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# ACCOUNTABILITY REVIEW IN CAMBODIA

Strengthening partnership towards participatory and accountable governance

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Effectiveness Review Series 2014/15

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Teng Kao, from Sre Ambel District, Koh Kong Province, says his land was taken and cleared to make way for a sugar cane plantation. Photo: Caroline Gluck/OGB.

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# ACRONYMS

AFD	Action for Development
AJC	Access to Justice Committee for the Poor
APA	Angkar Ponleu Aphiwat
AR	Accountability Review
CLEAN	Cambodia Land and Environment Action Network
CED	Community Economic Development
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ECCF	EU-Cambodia Co-operation Facility for Governance and Human Rights
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
KII	Key Informant Interviews
KPT	Kampong Thom Province
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OGB	OGB Great Britain
PM	(Technical) Partners' Meeting
PP	Phnom Penh
PVH	Prom Vihearhor
PKH	Ponlok Khmer
RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia
RUPP	Royal University of Phnom Penh
SNA	Sub-National Authority
ST	Stung Treng Province

# 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

To ensure the effectiveness and sustainability of development activities, all stakeholders, beneficiaries and development agents should be accountable to each other. Accountability can be defined as a process through which an organisation balances the needs of stakeholders in its decision making and activities, and delivers against this commitment.

Oxfam GB (OGB) chooses to use Accountability Reviews (ARs) to measure the degree to which its work meets its own standards for accountability.<sup>1</sup> These accountability standards are taken from OGB's Programme Standards – against which every programme is required to assess itself on a regular basis.

ARs seek evidence for, perceptions of and make judgements about the degree to which any given project meets OGB's standards for accountability with regard to both:

- accountability in its partnerships
- shared accountability with its partners to those it works on behalf of.

The purpose of ARs is to examine performance against standards. ARs are not designed to measure accountability *per se* or impact as a result of good accountability – both of these are areas of research OGB might choose to develop in the future.

ARs take place at project level, in randomly selected projects that are approximately a quarter to half-way through their cycle – enough time for accountable relationships to have been developed and with enough time remaining in the project to put learning into practice.

Levels of transparency, feedback and participation were considered to be key measurement indicators for accountability in this project.

The EU-Cambodia Co-operation Facility for Governance and Human Rights (ECCF) is one of three OGB projects randomly selected for an Accountability Review (AR) in 2014/15. A participatory approach with triangulation analysis was employed in the study to assess and explain the level of accountability of OGB to its partners, and of OGB and its partners to communities.

**Table 1.1: OGB's score for accountability to partners – from 1 (low) to 4 (v high)**

Accountability Indicator	(Average) OGB score	(Average) Partner score	Review team score
Transparency	4	3	4
Feedback	3	3.3	3
Participation	3	3.3	3.5
<b>Average Total:</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>3.5</b>

The review team awarded OGB's transparency a score of 4 because OGB's performance fulfilled all the standard criteria for measuring it as part of the AR process. However, feedback was rated 3 as OGB needs to do further work on addressing all the complaints and feedback accumulated during its project implementation. This has to do more with improved financial capacity and feedback mechanisms to address its current shortcomings in responding to partners' needs. Participation was scored high (3.5), but to get a top rating, OGB should

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reframe its strategies for involving partners in modifying key project frameworks and implementing strategies that should be open and flexible.

**Table 1.2: OGB and partner accountability to communities – from 1 (low) to 4 (v high)**

<b>Accountability Indicator</b>	<b>(Average) OGB/Partner score</b>	<b>(Average) Community score</b>	<b>Review team score</b>
<b>Transparency</b>	3	2.8	<b>3</b>
<b>Feedback</b>	3.3	3.3	<b>3</b>
<b>Participation</b>	3.3	3.0	<b>3.8</b>
<b>Average Total:</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>3.3</b>

The review team rated OGB and partners' transparency to communities as 3 (high). This is because the review team felt that, despite quite difficult operating circumstances, a good degree of transparency had been achieved. Key stakeholders in the communities knew a lot about the project: budget, duration, goals, donors, plans, benefits, etc., but others didn't know enough.

In general, it was felt that the long distances contributed to the fact that visits from partners to communities were irregular and infrequent, and that sharing of project reports suffered as a result. The challenge of travelling to some of the furthest locations has had an impact on all aspects of accountability: transparency, feedback and participation. In some cases, the communities felt that the information that partners were trying to communicate was too complex. It was suggested that the use of visual aids as training documents had been limited.

The community based their score of 3.3 for feedback on the fact that OGB and partners always acknowledged villagers' requests and concerns and had good relationships with the commune council and other local representatives. This award was almost homologous to the 3.2 score given by OGB and partners. However, the review team gave a score of only 3 for feedback mainly because OGB and partners needed to further improve the existing feedback-raising and response approaches.

Despite the fact that OGB and partners and the community scored only 3 for participation, the review team rated it much higher (3.8) as the project has involved all key stakeholders in planning, decision-making, implementing, and monitoring the progress activities. More especially, participatory approaches have always been considered to be the main tool in all the project implementation phases.

Some villagers were too busy with their livelihood activities to join the ECCF's project activities. Another factor that affects participation is the literacy rate of the villagers, which makes them hesitant to be a part of the project.

The Access to Justice Committees (AJCs) are still very new, and consequently don't yet have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities. Apart from receiving limited technical and financial support, the legal capacity of the AJCs needs to be built further to become fully operational and a catalyst for improving land and natural-resource governance and conflict management at local level.

### **Key recommendations**

- Set up mechanisms to improve the accountability knowledge of OGB's staff, partners and key local beneficiaries.
- Design approaches to share more project information with SNAs, line ministries and local communities, as well as OGB's partners.

- Redesign time-specific action plans to encourage more community participation, while focusing on incentive mechanisms to support livelihoods.
- Revisit and strengthen the accountability, especially the transparency, of the financial plan to allow OGB's partners, stakeholders and the community to better capture and understand the financial flow and management of the project.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

Despite the scale, breadth and complexity of OGB's work, it is strongly committed to being accountable to a wide range of stakeholders and improving its understanding and the communication of its effectiveness. Accountability is a core OGB value (alongside inclusivity and empowerment). This commitment means that *how* OGB does the work is as important as what is done. Assessing the ways in which OGB carries out its work is of vital importance, and OGB has devised a methodology for examining the leadership, systems and practices it employs at project level to increase its accountability to people living in poverty. OGB has a responsibility to be accountable to the partners with whom it works, and OGB's accountability to people living in poverty is the joint responsibility of OGB and its partners.

OGB regularly carries out a series of Effectiveness Reviews, all of which start with the random selection of projects. These projects are then rigorously examined for their performance against appropriate indicators. For the financial year 2014/15 OGB randomly selected three projects to review the degree to which its work meets its own standards for accountability. OGB's ECCF project 'Strengthening Partnership Towards Participatory and Accountable Governance of Land and Natural Resources in Cambodia' is one of these three randomly selected projects. ECCF has been implemented in four provinces in Cambodia – Kampong Thom, Preah Vihear, Kratie and Stung Treng – since 2013.

This review focuses on the process of implementation of ECCF's activities in Cambodia by using the concept and principles of accountability as the main lens through which to view all stages of the project cycle. The results of the AR will help OGB to ensure that its performance matches its accountability standards.

# 3 METHODOLOGY

Time and budget constraints for conducting the AR meant that only two provinces (Kampong Thom and Stung Treng) out of the four target provinces within OGB and ECCF’s coverage areas were selected for the AR study. Distance from the OGB office in the province was used as the basis to select the target villages for the study location, with distance from the office being ranked. This ranked list was split into two (nearest and furthest villages) and the villages randomly selected. Two far villages and two near villages were chosen from each province (Table 3.1).

**Table 3.1: Selected locations (villages and districts) for the AER process**

<b>Stung Treng Province (ST) (February 2–3, 2015)</b>		
<b>District</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Distance</b>
1. Siem Bouk District	Svay village, Koh Sralay commune (Near village)	20km
2. Thala Borivat District	Pong Tuk Village ,O’Rei Commune (Near village)	15km
	Morn Village, Anlong Chrey Commune (Far village)	70km
	Kaing Cham Village, Kaing Cham Commune (Far village)	25km
<b>Kampong Thom Province (KPT) (February 5–6, 2015)</b>		
1. Kompong Svay District	Trapeang Thmor Village, Trapeang Ruessei Commune (Near village)	16km
	Doun Chhuk Village, Nipech Commune (Far village)	44km
2- Prasat Balang	Andas Village, Salavisai Commune (Near village)	35km
	Mreak Kor Village, Tuol Kreul Commune (Far village)	36km

A participatory approach was employed in the AR, which allowed many involved actors to express both positive and negative points of the ECCF project implementation with their engagement in all stages of the project activities. Both primary and secondary data were collected through fieldwork and reviewing all existing documents, such as project documents, monitoring and evaluation reports, and annual reports. Supporting research documents and data are available upon request.

The primary data were gathered through Key Informant Interviews (KII) and Focus Group Discussions (FGD) with different levels of implementers and partners, stakeholders, and beneficiaries at two of the four targeted provinces – Kampong Thom and Stung Treng (see Appendix 1). The study used standard questionnaires (KII and FGD), which have been used by OGB in other places or countries (Table 3.2).

The ten-seed technique was used in the FGDs at the local community level at selected study sites (Figure 3.1). This tool allowed all the FGD members to participate actively in discussing all given questions in order to reach consensus answers. A Likert scale (1 = low, 2 = medium, 3 = high, and 4 = very high) was used in both FGD and KII questions to measure the perception of

the level of accountability of the representatives of all parties engaged in the ECCF project implementation.

**Figure 3.1: The ‘ten-seeds technique’ used in focus group discussions in the selected villages**



Representatives from OGB, partners, SNA, CBOs, districts, commune, and the consultant team participated in a workshop at the end of the data-gathering phase, which was divided into two sections. The first section was the presentation of the preliminary findings followed by questions and answers. The second section was group discussions and presentation of participants’ further discussions on the preliminary results. Finally, the agreed results of the AR and resulting commitments to change were reached in the workshop.

**Figure 3.2: OGB partners meeting in KPT province**  
**Figure 3.3: Focus group discussion meeting in the target village**



**Figure 3.4: Key informant interviews during the fieldwork**  
**Figure 3.5: OGB Accountability Review feedback workshop**



Credit for all photos above: OGB in Cambodia

## 4 SITUATIONAL SUMMARY

In the 1970s, 70% of Cambodia was covered by forest. Kampong Thom (KPT), Preah Vihear (PV), Kratie (KI) and Stung Treng (ST) were recognised as forest provinces, being the least populated provinces in Cambodia, and having the most ethnic minority groups. The main livelihoods in these areas rely on natural resources, especially non-timber forest products and traditional rice cultivation. Agriculture is still the main contributor to livelihoods today.

Since the 1990s, the peace and social security of the country has improved and since the civil war ended in 1998, development activities in Cambodia have been growing and natural resources used both legally and illegally. Illegal usage has had significant consequences, such as changing the local ecosystems, due mainly to deforestation. These losses and changes have had serious effects, not only on livelihoods, but also on natural resources, such as water, land, and fish stocks. In addition, other social problems, especially conflicts over land, occur in these areas.

The Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC), development partners, local and international organisations, and local communities have been actively working to respond to these serious challenges. All actors are actively working to protect, prevent, and manage the situation to ensure the equitable and sustainable use of natural resources for the next generation.

Currently, Directive 001, as part of the RGC's Leopard Strategy, is being implemented to rectify the government's countrywide land and forest governance reform. As a result, up to the end of 2014, 23 economic land concessions (ELCs) totalling 90,662 ha have been revoked by the Ministry of Environment. Participation in the establishment of community forestry, community fishery, and land-use planning is being encouraged and practised. This policy implementation serves as a key strategy to better governance of natural resources aimed at achieving poverty eradication and economic growth through engaging local communities and civil society organisations in the development process.

As the results of the intervention have not yet been achieved, the Royal Government of Cambodia, development agents, local and international organisations, and communities will continue to work to achieve development with sustainable natural resources in the country.

# 5 SHORT PROJECT SUMMARY

In January 2013, with financial support from the EU and its own resources, OGB started to implement a three-year project entitled 'Strengthening Partnership towards Participatory and Accountable Governance of Land and Natural Resource in Cambodia'. The objectives were: (i) to enhance capacities and provide platforms for engaging with the state agencies at sub-national authority level in the governance of land and natural resources; and (ii) to build capacity and establish platforms for civil society, rights holders and the state to advocate for the equitable management of land and natural resources. Four outcomes were expected to be achieved:

1. Strengthened capacity of 260 sub-national authorities, 45 NGOs, 90 community-based organisation members and 170,837 villagers in KPT, PV, KI and ST provinces of Cambodia on participatory engagement in policy dialogues for transparent and accountable governance of land and natural resources.
2. Institutionalised engagement mechanisms and cooperation between SNAs and CSOs for developing and implementing policies and strategies for land-use planning and development.
3. Citizens and groups affected by land disputes and conflicts in KPT, PV, KI and ST provinces of Cambodia to have access to legal services for resolving their cases.
4. Strengthened capacity of local communities and rights holders, particularly women and vulnerable groups, for claim-making and demand for good governance of land and natural resources.

The project's target groups and beneficiaries were the Provincial, District, and Commune Councils, civil society organisations, community-based organisations, land-poor and landless villagers, women, indigenous peoples and ethnic minorities. The coverage areas of the project were 240 villages, 46 communes and 8 districts in the four provinces. OGB works in partnership with local partner NGOs and takes their coverage areas as targets for project implementation. These local partners included Action for Development (AFD) and Angkar Ponleu Aphiwat (APA) based in Kampong Thom province; Ponlok Khmer (PKH) based in Preah Vihear; Community Economic Development (CED) based in Kratie; and Prom Vihearhor (PVT) based in Stung Treng.

# 6 HOW ACCOUNTABLE IS OGB TO PARTNERS IN THIS PROJECT?

The level of the accountability of OGB GB to its partners was measured by the levels of transparency, proactively seeking feedback, participation, and partnership practices of OGB to the various partners implementing the ECCF.

**Table 6.1: OGB’s score for accountability to partners (Average score) – from 1 (low) to 4 (v high)**

Accountability Indicator	(Average) OGB score	(Average) Partner score	Review team score
Transparency	4	3	4
Feedback	3	3.3	3
Participation	3	3.3	3.5
Average Total:	3.3	3.2	3.5
Partnership practices	3	3	3.5

**Table 6.2: OGB’s score for accountability to partners (Score per partner) – from 1 (low) to 4 (very high)**

Indicators	AFD	APA	PVT	Overall score
Transparency	3	3	3	3
Proactively seeking feedback	3	3	4	3.3
Participation	3	4	3	3.3
Partnership practices	3	3	3	3

## 6.1 TRANSPARENCY

As shown in Table 6.1, OGB and its ECCF project team rated themselves 4, the highest, for transparency. This was mainly due to how they had been performing and sharing their project documents, key information and task assignments, ranging from administrative to technical and financial, with all concerned partners before the project started, especially from the beginning of the project implementation. Reports of monthly, quarterly and annual meetings, technical training workshops, exchange visits, field monitoring and auditing, as well as all staff recruitment processes and work delivery, had been shared properly and widely among all project partners. However, project partners only rated OGB’s transparency as 3. This was because of the perceived limitation of financial information officially disclosed by OGB with regard to its support for the technical training workshops. After a long discussion and explanation from OGB, all the partners became more aware of the financial system, especially the set level of expenditure to support each partner in its involvement in implementing project activities. The review team gave

a similar score (4) for OGB's transparency as OGB had fulfilled all the requirements based upon standard transparency indicators of OGB's Programme Standards.

## 6.2 FEEDBACK

OGB scored itself 3 for feedback, while partners scored it slightly higher at 3.3. The review team scored OGB's feedback performance as 3. During the project implementation, OGB's staff always requested constructive feedback about any challenges, concerns or problems from all stakeholders and its partners at every workshop and meeting. OGB responded to all complaints by including feedback in its monitoring procedure and having monthly and quarterly feedback meetings. OGB and its partners supported each other. Responsiveness, however, is dependent on the nature of proposals or requests. Round-table discussions between OGB and sub national authorities (SNAs) were conducted to reflect on the implementation of the ECCF project.

Complaints and feedback regarding the implementation of the ECCF project happened via various different forms, such as meetings, workshops, round-table discussions, e-mails, phone calls, verbal communication and written documents. Feedback and complaints were regularly responded to by regional representatives of OGB. However, the review team awarded only 3, because OGB still needs to improve the quality and impact of its feedback mechanisms, especially in its active responses to all comments, feedback and proposals submitted by partners and local communities in the coverage areas. It also needs to further exercise all necessary existing mechanisms to promote continuity, while taking into serious account effective and innovative approaches to enhance stakeholder participation and trust in the project.

## 6.3 PARTICIPATION

Table 6.1 shows that participation in the implementation of the ECCF project's was high, as indicated in by OGB's score of 3, OGB's partners' score of 3.3 and the review team's score of 3.5. OGB's partners were invited to join all project activities, such as preparing the budget plan, policy making and implementation, monitoring and evaluation of the project, and modification of outputs. However, a major shortcoming of OGB in enhancing stakeholder involvement was attributed to the lack of opportunities for the partners to fully participate in modifying key project frameworks and implementation strategies.

OGB gave itself a high score (3) for participation, which was mainly due to: 1) equal involvement between OGB and its partners in decision-making on the preparation of the budget plan, project implementation, monitoring procedure, and modification of output for direction and mechanism; and 2) providing opportunities to elicit feedback from partners and relevant stakeholders and considering gender concerns.

As viewed by all the partners, women's participation had been much improved since the implementation of OGB's ECCF project in their project coverage areas, and such participation was judged to be proactive and interactive in term of women receiving more opportunities to voice their concerns and exercise their rights in decision-making, planning, and conflict management processes. In addition, women's capacity has been enhanced, particularly in land and natural-resource governance, through increasing understanding and practise of relevant law and regulatory frameworks.

OGB pointed out that partners and relevant stakeholders were invited to join reflection workshops, writing workshops, annual meetings, annual partner meetings, planning and budgeting meetings, monitoring and evaluation workshops, sustainability discussions and, in particular, strategy meetings. OGB's partners, however, were not able to participate in all the

financial planning processes of the ECCF project. According to the results from KI interviews and partners' meetings, partners usually were invited from the beginning to discuss in detail the feasibility of the project. They were also allowed to provide input into the design of the project framework and participate in the budgeting process, especially to plan and realise the budget for supporting their project implementations at provincial and local levels.

Although the budgeting and financial management processes dealing with all project implementation phases are transparent and participatory, partners are still keen to be further informed about OGB's ECCF logistical issues in supporting capacity-building activities related to land and natural-resource governance, while local communities (including SNAs and provincial line ministries) are more curious to know whether OGB and partners could increase their financial incentives to support active stakeholder engagement in all the processes. However, the review team considers these issues to be irrelevant and excessive as OGB's budgeting is already compliant with expenditure and financial management standards that every OGB agency has to follow. In this regard, what is necessary is that OGB needs to explain its funding policy and communicate it smoothly and coherently to all partners and concerned stakeholders before they partake in the project activities, as it is a matter of trust-building that could affect the success of OGB's stakeholder engagement strategies and partnership alliance as a whole.

## 6.4 PARTNERSHIP PRACTICES

Practices between OGB and its partners were awarded a similarly high score (3), while the review team scored higher (3.5) for this indicator for accountability assessment (Tables 6.1 and 6.2). Some positive key reasons from partners and the review team were: (a) there is mutual expectation, precise division of roles and responsibly among partners, as well as regular and legal monitoring, (b) OGB has clearly shown structure, roles and obligation to partners while implementing the project, (c) all modifications of roles, responsibility and the budget action plan have been clearly communicated, (d) the ECCF project has two major mechanisms – CLEAN and AJC – in which all established AJCs (at commune and provincial levels) have been established in two target communes of every district that received strong support from OGB's partners and concerned SNAs and line ministries, and (e) consultation among partners on potential project concerns was always conducted. Among all the scores given, the score from the review team was the highest. This was given for three main reasons: (1) OGB has good participatory stakeholder mechanisms to involve all concerned partners and players in getting updated about the project progress, in making joint decisions regarding project implementation to address local needs, and in reporting their concerns to improve project performance and accountability to the partners and communities; (2) concerned stakeholders and partners are well represented by key resource persons to participate in the project activities with emphasis on gender balance and inclusive participation, especially from the marginal and vulnerable groups; and (3) OGB often keeps good records of partners' and communities' input or suggestions and is committed to address them based upon their technical and financial capabilities that are listed in their project documents and logframe.

# 7 HOW ACCOUNTABLE ARE OGB AND PARTNERS TO COMMUNITIES IN THIS PROJECT?

**Table 7.1: OGB and partner accountability to communities (average scores) – from 1 (low) to 4 (v high)**

<b>Accountability Indicator</b>	<b>(Average) OGB/Partner score</b>	<b>(Average) Community score</b>	<b>Review team score</b>
<b>Transparency</b>	3.0	2.8	<b>3.0</b>
<b>Feedback</b>	3.3	3.3	<b>3.0</b>
<b>Participation</b>	3.3	3.0	<b>3.8</b>
<b>Average Total:</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>3.0</b>	<b>3.3</b>
<b>Staff attitudes</b>	n/a	3.5	<b>3.0</b>
<b>Satisfaction</b>	n/a	3.5	<b>3.0</b>

**Table 7.2: OGB and partner accountability to communities – from 1 (low) to 4 (v high)**

Indicators	OGB and partners	SNAs	CBOs	Non-partner NGOs	KII	FGD of villages from selected study sites	Average community score (SNAs + CBOs+ Non-partner NGOs + KII + FGD)	Review team score
Transparency	3	3.1	3	2	3	2.5	2.8	3
Listening	3.3	3.3	3	3	3.67	3.06	3.3	3
Participation	3.3	3.35	3	3	2.75	2.37	3	3.8
<b>Total</b>	<b>3.2</b>	<b>3.3</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>2.7</b>	<b>3.1</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3.3</b>
Staff attitudes	n/a	3.35	4	3	3.5	3.25	3.5	3
Satisfaction (useful)	n/a	3.45	4	3	4	3.25	3.5	-
Satisfaction (money)	n/a	3.2	4	3	3	3.31	3.3	-
Satisfaction (useful and money)	n/a	3.3	4	3	3.5	3.2	3.4	3

The level of accountability of OGB and its partners to the community was measured on transparency, feedback and participation. The levels of these in the project implementation were reflected through the approach, strategies and activities of the ECCF project being implemented.

## 7.1 TRANSPARENCY

OGB and its partners scored their transparency to the local community as 3. They were confident that the community is becoming more aware of OGB's ECCF project and partners' intervention strategies in the area, and they have received improved access to project information through various means of communication. The local community rated transparency only 2.8. They perceived that the distance between the project offices and local villages, along with limited means of communication and irregular visits of project staff to their villages, were major hindrances to regular updates on the project progress. The review team awarded 3 for this factor as OGB and partners need to reframe their strategies to disseminate project information to the wider public at local level, while improving the information and educational materials related to land and natural-resource governance in both quantity and quality for the local community to understand and participate more in the project.

## 7.2 FEEDBACK

OGB and partners scored 3.3 for feedback as they were confident that feedback mechanisms are apparent and developed in different forms for easy communication and use by local stakeholders. Feedback is usually well-recorded, and local beneficiaries have had more opportunities to provide feedback, especially via technical training sessions, meetings, and joint commune and district dialogues and forums. The community gave a similar score (3.3) to OGB and its NGO partners. However, they raised several key issues to be further addressed by the project implementers, including: (1) speed up responses to villagers' requests; (2) consider local feedback and incorporate it into project planning and implementation; and (3) enhance local capacity to voice concerns appropriately according to legal and legitimate procedures for land and natural-resource governance in the area.

The review team gave OGB and its partners a score of 3 as feedback and complaint mechanisms have been introduced to all partners and local communities in the target provinces. In addition, OGB staff and partners have accepted all comments from the local community. However, to improve its feedback-supported accountability, OGB and partners should take all the complaints and comments into serious account and address them promptly and effectively, while communicating their responses regularly to the local community so that they will be more enthusiastic in supporting and participating in the project.

## 7.3 PARTICIPATION

Table 7.1 shows that OGB and partners awarded themselves 3.3 for participation, slightly higher than the score of 3 given by the community. OGB and partners revealed that local stakeholders have been encouraged to participate, regardless of gender, institutional mandate, or social background. In addition, decision-making and project planning are normally done through close consultation between OGB and partners and local representatives. The local community held similar views. They reported that they are presently receiving more opportunities to decide, plan and participate in the project implementation process. As a result of their participation in various key trainings, meetings, consultations, and joint commune and village forums, their capacities have been enhanced, especially among committee members, and their relationship with all state and non-state stakeholders has markedly improved. More specifically, women have participated in social development and conflict management processes. However, the local community scored only 3 as they believed that their participation is very insecure as long as OGB and partners do not provide enough financial incentives or planning to carry out livelihood-improvement-related projects to support the current land and natural-resource governance activities in their areas. In contrast, the review team awarded 3.8 for this point because almost all participation enhancement mechanisms have been properly practised by OGB with support from partners, while from the outset of the project, participatory approaches have always been encouraged to mobilise the local community to participate.

## 7.4 SATISFACTION

All stakeholders, such as SNAs, CBOs, non-partner NGOs, and especially villagers from the selected study location, were highly or very highly satisfied with the ECCF projects as indicated by an overall satisfaction score of 3.5. Four major reasons for this score were 1) the project responded to the existing concerns of the villagers, especially land conflicts and deforestation in the community; (2) through Cambodia Land and Environment Action Network (CLEAN) and Access to Justice Committee for the Poor (AJC), villagers learn and understand about some important laws that affect them, such as land laws, fishery laws, and laws on protection and management of natural resources; (3) operational staff were strongly supported, not only by the local authority, but also the villagers themselves, and some stakeholders were able to exchange and learn through overseas trips from the ECCP project; and (4) the project has allowed all stakeholders, especially SNAs and NGOs and the community, to work together on important issues in the four provinces. However, the review team scored only 3 for overall satisfaction. According to the fieldwork and observations, some key representatives of local communities, SNAs, and line ministries remained dissatisfied due to conflicts of interest and limited information access because of their irregular participation in the project activities. This is not to put any blame on OGB and partners, as very often in the Cambodian context, such representatives are changed from time to time by their senior management, and this leads to irregular contact with the project that translates as less satisfaction with the project outputs.

## 8 OVERALL MAIN STRENGTHS

- OGB and its partners understand that accountability is a core point for implementing OGB's project activities.
- OGB and its partners were considered to have adopted a good participatory approach for implementing the ECCF project.
- OGB and its partners have clear mechanisms for receiving or collecting feedback or concerns from stakeholders.
- OGB and its partners have strong links and networking at the sub-national and community level.
- There is good cooperation with the community and making conflict resolution committees, out of court systems, and so on.
- All staff, from project to community level, exhibited good behaviour and a caring attitude to all.
- The community was informed and educated on various laws that affect them.
- The discussion forum has been an effective means for the villagers to exchange and share knowledge and concerns.
- Communities have a very high satisfaction level with the ECCF's project.
- The project has built transparency within the organisations, other stakeholders and beneficiaries, especially its partners.
- Round-table discussions between OGB and SNAs have been an important means of exchanging and sharing information on the ECCF project. This also is an effective means of influencing policy makers and practitioners.

# 9 OVERALL MAIN WEAKNESSES

- Some of OGB's staff had limited knowledge of accountability, even the key principles.
- OGB and its partners have no clear mechanism of reporting feedback results to communities – the feedback loop is incomplete.
- OGB had limited mechanisms to follow up or monitor implementation by its partners at local community level.
- Dissemination of financial information is still insufficient and inconsistent.
- There are not enough posters for public propaganda.
- Most of the project participants keep shifting their participation roles (sometimes male and female household members participated interchangeably) since their participation is often compromised by their efforts to ensure their daily livelihoods.
- Meetings/appointment times are sometimes changed without adequate notification.
- There is limited information and educational materials that are simple and comprehensible by local people in relation to legal and regulatory frameworks and limited local actionable plans with regard to land and natural-resource governance.
- There is a lack of clear explanation about the principles of giving gifts.
- The core person had not only limited time, but also limited support from NGOs and OGB for sharing project information with villagers.
- The level of transparency between partners and the community is still limited.
- The level of feedback or response from partners to the community is restricted due to limited resources of the partners.
- There is a lack of incentives to support local communities and rangers to proactively engage with resource patrolling within their localities.
- There is less frequent visiting and limited information distribution at the remote villages by project and partner staff.
- There are time conflicts between OGB's partners and villagers, especially during harvesting and crop planting.

# 10 PROGRAMME LEARNING CONSIDERATIONS

- Set up mechanisms to improve the accountability knowledge of OGB's staff, partners and key local beneficiaries.
- Design approaches to share more project information with SNAs, line ministries and local communities as well as OGB's partners.
- Redesign time-specific action plans to encourage more community participation, while focusing on incentive mechanisms to support livelihoods.
- Revisit and strengthen the accountability, especially the transparency, of the financial plan to allow OGB's partners, stakeholders and community to better capture and understand the financial flow and management of the project.

# 11 COMMITMENTS FOR CHANGE

In the feedback workshop, some commitments related to key points for improving accountability were made.

- OGB will set up a common or proper schedule that ensures full participation from the majority stakeholders and beneficiaries of the project.
- OGB and its partners will get together to explore an effective support mechanism for core persons in the communities. This will allow them to continue information dissemination to the villagers more effectively.
- OGB and its partners will improve feedback reporting of the community's concerns.
- OGB and its partners will strengthen and diversify means of dissemination to OGB's partners to ensure an excellent onward information provision to communities.
- OGB and its partners will add more visual aids to the training materials, which will help villagers to understand the content and focus.

# 12 EVALUATOR'S VIEW OF THE VALIDITY OF THE PROCESS, FINDINGS AND RESULTS

This was a scientific study conducted using both the standard documents of the AR and technical support from the AR expert at OGB House. Targeted study sites were selected using the principle that they should be representative of the overall project. Other participants in the study were selected from different levels of the project's management. At the management level, not only OGB staff, but also other OGB affiliates were invited to join the meeting. At the sub-national authority level, in-line ministries, OGB's partners, Community Based Organisations (CBOs), districts, the commune head, village chief, and villagers were chosen for Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), and a Focus Group Discussion (FGD). Informed consent was explained and assured at every interview in order to ensure that all respondents fully understood the study's objective, and their involvement and contribution to the study. The results of the study came through triangulation analysis from three main data sources: project documents, primary data (FGDs and KIIs), and empirical observation during the fieldwork. In addition, the preliminary report was verified through the feedback meeting. During the feedback meeting, questions and answers were conducted in order to respond to participants' concerns and comments on the study results. Finally, the results of the AR were accepted by all participants.

# APPENDIX 1: SUMMARY OF PARTICIPANTS

Location	Institution	KII		FGD		Partners' meeting	
		M	F	M	F	M	F
PP	OGB Phnom Penh	3	1	-	-	1	-
KPT	OGB at province	-	-	-	-	1	2
	Partners (AFD & APA)	-	-	-	-	5	2
	SNA	7	2	-	-	-	-
	Non Partner	1	0	-	-	-	-
	CBO	1	0	-	-	-	-
	Commune/Village representative	3	3	-	-	-	-
	Villagers	2	-	17	21	-	-
<b>Total</b>		<b>17</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>4</b>
ST	OGB at province	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Partners	-	-	-	-	2	0
	SNA	5	2	-	-	-	-
	Non Partner	0	1	-	-	-	-
	CBO	0	1	-	-	-	-
	Commune/Village representatives	2	2	-	-	-	-
	Villagers	2	-	24	19	-	-
<b>Total</b>		<b>9</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>24</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>0</b>
<b>Grand total</b>		<b>26</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>40</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>4</b>

## APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF ACCOUNTABILITY REVIEW PROCESS

Steps	Key activities	Accountability Review tools/data
One	Document review and evidence scoring sheet	Scoresheet – document review and evidence scoring sheet
Two	The OGB Partners' Accountability Workshop (16' January 2015 at OGB's Phnom Penh Office and 6 February 2015 at OGB's Kampong Thom province (Figure 3.2).	Overview – AR Questionnaire – OGB accountability to partners, Matrix – accountability in our projects
Three	Fieldwork for AER at two provinces (ST and KT)	KIIs' questionnaires (Figure 3.4) included Questionnaire – staff interviews, and instructions – community visits. FGD's questionnaires (Figure 3.3) such as instructions – community visits, instructions – commissioning artwork for FGDs  Instructions – preparing individuals and communities were used for preparing individual and communities
Four	Data processing and summary	Scoresheet – document review and evidence scoring sheet; scoresheet – questionnaires, matrix, FGDs, KIIs
Five	Feedback meeting 16' March 2015 at OGB's Phnom Penh Office (Figure 3.5)	Template – PowerPoint for workshop
Six	Final Report of the AER	Template for report

## OGB Effectiveness Reviews

For more information, or to comment on this report, email [opalenquiries@oxfam.org.uk](mailto:opalenquiries@oxfam.org.uk)

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