by KAP or by village development leadership prior to decision-making. Decisions are made by the VDC and the village chief and presented to villagers afterwards in meetings. Thus, though some activities are well managed and benefit participants, the participants understand too little about those activities to be able to influence decision-making and develop a sense of ownership.

By contrast, in Kompong Ko great efforts were made by the community leadership, supported by the KAP worker, to involve people at all stages. All people attending meetings are encouraged to speak and to exchange ideas. Additionally, the community leaders have very good informal contact with each other and almost all of the villagers. The consequent sense of ownership of the processes and outputs of the programme has led to villagers taking initiatives supported by the whole community, notably the repair of the village road.

4) Sustainability

Activities in Spean were designed to respond to different needs, but they have become increasingly similar, and respond largely to the needs of medium and better-off households for credit. If current trends continue there is little prospect of sustained benefit for the poorest of Spean. Currently, individual loan activities do not fully respond to the needs of medium and better-off families. However, as the schemes enlarge and as more people begin to participate in more than one activity, the needs of this group will be better served and the activities will become more sustainable. The continued involvement of the three woman VDC members who are most competent and most trusted by the community will be essential for this.

In Kompong Ko, three waves of severe illness afflicting children have affected every family in the community. Consequent high levels of indebtedness may threaten all activities and may justify a relief intervention. The fertiliser scheme in Kompong Ko has not been repaid since February 1995. There is no provision for the poorest to obtain land or to continue leasing land beyond the next harvest in a scheme specially designed for them. While the

quality of planning and implementation of activities does not generate confidence, the dedication and initiative of the community leadership and the very high levels of satisfaction of the villagers suggest that sustainable solutions will be found in Kompong Ko.

There has been an attempt to encourage environmentally sustainable farming methods by introducing compost production to these villages. This intervention is at too early a stage for any judgement to be made about whether it will have any value. This year is the first year that farmers have prepared compost pits, so results will not be clear until the 1999 harvest.

5) Organisational Structure and Approach

KAP's organisational structure requires community development workers to spend time performing other duties. Functioning without permanent leadership seems to suit KAP team members well and to produce high levels of motivation and responsibility.

In Kompong Ko, the KAP community development approach has taken root and continued because the VDC leader has retained and built upon what he learned as a village worker. By contrast, in Spean, where the KAP staff member has many administrative responsibilities, the community development approach has given way to a management of activities approach that does not encourage community cooperation and the inclusion of the poor.

Similarly, the attempt to expand the programme from 21 to 51 communities with the same 12-person structure threatens to undermine the KAP approach by not allowing team members to spend sufficient time in villages. Currently, KAP's stated approach of working closely with people is most effective in the early stages of intervention, when needs are identified and activities formulated. In Kompong Ko, the community leaders are effectively adopting KAP staff's earlier work as a model and continuing it successfully. Nothing similar to this is happening in Spean. KAP hopes to benefit from allowing diversity according to the needs and characters of different communities and team members. It was not made clear in the research, however, how the lessons from successes in communities such as Kompong Ko are to be articulated into a coherent implementation strategy. Clearly, though, the policy of setting aside every Friday for reflection and every Monday for training provides a time and structure within which learning might take place.

Case Study II was prepared by Robin Biddulph (CDRI associate), Chim Charya (MRD), John McAndrew (CDRI), Nguon Sokunthea (CDRI associate), Pon Dorina (CDRI associate—Ministry of Women's Affairs), So Sovannarith (CDRI) and Srun Pithou (MRD). The research team studied development activities in the villages of Spean and Kompong Ko (Bansay Treng commune, Battambang district and Reang Kesei commune, Sangke district, Battambang province) from 20 October to 5 November 1997.

Appendix Three

UNDP CAREERE/SEILA

1) Background

The Cambodia Area Rehabilitation and Regeneration project (CAREERE), scheduled to run from 1996 to 2000, builds on the foundations of the Cambodia Resettlement and Reintegration Project of 1992 to 1995. Initiated by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), CAREERE is a support project to the SEILA programme of the government of Cambodia. SEILA is a five-year experiment in the decentralised planning and financing of participatory rural development in five provinces of Cambodia—Banteay Meanchay, Battambang, Pursat, Siem Reap, and Ratanakkiri. The present study focuses on the implementation of CAREERE/SEILA in the Siem Reap villages of Beng and Chikeak.

The focal point of logistical and technical assistance from the CAREERE project to SEILA is the Provincial Rural Development Committee (PRDC) and its associated PRDC Executive Committee and PRDC Secretariat. The structure seeks to facilitate a bottom-up planning process that begins with the articulation of development needs and priorities at the village level. These needs are then progressively consolidated upwards into communal, district, provincial, and national development plans.

The local planning process is complemented by the local development fund (LDF), which provides resources to implement public investment projects identified and prioritised by village communities and village development committees (VDCs). As part of the experiment commune development committees (CDCs) are allocated indicative planning figures (IPFs), *i.e.* financial resources which are shares of the local development funds held at the provincial level. The IPFs comprise the funds available for the planning of village-level projects.

The CAREERE project also supports sectoral sub-projects that are implemented by counterpart agencies and partners. These include projects implemented in the study villages such as the Minimum Package Agricultural Support Project (MPP) and the Small-Scale Composting and Crop Diversification Project.

Beng village in Dan Run commune and Chikeak village in Kien Sangke commune are both located in the Siem Reap district of Sotr Nikom. Almost all of the 138 families in Beng cultivate wet season rice using local varieties. Most families own from 0.5 to 2.0 hectares of rice land. If yields are good, farmers are able to produce 60 *thangs* (1.44 tons) of paddy per hectare. In the last three years, villagers have only been able to harvest from 25 to 40 *thangs* (0.60 to 0.96 tons) of paddy rice per hectare due to damage by rats. About 20 village families earn a substantial part of their livelihood from fishing. Normally they go to fish in the Tonle Sap lake as an entire household. About 24 families also produce palm sugar. At least 48 villagers have temporarily migrated to Thailand as overseas workers.

In Chikeak rice cultivation is the main income earning activity for most of the 109 village families, with the cultivation of cash crops likewise important. Villagers grow only wet season rice with one local variety and depend on rain for water. Generally, villagers own from 0.5 to 1.5 hectares of rice land. About half of the Chikeak villagers also lease from 1.0 to 2.0 hectares of wet season rice land in another village. Most rice cultivators in the village produce enough rice to eat for six to nine months of the year. Only five households produce enough rice to eat all year round.

Aside from cultivating rice, the villagers have extensive experience in growing cash crops such as watermelon, cucumber, aubergine, Chinese kale, Chinese cabbage, tomato, sugar cane, sweet potato, cassava, string bean, and shallot for sale in nearby markets. In the dry season, some villagers fish in the Tonle Sap to earn additional income or to supplement home consumption. Chikeak villagers rarely leave the village to earn wages. Only a few have worked overseas in Thailand.

In Beng and Chikeak villages, the main development activities initiated under the CAREERE/SEILA programme have centred on the local planning process, culminating in the construction of ring wells. These activities include the formation of the VDC, participation in the participatory rural assessment (PRA), the identification and prioritisation of village needs, and financial and labour contributions to the construction of public investments, which in this case were ring wells. In both Beng and Chikeak, the sectoral Minimum Package Agricultural Support Project (MPP) has been implemented, and in Chikeak the Small-Scale Composting and Crop Diversification Project.

2) Distribution of Benefits

Material benefits in the provision of clean water from ring well construction have accrued to residents in both villages. In the first project cycle of 1996/1997, Beng villagers built seven ring wells and Chikeak villagers built eight ring wells. These were financed with shares of the IPF allocations received from respective CDCs. In both villages, the building of the ring wells encouraged community cooperation.

As participants in the CAREERE/SEILA programme, Beng and Chikeak villagers and VDCs have been introduced to a local planning process, though the importance of planning still needs to be demonstrated. The villagers have no clear understanding of how the priorities articulated in the village plans are related to decisions about the distribution of funds made at the commune level. While VDC members in both villages have been active in the village planning process, they have not been actively involved in decisions made by their respective CDCs about the allocation of funds. They have yet to see how the development of the village plan influences decisions made at the commune level.

In Beng and Chikeak, the training received by the VDCs has focused on tasks to be accomplished rather than on facilitating a process that involves local initiative and responses to changing situations. There has been little attempt to build community action around needs that can be solved locally or to seek assistance from governmental and non-governmental agencies not directly involved in the SEILA programme. There may be problems if VDC members simply wait to be told what to do next. They should be more proactive in the development process, and affirm that the village development plan is their plan and then seek resources wherever they can find them to support their activities.

In Beng and Chikeak, the Minimum Package Agricultural Support Project (MPP) has the potential to benefit about 35 farming families in both villages. While the MPP was designed as a strategy for improving the livelihoods of poor families with some access to land, most MPP participants in both villages are not poor.

In Chikeak, the Small-Scale Composting and Crop Diversification Project has the potential to benefit 25 farming families. While the project was not designed specifically to meet the needs of the poor, it did intend to address the problems of agricultural productivity and food security. More than half of the project participants in Chikeak are not poor.

3) Villager Participation, Decision-Making and Ownership

Village residents in both Beng and Chikeak participated in the election of the VDCs, the PRAs and the construction of the ring wells. However, decision-making about what type of public investment each village would receive under the local development fund was done mainly by the commune officials. For both villages, the VDC chiefs were members of their respective CDCs by virtue of their office. But while they attended CDC meetings, they did not see themselves as members of the committees. The VDC chiefs were not actively involved in making the hard choices over how the money in the local fund would be distributed among villages in the commune. These decisions were made by the commune leaders, and particularly by the commune chief. The village leaders submitted their priorities to the CDC and then waited to learn what they would receive.

In Beng, all villagers have access to the wells and have a sense of responsibility for and ownership of them. This results from the active participation of villagers in the well construction, which normally involved financial contributions. In Chikeak, all villagers likewise have access to the wells, though not all well group members participated in the wells' construction. Many villagers consider the well group chiefs, who provided food during the construction, as "well owners." In Chikeak the well group chiefs were thought to be responsible for maintaining and repairing the wells.

Farmers from Beng and Chikeak did not participate in the planning of the Minimum Package Agricultural Support Project (MPP) for their respective villages. Decisions about what components to include in the MPP were made at the provincial level. This is in conflict with the local planning process promoted under the SEILA programme.

While the MPP was designed to respond to the needs of poor farmers with some access to land, the poor in both villages did not have an opportunity to claim their right to participate in the project. The project proposal envisaged that the selection of poor participants would be facilitated by the wealth ranking data available in the PRAs. In fact the selection of participants was made by the village chiefs in collaboration with the VDC chiefs. As a consequence, the MPP project which was designed for the poor became a project of the medium and better-off farmers.

4) Sustainability

In Beng, the seven ring wells built under the SEILA programme were constructed in the wet season and in general meet technical standards. Six of the seven wells produce clean water. By comparison, the six original ring wells built in Chikeak under the SEILA programme were constructed in the wet season without sufficient attention to technical standards. In the dry season the Chikeak wells may not provide clean water.

The Minimum Package Agricultural Support Project (MPP) was approved as a one-year pilot scheduled to run until April 1998. While the project was designed to provide agricultural extensions to enable poor farm families to attain food security, the majority of participants in the two study villages are not poor. If the project is extended without consideration about how it might incorporate an increased number of poorer families it will surely lose its original purpose.

Aside from the composition of participants, a question remains as to the effectiveness of the MPP approach. The project provides a basic package of inputs to increase rice production and to diversify agriculture. However, it is not clear how the various inputs interact with each other to produce the desired result in a small-scale farming system. It may very well be that a package approach that involves inputs with delayed benefits, such as fruit trees, and cash loans that carry the risk of default, may be more suited to medium and better-off households with larger and more stable farming systems.

The SEILA programme operates on the premise that the local planning process will continue after CAREERE's four-year support to the IPF allocations is exhausted. The assumption is that villages and communes will be able to respond to their identified needs partly through community cooperation and partly through financial assistance provided by international donors and the Cambodian government. If these funds are not forthcoming the local planning process will be of limited use.

5) Organisational Structure and Approach

The large scale and rapid implementation of the CAREERE/SEILA programme has enabled real benefits to reach a large number of people in a short period of time. It has also led to several weaknesses in implementation. More attention needs to be paid to: (1) helping VDCs understand their role in the decentralisation process; (2) ensuring genuine participation of the VDC chiefs in the CDCs and in the formulation of commune development plans; (3) supporting a greater effort by commune authorities and facilitator teams to respond to village priorities; (4) providing timely releases of funds to ensure that projects are not adversely affected by seasonal conditions; and (5) improving the training of technical support staff teams to enable them to assist village infrastructure projects in ways that maintain technical standards.

The local planning process supported by the IPF allocations is a defining feature of the CAREERE/SEILA programme that holds much promise for national rural development. Nevertheless, the total funds provided to the IPF budget is relatively small. The total funds allocated by UNDP core resources for the operation and technical assistance components of the CAREERE project amount to \$20 million over the 1996–2000 period. In addition, UNDP seeks to mobilise another \$30.5 million in donor cost-sharing for the implementation of sub-project activities. In Siem Reap, one of five provincial project sites, the planned LDF/IPF allocation for four project cycles is \$550,000. The funds will be allocated to 107 villages in 11 communes of four districts. While this is a substantial amount in itself, it comprises a relatively small amount of total project funds for such a key feature of the programme.

The implementation of the Minimum Package Agricultural Support Project (MPP) suffers from varying views of the activity held by CAREERE and the Siem Reap Office of Technique, Economic and Extension (OTEE). The MPP was designed to provide agricultural extension directly to poor farming families with some access to land. While agricultural support is strong, more attention needs to be paid to the process of involving poor families in the project. The project design also needs to be simplified in ways that allow specific activities to build upon one other. Part of the problem is that the Siem Reap OTEE, in its desire to achieve success, has allowed medium and better-off farmers to participate in the project.

Case Study III was prepared by Chim Charya (MRD), John McAndrew (CDRI), Nguon Sokunthea (CDRI associate), and So Sovannarith (CDRI). The research team studied development activities in the villages of Beng and Chikeak (Dan Run and Kien Sangke communes, Sotr Nikom district, Siem Reap province) from 24 November to 12 December 1997.

Appendix Four

Hun Sen Krangyov Development Centre

1) Background

Difficulties faced by the villagers of Krangyov commune, Sa'ang district in Kandal province first came to the attention of the Second Prime Minister during late 1994 when he was distributing relief assistance in the area following a severe drought. In response to this he established the Hun Sen Krangyov Development Centre in January 1995. Daily management of the centre is by the district agriculture chief, who is now based in the centre. Other government staff from the agriculture, health and education sectors are seconded to the commune and receive modest salary supplements. Development activities are implemented by the village chiefs and commune chiefs, who meet with the centre manager once a week to report the state of their agriculture. At higher levels there is a coordination committee headed by the Second Prime Minister, in addition to two management sub-committees and an advisory committee, all of which are staffed by a mixture of officials from communal, district, provincial and national level.

The Krangyov model aims to achieve development through large increases in agricultural production. Old irrigation structures have been renovated, new ones constructed and large water pumping stations have been installed. Construction of roads, schools and a health centre, and the provision of a nursery to provide villagers with free trees, are the main elements of this output-oriented project. Credit activities have also been initiated to finance agricultural inputs for the new intensive agricultural practices facilitated by the improved irrigation.

Thom and Chek villages are only 4 km apart. During the 1960s, both villages grew wet season floating rice crops, and produced sufficient rice for their populations. The area was, however, extremely remote in the wet season with no access except by boat. Following the Democratic Kampuchea period (1975–79), the lack of availability of floating rice seed and the disruption of the local hydrology led to problems of both flooding and drought. Thus, until the intervention of the Second Prime Minister, the problem of accessibility was compounded by the problem of food security. Chek village, which has 157 families, is one of the most prosperous villages in the commune. This is particularly because villagers have cleared over 200 hectares of dry season rice land from inundated forest to the east of the village. Just 4 km north of Chek, Thom village has 118 families, and according to the people who live there it is the poorest village in the commune. Thom villagers have not been able to clear new dry season rice land and 35 percent of its wet season rice land is too high to receive benefit from the irrigation system.

2) Distribution of Benefits

Material benefits have accrued to all villagers, principally as a result of the amount of money which has been invested in irrigation. High yielding, expensive varieties are grown on both wet and dry season rice land, with yields of up to three tons per hectare for wet season rice and seven tons per hectare for dry season rice. For most farmers, material benefits are limited by their reliance on credit to purchase inputs, and by the ability of merchants to force down prices at harvest time. The greatest benefits are received by those who have sufficient money to clear new land or who can operate as moneylenders charging high interest rates for fertiliser and petrol on credit.

Human resource benefits to all children have been guaranteed by the construction of schools and the presence of sufficient teachers. In 1997, 15 students graduated from Krangyov secondary schools to the district college at Prek Toch, whereas before no students had gone on to study there from Krangyov. All children in Krangyov have easy access to primary and secondary education. The improved agricultural productivity has introduced new skills to the area, particularly in the fields of irrigated vegetable cultivation, tractor driving and mechanical equipment maintenance.

Community cooperation has not been noticeably facilitated by the programme. Development at Krangyov focuses on agricultural production rather than community development, and activities such as infrastructure maintenance and credit scheme management, which normally depend on community cooperation, are weak. The deputy director of the programme intends to establish community development practices within Krangyov in order to improve cooperation.

3) Villager Participation, Decision-Making and Ownership

Participation by villagers in Chek and Thom is principally to receive assistance rather than to take responsibility. Following consultations with members of the various committees and with villagers in Krangyov commune, decisions about programme design are made by senior levels of management. Decisions about who will participate in activities, particularly in credit schemes, are made by commune and village chiefs, again without consultation with villagers.

As a result, people in both villages tend not to have a sense of ownership. They are not in a position to make changes to the programme, and therefore they complain about the programme rather than taking their own initiatives to improve it. The lack of participation in decision-making by villagers has led to dependent attitudes to the development process.

4) Sustainability

Before the year 2000, the Second Prime Minister intends that farmers' associations should take over funding fuel supplies and pumping station maintenance, but the plan for this is not yet clear. If farmers are required to pay for fuel, the irrigation will be profitable in some places but not in others. Neither villagers, local authorities nor centre staff have plans to take care of or repair irrigation channels or other infrastructure.

The intention for credit funds to be revolving, with repayments recycled as loans to other villagers, has not yet been implemented. Repayment rates for the credit schemes have generally been extremely low. Overall, current arrangements for managing credit activities are inadequate, and unless they are changed it seems that the credit activities will soon completely cease to operate. The deputy director of the Krangyov Development Centre intends to reform the credit schemes by forming community associations to manage them.

The centre does not have the capacity to raise funds for salary supplements and other monthly expenses such as medicine for the health centre. Most salary supplements are only

about 10,000 riels per month, so this is not likely to be a big problem. The provision of good quality housing for teachers and medical staff is a good idea for attracting low paid staff to remote areas.

5) Organisational Structure and Approach

Because senior managers with responsibilities for the Hun Sen Krangyov Development Centre are in different locations, and also have other jobs within the government and the Cambodian People's Party, it is difficult for them to cooperate and work together effectively. The transition from external funding to self-reliance may be difficult without more full-time management and planning assistance provided to the chief of the centre.

The fact that all of the staff and management involved in the work of the centre are also members of the government or the civil service means that lessons learned have a good chance of being shared and having an influence over government policy, though the research team does not have evidence that this has yet happened.

The emphasis is on village level rather than family level improvement. If the village improves, less notice is taken of the difficulties of individual farmers. It appears that this approach does not guarantee assistance to the poorest families, especially those without land.

The emphasis on the provision of services enables people's needs to be met very effectively in the short term. However, the emphasis on provision rather than management or maintenance of facilities means that the programme will have many new problems to negotiate, because activities have been initiated without a clear plan for how to hand responsibility over to the local community.

Within the output-oriented Krangyov approach, the absence of bureaucracy, salaried development workers and expensive foreign technical assistance provide an attractive model for ensuring that villagers receive a high proportion of the funds directed towards them. However, it is not clear from the current research that the achievements of Krangyov can be attributed to its efficient, output-oriented approach. Further analysis is needed in order to assess the true value of the approach, particularly in regard to the following three factors: the ratio of costs to benefits; the influence of water sources on viability; and the role of the Second Prime Minister.

A more thorough comparative analysis of the costs and benefits of this and other approaches is needed to evaluate whether Krangyov's achievements derive from efficiency or simply from high levels of expenditure. If the Krangyov model is to be replicated (or adapted) elsewhere, it is necessary to examine the importance of having a major water source in close proximity. It may be that the Krangyov model is only really suitable for areas which have large, unrealised potential for irrigated agriculture. Finally, it is necessary to examine the importance of the influence of the Second Prime Minister. His patronage may be a major factor in ensuring that the management is fairly efficient, with little diversion of resources away from villagers by officials.

Given the large impact on the economic well-being and standard of living of people in the villages, however, it is clear that the Krangyov approach is worthy of further consideration as a potentially serious challenge to Western, process-oriented development approaches.

Case Study IV was prepared by Robin Biddulph (CDRI associate), Pon Dorina (CDRI associate—Ministry of Women's Affairs) and Srun Pithou (MRD). The research team studied development activities in the villages of Chek and Thom (Krangyov communes, Sa'ang district, Kandal province) from 24 November to 12 December 1997.

Appendix Five

GTZ/Provincial Development Programme

1) Background

GTZ (Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit) is an independent agency which acts on behalf of the German government to implement its entire overseas technical cooperation assistance. In Cambodia, one of the major initiatives supported by GTZ is an integrated rural development programme in the province of Kompong Thom known as the Provincial Development Programme (PDP). Envisioned as a 10-year activity, the first phase of the PDP is scheduled to run for three years from January 1996 to December 1998. As an overall goal, the programme seeks to better satisfy the needs of the rural poor, particularly in the areas of village infrastructure, agricultural productivity and diversification, access to affordable credit and health care, improved formal and informal education and strengthened local organisations. It does this by ensuring that a given target group comprised of farmers, women, youths or activity committee members organised under the PDP will utilise its own potential for self-reliant development and take advantage of services offered by cooperating partners.

Partners who implement the PDP include government departments, NGOs, financial institutions and the private sector. The Ministry of Rural Development (MRD) is the project executing agency and takes the lead in steering and coordinating the PDP's work. The Provincial Department of Rural Development (PDRD) coordinates the project at the provincial level and implements the community development component with participation from the Provincial Department of Women's Affairs. Community development activities include village planning, support for organisational development and self-help promotion. The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) is responsible for implementing the farming systems development component. In February 1997, three NGOs specialising in rural financial institutions—ACLEDA, Cambodia Community Building and Hattha Kaksekar—established rural financial services in the three districts of the present project area. The GTZ self-help team works directly with pagoda committees and local organisations to implement the self-help component. As the executing agency for the German contribution to the programme, GTZ provides technical and logistical support services to the PDP. A PDP Project Implementation Committee (PIC), comprised of representatives of all partner groups, coordinates day-to-day PDP activities and approves proposals for the funding of village projects.

While the PDP potentially includes coverage of the entire province of Kompong Thom, the first three-year phase centres activities in three of eight provincial districts—Stong, Stung Sen and Santuk. Initially, PDP activities have been limited to 25 villages, i.e. one village in each of the communes of these three districts. The present study focuses on the implementation of the PDP in the Stong village of Svay Ie and the Stung Sen village of Krachap.

Svay Ie is located in the Chamnar Krom commune of Stong district about 42 km from Kompong Thom provincial town. Villagers subsist primarily from wet season rice farming,

the majority cultivating about two hectares of land each. Normally, rice farmers are able to produce about two tons of paddy rice per hectare, but in recent years rice yields have been low due to droughts and floods. During the dry season, many village men migrate temporarily to fish in Tonle Sap lake. Others villagers, including women, earn from construction and from digging and carrying earth in Kompong Thom province. About five people have temporarily migrated to Thailand as construction workers.

Krachap village is located in Achar Leak commune of Stung Sen district, 2.5 km to the northeast of the provincial capital. As of September 1996, there were 347 families living in the village. Long-time residents of the village are mainly rice farmers who live along the banks of Krachap lake. In recent years, as a result of rapid urbanisation, many new residents employed nearby in Kompong Thom provincial town have moved into the village. Among the 1996 population were 90 civil servants and professionals including soldiers, teachers, physicians, government workers and militia men. A number of residents also operate restaurants and stores along the national route that cuts through the village. The majority of village rice farmers own from 1.5 to 2.0 hectares of land. Normally, cultivators can harvest about one ton of paddy per hectare from wet season rice and about one and a half tons of paddy per hectare from floating rice. Most farm families in the village are not able to grow sufficient rice for their yearly needs. To supplement their earnings, farmers grow vegetables with water from the lake. They also work as labourers in construction and in digging and carrying earth.

In Svay Ie, the main development activity initiated under the PDP has been village planning under a participatory assessment of the community (PAC). The subsequent development of a feasibility study and the submission of a project proposal led to the allocation of funds for the repair of the road into the village, which included two bridges and one culvert. This planning process tied mainly to infrastructure development has built upon cooperative participation in activities supported by the GTZ self-help team such as the rice bank and cash association. Other PDP projects initiated in the village include the pilot testing of a high-yielding rice variety and the training of a village veterinarian for local practice.

In Krachap, the major development activity set in motion by the PDP has likewise been village planning with the formulation of feasibility study and the writing of a project proposal, this time leading to funding for the construction of 17 culverts in the village road network. Under the PDP's farming systems development component, a small number of villagers field-tested high-yielding rice varieties and vegetable seeds, and a village veterinarian received training that equipped him to vaccinate and treat cows, buffalo and pigs.

2) Distribution of Benefits

As one of the first villages to undertake a PAC and to complete a feasibility study, Svay Ie submitted a project proposal to the PIC for the repair of the road into the village, which was subsequently approved. The improved road, with two bridges and one culvert, built in 1997 with labour contributions from the villagers, has provided easier transport for residents and goods especially in the time of floods. The rice bank established in Svay Ie by the GTZ self-help team in 1995, and now considered as a PDP activity, has provided almost all village households with low interest loans of paddy rice. Still, amounts borrowed by some households are not sufficient for their needs, which forces them to borrow additional supplies from lenders at high interest rates. The cash association initiated in Svay Ie by the pagoda committee in 1996, with the hope of receiving matching funds from the GTZ self-help team after the first three rounds, has benefited almost half of village households, mainly medium and better-off ones, with small short-term loans.

Much as in Svay Ie, Krachap villagers submitted a project proposal to the PIC after they had undertaken a PAC exercise and formulated a feasibility study. The proposal to install 17 culverts in the village road network was approved. The installation of the culverts in 1997

with money and labour contributions from the villagers has made transportation easier, lessened flood damage to home garden crops and reduced disease from stagnant water. As a consequence of rapid urbanisation, the improved road network has also benefited many new residents working nearby in the provincial centre who have bought house lots and built homes in the village.

In Svay Ie, the monks and the pagoda committee provided leadership and encouraged active participation and cooperation among villagers in repairing the road. In Krachap, the village development committee (VDC) and the *krom* (group) chiefs likewise motivated neighbourhood groups to involve themselves in the installation of the culverts.

In Svay Ie and Krachap, the introduction of higher yielding and earlier maturing rice seeds has the potential to increase harvest and to shorten the lean season. Despite low rice yields overall in the last crop season, farmers who tested the new seeds in both villages are committed to plant them again.

In Svay Ie and Krachap the veterinary programme has provided villagers with low cost vaccination and treatment for cows, buffalo and pigs. In both villages many farmers still have their animals treated by other veterinarians.

3) Villager Participation, Decision-Making and Ownership

In Svay Ie, all households participated in the rice bank and many people participated in repairing the road. Fewer households, especially the poor and the poorest, participated in the cash association. In Krachap, most villagers participated in installing the culverts. Poorer households without land or regular incomes were unable to borrow from the rice bank or take part in the credit activity. These projects were initiated by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

In Svay Ie, most decisions about the rice bank, the cash association and the submission of project proposals were made by the chief of the pagoda committee with agreement from activity committee members. In Krachap, only a few activity committee members were involved in decisions about which households could borrow, and how much they could borrow, from the rice bank and the credit funds. The decision to install the culverts was made by a few influential village leaders with the PDP community development working group.

4) Sustainability

In Svay Ie and Krachap, future activities to be undertaken as part of PDP implementation remain unclear. In Svay Ie there is PIC support for the provision of funds to repair other village roads. Within the village, however, there is little urgency to improve these roads through unpaid labour contributions. As a result of their experience in food for work programmes, still ongoing in the area, villagers look to be compensated in kind for their labour. In Krachap the village development plan has prioritised needs in addition to the construction of culverts. However, no subsequent feasibility studies have been submitted to the PIC. If follow-up proposals were submitted, it is unlikely that they would be approved and funded in the near future, given the current backlog of proposals from other villages, which have yet to receive assistance.

In Svay Ie, development efforts suffer from a lack of coordination between the pagoda committee and the village chief. The pagoda committee has been responsible for several development activities undertaken in the village. These include the building of the two-room primary school, the establishment of the rice bank and cash association, and the repair of the village road. The village chief has separately been responsible for working with the World Food Programme in the provision of food for work road improvement, and with the Adventist

Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) in the building of ring wells. While the PDP facilitated the formation of a VDC in Svay Ie, the members were drawn largely from the pagoda committee and did not include the village chief. As a result, an opportunity for enhanced coordination was missed.

In Krachap, the PDP has yet to determine its relationship with development activities initiated in the village by other organisations. In 1990, a rice bank was established by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) under its Family Food Production Programme. In 1994 it was reconstituted through rice contributions of villagers and now operates as a local organisation. In 1995 a credit association was established under UNICEF's Women in Development Programme (WID) and now answers to a representative from the Ministry of Women's Affairs. Both of these associations have active memberships and are managed by committee members involved in PDP activities. Both groups also require training in financial management and record-keeping. While the PDP has provided training in monitoring and record-keeping for its own specific activities, it could explore, as an integrated development programme, the possibility of expanding this training to the rice bank and credit association.

5) Organisational Structure and Approach

The development approaches and strategies of the GTZ-supported self-help and PDP activities are quite different. A more integrated and co-ordinated approach would mutually benefit both programmes. The GTZ self-help programme acts as an NGO that works directly with local groups, particularly pagoda committees, to build self-reliance and capacity for indigenous development. The emphasis on local self-help has proven to be effective, though limited by the interests and reach of the indigenous groups. The PDP, as an integrated rural development programme implemented by multiple partners led by government, has a broader operational framework and the potential to undertake a greater diversity of projects, including improving infrastructure. The two teams have much to learn from each other, and the decision to foster closer working relationships between the self-help and PDP staffs could be beneficial for both.

The slowdown and possible withdrawal of German government assistance has affected the funding of village project proposals and could affect the long-term 10-year commitment of GTZ to PDP Kompong Thom. As a consequence of the July 1997 fighting, the German government initially withdrew all GTZ expatriate staff from the country. By the end of 1997, staff were allowed to return to the project site for short periods to oversee the implementation of a "minimum programme." While the cutbacks in German technical assistance have not stopped work on the PDP (local staff have rather been required to take on more responsibility), a huge backlog of village feasibility studies awaits approval by the PIC and threatens the viability of the programme. The recent formation of a Cambodian PDP technical team has helped to address this difficulty. But the long-term prospects of continued German assistance remain unclear. At best, the German presence will be sharply reduced from what was originally planned, which will provide PDP local and expatriate staff with both new challenges and opportunities.

Case Study V was prepared by Chim Charya (MRD), John McAndrew (CDRI), Nguon Sokunthea (CDRI associate), and So Sovannarith (CDRI). The research team studied development activities in the villages of Svay Ie and Krachap (Chamnar Krom in Stong district and Achar Leak commune in Stung Sen district, Kompong Thom province) from 5 to 23 January 1998.

Appendix Six

Partners for Development

1) Background

Partners for Development (PFD) is a US-based international NGO which has been working in Cambodia since early 1993. It began its operations in Kratie implementing projects with UNHCR “quick impact funding.” Since late 1993, PFD has located its interventions in regional programmes described as partnerships with government, local institutions and other agencies. The first of these was the Northeast Cambodia Community Water and Health Education programme (NCCWHE) of 1993–96, and the second the Northeast Cambodia Community Development Program (NCCDP) of 1996–99. In addition to providing direct assistance through drilling wells, building or repairing schools and conducting community health education, PFD also aims to facilitate broader-based rural development through its work with village development committees (VDCs) and at provincial level through its coordination with other governmental and non-governmental agencies. In all of its infrastructure work, PFD requires substantial financial contributions from villagers.

Sre Treng is a village of 189 families 43 km from the provincial town of Kratie on the road to Stung Treng province. Although there was some temporary settlement during the late 1980s and early 1990s, the village has only become established on the road since 1995 with assistance from the Cambodian Red Cross. The new settlement stretches for over 8 km along the national road. Formerly, inhabitants of the village, which is 60 percent ethnic Phnong and 40 percent ethnic Khmer, lived in scattered settlements, mostly in the forest within 4 km of the road. The village has very fertile soil which can produce excellent rice and *chamkar* crops, though the lack of water sources means that it is highly dependent on rainfall, which has been low during the past two years. PFD first worked in Sre Treng under the auspices of the old NCCWHE programme. PFD has assisted with the drilling of eight pump wells, construction of a village school, and community education in health and sanitation. PFD also facilitated the formation of a VDC in 1995, but this was replaced by a second VDC chosen in a secret ballot organised by the commune chief.

Kompong Kor is a village of 347 families located on the Mekong about an hour from Kratie by boat. Despite the fact that about 100 families are landless, the standard of living is much higher than in Sre Treng. As in Sre Treng, rice crops of up to three tonnes per hectare may be achieved without fertiliser. Many farmers grow tobacco, which is very profitable, and the landless families have opportunities to fish and trade because of the river location. The VDC is led by the head of the pagoda committee. He and the other members of the VDC have been successful in organising development activities prior to PFD’s work in the village. Kompong Kor is one of the villages where PFD has started to apply its new NCCDP community development approach. In addition to assisting with a school, 12 pump wells and com-

munity health training, PFD also facilitated a participatory rural appraisal (PRA) in the village which enabled villagers to produce a list of eight development priorities.

2) Distribution of Benefits

Almost all villagers receive direct economic benefits from the wells due to the reduction in disease and the fact that the wells make water more accessible, saving villagers in Sre Treng the labour of fetching water and villagers in Kompong Kor the expense of buying it. For the poorest villagers in Kompong Kor this represents an increase in disposable income of up to 25 percent. In Sre Treng, the wells have also enabled the communities to remain as a village on the road. This has clearly benefited the Khmer families who have better access to business opportunities, but has been of less benefit to Phnong families who have faced difficulties in adapting to a money-based economy.

Human resource benefits have come through the improved access to primary education achieved by the school construction in both villages, and by improved knowledge about health and sanitation, especially in Sre Treng village. The impact on primary education has been limited in Sre Treng by the problem of absenteeism among both teachers and pupils, and the lack of contact between them. Other human resource benefits have come as a result of villagers new experience in construction skills and well maintenance.

Community cooperation has been enhanced in the communities of 20 to 30 families who use each well, with exceptional levels of organisation and responsibility demonstrated in some wells. In the wider community, the VDC in Kompong Kor has successfully built up the belief of the villagers in development processes. In Sre Treng, the construction of the school was managed by the original VDC. In addition to contribution of materials from PFD and the villagers, the VDC obtained food for work for their labour from the World Food Programme. Unfortunately, allegations of corruption relating to the distribution of the food-for-work rice have led to a build-up of suspicion and mistrust through the development process.

3) Villager Participation, Decision-Making and Ownership

Within the well-drilling programme, participation is organised by PFD in such a way as to ensure that villagers are required to take responsibility for the construction of the wells, in particular by requiring them to contribute their own resources to the well which they will use. This successfully prevents dependent attitudes from evolving, and fosters a sense of ownership because people not only know that they have the right to use the wells, but also have a responsibility to maintain them.

In Sre Treng the VDC has been disrupted by re-elections and appointments which have been made since PFD first facilitated a VDC election. As a result of this and other difficulties arising from the dispersed layout of the village, from conflicts which have arisen during the construction of the school, and from a lack of training and support for the current VDC, there have been no new initiatives since PFD built wells there. There are some ideas coming from VDC members, but these do not seem to have been widely discussed either formally or informally with many other villagers.

In Kompong Kor the same people who previously led development activities under the auspices of the pagoda committee and the building committee (which was also made up of pagoda committee members) are now leading the VDC, but with the important development that women now are formally involved in leadership, with three out of five of the VDC members being women. The VDC takes many unilateral decisions without reference to PFD, local authorities or the people. People have a strong sense of ownership not because they are formally consulted in the decision-making process, but because they feel that the committee makes good decisions and represents their interests well. The team did not find evidence that

PRA has mobilised people behind development objectives, or succeeded in identifying all of their main development priorities.

4) Sustainability

Good attitudes to maintenance of wells have been fostered through the community approach of PFD in the construction of wells, but the management of funds for well maintenance could be a long-term problem. Currently, villagers are not fully aware of the fact that money spent on well maintenance will increase as the wells get older, and there are insufficient plans to guarantee that money will be available if it is needed.

In contrast to Sre Treng, the VDC in Kompong Kor has clear plans, some of which it is already implementing and others for which it is still seeking funds. Although it is unlikely to be able to achieve all of its objectives, it has a high level of ability in both fund-raising and management, which is likely to provide continuing benefit not only to the village of Kompong Kor but to the rest of the commune as well.

Both villages are vulnerable to disruption by the Khmer Rouge if the security situation worsens, and there is some evidence that this is beginning to happen, especially in Kompong Kor. Sre Treng village is likely to receive strong support in the future from the chief of the Provincial Department of Rural Development, who understands the village's situation well and is committed to improve it. External threats to the development of Sre Treng relate to rights to clear and farm land in the area, and to access to markets, particularly if the Indonesian logging company working in the area continues to keep the national road in such a poor state of repair.

5) Organisational Structure and Approach

The staffing structure, the decision-making processes and the orientation of PFD enable provincial government staff to take a large amount of responsibility for the development activities which PFD initiates and supports. In particular, the fact that PFD focuses its limited resources on community development rather than institutional development means that government officials are less subject to control by the foreign organisation than is the case with some projects which aim to support government structures. While this has strengths and weaknesses, it certainly increases the sense of involvement and ownership of government staff, especially at the provincial level.

The orientation of the organisation towards aiming to help people in very difficult circumstances (in the transition from relief to development) ensures that resources have the best chance of being distributed to people with the largest needs.

PFD leadership supports the decentralisation of rural development services to enable field staff to have more continuous contact with communities. However, as the government has not implemented such policies, PFD has to rely on an approach which features staff from the provincial centre going to communities for intensive visits of a few days at a time. This is better suited to achieving physical outputs such as schools and wells than to achieving social outputs such as improved knowledge and practices relating to health and sanitation, or good community support for the village development leadership.

The team found strengths in both of the community approaches which have been employed by PFD. The earlier, more activity-oriented, approach meant that well-drilling was one of the first activities in which villagers were involved. This gave them an early experience of success, especially because the wells are highly valued by the villagers, because PFD specialises in both the technical aspects of well-drilling and the community organisation necessary to develop responsible, cooperative behaviour by well-users, and because a group of

people sharing a well is more of a natural community than a whole village. Thus, villagers' commitment of time and resources brought them quick rewards and gave them belief in the development process. It also gave development workers opportunities to develop good personal relations with villagers and to get to know them informally.

The later approach, which is more in accordance with normal community development principles, involves development workers facilitating a participatory rural appraisal (PRA) by villagers. This enables development workers to obtain a lot of information about various aspects of village life in a short period of time. It also establishes from the beginning that development workers should listen carefully, and that villagers themselves should try to think of ways to improve their situation. One reason that PRA had little impact on identifying priorities and mobilising resources in Kompong Kor was that the VDC was already achieving these objectives to a high degree. The later approach could be valuable in understanding and addressing problems which have arisen in a community such as Sre Treng.

Case Study VI was prepared by Robin Biddulph (CDRI associate), Pon Dorina (CDRI associate—Ministry of Women's Affairs) and Srun Pithou (MRD). The research team studied development activities in the villages of Sre Treng and Kompong Kor (Kbal Damrei commune, Sambor district, and Kompong Kor commune, Prek Prasap district, Kratie province) from 5 to 25 January 1997.

Cambodia Development Resource Institute

\$7.50

56 Street 315, Tuol Kork, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
(Postal address: PO Box 622, Phnom Penh, Cambodia)
Tel: (855-23) 881-701/881-916/883-603 Tel/Fax: (855-23) 880-734
e-mail: cdri@camnet.com.kh website: <http://www.cdri.org.kh>