

Independent Office
of Evaluation



Kingdom of Cambodia

**Rural Livelihoods Improvement Project in Kratie,
Preah Vihear and Ratanakiri**

PROJECT PERFORMANCE EVALUATION



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and Ratanakiri**

Project Performance Evaluation

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Photos of activities supported by the Rural Livelihoods Improvement Project in Kratie, Preah Vihear and Ratanakiri (RULIP)

Front cover: Dann Yanna, a Kuoy (indigenous) widow living in the Preah Vihear province, has struggled as the sole bread winner for her two children. Her vegetable garden planted with a variety of vegetables including morning glory, mung bean, cucumber and cabbage next to her house with the land area of 20m x20m helped her secure nutritious food and additional income for her family. Through RULIP and its livelihoods improvement group, she received the training on vegetable production. Thanks to her neighbour who owns a deep water well and agreed to let her use water to irrigate her vegetables, she has been able to grow them all year round and sell almost every day as part of her main source of income. Preah Me Village, Preah Me commune, Thbeng Mean Chey district, Preah Vihear.

Back cover: The leader of an agricultural cooperative explaining the financial status in Thuoy Tum village with Krueng (indigenous) people, Cha Ung commune, O-Chum district in Ratanakiri province. This agricultural cooperative was formed by merging members of a livelihoods improvement group, a most vulnerable family group, and a farming systems improvement group. When the evaluation team met the cooperative, there were 50 members, of which 11 women (right); Meeting with the members of the management of the Samaky PhonPichBory (agricultural cooperative), Bos village, Phnom Penh commune, Kulen district, Preah Vihear province. The cooperative was formed by merging six livelihood improvement groups and two most vulnerable family groups. The membership grew from 165 to 277 at the time of the evaluation mission. About half of the members have arrangements through the agricultural cooperative to supply organic rice to an agribusiness company (Amru rice) (left).

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Preface

The Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) conducted a project performance evaluation of the Rural Livelihoods Improvement Project in Kratie, Preah Vihear and Ratanakiri in the Kingdom of Cambodia, which was implemented between 2007 and 2014. The project was designed at a time when close to half of the country's population suffered from poverty. The project sought to assist poor rural households in improving their agricultural production by supporting extension services and training in improved agricultural technologies, mainly related to rice, poultry, vegetables and cassava, coupled with group revolving funds. The project was implemented through a decentralized approach, which also supported the Government's policy on "decentralization and deconcentration".

The project contributed to the adoption of improved agricultural techniques by the targeted poor rural households and to improving agricultural productivity and production. The project had a strong poverty focus, and gender issues were effectively integrated based on good collaboration between partners at national and provincial levels. The group revolving funds helped ease the cash flow of beneficiary households and contributed to building social capital among members, even though its importance as a source of finance for the target group declined due to increased availability of microfinance services in rural areas. There are good growth prospects for the agricultural cooperatives that emerged from the groups managing the revolving fund in Preah Vihear, also due to growing market opportunities for organic rice and other support initiatives.

On the other hand, the benefits realized in terms of improved agricultural production were less than expected, due to, among other factors, weaknesses in the approach of extension services and training of farmers. Despite the emphasis on "demand-driven" services, the approach was largely based on standard packages, especially in the initial years. The areas with a high proportion of indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities faced additional challenges due to low literacy rates, language issues and remoteness. Adjustments were made after the mid-term review, including efforts to be more responsive to farmers' needs and to tailor the training delivery approach. In general, however, there was insufficient consideration of farmers' capacity, their access to resources, and the conditions required for them to take up improved technologies (for example, access to water and availability of labour). The evaluation highlights the importance of devising differentiated approaches based on sound analysis of the target group, and on training and agricultural support services that are commensurate with farmers' resources and conditions.

This project performance evaluation was conducted by Fumiko Nakai, IOE Senior Evaluation Officer and lead evaluator, with contributions from Franklina Mantila and Pou Sovann, IOE consultants, and Shijie Yang, IOE Evaluation Analyst, who was responsible for quantitative data analysis in relation to rural poverty impact and economic and financial analysis. The peer reviewer was Fabrizio Felloni, IOE Deputy Director. Laure Vidaud, Evaluation Assistant, provided administrative support.

IOE is grateful to IFAD's Asia and the Pacific Division, the Royal Government of Cambodia – in particular the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and the Ministry of Women's Affairs, the Provincial Departments of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries and Women's Affairs in all three project provinces – for their insights at various stages of the evaluation process and the support they provided to the mission. I hope the results generated will be of use to help improve IFAD operations and development activities in the Kingdom of Cambodia.



Oscar A. Garcia
Director
Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD

The management members of an agricultural cooperative supported by RULIP looking at their records during the discussion with the evaluation team (Khasem Khnong village, Khasem commune, Sunuol district, Kratie Province). This agricultural cooperative was formed by converting a livelihoods improvement group with the membership of 25 households. The cooperative now has 26 members (21 women) as a result of co-opting the commune extension worker.

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Currency equivalent and measures

Currency equivalent

Currency unit = Cambodian Riel (KHR)

US\$1 = KHR 4,000

Measures

Metric system

Abbreviations and acronyms

AC	agricultural cooperative
ADESS	Agricultural Development Support to Seila Project
ASPIRE	Agricultural Services Programme for Innovations, Resilience and Extension
CEW	commune extension worker
COSOP	country strategic opportunities programme
DSF	debt sustainability framework
EIRR	economic internal rate of return
FSIG	farming systems improvement group
GRF	group revolving fund
IFAD	International Fund for Agricultural Development
IOE	Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD
LIG	livelihood investment group
M&E	monitoring and evaluation
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
MFI	microfinance institution
MOWA	Ministry of Women's Affairs
MTR	mid-term review
MVFG	most vulnerable family group
PCR	project completion report
PDAFF	Provincial Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry
PDoWA	Provincial Department of Women's Affairs
PPE	project performance evaluation
PSR	project status report
PSU	Project Support Unit (in MAFF)
RIMS	Results and Impact Management System
RPRP	Rural Poverty Reduction Project in Prey Veng and Svay Rieng
RULIP	Rural Livelihood Improvement Project in Kratie, Preah Vihear and Ratanakiri
SKD	Strategy and Knowledge Department (IFAD)
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VAHW	village animal health worker
VEW	village extension worker


Map of the project area

Kingdom of Cambodia

Rural Livelihoods Improvement in Kratie, Preah Vihear and Ratanakiri

Project performance evaluation



 The designations employed and the presentation of the material in this map do not imply the expression of any opinion whatsoever on the part of IFAD concerning the delimitation of the frontiers or boundaries, or the authorities thereof.
IFAD Map compiled by IFAD | 17-01-2017

Executive summary

Background

1. The Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) conducted a project performance evaluation (PPE) of the Rural Livelihoods Improvement Project in Kratie, Preah Vihear and Ratanakiri (RULIP) in the Kingdom of Cambodia. The main objectives of the evaluation were to: (i) provide an independent assessment of the overall results of the project; and (ii) generate lessons and recommendations for the design and implementation of ongoing and future operations in the country.
2. This evaluation was based on a desk review of available data and project-related documents and a country mission from 27 February to 10 March 2017. Data collection methods included desk-based research and review, interviews with various stakeholders and key informants (e.g. former project staff, project implementation agencies, service providers, sub-national government officials, village chiefs, IFAD staff), focus group discussions with agricultural cooperatives and groups supported by the project (management and members), and direct observations (e.g. bookkeeping records, farming activities). The PPE team traveled in the project area and visited 13 communes in eight districts in the three project provinces. In total, the team met with 19 groups/organizations of beneficiaries (mostly agricultural cooperatives) that had varied levels of maturity and including five groups of ethnic minorities.

The project

3. The target group was defined as follows: (i) poor households with little land; (ii) landless households; (iii) woman-headed households with young children and many dependents; and (iv) indigenous/ethnic minority households. The targeting approach combined geographical targeting (selection of poor provinces, districts, communes and villages) and social targeting (wealth-ranking exercise).
4. The project objective was "to make a positive and sustainable impact on agricultural development" in the targeted communes. The expected project outputs were as follows: (i) farmers and communities adapt improved and sustainable farming and agricultural land management systems; (ii) improved services are delivered to the poor in a participatory and demand-driven manner; and (iii) increased capacity for policy analysis and pro-poor policy formulation is secured for the agriculture sector and for mainstreaming gender within the sector.
5. The project comprised two components: (i) livelihoods improvement, including support for group formation, group revolving funds (GRFs) and introduction of improved agricultural technologies; and (ii) support for decentralization and deconcentration in agriculture, involving support for project implementation and coordination at national, provincial and district levels, as well as gender mainstreaming.
6. The project was implemented between 2007 and 2014 with the cost of US\$13.6 million. Major expenditure items were farmer training, in-kind and cash grants to groups to establish GRFs, and support services. Project services were provided predominantly through 634 beneficiary groups formed, through which 14,894 households were reached. Identified households were organized into three types of groups: most vulnerable family groups (very poor); livelihoods improvement groups (poor); and farming systems improvement groups (better-off).

Main evaluation findings

7. **Relevance.** The project objective and main thrusts were largely aligned with the Government's policies and priorities for poverty reduction, agricultural development and decentralization. They were also coherent with IFAD's strategic frameworks

and country strategies. Support to decentralization and deconcentration and decentralized implementation arrangements were relevant.

8. The three broad areas of project support were overall relevant, although flawed by some shortcomings and over-assumptions. With regard to the project approach to group formation, there was lack of clarity on the purpose and role of beneficiary groups within and/or beyond the project. The approach to group formation – by design and in implementation – was rigid, in terms of the fixed size and categorization of the targeted households into groups based on poverty level. These issues affected the effectiveness and sustainability of benefits.
9. Despite the emphasis on "demand-driven" services in the project design, the approach to farmer training and extension services was largely based on standard packages, especially in the initial years. Furthermore, there was an over-assumption that when provided with training and extension services and access to loan funds, farmers would have sufficient means of production, skills and motivation to apply improved agricultural technologies.
10. **Effectiveness.** The project contributed to the adoption of improved technologies by the targeted households, but effectiveness was compromised by design and implementation issues. Adoption rates of agricultural technologies are likely to have been lower than expected and self-reported, due to, among other factors, weaknesses in the training and extension approach, especially in the initial years, as well as the lack of enabling conditions for farmers to apply the improved techniques, such as lack of access to water and sufficient labour. Adjustments made after the mid-term review in an effort to make the training modality more "demand-driven" contributed to improving the performance, but the remaining time was short, and it was also challenging to turn around some of the fundamental issues largely related to design, such as lack of clarity on the role and purpose of groups and the rigid approach to group formation.
11. GRFs helped ease the cash flow of beneficiary households, while the extent of their contribution to the adoption of improved technologies and productive activities was not substantial, also due to the context change. In earlier years, GRFs served an important source of finance for group members, but many members have increasingly taken loans from microfinance institutions, whose services in rural areas increased dramatically during the project, to finance farming activities or other needs, not least because of the limited amounts available from GRFs. Nonetheless, GRFs also contributed to increased social capital.
12. Performance of agricultural support and GRFs varied widely between the provinces owing to a combination of factors: capacity of provincial/district teams; quality of service delivery; and contextual issues. There were more challenges in Ratanakiri, with its high proportion of indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities, due to factors such as very low literacy rates, language issues, different farming systems and remoteness.
13. **Efficiency.** Despite satisfactory timeliness and disbursement performance and reasonable project management cost, there were a number of issues which negatively affected how economically resources and inputs were converted into benefits. Sub-optimal quality of implementation affected the adoption rates of improved agricultural technologies, especially in early years. This, combined with increased project costs and smaller outreach than envisaged, reduced the expected benefits mainly in terms of income increase from improved agricultural production and productivity.
14. **Rural poverty impact.** There is some consistency in reported results from the different surveys, showing an increasing trend in household incomes and assets, as well as agricultural productivity (for wet-season rice, cassava and cashew) and food security compared to non-project households. However, due to sampling problems,

an absence of comparable baseline data and the general economic growth in the country, it is difficult to establish the extent or magnitude of positive impact or the attribution to the project. The survey data and the focus group discussions during the PPE field visit indicate that hunger was no longer a major issue among both project households and non-project households, but the malnutrition rate remains high in general, indicating that the quality of food, especially for small children (diversity and nutrition density) is inadequate.

15. Training and follow-up support in various areas – technical and agriculture-related, bookkeeping, gender issues, nutrition, group development and leadership skills – are likely to have improved the skills and knowledge of beneficiaries, even if not at an optimal level. Groups of beneficiaries centring around a GRF facilitated cooperation and social capital. It is probable that the project activities facilitated more interaction between commune councils and their constituencies, but the lasting effects on empowerment of organizations of the rural poor are not evident.
16. The project supported the public agricultural extension system to try, experience and appreciate demand-driven approaches, but the extent of its institutionalization is still low. The project contributed to building the capacity of public institutions and staff at provincial and district levels to conduct gender-related training and gender-sensitive monitoring. RULIP also contributed to upgrading the skills and services of village animal health workers.
17. **Sustainability of benefits.** The prospect for the continuation of collective activities by groups, including GRFs, is mixed and varies between the provinces. The transformation of groups into cooperatives with capacity-building support in the latter part of the project, which was pursued to address the issue of sustainability, was rushed. In a number of cases there was little critical reflection among the members on the rationale for becoming cooperatives. Except for Preah Vihear, agricultural cooperatives' operations have not expanded much or gone beyond savings and credit. The agricultural cooperative law of 2013 provides a framework for the Government to provide regulatory and institutional support, but lack of staffing and funding, a physical target-driven approach to developing cooperatives and the lack of quality support can be a risk to nurturing strong and empowered member-based organizations.
18. The farmers who have adopted improved production practices are likely to continue to apply them as long as the practices are profitable, they have access to means of production, and no disaster events occur. However, they would need to access extension services regularly to remain up to date on their skills and knowledge (new varieties, disease or pest management practices, market demand). Therefore, the availability of effective agricultural support service (public or private) will be critical. At the moment, this prospect seems uncertain, while it is noted that the ongoing IFAD-financed Agricultural Services Programme for Innovations, Resilience and Extension (ASPIRE) aims to address this issue. The sustainability of agricultural extension service delivery will be challenged without additional financing (including from other projects), increased government budget allocations, built-in fee-based services or a combination of these mechanisms.
19. **Innovation.** The project's emphasis on demand-responsive public sector agricultural service delivery was considered to be an innovation in the project completion report. However, this element has been present in earlier IFAD-financed projects, and it may be questioned how "innovative" it was. On the other hand, the efforts made to modify the training delivery modality to better suit indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities – for example, in terms of the location and the language – may be considered innovative, particularly in the context of public agricultural extension systems. Another innovation introduced after the mid-term review was social marketing approaches to improve early childhood nutrition at

village level. The approaches included "cooking competitions", "champion mothers" and "mother-to-mother social marketing activities".

20. **Scaling up.** There is little indication that the innovative approaches/initiatives discussed above have been scaled up. The ongoing ASPIRE may offer scope for scaling up demand-responsive extension delivery and differentiated service delivery to ethnic minorities, but this does not really reflect "scaling up" by other partners.
21. **Gender equality and women's empowerment.** Explicit attention to gender issues and good collaboration with the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the Provincial Department of Women's Affairs in each project province contributed to good performance in this area. Related activities included awareness campaigns/training (for staff and beneficiaries) on gender equality and women's rights and domestic violence, promoting women leadership in groups, and technology transfer intended to promote income-generating activities for women.
22. With conscious effort, there was high level of women's participation in beneficiary groups, also in leadership position, although the level was comparably lower in Ratanakiri, a province influenced by the social and cultural context of indigenous peoples and ethnic minority communities. The evaluation noted that awareness activities on gender issues led to the understanding that men and women have equal rights to decision-making as well as to an improved division of labour at home. The training approach of involving both husband and wife from the same household was effective in facilitating these changes. At the same time, there was little evidence that the project has contributed towards transformative change that would lead to far-reaching social change in terms of gender equality and women's empowerment.
23. **Environment and natural resources management.** Many of the technical skills introduced were focused on sustainable production practices and the proper use of agro-chemicals, as well as natural inputs as part of integrated pest management, such as manure and natural pesticides. While largely positive, these activities were modest in terms of contributing to the environment and natural resources management.

Recommendations

24. Key recommendations are provided below for consideration by IFAD and the Royal Government of Cambodia.
25. **Recommendation 1. Design, implement and monitor differentiated approaches grounded on target group analysis.** Some activities have already been initiated to better integrate indigenous peoples' issues and needs in the context of the ASPIRE, and progress and performance should be monitored continuously. There is also need to recognize the differences in capacity levels of beneficiaries (as well as project implementers). Project approaches should be adapted to maximize relevance and effectiveness, with appropriate allocation of project investment and realistic timelines. For example, farmers who have been less exposed to improved agricultural techniques or markets, or indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities, may require more capacity-building support and follow-up over a longer period of time, and such consideration needs to be reflected in project design, budgeting and planning.
26. **Recommendation 2. Ensure farmer training and agricultural advisory services are commensurate with farmers' resources and conditions and informed by market opportunities.** It is important to critically assess whether there are sufficient enabling conditions for beneficiaries to take advantage of the technical support package. The assessment should be context-specific and set forth the scope, content and approach for project interventions. For example, consideration might be needed on whether it is necessary to incorporate more support for improved access to inputs/means of production (e.g. access to water),

or to adjust/adapt the technical package to reflect the prevailing conditions (e.g. taking into consideration labour shortages). Projects should also support enabling farmers to make "informed" decisions on agricultural productive activities, taking into consideration key factors such as costs and benefits, inputs/labour requirements and market opportunities.

27. **Recommendation 3. Invest in capacity-building of farmer groups/ organizations for their economic empowerment**, including but not limited to agricultural cooperatives. While cooperatives play an important role in building social capital, they are foremost business entities and an instrument for farmers to enhance their productive activities and incomes. Support to cooperatives may include capacity-building to strengthen internal governance and leadership development, and should be based on the principles of cooperative development, such as voluntarism, independence and autonomy, and democratic member control.
28. **Recommendation 4. Strengthen attention to nutrition in ongoing and future agricultural and rural development projects**. Despite economic growth, malnutrition is still a concern in Cambodia. Given some interesting experience in RULIP and IFAD's stronger focus on nutrition in recent years, IFAD and the Government should explore opportunities to incorporate activities or adjust approaches with a nutrition lens in ongoing or future interventions where feasible.

IFAD Management's response¹

1. Management welcomes the Project Performance Evaluation (PPE) of the Rural Livelihoods Improvement Project in Kratie, Preah Vihear and Ratanakiri (RULIP), and appreciate the high quality of the report.
2. Overall, Management agrees with IOE's assessment of the project's performance and notes that RULIP brought positive changes to the life of smallholders in northern regions of Cambodia and supported Government efforts in streamlining de-concentration and decentralisation.
3. Management recognizes the importance of strengthening the link between improved agricultural practice and the group revolving fund activities. Management also believes that although nutrition was incorporated towards the end of the project, it was very significant and generated good results that can be scaled up in other programmes.
4. Management appreciates the PPE recommendations which are generally already being internalized and acted upon. Management's detailed views on the proposed recommendations are presented below:
 - **Design, implement and monitor differentiated approach grounded on target group analysis.** *As mentioned (paragraph 163), there are already some activities initiated to better integrate indigenous peoples' issues and needs in the context of the ASPIRE, and the progress and performance should be monitored continuously. There is also need to recognize the differences in capacity levels of beneficiaries (as well as project implementers). Project approach should be adapted to maximize the relevance and effectiveness (including, for example, communication modality), with appropriate allocation of project investment and realistic timeline. For example, farmers who have been less exposed to improved agricultural techniques or markets, or indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities, may require more capacity-building support and follow up over longer time and such consideration needs to be reflected in the design, budgeting and planning.*

Response from Management: Agreed. In Cambodia IFAD has always been focussing on the poorest groups (ID1 and ID2) below US\$0.5 per day and per capita. In the subsequent projects (PADEE and ASPIRE) this scope has been extended to other categories of poor farmers below and above international poverty line of US\$1.25. So this recommendation is welcome to pursue that effort and serve the various type of groups with better identified activities to their respective needs and capacities. Additionally, in line with the country strategic opportunities programme (COSOP) priorities for targeting, two of the value chains under the new project Accelerated Integrated Markets for Smallholders Project (AIMS) are particularly relevant and accessible for indigenous households. Furthermore, disaggregated data will be collected to ensure monitoring of indigenous peoples participation in the project.

- **Ensure farmer training and agricultural advisory services are commensurate with farmers' resource and conditions and informed by market opportunities.** *It is important to critically assess whether there are sufficient enabling conditions for beneficiaries to take advantage of the technical support package. Such assessment should be context specific and inform the scope, content and approach for project interventions. For example, consideration might be needed on whether it is necessary to incorporate more support for improved access to inputs/means of production (e.g. access to water), or to adjust/adapt the technical package to reflect the prevailing*

¹ The Programme Management Department sent the IFAD Management's Response to the Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD on 5 October 2017.

conditions (e.g. taking into consideration labour shortage issue). Projects should also support enabling farmers to make "informed" decisions on agricultural productive activities taking into consideration key factors, such as costs and benefits, inputs/labour requirements, market opportunities.

Response from Management: Agreed. As for previous recommendation the country programme is pursuing the same strategy to adapt the offer of technological package and capacity-building based on the group characteristics. This has been detailed in the COSOP and appears in recently designed projects of ASPIRE (extension service) and AIMS (value chains).

- **Invest in capacity-building of farmer groups/organizations for their economic empowerment, including but not limited to agricultural cooperatives.** *While cooperatives play an important role in building social capital, they are foremost business entities and an instrument for farmers to enhance their productive activities and incomes. Support to cooperatives may include capacity-building to strengthen internal governance and leadership development, and should be based on the principles of cooperative development, such as voluntarism, independence and autonomy, democratic member control.*

Response from Management: Agreed. Cooperatives are fully part of the country programme. Difficulty sometimes arises from the fact that cooperatives are under different public departments and lack national entities. An interesting way forward is to establish more linkages with Farmers' Organisations, which regroup a huge number of cooperatives and are regularly invited by MEF and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) in coordination meetings. Under both ASPIRE and AIMS, farmer groups and cooperatives are being strengthened and provided capacity-building support in line with MAFF policy priorities. There are particular output and outcome targets on providing capacity-building support through AIMS to these groups/organizations.

- **Strengthen attention to nutrition in ongoing and future agricultural and rural development projects.** *Despite the economic growth, malnutrition is still a concern in Cambodia. Given some interesting experience in RULIP and the IFAD's renewed focus on nutrition in recent years, IFAD and the Government should explore opportunities to incorporate activities or adjust approach with a nutrition lens in ongoing or future interventions where feasible.*

Response from Management: Agreed. As mentioned above nutrition focus was introduced towards the end of the project with good results. Since 2013, IFAD has committed to making all new COSOPs and 33 percent of new projects nutrition sensitive. The current COSOP ends in mid-2018 and nutrition will be embedded in the new COSOP in consultation with the Government. This will also be reflected in future projects in the country (in line with the new COSOP) as relevant.

5. Management thanks IOE for the productive process and is committed to internalize lessons learned and outcomes of this exercise to further improve the performance of IFAD-funded programmes in Cambodia and elsewhere.

Kingdom of Cambodia

Rural Livelihoods Improvement Project in Kratie, Preah Vihear and Ratanakiri

Project Performance Evaluation

I. Evaluation objectives, methodology and process

1. **Background.** The Independent Office of Evaluation of IFAD (IOE) undertakes project performance evaluations (PPEs) for a number of selected completed projects.¹ The Rural Livelihoods Improvement Project in Kratie, Preah Vihear and Ratanakiri (RULIP) in the Kingdom of Cambodia was selected for a PPE based on a number of considerations, in particular to provide inputs to the country strategy and programme evaluation (CSPE) for the country undertaken in 2017.
2. **Objectives and focus.** The main objectives of the PPE are to: (i) assess the results of the project; (ii) generate findings and recommendations for the design and implementation of ongoing and future operations in the country; and (iii) provide project-level evidence that will feed into the CSPE. Amongst others, this PPE focused on selected key issues that emerged from desk review as follows: (a) targeting and working through groups of beneficiaries; (b) group revolving fund (GRF) and access to finance; and (c) roles of community-level extension service providers, effectiveness and sustainability of their service provision.
3. **Methodology.** The PPE follows the IFAD's Evaluation Policy,² the IFAD/IOE Evaluation Manual (second edition)³ and the Guidelines for Project Completion Validation and Project Performance Evaluation.⁴ It adopts a set of internationally recognized evaluation criteria (see annex IV) and a six-point rating system (annex I, footnote a). The evaluation was based on a desk review of available data and documents⁵ and a country mission for two weeks including field visits.
4. Data collection methods included desk-based research and review, interviews with various stakeholders and key informants (e.g. former project staff, project implementation agencies, service providers, sub-national government officials, village chiefs, IFAD staff), focus group discussions with agricultural cooperatives (ACs) and groups supported by the project (management and members), and direct observations (e.g. book keeping records, farming activities). The groups and sites for visits in the project areas were selected based on various considerations including the diversity of geographical areas (e.g. agro-ecological conditions, access to markets and services), inclusion of groups and ACs that were considered at the end of the project to have good prospect for continuing with the aim to examine the issue of sustainability, as well as inclusion of indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities. The database on the groups and ACs, which included some indicators on performance and maturity, was used as a reference to select groups/ACs. Given the time and resource constraints, no large-scale survey was undertaken.
5. **Process.** The PPE mission was undertaken from 27 February to 10 March 2017. At the start of the mission, meetings were held in Phnom Penh with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF), former RULIP project staff, and two

¹ The selection criteria for PPEs include: (i) synergies with forthcoming or ongoing IOE evaluations; (ii) novel approaches; (iii) major information gaps in PCRs; and (iv) geographic balance.

² <http://www.ifad.org/pub/policy/oe.pdf>.

³ http://www.ifad.org/evaluation/process_methodology/doc/manual.pdf.

⁴ http://www.ifad.org/evaluation/process_methodology/doc/pr_completion.pdf. See annex IV for an extract from the guidelines, "Methodological note on project performance assessments".

⁵ Including supervision mission reports, mid-term review report, project completion report, baseline survey, outcome surveys, impact evaluation, RULIP group database. See also annex XII for bibliography.

service providers engaged with RULIP.⁶ From 1 to 7 March 2017, the PPE team traveled in the project area and visited 13 communes in eight districts in the three project provinces. In the field, the team met with: the Provincial Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (PDAFF) and the Provincial Department of Women's Affairs (PDoWA) in each province,⁷ project beneficiaries primarily through groups formed under the project, (former) commune extension workers (CEWs), village animal health workers (VAHWs), commune councillors and village chiefs. In total, the team met with 19 groups/organizations of beneficiaries (mostly ACs) with varied levels of maturity, including five groups of ethnic minorities.

6. After the return from the field to Phnom Penh, the PPE team held additional meetings, including with the Ministry of Women's Affairs (MOWA) and IFAD country programme officer. A wrap-up meeting was held on 10 March 2017 at MAFF where the PPE team presented preliminary findings. A list of key people met is provided in annex V. Following the mission, further analysis of the data and findings was conducted to prepare the draft PPE report. The draft report was first subjected to a peer review within IOE. It was thereafter shared with IFAD's Asia and the Pacific Division and the Royal Government of Cambodia for comments. The comments provided were taken into consideration in the report finalization.
7. **Data availability and limitations.** Apart from basic and periodical project reports (e.g. design document, supervision mission reports, mid-term review report, project completion report, project status reports with self-assessment ratings), other sources of project-related data for performance assessment included the following: (i) baseline, mid-term and end-line household survey reports, covering the standard indicators in line with the IFAD's Results and Impact Management System (RIMS)⁸ as well as other additional indicators; (ii) impact evaluation carried out by the IFAD Strategy and Knowledge Department (SKD); (iii) annual outcome survey and participatory impact assessments carried out in the later part of the project; and (iv) database on the status of groups and cooperatives close to project completion. More details and comments on these data are provided in the sub-section on rural poverty impact (in section III.A.) and annex X.
8. Despite the availability of data from different surveys aimed at measuring outcomes and impact, the major limitation was the quality and reliability of the data given their inconsistencies and the uncertainty on the comparability of data collected at different times of the project period (baseline, mid-term and end-line), as well as the comparability of the treatment group and the control group. For this PPE, data and information from different sources were reviewed, analysed and triangulated, combined by the in-country work, to provide informed assessment of the project performance.

⁶ Agronomes et Vétérinaires Sans Frontières which provided support to train and follow up on village animal health workers (VAHWs) and VADDHANAK which provided training and monitoring on group revolving fund (GRF) operations.

⁷ In this report, the acronyms PDAFF and PDoWA are used to indicate provincial departments in all three provinces, unless otherwise specified.

⁸ In 2003, IFAD established the Results and Impact Management System (RIMS) to measure and report on three levels of results (activities and outputs, outcomes, and impact) based on common standard indicators. For the impact level, a standard questionnaire for household-level survey was developed to capture data on household living standards and child malnutrition was also a mandatory indicator to be reported on, whether through anthropometric measurement to be conducted specifically for the project or existing data.

II. The project

A. Project context

9. The RULIP was designed during 2005 and 2006. The estimated poverty rates in Cambodia in 2004 and 2007 were 53.2 and 50.1 per cent, respectively. Close to 90 per cent of the poor were found in rural areas (89.3 in 2004, 92.3 per cent in 2007).⁹ In 2007, per capita gross national income in Cambodia was US\$590, with Myanmar being the only country in Southeast Asia with a figure lower than Cambodia (at US\$350).¹⁰
10. The causes of poverty noted in the RULIP design document included remoteness, lack of access to sufficient land and/or draught animals and other productive assets, shortage of labour for farming, lack of income earning opportunities, and lack of access to health and education services. Agriculture was characterized by low productivity (comparably lower than other neighbouring countries)¹¹ and heavy reliance on rice (some 90 per cent of the total planted area under rice). It was indicated that low agricultural productivity was due to low levels of technology, poor soils and climate events like floods and droughts.
11. In the above context and reflecting the experience in previous IFAD-financed projects, RULIP was conceived with a focus on "improving food security of the poor and promoting agricultural diversification and market oriented agricultural development"¹² to be supported mainly by agricultural extension services and GRF, to be implemented largely through a decentralized approach, thereby also contributing to the advancement of the government policy on "decentralization and deconcentration".
12. It is important to underline a couple of contextual issues as background information for the evaluation. First, the country achieved impressive economic growth and made progress in terms of poverty reduction over the decade preceding the project completion: the poverty rate in the country fell to 13.5 per cent in 2014, although so-called "near poor" (above the poverty line but still vulnerable) increased. Second, the services of microfinance institutions (MFIs) in rural areas increased dramatically during the project period. Third, the government workforce in agricultural extension was and is still extremely limited. In 2011 on average there was over one extension worker per district.¹³ In practice, there have been many commune extension workers (CEWs), village extension workers (VEWs) and VAHWs as field-level extension agents, but their presence has been almost entirely dependent on externally funded initiatives and this situation has not changed over the project period.
13. In relation to the last point, IFAD is currently financing the Agricultural Services Programme for Innovations, Resilience and Extension (ASPIRE) approved in December 2014 to run till 2021. The project is designed to prepare the way for a programme-based approach in the extension sub-sector and is expected to support strengthening of extension services nationwide. It is implemented initially in five pilot provinces (including two RULIP provinces, Kratie and Preah Vihear) to be expanded later. The intention is that by the end of the programme "the Cambodian Model for Extension Services" is ready to be rolled out to all provinces. As noted in later sections, a number of "sustainability" issues in RULIP have been forwarded to ASPIRE especially for the two project provinces, Kratie and Preah Vihear.
14. **Project area.** The project covered three provinces (out of 24 provinces in the country), Kratie, Preah Vihear and Ratanakiri located in the northeast of Cambodia.

⁹ World Bank 2014. Where Have All The Poor Gone? Cambodia Poverty Assessment 2013.

¹⁰ Other countries include: Lao PDR US\$620, Viet Nam US\$850.

¹¹ For example, the average rice yield in Cambodia was about 2.0 t/ha, compared to 2.6 t/ha in Thailand, 4.6 t/ha in Viet Nam and 6.3 t/ha in China according to the RULIP appraisal report.

¹² RULIP appraisal report, financing agreement.

¹³ ASPIRE design report, working paper 3.

The three provinces comprised 21 districts, 144 communes and 698 villages. Based on the 2004 commune database,¹⁴ the total population of the three provinces was 551,403, with 90 per cent living in rural areas. It was reported that all three provinces had indigenous ethnic minority groups, but with a notably high proportion in Ratanakiri (68 per cent of the population). The commune database¹⁵ shows the poverty rates in 2007 of 41.5 per cent in Kratie (6th highest among all the provinces), 45.7 per cent in Preah Vihear (the highest in the country) and 45 per cent in Ratanakiri (second highest).¹⁶

15. **Target group and targeting approach.** The target group was to cover four particularly disadvantaged subgroups: (i) poor households with little land; (ii) landless households; (iii) woman-headed households with young children and many dependents; and (iv) indigenous/ethnic minority households. Geographical targeting was done in a cascaded manner based on the poverty level and other considerations: selection of districts within the three provinces (16 out of 21) based on poverty level while excluding the districts with less than five poor communes "for cost effectiveness";¹⁷ selection of poor communes (84 out of 106 in the selected 16 districts); and then selection of villages. Within the selected communes, the project was to target: (a) poorer villages where there is potential for increased income generation and better natural resource management; and (b) ethnic minority communities. Villages would be identified based on available data, field visits and consultation with the commune councils. The project was then to use a community-based targeting approach within the selected villages, facilitated by CEWs and overseen by village elders. It was initially planned that about 22,600 poor households or 38 per cent of the population of the targeted 16 districts would directly benefit.¹⁸
16. **Project goal, objectives and components.** Under the overall goal to improve the livelihoods of the rural poor in the project area, the project objective was "to make a positive and sustainable impact on agricultural development"¹⁹ in the targeted communes. The expected project outputs²⁰ were provided as follows: (i) farmers and communities adapt improved and sustainable farming and agricultural land management systems; (ii) improved services are delivered to the poor in a participatory and demand-driven manner; and (iii) increased capacity for policy analysis and pro-poor policy formulation is secured for the agricultural sector and for mainstreaming gender within the sector.
17. The project design comprised two components: (i) livelihoods improvement, including support for group formation, GRF and introduction of improved agricultural technologies; and (ii) support for decentralization and deconcentration in agriculture, involving support for project implementation and coordination at national, provincial and district levels, as well as gender mainstreaming. According to the appraisal report, the first component was to apply "the approach used successfully" by IFAD-financed Agricultural Development Support to Seila Project (ADESS) and Rural Poverty Reduction Project in Prey Veng and Svay Rieng (RPRP), but adapt it for the upland areas and in ethnic minority communities.

¹⁴ According to the Commune Database Online (accessed December 2016), the population in the three provinces in 2007 was 605,114 and 673,727 in 2010.

¹⁵ Ministry of Planning. 2012. Poverty Reduction by Capital, Provinces, Municipalities, Districts, Khans and Communes, Sangkats: Based on Commune Data Base, year 2004-2012.

¹⁶ The poverty rates in 2011 were reported as: 32.6 per cent for Kratie, 37 per cent for Preah Vihear and 36.2 per cent in Ratanakiri.

¹⁷ RULIP appraisal report.

¹⁸ The appraisal report provided the target of 22,600 households as direct beneficiaries and 11,300 as indirect beneficiaries, with a total of 33,900 households. At the same time, the financing agreement stated that "the main purpose of the project is to assist approximately 60,000 poor households in the project area achieve a sustainable impact on agricultural development". The reason for this discrepancy and the basis of 60,000 is not clear from the document review.

¹⁹ RULIP president's report, April 2007.

²⁰ According to the financing agreement and the logical framework in the RULIP president's report.

18. **RULIP theory of change.** The reconstructed underlying theory of change narrative for RULIP is that capacity-building of targeted poor households and the provision of demand driven and improved extension services, combined with the provision of start-up capital and setting up of GRF would enable farming households to access agricultural inputs and adopt improved sustainable agricultural production practices, which would lead to improved agricultural production and productivity. Annex VIII contains a schematic presentation of the reconstructed theory of change with some comments.

B. Project implementation

19. **Timeframe.** IFAD financing was approved on 18 April 2007 and declared effective on 31 August 2007. The project was completed on 30 September 2014 and the financing was closed on 31 March 2015 as scheduled.
20. **Project financing.** The project cost was initially estimated as US\$11.51 million, including an IFAD grant (under debt sustainability framework, DSF) equivalent to US\$9.52 million. After the mid-term review (MTR), the original IFAD grant was reallocated between the financing categories, and furthermore, supplementary financing (a loan and a DSF grant equivalent to US\$1.25 million each)²¹ was approved by the IFAD Executive Board in December 2011.²² Actual total project cost was US\$13.64 million (97 per cent of the revised cost), and the disbursement rate of the combined IFAD financing was 96 per cent.²³

Table 1

Project financing: original estimate, revised and actual cost (US\$ million)

	<i>Original</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>With IFAD supplementary financing</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>Actual cost</i>	<i>%</i>
IFAD	9.52 ^a	82.6	12.02 ^b	85.7	11.99	87.9
Government	0.71	6.2	0.71	5.1	0.49	3.6
United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)	1.29 ^c	11.2	1.29	9.2	1.16	8.5
TOTAL	11.52	100	14.02	100	13.64	100

^a SDR\$6.4 million in grant.

^b With supplementary financing of SDR1.7 million (equivalent to US\$2.5 million), 50 per cent grant, 50 per cent loan.

^c UNDP was to finance "learning communities" sub-component and technical assistance.

21. Table 2 shows actual expenditure by component. The main spending sub-components were agricultural support services (38 per cent) and livelihoods improvement groups through the provision of inputs and funds and training.

²¹ It was no longer 100 per cent grant because that the DSF status of the Kingdom of Cambodia changed from "red" to "yellow" after the approval of the original grant.

²² The rationale for supplementary financing presented in the president's report (EB 2011/104/R.20/Rev.1) included high disbursement performance at that time due to, among other factors: "the exceptionally high inflation rates early in the project (25 per cent in 2008); the inclusion of additional, and originally foreseen, support to assist the most vulnerable households in target villages; the non-delivery by UNDP of the level of support for agricultural technical assistance originally envisaged under the Government's Project in support of Democratic Development through Decentralization and De-concentration; and increases in staff numbers above appraisal levels".

²³ The disbursement rate of the original loan was almost 100 per cent, but that for the grant and the loan under the supplementary financing was 82 per cent for both.

Table 2

Actual project expenditure by component as of 31 March 2015 (except for UNDP portion)

Use of fund by component and sub-component	Accumulated payment 2007-2015			%
	IFAD	RGC	Total	
A. Livelihoods Improvement	9 649 815	415 428	10 065 243	81
1. Livelihood improvement groups	2 578 181	-	2 578 181	21
2. Farming system improvement	800 164	-	800 164	6
3. Complementary support	1 174 362	-	1 174 362	9
4. Law awareness	92 722	-	92 722	1
5. Agriculture support services (PDAFF & ExCom)	4 328 939	399 429	4 728 368	38
6. Gender mainstreaming	675 446	15 999	691 445	6
B. Support for decentralization and deconcentration	2 335 989	77 915	2 413 904	19
1. Support for Provincial Agriculture Investment Programme (MAFF Project Support Unit [PSU], Min of Economy and Finance)	1 576 642	69 684	1 646 327	13
2. Support for policy analysis (PSU)	409 999	3 006	413 005	3
3. Support for gender mainstreaming in agriculture	349 347	5 225	354 572	3
Grand Total	11 985 803	493 343	12 479 147	100

Source: MAFF PSU.

22. **Implementation arrangements.** The MAFF²⁴ was the lead project agency and the project support unit (PSU) which had been established for the former IFAD-financed ADESS was responsible for coordinating and supporting the implementation in project provinces, coordinating and managing budgeting, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), reporting, as well as fiduciary aspects including financial management and procurement. The MOWA was another key implementing partner.
23. The implementation of the livelihoods improvement component was largely decentralized, with the PDAFF in each province leading the implementation in collaboration with the PDoWA. In project design, at the provincial level, the Executive Committee (commonly referred to as "ExCom") of the Provincial Rural Development Committee and their management units were to coordinate project implementation, but this mechanism ceased to exist during the project life.²⁵ Provincial support teams and district support teams were formed with staff from PDAFF and PDoWA in each province and district to work on the project.
24. CEWs were contracted to facilitate project activities at commune and village levels.²⁶ Some non-governmental organizations (NGOs) were contracted as service providers, namely VADDHANAK to assist and train GRF groups, and Agronomes et Vétérinaires Sans Frontières to support capacity-building of VAHWs, as well as livestock training for farmers. RULIP also collaborated with the "Programme for Linking Smallholder Livelihoods of Poor Smallholder Farmers to Emerging Environmentally Progressive Agro-Industrial Market" (also known as "the Food,

²⁴ At the time of the design, it was Ministry of Agriculture (MOA) but it was merged with forestry and fisheries during the project period. Consequently, the Provincial Department of Agriculture (PDA) also changed to the Provincial Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (PDAFF).

²⁵ The Provincial Rural Development Committee and its "ExCom" were phased out in 2011 and the project coordination and management responsibilities at sub-national level were transferred to the Provincial Administration (MTR 2011).

²⁶ According to the lessons learnt from ADESS, CBRDP and RPRP, "the CEW is not seen as a permanent staff member, but rather as direct hire staff with a specific role and time period – temporary change agent" with two main roles, as a facilitator with the ability to increase the capacity and confidence of poor families to take responsibility for their own future development, and as an extension agent with good general technical skills and excellent ability to communicate and transfer knowledge and technology. (RULIP appraisal report).

Feed, Fuel, and Fibre for a Greener Future Project", 4FGF) financed by an IFAD regional grant to the International Centre for Tropical Agriculture.²⁷

25. **Amendment to financing agreement.** It was initially proposed that the United Nations Office for Project Services would be responsible for administering the financing and supervising the project. However, soon after the approval, with an overall corporate shift to direct supervision, it was decided that IFAD would take up the supervision responsibilities. This necessitated the first amendment to the financing agreement (July 2008). The second amendment referred to original grant reallocation and the integration of additional financing (June 2012).
26. **Adjustments during implementation.** At the beginning of the project, an additional type of beneficiaries' group was introduced, "most vulnerable family groups (MVFGs)", in addition to two types of groups provided for in the design, namely livelihood improvement groups (LIGs) and farming systems improvement groups (FSIGs). This addition was intended to enhance the project outreach to the poorest farming households following the 2008 food crisis.
27. Some further adjustments mainly following the MTR recommendations included: (i) reduction of the targeted number of households (direct beneficiaries) from 22,600 to 14,800, based on what had already been achieved at that time with no more new groups to be formed; and (ii) discontinuation of what was considered to be "non-core activities" for better project focus, such as young farmers clubs, women's groups, law awareness, etc. The MTR also revised the logical framework – in terms of structuring of logical hierarchy, narratives and targets.
28. **Targeting and outreach.** Targeting within selected villages was predominantly through group formation processes facilitated by CEWs in collaboration with local authorities. Group formation started with project orientation followed by wealth ranking and validation through house to house visits. ID poor list²⁸ was also used where it existed. Wealth ranking was carried out using agreed livelihood levels divided into categories: very poor, poor, medium, and rich, based on visible indicators of living standards such as land, housing, transport, animals, agricultural equipment. Very poor households were prioritized for MVFGs, poor for LIGs and medium poor for FSIGs. Membership in each LIG/FSIG was set between 20-25, and 10-15 for MVFG.
29. The project completion report (PCR) reported that 15,669 households benefitted directly from the project, most of whom (14,894 households) through participation in various self-help groups (see table 3), including 2,194 female headed households and 6,369 ethnic minority households. In addition to group members, the reported beneficiaries also included village/community-level service providers, namely 681 VAHWs/CEWs and 94 integrated pest management trainers. The reported number of households directly reached surpassed the target revised at MTR (14,800, see paragraph 27) but was 65 per cent of the original appraisal target (22,600).

²⁷ The programme ran between 2009 and 2013 and covered Cambodia, Lao Peoples Democratic Republic and Viet Nam. In Cambodia, the activities included on-farm trials and demonstrations, training of extension workers and farmers (in Kratie and Ratanakiri) in association with RULIP. The activities and outputs in Cambodia (mostly in Kratie) included: eight on-farm crop and cropping systems trials; three farmer field days; six training courses on crop production for 101 trainees; a training of trainers course on using cassava roots and leaves to feed livestock for extensionists working with the RULIP project in Kratie and Ratanakiri.

²⁸ The Identification of Poor Household programme (IDPoor programme) was established in 2006 under the Ministry of Planning to provide a nation-wide standardised mechanism for identifying poor households. Ten rounds of surveys have been conducted since 2007. Every round, it covers about one third of the country (about 6,000 villages) and the information on poor households in all administrative areas is updated every three years. It tracks the poverty status of households through a scoring system. ID poor status has been used for targeting in some IFAD-financed projects.

Table 3

RULIP geographical coverage and outreach through groups formed by province

	<i>Kratie</i>	<i>Preah Vihear</i>	<i>Ratanakiri</i>	<i>Total</i>
District covered / total number of districts	3 / 5	7 / 7	6 / 7	16 / 19
Communes covered / total number of communes in selected districts	18 / 30	36 / 49	30 / 41	84 / 120
Village covered / total villages in selected communes	81 / 208	117 / 160	101 / 183	299 / 551
LIGs: number households (number groups)	2 094 (90)	3 700 (148)	2 940 (120)	8.734 (358) (1.376 FHHs)
MVFGs: number households (number groups)	106 (8)	450 (30)	136 (10)	692 (48) (206 FHHs)
LIGs + MVFGs: number of households (number of groups)	2 200 (98)	4 150 (178)	3 076 (130)	9 426 (406)
FSIGs: number households (number groups)	1 554 (66)	2 250 (90)	1 664 (72)	5 468 (228) (609 FHHs)
Number of households in all types of groups	3 754	6 400	4 740	14 894
Number of households: ethnic minorities				6 369

FHH: female-headed households.

Source: RULIP PCR and project completion workshop report.

30. **Component 1: Livelihoods improvement.** The structure of this component was unclear and inconsistent between different project documents. Some activities were discontinued after MTR. The description below covers key activities and outputs.
31. *LIGs and MVFGs.* LIGs and MVFGs were formed and provided with various training (e.g. agricultural techniques, group development, book keeping), material and cash grant support. GRF was to be established with repayments for agricultural inputs provided by the project and a cash grant of US\$20 per family, but in-kind support was discontinued around 2010, leaving only cash contribution (over US\$100 per household), based on the realization that the standardized package of agricultural inputs was not appropriate for all farmers.²⁹ Initially, the project also supported rice banks, financing the construction and providing rice.
32. Main agricultural commodities covered in the agricultural training included rice, chicken, vegetable, pig and cassava. Most of the "improved agricultural technologies (or techniques)" covered in the training were not something particularly new or advanced, but relatively simple and basic good production practices, which however Cambodian farmers had not been sufficiently exposed to. These include, for example, housing and better feeding for chicken, animal vaccination, making and use of composts, improved seeds, proper fertilizer application and weeding, etc. For rice, the training generally followed the methods under the system for rice intensification, known as SRI.³⁰
33. In total, 406 GRFs were established with 358 LIGs and 48 MVFGs. Close to project completion, 70 per cent of them were assessed as "mature" and 30 per cent as weak and failed.³¹ The performance varied widely between the provinces (table 4).

²⁹ For example, reflected in the 2009 supervision mission report, which started discussing this issue.

³⁰ The system of rice intensification is a climate-smart, agro-ecological methodology for increasing the productivity of rice and more recently other crops changing the management of plants, soil, water and nutrients. The SRI methodology is based on four main principles: (i) early, quick and healthy plant establishment; (ii) reduced plant density; (iii) improved soil conditions through enrichment with organic matter; and (iv) reduced and controlled water application. (Source: Cornell University, <http://sri.ciifad.cornell.edu/aboutsri/methods/index.html>).

³¹ RULIP PCR. The maturity assessment criteria included the following: (i) good group governance; (ii) good GRF loan management with at least 95 per cent repayment rate; (iii) savings generation; and (iv) increased capital based on plan.

Poor performance in Ratanakiri (and to less extent in Kratie) was mainly attributed to "serious issues with the original group mobilization process and GRF set-up".³²

Table 4

GRF group status summary by province reported in RULIP PCR

Province	GRF groups (LIGs + MVFGs)	Mature and/or merged into ACs		Weak/failed (i.e. unlikely to continue)		AC formed
	Number	Number	%	Number	%	Number
Kratie	98	72	73	26	27	31
Preah Vihear	178	172	97	6	3	36
Ratanakiri	130	39	30	91	70	25
Total	406	283	70	123	30	92

Source: RULIP PCR (The report is dated 2014 but it does not specify the date for the data above).

34. As a sustainability measure, the latter part of the project focused on assisting the GRF groups to become ACs. 246 groups out of 283 assessed as "mature" were transformed to 92 ACs, and the other 37 were expected to continue as they were. Merging of multiple groups into ACs of larger memberships (also involving self-help groups supported by other initiatives in some cases, e.g. groups supported by the World Vision) occurred almost exclusively in Preah Vihear. In Ratanakiri and Kratie, there was hardly any merging, and in most cases, each LIG or MVFG became an AC of the same very small membership.³³ AC formation was most likely also driven by the enactment of the new law on agricultural cooperative in 2013. Upon conversion to ACs, the GRF capital was apportioned as shares to the group members.
35. *FSIGs*. By MTR, 228 FSIGs had been formed with 5,468 members who received training using the farmer field school approach (running for 20 weeks) and 953 demonstrations organized on farmers' fields.³⁴ The MTR noted that expected linkages between FSIGs and LIGs/MVFGs for technology transfer did not develop, except for visits by the latter members to demonstrations at the FSIG members' farms. Moreover, without a GRF or other activities which would require collective actions, FSIGs did not sustain themselves as groups.³⁵ Consequently, after MTR, project support targeted at FSIGs as such was discontinued. In some cases, these groups or their members were merged with the ACs in their respective communes.
36. *Agricultural support services*. A total of 94 integrated pest management trainers (34 per cent women) were trained to facilitate the farmer field school training to farmers and to organize field days. The CEWs were tasked to monitor and follow up on households after the farmer field school training. A total of 168 CEWs (50 per cent women) were recruited and trained.
37. RULIP supported capacity-building of existing (164) and new (88) VAHWs and also piloted district level VAHWs associations, three in Kratie and Ratanakiri. The associations were to provide technical information, business and technical training, and veterinary supplies to members. The MTR noted that the associations were too weak to take up support functions for VAHWs. No VAHW associations were formed post MTR and there is little information in the PCR related to this activity.
38. The project aimed to establish "a sustainable VEW system in each village". By MTR, 112 VEWs (24 per cent women) had been selected and trained. The initial design

³² RULIP PCR.

³³ The Law on Agricultural Cooperative sets the minimum membership as 15.

³⁴ The FSIG training model consisted of: (i) one farmer field school training during the first year; (ii) one field day at the end of farmer field school training; (iii) selection of 3-4 members as demonstrators who would be provided with cash inputs during the first year and were expected to continue the demonstrations on their own; and (iv) monitoring and technical guidance by CEWs and district support teams.

³⁵ RULIP MTR.

envisaged that VEWs, two in each village (one man, one woman) acting as volunteers, would eventually take over the responsibilities of CEWs beyond the project after working closely with the CEWs. But at MTR, this had not been initiated because of the lower capacity of the VEWs and a lack of incentive for them to remain active. But in some cases, VAHWs were transformed into VEWs.

39. Under the heading of "agricultural support services", the project also financed the construction or renovation of some PDAFF and District Agriculture Office buildings. There is no information on this investment in the PCR.
40. Support to commune level planning and monitoring. The design also included support to commune councils for participatory commune planning processes, incorporating project activities into commune investment plans and monitoring development activities. The project worked with commune council focal points for agriculture and for women and children. The MTR noted that these focal points were generally committed to working with CEWs but that the integration of the RULIP activities into commune investment plans had hardly materialized because of very limited funds to support the commune investment plans. In the latter part of the project, the role of commune council focal points for agriculture focused on performing annual social audit or public hearing on GRF activities and other support activities. By project completion, social auditing was done in all communes in Preah Vihear and still to be conducted in Kratie and Ratanakiri.
41. Gender mainstreaming. Main activities supported by PDoWA included gender analysis, training of gender trainers, gender awareness training to beneficiaries' groups and gender impact monitoring. The PCR did not elaborate the outputs in this area, but the MTR showed that the project had met many of the appraisal targets, in particular, the recruitment and training of female staff for provincial and district support teams, CEWs and gender trainings organized by PDoWA staff. As for the latter, by MTR, 29 gender trainings had been organized against 12 planned. Key project staff and service providers at all levels were trained in gender concepts and analysis, as well as practical application of gender mainstreaming under RULIP.
42. Following the MTR recommendation, the project also introduced cooking competitions among mothers and women in local communities, with the winners in each competition going on to become "champion mothers" who were mobilised to provide mother-to-mother promotion of good nutrition practices for young children.
43. **Component 2: Support for decentralization and deconcentration in agriculture.** According to the original design, the component included the following activities: (i) support for provincial agriculture investment programme (support for project implementation and coordination at different levels - national, provincial, district and commune) and policy analysis; (ii) support for gender mainstreaming in agriculture; and (iii) learning communities (which was to be fully financed by UNDP at the cost of US\$360,000). The PCR does not provide detailed description on the activities and achievements under this component. The information gathered is provided below.
44. Support for provincial agriculture investment programme. According to the detailed project cost table at design, most of the cost under this sub-component was for the MAFF PSU and at national level, and none or little at provincial level. Policy analysis support under this heading was intended to assist pro-poor policy formulation.³⁶ Activities foreseen included studies, documentation and knowledge sharing, preparation of policy papers, capacity-building of MAFF and the sourcing of technical assistance, but many of these were not implemented. The main output by

³⁶ The topics identified in the design included the following: policy for decentralised planning, financing and implementation, decentralised agricultural development, rural poverty reduction, piloting of alternative service delivery arrangements, deconcentration of agency functions in the agriculture sector to commune councils, participatory approaches, institutional development and approaches to gender analysis and mainstreaming in agriculture.

the MTR was the documentation of lessons learned³⁷ in six booklets which were also translated into Khmer, rather than support to policy formulation *per se*. After the MTR, the focus was placed on dissemination of information and lessons and on strengthening of the M&E systems with some activities under the newly introduced heading "studies and reviews". These activities included annual outcome survey and participatory impact assessments.

45. Gender mainstreaming in agriculture sector. Activities and outputs mainly at national level under MOWA's leadership included: (i) testing and use of the gender mainstreaming flipchart; (ii) organizing inter-project workshop to accelerate the effectiveness of gender mainstreaming in RULIP (as well as in RPRP); and (iii) conduct of the gender impact assessment as part of annual outcome survey and participatory impact assessments. Technical support for strengthening the gender focal points and provincial staff for gender mainstreaming concepts, gender analysis, and the use of gender flip chart were provided by MOWA, which also supported its provincial counterparts in testing innovative approaches for improving childhood nutrition practices.
46. Learning Communities were planned to be developed in six pilot communes in three provinces under the Learning Community Development Project funded by UNDP. The RULIP MTR noted that since "this sub-component was implemented and financed by UNDP, mainstreaming it into RULIP and other IFAD projects in Cambodia has not been feasible due to lack of funds in 2011" and that the learning community approach was perceived as complex by staff and that ownership among project implementers was low. Consequently, the MTR recommended no further follow-up on this activity in the remainder of the project period. There is no information on this activity in the PCR.

Key points

- RULIP was designed during 2005 and 2006 with the project objective "to make a positive and sustainable impact on agricultural development" and with two components: (i) livelihoods improvement, including support for group formation, GRF and introduction of improved agricultural technologies; and (ii) support for decentralization and deconcentration in agriculture. PDAFF and PDoWA in each province played a major role in implementation, through provincial and district support teams.
- The project's targeting strategy combined geographical targeting (selection of poor provinces, districts, communes and villages) and social targeting (wealth ranking exercise and identification of the poor within selected villages).
- The number of targeted (direct) beneficiaries (households) was revised downward from 22,600 to 14,800 at MTR, based on what had already been achieved by then. The reported actual number beneficiaries was 15,669, including 14,894 through various groups and the rest village/community-level service providers (e.g. VAHWs, CEWs).
- The predominant channel to provide services to beneficiaries was through groups formed. According to the poverty status, identified households were organized into three types of groups: MVFGs, LIGs and FSIGs with total of 634 groups. 406 groups (358 LIGs and 48 MVFGs) were supported to establish GRFs.
- At project completion, about 283 out of 406 GRF groups were assessed as mature. As a sustainability measure, 246 of them were transformed into 92 ACs, while the remaining groups were to continue as they were.
- The project had supplementary financing by IFAD additional to the original DSF grant. The disbursement rate of the IFAD financing was 96 per cent. Major expenditure items were farmer training, in-kind and cash grants to groups and support services.

³⁷ In the areas of targeting, group formation, training of beneficiaries, service delivery, gender mainstreaming and GRF.

III. Main evaluation findings

A. Project performance and rural poverty impact

Relevance

47. The assessment of relevance looks at the extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, institutional priorities and partner and donor policies. It also entails an assessment of project design and coherence in achieving its objectives.
48. **Relevance of objectives. The project objectives were largely aligned with the government policies and priorities** for poverty reduction, agricultural development and natural resource management and decentralization. The National Strategic Development Plan 2006-2010 emphasized poverty reduction and progress towards achieving the targets of the Cambodian Millennium Development Goals by 2015 as the highest priority. With poverty being largely a rural phenomenon, growth in the agricultural and rural sectors were seen as key to poverty reduction. RULIP was designed to support this by specifically targeting poor rural communes, including remote areas and areas inhabited by indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities.
49. The Government's Strategic Framework for Decentralization and De-concentration Reforms (2005), which envisaged shifting of responsibilities for managing development at provincial and district administrations, provided an institutional framework through which the project was to target poor rural communities and support pro-poor initiatives, thereby assisting in transformative process.
50. The project objectives were also coherent with the IFAD strategic frameworks of 2002-2006 and 2007-2010, as well as the country strategies (1998 and 2008), with a focus on areas with high poverty rates, the rural poor and marginalised groups - and growth of the rural economy. Of the six strategic objectives of the 2007-10 strategic framework, the project objectives were particularly relevant to improved agricultural technologies and effective production services, and local and national policy and programming processes.
51. **Relevance of design.** The three broad areas of project support, i.e. agricultural training, revolving fund, support for decentralization and deconcentration, were overall relevant, although flawed by some shortcomings and over-assumptions as discussed in the following paragraphs. The targeting approach, using both geographical and social targeting (use of government list of poor households and wealth ranking exercises), was relevant for the poverty focus. On the other hand, the target group definition in the design (paragraph 15), referring to the landless and those with little land, was not entirely accurate or appropriate: the project covered poor households with more than "little land", and the training on crops such as rice or cassava would have been a mismatch for the landless and those with little land.
52. **There were shortcomings in the project approach to group formation.** First, there was lack of clarity on the purpose and role of beneficiaries' groups³⁸ within and/or beyond the project, i.e. whether it was to facilitate project service delivery (e.g. training), to encourage them to be self-reliant savings and credit groups (remaining small or growing in size), or to develop these groups to collectively engage in enterprise activities. This lack of clarity at onset also affected the effectiveness and sustainability of benefits as discussed in later sections.
53. Secondly, the approach to group formation – by design and in implementation – was rigid. The group size was fixed (20-25 members for LIGs and 10-15 for

³⁸ The PCR also commented on "the confused role" of GRF groups - serving as both savings and credit groups as well as groups for farmer training, with a fixed membership.

MVFGs), most likely in order to keep it manageable for training.³⁹ Group formation relied primarily on wealth ranking exercise and based on poverty level, identifying targeted households to be put into different types of groups introduced by the project: i.e. poorest households in MVFGs, poor households in LIGs and medium households in FSIGs. Lack of consideration for shared common interest in grouping for technology training influenced adoption rates. The rigid group configuration weakened the foundation for long-term group development, including for cooperatives.

54. **The project design did not integrate savings as an important component in establishing GRF from the onset.** Materials and financial incentives were to come first, with savings to be introduced later when group members "start to produce a surplus".⁴⁰ This is despite the fact that at the time of project design, the importance of integrating savings - however small the amount might be - in the community-based lending model had already been well-recognized internationally.⁴¹ A more recent study commissioned by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations⁴² also reiterated that where the creation of internal funds for lending was driven by outside grants, the prospects of sustainability of such grants converted into a loan fund remain low in the absence of a regular savings practice.
55. **Many aspects of the approach for farmer training and extension services were not appropriate especially in the initial years.** Despite the emphasis on "demand-driven" services in the project design and reasonably detailed situation analysis (e.g. by different agro-ecological conditions, Khmer and indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities) in a working paper of the appraisal report, the approach was largely based on standard packages. The design acknowledged the need for a differentiated approach for indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities and for the upland areas but rather in a cursory manner.
56. **There was an implicit assumption that conditions for trained farmers to apply improved agricultural techniques existed, but this was an over assumption in majority of cases.** As shown in the reconstructed theory of change (annex VIII), it was assumed that when provided with (presumably) demand-driven training and extension services and access to loan funds, farmers would have sufficient means of production, skills and motivation, thereby adopting improved agricultural technologies. It was also assumed that poor farmers would have ample time to attend training, which was not necessarily the case. Furthermore, not all areas covered by the project and rural communities have access to roads and markets or reliable water source, especially remote communes and villages such as in Ratanakiri. The project design assumed that investment in new or improved rural infrastructure would be undertaken by other donors.⁴³ These assumptions, mostly implicit, were in many cases not valid.
57. **Support to decentralization and deconcentration and decentralized implementation arrangements were relevant.** By following the government systems and procedures for decentralized development planning, financing and

³⁹ RULIP PCR also noted, with reference to the relevance of design, "the size 25 members per group seems to have been driven by setting an optimum size for the delivery of supply driven training".

⁴⁰ RULIP appraisal report.

⁴¹ For example, CGAP's 2006 brief noted that while recognizing promising results of community-managed loan funds and savings-based groups in remote or sparsely populated areas, financing them with external capital at the outset (e.g. revolving loan funds) would often lead to poor repayment rates and the collapse of the fund (CGAP 2006).

⁴² Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (2015). Community-based finance in Cambodia: A comparative study of savings and credit models for community development (2015) by Michael Marx and Vong Chhim Vannak.

⁴³ RULIP appraisal report (2007): "the project will not include investment in rural infrastructure, because the resources available from IFAD are relatively small, the infrastructure investments required in the project area are being met by others and inter-sector coordination during project implementation would be problematic" (paragraph 150); "Where infrastructure investment is needed e.g. for water supply or there are opportunities for social land concessions to address the issue of landlessness, the CEW and district/provincial support team will assist the commune councils to prepare a proposal which can be included in the commune investment plan (paragraph 176).

implementation, RULIP was to help strengthen the role of sub-national administrations for managing development through the delivery of extension services and gender mainstreaming in the rural development sector. The implementation arrangements also enabled PDAFF and PDoWA to take responsibilities, but accountability for results at provincial levels was hampered by their lack of control over budget and resource allocation.

58. **The policy-related objective⁴⁴ around the second project component was not realistic**, given the small planned and actual investment in this area. The indicators in the logical framework – both in the original and revised versions – were also not very meaningful.⁴⁵
59. **In summary**, based on the relevance of the objectives but some important weaknesses in design and initial implementation approach, relevance is rated **moderately satisfactory (4)**. IFAD's self-rating of "satisfactory" does not reflect the PCR narrative, which is generally positive but also acknowledges some design shortcomings and raises issues on some of the core project approaches on the delivery of agricultural training activities and GRF group mobilization.

Effectiveness

60. Effectiveness is assessed by examining to what extent the intended project objectives were achieved at the time of the evaluation. The logical framework was revised at the MTR including the narrative for "outputs" or component objectives (see annex VII), but the key elements of the objectives/outcomes remained the same. Consequently, for effectiveness assessment, the expected "project outputs" as stated in the original design are used as a main reference. Given that these "outputs" involved changes in skills, capacity and behaviour and for a medium-term, they are termed as "outcomes" hereunder.
61. **Outcome 1: Farmers and communities adopt improved and sustainable farming and agricultural land management systems.** Increased farm productivity and income was largely expected from adoption of improved agricultural technologies and practices introduced by the project. As shown in the theory of change (annex VIII), some critical assumptions underpinned the achievement of this outcome: (i) agricultural technologies promoted are effective; (ii) farmers acquire the knowledge and skills through training and have resources to put them into practice; and (iii) access to credit for productive purposes improves through GRF.
62. **Adoption rates of agricultural technologies are likely to have been lower than the expected⁴⁶ and lower than reported in the PCR.** The farmers met during the PPE field visits reported that they had attended farmer field school mainly on chicken raising, rice and vegetable production. There are inconsistencies in the data on adoption rates from different sources. The participatory impact assessment conducted by the project in 2012 and 2013 (which results were used in the PCR) reported higher adoption rates than the end-line survey data, while the end-line survey report on the other hand also provided misleading low figures based on incorrect calculation.⁴⁷ The focus group discussions by the PPE team,

⁴⁴ The revised logical framework phrased the objective of the second component as follows: "increase the national capacity for pro-poor policy analysis and pro-poor policy formulation for the agricultural sector, and for mainstreaming gender within the sector, while improving the capacities of community members to influence this process".

⁴⁵ The indicators in the revised logical framework include: "number of practices/lessons from RULIP incorporated in future project designs/policies by those attending Policy Guidance and Technical meetings at which RULIP experiences are shared"; and "number, quality and distribution of Knowledge management documents, presentations and dissemination materials prepared on lessons and experiences."

⁴⁶ Relevant indicator in the logical framework was "farmer households adopting 3 or more improved technology components for improved technologies for crops or livestock promoted by the project for at least 2 production seasons after training is completed" and the target was 70 per cent.

⁴⁷ The respondents were asked which "improved technologies/methods/crops" their households practice with four options for response: "no", "yes", "traditional methods" and "don't know". The percentage of respondents who answered "yes" was calculated based on the total sample without reflecting how many out of the all respondents actually grow the specific crops or raise animals, or were trained on certain improved technologies.

which probed reasons for no-adoption or discontinuation, indicated that the adoption rates reported by the participatory impact assessment seemed too high, possibly due to data collection methods or timing of data collection.⁴⁸ The project performance assessment on RPRP conducted by IOE in 2013 also found the adoption rates stated in the PCR (78 per cent) to be "inflated" and estimated it to be closer to 55 per cent.⁴⁹

63. Among the top three training topics (chicken, rice and vegetable), the adoption rate was much higher for chicken raising practices (e.g. cleaning of chicken house, feeding and vaccination) than those for rice and vegetable production. Chicken production is relevant for the poor with little or no land and less labor, and it is easy to find the markets. The main reason behind the low uptake of rice-related techniques is labour shortage, which compels farmers to apply broadcasting rather than labour-intensive transplanting. A typical barrier for applying the techniques learned on vegetable production was lack of access to water. Vegetable growing by most farmers in general continues to be based on traditional method only in rainy season in a very small land surrounding their houses, although there are also some exceptions.⁵⁰

Table 5

Data on adoption rates from different sources (percentage of adopters)

Sources	Rice	Vegetable	Cassava	Chicken
PIA/PCR	85%	83%	42%	77%
End-line survey data ^a	26% (SRI), 28% (seeds)	36% ^d	N/A	39% (highest for housing)
PPE team discussion: "adopted" ^b	27%	33%	N/A	70%
PPE team discussion: "still applying" ^c	19%	22%	N/A	63%

PIA: participatory impact assessment. SRI: System of rice intensification.

^a Re-calculated based on the number of households engaged in the production of given crops/livestock (e.g. 617 households for poultry) instead of the all respondents

^b The question asked was: "what techniques have you applied after you finished farmer field school?"

^c The question asked was "what technical skills do you continue to apply until now?"

^d The figure, re-calculated based on the farmers growing different types of vegetables, is likely to be inflated given frequent cases of non-engagement in vegetable production even when farmers were trained (as per the PPE focus group discussions), which may also explain the reduction in the proportion of farmers growing vegetables from the mid-term survey to the end-line survey.

64. Apart from lack of enabling conditions for farmers to apply the improved technologies, less than expected adoption rates were also due to weaknesses in the training/extension approach, especially in the initial years.⁵¹ Following the MTR, some adjustments were made but they were still insufficient and came late. Lack of follow-up, mentoring and refresher training for farmers were mentioned during the focus group discussions. Nonetheless, there are some skills they learnt such as how to use fertilizer, seed purity, and soil preparation that are still used at present. See also paragraphs 71-73 for discussion on the training and extension services.
65. **GRF helped ease cash flow of beneficiary households, while the extent of its contribution to adoption of improved technologies and productive activities was not substantial.** The initial idea of providing agricultural inputs to be repaid as a basis for GRF was discontinued, since the relevance of standardized

⁴⁸ Participatory impact assessment was introduced in 2012 following the MTR recommendation as part of the farmer training. Farmers were encouraged to keep records and CEWs were to support them on the record keeping and to collect data for consolidation and analysis during follow-ups after the training.

⁴⁹ IOE/IFAD 2013. Kingdom of Cambodia Rural Poverty Reduction Project in Prey Veng and Svay Rieng: project performance assessment.

⁵⁰ For example, a woman farmer in Preah Vihear met by the PPE team has been able to grow vegetables all year round thanks to her neighbour with a deep water well who agreed to let her use the water.

⁵¹ The MTR reported 24 per cent of households using some elements of SRI; 23 per cent apply compost making, 18 per cent using improved technologies for vegetable production. More encouraging figure was reported for chicken raising: 66 per cent using improved chicken house, though only 18 per cent using improved chicken feeding practices.

package was questioned. While the issue raised and adjustment was pertinent, the move to cash meant that the linkage between the GRF loans and the application of training, even for the first round, became somewhat blurred. The question then is to what extent the loans by the GRF met the needs of group members more effectively than alternatives to finance productive activities, in terms of, for example, loan terms and conditions.

66. In the past decade, the availability of MFI services in rural areas has increased dramatically in Cambodia,⁵² as confirmed in the focus group discussions by the PPE team. Most or all group members have borrowed from the GRF, normally the same amount, at the same time for the same period (usually 6 or 12 months), almost as an "entitlement". In earlier years, the GRF served as the important source of finance for LIG/MVFG members. But as the MFIs' presence increased, in parallel, many members have increasingly taken loans from MFIs to finance farming activities or other needs, not least because of the limited amounts available from GRF, while others shunned away from MFIs for fear of losing their lands if used as collateral. Borrowers may use the GRF loans for purposes other than agriculture (e.g. medicine, school fees, housing repairs), even though in many ACs/groups, repayments were usually linked with harvest season. Nonetheless, it is important to underline that access to GRF might have helped with productive activities (even if not necessarily linked to the training by the project) – and was still important to ease cash flow and for social capital. Furthermore, even though the interest rate of GRF and MFIs may be comparable (between 2.5 and 3 per cent per month), members like GRF since they receive part of the revenues as dividends at the end of cycle and have the sense of ownership.
67. **The GRF performance and capital growth have varied widely between the provinces** (see also annex IX). Merging of mature groups (also with non-RULIP groups) into ACs in the later part of the project helped capital build-up and membership growth with better prospect for sustainability, but this happened almost exclusively in Preah Vihear. The distance between villages in other provinces, especially Ratanakiri, was cited as a reason for not having vigorously pursued this merging option. In terms of the group performance and maturity during the project period, Ratanakiri was the worst performer, followed by Kratie.⁵³ Better-performing original smaller groups in Preah Vihear served as a basis for larger ACs with potential for further growth.
68. There is little data on the loan performance (e.g. on repayment and default for internal lending within the groups), even though it may be assumed that those groups/ACs with increasing capital should have reasonable loan management in the groups. At the same time, according to the focus group discussions by the PPE team, late repayment by members to the groups was fairly common, even if eventually repaid, and only few groups imposed (marginal) penalty on members for late repayment, indicating lack of financial discipline. In some ACs, loan defaults resulted in some members leaving the group without repaying the loan.
69. **The reasons for varied performance between the provinces - in GRF and agricultural support - were a combination of the capacity, quality of service delivery and the contextual issues.** According to the PCR, the quality of group mobilization differed between provincial teams, largely influenced by the leadership and management at provincial levels,⁵⁴ and "the MAFF PSU was not

⁵² The 2015 World Bank study reported that access to credit increased for farmers in the past years from various financial service providers comprising commercial banks, MFIs, community savings groups and money lender and that in the past 10 years, increased availability of financial services from MFIs was one of the main changes in rural Cambodia, with the proportion of villages having access to credit increasing from 25 per cent to above 90 per cent. (World Bank. 2015. *Cambodian Agriculture in Transition: Opportunities and Risks*).

⁵³ RULIP PCR.

⁵⁴ "Initial seed capital was provided in-kind (e.g. live animals, implements, input) rather than cash which created additional problems in mobilizing well formed GRF groups in which there was a clear sense of common purpose and

sufficiently proactive to identify and address the poor performance in some areas until it was too late."⁵⁵ On top of the capacity issue, there were also a number of challenges specifically in Ratanakiri, such as the highest proportion of indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities, different farming systems, very low literacy rate⁵⁶ and language difference, distance between villages, and limited access to other services. With lower implementation and management capacity in Ratanakiri and little guidance in the design, it was even harder for the provincial and district teams to detect issues and adapt the approach to better suit the population. On the other hand, better capacity in Preah Vihear has been further advantaged by existence of other support and booming market opportunities for organic rice in this lowland and predominantly rice-based province.⁵⁷

70. **Outcome 2: Improved services to the poor are delivered in a participatory and demand-driven manner.** The areas where the project support was provided with bearing on this expected outcome included: (i) agricultural extension services (which was also discussed extensively in conjunction with outcome 1); (ii) animal health services; and (iii) commune councils.
71. **Farmer training and agricultural extension services. Some adjustments were introduced post MTR to the training modality to make it more demand-driven, but the shift was still insufficient, and the effectiveness was affected by time and resource constraints.** Especially in the initial years, weaknesses in the approach included: (i) tendency of providing standard package training regardless of what farmers actually grow or are interested in; and (ii) lack of consideration for the difference and specific needs of indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities.
72. The PCR reported that after the MTR agricultural training became demand responsive, "through individual household level training needs assessment and participatory selection of training topics". For example, training on cassava was introduced based on the demand from farmers mainly in Ratanakiri and Kratie and also the cassava-related interventions benefited from the partnership with the regional grant-financed project (see paragraph 24, footnote 27). Specifically for ethnic minorities in Ratanakiri, there was adjustment in terms of the timing, location of training (changing from villages to "*champka*" (farms) located far from the villages) and language for training delivery.
73. Apart from the training delivery modality, it is not clear whether there were other pertinent adjustments made in terms of the training topics/contents for ethnic minorities or for non-ethnic minorities, since the training package the project beneficiaries received seemed largely the same across different areas and groups (mostly rice, chicken, vegetable and in less cases, cassava, pigs, etc.). There is also no evidence of taking into consideration collective/communal land titles and land management practiced by indigenous peoples with explicit attention to natural resource management, although their importance was recognised in the design. When adjustments were introduced after the MTR, with just 2.5 years left before project completion, there was a sense of urgency for results, yet this was complicated by delays in procurement and shortage of training staff.⁵⁸

acceptance that these grants were jointly owned asset of the GRF rather than one-off gifts to individual households, especially in Ratanakiri" (RULIP PCR).

⁵⁵ RULIP PCR.

⁵⁶ The literacy rate in Ratanakiri (+15 years in Khmer language) was reported to be 38 per cent in 2008, the lowest in the country.

⁵⁷ Many ACs have entered into contractual arrangements with the AMRU Rice company, which plays the key role as the foreign marketing for rice millers in Cambodia.

⁵⁸ PCR (paragraph 23): "Delayed procurement and weak cash flow management and control were persistent problems through the life of the project. These undoubtedly had large negative impacts on the achievement of the projects development objectives. For example, the qualitative survey at project completion found that many farmers had not adopted improved production practices, e.g. cassava, as the field schools and demonstration had begun well after the farmers had already begun their own production."

74. **Even with farmer needs assessment, there was lack of attention to facilitating farmers' decision-making based on "informed-demand"**, i.e. not only based on what they wished to do, but also based on critical assessment of whether they have the necessary capacity and resources to apply the technologies learned and whether market opportunities exist. The focus group discussions by the PPE team revealed that common reason for participating in training was simply that all group members were invited to attend, suggesting lack of screening of prospective participant's motivations and enabling conditions.
75. ***Animal health services*. The project contributed to increased availability of animal health services through VAHWs, although attrition rates seem to be high and the sustainability issue persists.** According to the Agronomes et Vétérinaires Sans Frontières final report (2014), out of 164 existing VAHWs who received refresher training, 49 per cent remained active, and out of 88 newly recruited VAHWs, 67 per cent remained active. There is no updated data on how many of these VAHWs assessed to be "active" are still active at the time of evaluation. The end-line survey results show that, perhaps not so surprisingly, the presence of VAHWs is much higher in the RULIP villages: 88 per cent of the respondents sampled from the RULIP groups indicated that there were VAHWs in their villages compared to about 50 per cent for the control group.
76. The PPE team's discussion with VAHWs, albeit limited in number (five from Ratanakiri and Preah Vihear), as well as with other stakeholders and informants indicate that the VAHWs lack refresher training to upgrade their skills, especially pertaining to treatment of new animal diseases, and reliable access to good quality medicines for vaccination (see also annex IX). The VAHWs met indicated that getting clients to pay for services was challenging, but that having good reputation of quality service and accepting in-kind payment helped sustain those VAHWs that remained active.
77. ***Commune councils***. The project design included "support to commune planning" and the original logical framework included an indicator "number of commune councils with improved capacity for social and economic development and agricultural land management". However, project support to commune councils was in fact very limited.
78. The role of commune council focal points for agriculture⁵⁹ shifted to monitoring development activities in their communes, particularly performing annual social audit or public hearing on GRF activities, farmer training and other support activities, which was reflected in the revised logical framework. According to the commune council members and village chiefs interviewed during the PPE mission, social auditing and public hearings on GRF - intended to enhance transparency and accountability - were done only during the project, but discontinued after the project for lack of funds. The value of this activity, however, was well-appreciated. Even if not on a significant scale, these commune council members got exposures to and experience in rural development and poverty reduction initiatives.
79. **Outcome 3: Increased capacity for (pro-poor) policy analysis/formulation and gender mainstreaming in the agricultural sector.** There is little evidence of substantive project contribution to increased capacity for policy analysis or formulation. There were not many activities and outputs, apart from some documentation of experience and lessons. The six booklets produced in 2010 were more a description of what project was to do rather than emerging lessons based on critical reflection, also given that they were prepared in the earlier part of RULIP.

⁵⁹ The MTR indicated that the roles and responsibilities of commune council focal points for agriculture included: (i) liaising with the local authority; (ii) incorporating the project investment into the annual commune investment plan; (iii) assisting the CEWs for beneficiary mobilization; (iv) facilitating the organization of farmers training; (v) participating in the LIGs/MVF's monthly meetings; (vi) coaching CEWs to work with the farmers group; (vii) acting in conflict resolution within the group; and (viii) reinforcing the repayment of the GRF."

80. **Important achievement was made in mainstreaming gender sensitive monitoring of project activities.** In collaboration with an IFAD regional grant project,⁶⁰ RULIP developed a case-based gender process monitoring system, based on case studies collected in the field. By engaging the communes and district level staff of PDAFF and PDoWA in the data collection and analysis, the project contributed to building their capacity to understand gender issues, how to bring changes and see that this is integral to the work they are doing. The domains of change monitored were: (i) women's participation and confidence; (ii) women's decision making; and (iii) domestic violence. Although lacking data systematically collected, monitoring concerning domestic violence was consistently mentioned by the commune council members and PDoWA staff met by the PPE team as successful, in terms of cases being reported and action taken by the commune councils to reduce domestic violence.
81. **Summary – effectiveness.** The effectiveness of the main project investment – group development, GRF, training and improved service delivery – was compromised by design and implementation issues, especially in the initial years. Adjustments made after MTR contributed to improving the performance, including relevance and effectiveness of farmer training and GRF performance. Focused support for strengthening the groups, including conversion of mature groups into ACs, has led to good prospect for sustainability and growth, in particular in Preah Vihear. Nonetheless, the remaining time was short, procurement delays experienced, and it was challenging to turn around some of the fundamental issues largely related to design. Effectiveness is rated as **moderately satisfactory (4)**.

Efficiency

82. Efficiency is a measure of how economically resources and inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted into results. Here, this criterion will be examined in relation to the following aspects: (i) timeliness; (ii) disbursement performance; (iii) implementation process; (iv) project management cost; (v) number of direct beneficiaries vis-à-vis the project cost; and (vi) economic and financial analysis.
83. **Timeline.** The process from the grant approval to effectiveness was relatively quick and notably shorter than the average of projects in APR approved between 2000 and 2008 (table 6). The project was completed as originally scheduled on 30 September 2014, even with supplementary financing in 2011.

Table 6

RULIP timeline from approval, signing, effectiveness and first disbursement

	Approval	Signing	Effectiveness	First disbursement	Approval-signing (months)	Signing-effectiveness (months)	Effectiveness-first disburs (months)
RULIP (original grant)	18/04/07	28/05/07	31/08/07	19/10/07	1.32	4.44	6.05
APR average*	NA	NA	NA	NA	4.60	8.00	9.38

Source: IFAD database Grants and Investment Projects System.

* For projects in APR approved between 2000 and 2008.

84. **Disbursement performance.** Disbursement was smooth and remained on track, as also reflected in the project status reports periodically prepared by IFAD, which assessed the disbursement rate as "moderately satisfactory" or "satisfactory" throughout the period. Additional financing for the project in the amount of US\$2.5 million (about 26 per cent of the original financing) was approved in December 2011, at which point the disbursement rate of the original grant was already 79 per cent. At financing closing, the disbursement rate on the IFAD financing (two grants and one grant combined) was 96 per cent.

⁶⁰ Asian Project Management Support - Gender Sensitive Management implemented between 2010 and 2013. The project covered the Asia region and implemented by the grant recipient Asia Institute of Technology.

85. **Implementation process.** While the disbursement rate was satisfactory, the PCR noted that delayed procurement and weak cash flow management and control were persistent problems throughout the project life, negatively affecting the level and quality of project achievements. An example of delays in demonstration and training delivery, not matching the production cycle, was cited. Supervision mission reports (e.g. 2012 and 2013) and the PCR discussed the issue of procurement delays both at provincial and PSU level (see also the section on performance of the government). There were also challenges encountered with changes in systems and procedures at the sub-national government level.⁶¹
86. **Project management cost.** The project did not have a distinctive component or sub-component for "project management", but "support for provincial agricultural investment programme" in the second component, mostly involving the cost of PSU, would be considered project management activities, which was 13 per cent of the total actual cost, considered to be close to the normally accepted range.⁶²
87. In terms of the financing categories, two financing categories which would have covered the cost of project management/administration, "staff allowances" and "incremental operating cost", expended 21 and 9 per cent of the total actual expenditures, respectively (20 and 10 per cent of the IFAD financing, respectively). This may seem rather high, but part of these costs would have also been for non-management activities (e.g. cost for conducting training activities), and it is difficult to make a conclusive remark on these figures. Part of the explaining factors for seemingly high proportion of the cost for the "staff allowance" category may be that the project was financing "supplementary salary allowances" (later called "priority operating cost scheme" as per a sub-decree by the Government) for large number of government staff involved in the project at all levels (PSU, national, provincial and district levels). The 2010 supervision mission report indicated that there were over 150 government staff involved in the project, apart from contract staff, CEWs, VAHWs, VEWs, etc. In addition, daily subsistence allowance was also financed under this category.
88. **Outreach.** One of the efficiency issues relates to the reduced number of direct beneficiaries (from the initial target of 22,600 to the actual achievement of 14,894 households in groups, and 15,669 including field-level service providers). According to the PCR, "this reduction was necessary because the project management and IFAD were collectively too slow to recognize and address the fact that the initial supply-driven activities were ineffective". Even though the physical progress might have been satisfactory at MTR (e.g. in terms of the number of groups formed), the quality of implementation in the initial years affected the level of benefits.
89. **Economic and financial analysis.** The economic and financial analysis in the PCR indicated a relatively high economic internal rate of return (EIRR) at 35 per cent with net present value of US\$6.59 million. This EIRR is significantly higher than the appraisal estimation of 11 per cent, despite the reduced number of direct beneficiaries by 34 per cent from the original target on the one hand and increased project costs (around by 20 per cent) on the other. The parameters for estimation in the PCR were taken mainly from the end-line survey and the participatory impact assessment, such as adoption rates, average production, average cultivated area, etc. The net incremental incomes were analyzed over a 15-year period, including seven years of project implementation and eight years of future

⁶¹ "An important change at the sub-national level has been the transition of project administration to the new IP3 [Implementation Programme 3] government system. This has entailed changes in process and procedure which have created inefficiencies and delays in various aspects from fund flow to procurement - with knock on effects on project activities, many of which are time sensitive as they are linked to the farming calendar." (2012 supervision report).

⁶² It is probable that some activities under the heading "agricultural support services" in the first component also related to project management at provincial level, but it is difficult to discern how much of the expenditure was for the purpose of project management and administration. Under this heading (38 per cent of the total actual cost), various cost items were included, including training activities, cost of CEWs, as well as government staff supplements and DSAs.

projections for seven production functions (poultry, pig, rice, cassava, maize, long bean and cucumber).

90. Careful review of the working file (excel file) used for the PCR's economic and financial analysis together with data from different sources indicates that the EIRR computed in the PCR is likely to have been overestimated due to the following:
 - There were formula errors in the excel file, which resulted in higher estimates, with all assumptions maintained.⁶³
 - Gains from cucumber were exaggerated in the calculation, given unexplainably high incremental benefit in Kratie used as a basis (over US\$1,000 per household) combined with formula errors noted above. Also, the number of households engaged in cucumber and other vegetable production was actually very low, as reflected in the end-line survey⁶⁴ and observed during the PPE mission.
 - Technology adoption rates used in the computation, based on the participatory impact assessment instead of the end-line survey, are likely to have been overestimated, also according to the PPE team's discussion in the field (see paragraph 62).
 - Opportunity costs of the farmers who attended training including farmer field school were not included in the production function of different types of crops and livestock.
91. On the other hand, the benefits may have been underestimated due to multiple discounting used in the model in the PCR, i.e. "actual realization of benefits ratio" on top of adoption rates and group sustainability. Lastly, margin profits by the beneficiaries compared with the control group were based on the end-line survey data, but due to lack of baseline data, it is not possible to verify that the control group could be served as the counterfactual and therefore the results could have been either overestimated or underestimated (see also sub-section on rural poverty impact part and annex X).
92. A simulation exercise was conducted for the PPE to test the EIRR results reported in the PCR (table 7). Correction of formula errors and the removal of the benefits from cucumber result in EIRR of 21 per cent. The downward adjustment of adoption rates for improved technologies and adjusting the exaggerated cucumber benefits further reduces the EIRR (between 6 and 18 per cent) and some cases resulting in negative net present value, depending on the assumptions. The simulation thus indicates that the economic viability of the project may have been around the borderline. The EIRR would further be deflated if taking into account the opportunity costs of farmers' attending trainings and declined cassava price after a re-calibration of different scenarios.

⁶³ For example, cumulative benefits of LIGs were calculated using the unit incremental benefits of Kratie province, rather than respective figures for Preah Vihear and Ratanakiri due to an excel formula error.

⁶⁴ The end-line survey data indicated only 2 households of treatment group and 1 household of control group produced cucumber.

Table 7

Economic and financial analysis: simulation on different scenarios

Scenarios (change from the PCR scenario + positive, - negative)	Net present value (\$ US) at 12% discount rate	EIRR
1. PCR calculation	6 585 407	35%
2. Formula errors corrected (-)	3 280 173	25%
3. "Actual realization of benefits ratio" is kept at 80% after the fourth year ^a (+)	5 453 197	29%
4. Remove benefits of cucumber from the model (after 2+3) (-)	2 529 383	21%
5. Apply two thirds of the adoption rates used in the PCR (after 2+3) (-)	1 774 772	18%
6. Combination of scenario 4 and 5 (-)	- 168 101	11%
7. Apply the adoption rates based on the end-line data as re-analysed by the PPE team ^b (-)	-114 602	12%
8. Combination of scenario 4 and 7 (-)	-1 414 429	6%

^a Combining scenario 2 and 3 will be treated as the basic scenario for the other scenarios.

^b For most of the parameters, adoption rates were recalculated based on the modified total number (e.g. taking the number of households engaged in poultry instead of the all respondents, see also table 5 and footnote 48). Where questionnaire asked adoption of different practices for each commodity, the highest adoption rate is taken for the estimation. For example, the data on improved rice seed practice is used, rather than organic rice practice.

93. **Summary – efficiency.** Despite satisfactory timeliness and disbursement performance and reasonable project management cost, there were a number of issues which negatively affected how economically resources and inputs were converted into benefits. Sub-optimal quality of implementation especially in early years, combined with increased project cost and smaller outreach than envisaged reduced the expected benefits as shown in the economic and financial analysis. Consequently, efficiency is rated **moderately unsatisfactory (3)**. The self-rating by IFAD was more critical with "unsatisfactory" rating, largely because of "lost time" in the initial years,⁶⁵ but the PPE team considers that this rating disregards some positive elements.

Rural poverty impact

94. Impact is defined as the changes that have occurred or are expected to occur in the lives of the rural poor (whether positive or negative, direct or indirect, intended or unintended) as a result of development interventions. These shall be assessed in four impact domains: (i) household income and net assets; (ii) human and social capital and empowerment; (iii) food security and agricultural productivity; and (iv) institutions and policies.
95. **There is lack of data to conclusively inform the assessment of rural poverty impact**, in particular, with regard to household income and assets, and food security and agricultural productivity, in spite of multiple surveys conducted (see table 8). Due to differences in sampling frames and approaches, the results cannot be meaningfully compared between the data from different points in time or between the treatment and the control group when the latter existed (see also annex X). The RIMS/household end-line survey data have no valid baseline for both the treatment and control groups. The same report claimed that the treatment and control groups shared similar features but without solid evidence. For the impact evaluation conducted by the IFAD's SKD, the only output shared is a five-page summary with limited information on the survey methodology. Furthermore, given rapid overall development context and other development initiatives in the project area, it is challenging to establish a causal linkage with the RULIP.

⁶⁵ "...by the time steps had been taken to address these issues in project year 5, the project had already burnt through four years of project costs and had left too little time to correct the problems without substantially reducing the number of project beneficiary" (RULIP PCR).

Table 8

Summary of RULIP outcome and impact assessments conducted

<i>Survey (date)</i>	<i>Sample size</i>	<i>Note</i>
RIMS and household baseline survey 2007/2008)	Treatment: 900 (30 villages from 30 communes in 16 districts, random)	Two questionnaires used, one focusing on IFAD standard RIMS indicators and the other covering other indicators (with some overlaps).
RIMS and household survey - mid-term (2011)	Treatment: 900 (randomly selected from members of groups supported by the project)	The same two questionnaires used for the baseline survey were used
RIMS and household endline survey (2014)	Treatment 945; two sub-groups* of control group (473 + 472)	Two questionnaires previously used were merged into one, removing duplication and also introducing new questions. The survey contracted out to a consulting firm (SBK Research and Development)
Impact evaluation conducted/managed by IFAD (2015)	Treatment 803; control 601 104 case studies, 28 key informant interviews, 18 focus group discussions	Conducted/managed by IFAD Strategy and Knowledge Department. Only a five-page brief on the summary of results made available.

* One control group was from the villages without RULIP interventions but from the communes covered by the project. The other control sub-group was from the non-RULIP communes.

96. Taking the above into consideration, the data from the SKD impact evaluation and the end-line survey are discussed below (more detail in annex X with a focus on the end-line survey data), combined with other data and observations in the field. The PPE team obtained the data file for the end-line survey from MAFF to run further analysis, although the question on the data quality cannot be solved due to the sampling issue and lack of solid baseline. Hence, it is important to underline that the survey data analysis by the PPE team was *not* intended to rigorously establish the causalities of the project's impact on rural poverty, but rather, to review the data from multiple angles to examine the level of consistency (or lack thereof) in the data from different sources. The dataset from the end-line survey also included some indicators that the SKD impact evaluation did not cover (e.g. productivity and incomes).
97. **Household income and assets.** The RIMS/household end-line survey results showed that RULIP project households had more incomes from crop cultivation than the control group. Even after controlling for several variables (socio-demographics, land size, wealth, gender of household heads, literacy, shock, differences in services from district agricultural offices/PDAFF and ethnicity), the treatment group still has on average crop incomes about 31 per cent higher than the control group, although it is difficult to establish a causal linkage with the project. The income from livestock is also higher for the treatment group, but if controlled for the same variables, this difference disappears. The higher livestock income seems to be correlated to VAHWs service and the sales rate of chickens, as well as land size which may also be an indication of poverty status. The SKD survey also showed an increase in the revenues from agricultural production by the project households.
98. During the focus group discussions by the PPE team, positive accounts with regard to change in incomes were provided often by those who have been engaged in chicken raising (with a number of rounds with increasing number of animals). They spoke of following what they learned through the training having contributed to new or improved chicken raising activity, for example, separation of hen and chick, feeding and vaccination. In Preah Vihear, all ACs met by the PPE team established contracts with the company trading organic rice and many members participate in the contract farming giving them income sources.
99. Regarding household assets, findings are positive across different datasets except for durable assets. The end-line survey shows that overall treatment households

had significantly higher ownership of household assets than the control group, mainly contributed by their ownership of agriculture equipment (hand tractor, plow/harrow, water pump, and rice mill). A before and after analysis of the data showed a mixed picture, eight out of 22 types of assets registered positive changes, three worsened and the rest stayed almost the same.

100. The SKD impact evaluation indicated a significant decrease in household durable asset ownership. The different indications in the end-line survey (positive) and the SKD study (negative) are most likely because of different types of assets included in calculating the composite figures.⁶⁶ The SKD study also indicated an increase in livestock ownership which was large enough to "outweigh" the decrease in durable asset ownership.
101. In summary, there is some consistency in reported results from the different surveys, showing an increasing trend in household incomes and assets. However, due to the sampling issue, absence of comparable baseline data and the general economic growth in the country, it is difficult to establish the extent or magnitude of positive impact or the attribution.
102. **Agricultural productivity and food security.** According to the end-line survey, RULIP households tend to have higher agricultural productivity for wet season rice, cassava, and cashew compared to non-RULIP farmers. For example, treatment households on average produced 1,828 kg/ha rice, compared to 1,551 kg/ha by the control group. The SKD survey showed an increase in the value of agricultural produce by the project households but for some reasons presented no data on productivity/yield.
103. A further look at wet season rice productivity data in the end-line survey provides consistent results regardless of the models used. The treatment group on average has 17.3 per cent higher rice yields than the control group if using the model with commune individual effect⁶⁷ (see annex X, table 1). The difference can mainly be explained by higher ownership of hand tractors and adoption of rice seed practice.
104. With regard to food security, the end-line survey showed that hardly any household (both treatment and control groups) experience hungry season. The same survey showed that 87 per cent of the treatment households had three meals a day, which is statistically higher than the control group (77 per cent), but without the baseline data, its causal linkage with RULIP is inconclusive.
105. The end-line survey included anthropometric measurements on children under five, but it is difficult to say much about project impact on nutrition at this stage despite some interesting initiatives (e.g. cooking classes and champion mothers, paragraphs 42, 130). Chronic malnutrition (height for age or stunting) for children under five remained high without much difference between the baseline and the end-line (49 and 50 per cent, respectively), but it might also take time for project interventions to be reflected in stunting rates. It is noted that stunting prevalence of children under five years old in Cambodia (national data 40 per cent in 2010) is one of the highest in Southeast Asia after Timor Leste and Lao People's Democratic Republic, even if the country made steady progress from the stunting prevalence of about 50 per cent in 2000.⁶⁸
106. The SKD impact evaluation has little data capturing the project's impact on mother and child nutrition. The SKD report noted that the only relevant indicator would be the incidence of household sickness, which reduced significantly amongst project

⁶⁶ The household assets included in the SKD survey were TV, radio, stove, bicycle, motorbike, mobile phone, roof type, kitchen type, toilet type, source of water and source of cooking fuel, without agricultural equipment.

⁶⁷ The model has controlled individual commune's effect as there are some commune factors, for example, soil, heat, local climate, cultural, etc. which may affect the dependent variable. Using commune dummies can knock out the potential effects from such factors to get a more robust result.

⁶⁸ Camila Chaparro, Lesley Oot, and Kavita Sethuraman. 2014. Overview of the Nutrition Situation in Seven Countries in Southeast Asia.

households, but that it was not clear whether this was driven by the impact of the nutrition component of the project or it was a by-product of the wealth-based improvements stimulated by the project.

107. The focus group discussions during the PPE field visit also indicated that hunger was no longer an issue. The rice banks supported by the project in the initial years, although not discussed in the PCR, seem to have been maintained, growing and also helpful in ensuring availability of rice for those in need. However, from the high stunting rates, it seems that the quality of food, especially for small children (diversity and nutrition density), is inadequate.
108. **Human and social capital and empowerment.** Much of the project support was about capacity-building – individuals and groups – and empowerment. Training and follow-up support in various areas - technical and agriculture-related, bookkeeping, gender issues, nutrition, group development or leadership skills – are likely to have improved skills and knowledge of beneficiaries, even if not at the optimal level. Groups of beneficiaries centring around GRF facilitated cooperation and social capital, even though savings and credit activities may not have been highly beneficial for improving access to credit for productive purposes especially for groups that did not accumulate higher capital.
109. The PCR reported that there was increased engagement of the project households with commune councils and the commune investment planning processes, based on the end-line survey results, but some caution is required in interpreting this statement. First, it is not clear how some of the questions⁶⁹ could have been related to the project:⁷⁰ there was very limited support or progress in linking or integrating RULIP-supported activities into commune investment plans due to lack of funds (paragraph 77). Second, the end-line results in 2014 were more positive for the RULIP households compared to non-project households, but they were not better (worse in some case) than the baseline and mid-term data (even if there are issues with comparability). It is probable that the project activities did facilitate more interaction between commune councils and their constituencies, but the lasting effects on empowerment of organizations of the rural poor are not evident.
110. Women's empowerment is discussed in a separate section later.
111. **Institutions and policies.** The PCR indicated that the project experience contributed to change in mindset and greater appreciation of the value of participatory and demand-driven approaches among provincial and district agricultural staff. The end-line survey showed much higher "usage of PDAFF/District Agriculture Office services" among the project households (67 per cent) compared to the control group (16 per cent), but it should be recalled that field-level extension services are heavily dependent on projects (paragraph 12). The PCR also noted that this difference in the perception of the treatment and control groups may be "due to RULIP activities dominating the workload and available training budgets of the district and provincial agricultural teams", which would have disadvantaged non-RULIP rural households. In this sense, even if there were indeed better capacity and appreciation for demand-driven services among provincial and district staff and other service providers (e.g. CEWs), it might be an overstatement to consider it as major impact on institutions.

⁶⁹ The survey included several questions in this area. For example, with regard to the question on whether the households were invited to attend commune council meetings, the results were: 71 per cent for the RULIP households, 57 per cent for the respondents in the RULIP communes but not in the targeted villages, 29 per cent in the non-RULIP communes. A more specific question on whether they were invited to attend meetings to discuss the last commune investment plans, the results were: 65, 49, 44 per cent for the RULIP households, households in the RULIP communes but not in the targeted villages, and households in the non-RULIP communes, respectively.

⁷⁰ It should also be noted that, according to the commune councillors met during PPE field visits, normally households were not directly involved in the commune investment planning processes. In reality, during the planning stage, villages were represented by the village chiefs and some influential residents.

112. RULIP contributed to upgrading the skills and services of VAHWs. Despite some drop-outs, remaining VAHWs continue to provide animal health services on demand basis (fee-based). The end-line survey results show that, perhaps not so surprisingly, the presence of VAHWs is higher in the RULIP villages: 88 per cent of the RULIP households/respondents compared to about 50 per cent for the control group. Far more respondents sampled from the RULIP groups (42 per cent) indicated that they have paid for private veterinary services compared to the control villages (less than 20 per cent). The end-line survey data analysis by the PPE team showed that livestock incomes were correlated to VAHW services (paragraph 97). The results also showed notable differences between the provinces, with Kratie giving the most positive picture.
113. The project contributed to building capacity of public institutions and staff at provincial and district level for conducting gender-related training and gender sensitive monitoring. Important contributing factor was the collaborative arrangements between MAFF and MOWA, PDAFF and PDoWA – not only in RULIP but also other IFAD-financed projects - as well as collaboration with the IFAD regional grant project as discussed earlier (paragraph 80).
114. Project capacity-building support also targeted commune council members, including commune council focal points for agriculture. They played an important role and gained experience in facilitating pro-poor project activities in their respective areas. However, there is little evidence that participatory development planning at commune level or representation of grassroots organizations have been institutionalized.
115. There are a number of policies and strategies developed before or around the RULIP completion including the Agriculture Extension Policy (2015), Agricultural Sector Strategic Plan (2014-2018), MAFF Gender Policy and Strategy (2016), and National Gender Policy and Strategy (2014-18). It is possible these policy documents were informed by RULIP experience one way or another, for example, through MAFF and/or MOWA participation in related technical guidance meetings. For example, the agricultural extension policy emphasises decentralized, demand-driven, participatory approach to extension services, and this is also reflected in the ASPIRE. Nonetheless, any RULIP contribution would have been rather indirect.
116. **Summary - rural poverty impact.** Given: (i) the largely positive indications on incomes, assets and agricultural productivity but with difficulties in linking these changes to RULIP; and (ii) mixed results on human and social capital and empowerment, institutions and policies, the PPE rates rural poverty impact as **moderately satisfactory (4)**.

Sustainability of benefits

117. This evaluation criterion relates to the likelihood of continuation of benefits generated by a development intervention. This section discusses the following areas: (i) groups/ACs and group revolving fund; (ii) technology transfer and improved agricultural production; (iii) agricultural extension service provision; and (iv) support by commune councils to sustain the project benefits.
118. **Groups/ACs and GRF.** The prospect for the continuation of collective activities, including GRF, is mixed and varies between the provinces. One of the key approaches taken to address the sustainability issue was the transformation of groups into ACs and their capacity-building. The PPE team had focus group discussions⁷¹ with the ACs that were considered at project completion to be reasonably mature. It is encouraging that most of these ACs met are still operational, but with varying maturity and extent of operation. Except for Preah

⁷¹ Key areas of data collection and discussions included the following: (i) capital and membership status; (ii) motivation for registering as an AC; (iii) leadership/group governance; (iv) enterprise management; (v) external support; (vi) observed successes/improvements; and (vii) Remaining challenges/constraints. The discussions were in most cases conducted separately with the group/AC management and members.

Vihear, ACs' operations have not expanded much nor gone beyond savings and credit. Capital accumulation is generally positive for all ACs, but significantly higher in Preah Vihear. In Kratie and Ratanakiri, the membership is stagnant in general or even decreasing in some cases (see annex IX).

119. The transformation of groups into ACs and capacity-building support in the latter part of the project was rushed. In a number of cases there was little critical reflection among the members on the rationale of becoming cooperatives. In fact, the PPE team's discussion in the field indicated that for many ACs especially in Kratie and Ratanakiri, the main reason for registering as ACs was the expectation to receive continued support from PDAFF/District Agriculture Office, rather than based on a shared vision and business plans. Stepping back, a fundamental point is that the success of group development depends on group formation process and clarity of purpose at onset. It may need to be accepted that some ACs would never go beyond small-scale internal lending operations, if they manage to maintain it. Some LIGs and MVFGs may also survive, remaining small and informal.
120. A positive aspect related to sustainability is that, based on the training provided, all groups and ACs generally have a system of setting aside certain proportion of "revenues" for different purpose, including "dividend" to the members as well as financial incentives for management members, even if they are small.
121. Even for relatively well-performing ACs, there are threats to sustainability such as lack of management support, difficulties in bookkeeping (e.g. ACs in Preah Vihear with their level of transaction increasing fast), weak internal control system, inadequate capital to engage in additional business, and loan defaults/bad debts. The agricultural cooperative law of 2013 provides a framework for the operations of ACs with PDAFF/District Agriculture Office tasked to provide regulatory and institutional support, but according to the PDAFF, the current level of staffing and funding are largely inadequate to cope with the intensity of the work. Not only the staffing and funding, but physical target-driven approach to developing cooperatives (similar to the top down approach in the initial years of RULIP) and lack of quality support hinged on the principles of cooperative development (e.g. voluntarism, independence and autonomy, democratic member control), are also an important threat.
122. Another element of the sustainability strategy was to encourage CEWs to become members of ACs to maintain support for record keeping. From the PPE field visit, this indeed happened and has proved to be effective, but it is on a voluntary basis many also found other employment opportunities.
123. **Agricultural technology adoption and production.** The farmers who have adopted improved production practices are likely to continue to apply them as long as the practices are profitable, they have access to means of production, and no disaster events occur. However, farmers would need to access extension services regularly to remain up to date on their skills and knowledge (new varieties, disease or pest management practices, crop/livestock diversification, market demand). Thus, in order for the benefits in terms of better returns from farming with improved production practices to be sustained over a long term, the availability of effective agricultural service will be critical - whether from public or private sector providers. At the moment, the prospect seems uncertain, while it is noted that ASPIRE aims to address this issue.
124. **Extension services.** The project experience may have contributed to the change in mindset and greater appreciation of the value of participatory and demand driven approaches among provincial and district agricultural staff, but it is too early to consider that the approach has been institutionalized. The experience gained through the project so far is limited, only for the last two years. ASPIRE will continue its support for improved extension services – public or private - in Kratie

and Preah Vihear, but sustaining the benefits in Ratanakiri is challenged by lack of government funding for continued application of the approach.

125. The recent agricultural extension policy (2015) provides a legal framework for the engagement of CEWs/VEWs, but their roles have yet to be defined and secured funding sources have yet to be mobilized.⁷² In RULIP, CEWs played an important role in mobilizing beneficiaries and improving the extension outreach, but the initial intention (which was going to be an exit strategy) that CEWs were to be "temporary agents" whose functions would be taken over by VEWs did not work out. Furthermore, their roles and required qualifications seem to be unclear, i.e. what are their main roles - facilitation and mobilization, support for non-agricultural activities (e.g. bookkeeping, group development), or agricultural advisory services?
126. **Commune councils to sustain project benefits.** One of the exit strategies was turning over the project activities to the commune councils, but this is difficult to expect, as the engagement of commune councils was limited, also with no control of the project resources. Since the project did not invest in physical public infrastructure that would benefit the majority of their constituents, there is less motivation, if any, to assume this responsibility. Finally, commune councils do not have a reliable funding source.
127. **Summary on sustainability of benefits.** The ground for sustainability of main areas of benefits is weak. Although the inclusion of Preah Vihear and Kratie in ASPIRE offers the opportunity to improve the sustainability prospect in those provinces in the long run, the sustainability of agricultural extension service delivery is challenged without additional financing, either from other projects, increased RGC budget allocations, built on fee-based services or a combination of these mechanisms. Sustainability of benefits is rated as **moderately unsatisfactory (3)**. The PCR's rating of "satisfactory" does not seem to reflect the narrative.

B. Other performance criteria

Innovation and scaling up

128. **Innovations.** This evaluation criterion concerns the extent to which the RULIP interventions introduced innovative approaches to rural poverty reduction. Among several areas of innovations provided in the PCR,⁷³ the following two items are discussed: (i) demand-responsive public sector agricultural service delivery (also related to the services to ethnic minorities and decision making on training activities by PDAFF); and (ii) nutrition - social marketing approaches through cooking competitions, champion mothers and mother-to-mother networks focused on early childhood nutrition.
129. On the first point, many PDAFF staff most likely did not have sufficient appreciation and skills for demand-driven approach, also considering "extension services" have not been very present and not well-developed in Cambodia. However, support to public agricultural extension systems and the emphasis on "demand-driven and participatory approach" have been present from earlier IFAD-financed projects

⁷² The agricultural extension policy aims to support, facilitate, and coordinate the work of all extension services providers in Cambodia so that farmers and farming communities receive regular extension services and timely, adequate, accessible, and adaptable technical information. Extension service providers include agricultural extension specialist, agricultural extension advisor, CEWs and VEWs. It also emphasized that extension services should be demand driven. For all types of extension workers, minimum level of education and training is required.

⁷³ In addition to the two mentioned in the main text: (i) decentralizing decision making to PDAFF to decide on how training resources get used to best serve explicit demands of local farmers; (ii) flexible approach to serving ethnic minority farmers better suited to their particular farming and social systems; (iii) VAHW-led model for animal health and production services (as recognized by the PCR, this is not an innovation in Cambodia, even though new to IFAD-financed projects in Cambodia.); and (iv) participatory impact assessment with each household used as a learning tool but also as a basis for near real time impact tracking for management decision making during the project.

(e.g. starting with ADESS approved in 1999),⁷⁴ hence it may be questioned how "innovative" it actually was, even if the two projects worked in different provinces. On the other hand, the efforts made to modify the training delivery modality to better suit indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities – for example, in terms of the location and the language through better facilitation by CEWs from the local community – may be considered innovative particularly in the public agricultural extension systems. In relation to the demand-driven approach, the PCR also considered "decentralizing decision making to PDAFF" on how the training resources are used" as an innovative practice.

130. Another innovation introduced after the MTR was social marketing approaches to improve early childhood nutrition at village level comprising of "cooking competitions", "champion mothers" and "mother to mother social marketing activities". This new added activity fitted well with the project set-up, especially given the involvement of MOWA and PDoWA and existing channel of training delivery through LIGs/MVFGs. These approaches were particularly novel in the project area and received good initial response from the villages, and hence considered promising, but they were not well-documented.
131. Based on the above, this criterion is rated as **moderately satisfactory (4)**.
132. **Scaling up.** This evaluation criterion concerns the extent to which the project interventions have been (or are likely to be) scaled up by government authorities, donor organizations, the private sector and others agencies. There is little indication that the approaches/initiatives discussed above have been or are likely to have been scaled up. ASPIRE may offer a scope for upscaling demand-responsive extension delivery and differentiated service delivery to ethnic minorities, but this does not really reflect "scaling up" by other partners. This criterion is rated as **moderately unsatisfactory (3)**.

Gender equality and women's empowerment

133. This evaluation criterion concerns the extent to which IFAD-supported interventions have contributed to better gender equality and women's empowerment, for example, in terms of women's access to and ownership of assets, resources and services; participation in decision making; work load balance and impact on women's incomes, nutrition and livelihoods.
134. **Explicit attention to gender issues in the project and good collaboration with MOWA/PDoWA both contributed to good performance in this area.** The project design and approach integrated gender issues, e.g. in terms of objectives, planned activities, implementation arrangements and monitoring of gender-disaggregated data. Activities promoting gender equality and women's empowerment included awareness campaign/training on gender equality and women's rights and domestic violence (staff and beneficiaries), promoting women leadership in groups, technology transfer intended to promote income generating activities for women, setting of the targets for recruitment of women staff, both government and contracted staff, for example 50 per cent, and 30 per cent of CEWs. In terms of the implementation arrangements, clearly designating MOWA and PDoWA as partners and co-opting PDoWA staff into provincial/district support teams was effective.

⁷⁴ ADESS was expected to strengthen the capacity of the Provincial Department of Agriculture to deliver good quality services to the beneficiaries in a demand driven and participatory manner.

Table 9

Women members and women in leadership position in agricultural cooperatives

<i>Province</i>	<i>ACs</i>	<i>Total member</i>	<i>Female member</i>	<i>% Female</i>	<i>Male leaders</i>	<i>Female leaders</i>	<i>% Female</i>
Preah Vihear	43	7 464	5 118	69%	201	120	37%
Kratie	31	1 149	730	64%	110	90	45%
Ratanakiri	34	1 385	488	35%	217	64	23%

Source: Current AC status submitted by PDAFF during the PPE mission. See also annex IX.

Note that the numbers may include those ACs formed after RULIP or those not originating from the RULIP groups.

135. With conscious efforts, there was high level of women participation in beneficiary groups. The latest update on ACs obtained during PPE field visit reflected that relatively high percentage of women members and women leaders in Kratie and Preah Vihear, while the figure was comparably lower in Ratanakiri influenced by the social and cultural context of indigenous peoples and ethnic minority communities.
136. The end-line survey showed that 93 per cent of the project households responded positively to the question inquiring their awareness on the law on domestic violence. However, the figure was already high from the baseline for some reasons (97 per cent for both the baseline and mid-term) and was also relatively high at the end-line for the control group (89 per cent). Interestingly, the end-line survey shows that in general, high percentage of female household members (over 90 per cent for most of the agricultural commodities) tend to keep money after selling agricultural produce. However, it is noted also for this parameter the differences are very small between the treatment group and the control group.
137. On the other hand, the SKD study stated that the data on "gender empowerment"⁷⁵ showed a significant decrease among the project beneficiaries and suggested that this may be "the result of none of the project components explicitly targeting gender empowerment". The latter presumption seems to have been made without proper understanding of the project, since in fact, RULIP did have a number of activities related to women's empowerment.
138. Even though the end-line survey, while positive, does not demonstrate a clear difference between the project and non-project households, the group members met by the PPE team, including in separate session with women group members, consistently reported that awareness on gender issues led to their understanding that men and women have equal rights to decision-making as well improved work balance at home. For example, husbands helping more in house works such as cooking, cleaning, childcare, and collecting water and firewood, which are predominantly female chores. The training approach of involving both husband and wife from the same household was effective in facilitating these changes. According to some wives who attended the training without their spouses, they encountered difficulty in explaining and convincing their spouses about equal rights of men and women. Hence, despite absence of tangible project investment on addressing work balance, the project has in some ways contributed to addressing this issue.
139. Despite the achievements discussed above, there was little evidence that the project has contributed towards transformative change that would lead to far reaching social change in terms of gender equality and women's empowerment. Furthermore, the PPE mission noted that, except for Preah Vihear where the Cambodia Horticulture Advancing Income and Nutrition (CHAIN) project is currently

⁷⁵ According to the IFAD's 2016 publication "Background paper to the IFAD9 Impact Assessment Initiative", this indicator aimed at measuring "the roles and extent of women's engagement in the agriculture sector in five domains: (i) decisions about agricultural production, (ii) access to and decision-making power over productive resources, (iii) control over use of income, (iv) leadership in the community, and (v) time use.

implemented,⁷⁶ the other two provinces face challenges in continuing gender mainstreaming activities after RULIP for lack of funds, including the promising nutrition activities with "champion mothers" (paragraph 130). Nonetheless, the government commitment, as embodied in the new five-year strategic plan for gender equality and women's empowerment (2014-2018),⁷⁷ may provide a scope for sustainability. Gender and Women's empowerment is rated as **moderately satisfactory (4)**, the same as the self-rating.

Environment and natural resources management

140. This evaluation criterion assesses the extent to which the project contributed to changes in the protection, rehabilitation or depletion of natural resources and the environment.
141. The PCR reported that the production technologies promoted by the project were sustainable and did not involve the use of large quantities of fertilizers or agro-chemicals, abstraction of large quantities of water, construction of reservoirs or clearing forests. Much of the technical skills introduced was focused on sustainable production practice and proper use of agro-chemicals as well as natural inputs as part of integrated pest management, such as manure, natural pesticides and other integrated pest management methods. This is confirmed from the PPE team meetings with different groups of farmers across the three provinces. For example, farmers learnt about SRI including how to prepare land and liquid compost, as well as vegetable growing techniques including hot/liquid compost, bed preparation and natural pesticides, etc.
142. While largely positive, these activities were modest in contributing to the environment and natural resource management, despite the issues and needs identified at design that are important to rural livelihoods. The evaluation criterion on environment and natural resource management is rated as **moderately satisfactory (4)**.

Adaptation to climate change

143. This evaluation criterion concerns the contribution of the project to increase climate resilience and increase beneficiaries' capacity to manage short- and long-term climate risks. Some agricultural technologies introduced, for example SRI, hot/liquid compost, and integrated pest management methods, would be part of measure for adapting to climate change, even if they were not considered explicitly as such. It is also worth mentioning that the implementation of the so-called "NAPA⁷⁸ Follow-up project" (Promoting Climate-Resilient Water Management and Agricultural Practices in Rural Cambodia) funded by UNDP and Canada⁷⁹ was linked with RULIP, e.g. provincial staff that were involved in RULIP were also engaged in the NAPA-FU project.
144. Given that project did not specifically emphasize this aspect and that the design (during 2005-2006) preceded the approval of IFAD's climate change strategy in 2010, in line with the IOE evaluation manual (2015, second edition),⁸⁰ this criterion is **not rated**.

⁷⁶ Cambodia Horticulture Advancing Nutrition and Income (CHAIN) project is a Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) funded three-year programme. It aims to reduce rural income poverty in Cambodia by increasing the income of 6,000 mostly women smallholder farmers and small-scale entrepreneurs by 2018.

⁷⁷ Neary Rattanakiri IV is the five-year strategic plan (2014-2018) for gender equality and the empowerment of women in Cambodia developed to support the Phase III of the Rectangular Strategy for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency. It aims to support the reform process of the Ministry of Women's Affairs to move from project-based activities to a programme-based approach, and promoting MoWA's role in providing effective gender analysis, institutional advocacy and policy advice across government sectors.

⁷⁸ National Adaptation Programme of Action.

⁷⁹ The project was implemented in two phases in Kratie and Preah Vihear. The objective was to reduce the vulnerability of Cambodia's agricultural sector to climate-induced changes in water resources availability.

⁸⁰ The evaluation manual (2015) provides as follows: "There might be instances when not all evaluation criteria can be assessed or rated. For example, IOE might not be able to assess or rate "adaptation to climate change" in a project that mainly deals with microfinance for micro-enterprise development, or projects that were designed a decade ago that did

C. Overall project achievement

145. The project reached close to 15,000 rural households primarily through groups. The main pillars of the support to beneficiaries were training and extension services for promoting improved agricultural production practices and GRF.
146. The project assisted part of the targeted households in improving agricultural practices and production, and is likely to have contributed to increased agricultural incomes, but such benefits were uneven between households, groups and locations. While some level of attrition is well-expected (i.e. not all those trained are not expected to put the training into practice), the adoption rates appear to have been lower than expected and reported in the PCR. GRF-related activities contributed to improved human and social capital in general, but its linkage and contribution to productive activities was not substantial. Only in Preah Vihear, majority of ACs formed based on smaller RULIP groups have reasonable prospect of expansion and growth.
147. The effectiveness was compromised by design and implementation issues, especially in the initial years. Even though adjustments made after MTR contributed to improved performance, it was not possible to recover the implementation quality and results to the optimal level.
148. Overall project achievement is rated as **moderately satisfactory (4)**.

D. Performance of partners

149. **Performance of the Government.** Indicators of positive performance of the Government include timeliness in meeting the conditions for the grant effectiveness, satisfactory disbursement performance throughout the project period and at completion, counterpart funding (in general).
150. The PCR assessed the performance of PDAFF, MOWA and PDoWA as satisfactory in general but that of MAFF PSU as "mixed". Uneven performance of PDAFF in different provinces reportedly improved especially after MTR. While the PSU demonstrated good performance in some aspects, such as support to PDAFF especially in the later part of the project, there were a number of issues which negatively affected the implementation, such as delayed procurement and weak cash flow management. While recognizing the challenges encountered with changes at the sub-national government level,⁸¹ the PCR considered the less than satisfactory procurement performance as "inexplicable" as the PSU had implemented IFAD-supported projects over years. IFAD's assessment on audits undertaken by external auditors, varied between "satisfactory" and "moderately unsatisfactory". When it was rated "moderately unsatisfactory", it was due to the delayed submission, limited scope of audit or the absence of clear auditor's opinion on specific areas as required by the IFAD Guidelines on Project Audit.
151. With regard to M&E, as commented in the PCR, there was much more focus on inputs and activities, rather than outcomes. The quality of data (baseline/end-line survey, as well as annual outcome survey, participatory impact assessments) was found to be unreliable. At the same time, the positive aspect was that the project kept data disaggregated by gender as well as Khmer and non-Khmer.
152. Another factor affecting the project implementation in the initial years emanating from an action by the Government – even though it may not be deemed as "performance issue" as such – was "the discontinuance of supplemental allowances

not explicitly emphasize climate change. In such cases, the evaluation report will allocate a "not-applicable" rating to such criteria".

⁸¹ "An important change at the sub-national level has been the transition of project administration to the new "IP3" government system. This has entailed changes in process and procedure which have created inefficiencies and delays in various aspects from fund flow to procurement - with knock on effects on project activities, many of which are time sensitive as they are linked to the farming calendar." (2012 supervision mission report).

for project staff and change to daily subsistence allowance", which "was a disincentive that affected the commitment of staff".⁸²

153. In summary, the performance of the Government is rated **moderately satisfactory (4)** by the PPE. This takes into consideration areas of weak performance (e.g. procurement, M&E) on the one hand, and positive elements on the other hand including improvements in project management performance in later years, generally good collaboration between PDAFF and PDoWA, timeliness and disbursement.
154. **Performance of IFAD.** IFAD regularly fielded supervision and implementation support missions. In addition to annual supervision missions (five in total, between 2008 and 2013, except for 2011 when MTR was conducted), about seven implementation support missions focusing on various issues were fielded (at least one a year and sometimes more), which demonstrates the willingness to assist in addressing emerging implementation issues. The supervision missions in 2009 and 2010 were conducted for RULIP and the other IFAD-financed project RPRP which had similar features as RULIP and both managed by MAFF PSU. This reflected the efforts by IFAD to promote the exchange and learning between these projects running at the same time in different areas. The IFAD-supported MTR mission is given credit for identifying opportunities to integrate nutrition issues into the project.
155. While these missions identified issues and made relevant recommendations, many issues emanating from the project design, for example, rigid approach to group formation or multitude of small activities, affected the implementation. Even though adjustments were made, the lost time could not be recovered with implications on the eventual achievements. Furthermore, the follow-up by IFAD after identifying key design and implementation issues at early stage of the project (in supervision missions) was not sufficient, as noted in the PCR, which further stated that "an important lesson for IFAD" being "the need for more proactive and consistent support to projects during early years of implementation".
156. Based on the above, the performance of IFAD is rated as **moderately satisfactory (4)**. The PCR rating was also the same, describing that "IFAD's contribution and support to RULIP has been mixed, but has been more consistent since MTR".

E. Assessment of the quality of the Project Completion Report

157. **Scope.** The scope of the report is largely comprehensive and more or less follows the guidelines by IFAD. The report also includes fairly detailed economic and financial analysis, case studies as well as photos. Weak or missing elements in the PCR include limited coverage of some aspects of the project activities, especially for the second project component (support to decentralization and deconcentration) and no presentation of project costs by components/sub-components. The scope is rated as moderately satisfactory (4).
158. **Quality.** The PCR presents good analytical account of the project performance but there could have been more critical examination of the quality of quantitative data used, in particular, the data from the participatory impact assessment and the end-line survey. For the economic and financial analysis, for example, the PCR used the participatory impact assessment data, without discussing different conflicting data sources and data quality. The quality is assessed as moderately satisfactory (4).
159. **Lessons.** The lessons provided in the PCR are largely relevant and critical, and assessed as satisfactory (5).

⁸² The Government issued in July 2010 a sub-decree on establishment and implementation of the Priority Operating Cost (POC) within the Financing Cooperation of Development Framework". "Unlike supplementary allowances where the project pays their project staffs, POC requires a lengthy implementation procedure which has not been yet in place" (2010 supervision mission report).

160. **Candour.** The PCR is candid, especially in narratives, critically reflecting on issues with the design and implementation (especially that of earlier years). On the other hand, there were some aspects that the PCR was found do to be less candid, for example, in terms of the ratings when provided in the text (the report itself does not present the ratings in a systematic manner and a table was prepared separately and endorsed by the IFAD Asia and the Pacific Division) or no examination and discussion on conflicting data on adoption rates from different sources. Candour is assessed as moderately satisfactory (4).

Key points

- The project objectives and the decentralized approach to implementation were overall relevant, but there were some important weaknesses and over-assumptions in design and initial implementation approach, for example, in relation to group formation and development.
- The project contributed to adoption of improved agricultural technologies and improved production by the beneficiaries, but effectiveness was compromised by design and implementation issues, especially in the initial years, also as demonstrated by lower level of adoption than self-reported. Adjustments made after MTR in efforts to change the extension service and training modality to be more "demand-driven" contributed to improved performance, but the remaining time was short and it was also challenging to turn around some of the fundamental issues largely related to design.
- The performance varied widely between the provinces owing to a combination of factors: capacity of provincial/district teams and quality of service delivery, as well as the contextual issues. There are more challenges in Ratanakiri with a high proportion of indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities, due to very low literacy rate, language issue, different farming systems, remoteness, etc.
- Despite satisfactory timeliness and disbursement performance, there were a number of issues which negatively affected the efficiency, including the quality of implementation compromising the benefits in the initial years.
- The available data provide largely positive indications on impact on incomes, assets and agricultural productivity with project households but with difficulties in linking these changes to RULIP. Impact on human and social capital and empowerment, institutions and policies is mixed.
- With explicit attention to gender issues in the design and based on collaborative work with MOWA/PDoWA, RULIP succeeded in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment.

IV. Conclusions and recommendations

A. Conclusions

161. **The project had a strong poverty and gender focus**, systematically employing wealth-ranking exercise (combined with the use of ID poor list where feasible), integrating project sub-components and activities explicitly related to gender issues with appropriate institutional arrangements. The project also tracked data disaggregated by gender and ethnicity (Khmer or non-Khmer/ethnic minority). On the other hand, the reliance on poverty status as a basis for groupings compromised the foundation for long-term group development.
162. **The project contributed to improved agricultural production, but the benefits were less than expected and were highly uneven.** This was due to, among others, inadequacy of project support especially in the initial years, capacity of provincial/district teams, as well as the contextual issues. The agro-ecological and socio-economic contexts varied widely between the provinces, and so did the performance. Promising achievements and good performance in Preah Vihear were due to a combination of good management at provincial level, fast growing market opportunities for organic rice and other support initiatives. Ratanakiri turned out to be the most challenging case, also due to the predominant presence of indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities in upland areas, different farming systems, different socio-economic situations, lower literacy rate, language issues and remoteness.
163. The analysis undertaken at the design stage on different agro-ecological conditions and socio-economic contexts did not influence much the approach to be differentiated and adapted, compromising the relevance and effectiveness. With specific reference to ethnic minorities, in the latter part of the project, efforts were made to adapt the training delivery modality to be better suited to them, but the extent of adjusting the training "package" or topics adapted to their farming and natural resource management practice was rather limited. It is worthwhile noting that IFAD recently (March 2017) fielded a mission (with an external specialist/consultant on indigenous peoples' issues and a representative of Cambodia's indigenous peoples organization) to design an entry strategy to address indigenous peoples' issues in the context of ongoing ASPIRE's operation.
164. Some design shortcomings, implementation issues and weak follow-ups especially in the initial years rendered the project less effective in achieving the objectives and impact. Adjustments were made in the approaches and quality of implementation improved, but some fundamental issues could not be turned around and full "recovery" was not possible. For example, rigid approach to group formation and lack of clarity of the purpose of groups, which ran through the group formation processes, had repercussions on the effectiveness and eventual sustainability of expected benefits of groups.
165. **There was lack of careful consideration and assessment of farmers' motivation, access to resource, capacity and conditions for them to take up improved agricultural production practices**, for example, means of production (e.g. access to water, labour) or access to markets and market opportunities. These were indeed among the important barriers to putting the training into practice.
166. **The project provided opportunities for the public agricultural extension system to try, experience and appreciate demand-driven approaches, but the extent of its institutionalization and sustainability is still low.** Positions of public agricultural extension workforce go only up to the district level, and field-level extension service providers (e.g. CEWs) have been mostly dependent on externally-funded projects. It can also be argued many of these trained field-level agents have remained (and are likely to remain) in performing the same or similar lines of work with different projects in their respective localities, but this is far from

being institutionalized with prospect of sustained services. While the value of pluralistic extension services is recognized as reflected in the 2015 agricultural extension policy, the Government is likely to continue to have a role in supporting especially smallholder farmers. The ongoing ASPIRE is expected to make progresses in coming up with extension models that are suitable to the Cambodian context.

167. **The level of linkages between GRF and productive activities was not substantial, but GRF helped ease cash flow of beneficiary households and supported the building of social capital.** Access to loans through GRF almost as an entitlement helped cash flow of the rural households, but GRF loans were limited in size and terms and conditions, the money is fungible and it is understandable that the households may wish to use the GRF loans for non-productive purposes. During the project period, MFI services in rural areas increased significantly, which further diminished the relevance of GRF. Nonetheless, GRF mechanism served to be a foundation for further development for some ACs.
168. **Nutrition activities introduced after the MTR fitted well with the RULIP set-up and focus, and were relevant given high level of malnutrition in Cambodia.** Close involvement of MOWA and PDoWA in the project and existing channel of training delivery through LIGs/MVFGs facilitated smooth integration of this activity. The approaches promoted were considered to be promising but the activities ran for a short time and data and documentation was not adequate.

B. Recommendations

169. Key recommendations are provided below for consideration by IFAD and the Royal Government of Cambodia.
170. **Recommendation 1. Design, implement and monitor differentiated approaches grounded on target group analysis.** As mentioned (paragraph 163), some activities have already been initiated to better integrate indigenous peoples' issues and needs in the context of the ASPIRE, and progress and performance should be monitored continuously. There is also need to recognize the differences in capacity levels of beneficiaries (as well as project implementers). Project approaches should be adapted to maximize relevance and effectiveness (including, for example, communication modality), with appropriate allocation of project investment and realistic timeline. For example, farmers who have been less exposed to improved agricultural techniques or markets, or indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities, may require more capacity-building support and follow-up over a longer period of time, and such consideration needs to be reflected in project design, budgeting and planning.
171. **Recommendation 2. Ensure farmer training and agricultural advisory services are commensurate with farmers' resources and conditions and informed by market opportunities.** It is important to critically assess whether there are sufficient enabling conditions for beneficiaries to take advantage of the technical support package. The assessment should be context-specific and set forth the scope, content and approach for project interventions. For example, consideration might be needed on whether it is necessary to incorporate more support for improved access to inputs/means of production (e.g. access to water), or to adjust/adapt the technical package to reflect the prevailing conditions (e.g. taking into consideration labour shortages). Projects should also support enabling farmers to make "informed" decisions on agricultural productive activities, taking into consideration key factors, such as costs and benefits, inputs/labour requirements and market opportunities.
172. **Recommendation 3. Invest in capacity-building of farmer groups/organizations for their economic empowerment,** including but not limited to agricultural cooperatives. While cooperatives play an important role in

building social capital, they are foremost business entities and an instrument for farmers to enhance their productive activities and incomes. Support to cooperatives may include capacity-building to strengthen internal governance and leadership development, and should be based on the principles of cooperative development, such as voluntarism, independence and autonomy, and democratic member control.

173. **Recommendation 4. Strengthen attention to nutrition in ongoing and future agricultural and rural development projects.** Despite economic growth, malnutrition is still a concern in Cambodia. Given some interesting experience in RULIP and the IFAD's stronger focus on nutrition in recent years, IFAD and the Government should explore opportunities to incorporate activities or adjust approach with a nutrition lens in ongoing or future interventions where feasible.

Rating comparison

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>IFAD-PMD rating^a</i>	<i>PPE rating^a</i>	<i>Rating disconnect</i>
Rural poverty impact	5	4	-1
Project performance			
Relevance	5	4	-1
Effectiveness	5	4	-1
Efficiency	2	3	1
Sustainability of benefits	5	3	-2
Project performance^b	4.25	3.5	-0.75
Other performance criteria			
Gender equality and women's empowerment	4	4	0
Innovation	5	4	-1
Scaling up	5 ("potential for scaling-up")	3	-2
Environment and natural resources management	5	4	-1
Adaptation to climate change	n.p.	n.p.	n.a.
Overall project achievement^c	5	4	-1
Performance of partners^d			
IFAD	4	4	0
Government	4	4	0
Average net disconnect			-0.73

^a Rating scale: 1 = highly unsatisfactory; 2 = unsatisfactory; 3 = moderately unsatisfactory; 4 = moderately satisfactory; 5 = satisfactory; 6 = highly satisfactory; n.p. = not provided; n.a. = not applicable.

^b Arithmetic average of ratings for relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of benefits.

^c This is not an average of ratings of individual evaluation criteria but an overarching assessment of the project, drawing upon the rating for relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability of benefits, rural poverty impact, gender, innovation and scaling up, environment and natural resources management, and adaptation to climate change.

^d The rating for partners' performance is not a component of the overall project achievement rating.

Ratings of the project completion report quality

	<i>PMD rating</i>	<i>IOE PCRV rating</i>	<i>Net disconnect</i>
Scope	n.a.	4	n.a.
Quality (methods, data, participatory process)	n.a.	4	n.a.
Lessons	n.a.	5	n.a.
Candour	n.a.	4	n.a.

Rating scale: 1 = highly unsatisfactory; 2 = unsatisfactory; 3 = moderately unsatisfactory; 4 = moderately satisfactory; 5 = satisfactory; 6 = highly satisfactory; n.a. = not applicable.

Basic project data

			Approval (US\$ m)		Actual (US\$ m)	
Region	Asia and the Pacific	Total project costs	11.51		13.64	
Country	Kingdom of Cambodia					
Grant number Grant (additional) Loan number * (additional)	DSF-8005-KH DSF-8005A-KH 862-KH	IFAD loans/grant and percentage of total	Original 9.52 (With additional: US\$12 mill)	82.6	11.99	87.9
Type of project (subsector)	AGRIC	Recipient government	0.71	6.2	0.49	3.6
Financing type	IFAD-initiated	Beneficiaries				
Lending terms *	Highly concessional	Other sources: UNDP	1.29	11.2	1.16	8.5
Date of approval	18 Apr 2007					
Date of loan signature	28 May 2007					
Date of effectiveness	31 Aug 2007					
Loan amendments	Twice (July 2008 & June 2012)	Number of beneficiaries: (if appropriate, specify if direct or indirect)	22,600HHs (direct)		Direct: 15,669 HH Indirect: 8,500 HH	
Loan closure extensions	NA					
Country programme managers	Youqiong Wang Khalid El-Harizi Benoit Thierry	Loan/grant closing date	31 Mar 2015		31 Mar 2015	
Regional director(s)	Thomas Elhaut	Mid-term review			July 2011	
Project performance evaluation reviewer	Fumiko Nakai	IFAD funds disbursement at project completion (%)			96%	
Project performance evaluation quality control panel	Fabrizio Felloni Mark Keating	Date of project completion report			17 Dec 2014	

Source: President's report, appraisal report, PCR.

* There are four types of lending terms: (i) special loans on highly concessional terms, free of interest but bearing a service charge of three fourths of one per cent (0.75%) per annum and having a maturity period of 40 years, including a grace period of 10 years; (ii) loans on hardened terms, bearing a service charge of three fourths of one per cent (0.75 per cent) per annum and having a maturity period of 20 years, including a grace period of 10 years; (iii) loans on intermediate terms, with a rate of interest per annum equivalent to 50 per cent of the variable reference interest rate and a maturity period of 20 years, including a grace period of five years; (iv) loans on ordinary terms, with a rate of interest per annum equivalent to one hundred per cent (100 per cent) of the variable reference interest rate, and a maturity period of 15-18 18 years, including a grace period of three years.

Approach paper

A. Background

1. The Independent Office of Evaluation (IOE) undertakes: (i) validation of project completion reports (PCRs) for all completed projects, based on a desk review of PCRs and other documents; and (ii) project performance evaluations (PPEs) involving country visits for selected projects (about 10 in a year).¹
2. The Rural Livelihoods Improvement Project in Kratie, Preah Vihear and Ratanakirri (RULIP) in the Kingdom of Cambodia (implemented between 2007 and 2014) has been selected for a PPE, among others, to feed into the planned country strategy and programme evaluation (CSPE) as per the 2017 IOE work programme approved by the 119th session of the IFAD Executive Board in December 2016. The RULIP PPE mission is scheduled for March 2017.
3. This document presents a brief description of RULIP, the PPE objectives, scope and methodology, and evaluation questions which would guide this PPE. A separate draft approach paper will be prepared for the CSPE.

B. Project overview²

4. **Project context.** In 2007, per capita gross national income in Cambodia was US\$590, with Myanmar being the only country in south-east Asia with a figure lower than Cambodia (at US\$350).³ According to the 2004 Cambodia Socio-Economic Survey, the incidence of poverty for Cambodia was estimated at 34.7 per cent: higher at 39.2 per cent in rural areas and 24.6 per cent in urban areas excluding the capital. According to the RULIP appraisal report (2007), 91 per cent of the poor lived in rural areas and thus poverty was largely a rural phenomenon.
5. The causes of poverty noted include remoteness, lack of access to sufficient land and/or draught animals and other productive assets, shortage of labour for farming, lack of income earning opportunities, and lack of access to health and education services. The RULIP appraisal report also underlined low agricultural productivity, as well as heavy reliance on rice (some 90 per cent of the total planted area under rice). It was indicated that low agricultural productivity was due to low levels of technology, poor soils and climate events like floods and droughts. For example, the average rice yield of about 2.0 t/ha in the country was compared to 2.6 t/ha in Thailand, 4.6 t/ha in Viet Nam and 6.3 t/ha in China.
6. With regard to the policy and institutional context, the Government's Agricultural and Water Strategy (2006-2010) envisaged five programmes with follows: (i) institutional capacity-building and management support for the agriculture and water sectors; (ii) food security support including intensified and diversified food production by food-insecure smallholders, empowerment of community groups, food security related information and policies; (iii) agricultural and agri-business support; (iv) water resources, irrigation and land management; and (v) agricultural and water resources research, education and extension. RULIP appears to be relevant particularly to (ii) and perhaps also (i).
7. The Government was promoting "decentralization and deconcentration" (so-called "D&D") and established the National Committee for the Management of Decentralization and Deconcentration Reform (NCDD) in 2006. One component of

¹ The selection criteria for PPE include: (i) information gaps in PCRs; (ii) projects of strategic relevance that offer enhanced opportunities for learning; (iii) a need to build evidence for forthcoming corporate level evaluations, country strategy and programme evaluations or evaluation synthesis reports; and (iv) a regional balance of IOE's evaluation programme.

² Information in this section is mostly derived from the 2007 RULIP appraisal report, financing agreement and project completion report.

³ Other countries include: Lao PDR US\$620, Viet Nam US\$850.

RULIP was to support decentralization and deconcentration - with a particular focus on the agriculture sector.

8. **Project area.** The project covered three provinces (out of 25 provinces in the country), Kratie, Preah Vihear and Ratanakiri located in the northeast of Cambodia. All of these provinces share international borders: Kratie province with Viet Nam, Ratanakiri with Viet Nam to the east and Lao PDR to the north, and Preah Vihear with Thailand and Lao PDR. According to the RULIP appraisal report of 2007, the total land area of the three provinces was reported to be 37,789 km², equivalent to 21 per cent of the country, of which nearly 88 per cent was under forest, while agricultural land accounted for only 3 per cent. The three provinces comprised 21 districts, 144 communes and 698 villages.
9. Based on the 2004 commune database,⁴ according to the appraisal report, the total population of the three provinces was 551,403 living in 110,490 households, with 90 per cent of the population living in the rural areas. It was reported that all provinces had indigenous ethnic minority groups, but with a particularly high proportion in Ratanakiri (68 per cent of the population). The poverty rates in these provinces have been among the highest over the years. The 2007 data⁵ shows the poverty rates of 45.7 per cent in Preah Vihear (the highest in the country), 45 per cent in Ratanakiri (second highest), and 41.5 per cent in Kratie (6th highest).
10. **Target group and targeting approach.** According to the project design, the target group was to cover four particularly disadvantaged subgroups: (i) poor households with little land; (ii) landless households; (iii) woman-headed households with young children and many dependents; and (iv) indigenous/ethnic minority households. It was initially planned that about 22,600 poor households or 38 per cent of the population of the project area would benefit.⁶
11. The project was to target about 84 poor communes in 16 districts (out of 144 communes in 21 districts) in the three project provinces. Within the communes, the project was to target: (i) poorer villages where there is potential for increased income generation and better natural resource management; and (ii) ethnic minority communities. Within each commune, the poorest villages would be identified through available data, field visits and consultation with the commune councils. The project was then to use a community-based targeting approach within the selected villages, facilitated by commune extension workers and overseen by the village elders.
12. **Project goal and objectives.** Under the overall goal to improve the livelihoods of the rural poor in the project area, the project objective was "to make a positive and sustainable impact on agricultural development"⁷ in the targeted communes.⁸ The expected project outputs⁹ were as follows: (i) farmers and communities adapt improved and sustainable farming and agricultural land management systems; (ii) improved services are delivered to the poor in a participatory and demand-driven manner; and (iii) increased capacity for policy analysis and pro-poor policy formulation is secured for the agricultural sector and for mainstreaming gender within the sector.

⁴ According to the Commune Database Online (accessed December 2016), the population in the three provinces in 2007 was 605,114 and 673,727 in 2010.

⁵ Ministry of Planning. 2012. Poverty Reduction by Capital, Provinces, Municipalities, Districts, Khans and Communes, Sangkats: Based on Commune Data Base, year 2004-2012.

⁶ The financing agreement states that "the main purpose of the project is to assist approximately 60,000 poor households in the project area achieve a sustainable impact on agricultural development". The reason for this discrepancy and the basis of 60,000 households is not clear from preliminary document review. The appraisal report provided the target of 22,600 households as direct beneficiaries and 11,300 as indirect beneficiaries, with a total of 33,900 beneficiary households.

⁷ RULIP president's report, April 2007.

⁸ See footnote 5 above on how the "project purpose" was provided in the financing agreement.

⁹ According to the financing agreement and the logical framework in the RULIP President's Report.

13. **Project components.** According to the RULIP design, the project comprised two components as follows:
- (i) **Livelihoods improvement component.** The financing agreement presents the following two "sub-components":¹⁰ (a) livelihoods improvement groups (LIGs); and (b) farming system improvement (FSI) groups. Groups, envisaged with the membership of about 20-25, were to be identified, formed and provided with support in areas/activities such as training, inputs, grants for revolving funds, savings and credit activities, introduction of improved technologies. The component also covered what is termed "complementary support programmes" with the following activities: support to commune planning; support to village animal health workers (VAHWs) and village extension workers (VEWs); awareness raising on laws and regulations related to land, fisheries and agriculture; gender mainstreaming; support for marketing initiatives; integrated farming system demonstrations; private sector development; district fairs; establishment of Young Farmers' Clubs; and piloting of agro-processing enterprises. About 80 per cent of the project budget was allocated to this component.
 - (ii) **Support for decentralization and deconcentration in agriculture.** This component comprised the following four sub-components:¹¹ (a) support for Provincial Agriculture Investment Programme (support for project implementation and coordination at different levels - national, provincial, district and commune); (b) policy analysis; (c) support for gender mainstreaming in agriculture; and (d) learning communities. The last sub-component "learning communities", to be fully financed by UNDP with the cost of US\$360,000, was to support "learning communities" selected from each province. A learning community was described as "a group composed of one village or one commune, local NGOs, the commune council and the facilitators in which knowledge is shared among all participants both horizontally and vertically",¹² supposedly with a focus on agriculture and natural resource management.
14. **Implementation arrangements.** The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) was the lead project agency, under which, a Project Support Unit (PSU) was to be established. The Ministry of Women's Affairs was another key implementing partner.
15. The implementation of the livelihoods improvement component was largely decentralized, with the Provincial Departments of Agriculture (PDAs) leading the implementation and also the PDOWAs implementing some activities. The PSU in the MAFF was responsible for coordinating and supporting the implementation in project provinces, coordinating and managing budgeting, M&E, reporting, as well as fiduciary aspects including financial management and procurement.
16. **Project financing.** The project cost was initially estimated as US\$11.51 million, including an IFAD grant (under debt sustainability framework, DSF) of US\$9.52 million (SDR 6.4 million), UNDP financing of US\$1.29 million¹³ and the Government counterpart funding of US\$0.71 million.
17. After the mid-term review, the original DSF grant of SDR 6.4 million was reallocated between the financing categories and furthermore, supplementary financing of SDR 1.7 million (US\$2.5 million, 50 per cent in loan and 50 per cent in grant and not 100 per cent grant)¹⁴ for this project was approved by the IFAD

¹⁰ In the appraisal report, the term "sub-component" is not used in relation to the first component.

¹¹ The appraisal report present three sub-components and not four, with "policy analysis" subsumed under the first subcomponent.

¹² RULIP appraisal report, para 210 and footnote 27.

¹³ According to the appraisal report, UNDP was to finance: (i) technical assistance; and (ii) cost of the learning communities.

¹⁴ This was in light of the revision of the DSF status from "red" to "yellow".

board (December 2011). The rationale for supplementary financing presented included high disbursement performance at that time due to, among other factors, "the exceptionally high inflation rates early in the project (25 per cent in 2008); the inclusion of additional, and originally unforeseen, support to assist the most vulnerable households in target villages; the non-delivery by UNDP of the level of support for agricultural technical assistance originally envisaged under the Government's Project in Support of Democratic Development through Decentralization and Deconcentration; and increases in staff numbers above appraisal levels".¹⁵

18. Actual total project cost was US\$13.64 million (over 97 per cent of the revised cost including the supplementary financing, table 1), and the disbursement of the IFAD funding - loan and grants combined - was 96 per cent.¹⁶ There is no data on the actual project cost by components/sub-components in the PCR.¹⁷ Table 2 provides actual disbursement against the allocation by financing category only for the IFAD financing parts. Table 2 shows that the financing category for which the largest proportion of the IFAD funds was disbursed was for training.

Annex III - Table 1

Project financing: original estimate, revised cost and actual cost (US\$ million)

	Original	%	With supplementary financing	%	Actual cost	%
IFAD	9.52 ^a	82.6	12.02 ^b	85.7	11.99	87.9
Government	0.71	6.2	0.71	5.1	0.49	3.6
UNDP	1.29	11.2	1.29	9.2	1.16	8.5
TOTAL	11.52	100	14.02	100	13.64	100

a SDR 6.4 million in grant

b With supplementary financing of SDR1.7 million approved in 2011 (50% grant, 50% loan)

Annex III - Table 2

IFAD financing allocation and disbursement by category (SDR)

	Original (SDR)	Reallocation + supplementary grant and loan 2012 (SDR)				Actual (SDR)				Proportion	
	DSF 8005	DSF 8005	DSF 8005-A	Loan	Total	8005	8005-A	Loan	Total	Original	Actual
I. Vehicles	345 000	405 000			405 000.00	403 911.53			403 911.53	6.0%	5.2%
II. Civil works	150 000	254 000			254 000.00	268 988.54			268 988.54	2.6%	3.5%
III. Materials	1 650 000	1 303 000			1 303 000.00	1 339 453.79			1 339 453.79	28.6%	17.2%
IV. Equipment	100 000	125 000			125 000.00	124 318.49			124 318.49	1.7%	1.6%
V. Training	1 410 000	1 410 000	410 000	410 000	2 230 000.00	1 561 909.80	256 031.44	255 421.69	2 073 362.93	24.4%	26.6%
VI. Contracts and studies	320 000	320 000	440 000	440 000	1 200 000.00	289 125.41	440 089.75	440 305.48	1 169 520.64	5.5%	15.0%
VII. Staff allowances	1 050 000	1 553 000			1 553 000.00	1 660 882.42			1 660 882.42	18.2%	21.3%
VIII. Incremental operating costs	745 000	780 000			780 000.00	748 467.56			748 467.56	12.9%	9.6%
IX. Unallocated	630 000	250 000			250 000.00				-	NA	NA
	6 400 000	6 400 000	850 000	850 000	8 100 000	6 397 057.54	696 121.19	695 727.17	7 788 905.90	100.0%	100.0%
						100.0%	81.9%	81.9%	96.2%		

19. **Timeframe.** The original DSF grant in the amount of SDR 6.4 million (equivalent to US\$9.52 million) was approved on 18 April 2007. The financing agreement was signed on 28 May 2007 and it became effective on 31 August 2007. Additional financing (equivalent to US\$2.5 million, 50 per cent loan and 50 per cent grant) was approved in December 2011 and subsequently, the financing agreement was amended in its entirety dated 21 June 2012. The programme was completed on 30 September 2014 and the loan/grant closing was on 31 March 2015 as per original schedule.

¹⁵ RULIP president's memorandum for supplementary financing. EB2011/104/R.20/Rev.1

¹⁶ The disbursement rate of the original loan was almost 100 per cent, but that for the grant and the loan under the supplementary financing was 82 per cent for both.

¹⁷ The latest supervision mission (September 2013, one year before the completion) indicated that 80 per cent of the project expenditure then was for component 1 compared to 70 per cent per design.

20. **Supervision arrangements.** It was initially proposed that the United Nations Office for Project Services would act as a cooperating institution responsible for administering the financing and supervising the programme. However, soon after the approval, with an overall corporate shift to direct supervision, it was decided that IFAD would be responsible for supervision and this necessitated the first amendment to the financing agreement (July 2008).
21. **Amendments to the financing agreement.** The financing agreement was amended twice: (i) reflecting the change to direct supervision (July 2008); and (ii) original grant reallocation and the integration of additional financing (a loan and a grant) (June 2012).
22. **Project implementation - snapshot.** The PCR reported that 15,669 households benefited directly from the project, for most of whom (14,894 households) through participation as members of various self-help groups (i.e. livelihoods improvement groups [LIGs], farming systems improvement [FSI] groups and Most Vulnerable Family [MVF] groups).¹⁸ Under the project, 358 LIGs, 48 MVF groups and 228 FSI groups were formed (a total of 634 groups). In addition to those members of self-help groups, counted as part of the beneficiaries were service providers (VAHWs, community extension workers [CEWs],¹⁹ integrated pest management trainers), commune council members, individuals who participated in district fairs and Young Farmers Clubs. The reported number of households reached was short of the original target of 22,600 but met and surpassed the revised target of 14,800 households (revised at the mid-term review).
23. The PCR reports a number of adjustments made during the implementation, including the following: (i) measures employed to make agricultural training more relevant and effective, in terms of needs identification (demand-driven vs. supply-driven) and delivery modality (including contracting of a NGO to support VAHWs); (ii) adjustments in the implementation modality to be better suited to indigenous communities (e.g. distinct farming systems) especially in Ratanakiri; and (iii) initiatives to strengthen and upgrade viable farmer groups (for group revolving funds [GRFs]) and merge them into larger groups, e.g. agricultural cooperatives.
24. According to the self-rating on the project performance at completion, the overall project achievement was considered as satisfactory (5), with the ratings for most of the evaluation criteria being 5 or 4, except for efficiency (2, unsatisfactory).

C. PPE objectives and scope

25. The PPE will be undertaken in accordance with the IFAD's Evaluation Policy²⁰ and the IFAD Evaluation Manual (second edition, 2015), building on a desk review of PCR and other available data. The main objectives of the PPE are to: (i) assess the results of the project; (ii) generate findings and recommendations for the design and implementation of ongoing and future operations in the country; and (iii) provide project-level evidence that will feed into the CSPE.
26. **Scope.** A PPE provides assessment and independent ratings on the project performance according to the standard evaluation criteria defined in the IOE Evaluation Manual (see paragraph 38). At the same time, in view of the time and resources available, the PPE is generally not expected to examine the full spectrum of project activities, achievements and drawbacks. Rather, it will focus on selected key issues of focus with consideration to the following: (i) contextual, project design and/or implementation issues that had a critical bearing on project achievements or challenge and unsatisfactory performance; and (ii) issues of importance that cut across in the IFAD Cambodia portfolio to feed into the

¹⁸ Originally, MVF groups were not included in the RULIP design. This category was reportedly added in 2009 as a result of the study of the impact of soaring prices to the very poor families in the project areas.

¹⁹ The terminology seems to have changed from "village extension workers (VEWs)" in the design document to CEWs in PCR, also reflecting the level at which they work and the coverage (i.e. village level vs. commune level).

²⁰ <http://www.ifad.org/pub/policy/oe.pdf>.

upcoming CSPE. A theory of change for the project, which has been reconstructed by the PPE team in absence of its clear presentation in the project design, will be used to guide the identification of key issues (presented later in the section) and the evaluation approach.

27. **RULIP theory of change.** The underlying theory of change narrative – as put together by the PPE team based on the available project documents - would be that capacity-building/training of targeted poor households and the provision of demand-driven and improved extension services, combined with the provision of start-up capital and the setting up of group revolving fund would enable farming households to access agricultural inputs and adopt improved and sustainable agricultural production practices, which would lead to improved agricultural production and productivity, and then to improved livelihoods. "Improved livelihoods" would mean improved food security and nutrition, household incomes and assets. Groups of targeted beneficiaries are a main vehicle for the project service delivery. A schematic presentation of the reconstructed theory of change including key assumptions was prepared.
28. The PCR commented that "the design included many small, non-core activities".²¹ This means that it is complicated to present a cohesive theory of change which is comprehensive of *all* inputs and activities supported by the project leading to a set of outputs, outcomes and impact. Consequently, there are a number of small project activities which are not included the schematic presentation of the reconstructed theory of change, either or both because their linkage with expected outcomes is unclear or/and because adding all small activities would make the theory of change rather too complicated. These include activities such as awareness raising on laws and regulations related to land, fisheries and agriculture, district fairs or establishment of Young Farmers' Clubs.
29. **Key issues for evaluation in PPE.** Based on a desk review of the PCR, other basic documentation and preliminary discussions during the preparatory mission, key issues for this PPE (to be covered under different evaluation criteria) have been identified as below. All issues presented here are highly relevant to the overall IFAD portfolio and will be subjected to further analysis in the CSPE covering other relevant projects.
30. *Targeting and working through groups of beneficiaries.* Mobilization and formation of groups of beneficiaries was central to this project. There were different types of groups, i.e. LIGs, MVF groups and FSI groups. In fact, a similar group-based approach has been employed extensively in most IFAD-financed projects in the country.
31. The project employed a combination of geographical and social targeting (use of government records/list of poor households and wealth ranking exercise). Identification of poor households and mobilizing them to form groups was at the core of the project's poverty targeting strategy. After the start-up, the project introduced a new category of beneficiary groups, i.e. "most vulnerable family (MVF)" groups, in addition to LIGs and FSI groups. The PCR assessed the project performance in terms of targeting as "satisfactory", noting that it reached out to "the intended targets, who are poor households who have little, or even no land, few livestock or other assets and often many dependents".
32. In RULIP, these groups served as a channel for delivering training and extension services, as well as for receiving inputs and grants with the expectation that the groups would promote and engage in savings and credit activities, set up and operate GRFs (in particular, LIGs and MVF groups).²² One of the lessons identified

²¹ The "non-core activities" mentioned by the PCR included: support to Young Farmers Clubs and Women's Groups, law awareness raising, support to rice banks, agricultural market information system, and ethnic minority fund.

²² FIS groups did not receive grants for GRFs, as the members were considered to be less poor and what they lack was knowledge and access to technologies.

- in the PCR – as also reflected in the theory of change as one of the assumptions - is about the importance of clear understanding of common purposes and value added of groups from the onset. The PCR frankly stated that "poorly mobilized groups are unlikely to ever recover – as was seen in Ratanakiri".
33. The PPE will review the roles and functions (during RULIP, current or expected), current status, activities and membership of different types of groups with the aim to draw lessons on how and in what circumstances group-based approaches are likely to be more relevant and effective – for what purposes and for whom, as well as their sustainability. The PPE will also examine the impact such groups may have had on social capital and empowerment.
 34. Group revolving fund and access to finance. The use of GRFs is extensive in the IFAD-supported projects and this is also closely linked to the point above (i.e. group-based approach). The interaction with stakeholders during the preparatory mission revealed that sustainability of the GRF operations after the project is a common concern, including in other ongoing projects. The theory of change indicates that the capacity (e.g. credit management skills), group governance and the relevance of such funding mechanism to the members' needs are among the important assumptions for sustainable GRF operations. The RULIP PCR reported that out of 406 GRF groups, 283 (about 70 per cent) were expected to continue operating after the project – "with 37 continuing as standalone GRF groups and 246 merging in to 92 agricultural cooperatives created through the project". At the same time, the PCR mentioned that the efforts to enhance their sustainability were introduced at later stage of the project and therefore recognized that there were still uncertainties in this regard at project completion.
 35. The PPE will follow up on a sample of the GRF groups assessed as "successful" and the agricultural cooperatives formed (which were considered to have a reasonable likelihood of continuation, according to the assessment of at project completion 2.5 years ago), to examine the relevance and effectiveness of the GRF approach and key factors influencing the likelihood of success and sustainability. A number of studies have been carried out to explore options for improving access to finance by the rural poor and for community/member-based financial services (not only linked to RULIP).²³ A review of such studies and interviews with key informants and resource persons would be an important input to complement data collection during the field visits.
 36. Roles of community-level extension service providers, effectiveness and sustainability of their service provision. The project supported and worked with different types of extension service providers: CEWs, VAHWs and integrated pest management trainers. In the 2015 Agricultural Extension Policy by MAFF, CEWs and VEWs are explicitly mentioned among the "four types of agricultural extension workers". According to the PCR, CEWs in RULIP "were a critical part of the project modality but in many ways had a confused role - spending large amounts of time supporting the operation of the GRF savings and credit activities but also required to support farmer training as well as other project activities in the commune". With regard to VAHWs, the PCR indicated that "fee-based private animal health and production services are already viable in many locations in rural Cambodia", but that "to accelerate the emergence of such systems on a sustainable basis, there is a need for an improved process of selection, mobilization, training and coaching of candidate VAHW supported the development of district level associations/co-operatives of such service providers to increase the sustainability of such systems."
 37. The PPE will examine the effectiveness of their services during the project and also follow up on the current status and activities of these service providers supported

²³ Including "Community-Based Finance in Cambodia: A comparative study of savings and credit models for community development" (FAO 2015), an assessment of Cambodia's revolving credit through IFAD implementation support mission to RULIP in 2009 (still to be located), "UNDP/IFAD Joint Study on Group Revolving Fund" (UNDP/IFAD, 2007).

under RULIP - to understand how and in which cases the extension modality through commune/village-level service providers are more likely to be relevant, effective, efficient and sustainable. The assessment will need to take into consideration the Government's policy position on the roles of commune/village-level extension service providers, required qualifications and financing modalities, as well as experience of other similar initiatives.

38. **Evaluation criteria.** In line with the IOE's Evaluation Manual (2015), the key evaluation criteria applied in PPEs in principle include the following:
- (i) **Rural poverty impact**, which is defined as the changes that have occurred or are expected to occur in the lives of the rural poor (whether positive or negative, direct or indirect, intended or unintended) as a result of development interventions. Four impact domains are employed to generate a composite indication of rural poverty impact: (i) household income and assets; (ii) human and social capital and empowerment; (iii) food security and agricultural productivity; and (iv) institutions and policies. A composite rating will be provided for the criterion of "rural poverty impact" but not for each of the impact domains.
 - (ii) **Relevance**,²⁴ which is assessed both in terms of alignment of project objectives with country and IFAD policies for agriculture and rural development and the needs of the rural poor, as well as project design features geared to the achievement of project objectives.
 - (iii) **Effectiveness**, which measures the extent to which the project's immediate objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance.
 - (iv) **Efficiency**, which indicates how economically resources/inputs (e.g. funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted into results.
 - (v) **Sustainability of benefits**, indicating the likely continuation of net benefits from a development intervention beyond the phase of external funding support. It also includes an assessment of the likelihood that actual and anticipated results will be resilient to risks beyond the project's life.
 - (vi) **Gender equality and women's empowerment**, indicating the extent to which IFAD's interventions have contributed to better gender equality and women's empowerment, for example, in terms of women's access to and ownership of assets, resources and services; participation in decision making work loan balance and impact on women's incomes, nutrition and livelihoods.
 - (vii) **Innovation and scaling up**, assessing the extent to which IFAD development interventions: (a) have introduced innovative approaches to rural poverty reduction; and (b) have been (or are likely to be) scaled up by government authorities, donor organizations, the private sector and other agencies. Separate ratings will be provided for innovation and scaling up.
 - (viii) **Environment and natural resource management**, assessing the extent to which a project contributes to changes in the protection, rehabilitation or depletion of natural resource and the environment.
 - (ix) **Adaptation to climate change**, assessing the contribution of the project to increase climate resilience and increase beneficiaries' capacity to manage short- and long-term climate risks.
 - (x) **Overall project achievement** provides an overarching assessment of the intervention, drawing upon the analysis and ratings for all above-mentioned criteria.

²⁴ An average of the ratings for relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of benefits will be the project performance rating.

- (xi) **Performance of partners**, including the performance of IFAD and the Government, will be assessed on an individual basis, with a view to the partners' expected role and responsibility in the project life cycle.
39. An evaluation framework (attached) has been developed, with guiding evaluation questions according to the evaluation criteria described above. The evaluation questions contained in the framework reflect the guidance in the IOE Evaluation Manual as well as key issues identified (in the next section).
40. **Rating system.** In line with the practice adopted in many other international financial institutions and UN organizations, IOE uses a six-point rating system, where 6 is the highest score (highly satisfactory) and 1 being the lowest score (highly unsatisfactory).

D. Evaluation methodology

41. The PPE will build on a desk review of PCR and other key project documents and available data (including impact assessments carried out at project completion) while taking into account the contexts and information from interviews at the IFAD headquarters and during the CSPE/PPE preparatory mission.²⁵ During the main PPE mission, additional evidence and data will be collected to verify available evidence and to reach an independent assessment of performance and results. The PPE will use a theory of change for an examination of assumed causal linkages and whether there is sufficient evidence to support these linkages, while also examining to what extent key assumptions were realistic.
42. **Data collection.** Careful review, analysis and triangulation of reported project achievements will be key. Validation of project results will be done through bringing in and cross-checking information and evidences from multiple sources and stakeholder perspectives.
43. *Prior to the PPE mission.* In the preparatory stage, relevant documents and data are gathered and reviewed to guide the evaluation design and planning and conduct of the PPE mission. Main project-related documents and data for a desk review include the following: (i) project design documents; (ii) project implementation manual; (iii) financing agreements, amendments and background documents; (iv) supervision and implementation support mission reports; (v) mid-term review report; (vi) PCR; (vii) IFAD periodical project status reports with self-assessment ratings; (viii) IFAD financial and disbursement data; (ix) annual impact survey reports and participatory impact assessment reports prepared by the project; (x) baseline, mid-term and end-line household survey reports in line with the IFAD's results and impact management system (RIMS);²⁶ and (xi) impact evaluation carried out by the IFAD Strategy and Knowledge Department.²⁷
44. Additional data, information and documents will be collected as much as possible prior to the mission - through email correspondence with the project stakeholders and during the CSPE/PPE preparatory mission. These may include project M&E data and reports or some technical reports produced by the project. In addition, secondary data from other sources and statistics (e.g. commune database, agricultural statistics) will also be collected where relevant to better contextualize the project results and achievements.
45. Interviews will be conducted with IFAD staff, in-country stakeholders during the preparatory mission (with a limited number of people who were involved in the project management), and possibly also main consultants who were involved in

²⁵ The CSPE/PPE preparatory mission was undertaken from 23 January to 2 February 2017, including the participation of the IOE lead evaluator in the IFAD annual country portfolio review (24-26 January 2017).

²⁶ The RIMS end-line household survey covered a sample of 1,887 households, almost equally split by the treatment group and control group (with two subgroups). The survey questions covered a wide range of issues such as food security, nutrition, household assets, agricultural technological transfer and crop and livestock production.

²⁷ The impact evaluation by SKD covered 803 project households and 601 control households.

supervision and implementation support. Interactions with stakeholders would help the PPE team identify additional relevant data and reports and key issues for attention.

46. Given that two different impact assessment surveys were carried out at and after project completion both with a relatively large sample (see paragraph 43), the PPE team will also seek to access data files in order to better understand the analysis and findings presented. The available data and evidence are reviewed to examine the extent of consistencies or inconsistencies while reflecting the plausible causal links and assumptions in the theory of change, and to identify gaps to refine the tools and questions to guide the field work.
47. Data collection during the mission. The PPE mission will be conducted for about 2 weeks, including visits to the project sites over 6-7 days. During the in-country work, additional primary and secondary data will be collected. Data collection methods will mostly include qualitative techniques. The methods deployed will consist of individual and group interviews, focus group discussions with project stakeholders, beneficiaries and other key informants and resource persons, and direct observations.
48. In light of the key issues for PPE identified (presented earlier), groups formed by the project would be one of the main units of analysis. In relation to GRF, groups/organizations to be assessed will be sampled from the 92 agricultural cooperatives formed during the project by merging 246 smaller groups and 37 original groups which were expected to continue with the GRF operations. During the project, an NGO was contracted to monitor the performance of the groups and to provide follow-up and training.²⁸ Their records at project end (e.g. list of cooperatives/groups with portfolio data) would provide a basis for selecting a sample of the cooperatives and groups. It is envisaged that the PPE team would interact with about 10-12 cooperatives/groups (note that a cooperative covers multiple original smaller groups). The focus would be to trace those cooperatives/groups that were considered to have good prospect for continuing, assess their current status and to understand key factors influencing sustainability.
49. Data collection on cooperatives/groups will be guided by a short institutional assessment form to be developed, as well as key guiding questions.²⁹ Data collection method also involves direct observation, mainly the financial records kept by the groups. Data collection would cover parameters such as basic data on the groups, changes over the years (e.g. membership, management structure and members, lending capital and portfolio growth), operating modality (e.g. voluntary or paid staff/services), current portfolio (savings, loan products, active borrowers, loans outstanding, repayment rates or portfolio at risk, etc.).
50. Field visit site selection. The PPE mission will conduct field visits in all three project provinces (Ratanakiri, and Kratie or Preah Vihear). Site selection for field visits will be guided by the following consideration as may be relevant: (i) coverage of areas with different characteristics (e.g. agro-ecological conditions and farming systems, access to markets and services); (ii) coverage of indigenous (mainly in Ratanakiri) and non-indigenous peoples' communities; (iv) districts and communes with varied performance (e.g. capacity of district agriculture staff and/or CEWs, involvement of commune councils); (v) where the cooperatives/groups of interest are located; (vi) in the Preah Vihear and Kratie provinces, communes and villages that are covered and not covered in the ongoing IFAD-financed project ASPIRE (unless they are *all* covered or not covered in ASPIRE); and (vii) communes and villages with or without other development assistance during or after RULIP. Balancing the

²⁸ The NGO VADDHANNAK had a tool to assess the strength/maturity of LIGs and MVF groups, as well as CEWs. It is assumed that the results from the latest assessment in the project implementation period could be obtained.

²⁹ It is planned that the same approach be used for data collection on similar groups supported by other IFAD-financed projects for the purpose of the CSPE to allow consistency in data collection and analysis.

consideration to these criteria with the distance and the time constraint of the PPE would be important.

51. **Key stakeholders** to be met in Phnom Penh and in the project provinces include the following: (i) MAFF and former project staff to the extent traceable; (ii) Ministry of Women's Affairs; (iii) representatives of the Provincial Administrations, PDAs and PDOWAs; (iv) district-level agriculture staff; (v) commune council members and village chiefs; (vi) CEWs, VAHWs, integrated pest management trainers trained under the project; (vii) management and members of groups formed; (viii) villagers who were/are not part of groups formed; (ix) main in-country partners and service providers involved in the project;³⁰ and (x) other key informants.
52. **Linkage with CSPE.** In relation to the tracing of and assessment of beneficiary groups and groups, and possibly also with regard to agricultural extension services, the same data collection tools will be used for other projects in the CSPE to allow a comparative analysis, while fully taking into consideration some differences in the context and implementing modalities with factors influencing the likelihood of success.
53. **Stakeholders' participation.** In compliance with the IOE Evaluation Policy, the main project stakeholders will be involved throughout the PPE. This will ensure that the key concerns of the stakeholders are taken into account, that the evaluators fully understand the context in which the programme was implemented, and that opportunities and constraints faced by the implementing institutions are identified. Regular interaction and communication will be established with the Asia and the Pacific Division (APR) of IFAD and with the Government. Formal and informal opportunities will be explored during the process for the purpose of discussing findings, lessons and recommendations.

E. Evaluation process

54. The PPE will involve following key steps:
 - **Preparatory phase.** The preparatory phase will include the following activities: (i) desk review of PCR and main project design and implementation documents (e.g. supervision mission reports, mid-term review report, design document); (ii) collection and review of data and information (e.g. impact assessment, project monitoring data on locations and types of project investments, IFAD funds disbursement records); (iii) brief country visit to Cambodia as a preparatory mission; and (iv) preparation of the PPE approach paper. As for (iii), the lead evaluator will travel to Cambodia from 23 January to 2 February 2017, combining the participation in the country portfolio review organized by IFAD and preparatory meetings with Phnom Penh for both PPE and CSPE. During this visit, the lead evaluator met with a limited number of key persons - previous RULIP project staff, Project Support Unit of the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, to provide a briefing on the PPE methodology and approach, as well as to examine the availability of additional data and documentation, hold initial discussion on key implementation issues and PPE mission planning (e.g. in terms of field visit sites).
 - **In-country work.** The PPE mission is scheduled for 27 February to 10 March 2017. It will interact with representatives from the government and other institutions, beneficiaries and key informants, in Phnom Penh in the field. At the end of the mission, a wrap-up meeting will be held in Phnom Penh to summarize the preliminary findings and discuss emerging issues. The IFAD country programme manager and/or country programme officer for Cambodia is expected to participate in the wrap-up meeting, which is tentatively scheduled for 10 March 2017.

³⁰ Namely, VADDHANNAK (monitoring and follow-up of GRFs), Agronomes et Vétérinaires Sans Frontières, training of VAHWs).

- **Report drafting and peer review.** After the field visit, a draft PPE report will be prepared and submitted to IOE internal peer review for quality assurance.
- **Comments by APR and the Government.** The draft PPE report will be shared simultaneously with APR and the Government for review and comment. IOE will finalize the report following receipt of comments by APR and the Government and prepare the audit trail.
- **Management response by APR.** A written management response on the final PPE report will be prepared by the Programme Management Department. This will be included in the PPE report, when published.
- **Communication and dissemination.** The final report will be disseminated among key stakeholders and the evaluation report published by IOE, both online and in print.

F. Evaluation team

55. Fumiko Nakai, IOE Senior Evaluation Officer has been designated as Lead Evaluator for this PPE and will be responsible for delivering the final report. She will be assisted by Franklina Mantila (community development and gender specialist, IOE consultant) and a national consultant. Ms Laure Vidaud, IOE Evaluation Assistant, will provide research and administrative support.

G. Background documents

56. The key background documents for the exercise will include the following:

RULIP project specific documents

- Appraisal report (2007)
- IFAD President's Report (2007)
- Mid-term review report (2011)
- Financing Agreement (2007) and amendments
- Supervision mission aide memoire and reports
- Project status reports
- Project completion report (2015)
- Pre-MTR survey (2011)
- Results and impact management system: end-line survey (2015) (data files to be requested)
- Ex-post impact evaluation RULIP conducted by IFAD Strategy and Knowledge Department (full report and data being requested)

General and others

- IFAD (2015). Evaluation Manual – Second Edition
- IOE (2012). Guidelines for the Project Completion Report Validation (PCRV) and Project Performance Assessment
- IFAD (2011). IFAD Evaluation Policy
- Various IFAD policies and strategies, in particular, Strategic Framework (2007-2012), Targeting, Gender Equity and Women's Empowerment, Rural Finance

Kingdom of Cambodia: Rural Livelihoods Improvement Project in Kratie, Preah Vihear and Ratanakiri (RULIP)
Project Performance Evaluation
Evaluation Framework

Criteria	Evaluation questions	Data/information sources
Project performance		
Relevance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Were the RULIP objectives realistic and aligned to Government's agriculture and rural development strategies/policies, the COSOP and other relevant IFAD policies? To what extent did the project respond to the development needs of the rural poor in the project area? • How was the internal coherence of the project in terms of synergies and complementarity between objectives, components, activities and inputs as described in the project design document and subsequent changes? To what extent the assumptions contained in the theory of change were realistic? • Was the project implementation approach appropriate for achieving the project's objectives, given the context in which the project was implemented? This refers, <i>inter alia</i>, to the following dimensions: (i) targeting approach (geographical and social); (ii) working through groups of beneficiaries; (iii) provision of training and extension services through CEWs, VAHWs and integrated pest management trainers – modality and contents; (iv) provision of inputs and grants to groups of beneficiaries; (v) implementation arrangements – at national level, provincial and district levels (Provincial Administration, PDAs and PDOWAs). • To what extent the approach of forming beneficiaries' groups (LIGs, MVF groups and FSI groups) is relevant to the needs of the target group and to the context? • To what extent the group revolving fund mechanism is relevant to the needs of the target group (in general and with respect to the RULIP's operating modality) and how can the likelihoods of its effectiveness and sustainability be enhanced? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appraisal report • Supervision mission reports, MTR, PCR • Interviews with ex PSU staff, government staff at provincial and district level, commune council members • Group discussions and interviews with CEWs/VAHWs and beneficiaries • Interviews with IFAD CPM/CPO, consultants involved in RULIP supervision • Review of other relevant analytical reports (e.g. review of revolving funds) and interviews with interviews with other key informants and resource persons
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To what extent have project objectives been attained, in terms of improving agricultural production and productivity in a sustainable manner? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) To what extent did farmers and communities adopt improved and sustainable farming and agricultural land management systems? What kind of improved technologies have been promoted and adopted and to what extent and how they were effective in increasing returns? What improved technologies promoted by the project were found to be less relevant and less effective and why? (ii) To what extent the quality of agricultural extension and advisory service delivery has improved and was effective? To what extent and how has it been made more participatory and responsive to demands and needs? (iii) To what extent has the capacity for policy analysis, pro-poor policy formulation and gender mainstreaming in the agricultural sector been improved? (iv) To what extent have GRFs been effective in improving access to financial services by the target group, particularly to enable them to access and adopt improved agricultural technologies, in a sustainable manner? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervision mission reports, MTR, PCR, project status reports (PSRs) • Technical reports produced by the project • Impact assessment reports • Interviews with PSU/government staff; commune council members; service providers • Group discussions with beneficiaries • Interviews with IFAD CPM/CPO and consultants involved in supervision

Criteria	Evaluation questions	Data/information sources
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How much time did it take for the financing to be effective, and how does it compare with other cases in the same country and region? By how much was the original closing date extended, and what were the additional administrative costs that were incurred during the extension period? • What are the costs per beneficiary and beneficiary group? What was the level of investments for capacity-building of beneficiaries and service providers, and grant element? • What were the administrative costs per beneficiary and how do they compare to other projects? • Did the project deliver expected results in a timely manner? What factors helped or impeded the efficiency in implementation progress? • How is the economic rate of return compared to the projection at the appraisal stage, and how are the figures reported in the PCR cross-checked with other data? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervision mission reports, MTR, PCR, PSRs • Project financial records, IFAD disbursement records • Interviews with in-country stakeholders, IFAD • Interviews with beneficiaries (for validation of costs and benefits)
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was a specific exit strategy or approach prepared and agreed upon by key partners to ensure post-project sustainability (e.g. beneficiaries' groups, GRFs, commune/village-level extension services)? If so, has this been effective? • What are the chances that benefits generated by the project will continue after project closure (e.g. improved technology adoption and increased agricultural productivity), and what factors militate in favour of or against maintaining benefits? • What is the current state of different beneficiaries' groups supported by the project? Do they still operate as groups, if they do, what roles do they play? Do they receive support from the Government or other development initiatives? • What is the current state of CEWs/VAHWs supported and trained by the project? Do they still provide extension services? What kind of services do they provide and what roles are they expected to play? Do they have financial incentives? If they do, at what level, and are they likely to be sustainable? • Is there a clear indication of government commitment to continuing demand-driven extension services and participatory development processes? What are the resources, and instruments provided, if any? • What is the current status of savings and lending, GRF activities, loan portfolio and financial positions, especially of those agricultural cooperatives and GRF groups which were considered to be likely to be sustainable? What are success factors and challenges? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appraisal report, supervision reports, MTR, PCR • Data on maturity of groups at project completion • Interviews and group discussion with beneficiaries • Interviews with government staff, commune councils, IFAD CPM/CPO, consultants involved in supervision • Analytical and assessment reports related to similar or relevant initiatives, as appropriate
Rural poverty impact		
Rural poverty impact (four domains)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [Household income and assets] To what extent have beneficiary incomes changed as a result of the project? In what way and to what extent have household net assets changed due to the intervention? • [Human and social capital and empowerment] To what extent did the project affect the capabilities of individuals, groups and communities? What were the results achieved under various training activities supported under RULIP? How did the project improve the access to services, inputs and markets by the people in targeted villages and communes? How has such change occurred through beneficiaries' groups (i.e. LIGs, MVF groups and FSI groups)? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supervision, MTR, PCR • Impact assessment reports, analytical reports produced by the project • Interviews and group discussions with beneficiaries • Interviews with comparison households (e.g. households in the villages covered who were not part of the groups, or in the villages not

Criteria	Evaluation questions	Data/information sources
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> [Food security and agricultural productivity] What changes have taken place in household food security and nutrition and what explains such changes? How and to what extent, if any, did the project contribute to increasing agricultural productivity and diversification? Did the project support to training and extension services have any spill-over effects beyond those directly trained? If so, to what extent and how? [Institutions and policies] To what extent did the project empower the rural poor, communities and organisations vis-à-vis development actors and local and national public authorities? Do beneficiaries' groups play more effective roles in decision-making? To what extent did the project influence the modality and quality of extension service delivery (public and private) to be more responsive to the needs of the poor farmers? Has the project contributed to making the development planning and service delivery process more participatory and responsive to demands? How? If not, why not? 	<p>covered - as may be possible)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statistical data (e.g. poverty assessment, agricultural production and productivity) Direct observations Interviews with government staff, local government, IFAD, service providers
Other performance criteria		
Innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What were the innovations promoted by the project and their characteristics, if any? What makes them innovative? What were the strategies to promote innovations – in the project design and/or during the implementation? Were successfully promoted innovations, if any, documented and shared to facilitate scaling up? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervision reports, MTR, PCR Knowledge products produced by the project, if any Interviews and group discussion with beneficiaries Interviews with government staff, local government, IFAD
Scaling-up	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Has any interventions and/or innovations promoted in the project been scaled up? If so, what evidence was used to justify scaling up, and scaled up in what way and by whom? If not, what are the prospects that they can and will be scaled up by other actors/initiatives? What were/are the pathways to scaling up? Has the project implementers/managers and/or IFAD engaged in promoting partnerships and interaction with other stakeholders to facilitate the uptake of successful innovations? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Same as above Any relevant documentation by other actors
Gender equality and women's empowerment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent did the project succeed in promoting gender equality and women's empowerment given the social and cultural context? To what extent did the project contribute to promoting gender mainstreaming in policy-making and service delivery in the agricultural sector? What were the project activities and approaches that effectively contributed to empowering women, if any? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervision reports, MTR, PCR, PSRs (including ratings), M&E data, impact assessment reports Interviews and group discussion with beneficiaries Interviews with former project staff, government staff, local governments,
Environment and natural resource management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent did the project adopt approaches/ measures for restoration or sustainable management of natural resources (e.g. support to training and extension to foster sustainable environment and natural resource management, appropriate/new technologies)? To what extent did the project contribute to long-term environmental and social sustainability (e.g. through avoiding over exploitation of natural resources or loss of biodiversity or reduction of the community's livelihoods)? To what extent did the project follow required environmental and social risk assessment procedures, as may have been necessary? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervision reports, MTR, PCR, PSRs (including ratings) Interviews and group discussion with beneficiaries Interviews with former project staff, government staff, local governments

Criteria	Evaluation questions	Data/information sources
Adaptation to climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent did the agricultural technologies promoted contribute to reducing the vulnerability of the smallholders and building resilience to climate change risks? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervision reports, MTR, PCR, PSRs Interviews and group discussion with beneficiaries Interviews with former project staff, government staff, local government
Performance of partners		
IFAD	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How well were the comments and recommendations of design review process and experience from previous projects reflected in the project design? To what extent did IFAD monitor the project performance and provide adequate and relevant supervision and implementation support in a timely manner? How and to what extent did IFAD provide support to help address key issues identified in supervision missions and performance monitoring? How responsive was IFAD to the identified needs to adjust the project design/interventions during the implementation? How responsive was IFAD to the request for no-objections and the processing of withdrawal applications? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Technical review committee documentation Appraisal report and PCRs of previous relevant projects (if any) Records on supervision and implementation support missions and their reports, PSRs Interviews with government / former project staff Interviews with IFAD CPM/CPO, consultants involved in supervision
Government	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Did the government guide and support project management and implementation to be effective and efficient? Were project's monitoring and evaluation systems properly established and operationalized? Were the M&E data generated and analysed in a timely manner and used to report on progress as well as to inform decision making? Did the government fulfil fiduciary responsibilities in a timely manner, including sound financial management, preparation of financial reports and audit reports, and procurement processes? Was the in-country flow of funds (between implementing partners) smooth and timely? Were the withdrawal applications prepared in a timely manner and of acceptable quality? Were counterpart resources (funds and staffing) provided in line with the agreement at design stage? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Supervision mission reports, PSRs, MTR and PCR IFAD funds disbursement records IFAD review/records on project's audit reports

Definition and rating of the evaluation criteria used by IOE

Criteria	Definition *	Mandatory	To be rated
Rural poverty impact	Impact is defined as the changes that have occurred or are expected to occur in the lives of the rural poor (whether positive or negative, direct or indirect, intended or unintended) as a result of development interventions.	X	Yes
	<i>Four impact domains</i>		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Household income and net assets: Household income provides a means of assessing the flow of economic benefits accruing to an individual or group, whereas assets relate to a stock of accumulated items of economic value. The analysis must include an assessment of trends in equality over time. 		No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Human and social capital and empowerment: Human and social capital and empowerment include an assessment of the changes that have occurred in the empowerment of individuals, the quality of grass-roots organizations and institutions, the poor's individual and collective capacity, and in particular, the extent to which specific groups such as youth are included or excluded from the development process. 		No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Food security and agricultural productivity: Changes in food security relate to availability, stability, affordability and access to food and stability of access, whereas changes in agricultural productivity are measured in terms of yields; nutrition relates to the nutritional value of food and child malnutrition. 		No
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Institutions and policies: The criterion relating to institutions and policies is designed to assess changes in the quality and performance of institutions, policies and the regulatory framework that influence the lives of the poor. 		No
Project performance	Project performance is an average of the ratings for relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of benefits.	X	Yes
Relevance	The extent to which the objectives of a development intervention are consistent with beneficiaries' requirements, country needs, institutional priorities and partner and donor policies. It also entails an assessment of project design and coherence in achieving its objectives. An assessment should also be made of whether objectives and design address inequality, for example, by assessing the relevance of targeting strategies adopted.	X	Yes
Effectiveness	The extent to which the development intervention's objectives were achieved, or are expected to be achieved, taking into account their relative importance.	X	Yes
Efficiency	A measure of how economically resources/inputs (funds, expertise, time, etc.) are converted into results.	X	Yes
Sustainability of benefits	The likely continuation of net benefits from a development intervention beyond the phase of external funding support. It also includes an assessment of the likelihood that actual and anticipated results will be resilient to risks beyond the project's life.	X	Yes
Other performance criteria			
Gender equality and women's empowerment	The extent to which IFAD interventions have contributed to better gender equality and women's empowerment, for example, in terms of women's access to and ownership of assets, resources and services; participation in decision making; work load balance and impact on women's incomes, nutrition and livelihoods.	X	Yes
Innovation and scaling up	The extent to which IFAD development interventions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) have introduced innovative approaches to rural poverty reduction; and (ii) have been (or are likely to be) scaled up by government authorities, donor organizations, the private sector and others agencies. 	X	Yes
Environment and natural resources management	The extent to which IFAD development interventions contribute to resilient livelihoods and ecosystems. The focus is on the use and management of the natural environment, including natural resources defined as raw materials used for socio-economic and cultural purposes, and ecosystems and biodiversity - with the goods and services they provide.	X	Yes
Adaptation to climate change	The contribution of the project to reducing the negative impacts of climate change through dedicated adaptation or risk reduction measures	X	Yes

<i>Criteria</i>	<i>Definition</i> [*]	<i>Mandatory</i>	<i>To be rated</i>
Overall project achievement	This provides an overarching assessment of the intervention, drawing upon the analysis and ratings for rural poverty impact, relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, sustainability of benefits, gender equality and women's empowerment, innovation and scaling up, as well as environment and natural resources management, and adaptation to climate change.	X	Yes
Performance of partners			
• IFAD	This criterion assesses the contribution of partners to project design, execution, monitoring and reporting, supervision and implementation support, and evaluation. The performance of each partner will be assessed on an individual basis with a view to the partner's expected role and responsibility in the project life cycle.	X	Yes
• Government		X	Yes

* These definitions build on the OECD/DAC Glossary of Key Terms in Evaluation and Results-Based Management; the Methodological Framework for Project Evaluation agreed with the Evaluation Committee in September 2003; the first edition of the Evaluation Manual discussed with the Evaluation Committee in December 2008; and further discussions with the Evaluation Committee in November 2010 on IOE's evaluation criteria and key questions.

List of key persons met

In Phnom Penh (chronological order)

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position/organization</i>	<i>Date</i>
Mr H.E. Mam Amnot	Under Secretary of State, MAFF	27/01/2017
Mr Ouk Vuthirith	Former Deputy Project Manager, RULIP	31/01 & 28/02/2017
Ms Sok Vanna	Former M&E Advisor, RULIP	31/01 & 28/02/2017
Mr Dara Rat Moni Ung	Former IFAD/UNDP policy advisor, RULIP	31/01/2017
Mr Chhoeng Sovuthy	NGO VADDHANAK	27/02/2017
Mr Hok Kimthourn	Manager, ASPIRE Secretariat	28/02/2017
Mr Min Sophoan	Country Coordinator, Agronomes et Vétérinaires Sans Frontières	28/02/2017
Mr Um Sitha	Project Manager Assistant, "Petsat Chhnaeum Project", Agronomes et Vétérinaires Sans Frontières	28/02/2017
Mr The Chhunhak	Deputy Director General, MOWA	09/03/2017
Mr Phanna Remy	M&E Officer/Cambodian National Council for Women (Former Gender focal person with RULIP/MOWA)	09/03/2017
Ms Sakphouseth Meng	IFAD country programme officer	09/03/2017
Ms Hor Malin	Secretary of State, Gender focal person, MAFF	04/04/2017
Ms Ournf Heng	Advisor and Vice Chairwoman of Gender Technical Working Group, MAFF	04/04/2017
Ms U Sirita	Advisor and Member of GTWG, MAFF	04/04/2017

Meetings at sub-national level

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Institution</i>
Kratie Province: PDAFF and PDoWA, 01/03/2017		
Mr Kuy Huot	Director	PDAFF
Mr Mao Vichet	Deputy director	PDAFF
Mr Se Sophy	PSMA	PDAFF
Mr He Sophanna	Office Chief	PDAFF
Mr Nget Sokunthea	Office Chief, AC	PDAFF
Mr Pith Nareth	Vice chief, Animal Health	PDAFF
Mr Eung Yorty	Vice chief, Animal Health	PDAFF
Ms Sea Kunthea	Office Chief	PDOWA

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position</i>	<i>Institution</i>
Mr Ly Saravuth	Official, District Support Team	Chet Borey
Mr Sam Sam Ath	Chief, Office of Agronomy	PDAFF
Mr Cheam SaEm Poline	Finance-ASPIRE	PDAFF
Mr San Yos	M&E Officer	MAFF
Ratanakiri Province: PDAFF and PDOWA, 03/03/2017		
Mr Sreng Chea Heng	Deputy Director	PDAFF
Mr Nan To	Chief, Admin office	PDOWA
Mr Nheuk Loeut	Staff	PDAFF
Mr Long Lon	Staff	PDAFF
MR Chea Neath	Staff, AC	PDAFF
Mr Chak Sikeang	Chief, Admin office	PDAFF
Ms Kang Nea	Deputy Director	PDOWA
Mr Chheang Nora	Staff, AC	PDAFF
Mr San Yos	M &E Officer	MAFF
Preah Vihear: PDAFF and PDOWA, 06/03/2017		
Mr Poeung Tryda	Director	PDAFF
Mr Hok Kimthourn	Manager	ASPIRE/MAFF
Mr Kem Peng Vireak	Deputy Director	PDAFF
Mr Hong Sophea	M&E Advisor	ASPIRE/PDAFF
Mr Thon Soryta	Advisor	PDAFF
Mr Veng Honglim	Chief, Office of Animal Health and Production	PDAFF
Mr Prum Vimean	Management Advisor	ASPIRE/MAFF
Mr San Yos	M&E Officer	MAFF

Key informant interviews at sub-national level

<i>Name</i>	<i>Position/organization</i>	<i>Date</i>
Mr Mey Saroeun	Deputy Chief of Commune Council (responsible for agriculture), Chey Udom Commune, Lumphat district, Ratanakiri	03/03/2017
Mr Sreng Chea Heng	Deputy Director/PDAFF Ratanakiri	04/03/2017
Mr Phat Sopha	VAHW, Sethakech village, Chhean Muk commune, Thbeng Meanchey district, PVH	06/03/2017
Ms Veuk Ya	Chairwoman, AC Kasekam Rumtum Samaki Meanchey, Traperng Tunteum village, Rumtum commune, Roveang district, PVH	07/03/2017

Focus group discussions at sub-national level

<i>N</i>	<i>Name of AC/group</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>No. of person (women)</i>	<i>Date</i>
Kratie province				
1	Khbal Trach Samaki	Khbal Trach village, Srer Char commune, Snuol district	8 (4)	01/03/2017
2	Krabel Chol Rong (AC)	Krabel Chol Rong village, Srer Char Commune, Snuol district (ethnic group: Stieng)	13 (7)	
3	Khasem Khnong (AC)	Khasem Knong village, Khasem commune, Snuol district Members AC management	11 (11) 6 (3)	
4	Cha Thnorl Samaki (AC)	Cha Thnorl village, Sambo commune, Sambo district Members AC management	6 (5) 4 (1)	02/03/2017
5	VAHW Association	O-Taneung village, Khbal Damrei commune, Sambo district	4 (0)	
6	Sre Sbov (AC)	Sre Sbov village, Khbal Damrei commune, Sambo district Members AC management and former CEW	4 (2) 4 (3)	
Ratanakiri province				
7	3 ACs/villages (O-kan, Lumphat, Dey Luot)	O-Kan village, Dey Lo village, Lumphat village, Chey Udom commune, Lumphat district Members AC management and CC members	7 (7) 9 (1)	03/03/2017
8	2 villages/2 ACs (Leu Khuon and Chrung)	Leu Khuon village and Chrung village, Chey Udom commune, Lumphat district (ethnic group: Jarai) Members AC management	6 (0)	
9	AC Lung Khung:	Lung Khung village, Lung Khung commune, Bokeo district (ethnic group: Tampuon) Men only Women only	12 (0) 8 (8)	
10	AC integrated agriculture Thuoy Tum Ratanak	Thuoy Tum village, Cha Ung commune, O-Chum district Members Management (ethnic group: Kreung)	13 (1) 5 (1)	04/03/2017
11	AC integrated agriculture Ek Pheap Kroch	Kroch village, Ek Pheap commune, O-Chum district Members Management	5 (5) 5 (0)	

<i>N</i>	<i>Name of AC/group</i>	<i>Location</i>	<i>No. of person (women)</i>	<i>Date</i>
12	Former LIG (not AC)	Kalai village, Kalai commune, O-Chum district		
-	Chamkasan village	Lumphat district (non-RULIP village)		
Preah Vihear province				
13	AC Phnom Pich Borey (3 villages)	Phnov village, Bos village, Srabal village, Phnom Penh commune, Kulen district Members Management	11 (9) 6 (3)	06/03/2017
14	AC Krachao Prumtep	Krabo Prumtep village, Kulen Thbong commune, Kulen district Members Management	10 (9) 4 (1)	
15	AC Livelihood Improvement	Sethakech village, Chheanmuk commune, Tbung Meang Chey district	6 (5)	
16	AC Preah Me Sen Chey Development	Preah Me village, Preah Me commune, Tbung Meanchey district (ethnic group: Kuoy)	8 (8)	07/03/2017

PPE mission wrap up meeting – MAFF (10 March 2017)

Name	Position/organization
Mr Hok Kimthourn	Manager/ASPIRE Secretariat
Mr Pen Vuth	Manager/PADEE/MAFF-PSU
Mr San Yos	M & E Officer/MAFF-PSU
Mr Mao Vichet	Deputy Director/PDAFF-Kratie
Mr Cheam Saempolin	Finance/ASPIRE
Mr Mao Narith	National M&E Advisor/MAFF-PSU
Mr Say Prumny	MIS Officer/PSU
Mr Kong Bunna	Programme Budgeting M&E Specialist/ASPIRE
Mr Renato Lee	Program Advisor/ASPIRE
Mr Sreng Chea Heng	Deputy Director/PDAFF Ratanakiri
Mr Kor Ponna	Chief/Agronomy and Agricultural Productivity Office, Preah Vihear
Mr Em Channan Oudom	Support staff/ASPIRE Secretariat
Mr Kong Sophon	Programme Budgeting Finance Specialist/Department of Planning and Statistics – Department of Accounting and Finance, General Directorate of Agriculture
Mr Nhem Sovatha	Deputy Programme Manager/Department of Planning and Statistics – Department of Accounting and Finance, General Directorate of Agriculture)
Mr Kong Chanthan	Climate Resilient Specialist, ASPIRE, National Committee for Sub-National Democratic Development Secretariat

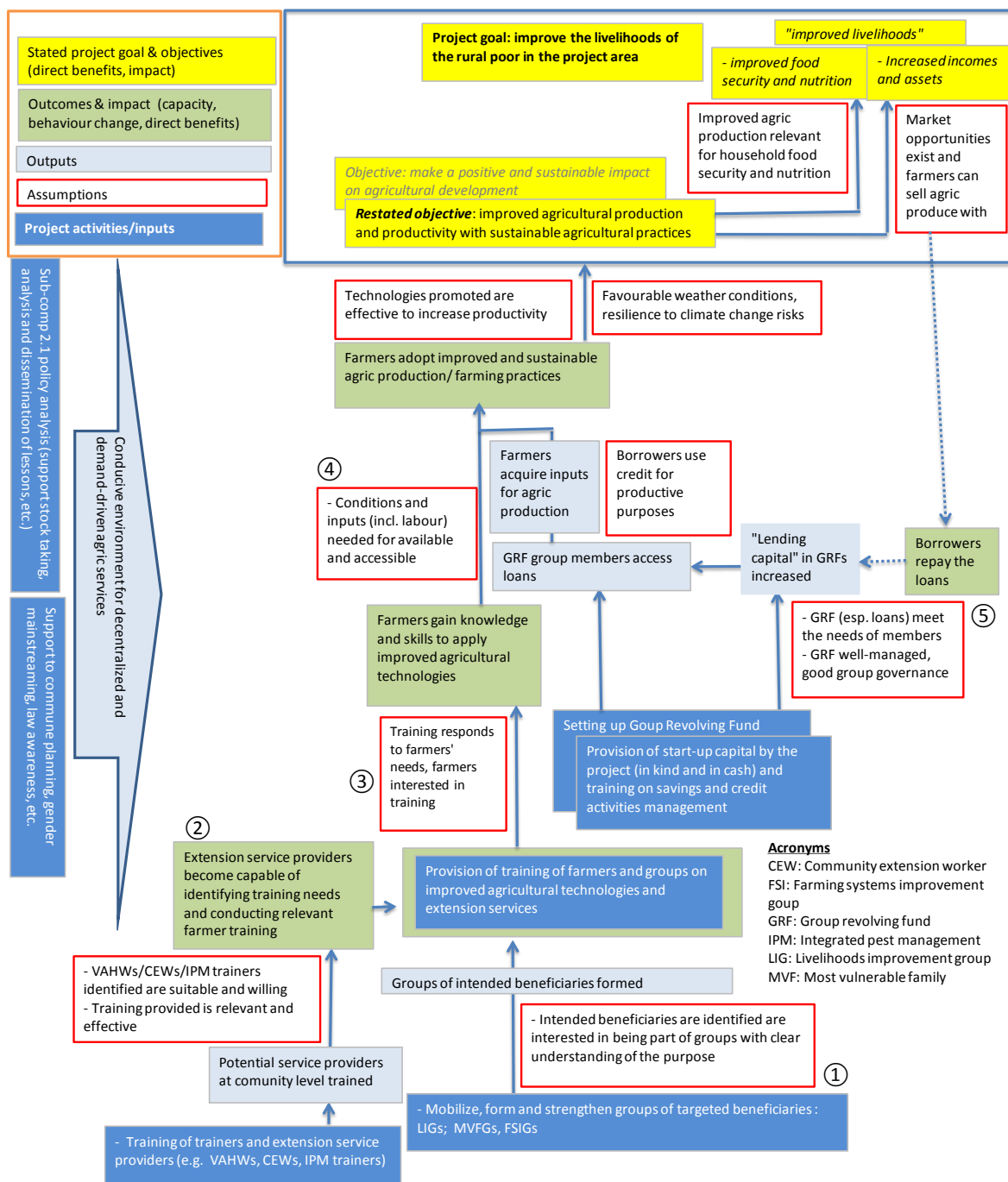
IFAD financing disbursement by category

	Original (SDR) DSF 8005	Reallocation + supplementary grant and loan 2012 (SDR)				Actual (SDR)				Proportion	
		DSF 8005	DSF 8005-A	Loan	Total	8005	8005-A	Loan	Total	Original	Actual
I. Vehicles	345 000	405 000			405 000.00	403 911.53			403 911.53	6.0%	5.2%
II. Civil works	150 000	254 000			254 000.00	268 988.54			268 988.54	2.6%	3.5%
III. Materials	1 650 000	1 303 000			1 303 000.00	1 339 453.79			1 339 453.79	28.6%	17.2%
IV. Equipment	100 000	125 000			125 000.00	124 318.49			124 318.49	1.7%	1.6%
V. Training	1 410 000	1 410 000	410 000	410 000	2 230 000.00	1 561 909.80	256 031.44	255 421.69	2 073 362.93	24.4%	26.6%
VI. Contracts and studies	320 000	320 000	440 000	440 000	1 200 000.00	289 125.41	440 089.75	440 305.48	1 169 520.64	5.5%	15.0%
VII. Staff allowances	1 050 000	1 553 000			1 553 000.00	1 660 882.42			1 660 882.42	18.2%	21.3%
VIII. Incremental operating costs	745 000	780 000			780 000.00	748 467.56			748 467.56	12.9%	9.6%
IX. Unallocated	630 000	250 000			250 000.00				-	NA	NA
	6 400 000	6 400 000	850 000	850 000	8 100 000	6 397 057.54	696 121.19	695 727.17	7 788 905.90	100.0%	100.0%
						100.0%	81.9%	81.9%	96.2%		

Comparison of RULIP objectives in different documents

<i>President's report and appraisal report logframe</i>	<i>Financing agreement</i>	<i>Revised logframe (MTR)</i>	<i>PPE comments</i>
Goal	Goal	Goal	
Livelihoods of the rural poor in the targeted communes of the three provinces improved	The goal of the project is to improve the livelihoods of the rural poor in the Project Area	Livelihoods of the rural poor in the targeted communes of the three provinces improved	Largely the same
Purpose/objectives	Purpose	Project purpose	
Sustainable impact on agricultural development achieved in the targeted communes in the three provinces.	The main purpose of the project is to assist approximately 60 000 poor households in the Project Area achieve a sustainable impact on agricultural development.	Sustainable impact on agricultural development achieved in the targeted communes in the three provinces (presented in the PCR as post-MTR logframe) (Note: The MTR report contained different wording: "Sustainable development of agricultural production and productivity and sustainable, decentralized, pro-poor and gender sensitive service delivery in the targeted communities")	The financing agreement contains explicit reference to the target of 60,000 households.
Outputs	Outputs	Objectives (by component)	
Farmers and communities adopt improved and sustainable farming and agricultural land management systems	Same as left	The objective is to use newly-established self-help groups and strengthened, more efficient service providers to improve the food security of the poor and promote agricultural diversification and market-oriented agricultural development	The revised version is long-winded and appears rather strange to have as an objective "to use groups".
Improved services delivered to the poor in a participatory and demand-driven manner.	Ditto		
Increased capacity for policy analysis and pro-poor policy formulation for the agricultural sector and for mainstreaming gender within the sector.	Ditto	The objective is to increase the national capacity for pro-poor policy analysis and pro-poor policy formulation for the agricultural sector, and for mainstreaming gender within the sector, while improving the capacities of community members to influence this process.	The revised version still inherits the original wording but rather long-winded. The corresponding indicators were not very meaningful and in any case, the level of investment for this was very low.

RULIP reconstructed theory of change*



PPE comments

- ① There was lack of clarity in the purpose of groups.
- ② Shift from "top-down" and "supply-driven" to participatory and demand-driven services was slow and challenging.
- ③ Training was mostly based on standard package, even though the efforts to identify farmers' needs increased in the latter of the project.
- ④ Trainer farmers often lacked sufficient conditions and access to means of production for them to put into practice what they were trained on (e.g. access to water for vegetable production, labour shortage).
- ⑤ GRF loans were largely fixed in size and terms and conditions. In the meantime MFI services increased.

* The theory of change was not fully elaborated in the design and this was reconstructed based on design document; (ii) supervision mission reports, MTR and PCR; (iii) discussions in the field by the PPE; and (iv) empirical evidence from elsewhere.

Selected data collected by the PPE team

Annex IX- Table 1
Current capital and membership status of ACs by province as reported by PDAFF in March 2017

Preah Vihear AC status December 2016														
District	No of ACs	Year Registered	Total	Female	Total Share	Total cost Share (KHR)	RGC Share (KHR)	Partner Share(KHR)	Training Cost(KHR)	Reserve Capital(KHR)	Total Capital(KHR)	Male leaders	Female leaders	% Members share
Cheysen	6	2012-2014	1 176	890	16 704	323 560 000	200 000	46 462 700	3 562 700	23 495 100	879 473 500	29	15	37%
Chheb	6	2012-2014	645	380	15 383	307 660 000	-	59 669 000	2 318 200	22 115 500	449 983 500	36	11	68%
Choam Ksan	6	2012-2016	942	694	19 466	389 420 000	-	137 494 200	3 919 500	30 481 100	778 092 800	28	17	50%
Kulen	6	2009-2015	1 126	738	25 362	523 280 000	-	20 964 700	7 158 100	59 758 600	1 152 884 100	28	20	45%
Roveng	9	2010-2014	1 929	1 254	26 174	495 230 000	3 200 000	72 573 900	5 723 700	60 492 200	1 298 976 900	44	29	38%
SongkumThmey	5	2012-2014	817	619	20 769	415 380 000	-	14 569 900	4 109 400	27 068 600	566 476 300	22	11	73%
Tbeng Meanchey	5	2007-2012	829	543	18 077	369 889 600	9 400 000	9 773 800	5 774 600	35 712 100	726 054 500	14	17	51%
Total	43		7 464	5 118	141 935	2 824 419 600	12 800 000	361 508 200	32 566 200	259 123 200	5 851 941 600	201	120	48%
Kratie AC status submitted March 2017														
District	No. of ACs	Year Registered	Total members	Female members	No. of shares	Amount of shares(KHR)	Gift of Gov't (KHR)	Gift of DP/NGO(KHR)	Costs for trainings(KHR)	Reserved fund(KHR)	Total capital(KHR)	Male leaders	Female leaders	% Members share
		2014	112	91	3 589	71 780 000	-	-	60 000	80 000	118 350 000	5	7	61%
Chetr Borei	9	2014	233	152	7 920	158 400 000	-	-	-	1 664 100	183 078 100	30	24	87%
Sambou	11	2009-2014	423	305	20 895	417 900 000	-	-	3 465 200	13 693 100	473 261 740	36	30	88%
Snoul	11		381	182	11 500	230 000 000	-	-	550 000	8 788 900	305 544 000	39	29	75%
Total	31		1 149	730	43 904	878 080 000	-	-	4 075 200	24 226 100	1 080 233 840	110	90	81%
Ratanakiri AC submitted March 2017														
District	No. of ACs	Year registered	Total member	Female member	No. of Shares	Total capital (KHR)	Other Gov't (KHR)	Gift of DP/NGO (KHR)	Capital Training	Capital reserve (KHR)	Total of capital	Male	Female	% Members share
Ou Yadao	6	2014	162	16	1 757	78 020 000		-	-		78 020 000	37	2	100%
Kon Moum	7		403	237	1 705	45 165 000		64 898 500	-		110 063 500	40	20	41%
Lumphat	8		330	151	2 520	120 365 000		51 200 000	-		171 565 000	53	23	70%
Borkeo	5		172	9	1 756	84 050 000		-	-		84 050 000	38	2	100%
Ou Chum	8		318	75	1 995	97 070 000		55 690 600	-		152 760 600	49	17	64%
Total	34		1 385	488	9 733	424 670 000		171 789 100			596 459 100	217	64	71%
Data source: AC status report submitted by PDAFF . Note that in Preah Vihear and Kratie, Total capital does not tally with all the items listed under different fund source as reported														

Summary of data collected from PPE focus group discussions with AC/LIG management and members: group development assessment

<i>Kratie province: 3 ACs - Krabel Chol, Khsoem Khnong Rung Roeung and Char Thnoal Samaki</i>					
Motivation	Leadership	Enterprise management	External support	Successes/improvements	Challenges/constraints
(i) Access to external support (ii) formal recognition from PDAFF (iii) Sharing of profits from buying shares (iv) Bigger business	(i) General assembly conducted, regulations and by laws discussed, (ii) Elected Board of Directors and committee members (3 board, and 3 members) (iii) Women representation - at least 1 or 2 women) (vi) All ACs with management incentives (in cash)	(i) Capital - all have GRF, 1 AC having both savings and shares, 2 ACs only shares; (ii) Credit operation - 1 year cycle, Ave. loan size - 400,000 -1,200,000 KHR, 100% repayment but some late payments without penalty (except 1 AC); loan for productive and general (medicine, food, etc); (iii) Bookkeeping - all 3 ACs have updated transactions records, loan contracts, bank books, no financial statement prepared or submitted (iv) Other enterprises - 1 AC with rice bank, 1 AC with agri-input supply; (v) Business plan - all 3 ACs have plans to invest in additional enterprise, but only 1 with developed business plan and secured funding from NGO loan.	(i) Support from District Agriculture Office/PDAFF (occasional) and ASPIRE; 1 with NGO support and Cambodia association of cooperatives; (ii) External loans - 2 ACs with members availing MFI/NGO loans, only one without external loan. 1 AC obtained loan without collateral from MFI with only group guaranty.	(i) Members buying shares and accumulate savings (ii) sharing profits (iii) Increased capital and loan size and with longer duration – easy and not complicated, immediate (iv) Increased members' attendance to meetings; (v) General assembly a happy social occasion with food and sharing of AC profits on shares and interests on savings (vi) Better food security - rice available all year round through rice bank and increased rice yields	(i) Late payments; (ii) Small loan size insufficient for production needs; (iii) Difficulty in bookkeeping, unable to generate and submit financial statements to cooperative office (PDAFF); (iv) Inadequate capital for business investment – despite available MFI loans members unwilling to get loan for fear of losing collateral (land); (v) Very low market price for cassava - which might affect repayment

<i>Ratanakiri Province: 8 ACs and 1 LIG - O'kan, Deilou, Lumphat, Leu Khuan, Leu Huan, Chrung, krouch, thuy tum, Kalai 1</i>					
Motivation	Leadership	Enterprise management	External support	Successes/Improvements	Challenges/Constraints
(i) Access to external support (ii) formal recognition from PDAFF (iii) progress and improved living standards	(i) General assembly conducted, regulations and by laws discussed (ii) Elected Board of Directors and committee members 6-8 members (iii) Women	(i) Capital – mainly from RULIP GRF; no savings, but some members have separate savings group not part of AC operation; 1 AC used to generate savings during RULIP time but not anymore; 2 ACs generated members shares (ii) Credit operation – 4 ACs with credit operation using only RULIP GRF; loan cycle 1 year; average loan size 400,000 to	(i) Support from District Agriculture Office/PDAFF (occasional) and Not covered by ASPIRE, 3 with NGO and other development partner support (e.g. ETEA, OCANDEN)	(i) loan from GRF – easy, not complicated, immediate, low interest (ii) Better livelihoods – vegetable and chicken available for consumption, women raising chickens able to sell (generate additional income)	(i) Late payments-1 LIG stopped credit operation (50% of loans very late payment) and planned to restart loan after all loans are paid (ii) Some members left the group without paying loan (iii) Small loan size

	<p>representation - most ACs with 1-3 women), but no women in 2 ACs</p> <p>(iv) Some AC Management provided with incentives (in cash)</p> <p>(v) LIG management consisted of Leader, deputy leader and bookkeeper – same leaders ever since.</p>	<p>1,000,000 KHR/members (7 ACs have not indicated loan size); loan for production and general purpose (food, housing, medicine, etc); 1 AC no late payment, others late repayment between 20-50%; generally, no penalty charges</p> <p>(iii) Bookkeeping – minimal records maintained, only 1 AC with good records keeping, charged penalties for late payment, and with financial statement submitted with NGO support; all with bank accounts</p> <p>(vi) All groups have bank accounts</p> <p>(iv) Other enterprises – only 1 AC with agri-input supply and fish sauce manufacturing</p> <p>(v) Business plan – Only 1 AC with clear business plan</p>	<p>(ii) External loans – 2 ACs with some members availing loans from MFI/NGO</p>	<p>(iii) increased income generation from members (Fish sauce selling)</p>	<p>insufficient for production needs</p> <p>(iv) Difficulty in bookkeeping, all groups except 1 AC unable to generate and submit financial statements to Cooperative office (PDAFF) with NGO support</p> <p>(v) Inadequate capital for business investment</p> <p>(vi) Big amount (2,000,000 KHR) kept as cash in hand by group leader</p> <p>(vii) No membership expansion in most ACs. For some, even declining</p> <p>(viii) Illiteracy – not able to understand the training fully (Ratanakiri)</p>
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Preah Vihear Province: 5 ACs -Samaki Phom Pech Borei, Kroboav Prumtep, Kelum Or ChiveakPheap rosnoy, Akphiwat Prame Senchey, and Romtum Samaki Mean

Motivation	Leadership	Enterprise management	External Support	Successes/improvements	Challenges/constraints
	<p>(i) General assembly conducted and regulations and by laws discussed</p> <p>(ii) Board of Directors and committee members elected between 6-8 members</p> <p>(iii) Women representation between 1-3 women</p>	<p>(i) Capital – GRF and members shares (big proportion of capital - shares for each AC: 204 million KHR, 110 million KHR, 107.2 million KHR and 20 million KHR)</p> <p>(ii) Credit operation - Ave. loan size - 150,000 -4,000,000 KHR, big amounts of outstanding loans (11 million, 214 million, and KHR in 2 ACs); loan repayment generally good with minimal default (10%); loan purpose for productive and general purposes with penalty for late payment</p>	<p>(i) Support from District Agriculture Office/PDAFF (occasional) and ASPIRE, other development project (e.g. MALIS, Australian Aid) and NGO – (e.g. World Vision)</p> <p>(ii) Members have access to MFIs</p>	<p>(i) Huge increase capital from members shares. Very high increase due to merging of more groups and participation of other villages not necessarily covered by RULIP</p> <p>(ii) High membership increase including outside RULIP supported villages</p>	<p>(i) Huge amounts of business transaction but records keeping is still manual (Risky)</p> <p>(ii) AC expansion limited due to PDAFF policy of only 1 AC per commune.</p>

	(iv) Incentives (in cash) provided for the management team	(iii) Bookkeeping – generally good, updated records (2 ACs have financial statement with NGO support); (iv) Other enterprises – organic rice, agri-inputs supply, veterinary services, threshing. All have contract growing arrangement with AMRU Rice (v) Business plan – all have clear business directions enterprise, others with plan to expand to non-agri related		(iii) Good market access – all having contract with AMRU for organic rice	
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Annex IX - Table 3
Status of members and capital growth of RULIP-supported ACs met by the PPE team

Province	Village/Group	Initial Members			Current Members			Member Growth				Initial Capital (KHR)	Current Capital (KHR)	Capital Growth	Change	
		Male	Female	Total	Male	Female	Total	Total	Change	Female	Change	Total	Total			
Kratie	Krabel Chol AC	14	25	39	12	25	37	-5%	Decrease	0%	Stagnant		12 200 000			
Kratie	Khsoem Khnong Rung Roeung AC	2	23	25	2	24	26	4%	Slight increase	4%	Slight increase	25 540 000	40 999 400	61%	High increase	
Kratie	Char Thnoal Samaki AC	16	29	45	8	29	37	-18%	Decrease	0%	Stagnant	28 000 000	44 067 000	57%	High increase	
Kratie	Village Animal Health Workers	0	0	9	0	0	22	144%	High increase			-	-			
	KRATIE	32	77	118	22	78	122					53 540 000	97 266 400			
Rattanakiri	O'kan AC	15	10	25			28	12%	Slight increase			10 000 000	18 802 000	88%	High increase	
Rattanakiri	deilou AC			50	27	19	46	-8%	Decrease			20 000 000	37 000 000	85%	High increase	
Rattanakiri	lumphat AC	15	10	25	20	30	50	100%	High increase	200%	Slight increase	12 000 000	20 000 000	67%	High increase	
Rattanakiri	leu khuan AC	24	1	25	14	1	15	-40%	Decrease	0%	Stagnant	10 500 000	12 980 000	24%	Modest increase	
Rattanakiri	leu huan AC	25	0	25	26	0	26	4%	Slight increase			10 000 000	17 000 000	70%	High increase	
Rattanakiri	Chrung AC	19	0	19	19	0	19	0%	Stagnant			9 000 000	9 500 000	6%	Slight increase	
Rattanakiri	lung kung AC	Women FGD														
Rattanakiri	krouch AC	22	3	25	20	3	23	-8%	Decrease	0%	Stagnant	17 167 000	21 939 500	28%	Modest increase	
Rattanakiri	thuy tum AC	36	9	45	39	11	50	11%	Slight increase	22%	Slight increase	27 750 000	43 250 000	56%	High increase	
Rattanakiri	Kalai I LIG	15	10	25	13	10	23	-8%	Decrease	0%	Stagnant	9 000 000	11 907 379	32%	Modest increase	
	RATANAKIRI	171	43	264	178	74	252					125 417 000	192 378 879			
Preah Vihear	Samaky PhnomPichBory (Phnom Penh Commune, Kulen District)	138	28	165	n/a		277	68%	High increase	-100%	Decrease	181 980 000	333 000 000	83%	High increase	
Preah Vihear	Kroboav Prumtep (Kulentbong Commune, Kulen District)	23	223	266	n/a	n/a	282	6%	Slight increase	-100%	Decrease	190 417 000	360 000 000	89%	High increase	
Preah Vihear	(Sethakech village, Chheanmuk Comune, Tbeng Mean Chey District)	n/a	n/a	n/a	55	150	205	n/a				-	-			
Preah Vihear	Arkiwath Prame Senchey (Prame Commune, Tbean Mean Chey district)	17	62	79	n/a	n/a	88	11%	Slight increase		Slight increase	28 408 000	46 000 000	62%	High increase	
Preah Vihear	Romtum Samaki Meanchey, Rovieng District	0	0	50	111	224	335	570%	High increase			38 000 000	230 000 000	505%	High increase	
	PREAH VIHEAR	178	313	560	166	374	1187					66 408 000	276 000 000			

Note: Data utilized were based on figures reported by the AC/LIG management without necessarily referring to the most updated records or approved financial statement. Only 2 out of 18 visited have produced financial statements.

Annex IX - Table -4

Status of VAHWs service delivery

<i>Village/district/province</i>	<i>No. of VAHW met</i>	<i>Status</i>	<i>Success factors (for sustainability)</i>	<i>Key challenges (for sustainability)</i>
Cha Ung/Thuy Tum Rattanakiri	1 (M) - village chief	Active	Popularity being the village chef; Has paying clients; accepting chickens if clients have no cash	Difficulty in serving farmers living far from the residence; Too busy with other responsibilities
Kalai Pi1 Rattanakiri	1 (M) - LIG group leader	Active	Has paying clients in his own village and other villages; has good reputation for good quality services	
SethaKech/Chheanmuk/ Tbeng Meanchey Preah Vihar	1 (F)	Less active	Some paying clients; free vaccines from PDAFF/MALIS project;	Unable to treat new/different type of animal diseases. Needs Refresher training; some clients pay very late (two years); bad quality medicine/vaccines from the market
Bos/Phnom Pen Preah Vihar	1 (F)	Non-active		Too busy for child care
Kroboab/Kulen Preah Vihar	1 (F)	Active	Support from other projects, collaboration with AC animal health officer; has paying clients	

Note: All active VAHWs not affiliated with VAHW Association.

M = male; F = female

Annex IX - Table 5

Adoption rates based on reports by the beneficiaries met by the PPE team

	<i>Preah Vihear</i>		<i>Kratie</i>		<i>Ratanakiri</i>		<i>Average per 3 province</i>	
	A	B	A	B	A	B	A	B
Chicken	16/20 =80%	15/20 =75%	19/21 =90%	12/21 =57%	26/46 =57%	28/46 =61%	61/87 =70%	55/87 =63%
Vegetable	14/20 =70%	4/20 =20%	4/21 =19%	5/21 =24%	11/46 =24%	9/46 20%	29/87 =33%	19/87 =22%
Rice	12/30 =40%	14/30 =47%	8/21 =38%	4/21 =19%	6/46 =13%	0/46 0%	26/97 =27%	18/97 =19%

Number of persons with positive responses / number of persons who reported to have participated in the training.

A: New technique learnt and applied after the training.

B: Continue to apply until now.

Technical note on rural poverty impact assessment

- The evaluation team reviewed data from different surveys and project M&E data to inform the assessment of rural poverty impact. Key information on the main surveys is provided below.

Summary of RULIP outcome and impact assessments conducted

Survey title, date	Sample size	Evaluation methodology	Key results reported	Comments
RIMS survey and baseline survey (two questionnaires, two reports) 2007/2008	T: 900 (30 villages from 30 communes in 16 districts) Random	Before and after		The households were randomly selected from the entire village population rather than actual or prospective group members. Presumably two-stage sampling (villages then households) was used based on the IFAD's RIMS impact survey manual.
RIMS mid-line and household survey (two questionnaires, two reports) 2011	T: 900 Random	Before and after		Same two questionnaires as the baseline. Household surveyed were randomly selected from the members of the project groups
RIMS endline and household survey 2014 (SBK research & development (survey consulting firm)) One combined questionnaire	T: 945 CD1: 473 CD2: 472 (30 villages for TD, 15 villages for CD1, and 15 for CD2) Random	Before and after (with baseline and midline); cross-sectional comparison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Project HH asset ownership 33% higher than comparable households Total crop production increased from 2.2 tons/HH at baseline to 5.3 tons/HH) Project HH produced 52% more crop (by weight), sold a higher percentage of their crop (65% vs 60%) Technology transfer adoption rate declined significantly compared to mid-line survey. 	Two questionnaires used in the previous surveys were combined, eliminating duplications. No valid baseline data for both T and CD groups to ensure CD group can serve as counterfactual groups. The report only contains simple descriptive statistics without significance test. In many aspects results were better/best at mid-line (e.g. usage of agricultural service): It is not clear whether this is due to sampling problem or reflects the project performance.
RULIP impact evaluation (a brief note released 2017 by IFAD Strategy and Knowledge Department) 2015	T: 803 C: 601 Random 104 case studies, 28 key informant interviews, 18 focus group discussions	Propensity Score Matching	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Overall assets ownership increased including livestock, while durable asset index dropped Land ownership increased significantly. Agricultural yields and revenue increased significantly from agricultural production. Crop cultivation diversity increased. Gender empowerment index decreased significantly. 	No sufficient information to confirm the comparability of control and treatment groups. Significantly less number of observations for the control group may have affected the power of matching.

CD = control domain; T = treatment group; HH = household

2. IOE obtained the data file from the RIMS end-line and household survey conducted in 2015 from MAFF and ran some further data analysis. Recognizing the limitation of the survey methodology and results, especially in terms of uncertainty about the comparability of the control and treatment groups, the aim was not to generate any findings on causalities of the project's poverty impact, but rather to analyse the data from different angles and see the level of consistency or lack thereof with data from different sources. This either gives some confidence on the assessment emerging from different data sources or signals the need for caution in interpreting data. It can show correlations between different factors in treatment and control areas. Furthermore, the dataset from the RIMS and household survey also included some key indicators that the SKD impact evaluation did not cover (e.g. productivity and incomes).
3. Out of the four domains of poverty impact, the data analysis focused on household income and net asset, and food security and agricultural productivity. In the end-line survey, treatment households (945 households, "treatment domain", TD) were sampled from the RULIP-supported groups (e.g. LIGs), half of the control households (473, "control domain" 1, CD1) were sampled from villages not covered by the project but located in the treated communes, and the other half of the control households (472 households, "control domain" 2, or CD2) were sampled from the communes not covered by the project but located in the project districts. CD1 was sampled in order to capture any spill-over effects from nearby treated villages, while the CD2 was expected to show no or minimal spill-over effects as those villages were far away from the treated villages.

Household income and net assets

4. The RIMS end-line survey collected income from different sources, including crop cultivation, livestock raising, remittance, etc. As for the project concerns, this part will only focus on agricultural income (crop cultivation and livestock raising).

Income from crop-cultivation
5. These RULIP project households have gained significant higher amounts of income from crop cultivation compared to non-RULIP households. On average, the RULIP project beneficiaries have gained a 31.3 per cent higher income than non-beneficiaries (see column 4) even after controlling other variables (social demographic information of the households, extension service, land size, and the shocks). Specifically:
 - The income quintile variable is composed of nine weighted household assets using principal component analysis method, which could be treated as a stock of previous household wealth. Wealth quintile increases one level, the income from crop cultivation increases 11 per cent (Model (4)). There are potential reverse causality in this correlation, which needs to be interpreted carefully: i.e. it can also be due to higher income increase HHs are able to purchase more household assets.
 - One more hectare of land size, income from crop cultivation is 14.7 per cent higher, ceteris paribus.
 - If farmers received service from District Agriculture Office, their crop cultivation will be 13.4 per cent higher, ceteris paribus.
 - Whether it is male-headed households, literate or minority, it shows no significant difference.
 - Interestingly, the income is negatively correlated with sales rate of crops.

Annex X – Table 1
Income from crop cultivation

Variables	(1) <i>Ln_crop_income</i> ^a	(2) <i>Ln_crop_income</i>	(3) <i>Ln_crop_income</i>	(4) <i>Ln_crop_income</i>
Treated	0.689*** (0.055)	0.564*** (0.097)	0.420*** (0.071)	0.313*** (0.094)
Income quintile			0.089*** (0.020)	0.110*** (0.018)
Sale rate of crops			-0.008 (0.016)	-0.027*** (0.010)
Male headed household			0.082 (0.084)	0.019 (0.070)
Household head is illiterate			-0.038 (0.063)	-0.103 (0.064)
Land size			0.158*** (0.010)	0.147*** (0.009)
Shock ^b			-0.051 (0.049)	0.015 (0.048)
Service from District Agriculture Office ^c			0.163** (0.078)	0.134* (0.069)
Non-minority (Khmer)			-0.072 (0.071)	0.059 (0.087)
Constant	14.338*** (0.061)	14.712*** (0.404)	13.766*** (0.113)	13.875*** (0.322)
Other controls	Province dummy	Commune dummy ^d	Province dummy	Commune dummy
Observations	1,604	1,604	1,548	1,548
R-squared	0.098	0.301	0.277	0.449
rmse	1.086	0.969	0.973	0.861

Robust standard errors in parentheses

Ln_crop_income = Natural logarithm of crop income

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Model (1): bivariable linear regression with province fixed effect.

Model (2): bivariable linear regression with commune fixed effect.

Model (3): multi-variable regression with province fixed effect and control of potential explanatory variables for crop income.

Model (4): multi-variable regression with commune fixed effect and control of potential explanatory variables for crop income.

^a Log of income from crop cultivation.

^b In the last 12 months, has your household experienced any big shock that affected your household food security (e.g. severe sickness or death, huge increase in food prices, natural disaster, etc.)?

^c If they received service from district agricultural officer, it will be coded as 1, then otherwise.

^d Province/commune dummies, each of which will refer to one province/commune—that is, that variable will be 1 if the individual comes from that province/commune, and 0 otherwise.

Income from livestock

6. Secondly, if we look at livestock income, the project's effect is not that obvious if controlling other factors. If we only look at the relationship between "treat" and logarithm of livestock profit, the RULIP project households gained about 45 per cent higher profit from livestock than non-RULIP households, but only significant at 90 per cent, with commune individual effect counted. However, after adding some other controls, the significant correlation disappears. The livestock profit are positively correlated with land size, VAHW service (vaccination, sickness treatment, and advice) , existence of VAHW workers in the village (not in all

models), and the sales rate of chicken. Model (3) is treated as the basic model to examine different control variables.

- One more hectare of land size, income from livestock is 11.4 per cent higher, *ceteris paribus*.
- The effect of VAHW health service on livestock profit is significant. If farmers received the VAHW service, the profit increases 88.1 per cent if holding other variables the same.
- In this model (3), the effect of VAHW workers' existence is not significant as there might be multicollinearity with commune dummies.
- Model (4) indicates that the higher the chicken sales rate, the higher the livestock profit.¹

Annex X – Table 2

Income from livestock

Variables	(1) <i>Ln_livestock_profit</i>	(2) <i>Ln_livestock_profit</i>	(3) <i>Ln_livestock_profit</i>	(4) <i>Ln_livestock_profit</i>
Treated	0.450*	0.012	-0.084	0.067
	(0.267)	(0.161)	(0.270)	(0.214)
Preah Vihear		0.271*		0.295
		(0.156)		(0.215)
Ratanakiri		-0.763***		-0.375
		(0.211)		(0.279)
Male headed household		-0.051	-0.018	-0.128
		(0.212)	(0.189)	(0.295)
Land size		0.116***	0.114***	0.156***
		(0.022)	(0.024)	(0.038)
Shock		-0.098	-0.109	-0.363**
		(0.126)	(0.126)	(0.175)
VAHW service		0.861***	0.881***	1.037***
		(0.146)	(0.153)	(0.203)
Presence VAHW worker		0.592***	0.112	0.635***
		(0.183)	(0.215)	(0.227)
Non-minority (Khmer)		0.096	0.529*	0.274
		(0.160)	(0.282)	(0.236)
Chicken sales rate				1.553***
				(0.476)
Constant	13.903***	11.918***	12.428***	10.410***
	(0.731)	(0.333)	(0.725)	(0.452)
Other controls	Commune dummy	Province dummy	Commune dummy	Commune dummy
Observations	690	659	659	327
R-squared	0.247	0.189	0.328	0.296
rmse	1.577	1.609	1.513	1.509

Robust standard errors in parentheses

Ln_livestock_profit = Natural logarithm livestock profit

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Model (1): bivariable linear regression with commune fixed effect

Model (2): multi-variable linear regression with provincial fixed effect and control of variables affecting livestock-income

Model (3): multi-variable regression with commune fixed effect and control of variables affecting livestock -income

Model (4): multi-variable regression with commune fixed effect and control of variables affecting livestock-income, including chicken sales rate.

¹ Only chicken sales rate is used as it include sufficient observations to conduct regression analysis. It is also reasonable to use chicken's sales rate as this is the mostly common raised livestock, which is the most significant part of the livestock income for rural households.

Household assets

7. Here the household assets only cover durable assets. The data analysis indicates that RULIP households have significantly higher asset ownership and asset values than non-RULIP households even after controlling. Male-headed households have possessed more assets than female-headed households. Khmer households have higher asset ownership than minority households. Illiterate households have significantly less household assets than literate households.

Annex X – Table 3

Household asset ownership and household asset value

Variables	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	<i>Ln_asset_value</i>	<i>Ln_asset_value</i>	<i>Asset ownership</i>	<i>Asset ownership</i>
Treated	0.439*** (0.137)	0.433*** (0.132)	0.531*** (0.114)	0.534*** (0.112)
Male headed household		0.842*** (0.124)		0.447*** (0.080)
Non-minority (Khmer)		0.068 (0.148)		0.293** (0.115)
Household head is illiterate		-0.459*** (0.092)		-0.524*** (0.065)
Constant	14.518*** (0.262)	13.807*** (0.323)	-0.278 (0.310)	-0.827** (0.350)
Other controls	Commune dummy	Commune dummy	Commune dummy	Commune dummy
Observations	1 870	1 803	1 887	1 816
R-squared	0.167	0.214	0.166	0.217
rmse	1.559	1.511	1.193	1.159

Robust standard errors in parentheses

Ln_asset_value = Natural logarithm asset value

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Model (1): bivariable linear regression with commune fixed effect and the dependent variable is logarithm of asset value.

Model (2): multi-variable linear regression with commune fixed effect and control of variables affecting asset value.

Model (3) bivariable regression with commune fixed effect and the dependent variable is asset ownership of a basket of assets.

Model (4): multi-variable regression with commune fixed effect and control of variables affecting asset ownership.

8. The SKD impact evaluation indicated a significant decrease in household durable asset ownership even though the overall asset ownership increased. It is because an increase in livestock ownership was large enough to "outweigh" the decrease in durable asset ownership. The difference could be driven by different baskets of assets they were asked and more importantly, the SKD survey has a recall baseline included in the analysis.

Food security and agricultural productivityFood security

9. Hunger is not a significant problem in all three types of area (TD, CD1, and CD2). In total, there are only about 0.5% of households that have experienced a hunger season. 86.8 per cent of RULIP households have at least three meals a day, statistically higher than the non-RULIP households, who have 77.4 per cent of households have at least three meals a day (table 4).

Annex X – Table 4
Households have at least three meals a day (per cent)

	<i>TD</i>	<i>CD (CD1 and CD2)</i>	<i>CD1</i>	<i>CD2</i>
Mean	86.8%	77.4%	70.2%	84.7%
Number of observations	942	945	473	472
P-value		(TD-CD): 0.000***	(TD-CD1): 0.000***	(TD-CD2): 0.1418

CD = control domain; TD = treatment domain

10. As for food expenditure, there is no statistically significant difference for TD and CD areas (table 5). However, TD households tend to spend more on non-food expenditure. Though there is no significant difference on food expenditure, farmers who reported improved agricultural productivity may have improved food consumption as they were able to grow more food for themselves to eat. This may also explain the negative correlation between agricultural income and sales rate, which suggests that food consumption may have been improved without being reflected in household food expenditures.

Annex X – Table 5
Household expenditure on food and non-food

	<i>TD</i>	<i>CD (CD1 and CD2)</i>	<i>CD1</i>	<i>CD2</i>
Food expenditure				
Mean (Riel)	568156.5	558887.8	554311.8	563473.5
Number of Obs.	942	945	473	472
P-value		(TD-CD): 0.1948	(TD-CD1): 0.1461	(TD-CD2):0.3623
Non-food expenditure				
Mean (Riel)	5363128	4109266	3806052	4413124
Number of Obs.	942	945	473	472
P-value		(TD-CD):0.0000***	(TD-CD1):0.0001***	(TD-CD2):0.0137

Notes: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

CD = control domain; TD = treatment domain

Agricultural productivity

11. Regarding agricultural productivity, RULIP households tend to have statistically higher agricultural productivity for wet season rice, cassava, and cashew. For dry season rice, RULIP households produce almost two times of rice per hectare than the control area. However, it is not statistically significant, which is due to the small number of observations for the control groups.

Annex X – Table 6
Agricultural productivity (kg/ha)

<i>Wet season</i>		<i>TD</i>	<i>CD (CD1 and CD2)</i>	<i>CD1</i>	<i>CD2</i>
Rice	Mean	1828.3	1583.5	1618.5	1550.7
	Number of observations	817	644	312	332
	P-value		(TD-CD): 0.000***	(TD-CD1): 0.002***	(TD-CD2): 0.000***
Cassava	Mean	5850.1	5095.8	5300.6	4745.1
	Number of observations	200	141	89	52
	P-value		(TD-CD): 0.0724*	(TD-CD1): 0.1744	(TD-CD2): 0.0828 *
Soybean	Mean	1474.189	1088.947	693.75	1166.058
	Number of observations	123	49	8	41
	P-value		(TD-CD): 0.0424 **	(TD-CD1): 0.1025	(TD-CD2): 0.0751*
<i>Dry season</i>		<i>TD</i>	<i>CD (CD1 and CD2)</i>	<i>CD1</i>	<i>CD2</i>
Rice	Mean	2903.75	1386.161		1386.161
	Number of observations	8	4	0	4
	P-value		(TD-CD): 0.118	N/A	(TD-CD2): 0.118
Cassava	Mean	4516.0	4885.9	2740.0	6227.1
	Number of observations	66	13	5	8
	P-value		(TD-CD): 0.6036*	(TD-CD1): 0.1737	(TD-CD2): 0.8347
Fruit		TD	CD (CD1 and CD2)	CD1	CD2
Cashew	Mean	16.17976	4.038749	4.171032	3.851349
	Number of observations	106	58	34	24
	P-value		(TD-CD):0.0737*	(TD-CD1): 0.1362	(TD-CD2): 0.172
Banana	Mean	0.83981	0.8234991	1.337556	0.5815902
	Number of observations	110	75	24	51
	P-value		(TD-CD): 0.4692	(TD-CD1): 0.9141	(TD-CD2): 0.0296**

Notes: * p<0.05, ** p<0.01, *** p<0.001

CD = control domain; TD = treatment domain

12. As for the rice productivity, regardless of the models, the treatment area shows a significant higher rice productivity. Model (4) will be treated as the base model for the following interpretations:
- RULIP households tend to have 17.3 per cent higher rice yields than non-RULIP households;
 - Households owning hand tractors tend to have 9.7 per cent rice yield than those without hand tractors;
 - Khmer households tend to have 15.4 per cent higher rice yields than minority households;
 - Farmers who have applied the rice seed practice tend to produce 12.2 per cent higher rice yields.
 - Interestingly, farmers who own one more hectare of land tend to produce 4.2 per cent less rice. It might be because farmers who own more land may not cultivate rice as intensively as ones who have less land.

Annex X – Table 7
Household rice productivity

Variables	(1) Ln_rice_productivity	(2) Ln_rice_productivity	(3) Ln_rice_productivity	(4) Ln_rice_productivity
Treat	0.205*** (0.037)	0.198** (0.080)	0.180*** (0.051)	0.173** (0.081)
Male headed household			0.020 (0.056)	-0.008 (0.050)
Land size			-0.041*** (0.008)	-0.042*** (0.009)
Shock			-0.031 (0.036)	-0.033 (0.035)
Hand tractor ^a			0.140*** (0.042)	0.097** (0.045)
Service from District Agriculture Office			0.024 (0.053)	0.031 (0.052)
Non-minority (Khmer)			0.087** (0.043)	0.154** (0.068)
Rice_Seed Practice ^b			0.179*** (0.042)	0.122*** (0.047)
Farmer field school			0.002 (0.054)	0.012 (0.059)
Other controls	Province dummy	Commune dummy	Province dummy	Commune dummy
Constant	7.323*** (0.046)	7.413*** (0.126)	7.324*** (0.078)	7.374*** (0.150)
Observations	1,444	1,444	1,395	1,395
R-squared	0.108	0.195	0.133	0.212
rmse	0.676	0.652	0.659	0.638
Robust standard errors in parentheses				

*** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Ln_rice_productivity = Natural logarithm rice productivity

^a If the household owns hand tractor, it will be coded as 1; if no, then will be coded as 0.

^b Whether household adopt the rice seed practice technology transfer or not. If yes, then it is coded as 1, if no, then it is coded as 0.

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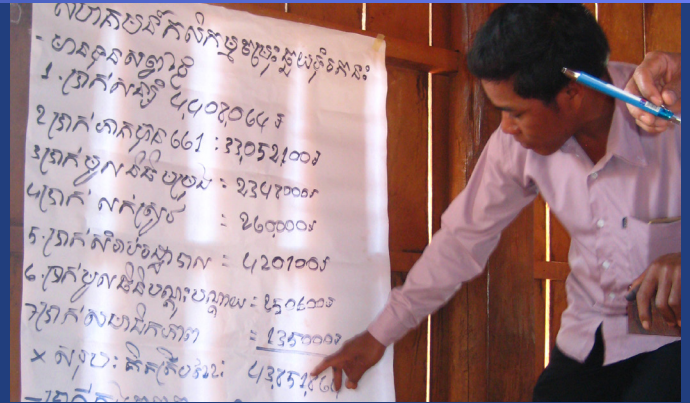
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Independent Office of Evaluation
 International Fund for Agricultural Development
 Via Paolo di Dono, 44 - 00142 Rome, Italy
 Tel: +39 06 54591 - Fax: +39 06 5043463
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