

THE EXTERNAL EVALUATION REPORT



*Community Led Poverty Reduction in the Former Conflict Zones of North
West Cambodia
Battambang and Banteay Meanchey Provinces, Cambodia.*

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October – November 2010

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Acknowledgement

Cambodia is a country with a traumatic past, but its people have shown incredible resilience in dealing with their trauma and in emerging victorious. The generation that suffered the most during the Khmer Rouge and the Pol Pot regime are now the older Cambodians. I feel privileged to have worked with this older generation of Cambodians, who have not only led their children out of the dark shadows of the past but are continuing to play a significant role in community development through the Older People's Associations and other such initiatives. I congratulate HelpAge International and its partners for capturing the capacities of older people, and for enabling the older people to be self sufficient to address their needs. I congratulate HelpAge and its partners to ensure that the nation of Cambodia does not forget about the older people, and that its policy reflects the problems and the aspirations of the older people. My sincere gratitude to HelpAge and its partners for giving me this opportunity to conduct this evaluation. A special thank and heartfelt gratitude to AnnieNut, Ven Sarith and the rest of the team members from the HelpAge country office in Cambodia, its partners, freelance interpreter Chan Chuan, and last but not the least the OPA members, community members, stakeholders and others who gave me time and space to speak with them. I would like to thank Eduardo Klien, Dr. Dharmapriya Wesumperuma, Godfred Paul and Meredith Wyse for their guidance and inputs in conducting this evaluation.

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. Brief description of the programme

HelpAge's programme in Cambodia is primarily based upon the 'distinctive competence' it has acquired in the development of Older People's Associations (OPAs) for community development in poor rural areas of the country. OPAs are composed of older people and other vulnerable members of the community to create a sustainable base of skills, knowledge, resources and linkages so that the OPAs can take lead in community development. The OPAs are culturally fitting to the Cambodian context as these are advanced versions of the traditional committees in Padogas called *Samakun Chan Chanang* (association of pots and plates). The Pagoda committees' role is limited to religious tasks, and building on those traditional tasks, the OPAs have expanded their scope of work from food security, livelihood support, home and health care to advocacy, this setting up a safety net for older people and other vulnerable members of the community.

OPAs are one of the most successful ways of building local capacities and confidence and are an effective means of community development. The project **Community led poverty reduction in former conflict zones in North-West Cambodia** has been a key component of HelpAge's overall vision for Cambodia. This project started in 2004 (duration of 54 months) and has been instrumental in establishing and strengthening 60 OPAs in two provinces - Battambang and Banteay Meanchey. The **overall objective** of the project is to reduce poverty and improve the health of poor and vulnerable families through intergenerational community led initiatives in rural Cambodia. The **specific objective** of the action is to increase household incomes, food security and improve health for vulnerable communities in 60 remote villages in Banteay Meanchey and Battambang provinces through the establishment of active associations of older people working with vulnerable groups.

This project addressed four major problems: rural poverty and food insecurity, low levels of health care and access to health services, low levels of education, and social exclusion of

older people. This project aimed at six results related to building the capacity of local partners to work with vulnerable groups, the establishment of 60 strong and intergenerational Older People's Associations (OPA), an increase in food and income security, improved access to health care, and dissemination of good practices. The major outputs of this project are listed in appendix 1 and are available in the final narrative report.

1.2. Good practices, future considerations, recommendations and conclusions

Good Practices

Partnership

- The Project Monitoring and Management Committee (PMMC) and the Project Advisory Committee (PAC) meetings were held regularly and key strategic decisions were taken through a participatory way with all partners. This ensured the partners had an equal chance to plan the project implementation and voice their concerns.
- Project monitoring (spot checking) took place jointly by HelpAge and partners, thus strengthening their solidarity and harmonization of implementation.
- The capacity building trainings were designed well and were highly effective in building the capacity of partners' staff.
- OPA development is a key skill that partners have acquired from this project.
- Implementation of activities through a transparent and accountable way is another key lesson the partners learned from this project as the partners are now confident of managing large budgets in an accountable/transparent way.
- The management developed and maintained relationships with national and international institutions in order to bring in complementary services to the coverage areas and to refer OPAs to existing, competent and appropriate services

Establishment of 60 OPAs

- OPA leaders have been trained and coached effectively and they have assumed their roles and duties well, thus contributing to the success of their OPAs.
- The OPAs have been constantly innovating their policies and practices to address the needs of various vulnerable community members.
- Encouraging trends such as linkages with Commune Councils, rapport building with government departments, and connections with other agencies have been fostered successfully to determine future paths for the OPAs.
- The MoSVY has acknowledged the OPA model as a safety net mechanism for vulnerable elderly households and approved in May 2009 a National Guideline on Establishing OPA
- Community consultations are taking place; Tools and guidelines are tested and endorsed by MoSVY.
- The stronger OPAs have demonstrated their ability and capacity to replicate OPAs in other villages

Food and income security

- There is a strong feeling of ownership for the rice and cow banks among the OPAs and the communities.
- The simple yet effective system of management for both cow and rice banks has made these ventures easy to implement and maintain.
- The cow and rice banks have been built on traditional practices, so the OPA members have been able to understand and follow the systems well.
- Contracting the government departments for agriculture and other related training has helped tap available expertise and has facilitated the linkages between government departments and OPAs.
- The training and business development was conducted through a well reputed system of Successful Case Replication.
- Alternative business opportunities were provided to older people, which enabled many to practice livelihood in a way that suited them the best.
- Younger family members or vulnerable members of the community also received the opportunities to enhance their businesses and increase their income.

Health care

- The health camps were designed in a comprehensive way so older people and other vulnerable people could optimise their experience and understanding by attending these camps.
- The collaboration with local health centres in organising the camps proved to be effective as it provided an opportunity for the health centre staff to connect with the communities, especially the older people, and gave them good exposure on conducting outreach services.
- Health volunteers in the villages were involved in organizing the health camps
- The MoH, notably Department of Preventive health, reinforced awareness raising of health staff on ageing.

Dissemination of learning to stakeholders

- Focusing on Battambang and Banteay Meanchey as the focal point for developing OPAs, and demonstrating the work for advocacy has been a very useful way to influence policy.
- Keeping stakeholders involved at all levels in the project activities has created a strong relationship and camaraderie between HelpAge, its partners and the various government departments.
- Technical support and guidance to the relevant government departments have motivated them towards the issue of older people and have made them keen to further their capacity.

Future considerations

At the inception of the project the environment (such as staff turn-overs and limited capacity of new staffs, drought and inundation problems leading to some disruption of the planned activities), delayed and at times impeded the implementation of activities. Lessons learned from this project can be used for future considerations:

Partnership

- Partnership perhaps was more at implementation level and less at organisational level. This implies there was limited scope to engage partners at organisational level and help them build their overall organisational skills and strategies.

- There was a lack of a system for institutionalisation of the key skills learned from this project. The partners' staff who were trained by this project may leave the organisations at the end of the project or later, which implies they will take the acquired skills away with them.
- Frequent changes in plans and activities due to turn over in staff led to confusion and at times stress.

Establishment of 60 OPAs

- A majority of OPAs has hundred percent membership of older people in the village but in the rest of the OPAs, some of the poorest older people have not become members. Misunderstanding related to the benefits of OPAs, payment of OPA fees, social biases and immigration are some of the barriers that have excluded some older people from becoming members of their OPAs.
- The current leaders have mostly remained leaders from the start of the project. During the course of the project, a second generation of leaders could have been trained and coached to prepare them for the future.
- Although this project had a phase out period, it could have been further strengthened by developing an action plan for self sufficiency for the OPAs.
- Complaint mechanisms and social accountability processes, especially with beneficiary selection, could have been stronger. Transparency boards stating details of work done in each village, lists of beneficiaries and reasons for the selection could have been displayed in the meeting halls.

Food and income security

- In Cambodia, cows' milk is not consumed and cows are sold for money. Additionally, the waiting time to get a calf is quite long. Perhaps, more rice banks (within the scope of the present owner driven approach) or other activities for food security could have been considered instead of cow banks.
- Although OPAs have provided extended services by donating rice to those OPA members who cannot borrow rice from the rice banks, some of the most vulnerable members of the community are excluded from rice and cow banks for their inability to return.

- The home gardens are watered mostly by transporting water from ponds or by using pumps. Traditional systems of water harvesting could be promoted to water the home gardens.
- Closer collaboration with competent institutions such as Departments of Rural Development, Agriculture and NGOs working in this field could be considered to revive innovative traditional water management practices.
- In future, cash for work could be considered for the construction and restoration of ponds or other community assets to facilitate an owner driven approach.
- The OPA members who received training in SCR could have formed a resource base within each OPA to share their knowledge with other OPA members.
- Enabling the OPAs with a monitoring wing to monitor and counsel those businesses that are weakening could have been considered.
- More support to intergenerational partnership could have been useful as a few cases were encountered where the older people were unable to carry on with their businesses due to declining health.

Health Care

- The role of Village Health Support Group or Village Health Workers could have been strengthened by making an action plan for linkages in post project activities.
- The withdrawal of health camps with the project ending will create a vacuum in health care.
- Strategising on further developing partnership with Ministry of Health could be considered since health is such a major issue for most older people.

Dissemination of learning to stakeholders

- Towards the end of the project, determining clear steps on how each stakeholder can link with OPAs could have been developed as a part of the phase out strategy.
- Although it is quite clear from the stakeholders' consultation that linkage with Commune Councils is one of the critical factors in sustaining the OPAs, the complicated process of getting CIPs

funded and the lack of funds could slow down the progress of the OPAs.

- Alliance building with other agencies, especially INGOs and NGOs with various specialisations could have helped diversify the support base for OPAs.

Key recommendations

Partners' capacity

- A detailed framework of capacity building that sets out the expectations, vision, and a clear road map beyond the project can be considered in the future.
- Institutionalising the key skills learned from the project is crucial and can be considered in the future.

Establishment of 60 OPAs

- OPA to be involved in monitoring and tracking the progress of each OPA member, and more of the poorest and most vulnerable OPA members.
- Potential leaders of OPAs to be trained along with current leaders to develop a future generation of leaders.
- Clear cut phase out strategy with an action plan for self sufficiency.
- Exclusion of older people and other vulnerable members of the community to be minimised through strategic steps and linkages with services for the very poor.

Food and income security

- Focus on key aspects of food security instead of spreading too thin with multiple activities. For instance, having more rice in the rice banks would have been more beneficial for the communities' food security than having cow banks.
- Cash/food for work for the whole community would have motivated the community more to support OPA initiatives and would have made the community assets more community based.
- Traditional rain water harvesting and other water purification practices can be revived in the communities by the older people.
- Inclusive strategies to reach out to those older people and other vulnerable members who are not eligible to borrow from rice banks should be incorporated in OPA plans of action with greater force and scope.

- Capitalise on OPA members' expertise and set up informal technical hubs for training, coaching and counseling on livelihood options for older people and other vulnerable groups.
- Encourage inter-generational partnership to bolster livelihoods of those older people who have limited physical capacity through partnership with other vulnerable people who are in need of livelihood support.
- Products made by older people can be better promoted by branding to increase sales and recognition.

Health care

- Greater association with and capacity building of local mechanisms such as VHSG and VHW to ensure there is a system to take over the basic health care and health education practices after the project is over.
- Developing partnership with Ministry of Health and especially the department of preventive medicine on common strategies on health prevention, treatment of non communicable diseases policies and sensitization of health personnels on age friendliness.

Dissemination of learning to stakeholders

- Greater engagement with NCPD through technical support will be instrumental in influencing various ministries.
- Intensive capacity building of MoSVY in working with older people and in making appropriate strategies and vision is required.
- Further strengthening of the relationship between OPAs and Commune Councils and facilitating the process of their linkages will be required.
- New avenues such as stronger partnerships with the Ministry of Women Affairs and Department of Health are recommended to further work on gender vis-à-vis older women and age friendly health care systems.
- New alliances with INGOs with overlapping agendas such as disability, children, women empowerment or inclusive rural development and other UN departments will consolidate HelpAge's work.
- Compiling existing best practices and training materials on OPAs and ageing in general as national standards

Conclusions

5.1 Programme Results

Progress reports, key informant interviews and discussions with beneficiaries confirmed that the programme made significant contributions to positive changes in the lives of the target population including the organisations that participated in the implementation.

5.2 Programme Design

The design of the programme to cover a large geographical area spanning 60 villages across two provinces led to a rapid scale up of older people's issues in those areas.

5.3 Capacity and Activity Implementation

This programme provided a wide range of basic needs to older people: establishment of OPAs, interventions and resources for food and income security, health care and health education, advocacy and linkages.

5.4 Innovative Intervention

The capacity building approach, intergenerational dimensions and the holistic modes have made this project very wholesome.

5.5 Advocacy and Linkages

The programme established linkages with governments and others at different levels. These linkages have the potential to support advocacy work in the future.

5.6 Partnership Model

The strong focus on building the capacity of the partners so they develop expertise and improve their organisational capacity has been one of the highlights of this project.

5.7 Sustainability

Trained OPAs based in villages enhanced by linkages are likely to sustain their activities even after the conclusion of the programme. Linkages established with governments and others at different levels are likely to continue to support advocacy work initiated by the programme.

5.8. Cost effective

Overall, the outcomes and the financial reports cited suggest the programme provided good value for money.

5.9. Opportunities for future path

Further strengthening and replication of OPAs:

It is recommended that the achievements of OPAs should be viewed as an opportunity to further the work of OPAs through partnership and networking with various agencies and the OPAs themselves.

Building a resource base on OPAs: In addition to the OPA guidelines published by the MoSVY, various other resources that have been developed over the years, and various experiences and achievements that have still not been captured can all be compiled into a comprehensive resource base on OPAs.

Stepping up policy work: Given the increased interest in OPAs and ageing among government agencies, there is an opportunity to develop appropriate strategies for policy work, and to upgrade the level of policy work that HelpAge is doing at present.

Alliance building: Partnerships with UN agencies and INGOs/NGOs will be of extreme benefit to address ageing as a cross cutting issue. Mainstreaming ageing into the programmes of agencies that are working on women, children, persons with disabilities, IDPs has still remained an untapped opportunity.

Branching out: Logical progression of programmes that branch out to new areas can be explored and implemented.

2. INTRODUCTION TO THE PROJECT

2.1. Programme background

HelpAge is a leading global network on ageing with a vision of a world in which all older people can lead dignified, active, healthy and secure lives. HelpAge believes in building local capacity so they are equipped in addressing the various challenges of a rapidly ageing world where the demographic equations are changing constantly. HelpAge International has been working in Cambodia for the past 15 years with a vision to have a national reach of direct programming and to work through partners to establish and support multi functional community based groups called Older People's Associations. HelpAge also works to influence the government agenda and policy discussions on topics such as social

pensions and health for older people. It actively promotes access of older people to suitable health care and to knowledge of self-care practices that enhance healthy living. It works through partnership, resourcing and alliance building.

HelpAge's programme in Cambodia is primarily based upon the 'distinctive competence' that it has acquired in the development of Older People's Associations (OPAs) for community development in poor rural areas of the country. OPAs are one of the most successful ways of building local capacities and confidence and are an effective means of community development. HelpAge facilitates OPAs' linkages with government service providers to help OPA members recognise that government departments are resources for them to utilise. This builds confidence among older people and helps them articulate their needs properly. The goal of these organisations is to improve the wellbeing of older people and other vulnerable community members through collective activities benefiting themselves and their communities. Through OPAs, HelpAge's focus is on promoting improved income security for poor older people and other vulnerable people through livelihood-related activities, micro-credit schemes, income-generating activities or ensuring food security for older people. Through OPAs, efforts on promoting self-care, improved health-seeking behaviors and better health are also made.

The project **Community led poverty reduction in former conflict zones in North-West Cambodia** has been a key component of HelpAge's overall vision for Cambodia. This project started in 2004 (duration of 54 months) and has been instrumental in establishing and strengthening 60 OPAs in two provinces – Battambang and Banteay Meanchey. The **overall objective** of the project is to reduce poverty and improve the health of poor and vulnerable families through intergenerational community led initiatives in rural Cambodia. The **specific objective** of the action is to increase household incomes, food security and improve health for vulnerable communities in 60 remote villages in Banteay Meanchey and Battambang provinces through the establishment of active associations of older people working with vulnerable groups.

The problems that this project seeks to address and that are identified in project proposal are the following:

Rural Poverty and Food Insecurity: An estimated 85% of the target communities are

dependent on rain fed agriculture, and an estimated 10-35% of farming households face food shortages annually between July and December while waiting for crops to be harvested. Since the vulnerable and marginalised communities are not in a position to borrow rice at the existing interest rates, they face severe food shortage. To make ends meet, many people migrate to the border area, leaving behind their older parents. The older parents have few options and resources to purchase food, thus becoming one of the worst victims of food insecurity. A participatory study undertaken by HelpAge International in Battambang (2003) found that in the poorest families affected by HIV/AIDS, OVCs as young as eight regularly assist their older carer to find food or work. If their older carer became too weak, the responsibility of feeding the family was handed down to the eldest OVC.

Low levels of health care and access to health services: The targeted communities have very limited access to health care and very limited health care seeking behavior. The major challenges people face in accessing health care are the cost for transportation and purchasing medicines. Therefore, self medication and dependence on traditional medicine are high. It has been reported that the drugs sold by untrained people are often ineffective and thus the communities are at risk of inadequate health care.

Low levels of education: The communities in the target area have low levels of literacy, which is detrimental to building the communities' capacity and confidence. Communities are unable to represent themselves in various platforms.

Social exclusion: Older people have largely been excluded and underutilised by government departments and NGOs working in the development sector in Cambodia. Despite the overwhelming needs of older people, and their potential role within development efforts, modern institutions which have taken responsibility for community affairs often do not include older people in their activities.

The expected results of this project, to address the problems identified above are the following:

Result 1: Four local community based partner NGOs in Battambang and Banteay Meanchey have increased organisational capacity to work with vulnerable groups in community led poverty alleviation initiatives

Result 2: Development of 60 strong intergenerational community based OPAs

through increased organisational capacity for older people in Battambang and Banteay Meanchey provinces

Result 3: Increased food security for vulnerable families in 60 villages in Banteay Meanchey and Battambang provinces

Result 4: Increased income security for vulnerable families through income generation activities to reduce poverty in 60 villages in Battambang and Banteay Meanchey provinces

Result 5: Improved health care for vulnerable families in Battambang and Banteay Meanchey provinces

Result 6: Dissemination and replication of best practices in using older peoples' capacities to increase food and income security and improved health in Battambang and Banteay Meanchey provinces.

The project was implemented in 60 villages (approximately 13,900 households) located in 18 communes in six districts. HelpAge had already established OPAs in 15 villages in the six districts and 45 new villages were added in this project.

The target group of this project was older people in 60 project villages. Older people through OPAs were primarily responsible for the identification of beneficiaries, collection of information, implementation and management of project activities at village level, monitoring and evaluation of project activities and participation at project annual meetings.

Direct Beneficiaries: At least **5,400 older people** in 60 project villages through membership in the OPAs and participation in project activities (based on average membership of 90).

Indirect Beneficiaries: At least 71,200 community members in 60 project villages through improved health and the results of activities implemented through OPAs and a greater sense of community cohesiveness. The major outputs of this project are available in annex 1 and in the final narrative report prepared by HelpAge.

2.2. Partners and stakeholders

Local Partners

HelpAge implemented this project through four local community based partner NGOs, which were identified through a consultative process at the beginning of the project. The four partner NGOs were Village Support Group (VSG), Khmer Rural Development Association

(KRDA), Kumnit Thmey Organization (KNTO) and Khmer Farmer Development (KFD). At the time of selection, all partners had 4–12 years of experience of community development in post conflict rural communities. In the implementation arrangements, all the partner NGOs were responsible for management and monitoring of activities in assigned districts.

Local Authorities

The local authorities included key departments such as MoSVY, PDRD, PDA and PHD, which provided technical advice in different areas and participated in the project through PAC membership. The advocacy strategy involved interaction with 18 Commune Councils (CC). Representatives from each CC will be invited to visit project villages and activities to increase awareness on the effectiveness of OPAs in community based development.

Other Key Stakeholders

Organisations managing complementary programmes in provinces were invited to be members of the PAC, so they could provide advice and guidance on implementation of activities where relevant. This would also facilitate links between planned project and projects that were currently being or would be implemented in the two provinces in order to promote learning and better coordination of activities

2.3. Progress against mid term review

Programme Component	Recommendation	Implementation status
Programme implementation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> CO require full understanding of community and rural development CO's salaries should be increased/topped up to reduce staff turnover CO's English should be improved Strengthen CO's abilities to undertake impact monitoring on levels of income, food security and health Strengthen CO's abilities to monitor behavioural change in the OPA. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The CO's – both HelpAge and partners – are experienced and well aware of community based work. English language, monitoring skills, networking skills and interpersonal skills of the CO are satisfactory.
Partner NGO capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve clarity of terms of partnership with the local NGOs Ambition of partners exceed capacity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The four local partners have their separate areas for implementation and so have adequate clarity on implementation arrangements. The aspirations of the partners is dependent on funding opportunities.
OPA capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve intergenerational capacity Strengthen leadership Better integrate with other village development activities Increase the profile and voice of OPA through the development of provincial and/or subregional confederations/unions Need to encourage more women in leadership role Succession plans need to be put in place to mitigate loss of current leadership skills 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The OPAs are quite intergenerational, and more importantly very inclusive. They have come up with many innovative approaches and policies to extend services to people of all ages, especially the vulnerable groups. Women are in key positions and have played instrumental roles. The succession of leadership needs to be improved.
M&E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve capacity of partner NGOs in Results Based M&E Upgrade baseline survey data and analysis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> M&E tools for progress monitoring have been developed and used. An overall monitoring framework for progress, impact monitoring and feeding information into the system, with databases could have been developed. Baseline tracking could have been stronger.
Health camps	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Strengthen messaging around good health practice such as exercise No sustainability to the camps Continue to strengthen prevention message and manage expectations for curative drugs OPAs need to focus limited social funds on the most needful Need to better link OPAs with existing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The health camps have been very comprehensive and have had regular sessions on health/hygiene education and physical exercises. OPAs have established a fund for health care for their poorest members The linkage of OPAs with other

	social protection programmes such as the Equity Fund.	health related programmes could have been improved.
Rice and Cow banks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OPA and committee leaders require further training in record keeping and financial management • Greater capacity is required across the bank committees, exchange visits are suggested • Greater inclusion of younger people in the rice bank committees to ensure sustainability • Need to better address the impact of drought/flooding on the management of the rice bank • Require more reliable and qualified veterinary services • Need better evidence on the impact of the cow banks beyond the anecdotal • Cow recipients who have little experience need greater training and coaching to avoid poor conditions and poor care. • In Banteay Meanchey at least, lack of water and pasture threatens the sustainability of the cow 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The rules and regulations relating to the banks are well comprehended both by the committees and the members of the OPAs. • Younger people are included both in the committees and in the beneficiaries. • The DRR measures for rice and cow banks could have been stronger. • The cow banks are linked with local veterinarians but a cadre of paravets, or having some capacity within the OPAs could have helped.
Ponds/Wells	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Limited sense of ownership threatens sustainability • Need for clearer rules on maintenance • Shallow wells need to be better constructed • Location of new ponds needs to be considerate of increasing land value 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The OPAs are maintaining the water sources and communities abide by the rules. • A specialist on water sources tested the sites of the construction • Sense of ownership could have been strengthened
SCR/IGA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OPA members need to better understand business management and market information • Improved selection of recipients to minimise chances of grant not being used for livelihood, migration etc • Greater consideration to the threat to any IGA from lack of reasonable credit • HelpAge International staff's capacity needs to be strengthened in the areas of agricultural processing and agricultural marketing • Raise profile of IGA products through trade fairs/exhibitions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The OPA members who received the SCR training have been able to apply their skills and start their business • The market information has helped to an extent, but market mapping and market linkages could have been improved • Linkages with credit agencies could have been fostered • HelpAge International staff attended agricultural training conducted by the Department of Agriculture • IGA products by OPA members could be better marketed and consideration of brand building can be taken in the future.

3. THE REVIEW

3.1. Purpose of the review

The purpose of the evaluation is to provide an objective assessment of the project, its implementation arrangements in relation to the project goal, objectives and expected outputs. It is also intended to assess if the project is implemented in an effective and efficient manner by all parties involved. The evaluation report is expected to highlight: community experiences, lessons learned, successes and challenges, strengths and weaknesses as well as opportunities. In addition, the report will investigate the impact on the older people and the communities and whether the project activities are likely to be sustainable in the medium and long term. The evaluation is expected to provide HelpAge with information on the performance of its staff and partners involved in the implementation and management of the project. It will also make recommendations for improvement/changes to guide future project implementation.

The results of the evaluation will be used by HelpAge International – Cambodia and the local NGO partners to review their programmes and implementation strategies. It will be used by project partners to promote discussion and the formulation of future programmes. The evaluation will also be shared with local stakeholders, primarily the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation, Provincial Departments of Agriculture, Rural Development, Health, and Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation as well as with the European Commission and the wider HelpAge network.

The purpose of the final evaluation is to achieve the following **objectives**:

1. to review the original project objectives and outputs, scope, design and the implementation strategy
2. to evaluate the original project objectives, scope, design and implementation processes in light of the overall project outcomes to date;
3. to evaluate project components with a view to ascertain their effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and sustainability in the context of the project implementation.
4. to assess the extent of beneficiary involvement in project implementation, including community participation in

decision making, and the effectiveness of community targeting of project components;

5. to assess the extent and depth of project impacts based on the monitoring and evaluation techniques used in project implementation;
6. to assess the collaboration with partners including their role, capacity, management of the project, and the strengths and weaknesses for HelpAge.
7. to review monitoring and evaluation techniques being used for relevance and accuracy
8. to study the financial management of the project, its cost effectiveness in implementation, and transparency in sharing financial information with the community and the partners
9. to formulate appropriate recommendations for corrective actions for future programming concerning issues identified

3.2. Methodology of the review

Initial Briefing, Desk Review of Documents and Preparation of Inception Report

The initial briefing included sharing the Terms of References to understand the purpose, scope and objectives of this evaluation. It also included a desk top review of key project documents (see annex 2 for the list) based on which an initial inception report was developed which proposed tools to assess the impact of various expected results of this project (see annex 3 for the inception report).

Preparation of Tools

Key informant interview guides, focus group discussion guides, a case study guide, and a questionnaire for quantitative assessment were prepared and submitted to the Cambodian office prior to the field visits. Based on the feedbacks received, the tools were finalised. The tools are available in annex 4.

Sampling

A random sampling of 20 per cent of the villages (12 villages out of 60 project villages) was conducted to determine the sample for both the quantitative and qualitative assessments. The quantitative survey was conducted on all the OPA members of the 12 villages and the qualitative assessments covered more than 50 per cent of the OPA members in the 12 villages.

Quantitative survey

The quantitative survey tool was translated into the Khmer language and was conducted on 249 respondents to get an overview of the improved status in the lives of the OPA members and to substantiate and corroborate the findings from the qualitative assessments.

Interview with stakeholders

Group discussions were conducted with the HelpAge project team and the four partners. Individual interviews were held with each project team member from both HelpAge and the partners.

Individual interviews were also held with the stakeholders at the national and the provincial levels. Representatives from MoSVY, National Committee for Planning and Development, and the health departments were interviewed at the national level. The representatives from Departments of health, agriculture, rural development and PoSVY were interviewed at the provincial level.

Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

FGDs were held for all types of project activities. The beneficiaries were mobilised by HelpAge and the local implementing partners. Two hundred older people were participated in the FGDs in the 12 sample villages.

Case Studies

In-depth interviews were held with identified beneficiaries to learn how programme activities had impacted on their livelihoods.

Observations

Project activities such as rice banks and water sources were visited for observation and understanding.

Data Analysis and Draft Field Report

The information obtained was collated, analysed and a draft report prepared. Qualitative data was analysed thematically as per the project outcomes and other relevant headings.

Presentation of Preliminary Findings

The preliminary findings were presented to the HelpAge team in Cambodia and clarifications were made. The PowerPoint presentation is available in annex 5.

Limitations

The sample size is 20 per cent, which is small, so steps were taken to ensure this sample was adequately representative. OPA members of

both genders and various age groups belonging to various occupations were involved in the assessment. Non OPA members were also interviewed to get an overview of their opinions on OPAs. Thus, the limitation of the small sample size was addressed.

4. FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

4.1. Project management and implementation arrangement

HelpAge International had a two pronged approach: first to implement the activities of the project in the most participatory and consultative fashion and second to build their own capacity in the process. Both the components are interrelated and are inseparable as one complements the other. Therefore, HelpAge adopted an integrated pathway and focused both on result and capacity development of its staff.

It has often been noticed that too much preoccupation with outcomes and results can indirectly diminish capacity as most team members do not have the time or the resources to develop their capacity. This potential for a trade-off between capacity development and results has been a longstanding issue in technical assistance¹. Questions such as are specialised activities the "the job of external advisers to get things done, or does their key contribution lie in helping others to develop their capabilities to get things done? Do aid staff have any space for learning or thinking, or are they strictly in the 'doing' business? Will a trade-off emerge between short-term results and medium term capacity and performance?" (Baser and Morgan, 2008). The alternative situation – too much concentration on building capacity of the team – could also be dysfunctional. In the process of capacity building, participants could lose track of the need to produce or deliver the outputs. Capacity development then ends up diminishing the levels of performance and results.

Therefore, a balance of both results based approach and capacity building measures was required in this project as over dependence on one aspect could have upset the other aspect. Through this evaluation, attempts were made to understand the modality of management and also feedbacks from the team on whether or not it was a good balance of opportunities for building capacity as well as an environment to deliver the results.

¹ Study on capacity change and performance. European Centre for Development Policy Management. Baser and Morgan. 2008.

At the outset, it is important to acknowledge that the primary challenge was to find a way to harmonise the two approaches so that tensions around the delivery of time bound results and building the required capacity of the team were resolved well. The harmonisation was done through various means such as (1) placing staff members in various workshops and training programmes separately so that some of the staff members were always available to implement activities, (2) staff members attending community training sessions held by various specialists so they also learned the specialised topics, (3) making efforts to organise workshops and retreats for staff members, and (4) ongoing coaching and counseling.

The following matrix from Baser and Morgan's analysis of two approaches for management style was used to assess the approach the HelpAge team in Cambodia took. The findings are listed in the matrix below.

Aspects of change	Focus on results	Focus on capacity development
Purpose	Maximising development results	Developing capacity
Approach to capacity issues	CD seen as a secondary means in support of performance ends	Seen as an end in itself
Leadership	More directed and top down	More participatory and inclusive
Main focus	Structure and systems, incentives, demand pressures	Individual and collective skills, culture and mindset
Planning	Systematic and solution-driven	Emergent and more incremental
Application	Standardised and uniform	Responsive and varied
Tangibles and intangibles	More emphasis on the tangibles	More emphasis on the intangibles
Motivation	Incentives lead	Incentives lag
Emphasis on learning and experimentation	Modest	Critical
Monitoring and evaluation	Focuses on results	Focuses on capacity
Use of external TA	Intensive and focused on task achievement	Less intensive and focused on process and facilitation

Note: Application and motivation were not assessed.

Purpose: Most staff members mentioned there was a balance of developing both results and capacity as they received a number of opportunities to develop their capacity and at the same time worked on a very heavy calendar to deliver their work plans. The staff listed the following when asked to name the top things they learned from this project that helped them to strengthen their capacity:

- Formation of Older People's Associations
- Small Enterprise Development
- Work with NGOs as partners
- Networking skills

- Communication (two staff mentioning their English language skills were developed while working with HelpAge)

Approach to capacity issues: Most staff members reported that capacity development has been seen as a part of the programme and some felt it was seen as an end in itself as eventually the capacity developed from this project would be used for furthering work on OPAs.

This project also did well with outsourcing some of the specialised activities to specialists in those areas, thus reducing pressure and expectations from the project team, which also gave the project team an opportunity to build their capacities in those areas.

Leadership: Most staff members expressed satisfaction at the consultative nature of leadership. They felt comfortable to be a part of the team and that their ideas and opinions were heard and applied. Two members, however, mentioned that a few times decisions become top down in nature due to time constraints.

Main focus, planning and application: The standardised system of policies and mechanisms such as procurement, financial and administrative, monitoring and evaluation frameworks are available. These standardised systems have helped the project team maintain quality and transparency. At the same time, there have been multiple changes of systems customised to, or in response to, the needs of various scenarios.

Tangibles and intangibles: Staff members mentioned that for most project activities, the focus was on achieving tangible outcomes and also for the policy work.

Emphasis on learning and experimentation: The staff mentioned that although there have been multiple opportunities for capacity building and hands on training, there was not enough time or scope to experiment and expand the canvas of learning due to the tight work plans.

Monitoring and Evaluation: The M & E system focused on progress monitoring and has many tools and systems in place to capture the achievements and the gaps from the system. Through monthly meetings, the information from M & E was fed into the implementation process. However, there has not been a channel to use the findings from the M & E system to build the capacity of the team members.

Key recommendations

- Further communication and understanding of country programme to ensure a common vision.
- Expand the team's vision and understanding of existing services, their competences, expertise's, opportunities and limitation and how to make use and maximize on existing strengths and resources at the local, provincial and central levels versus narrow and vertical programme implementation
- Utilise available pool of human resources such as volunteers, university students in the monitoring and writing of case studies and in other documentation related work.

- Successful Case Replication
- Cow and rice banks
- Advocacy and linkages

All four partners reported that they have enhanced their capacity and have emerged stronger in their understanding and skills in participatory community development. They felt that as members of PMMC, they were able to make decisions in all aspects of project cycle management in a participatory manner. Therefore, at the end of the project it was important to understand the impact of the measures on building the capacity of the four local NGOs. This evaluation used the 'capacity framework' tool developed by McKinsey to assess the level of competency among the four partners.

The capacity framework defines capacity for NGOs in a pyramid of seven essential elements: three higher-level elements – aspirations, strategy, and organisational skills – three foundational elements – systems and infrastructure, human resources, and organisational structure – and a cultural element that serves to connect all the others. The capacity framework is exercised by the Capacity Assessment Grid, a diagnostic tool to measure an organisation's strength along each capacity element in the Capacity Framework. In essence, this grid enables an organisation to determine where it stands along the continuum of best practices for each element of capacity.

4.2. Project outcomes

Result 1: Four local community based partner NGOs in Battambang and Banteay Meanchey have increased organisational capacity to work with vulnerable groups in community led poverty alleviation initiatives.

HelpAge seeks to build local capacity and tap their potential in addressing various issues concerning older people and other vulnerable groups. Therefore, this project set out by selecting four community based NGOs as partners with an objective to build their capacity in various aspects of project cycle management. The partners received two major training sessions: (1) Designing, managing, monitoring and evaluating participatory rural development activities through community based organisations led by older people and (2) Financial management and reporting. The partners were also members of the Project Management and Monitoring Committee and the Project Advisory Committee.

Additionally, all partners received training in other topics such as:

- Participatory Learning Assessment
- Baseline survey
- Establishment of Older People's Association
- Communication and leadership
- Watershed

Capacity building is a broad term and can be interpreted in various ways. Therefore, to determine the scope of capacity building in this project, the four partner NGOs were asked to express the expectation they had for building their capacity from this project. The partners mentioned the following expectations:

- Improved understanding of ageing and how to work with older people
- Improved skills in managing community based development projects
- Improved expertise in financial management

To assess whether or not the expectations of the four partners NGOs were met, the tool for capacity framework, that is, the capacity grid, was used. In the capacity assessment grid, the following components were assessed to understand the impact the partnership with HelpAge had on the capacity of each partner agency.

I. Aspiration

All four partners had mission and vision for their organisations prior to the partnership with HelpAge. However, their aspiration was

limited to implementing integrated development projects. After this partnership, they have been able to enhance their aspirations further by increasing the scope of their mission and vision to other thematic areas such as policy work and advocacy. They have also learned how to be more inclusive in their aspiration so that vulnerable groups such as older people, women and people with disabilities are appropriately included in their projects.

II. Strategy

The four partners now have a basic level of capacity in place to build strategies as opposed to nonexistent in a couple of cases and unclear and incoherent strategies in the other cases, at the beginning of the project. The strategies that the four NGOs have developed are not easily actionable as they depend on funding. The partner NGOs aspire to be more inclusive in nature and engage in policy work/advocacy. Nonetheless, due to the absence of sustainable strategies or opportunities for funding, their strategies are not consistent. Thus, they end up adjusting their strategy to meet the funding opportunities and in the bargain do not always fit into their aspirations.

This has impacted their future path in determining programme growth and replication or in developing new programmes. Thus, even though they aspire to work with vulnerable groups, the lack of funding forces them to take a different pathway.

There was also a lack of understanding on how they can utilise the expertise gained from this project in sustaining their agencies. Village Support Group has a strong strategy in place as they would like to link their work on governance with the OPAs, thus making the OPAs a platform for social accountability measures. However, the other three partners did not list working with older people as their priority in future programming. They did mention that they have enough expertise of working with older people, especially in thematic areas such as development of OPAs, communicating with older people and designing programmes for older people. They have also acquired adequate skills in small scale business development, home care, and setting up rice and cow banks.

III. Organisational skills

All four partners mentioned they have significantly increased their capacity in organisational skills from this project. Aspects such as performance measurement, policies on human resource, administration and financial

procedures have been established in the agencies due to this project. Through training and practical experience, they have been able to develop and implement these policies effectively. HelpAge has shared its policies and formats, which has been adapted to the needs of each partner agency. The partners also felt that their standards of accountability and transparency have substantially increased and they have emerged as responsible agencies that can implement large budgets.

Except for VSG (which has developed partnership with PACT and other agencies), the other partners' fundraising skills are almost non-existent. They did get some basic training from HelpAge in fundraising, but there was not enough time and also it was not within the scope of the project, to develop fund raising skills well. Although VSG has been successful in partnering with various other agencies and has a basic fund raising strategy in place, the challenge is that the agencies look at partnering with international NGOs or applying for proposals as the only way for raising funds, and these opportunities are very limited.

All four partners have strong presences in the local communities and the geographical expansion to new villages through this project has helped them develop their presence further. Thus, these agencies are well known within their communities, and are perceived as open and responsive to the needs of the communities.

They have also been able to develop strong linkages with various government departments at both provincial and national levels since this project entails significant advocacy and policy work. These agencies are now aware of their possibilities in influencing policy making. They also have the readiness and the skills to participate in policy discussions. Nonetheless, they are unsure whether they will be invited by the relevant departments in future policy discussions.

"A few years ago, I thought we were just community based agencies and would like to work at the community level, but now with the exposure in advocacy, we know how to present the needs of the communities and voice their demands to government and other agencies through various advocacy measures." Director, KFD.

IV. Culture

The partner NGOs are committed agencies, working with small resources. They have good bonding among the staff members and they have been able to promote a common vision

for their agencies. The staff share the aspirations of their respective agencies. The common set of basic beliefs held by the staff members of the NGOs with a strong sense of identity. The staff members also felt their culture fitted well with the culture of HelpAge, and so despite time pressure and a huge workload, they could work well as a team.

The partner agencies, however, were of the opinion that they can play a more active role in proposal and work plan development. They were also of the opinion that measures could be taken to lighten the paperwork related to their projects. Nonetheless, they admitted that the paperwork was necessary to keep up with organisational policies and to maintain the standards of transparency and accountability.

The partners' staff who are directly linked to this project and received training from this project, share their experience and expertise with other members of their agency at monthly or quarterly meetings. This is more of an informal setting and is not a strong link for institutionalising the learning from this project.

Good Practices

- The PMMC and PAC meetings were held regularly and key strategic decisions were taken through a participatory way with all partners. This ensured the partners got an equal chance to plan the project implementation and voice their concerns. The PMMC meetings also strengthened the camaraderie among the four partner agencies and HelpAge. It provided a platform to share various project experiences and learn from one another. The PAC meetings on the other hand provided the partners an opportunity to work closely with various government departments, and thus they could build a strong rapport with these departments.
- Project monitoring (spot checking) took place jointly by HelpAge and partners, thus strengthening their solidarity. The monitoring system was looked at as a way to enhance the programme and not an examination of work done by the implementing partner. The monitoring tools were shared with partners so the partners were aware of the indicators of success, thus there was harmonization of approach.
- Training was highly effective in building the capacity of partners' staff. The training not only raised the skills of the staff who participated, but also gave

them an opportunity to apply those skills in the project activities. Thus, they could get a wholesome experience from the training.

- OPA development is a key skill that partners acquired from this project. They are now resourced with this special expertise.
- Implementation of activities in a transparent and accountable way was another key lesson learned by the partners from this project. The partners are now confident about managing large budgets well.
- The management developed and maintained relationships with national and international institutions in order to bring in complementary services to the coverage areas and to refer OPAs to existing, competent and appropriate services.

Future considerations

At the inception of the project the environment (such as staff turn-overs and limited capacity of new staffs, drought and inundation problems leading to some disruption of the planned activities), delayed and at times impeded the implementation of activities. Lessons learned from this project can be used for future considerations:

- Partnership was perhaps more at implementation level and less at organisational level. This implies there was limited scope to engage partners at organisational level and help them build their overall organisational skills and strategies. A disconnect between the organisations' aspirations and strategies is taking place due to the tendency to fit into available funding mechanisms. Workshops on organisational review, sustainability and strategising could be considered in the future so partners have a long term vision and a road map in front of them. This would have also helped the partners to determine how they would use the experience and expertise gained from this project in their overall organisational development. For instance, options to explore include: Could they set up an OPA training centre? Could they mainstream ageing as a cross cutting issue across their programme?
- There was a lack of a system for institutionalisation of the key skills learned from this project. The partners'

staff who were trained by this project may leave the organisations at the end of the project or later, which implies they will take the acquired skills away with them. Therefore, a more formal or more methodical way of transferring skills or institutionalising skills would have been beneficial.

- Frequent changes in plans and activities led to confusion and at times stress. It mainly happened due to staff turn-over, especially at the management level. This is a common occurrence across the development sector, and is a part of the package. However, to avoid dissatisfaction from work plans, more involvement by the partners and developing a seasonal/cultural calendar from the beginning perhaps could have been useful.

Key recommendations

- A detailed framework of capacity building that sets out the expectations, vision, and a clear road map beyond the project can be considered in the future. The road map can focus on how the learning from the project would be used by the organisations for strengthening their strategies and operations. Monitoring of capacity as per that capacity framework would ensure the progress is going in the right direction.
- Institutionalising the key skills learned from the project is crucial and can be considered in the future. Institutionalising will assist in envisioning the future as well, and thus will enable the absorbing of the skills from the project into the future of the organisation, making the whole experience worthwhile.

Result 2: Development of 60 strong intergenerational community based OPAs through increased organisational capacity for older people in Battambang and Banteay Meanchey provinces.

Older People's Associations are community based organisations that involve older people in a given community who organise themselves and build their capacity to become change makers to develop their communities. They have multiple functions such as welfare activities, social support and counseling,

linkages with government and non government agencies, and advocacy for the needs of the people. They are inclusive in nature, meaning they are open to people of all age groups and especially to the most vulnerable groups such as people with disabilities, female headed households and landless people.

In this project, 45 new OPAs were established and 15 old OPAs were further strengthened across 60 villages in the two provinces of Battambang and Banteay Meanchey. In total, these OPAs have 6302 members, with 3613 women members.

In the quantitative survey that took place with twelve OPAs, the following facts emerged:

Attendance and participation:

- Eleven out of twelve OPAs reported an average attendance of 50-75 per cent in the OPA meetings that take place every month.
- Four OPAs reported that more than 75 per cent of participants in the OPA meetings participate in setting the agendas, five OPAs reported 50-75 per cent and three OPAs reported 40-50 per cent participate in setting agendas.
- Six OPAs reported that 50-75 per cent of members participate in discussions to solve problems faced by OPA members and to make action plans.
- Seven OPAs reported more than 75 per cent of women who attend OPA meetings participate in the OPA discussions.

OPA meeting proceedings:

- Nine OPAs stated that the Secretary recapitulates meeting minutes from the past meetings and eleven OPAs reported that the President shares information regularly.
- Three OPAs reported that the President does not share the plan of action with the members.
- Ten OPAs reported that meeting minutes are recorded every month.
- None of the OPAs have boards to display information about the OPAs.
- All twelve OPAs have sub committees for various tasks.

Linkages:

- Seven OPAs have significant linkages with other agencies.
- The same seven OPAs reported regular visitors from Commune Councils and other agencies to their OPA meetings.

- Five OPAs reported that they accomplish their plan of action regularly.

Financial:

- Six OPAs have bank accounts.
- Eleven OPAs share financial information with their members regularly.
- Eleven OPAs mentioned they collect OPA membership fees every month.
- Six OPAs said decisions on financial expenses are taken in monthly meetings, the rest mentioned that decisions are usually taken by the leaders/subcommittees.
- Five OPAs said there have been instances of cash mishandling by the members, which have been tracked in time and members have paid the money back.
- Only three OPAs feel they do not have clear financial policies.
- Six OPAs have fundraising avenues apart from the membership fees
- While seven OPAs have monthly budget plans, only one OPA reported to have an annual budget.

The OPAs have a strong foundation and a strong sense of purpose. These OPAs have enhanced the traditional spirit of collectivism and have given the older people a concrete platform to contribute to communities' growth. The OPAs are widely acknowledged by the stakeholders, and other community members (non OPA members). Innovative measures such as hiring a teacher to raise awareness about OPAs, prior to establishing the OPAs, were instrumental in mobilising the older people and the communities to form OPAs. Thus, starting off with a well mobilised community helped set the foundation for strong OPAs.

In addition to training for capacity building, involving the OPA leaders and members and implementing the project activities through OPAs has also built their confidence and understanding of how to manage micro projects. OPA leaders clearly have a good grasp of what constitutes holistic development of the older people and of the community as they listed livelihood, health care, social support and advocacy as the four areas of focus for integrated development.

Appropriateness: Older people are often looked at as advisors and mentors in most Asian countries. In Cambodia, older people are viewed respectfully. Therefore, having OPAs to

foster growth and development in the communities has blended well with the cultural context, and hence these organisations are highly appropriate.

Moreover, forming an association of Older People is not uncommon in Cambodia as there are many types across the countries, especially the ones that are attached to the Pagodas. However, making these associations development oriented, bringing social accountability tools, expanding roles and functions are new but well perceived.

Vision and purpose: The OPAs have given the older people a vision and purpose. The strong bonding of collective society that faced collapse due to growing poverty and migration has been revitalised by the OPAs. The cracks in communal feeling have been cemented by the renewed interest and motivation to assist the vulnerable. An OPA leader explained: "Prior to the OPAs, religion brought us together, now the mission to develop our community keeps us together. Our solidarity has reached another level."

Leadership: The OPA leaders in the 12 sample villages have the full confidence of their members. OPA members explain: "Our leaders are honest and transparent." Honesty and transparency from leaders is crucial for trust building, which is often a challenge for most CBOs. Therefore, having honest leaders and a strong support from the OPA members has definitely contributed to the success of the OPAs. The OPA members from xxxx village said: "Our OPA leaders are honest. They are fair and transparent. They announce financial expenses in every meeting and keep us informed on all plans."

Fundraising: Through various innovative means, the OPAs have raised funds to implement their plans and realise their vision for their communities.

Social support: The OPAs have also been extremely successful in providing a sense of social support and security among members. As one member said: "My expectations of getting social and economic support have been fulfilled by becoming a member of my OPA."

Intergenerational: The OPAs have been open to vulnerable members of all age groups, thus making the composition and nature of the OPAs truly intergenerational. The OPA leaders and members have reached out to needy community members in the true spirit of community harmony, and have extended the social support to those who needed it.

Gender: There are close to 2500 women headed households among the women OPA members. The women are encouraged to be active participants and are taking the lead in many of the OPA activities. Need assessments, monitoring and review meetings and all activities are gender sensitive and inclusive of women. For instance, in livelihood and health care activities, women's needs were addressed. The Successful Case Replication initiatives included women OPA members, especially the ones who head their households and/or live alone. Out of 571 SCR beneficiaries, 439 are women with 17 women living alone.

Linkages: In addition to linkages with stakeholders (explained in the following section), linkages to HelpAge's other programmes were made. Homecare is an effective way to provide care, support and counselling to lonely home-bound older people. This programme was linked to the OPAs and older people who met the criteria for homecare were selected by the OPAs.

Stories of change



The women members of OPA have been playing a key role in leading the OPAs. They have managed events, attended training workshops, maintained records and have raised funds. According to the men OPA members, the women members are better at managing events and raising funds than their male counterparts. In the picture above, some of the OPA female leaders can be seen.

The Sochen (25 years), Sai Salouet (39 years), Chitith Thol (74 years), Hok Savouen (64 years), Pha Sieng (45 years) and Pen Om (42 years) are a group of



intergenerational homecare volunteers who have been trained in homecare. They are in charge of 12 clients, who they look after in different ways: cooking, cleaning, buying grocery and medicines, conducting physiotherapy and keeping the OPAs updated on the condition of the homecare clients.

Phoon Toomay Pi (83 years old) lives in Ouchcha village in Battambang province, with his 40-year-old daughter and a 5 years old grandson. His son-in-law left for Malaysia a few years ago in search of a job but never



returned. He lives in a small shack in the backyard of an older woman who lives alone. That older woman donated a part of her land to his family. Phoon Toomay Pi is too old and frail to work so he gets homecare support from his OPA, while his daughter works on farms as a labourer to earn a living for the three of them. He is too poor to meet the rules of rice banks and so is unable to access rice. However, his OPA donates rice to him twice a year, which ensures he has some food for his grandson. He said the little things he has received from his OPA have made big difference. The water filter for instance ensures he and his family have clean water to drink. During the monsoons, his house was flooded with water (as seen in the picture), but he knew he could depend on his OPAs for help to clear that water out. He also hopes his daughter will get support to have a livelihood that will help them to improve their lives.



Bin Pholen (90-years-old) from Ouchcha village in Battambang province is bedridden. She has four children and three of them have gone away to the Thailand border in search for jobs. Her fourth child, a 22 year old woman, had also gone away temporarily as there was nothing to eat at home. When she returned home, worried that her mother did not survive being alone, she was greatly relieved to find that the OPA had placed a homecare volunteer to look after her mother. Now that her mother has someone to look after, she can spend more time on the farms earning for her mother and herself.

There are many instances of children representing their parents in the OPAs as the parents may be too old to participate effectively or are home bound. This practice has helped the children become more sensitive to older people's needs as they hear, in the meetings, of the various challenges older people face. It also makes them aware of the capacities and resources older people bring to their communities. Furthermore, in many instances the children of older people may be suffering from various vulnerabilities such as disabilities or are single/abandoned/widowed women. A case in point is a lady from one of the villages in Bantea Meanchey who said: "I represent my mother, who is very old and bedridden. Through this OPA, both my mother and I benefit as I have a more stable livelihood now, which helps me to look after my ailing mother."

Another aspect of intergenerational harmony is the sharing of skills and expertise that the older people have gained from this project with other members of the community. The training on various aspects of livelihoods, health and hygiene has increased the knowledge of the older people who participated in the training.

Equipped with the knowledge and information, those older people have become resources in their communities.

Stories of change



Pho Rim (the lady on left) from Bantea Meanchey learned how to weave scarves from a HelpAge project in the year 2000. In the following years, she taught young women how to weave scarves that will sell well in the

markets in the town. The lady on the right is a widow and a landless farmer, has now learned how to weave these scarves and has started selling scarves to earn extra income for her family, thanks to Pho Rim's trainings.



Tkay Sophup from Romchey village in Battambang, is 32 year-old man who suffered from malaria for a long time and needed treatment. However, due to his sickness, he could not earn his livelihood and so did not have the money to seek health care. When the OPA members of his village came to know about his case, they offered him a sick grant to get treated for malaria. After recovering from malaria, he became a member of the OPA in his village as he wanted to contribute to OPAs' work to help other vulnerable members in the community. He also wanted to be a part of the safety net of the OPA and feels more confident to face the future.

Good practices

- OPA leaders have been trained and coached effectively and they have assumed their roles and duties well, thus contributing to the success of their OPAs. The election of leaders was held democratically, and through constant motivation and support the leaders have been able to deliver their duties, thus leading by example.
- The OPAs have been constantly innovating their policies and practices to address the needs of various vulnerable community members. For instance, they have opened membership to younger groups, assisted children who are looking after ailing parents and offered services to the community by building community halls for religious and social events.
- Encouraging trends such as linkages with Commune Councils, rapport building with government departments and connections with other agencies have been fostered successfully to determine future paths for the OPAs. For instance, a few OPA members got free cataract surgery through linkages with an agency for service delivery.
- The MoSVY has acknowledged the OPA model as a safety net mechanism for vulnerable elderly households and approved in May 2009 a National Guideline on Establishing OPA
- Tools and guidelines for development of OPAs are tested and endorsed by MoSVY
- The stronger OPAs have demonstrated their ability and capacity to replicate OPAs in other villages

Future Considerations

At the inception of the project the environment (such as staff turn-overs and limited capacity of new staffs, drought and inundation problems leading to some disruption of the planned activities), delayed and at times impeded the implementation of activities. Lessons learned from this project can be used for future considerations:

- Although efforts have been made to mobilise and extend OPA membership to all older people, exclusion of older people has taken place as some of them have fallen through the cracks. The percentage of this exclusion varies

across OPAs. A majority of OPAs have cent percentage membership of older people in the community but in a few of the OPAs, some of the poorest older people have not become members. Misunderstanding related to the benefits of OPAs, payment of OPA fees, social biases and immigration are some of the barriers that have excluded older people from becoming members of their OPAs. HelpAge and its partners have identified this problem and taken measures to motivate the excluded older people to become OPA members. However, this gap could have identified from the start and a more strategic approach could have been taken to address this issue.

- The current leaders have shown extraordinary motivation and are widely respected by their community members for being honest and considerate. Nonetheless, more OPA members expressed concern at the future leadership as the second generation of leaders has not come up well. The current leaders have mostly remained leaders from the start of the project. During the course of the project, a second generation of leaders could have been trained and coached to prepare them for the future.
- Although the OPAs have raised funds and have short and long term plans, their dependence on HelpAge and partners is still quite high, thus hindering the process of confidence building for self sufficiency. The last year of the project could perhaps have focused more on developing concrete and realistic strategies for phasing out, instilling more confidence and developing an action plan for self sufficiency for the OPAs.
- Complaint mechanisms and social accountability processes, especially with beneficiary selection, could have been stronger. Transparency boards stating details of work done in each village, list of beneficiaries and reasons for the selection could have been displayed in the meeting halls.

Key recommendations

- OPA to be involved in monitoring and tracking the progress of each OPA member, and more of the poorest and most vulnerable OPA members.

- Potential leaders of OPAs to be trained along with current leaders to develop a future generation of leaders.
- Clear cut phase out strategy with an action plan for self sufficiency
- Exclusion of older people and other vulnerable members of the community to be minimised through strategic steps and linkages with services for the very poor.

Story of change



The OPA members in a village in Banteay Meanchey province are loving grandparents who have always dreamt their grandchildren will grow up to become educated adults. However, given the distance of the school from their village, the realisation of this dream seemed bleak. Due to the distance, many children who were under 10-years-old and studied in primary school dropped out of school. Alarmed by the high drop out rates, the grandparents of these children discussed this issue at one of the OPA meetings. The discussion led to the exploration of many ideas to ensure the children of the village get access to education. Finally, the OPA took a collective decision that they would raise funds by donating the wage that they earned by working on the farm and with that fund would build a primary school for the children in the village. All the members of the OPA participated in this endeavor and raised fund to set up a school, complete with desks and chairs. A school teacher who lives in the village was hired to teach the children and at present 40 children under 10-years-old study in that school. The OPA hopes to raise more funds to extend that school to higher classes.

Result 3: Increased food security for vulnerable families in 60 villages in Battambang and Banteay Meanchey provinces

The villages in both the targeted provinces suffer from severe food insecurity. Added to that, the declining social support for older people and others who are dependent on their families has led to aggravation of vulnerabilities. Therefore, having a whole range of components for food security was highly relevant. The measures for food security were all OPA led and managed, which make these components more community based and sustainable.

In the quantitative survey that was conducted on 249 OPA members in 12 villages (100 percent OPA members in the 12 villages), the following facts emerged:

- All 249 respondents were aware their village has a rice bank or a cow bank or both rice and cow banks.
- Only 19 respondents mentioned that they could access rice from a rice bank that was formed by another NGO prior to this project in one of the villages. That rice bank was practically non-functional so this project re-established it.
- 170 respondents have received training for improving agricultural production.
- 245 respondents are confident their OPAs and their community members will be able to run the rice and cow banks after the project ends.
- 200 respondents reported increased access and availability of food in their communities due to the rice bank and home gardens.

The activities under food security have definitely improved access to sources of food security through rice banks and home gardens. The OPA members mentioned how the low interest of the rice banks has enabled them to borrow rice during times of food shortages. Thus, the whole year round, there is rice at home. Due to the low interest and flexible rules for returning rice, the rate of return is close to 95 Per cent. There are very few defaulters. Improved supply of rice and vegetables among older people and their family members through the home gardens is another means for food security. A mix of both consumption of the produce from the home garden and sale of the surplus produce has been beneficial for most families.

Training for improved agricultural production has also been appreciated. Most OPA members report that they now have more knowledge on how to increase agricultural production in their farms. Nonetheless, whether or not the OPA members have actually been successful in increasing their production is yet to be seen. The water sources have also been extremely beneficial to the entire community. The OPAs manage the ponds and have laid down clear rules and regulations for using water. The water sources are mainly used for drinking, cleaning and watering gardens.

Stories of change



The gentleman above is a 70-year-old grandfather from a village in Banteay Meanchey province, who earns his livelihood by working on farmlands. He supports his family by contributing to his son's meagre earning and so was quite thrilled when he received a home garden from his OPA. He always had 'green fingers' and so he knew he could do wonders with his garden. True enough, his garden is lush green with a varied number of vegetable and fruit plants and different kinds of herbs. His garden's produce has increased over the past couple of years, and now despite substantial consumption by the family, there is surplus to sell in the market.



A village in Banteay Meanchey province is resourced with a community pond that provides water for drinking and other domestic purposes to more than 1,000 families in that village and neighbouring villages. The pond has been maintained by the village OPA, which has made rules and regulations for using water from the pond. Community members have been mostly responsible, but if they ever break any rules, OPAs penalise them as per the rules. The OPAs also let people who face water shortages draw water through pumps into farm lands for a fee.

Good practices

- The rice banks and cow banks are owned and managed by the OPAs. Each OPA has a committee for the rice banks and cow banks. These committees are responsible for managing and maintaining the ventures, and report to the OPA about the progress and the challenges. Thus, there is a strong feeling of ownership for these ventures, which has enhances its chance for sustainability.
- The simple yet effective system of management for both cow and rice banks has made these ventures easy to implement and maintain. Most OPA members are aware of the rules and regulations, and the processes to access these services. For instance,

when cows suffered from diseases due to factors beyond control, the committee and the beneficiaries sold those cows and returned the money to the bank and waited for the next round of calves.

- The cow and rice banks have been built on traditional practices so the OPA members have been able to understand and follow the systems very well.
- Contracting the government departments for agriculture and other related training has helped tap available expertise and has also facilitated linkages between the government departments and the OPAs

Future considerations

At the inception of the project the environment (such as staff turn-overs and limited capacity of new staffs, drought and inundation problems leading to some disruption of the planned activities), delayed and at times impeded the implementation of activities. Lessons learned from this project can be used for future considerations:

- The cows from cow banks are generally used by the households to earn income; so technically, it seems to be more appropriate for income security or savings rather than for food security. In many cultures, cow banks can be for both food and income security as cow milk and milk products are consumed by the family members. However, in Cambodia, cow's milk is not consumed and the cows are sold for money. Perhaps, more rice banks or other activities for food security could have been considered instead of cow banks. Moreover, the waiting period to get a calf from a cow is considerably long and at times it tests the patience of people who need capital urgently.
- Although OPAs have provided extended services by donating rice to those OPA members who cannot borrow rice from the rice banks, some of the most vulnerable members of the community are excluded from rice and cow banks due to their inability to return. Strategies on how to be more inclusive of such households could be considered in the future.
- The home gardens are watered mostly by transporting water from ponds or by using pumps. Traditional systems of

water harvesting could be promoted to water the home gardens.

- Closer collaboration with competent institutions such as Departments of Rural Development, Agriculture and NGOs working in this field could be considered to revive innovative traditional water management practices.
- In future, cash or food for work could be considered for the construction and restoration of ponds or other community assets to facilitate an owner driven approach. In this project, seasonal and socio-cultural factors (related to the history of forced labour during the Khmer Rouge regime) hindered the implementation of cash for work programmes.

Key recommendations

- Focus on key aspects of food security instead of spreading too thin with multiple activities. For instance, having more rice in the rice banks would have been more beneficial for the communities' food security than having cow banks.
- Cash for work for the whole community would have motivated the community more to support OPA initiatives and would have made the community assets more community based.
- Inclusive strategies to reach out to those older people and other vulnerable members who are not eligible to borrow from rice banks should be incorporated in OPA plans of action with greater force and scope.



Sui Chan and Phn Nai (71 and 72 years old respectively) from Saday village in Battambang have received home garden and a cow, that help them to look after their grandchildren and live a dignified life.

Result 4: Increased income security for vulnerable people through income generation activities to reduce poverty in 60 villages in Battambang and Banteay Meanchey provinces.

Most older people in the target area are still economically active. In the quantitative survey, 135 out of 249 respondents mentioned that they are the main breadwinners of their families; another 50 older people reported that they contribute to family income. Given this background, having opportunities for income generating activities were highly relevant, especially for those older people who are the main breadwinners.

The Successful Replication Model has been effective to a large extent in enabling OPA members develop viable business plans, and get appropriate training and business assets to start or strengthen their businesses.

Many beneficiaries reported they could seek alternative employment opportunities due to this project. Due to age or disabilities, some older people found it difficult to practice their original livelihoods such as farming or working as a daily labourer. Therefore, having an opportunity to develop skills to start an alternative business that suited them was extremely beneficial.

Most beneficiaries both in the quantitative and qualitative assessments reported that the businesses have increased their potential to earn more. They have also been able to spend more towards their needs, especially for seeking health care, buying food and other basic necessities. Thus, they feel their standard of living has increased.

Story of change

In Saren (46 years old) lives in Saday village in

Battambang province.

Due to her husband's addiction problems, she is the main breadwinner for her family of seven members.

Being close to the older age group,

she was always interested in the OPAs, and so attended a few initial meetings and became an OPA member eventually. The wealth ranking exercise resulted in her selection for SCR support, which included the whole package of training, developing a business proposal and receiving assets as per the business proposal. Prior to her selection for SCR, she had always dreamt of a sustainable business of her own as she realised the money earned from collecting morning glory every morning was not going to help her educate her children, feed them or escape the circle of extreme poverty. So, after visiting various successful businesses, she chose to replicate the business of selling cupcakes on a bicycle. She goes to a market nearby every morning to buy her cupcakes and goes around villages selling those, thus earning enough to pay her children's school fees, and to feed them two times a day. She loves her job and hopes that from here, there is no looking back, as her business will grow and she will prosper.





Good practices

- The training and business development was conducted through a well reputed system of Successful Case Replication or SCR. It is a methodology that claims to be able to identify, verify and multiply successful enterprises. This project tapped the SCR model and applied a tested methodology, thus benefiting from past resources and existing resources.
- Alternative business opportunities were provided to older people, which enabled many to practice livelihood in a way that suited them the best. The older people were also able to choose how to expand or enhance their businesses.

- Younger family members or vulnerable members of the community also received opportunities to enhance their businesses and increase their income.

Future considerations

At the inception of the project the environment (e.g: staffs turn-over, drought and inundation problems leading to some disruption of the planned activities, limited capacity of new staffs), delayed and at times impeded the implementation of activities. Now there are avenues to expand to the following considerations for future project implementations:

- The OPA members who received SCR training could have formed a resource base within each OPA to share their knowledge with other OPA members. This would have added to the ripple effect of the project.
- Enabling the OPAs with a monitoring wing to monitor and counsel businesses that were weakening could have been considered. Capacity of OPAs in counseling and business strategies could have been put into place for those businesses that were slowing down or at risk of closing down.
- More support to inter-generational partnership could have been useful as a few cases were encountered where the older people were unable to carry on with their businesses due to declining health.

Key recommendations

- Capitalise on OPA members' expertise and set up informal technical hubs for training, coaching and counseling on livelihood options for older people and other vulnerable groups.
- Encourage inter-generational partnership to bolster livelihoods of those older people who have limited physical capacity through partnership with other vulnerable people who are in need of livelihoods.



Mean Koen (64 years old) is a mine victim who lost his legs. Both he and his wife have joined OPA for social support. He has received a grant to run his store and his wife has volunteered to be a home care volunteer.

Result 5: Improved health care for vulnerable families in 60 villages in Battambang and Banteay Meanchey provinces

It is no surprise that only nine out of the 249 respondents in the quantitative survey said that they do not have any health problems. Health deteriorates with age, but what aggravates the deterioration is the lack of health care facilities and the absence of health care seeking behavior. Therefore, having a comprehensive programme of health care, which included medical check-ups and health education, provided an opportunity to OPA members and other community members to improve their health.

The health camps have provided regular accessible health services to older people and other community members. Only eight out of the 249 respondents said they were not aware of the health camps that were organised by this project. However, there is lack of clarity among the OPA members about who organised those camps as answers ranged from HelpAge and its partners to government departments. Twenty-five respondents said they did not attend the health camps as they were busy with their work and did not have enough time.

The health camps did not only offer regular health check-ups but also detected a few serious health care problems such as tuberculosis and gallbladder stones that were referred to health care centres for further treatment. The health education and physical exercise further enhanced the experience of the health camps.

Story of change



Hoth Ruom (81 years old) from Samruang village and Im Choan (74 years old) from Sdey village show their physiotherapy exercise that help them to fight their back pain. They explained how the visits to the health camps regularly have helped them to keep their blood pressure in check and in eating healthy. They try to use less oil and salt in their food now and eat more green and yellow vegetables. They said they will continue with their healthy lifestyle and will try to encourage community members to live healthily as well.

Good practices

- The health camps were designed in a comprehensive way and so older people and other vulnerable members had the chance to optimise their experience and understanding by going to those health camps. Given the lack of time community members have due to their livelihoods and other commitments, it is a good practice to make the time they spend at the health camp worthwhile.
- The collaboration with local health centres in organising the camps proved

to be effective as it provided an opportunity for the health centre staff to connect with the communities, especially the older people, and gave them good exposure on conducting outreach services.

- Health volunteers in the villages were involved in organizing the health camps
- The MoH, notably Department of Preventive health, reinforced awareness raising of health staff on ageing. The MoH invited HelpAge staff to provide training and raise awareness on health for older people in its preventive medicine department.

Future considerations

At the inception of the project the environment (such as staff turn-overs and limited capacity of new staffs, drought and inundation problems leading to some disruption of the planned activities), delayed and at times impeded the implementation of activities. Lessons learned from this project can be used for future considerations:

- The role of Village Health Support Group (VHSG) or Village Health Workers (VHW) could have been strengthened by making an action plan for linkages in post project activities. At present, although the VHSG and VHW are aware of the health care needs and the activities for health care for older people, it is not clear how the work will be taken forward.
- The withdrawal of health camps with the project ending will create a vacuum in health care. The regular health camps that were organised every two months will end, so the community members will face a sudden drop their regular health check-up. The VHSG, VHW and the local health centre could have been included to make a plan of action to take over the health camp activities.
- Strategising on further developing partnership with Ministry of Health could have been considered since health is such a major issue for most older people.

Key recommendations

- Greater association with local mechanisms such as VHSG and VHW to ensure there is a system to take over the basic health care and health

education practices after the project is over.

- Developing partnership with Ministry of Health and especially the department of preventive medicine on common strategies on health prevention, treatment of non communicable diseases policies and sensitization of health personnels on age friendliness.

Result 6: Dissemination and replication of best practices in using older peoples' capacities to achieve increased food and income security and improved health in Battambang and Banteay Meanchey provinces

This project has worked with four major stakeholders: Ministry of Social Affairs and Veteran and Youth (MoSVY), Departments of agriculture, rural development and health. HelpAge has engaged these stakeholders at both national and provincial levels, thus ensuring the departments are sensitised, aware and responsive to the needs of the older people and the potential of OPAs. The stakeholders have all been involved with the project as members of Project Advisory Committee, thus most of them at the district level have been closely monitoring and following the project activities. The stakeholders have also been involved in implementing some of the project activities. For example, the Department of Agriculture was sub contracted to conduct agricultural training and the Department of Health participated in conducting the bi-monthly health camps. This has brought the stakeholders close to the project and to HelpAge, thus building a substantial rapport for advocacy and mutual cooperation.

The success with the publication of national guidelines for OPAs has enhanced the interest and understanding of OPAs among stakeholders. In 2009, the Government of Cambodia approved the national guidelines for establishing and managing OPAs. This is an outcome of HelpAge's advocacy with the government for a long time. The exposure to the benefits of the OPAs through the involvement with this project strengthened HelpAge's advocacy measures. It is expected that the guideline will support the formation and strengthening of OPAs throughout Cambodia, and promote older people's social and economic well-being. The guidelines were developed by the Department of Pensions of

the Ministry of Social Affairs, Veterans and Youth Rehabilitation, with support from UNFPA and HelpAge International. The guidelines will be a practical tool for local government authorities, communities and aid organisations to support OPAs. They include advice on mobilising the community, developing activities and fundraising plans, and financial management.

HelpAge has also provided opportunities to the stakeholders to develop their capacity and technical knowledge on designing appropriate programmes for older people. Representatives from MoSVY have attended trainings on social pensions and homecare for older people. Workshops involving all stakeholders to determine the future path have been extremely beneficial in keeping the stakeholders engaged. In its work plan for 2008-2013, MoSVY aims to address the challenges of the vulnerable groups and one of its goals is to replicate the OPAs for improving the system of social safety net and civic engagement. However, lack of awareness among the local institutions, such as Commune Councils and Local Authorities, of the vulnerabilities of the marginalised groups and a lack of information among the marginalised groups of the existing mechanisms and services are major impediments for the successful implementation of MoSVY's goals.

As explained by the Director of National Committee for Planning Division, the issue of older people was at the bottom of the barrel, but HelpAge has put it on the table. Given the demographic changes and the growing socio-economic problems that older people face, this is the time for policy makers to gear up their policies and work for older people. The NCPD guides the inter-ministerial body and has intentions to influence the inter-ministerial body regarding more schemes for older people. Therefore, NCPD requires technical support in conducting research and developing appropriate messages and guidance to influence various ministries on the topic of ageing.

The stakeholders have clearly indicated that connecting the OPAs with the Commune Councils is required so the OPAs can access services and resources allocated in each commune. The Commune Investment Plan, a process for CBOs to submit their proposals to their respective communes for support, is an important way forwards for the OPAs. In this project, the Commune Councils have been introduced to OPAs, and sensitised on the issues of older people. Consequently, OPAs

have been given space in Commune Council meetings, and many Commune Council members have attended OPA meetings. There have also been cases of allocation of land and resources from the Commune Council. The major outcomes have been:

- 60 OPAs attended 240 Commune Council meetings
- 60 OPAs presented their plans to the Commune Councils
- Two OPAs in Banteay Meanchey province received communal land from the local Commune Councils for planting rice.

Good practices

- Focusing on Battambang and Banteay Meanchey as the focal point for developing OPAs, and demonstrating the work for advocacy has been a very useful way to influence policy.
- Keeping stakeholders involved at all levels in the project activities has created a strong relationship and camaraderie between HelpAge, its partners and the various government departments.
- Technical support and guidance for the departments has motivated them toward the issue of older people and has made them keen on furthering their capacity.

Future considerations

At the inception of the project the environment (such as staff turn-overs and limited capacity of new staffs, drought and inundation problems leading to some disruption of the planned activities), delayed and at times impeded the implementation of activities. Lessons learned from this project can be used for future considerations:

- Towards the end of the project, determining clear steps on how each stakeholder can link with OPAs could have been developed as a part of the phase out strategy. This would have laid the future path in a more concrete fashion and each stakeholder would have known how to continue the linkage with the OPAs, or would have been aware of their responsibilities to the OPAs.
- It is quite clear from the stakeholders' consultation that linkage with Commune Councils is one of the critical factors in sustaining the OPAs.

However, the complicated process of getting CIPs funded and the lack of funds could slow down the progress of OPAs.

- Alliance building with other agencies, especially INGOs and NGOs with various specialisations could have helped in diversifying the support base of OPAs. The success with the cataract surgery of some OPA members is a case in point.

Key recommendations

- Greater engagement with NCPD through technical support will be instrumental in influencing various ministries. It will also enable NCPD to address the key needs for research and understanding of issues around older people.
- Intensive capacity building of MoSVY in working with older people and in defining appropriate strategies and vision is required. MoSVY has already expressed its interest in developing its capacity on ageing issues, and has shown its commitment by incorporating ageing in its work plan. Nonetheless, it still has a very small team for veterans' affairs with a limited capacity.
- Further strengthening the relationship between OPAs and Commune Councils and facilitating the process of their linkages will be required. Further sensitisation of the Commune Councils so they are more receptive and responsive to OPAs advocacy efforts will be required as well.
- New avenues such as stronger partnerships with the Ministry of Women Affairs and Department of Health are recommended to further work on gender vis-à-vis older women and age friendly health care systems.
- New alliances with INGOs with overlapping agendas such as disability, children, women empowerment or inclusive rural development and other UN departments will consolidate HelpAge's work. For instance, the strong partnership with UNFPA can be replicated with UNDP (for poverty reduction programmes) and UNICEF (child protection by grandparents).
- Consider using both location to test new approaches and feed in best practices to development partners and national level

- Compile existing best practices and training materials on OPAs and ageing in general as national standards

5. CONCLUSION

Programme Results

Progress reports, key informant interviews and discussions with beneficiaries confirmed that the programme made significant contributions to positive changes in the lives of the target population, including the organisations that participated in the implementation. Positive impacts have been reported and documented under all the six outcomes. The programme has generated lessons and good practices that can be replicated in future programmes.

The OPAs have a strong foundation and a strong sense of purpose. These OPAs have enhanced the traditional spirit of collectivism and have given the older people a concrete platform to contribute to communities' growth. The OPAs are widely acknowledged by the stakeholders, and other community members (non-OPA members). Innovative measures such as hiring a teacher to raise awareness about OPAs, prior to establishing the OPAs, were instrumental in mobilising the older people and the communities to form OPAs. Thus, starting off with a well mobilised community helped set the foundation for strong OPAs.

The activities under food security have definitely improved access to sources of food security through rice banks and home gardens. The OPA members mentioned how the low interest of the rice banks has enabled them to borrow rice during times of food shortages. Thus, the whole year round, there is rice at home. Due to the low interest and flexible rules for returning rice, the rate of return is close to 95per cent. There are very few defaulters. Improved supply of rice and vegetables among older people and their family members through the home gardens is another means for food security. A mix of both consuming the produce from the home gardens and selling the surplus produce has been beneficial for most families.

The Successful Replication Model has been effective to a large extent in enabling the OPA members to develop viable business plans, and get appropriate training and business assets to start or strengthen their businesses. Many beneficiaries reported they could seek alternative employment opportunities due to

this project. Due to age, or disabilities, some older people found it difficult to practice their original livelihoods such as farming or working as a daily labourer.

The health camps have provided regular accessible health services to older people and other community members. Only eight out of the 249 respondents said they were not aware of the health camps that were organised by this project.

Programme Design

The design of the programme to cover a large geographical area spanning 60 villages across two provinces led to rapid scale up of older people's issues in those areas. The advocacy efforts by the programme are yielding fruits as other agencies and governments are giving more attention to the issues of older people. The last year, however, should have focused more on phasing out and exit strategies to reduce dependency of communities on HelpAge and its partners and to become more confident and assured.

Capacity and Activity Implementation

The project management and implementation arrangements have been a good mix of result driven and capacity building approaches. The staff members of HelpAge in Cambodia have been able to build their capacity in varying degrees and at the same time have worked under a very heavy calendar to deliver the outputs.

This programme provided a wide range of basic needs to older people: establishment of OPAs, interventions and resources for food and income security, health care and health education, advocacy and linkages. This provided opportunity for learning what worked well for the older people in those areas. Emerging best practices should be replicated in future programmes.

Innovative Intervention

The issue of older people is still not addressed well in Cambodia. So, this project, through an innovative twin approach of addressing the needs as well as demonstrating the capacities of older people, has been able to bring much needed focus on older people. Engaging communities and stakeholders in the manner the programme did was innovative as it has built strong channels of communication and collaboration between the stakeholders and the community based organisations (OPAs). The capacity building approach, intergenerational

dimensions and the holistic modes have made this project very wholesome.

Advocacy and Linkages

The programme established linkages with governments and others at different levels. These linkages have the potential to support advocacy work in the future. Overall linkages of OP to sources of support were evidenced by governments supplementing on the ongoing programme activities, which is a compliment to the programme advocacy efforts.

Partnership Model

All four partners reported that they have enhanced their capacity and have emerged stronger in their understanding and skills in participatory community development. They felt as members of PMMC, they were able to take decisions in all aspects of project cycle management in a participatory manner. Therefore, at the end of the project, it was important to understand the impact of the measures on building the capacity of the four local NGOs. This evaluation used the 'capacity framework' tool developed by McKinsey to assess the level of competency among the four partners.

Therefore, the strong focus on building the capacity of the partners so they develop expertise and improve their organisational capacity has been one of the highlights of this project. Nonetheless, in future more emphasis on vision building and strategising for the future will be fruitful for a more holistic development.

Sustainability

Trained OPAs based in villages enhanced by linkages are likely to sustain their activities after the conclusion of the programme. Linkages established with governments and others at different levels are likely to continue to support advocacy work initiated by the programme. Some partners have capacities and are running other programmes, which indicates a degree of sustainability of organisations without the programme. The scale of resource requirements to address outstanding issues of older people, however, limits the capacity of local organisations to sustain similar programmes without external support.

Cost effective

Overall the outcomes and the financial reports cited suggest the programme provided good

value for money. HelpAge has also been very cost conscious and has taken steps for cost cutting. Setting up the office and being in close contact with the operational area has reduced the costs of travel, logistics and administration to a large extent. Considering the activities undertaken, the number of beneficiaries who received support in terms of gaining awareness, skills, and receiving entitlements; better capacities for partners; and, the changes that have taken place as a result of the programme intervention; this programme has been quite cost effective.

Opportunities for future path

The lessons learned and the key recommendations from this evaluation, can be a resource for developing the future strategies for HelpAge in Cambodia. To capitalize on the momentum set by the committed work of the past, and to ensure that the future strategies are in line with the work of the past, the good practices can be replicated and the lessons learned can be converted to stepping stones for success in the future and a pathway to suitable exit strategy. The key opportunities are:

Further strengthening and replication of OPAs: The HelpAge team mentioned that the work in the two provinces of Bantea Meanchey and Battambang is like a “laboratory” where the concept of OPA was applied and enhanced, resulting in a successful implementation of a model. It is recommended that this opportunity is taken to further the work of OPAs through partnership and networking with various agencies and the OPAs themselves.

Building a resource base on OPAs: In addition to the OPA guidelines published by the MoSVY, various other resources that have been developed over the years, and various experiences and achievements that have still not been captured can all be compiled into a comprehensive resource base on OPAs. This will benefit in accomplishing the first opportunity for replication of OPAs across the country (or at least in the prioritized areas) through an approach that builds local capacity and strengthen local networking.

Stepping up policy work: At a time when the government of Cambodia, especially the key department MoSVY, has been engaged so well to the issues of older people, the opportunity for a full fledged policy programming, to

influence policy makers and also to build their capacity, exists. Therefore, it is essential to develop appropriate strategies for policy work, and it is also essential to upgrade the level of policy work that HelpAge is doing at present. Through consultation, activity mapping and need assessment, the interventions for policy work can be determined. Additionally, engaging other departments such as health, women welfare, rural development will be beneficial too.

Alliance building: Partnerships with UN agencies and INGOs/NGOs will be of extreme benefit to address ageing as a cross cutting issue. Mainstreaming ageing into the programmes of agencies that are working on women, children, persons with disabilities, IDPs has still remained an untapped opportunity.

Branching out: Logical progression of programmes that branch out to new areas such as governance or social accountability via OPAs, as mentioned upgraded policy work, mainstreaming of age friendliness/inclusion of older people, livelihood/marketing linkages of OPA products can be explored and implemented.

6. ANNEXES

- Annex 1: Summary of project outputs
- Annex 2: List of key project documents reviewed
- Annex 3: Inception report (including field schedule)
- Annex 4: Tools used for this evaluation
- Annex 5: PowerPoint presentation of preliminary findings