

## Country Programme Evaluation for Cambodia

Type of Evaluation: **Country Programme Evaluation**

Evaluator: **Focus UP**

Time of the Evaluation: **December 2017**

### Executive Summary

#### Introduction & Methodology

**S1.** The objective of the country programme evaluation Cambodia was to analyse the relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, sustainability and accountability of FCA`s country programme 2013-2017.

**S2.** During the period 2013-2017 FCA and its partners implemented twelve projects. The main partners are Life with Dignity (LWD), Cambodian Women`s Crisis Center (CWCC), Puthi Komar Organization (PKO), Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport (MoEYS), Cambodian Changemaker. The cooperation with MAG (Mines Advisory Group) and with Khmer Youth Association (KYA) came to an end in 2015. FCA supports projects in Kampong Speu, Kampong Chhnang, Phnom Penh, Takeo, Siem Reap, Pursat and Battambang provinces.

**S3.** A qualitative approach has been implemented to evaluate the country programme consisting of the following elements: 1/ Desk research based on inductive general approach using the software package Nvivo; 2/ Field mission to Cambodia from November 6 to November 21, 2018. Interviews and focus groups were conducted with partner organizations and final beneficiaries.

#### Findings Relevance

**S4.** Thirteen objectives have been formulated for the period 2013-2014. Although the number of objectives decreased to seven in 2015, the high number of sixteen sub-objectives illustrates an ambitious overall country strategy. The country strategy is in line with FCA`s global strategy as the country objectives are copied from the global objectives. The country programme objectives are still highly relevant.

**S5. R2L.** Since 2016 Cambodia is classified as a lower-middle income economy by the world bank group. In 2011, 10% of the population lived on less than \$1.25 per day, down from 31% in 2007, a drop of 21 percentage points in 4 years. However, in 2011, 41% of the population still lived on less than \$2 per day, and 72% lived on less than \$3 per day. Demonstrating the growing vulnerability in Cambodia, in 2007, 28.5% of the population fell between the \$1.25 and \$2.00 per day poverty lines. By 2011, this had grown to 31.2% of the population, or about 4 million people. The \$2 per day poverty rate increased from 40.7% in 2009 to 41.2% in 2011. Poverty is overwhelmingly concentrated in rural areas, and the gap appears to be growing. More than half of the working population is still engaged in agriculture on very small plot sizes. These figures are illustrating the relevance of FCA`s R2L programme in Cambodia. Recent data on economic performance and poverty rates taking into account difference between regions and the urban-rural dividing line are lacking.

**S6. R2(Q)E.** Enormous progress has been made in enrolment rates at primary education level. At secondary education level, and especially at upper secondary education level the enrolment rates

are still low, especially in rural provinces. Teacher profession standards has been improved by the development of teacher career pathway, increased salaries and the introduction of 4-year BA for student teachers. The TVET sector remains source of concern because of coordination problems between the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Education. Within the broad sector of Education, FCA Cambodia has found a niche on career counselling. (International) NGO`s and international donors are deeply involved in this topic. Career counselling won`t be integrated in the new curriculum of Teacher Education Colleges (TEC).

**S7.** FCA`s activities in Cambodia focus mainly on capacity development of direct beneficiaries (like farmers, commune officials, women entrepreneurs, youth) and partners (like increasing capacity of LWD, CWCC, KYA, PKO, MoEYS). In general terms, the programme does support activities which contribute to the desired outputs and outcomes (objectives). Within the implementation strategies, in particularly when project implementations are done by partners, a direct clear link to FCA`s country objectives is often absent. The problem of disconnection between indicators at project level and programme level creates difficulties in reporting on country level indicators.

**S8.** FCA supports projects in Kampong Speu, Kampong Chhnang, Phnom Penh, Takeo, Siem Reap, Pursat and Battambang provinces. The choice of provinces seems to be partner driven. Within each of these provinces the radius of action is rather limited.

### **Findings effectiveness**

**S9.** The objectives and sub-objectives are formulated in very broad and general terms. Indicators on the sub-objectives are mainly output indicators (e.g. the number of trained people, numbers of activities, number of advocacy activities). Target values are not developed. Consequences of this approach are the impracticability to evaluate to what extent the objectives and sub-objectives are achieved during the period 2013-2017. It is important to mention that country programme is evolving in a positive way to a more outcome driven framework. Steps are taken to improve the formulation of (sub-)objectives, indicators and target values. A sophisticated excel-file has been developed and will be distributed to the country offices, including Cambodia. This file will simplify the process of matching project indicators to programme indicators.

**S10.** The country strategy is evolving gradually to a more consistent programme approach linking the three themes. For example the career counselling project is trying to establish direct links with (B)TVET sector and the needs of the private sector. The fact that FCA is working directly with MoEYS at different levels (national, provincial, district) and schools, creates opportunities of bringing together the needs of right holders and duty bearers.

**S11.** The establishment of a country office has been a very good strategic choice because of the high potential visibility to partners, international agencies and funding agencies. Additionally, a country office enables a closer cooperation with partners in order to reach the country programme objectives and a more efficient use of programme funds.

**S12.** The process of decentralisation whereby the country director has the authority to decide which projects have to be implemented in order to reach the country programme objectives is an excellent choice as well.

### **Efficiency**

**S13.** In general terms, strong partners like LWD and CWCC do apply their own financial rules and regulations without any interference of FCA country office. Yearly audits, commissioned by the partners themselves, are effective control mechanism to check whether activities were executed according to the rules.

**S14.** For own implementation (e.g. career counselling project) and for country programme activities implemented by FCA country office, financial rules and regulations are in place and applied.

**S15.** It is considered as very positive that FCA country office is planning to conduct more spot checks in 2018, for all types of partners and activities

**S16.** Most of FCA`s partners are not chosen based on critical assessment of several potential implementing parties. LWD and CWCC are since a very long time partners of FCA because of historical factors.

### **Sustainability and Impact**

**S17.** Sustainability and impact are difficult to evaluate for the same reasons as mentioned above: the lack of clear indicators and target values.

**S18.** On project level sustainable impact could be identified: individual members of the changemaker project reported increased skills development and self-confidence. Some individual farmers, AC`s and Village banks could develop activities (like delivering credit to member at a low interest rate) which they were not able to do before the intervention; Commune Mediation Committees reported an increased number of successful conflict mediation cases.

**S19.** The career counselling project has laid the foundation of creating sustainable impact. The pilot in Battambang was very successful and has the potential of being extrapolated on country level.

**S20.** In the some of the R2L projects, the farmers rely since a very long time on the LWD (in some cases even more than 14 years). An exit strategy for community and village work does not exist.

### **Accountability**

**S21.** The accountability is evaluated as very high. FCA`s partners are highly satisfied with the cooperation with FCA. The evaluation team found a lot of evidence that accountability is realized in many ways

**S22.** Ownership of partners is high at the project level, but absent at country programme level. We found indications, based on interviews with FCA staff and partners, that the country objectives and indicators are formulated at headquarters of FCA, without involvement of partners. Once the indicators are formulated, the country office together with partners implement accordingly and develop monitoring instruments. It has been reported by several partners that a close cooperation and mutual understanding does exist at project level.

### **Recommendations**

**R1.** A profound R2L thematic assessment context analysis should be conducted focusing on an analysis on the future of small farming and analysing the impact of small farming, capacity development and access to capital and increased income on the income of farmer families. (Based on S5).

**R2.** FCA Cambodia should consider the possibility to invest more in career counselling and linking career counselling to (B)TVET and the private sector. Since the beginning of the career counselling project, FCA Cambodia has gained credibility on this topic and is the most important player in this field of education. The career counselling project has a huge potential to create important synergies

between R2QE and R2L. In order to increase the effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability and impact, FCA Cambodia should become a full member of Education Sector Working Group (ESWG). As a logical consequence, FCA should leave the NGO Education Partnership (NEP). NEP has four representatives in ESWG. So being full member of ESWG and being member of NEP is not compatible. The advantages of being full member of ESWG are numerous: better and up-to-date information on developments in the education sector, increased visibility of FCA in the donor community, and networking possibilities with international NGO`s, International organisations and donors. (Based on S6, S11, S20).

**R3.** Selection of new partners should be based on: 1/broad mapping of potential local ngo`s in a specific sector and subsequently the application of the partnership assessment tools developed by FCA HO. (based on S.17)

**R4.** To streamline, define and evaluate capacity development activities, FCA Cambodia should consider the application of the 9-role model of coaching. This model can be used to develop activities and the roles which can be taken up by FCA staff and/or partners to support beneficiaries in capacity development. The 9-role model is described in Annex 1: 9-role model (Based on S8).

**R6.** To evaluate capacity development activities and in particular training activities, FCA Cambodia should consider the Four level model of evaluating Quality of trainings (Model of Kirkpatrick). See Annex 2. Four Levels of Evaluating Quality of Trainings: Model of Kirkpatrick (Based on S9).

**R5.** Disconnection between project indicators and country programme indicators should be avoided as much as possible. Measuring output indicators is a necessary monitoring tool to monitor ongoing activities. To evaluate outcome indicators (in order to evaluate the impact of projects and programmes, additional outcome indicators should be developed. The lack of outcome indicators and target values should be avoided in future programmes. The development Monitoring and evaluation plans and trainings should strengthened. See Annex 3: Recommendation on M&E (based on S10, S11).

**R6.** FCA Cambodia should consider the recruitment of a monitoring and evaluation advisor to develop M&E strategies and plans for own implementations as well for supporting partners in their M&E activities within the framework of FCA`s projects. (based on S10, S11)

**R7.** FCA Cambodia should consider the possibility to focus on a limited number of provinces in order to increase efficiency and effectiveness. For the R2L projects it would be obvious to focus on Battambang (and Siem Reap) covering more districts and communes within the province. Implementing more R2L activities in Battambang increases efficiency as R2QE is focusing on Battambang province as well. Focusing on one province will decrease the overhead costs of the programme. Allocating more programme funding to one province will generate higher accumulated effects (and impact). (Based on S9).

**R8.** The country office should be strengthened with extra staff taking care of the project implementation. The country director should spend more time on network activities with partners, international NGO`s, International Agencies (like Unicef, World Bank, Jica, Koica,...) and potential funding agencies, as defined in the country director`s job description. (Based on S11 & S12)

**R9.** From sustainability point of view, it would be recommendable to include exit strategies in the projects. (Based on S18-21).