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Independent Monitoring and Evaluation of the Seila Local Planning Process

Final Report 1999

In 1999 UNDP/CARERE commissioned a third study of the Seila Local Planning Process which is being piloted in five provinces of Cambodia. This report is the evaluation team's analysis and recommendations following the 1999 study: additional outputs from the study were Feedback Reports produced for each of the five provinces.

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Executive Summary in Simple English

The purpose of this executive summary is to highlight the most important findings and recommendations of the 1999 Independent Evaluation. It is written in simple English in order to make it easy to translate and also easy to read for people who are not fluent.

Background

The Local Planning Process (LPP) is a central part of the Seila programme. Seila is a Royal Government of Cambodia programme receiving technical assistance and investment resources from UNDP and a variety of donors through the CAREERE project.

Seila is a policy experiment that seeks to prove the value of a model of decentralised governance which concentrates planning, financing and decision-making at provincial and commune levels. The LPP is a set of procedures, which enables local development funds to be transferred annually from provincial to commune level, and spent according to locally decided goals. After pilots in two communes each in Battambang and Banteay Meanchey provinces in NW Cambodia in 1996, a second round was implemented in 32 communes in 1997. In 1998 it was being implemented in 80 communes in five provinces. Now, in 1999 it is being implemented in 134 communes serving a population of approximately 943,000. Within the current project, each commune implements three cycles of the LPP normally with a budget of \$50,000 or more spread over the three years.

CAREERE support to the LPP is managed through five provincial subprojects, each of which has as its development objective 'Rural Development Structure committees and Provincial Government are capable to manage development activities based on active community participation'. In 1999 the independent evaluation team was asked to 'examine CAREERE support to the Local Planning Process and the progress being made towards realising its overall purpose'. In the context of anticipated commune council elections, and the consequent possibility of future expansion, the team was particularly asked to focus on: 'the key question that the SEILA LPP is facing [which] is how to achieve scale within the province through management by the commune while retaining aspects of local participation and consultation'.

Allocation of Resources

For the allocation by the CDC we noticed that many CDCs now dare to decide to do fewer projects instead of implementing one project in every village. Sometimes there is a project for every village because facilitators or CDC members do not dare not to allocate to every village, and sometimes because there is enough money to do a good project in every village. Generally, decision-making is improving in this respect.

We found that some CDCs still rely very much on the facilitators for the allocation of the LDF. In a minority of cases the CDC members do not really understand that making decisions about how to spend the LDF is their responsibility. We believe that in order to improve the level of understanding and ownership of the process by the CDC members that it is necessary to have a simpler process to allocate the LDF by the commune.

Recommendation:

There should only be two or three simple criteria for the CDC members to think about when deciding which projects to implement.

The best way to make sure that the new simple commune process is understood by most CDC members is to give CDC representatives the most important role in designing the process.

Recommendation:

At the Battambang LPP meeting in September 1999 Terms of Reference should be written for a group of CDC representatives, one from each province, to work on the final design of a new commune process to allocate the commune's LDF.

We noticed that many of the non-infrastructure projects are meeting problems. It is easier for the better off people to take most of the direct benefits from projects such as water pumps and buffalo provision. Projects such as rice banks and fertiliser banks are more likely to fail because of the climate or pests in the rice crop. It is important that in the early stages of the process that communes are able to implement successful projects.

Recommendation:

Only a limited sort of projects should be allowed for LDF funding, which should be mainly infrastructure. Non-infrastructure projects should continue to be monitored in existing communes and this decision can be reviewed in future.

Regarding the allocation from province to commune, three of the provinces were still allocating according to the number of villages in the commune. In a decentralised system the higher fund-holding levels must learn how to allocate in a way which is fair and transparent.

Recommendation:

All provinces must use a province to commune formula based on population of the commune and standard of living in the commune.

Collaboration

We found that integration meetings are quite well-attended by representatives from communes, NGOs and provincial departments. In many cases the dialogue is very useful for all of the participants. Especially, we noted that it is a good idea for all of the VDCs and CDCs to have a written record of the agreements made in integration, including the cost, timing and person responsible for any activity. This is done in some provinces and needs to be done everywhere. Especially, to help local people follow-up agreements which have been made. We also noticed that different people have responsibility for integration meetings in different places.

Recommendation:

Integration must be chaired by the district chief. Documentation of agreements must be given to all VDC and CDCs. Department of Planning must assist in preparation of the meeting and be the focal point for following-up agreements.

Monks are often doing valuable work in the LPP. We saw that they are more involved in leading labour and in solving problems, but not so much involved in planning and in spreading information. The main factor affecting whether monks participate actively or not is the leadership from LCBs and facilitators. We believe that if monks understand the programme well, that they will disseminate what they know to the communities unofficially.

Recommendation:

Monks should be invited to attend and give advice at every development meeting, formal and informal, at every level of Seila from village to national level. Managers must monitor this work to ensure that this happens and that monks are always invited.

Other development organisations seem to like the Seila programme because it is similar to the sort of work that they do. Relations between organisations and the LPP seem to be good, including some organisations who want to use the LPP as a model. However, NGOs are not yet being used as a resource to help with facilitation, monitoring and empowerment in the LPP. In our report we suggest ways for increased NGO participation in Seila.

The introduction of bidding is achieving good quality projects for low prices. Sometimes the VDC do not understand their rights and responsibilities with regard to managing the contractors. Even though they are not technical experts, villagers can monitor some parts of the work: they must understand their rights and responsibilities in this regard.

Recommendation:

Every project must have a project management sub-committee which is trained in the management of the contract and who must sign before the contractor is paid.

Also important for further discussion is the need for a complaints procedure. Especially, whether the Monitoring & Evaluation unit should also be the unit to receive complaints.

Participation

In this evaluation we understood participation to mean the influence which villagers have over development. For this, information is important. If villagers do not know something then they will not be able to influence it. In our experience very few villagers (almost nobody) knows that there is a commune development committee and that they are responsible for deciding how to spend the commune's LDF. If the CDC do a good job or a bad job, the villagers do not know, they are only aware of their VDC and village chief. Above that most of them just say that there is the "organisation". If people do not know whether officials and representatives at commune level are doing a good job or not, it also means that they lack relevant information on who to vote for in a commune council election. One important reason

for this is that for the 1998-9 Seila LPP, CARERE/Seila management decided that the commune LDF was not important information for villagers to know.

Generally, the information to villagers in the LPP was not good. However, in the case of publicising bidding there were some important successes. This included good use of television and radio. There is an experiment in Battambang to share responsibility for spreading information amongst villagers (in English this is called an Information Tree).

Recommendation:

The public information strategy must focus on making sure that villagers know about the commune LDF and know how to influence the way it is spent. New ways of spreading information must be used.

For villagers to have influence it is important that meetings with them are at the correct time in the process and about relevant issues. At the moment village priorities are discussed in village meetings (when the VFAP is made or updated) before the commune decides how to spend its commune LDF. This leads them to think of the village more than the commune.

Recommendation:

Instead of updating their village priorities, the villagers should discuss how to spend the commune LDF and ask the VDC chief to take their recommendations to the CDC.

When villagers meet to talk about the project workplan it is after the proposal has been written and the Ex-com has approved it, so the important decisions have been made already. If villagers are to have more influence, this must change.

Recommendation

A project workplan meeting (where the project management sub-committee is chosen) must happen after the CDC has decided what projects to do and before the project proposals are written.

If a village has three hundred families it is not possible to have a proper village meeting where people can give their opinions. There is a need for a method which ensures that there is a suitable size of meeting for good quality dialogue, and also fair representation of the village population.

Recommendation:

In villages of more than 200 households, at least one man and one woman from each Krom must attend village meetings.

Role and Behaviour of Local Authorities and other government staff

Sometimes the village chief is a very good and supportive influence for the VDC. Sometimes he tries to do things himself and because the VDC is weak he is able to dominate. This includes sometimes when the village chief is the VDC chief.

VDCs should have monthly meetings and NGOs should be encouraged to support the VDCs so that they fulfil their responsibilities correctly and do not rely on the village chief.

When there are problems in relationships it is usually between the commune chief and villages that are not his village. If the commune authorities only come from one or two villages then they may be quite remote from most villagers in the commune and therefore it is difficult to make sure that the authorities listen to the people.

Recommendation

Based on CARERE/Seila experience, the possibility of a commune assembly which includes representation from all villages should be discussed with the Ministry of Interior as a possible alternative for the new commune council law.

We think that there is some confusion between facilitation and training in the LPP at the moment. Staff are called facilitators, but their main role is to build capacity. We think that it is difficult to facilitate and build capacity at the same time. Some CDC members complain that facilitators do the work for them. We think that there should be formal training for every skill which committee members need, including proper tests and retraining for people until they are competent. The training should happen at one time, and the actual work should happen at another time. We think videos should be used to model good ways of behaving, especially for how to arrange group work and meetings (eg the CDC allocation meeting).

Recommendation

A new approach which concentrates on facilitation through training, not training through facilitation, and which uses videos to demonstrate all of the work.

We also think that in order to make sure that facilitators focus their work on providing services to local people that they should work for the local people, not for a provincial employer. This will mean that if someone does not provide good services they will be replaced. It will also be a model for government if they think that the new commune councils should have a civil servant to assist them.

District facilitators should be employees of the CDC and the provincial facilitators should be employees of the district authorities.

We found that in some places the communes were not really taking responsibility for technical matters and the TSS were doing all of the pricing and technical work. This meant that in some cases when TSS were very busy they just reported to the province and the commune did not know clearly about its own work and projects. We think that it will be difficult to find an answer to this problem because there is a lack of people with technical capacity.

Recommendation

Look for a way to provide separate technical support for the CDC, for example using private sector, NGOs or district technical officials. Possibly by giving the CDC money to buy the services when it needs them.

Other points

These are points which are outside the Terms of Reference for the Evaluation, but that the team think are important to mention.

1. Timing.

In all areas people ask "Why do they always come with the rains when we are busy". For the future it is absolutely essential that managers and donors ensure that the programme is arranged according to Cambodian weather, which means that implementation should be finished by Khmer New Year. Preparations are being made to ensure that this is the case for 2000.

2. Public Sector Reform

Seila is a very successful public sector reform project. It is changing the attitudes of everyone in provinces from rural villagers to the governor. Because of the programme people expect the government to provide services effectively, and the government does this work. This can be the foundation stone for public sector reform throughout the country. We expect that the UNDP project called Public Administration Reform will look to build on this success and find ways to ensure that national policies assist its expansion and its sustainability.

3. Technical Assistance

Now the CARERE project does not have much money for new staff or consultants, but because Seila and the LPP are an experiment, there are still new ideas and new tasks in the programme which were not planned at the beginning, but which are important. It was probably a mistake to design the programme with so many advisors at the beginning and so few advisors at the end. There may be an important need for more advisors (Cambodian or foreign) to assist in some work especially: planning of training; rapid production of training videos; feasibility study of alternative local technical assistance provision; design of a provincial LDF process; policy advice to national government based on lessons from the LPP.

Glossary and Abbreviations

Local	Refers to village and commune levels of government, and generally to any activity in villages.
Commune	The next level of government above village. Provincial government in Cambodian is structured, top-down as follows: Province; District; Commune; Village; Group (<i>Krom</i>). The <i>Krom</i> have been less active since 1993.
UNDP	The United Nations Development Programme
UNOPS	United Nations Office for Project Services
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
LDF	Local Development Fund
AIT	Asian Institute of Technology
WFP	The World Food Programme
VDC	Village Development Committee
VDP	Village Development Plan
VFAP	Village Future Action Plan
CDC	Commune Development Committee
DDC	District Development Committee
PRDC	Provincial Rural Development Committee
Excom	The executive committee of the PRDC
PDRD	Provincial Department of Rural Development
LPU	Local Planning Unit – section of the PRDC Secretariat responsible for the LPP
DFT	District Facilitation Team – district officials seconded to the Secretariat to facilitate the LPP
PFT	Provincial Facilitation Team – provincial officials seconded to the Secretariat to facilitate the LPP
TSS	Technical Support Staff – provincial officials seconded to the Secretariat to provide technical services to all involved in the LPP
IPF	Indicative Planning Figure (this term is no longer being used on the programme).
LDF	Local Development Fund – decentralised development fund available to the commune (formerly referred to as an IPF).
SIP	Seila Investment Plan – document which outlines how decentralised funds at provincial and commune level will be allocated and spent by the province.
PSO	Programme Support Office – the provincial CARERE offices.
PPM	Provincial Programme Manager
APPM	Assistant Provincial Programme Manager
LCB	Local Capacity Building assistant
LCBA	Local Capacity Building adviser
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal

Preface

The 1999 Independent Monitoring and Evaluation of CARERE support to the Local Planning Process is the third study to be commissioned by UNDP/CARERE to assist in tracking the progress of the LPP. This Final Report is supplemented by 5 provincial Feedback Reports which are available from the CARERE Phnom Penh office.

In 1997, a study in four provinces was carried out by Biddulph and Vanna. In 1998 Biddulph, Sinath, Saroth and Charya carried out a study in all five Seila provinces. The overall purpose and method have been similar each year, though elements of the TOR and of the work of the team have been amended each year through experience.

The report has been drafted in English by Robin Biddulph. It has been read and orally translated for Sem Sophal and Ok Lundy by In Sombol. Their comments, as well as those on the programme have been incorporated. Thus, while the analysis and production of this report has been a joint effort, any shortcomings in the final presentation are the responsibility of the Team Leader.

Over a three and a half month period the team has received tremendous support and cooperation both inside and outside normal working hours and in both professional and personal matters. We would like to thank everyone in the villages, the provinces and in Phnom Penh for all of their cooperation, support and friendship.

After 17 weeks of working intensively with each other, I would like to express my personal thanks to In Sombol, Sem Sophal and Ok Lundy for their commitment, professionalism, support and humour. They have been model professionals and good friends and have made my work very easy.

Finally, a particular thanks to the internal teams in each province who worked in parallel with us for a week and a half in each province. Invariably they taught us a lot and also helped to ensure that our findings were accepted in every province. We hope that ways will be found for their experience to be built on within the programme.

Robin Biddulph
14 August 1999

Background

Political and Security context for the LPP since 1998.

The general political and security situation in Cambodia since the 1998 evaluation has provided a relatively stable context for the LPP. An exception has been in Ratanakiri during July 1999 when the murder of 13 villagers and reported sightings of a number of armed groups created an atmosphere of terror throughout the province disrupting all work (including that of the evaluation team which was not able to stay in villages).

On 11 January 1999 the Prime Minister signed Decree Number 02 of the Royal Government of Cambodia on the creation of Provincial (and Municipal) Rural Development Committees. This (and an accompanying circular issued by the Ministry of Rural Development) specified roles and responsibilities for the provincial level and below in the Rural Development Structure. Some features of the Seila experiment were not mentioned in the decree: some elements of the decree were new and different to what was being piloted in the Seila experiment. Thus, an important part of the context for the LPP in 1999 was the review of RDS arrangements and policies in Seila provinces in the context of Decree 02.

The Local Planning Process 1998 to 1999 – Briefing Paper

In 1999 the Local Planning Process has expanded to 134 communes, which incorporate a total of 1,144 villages. This represents partial coverage of 40 districts in the 5 Seila provinces.

In order to provide a background for the team, the following paper was prepared by the project:

**Local Planning Process 1998-1999
Briefing paper for the LPP Independent Evaluation Team
April 1999**

This paper was prepared by the LPP M&E Adviser at the request of the Team Leader of the LPP Independent Evaluation 1999. It summarises the major changes, achievements and constraints in the LPP over the past 12 months, following the 1998 review process. The paper is not comprehensive and reference documents are mentioned.

1. Major changes and events related to the LPP in the past year.

1.1 Immediately following the completion of the LPP Independent Evaluation 1998, the provincial reviews of the LPP, and other LPP review activities, a workshop was organised in August 1998 in Pursat. Representatives from SEILA and CARERE from all provinces and Phnom Penh reviewed the progress and recommendations made. A revised local planning process was agreed on. Some of the steps of the process were revised. The changes and main agreements were on:

- use of information collection tools (reduced to 4 tools) during LPP
- information on village and project information boards
- content and format of VDP (changed to Village Future Action Plan) and CDP,

- local contributions at 10% of IPF, with a minimum of 3% cash in advance and no payment for unskilled labour
- planning integration with sectors
- agreement to use bidding procedure
- financial procedures for LDF projects streamlined
- contract and agreement formats
- LDF allocation criteria for the PRDC
- VDC formation

The implementation of these agreements is underway in the 3rd cycle of the LPP.

Reference documents: Summary of Agreements on the Local Planning Process. Joel Chamy, UNDP/CARERE Memorandum, 30 October 1998 and 5 Province level LPP 2nd cycle review reports.

- 1.2 The LPP review workshop was followed by a Workshop on Plan Integration in the SEILA Programme in Siem Reap in September 1998. Agreements were made on a model and roles & responsibilities for the integration of local commune plans, department and NGO plans. The Planning Departments are now responsible to organise annual integration meetings at district level. At these meetings, after presentations and negotiations between commune, sectors and NGOs, intentions are documented and form the basis for implementation of activities. The communes allocate their own resources only after the integration meeting.

Reference documents: Summary Workshop on Plan Integration in the SEILA Programme, Siem Reap, 16-18 September 1998, and Issues for decentralized planning and financing of rural development in Cambodia, Joel Chamy, DPM, UNDP/CARERE, December 1998, Phnom Penh

- 1.3 Since the last quarter of 1998 to date, national level policy developments on decentralisation are taking place. It looks like SEILA, as a policy experiment contributing to policy development, will end by the end of 1999 or early 2000, after the formulation of laws for commune elections and territorial administration. SEILA/CARERE is already preparing a programme to support the implementation of the yet to be formulated laws and reforms. This will likely have consequences for the LPP as we know it: the scale of the local planning process is expected to increase, the focus will need to be more on the commune level, and the resources to support the planning process are expected to be less.

Reference documents: LFA Workshop Report, Paddy Roome's mission reports 98/99, Soparth Pongquan's Back to office reports February/March 1999, IOMemo by Scott Leiper, PM, 5 April 1999

- 1.4 End of December 1998, the contracts of the 4 CARERE LCBA's expired. This meant that all responsibilities for planning and managing the LPP contracts between CARERE and the PRDC were transferred to the LCB teams.

Reference documents: End of contract reports from Marilou Juanito, Sompong Sritatera and Songsatit K.

- 1.5 In 4 out of 5 CARERE/SEILA provinces (not in Ratanakiri), the reconciliation areas were integrated into the regular LPP. This meant extra training of staff and a bigger coverage in the provinces. These areas are often remote and lack most basic services and infrastructure. The staff faces different challenges in these areas, such as inexperienced facilitators, local authorities that have not been exposed to development before, and lack of places to meet.
- 1.6 In October 1998, the LPP M&E framework and workplan were formulated. This clearly spells out the definitions of the M&E and hypothesis underpinning the programme and the monitoring and evaluation activities to be undertaken. Implementation of this framework is currently underway. In addition, in all PSOs, the LCB staff (in some cases

jointly with their counterparts) have identified aspects to monitor throughout the local planning process and are taking notes and reporting on these aspects.

Reference documents: CARERE M&E Framework paper and Draft LPP M&E Framework proposal (by IPS), both October 1998. SEILA/CARERE M&E Workplan, Final Draft, November 1998. LPP 3rd cycle training material from all PSOs, Battambang M&E Workplan 1999, training hand-outs M&E Consultant.

- 1.7 Development of systems for planning, financing and managing decentralisation was an important activity in the past year. A new financial system, to be managed by the government, with support from CARERE, has been developed and will start in July 1999. The planning and contract administration and management system is gradually being transferred to the provincial government. Provincial Development Plans got a longer-term perspective and became more strategic, and integration of local and sector planning was improved. Each province formulated a SEILA Investment Plan (SIP) for 1999, an investment plan based on known resources. And, as mentioned above already, the LPP was revised. All these changes, some still to be implemented, asked a lot of input and flexibility from all staff, both project and counterpart.

Reference documents: PDPs and SEILA Investment Plans 1999 from 5 provinces, Annual project Report, April 1999

2. Resource allocation & financial system

- 2.1 UNDP/UNCDF subcontracted Price Waterhouse Coopers to examine the financial management system of the LPP. Siem Reap and Banteay Meanchey were selected for the field study. The main conclusion of the audit was that the current procedures and forms provide the foundation of a simple and effective reporting structure. More training and capacity building is required, but significant progress was noticed with people involved in financial management and reporting since the first LPP cycle. No proof of misuse of LDF funds was found. The consultant made useful recommendations to improve:

- understanding of the concept of effective review and authorisation procedures
- reconciliation of records to physical assets and non-expendable property
- understanding of budget control and budget management
- dissemination of local contribution policy and recording of collection and disposal of local contribution
- cash and account management.

The follow up of the recommendations of the report is ongoing.

Reference document: CARERE/SEILA Financial management audit: Local Planning Process/Local Development Fund. Report to management, Price Waterhouse Coopers, October 1998.

- 2.2 A new decentralised finance management system has been developed in 1998. There will be only some minor changes in the financial management and reporting of the LDF resources. Based on recommendations made in the LPP review workshop, the financial report forms were improved. In the future, payments will mostly be made through direct payment from the Secretariat Finance Section, after request for payment from the CDCs (who will be the managers of the funds allocated to them). Re-training of finance staff at commune level is planned to take place before the next round of LDF projects.

Reference document: Restructuring the SEILA Financial System 1999-200, Mohamed Elmensi, CARERE 1998, SEILA Finance Workshop Report, 11-13 November 1998. Draft Finance Manual, March 1999

- 2.3 In Battambang and Banteay Meanchey a study of the allocation of resources was undertaken. Meetings were observed, CDC/VDC members were interviewed and records analysed. The overall conclusion was that the CDCs become more capable over time in the planning of development and the allocation of resources available to

them. The CDCs overwhelmingly allocate resources to the VDCs' highest development priorities and the process was generally understood and considered fair. The CDCs used allocation criteria and available information. However, the study also found that the commune perspective and the sense of being part of a commune are not yet well developed and especially weak with VDC members. Participation of women in the allocation decision making was very low.

All PSOs have agreed to undertake special observation of allocation processes in 1999.

Reference document: Study of the CDC IPF allocation in Battambang and Banteay Meanchey, M&E and LCB staff. September 1998

- 2.4 LDF allocation criteria for PRDC and CDCs were reviewed during the Pursat LPP workshop. PRDC can now choose from 2 different ways to allocate funds to CDCs: one is based on the number of villages, the other on a number of specific indicators. Further work on the development of PRDC LDF allocation criteria is needed after the Commune database is ready. Allocation criteria to be used by CDCs to allocate LDF resources to specific projects were finalised in December 1998. The criteria were divided into screening and ranking criteria. Screening criteria help CDCs to judge if projects meet certain basic requirements and if proposals are realistic. Ranking criteria help to identify the highest priorities. It was agreed that the ranking criteria are guidelines and it was recommended not to use a scoring system, as this gives a false impression of scientific accuracy. In practice, it turned out to be difficult for CDCs to use the ranking criteria without the support of tables and scoring. Battambang and Banteay Meanchey have therefore developed some tables and scoring methods to assist the CDCs in the allocation process. CDCs were also encouraged to focus funding more on commune level activities and projects this new cycle.

Reference document: Summary of Agreements CARERE LCB meeting, 7-8 December 1998

- 2.5 Local contribution is set at 10% of the LDF, with a minimum of 3% cash to be collected in advance, where possible deposited in the CDC bank account. To avoid discrepancies and avoid concerns raised during the review, recording of local contribution and reporting on the disposal of the money will be more strict and followed up more carefully this cycle.

3. Collaboration

- 3.1 Agreements made in the Siem Reap integration workshop were implemented late 1998, when provinces organised district level integration meetings. Commune representatives, sector staff and NGO people met with each other. All presented their plans, policies and criteria. Possibilities for activities were discussed. In some cases the meeting resembled a market place, complete with offers being made, bargaining and negotiations. The outcomes are recorded in Letters of Intent. Integration outputs are used at commune LDF allocation meetings. Implementation of activities is planned to take place in 1999. See point 1.2.

Reference document: Integration meeting minutes and Summary of Letters of Intent in each PSO

- 3.2 Information about implemented projects in 1998 (not only LDF funded, but also by NGOs and sectors) has been collected in each commune and is compiled in each province. The LPP M&E Adviser is currently summarising the information and drafting a Collaboration report. It is expected that the first draft of this report will be available by early May 1999.
- 3.3 UNCDF subcontracted the Center for Advanced Study to do research into civil society strengthening in Battambang. The purpose was to find out more about the relationships between civil society, local authorities and NGOs, and the way the SEILA/CARERE programme had influenced these relationships. Dr. William Collins, team leader,

submitted his first draft in March 1999. He is currently reviewing the comments on this draft.

Reference document: First draft: Local Planning Process: Reinforcing Civil Society Case Studies from Battambang. An external Consultant's Report for UNDP/CARERE (only for Evaluation Team: not for distribution or quotation!)

4. Participation & information

- 4.1 Participation remains one of the most difficult and challenging aspects of the local planning process. Getting and keeping people involved proves difficult. The LPP tries to involve as many people as possible in different stages and at different levels of the process. However, results were not satisfactory. Review indicated that participation was sometimes perceived as a simple headcount. Some PRA tools used with the aim to involve people and enable them to analyse their own situation and identify solutions did not have the desired effect and were sometimes used in a rather mechanical manner. The number of tools has now been reduced to 4. We also no longer speak of 'PRA' and 'PRA tools' in the LPP, but rather of 'information collection methods'. Continuous efforts are being made to improve facilitation skills and raise awareness about this issue. For the future, ways to maintain effective levels of participation and representation in the LPP need to be carefully considered, especially for village level, in case the decision is made to focus (limited facilitation and support) more on commune level.

Reference documents: Issues for decentralized planning and financing of rural development in Cambodia, Joel Chamy, DPM, UNDP/CARERE, December 1998, Phnom Penh, and UNDP/CARERE, Annual Project Report 1998, April 1999.

- 4.2 Directly related to awareness and participation is knowledge of the process and activities. In the Pursat workshop agreements were made on how to improve information sharing and publication. Steps have been included or revised in order to provide more feedback to the villagers about the agreements made and to consult them on their contribution and the implementation schedule of the project. It was agreed what information should be on the Village Information boards and the project boards. CIDs did a study into the use of the newsletter distributed by the programme and adjustments will be made. The follow up on the information issues is ongoing. In an effort to contribute to information sharing and documentation NPPPs are writing case stories.

Reference documents as mentioned in 4.1. Agreements CID meeting, 7-8 April 1999, Case Stories Reports from all PSOs 1998/1999

5. Roles and behaviour of local authorities and RDS

- 5.1 Continuous efforts are being made to build capacity and improve skills of staff and beneficiaries involved in the LPP. Training in planning, implementation, management, leadership, gender, information, finances, M&E, roles and responsibilities, good governance, facilitation and technical skills are ongoing in all provinces. The programme has started to evaluate the impact of the training: a gender evaluation is currently ongoing, the good governance training programme will be evaluated in 1999, and discussions about a comprehensive KAP survey are ongoing. Continuous follow up of capacity building is taking place.

Reference documents: JRC's issues paper and APR 1998

- 5.2 At the end of 1998 SEILA/CARERE designed and started the implementation of a performance appraisal system for PRDC staff. The appraisal system consists of a combination of self-evaluation and appraisal by supervisors and management. This system will be continued in the future.

Reference document: Performance Appraisal documents, CARERE/SEILA 1998

- 5.3 See also point 3.3: the study by CAS also looked at the attitudes and behaviour of local authorities.

6. Other important points

- 6.1 Due to various reasons CARERE management made the decision to put on hold the LPP Manual that was planned to be prepared by the end of 1998. At the moment – given the fact that more changes in the planning process are expected - it is expected to be prepared after the next LPP revision.
- 6.2 Infrastructure staff has further refined their procedures and developed standard contracts and bidding procedures and a set of manuals. Bidding is to be used for all LDF funded projects for the first time this year. Intensive training has taken place to prepare everybody. Close monitoring of the implementation is taking place at this moment.

Reference documents: Infrastructure Manual, Bidding & contracting documents, Bidding training materials, December 1998

- 6.3 The systems related to the collection and management of village and project information have been improved and are nearly completed. A programmer was contracted. He completed the Commune Data base system, containing all basic socio-economic data from all provinces. He is currently finalising the LDF database, where all data from the LDF funded projects will be kept. Both systems are bi-lingual, users friendly and easy accessible. The systems are expected to improve the use of the available data and improve management and feedback.

Reference documents: Commune Inventory Database, Users Manual, December 1998, Draft LDF database, December 1998 both by Xavier Mouchart.

- 6.4 Given the current decentralisation policy developments at national level and the expected need for a simpler local planning process, it was agreed that 3 provinces will carry out further (limited) experiments with a simplified LPP, with a stronger focus on commune level. This will take place in Banteay Meanchey, Siem Reap and Ratanakiri in the 2nd quarter of 1999. These experiments will be carefully monitored.

Reference document: Agreements FPM Meeting, 29-31 March 1999.

Developments During the Course of the Evaluation 19/4/99–13/8/99

While the 3 experiments mentioned in the briefing to the Evaluation Team have been ongoing, the team were unable to observe them satisfactorily, principally because they were not yet well-established at the time of the team's visits in the respective provinces.

The development of most importance is the continued work on the **proposed commune election and administration laws**. During the course of the 1999 evaluation these were being drafted and redrafted by the Ministry of Interior and shared with other ministries. At the time of writing it appears likely that the adoption of the new laws will take some weeks longer, and it is expected that the National Election Commission will require a further 9 months from the adoption of the law until an election can be held.

Key design questions related to the development of the Local Planning Process depend on the content of the commune council law, and therefore many decisions made will depend on how certain key issues unfold. These include

- Whether development and other functions will be combined under one authority.
- Whether elections will be run on party political lines.
- How village representation at commune level will (or will not) be legislated for.

- Whether communes will be assigned deconcentrated officials and in what role.
- What funds and other resources government will provide to commune councils for routine work.
- Restrictions and mandates regarding revenue-raising and service-provision by communes.

On 28 July 1999, the Chairman of the Seila Task Force issued Prakas No 1761/99 CDC from the Council for Development of Cambodia. This was entitled **Restructuring the PRDC Ex-com in the framework of the Seila programme**. This established a PRDC Ex-com in Seila provinces which would be chaired by the Provincial Governor, with a Deputy Governor as the first deputy chair, the head of the Provincial Department of Rural Development as the second deputy chair and the head of the Department of Planning as the Secretary (overseeing an administration unit). Directors of Finance, Women's Affairs, and Agriculture Departments were also members. Facilitation and technical services were placed under the Department of Rural Development; Monitoring and Evaluation and the Resource Centre under the Department of Planning and the Finance unit under the Department of Finance.

Method

A number of changes were made to the method for the 1999 evaluation. These are summarised as follows:

1. **Terms of reference were simplified** to four major headings to provide a simpler format around which all dialogue with the team could be structured.
2. **Briefing papers** were provided for the team, at programme level by the LPP M&E advisor and at provincial level by the Secretariats/PSOs. Briefing papers used the headings from the TOR and aimed firstly to give the team a baseline of knowledge, and secondly to ensure that participants in the programme were taking some responsibility for an evaluation process.
3. During the orientation week an **orientation meeting** was held with representatives from each provincial LCB team in order to agree all aspects of the process.
4. **An internal team** was created in each province which participated in the main case study. The internal team's composition was similar to the external team's (usually 2 women, 2 men, including a CAREERE LCB, Secretariat M&E officer, district facilitator, VDC/CDC member). One day was spent on orientation and training, four days on field research (internal and external teams in different villages in the same commune) and two days on reflection and analysis. The purposes of this were:
 - Capacity building for members of the internal team.
 - Improved understanding for the external team of the issues and perspectives of people working within the programme.
 - Improved understanding and ownership of the evaluation process by people in the programme.
5. **More villages and communes** were visited in each province. Normally this was nine different villages in 8 different communes. Seven Short studies of a day each in the first week were made by one or more of the team accompanied by programme participants.
6. **A commune focus** in line with the current movements within the programme was achieved by regarding all studies as commune studies. In every case a CDC member gave the team a commune briefing, before it deployed to a village or villages within the commune. Commune chiefs from other communes also accompanied team members for at least one study in each province.
7. **Feedback reports** in each province consisted of the PSO/Secretariat briefing on achievements, constraints and issues for research and the internal team leader's notes from the Feedback meetings. Notes from interviews and commune studies were attached as appendices, as was an evaluation of the internal/external team process carried out in each province.
8. **Advice and comment from other consultants** providing technical advice on decentralisation to the CAREERE/Seila initiative, was sought. The UNCDF principal technical advisor and a public finance specialist and a lawyer who have provided services to CAREERE and to the Royal Government of Cambodia on behalf of UNCDF were shown the terms of reference and also the first feedback report, in addition to being consulted for advice on specific issues which arose.

For details on the work schedule, questions used and content of trainings and evaluation see Appendices.

Analysis

The analysis is organised under the headings in the evaluation team's Terms of Reference with each section being prefaced by the relevant section from the Terms of Reference.

Recommendations are included in text boxes as well as listed separately at the end of the document. Generally, names of places are not used, though in some cases, especially potential models, they are given to assist follow-up dialogue.

Allocation of Resources

- | |
|---|
| 1. <i>Allocation of resources:</i> How are resources being distributed through the LPP/LDF and are they addressing identified development priorities? Is decision-making about resource allocation transparent? |
|---|

There are two levels at which allocation decisions are currently made within the structure of the Seila LPP. At commune level the Commune Development Committee is required to decide how it spends the commune's Local Development Fund. At provincial level, the Provincial Rural Development Committee's Executive Committee (Ex-com) is required to decide how much funding to allocate to each commune. We consider the commune level first.

What is the Local Development Fund for?

There are striking differences between provinces regarding how the commune LDF is being spent. Both the term 'public good' and the screening criteria specified in the October memo are interpreted in different ways in different provinces. For instance, projects such as water pump provision and buffalo provision are disallowed in Siem Reap because they are not public goods; in Pursat and Battambang they are judged to be within the rules.

Similarly, there are differing assumptions about the way in which the LDF should be expected to alleviate poverty, and in particular about the extent to which it should be targeted towards benefiting the poorest groups in the commune.

These are issues which we examine below. However, it is first useful to clarify some assumptions on the part of the evaluation team. The evaluation team assumes that the devolution of functions to the commune level is the first step in a process which will gather momentum. Initially, capacity needs to be built in a manageable range of functions: the experience of carrying out these functions will in turn increase the capacity of the commune. In future, therefore, more functions may be delegated to it as its comparative advantage extends to a wider range of functions.

In other words, as the emerging system matures roles and responsibilities will continue to change as capacities change. What the Seila policy experiment is therefore aiming at is not a model in the sense of a final solution regarding the role of the commune. Rather, it is trying to establish a first step in an envisaged trajectory of change, which over time will lead to increased resources and responsibilities being focussed at the commune level. The policy implication of this assumption is that at this stage the priority must be to introduce responsibilities and activities at the commune level which are appropriate to existing capacities

and will enable commune governments to prove their capacity to both themselves and to others involved in developing Cambodian governance.

It is partly on the basis of these assumptions that we make the following analysis and recommendations.

Types of projects

The following comments are limited to the types of project encountered during the evaluation. Once principles are agreed it will be easy to consider other sorts of projects which we have not included here.

Roads, bridges, culverts and schools

Least controversial with regard to perceived benefit which was derived from them were projects which were to do with the improvement of roads and schools. It was generally felt that both rich and poor benefited from good roads, and also that schools were a benefit to the community – even people without their own children wanted to see the children in the community educated, and believe that their community will be improved if more people have been to school.

While we heard of minor controversies regarding culverts which were being placed in roads onto private land, these were exceptional and not directly observed by the team. Using LDF money for culverts, bridges and schools therefore seems uncontroversial and effective.

With regard to roads there are significant reservations related to sustainability. There remains evidence of roads being built to a low standard (eg without culverts, or so low that they are likely to be destroyed by flood water) and of maintenance being beyond the fiscal and management capacity of local communities. However, people interviewed remained highly satisfied with their roads.

Wells and irrigation systems

The degree to which wells and irrigation systems are public goods of general benefit varies hugely depending on the local situation. While irrigation systems are potentially highly controversial, in all of the villages which the team went to where irrigation systems had either been built or requested there was no discontent voiced about families being excluded from benefit.

Wells, on the other hand, have been controversial. In Doun On in Siem Reap families who do not have a ring well simply use a hand dug well in their own garden. The ring well is widely regarded as the private property of the householder on whose land the well is located. Nevertheless, the hydrology of this village is quite exceptional, and ring wells (along with roads) were cited by many villagers as major improvements in the situation of that commune.

Rice banks and Fertiliser banks

The evaluation team has experience of many rice banks run by NGOs and International Organisations in many communities in Cambodia. Our general observation has been: that while they are operating they tend to benefit better off families and exclude poorer ones; that

most of them fail; that when they do fail they engender extreme bad feeling¹. In two of the five Main Case Study villages the VDCs had difficulties caused by previous mismanagement by local authorities of failed or failing rice banks. In Ratanakiri it was particularly clear that rice banks were being prioritised as projects as a means of immediately accessing food, but there was also evidence that productive capacity was neither sufficient nor sufficiently reliable to sustain such activities. We heard from CARERE staff of people having to sell land in order to repay rice banks. When the issue was raised in the Ratanakiri feedback meeting, one VDC chief who had been running a rice bank for two years was pessimistic about its long-term prospects.

Fertiliser banks are a similar activity to rice banks. An interesting point to note was that some commune chiefs said that the reason for adopting these projects was that their 3-year plan expires this year, so they want to guarantee themselves more funds for the future by establishing credit activities.

Rice mills and Water pumps

Both of these projects involve local communities using local government funds to directly compete with individuals providing these services in the private sector.

There was strong evidence this year, especially in Ratanakiri, of the communities lacking the technical competence to maintain the rice mills – people from villagers to district chiefs expressed pessimism about the ability of committees to keep the machines working in the long term. While we were told that private rice mills are never broken for more than a day, the rice mill in the Main Case Study village had been broken for more than a month².

A separate set of arguments relates to water pumps, which are often only of use to people whose land is near water sources, and are therefore often the better off. Certainly in the villages where the team visited the tendency was for the project to serve a minority of better off families, and for most families not to be aware of its existence as a project³.

Draught animals

The team encountered extremely mixed situations with regard to draught animal provision. There is a clear danger that this project becomes a private project, and also that benefits go to better off individuals: this was clearly starting to happen in the pilot in Battambang. On the other hand, in both Ratanakiri and Pursat buffalo were being allocated to poorer families in a process which was widely approved of by other villagers.

¹ Charya et al (1998) are instructive with regard to the tendency for infrastructure projects to produce more sustainable and equitable impacts than credit-style non-infrastructure projects as observed in leading Cambodian rural development programmes at the time.

² During the Feedback presentation with government representatives on 13 August 1999 it was mentioned that Women's Association rice mills are better maintained than LDF rice mills. It was also suggested that women managers are more likely to find solutions to problems with rice mills and user fees because they have more incentive – it is their workload which is reduced by the rice mill. If there is a case for communal rice mills being a low-risk project it should be made at the September review meeting.

³ A key factor in this was the way in which local contributions are collected. This is an issue which is central to both Resource Allocation and Participation, and is discussed (in line with previous years) under the heading of participation.

A project which had been mentioned by some people in Siem Reap, but not approved or implemented, was the provision of pigs or draught animals for stud. This seemed to be a potentially effective and appropriate way of investing in agricultural capital which could be of broad public benefit in the short term.

Commune Resource Centres

In two provinces LDF money has been used to build resource centres, referred to by villagers and committee members as commune offices. The evaluation team believes that it is appropriate for the commune to be provided with the means to do its work, but that these facilities should come from provincial or other funds and not from the LDF.

With regard to the type of projects which should be eligible for LDF funding the team therefore recommends a narrower range of projects which are eligible for LDF funds. This focusses on projects which are more easily managed and which are less intrinsically risky. They therefore constitute those projects which are most likely to build a foundation of successful experience for the commune development committees:

- Existing rice banks, buffalo, rice mills, water pumps should be monitored and evaluated in order to draw long-term lessons with regard to the factors which might make them suitable as locally managed, LDF funded projects.
- A list of project types allowed for funding within the programme should be drawn up. These should be projects which are likely to succeed. It should include roads, schools, bridges, culverts, wells, irrigation channels, water gates, animals for stud. It should not include rice banks, provision of draught animals, rice mills, water pumps, commune resource centres.
- Projects requested by communities which are outside the approved list should only be permitted if approved by the Seila Task Force as programme level policy experiments, which the STF itself will oversee monitoring and evaluation of.
- A basic scale of equipment should be supplied to all communes which enter the LPP – this should be from a fund which is separate to the LDF.

Commune focus and village focus

In the 1998 report we suggested that more intensive debate was required on the relative merits of commune and village projects. That debate is ongoing and is producing interesting and varied results. The most convincing arguments regarding a move to so-called commune projects rather than trying to give each village a project is that if the LDF is small, the investments will be too small to have significant impact. This argument is certainly convincing many of the commune development committees who in 1999 are for the first time not allocating projects to all villages, and who cite the lack of funds as the reason. In this respect, the lower LDFs have had an important impact as has the dialogue about this issue led by CARERE staff and facilitators.

The move towards a commune focus has, however, yielded some difficulties. In particular, the evaluation team believes that the labels 'commune project' and 'village project' cause confusion. In some commune development committees a 'commune project' is any project which serves more than one village. In other places, the commune chief is given the right to unilaterally submit projects which have not been suggested by villagers and this is called a commune project.

In Ratanakiri the picture is particularly confused. The LDFs there are still large enough that every village can be given a good project (this may always be more likely in Ratanakiri where villages are often more isolated), so effectively there is still a village focus. However, there has been an attempt to develop a commune focus by *matrix ranking of types of project*. This does not actually lead to a commune focus because there is still one project per village, so the only significant consequence is that village projects are chosen which are often lower priorities for those villages.

In the lowland provinces there is still a tendency to preface the commune project selection process by asking each village to submit two potential projects for consideration – the commune criteria are then applied to all of those projects in order to choose the commune's projects. Different assumptions prevail in the selecting of these projects. Some village development committee chiefs are submitting projects for consideration which are more expensive than the commune LDF, while in other cases VDC chiefs are being told not to suggest projects because they are 'too expensive' despite the fact that their cost is less than the commune's LDF.

Part of the problem here we believe is that while the CDC is being asked to 'think commune' the activities in the villages still have a 'think village' orientation. Part of the solution is to ensure that villagers 'think commune', in other words, that when they participate in the LPP it is not to suggest what their village needs, but to suggest how they think that the commune LDF should be spent. We make specific recommendations in this regard in the section on Participation below.

Another option with regard to achieving a better commune perspective is to design a process which begins with project identification at commune level (still being completed by representatives from every village). This was suggested at the CARERE feedback meeting on 12 August 1999 and is also the starting assumption of the experiment being conducted in Siem Reap which was not yet being implemented when the evaluation team was in that province.

Possibly the fundamental issue regarding 'commune focus' is that some CDCs may be afraid to not allocate a project to every village. Certainly there were some VDC and CDC members, and indeed facilitators, who said that it was still necessary to allocate something to every village. Also, given that there is a strong sense that the 'right answer' to this question is to say that not every village needs to have a project, there may be more resistance to the idea of moving away from one village one project than is immediately apparent. However, the overall trend is encouraging. More communes are opting for less projects and CDCs are able to justify this convincingly.

In order to remove some of the confusion regarding so called 'village projects' and 'commune projects' we would suggest that the label village project be dropped, and also that responsibilities are assigned slightly more clearly. We would suggest that **all** projects are commune projects, in the sense that they are chosen by the commune development committee according to commune criteria.

The concept of the 'village project' and the 'commune project' should be ended. All projects should be implemented by project management sub-committees.

This leads us into a consideration of the issue of the 3% administration fees.

Administration fees

In one province it was decided that for commune projects the commune development committee should receive a 2% administration fee and for village projects the CDC should receive 1% and the VDC 2%. The removal of the misleading label 'village project' should help to address this issue. We suggest a slight clarification of responsibilities and accompanying that a change in the allocation of the administration fees. We would argue that however the LDF is allocated there are responsibilities for the following:

CDC which decides which projects will be funded and are responsible for monitoring all projects.

VDC, which is responsible for sharing information in its village and for ensuring that the villagers have a say in how the commune LDF is spent.

Project management sub-committee which is responsible for direct management of the contract and for authorising payments (this latter sub-committee already exists on paper in most places as the 'technical sub-committee', but it does not always have an actual role in practice).

It is apparent that the percentage administration fee does not cover all of the costs of the committee members who do all of this work, and that therefore much of their time is volunteered. However, it is also clearly appreciated. We would argue that the 3% administration fee should be allocated at 1% each to the CDC, VDC and project management sub-committees.

3% administration fee should be allocated at 1% to the CDC, 1% split equally between all VDCs, 1% to project management sub-committees (proportional to the cost of each project).

Commune LDF and Poverty Alleviation

A related question which arises when discussing the village/commune focus, is the extent to which commune LDF should be poverty targeted, and specifically the extent to which it should be targeted at the poorest in the commune.

In 1997 the deputy project manager in discussions with the evaluation team clarified that neither CAREERE nor Seila had a specific mandate to focus on work with the poorest members of a community. The Sida Advisory Team observes that "CAREERE/Seila has systemic ambitions allowing only limited attention to be spent with special cases and categories - such as the poorest" (Rundengren et al, 1999:7). We would subscribe to the view that elected local governments (or local development committees) are not at this stage best suited to focusing resources solely on the poorest groups. The evaluation team observed that one of the arguments which was deployed by the CDCs who were not implementing one village one project was that in following years other villages would benefit from LDF.

There are villages in Seila communes which are the poorest in the commune and which will remain the poorest for some years, even if all of the commune LDF is spent in them. The poverty of individuals or families may be even more intransigent. A number of facilitators and CDC members argued that a requirement to only direct funds only towards the poorest within the commune would lock the CDC into providing the same villages or groups of people with funds for some years. This would be likely to put intolerable political pressure on the CDCs.

On the other hand, we have observed that it is possible for the poorer villages to be neglected: certainly in one of the Main Case Study communes the poorest village consistently received the least assistance, and the second poorest village received the next least assistance. What we recommend therefore is a formula or process which enables CDCs to cater for the whole of their constituency over time, but which does not allow them to systematically neglect the weakest or least influential (ie poorest) areas.

One tool which has been used in Vietnam in order to identify poorest villages is matrix ranking. According to observations from the 1998 study tour to Vietnam the results of this technique agreed with the statistical measures of poverty which were used there. Done as a participatory process with the CDC this would be a way of introducing a shared understanding of where in the commune is poorest. This is a tool which has been used by most facilitators before, and which once understood seems to be appreciated by CDC members.

What sort of process is needed in order to enable commune development committees to spend their LDF?

There was evidence in all provinces of commune development committee members not feeling in control of the process of deciding how to spend their commune LDF because they did not really understand it. This was most evident in Ratanakiri where some CDC chiefs actually said that the work was not done by them but by CARERE or the facilitators. In other provinces there was little or no distinction drawn between screening and ranking criteria. Where tables and scores were used people also expressed confusion: asked for the reasons for decisions some people said that the decision came from the tables so they had to do it that way. We believe that any process which requires numeracy from the CDC members (eg cost:benefit ratios, percentage of people who benefit etc) will distract them from the actual matters which they are debating¹ and thereby reduce their sense of ownership and control over the process.

During CDC observations in Battambang which are part of the programme's internal monitoring and evaluation, it has been observed on at least one occasion that the debate degenerated into a shouting match where it was felt that the loudest voice won. One response to this is to design a more formulaic process in order to guide decision-making. The evaluation team believes that simple discussion according to simple criteria will be the most efficient way to enable commune development committees to achieve ownership of the decision-making process. If there is an issue regarding people being aggressive and overbearing in meetings we believe that this is best addressed as an issue in itself, with ground rules for correct behaviour in meetings being introduced (no raised voices, no standing up, no interrupting, only one voice at a time with everyone able to hear, opportunity for everyone to speak etc). Our points relating to facilitation and training services in the LPP in "Role and behaviour..." below are relevant in this regard.

The commune chiefs who were best able to explain the reasons for how they had spent their money (eg Phkoam in Banteay Meanchey and Preak Norin in Battambang), explained their decisions with reference to two or three criteria which were simple and not the full list which

¹ Possibly relevant in understanding the levels of numeracy: we asked two of the most capable VDC/CDC members who we had met what 10% of 200 was. They both got the answer wrong.

had been suggested to them. Commune chiefs who were able to recall (or read from notebooks) the criteria, were not able to convincingly relate them to the decisions made and the team in a number of cases could not see the impact of the criteria on the decision.

One source of confusion was the lack of understanding of the concepts of ranking and screening. In one of the orientation briefings, the government staff began to explain that there were ten different criteria and had to be interrupted by the CARERE staff who explained which were screening, which were ranking and which were poverty criteria.

In order to achieve better clarity and simplicity it will be necessary to draw a clearer boundary between screening and ranking. The words screening and ranking do not translate particularly well into Khmer. It will probably be more useful to have "rules for the sort of projects which can be done with commune LDF money" and "points which the CDC will consider when comparing projects and deciding which projects are the most important to do this year"

The **rules for the sort of project** (screening criteria) probably cannot be greatly simplified: the key will be to ensure that sufficient training is given in understanding these, and that they are raised at every stage of the process when the LDF is being discussed.

The **points for comparing projects** (ranking criteria) on the other hand should be simplified to a list of two or three points. The purpose of these is to assist the CDC in having a reasoned debate about which project to choose. The following three points give an idea of the how we think that these criteria might look:

1. Fits with commune or poor village priorities
2. Has long-term benefits
3. Has a large impact on people's lives

Screening and Ranking Criteria must be renamed in English and Khmer and Ranking criteria reduced to two or three points which assist dialogue (see analysis for detailed suggestions).

The relationship between the 3-year commune development plan and the annual spending decisions regarding the commune LDF

From discussions with CDC members and facilitators it is not clear that the commune development plan itself has much influence over the annual LDF spending decisions.

Currently the commune development plans serve two purposes: firstly to assist in the spending of known resources (ie the commune LDF over three years) and secondly to attract new resources (ie government and NGO funding which cannot be predicted).

The lack of clarity between these two activities is one source of confusion at present. On two occasions in Main Case Study communes VDC chiefs said that during discussions about how to spend the LDF they had suggested projects which were more expensive than the LDF itself. The reason they gave was that they hoped that other organisations would fund these projects.

It is important, therefore that in the redesigned process that there is as much clarity as possible at all stages regarding whether a particular activity is to assist with attracting new funding or to allocate known funds.

There is also an important contextual change. During 1996 and 1997 communes were able to look forward to three years of LDF funding which would be guaranteed to come from UNDP

CARERE and would amount to \$50,000 or more. For new communes in 1999 and 2000 there is no such guarantee of further funding, neither is it clear as yet whether future funding arrangements either national or international will include a multi-year commitment which can enable communes to plan for known resources over a three years or more.

The current response to this has been to do one-year extensions to commune plans or to do commune plans for 1999-2000. An alternative to this would be to reintroduce the concept of an indicative planning figure. Thus a commune could for instance make a three year plan based on the assumption that for the coming three years it will receive the same level of funding as it has received this year. This would lead the commune to make provisional spending decisions for three years during its first year, and in subsequent years to simply update these. An alternative would be to make the commune plan a much less specific document which simply provides resource data for annual decisions to be made as and when commune decisions are made. (Our impression is that neither of these really happens at the moment, though theoretically the annual process is simply one of updating an existing plan).

Given that the core function of the commune development plan is to assist spending decisions to be made, whether by the CDC itself or by NGOs and departments we recommend the following be included in the CDP.

The CDP should include

- a matrix ranking of villages by poverty.
- a matrix ranking of sectors by priority.
- lists of prioritised projects by sector for the commune.

During the 12 August 1999 meeting the idea of a 5-year CDP, a 3-year rolling investment plan and an annual budget was raised. What we have suggested above is what we would see as the basic requirement for the 5-year CDP. More than this, we would argue, is not appropriate to the current capacities of most communes, nor to the amount of investment money they have to spend.

Currently the update process is slightly different from province to province. Sometimes the whole document is reproduced, whereas sometimes a separate amendment is added. In one case we saw something called a "Commune Future Action Plan".

How to develop the simplified commune-focussed process

We suggest that the process for designing the simplified, commune-focussed process is as important as the design itself. Clearly the findings from the provincial reviews, the evaluation of the three experiments which are being conducted in Siem Reap, Ratanakiri and Banteay Meanchey and the findings of the Independent Evaluation will all be taken into consideration during the September review. However, we believe that the best chance of getting an appropriate commune-led process will be to involve CDC representatives in this work. A senior Khmer-speaking member of CARERE staff or the Seila Task Force (or both) could facilitate a working group consisting of a CDC representative from each province to complete

this task¹. The job of the September review would then be to develop guidelines and Terms of Reference for that group.

The September LPP Review should develop Terms of Reference for a working group of CDC representatives from each province to complete the work of designing a new commune-focussed allocation process.

Suggestions for the new commune process

As we have mentioned above, a process such as exists at present with each village submitting priority village projects is problematic when attempting to facilitate a dialogue about commune priorities. We believe that a better starting point is required, and that this can be achieved by looking at the priority sector and the poorest village. The dialogue therefore begins with the proposition that the commune's LDF should all be spent on the highest priority sector in the poorest village.

This would serve the purpose of having a **commune-focused starting point**. In other words the dialogue does not begin with the assumption that the LDF should be split up into village projects equally; it begins with the assumption that all the resources might be directed into the highest priority sector in the poorest area. This, however, is just the starting point. In the debate that follows all village representatives should have an opportunity to present not their village priority, but how they think the commune LDF should best be spent – in each case justifying their opinions in the light of the commune criteria. A **suggested process**² might therefore look like this:

- Introduction (Presentation of: size of LDF; rules for types of project; priority ranking of sectors; poverty ranking of villages; points to be considered by the CDC)
- Each VDC chief presents their suggestion for how commune LDF should be spent
- CDC chief (or his nominee) synthesises 3 options for how the LDF should be spent from the presentations
- Other CDC members have an opportunity to add other options (this might actually include every single VDC suggestion being written up, but the hope would be that there would be some overlap and compromise)
- Dialogue to attempt to reach consensus on the best option
- Matrix ranking of options if consensus cannot be reached
- [Provisional allocation of the next two years if a 3-year process is to be retained].

The evaluation team's suggested process to be considered alongside provincial review findings when formulating the new commune process to decide how to spend the annual LDF allocation

How should the LDF be allocated to communes?

After a pilot round and three rounds of allocations it is surprising that there are still Seila provinces where the allocation of LDF funds to communes does not have a poverty component and where the size of the commune is measured by the number of villages and not

¹ Such a forum would be an ideal forum for some of the theoretical inputs from the UNCDF principal technical advisor to be subjected to a reality check against existing capacities and attitudes.

² This is a process that we would envisage taking a full day and which corresponds to the second part of what is currently numbered step 11 in the LPP.

by the population. Given the guidance on this issue in project formulation documents in 1995 and 1996 and the comments of the Independent Evaluation team in 1997 and 1998 and missions such as the October 1998 evaluation by UNCDF this stands as a rather glaring weakness and represents many missed learning opportunities.

In the two provinces which have attempted to include population and poverty, the criteria include the use of raw numbers rather than percentages and also the wealth ranking tool which is only designed for assessing poverty within and not between villages (and would need to be redesigned if it were to be used in this way). These are serious flaws. It is, however, a step in the right direction that poverty criteria are now being incorporated.

Some issues:

- ◆ Number of people not number of villages should be base criteria for size of commune.
- ◆ An infrastructure quota such as used in Vietnam¹ is an option, though not absolutely necessary with the inclusion of a good poverty indicator.
- ◆ Likewise, incorporating land area to allow for the extra resources needed by geographically larger areas is an option (eg in Argentina a formulation is used which is 65% population; 25% poverty; 10% land area²).
- ◆ Copying criteria from another country and modifying it with experience may be an appropriate solution in the current situation of needing something quite quickly.
- ◆ With regard to the longer term empowerment of local levels, it will be helpful if the formula is simple enough for CDC representatives to be able to understand their allocation. (The ideal would probably be to invite a CDC representative from each commune to a large workshop where the formula and the data are presented and CDCs do their own arithmetic. Given low numeracy of CDC members this would need to be piloted with a small group of CDC members first to see whether it is realistic).

The next round of allocations to communes must be based on a formula which incorporates poverty and which uses population as the means of measuring the size of the commune

Currently, there are some relatively very wealthy communes in the programme which have completed a three-year planning cycle and therefore could cease to receive LDF in 2000. From an immediate equity perspective, the decision to take LDF away from them is justifiable. From a policy point of view other factors which are important to consider are:

- Communes which are more wealthy appear to be correspondingly high in human resource quality: are there lessons to be learned or ways in which these resources could and should be kept in the programme?
- In the context of unpredictable funding to the local development funds (and certainly the next two or three years do not look at all predictable) it may be that some communes will qualify for one year, and then not be funded the next and then be funded again. What can be learned through the current programme about what needs to happen when this occurs?

These issues which are most striking in Battambang, where they are being debated by CARERE and government staff also apply in other provinces to varying degrees.

¹ Documents from the 1998 Study Tour will support this.

² UNCDF Principal Technical Advisor was the source of this example.

Commune LDF size: capacity and efficiency

Any time the issue has arisen, both CARERE staff and facilitators have felt that there are no benefits to a phased allocation such as has been used thus far (ie year 1:2:3 is 50:30:20). We recommend that the criteria are applied to all the communes in the same way regardless of how many years they have been receiving LDF.

Province to commune allocation criteria should be applied in the same way to all communes regardless of how many years they have received LDF for.

We received no indications of LDF money being beyond the capacity of communes to spend effectively: indeed there seemed to be confidence that they could spend more money as effectively as they are spending their current allocations. There was, however, one commune which we visited where the LDF was about \$6,000 and the CDC members claimed that it was not possible to do substantial projects with it. They had prioritised education and wanted to build schools, but the money was insufficient so they used it for school gates, furniture and wells. We would question whether it is worthwhile to allocate any commune less than \$10,000 and suggest that a cut-off figure be adopted to ensure that this does not occur (this would mean that communes which qualify for less than \$10,000 receive either \$10,000 or nothing).

A minimum annual commune LDF figure should be adopted – probably \$10,000.

A small but important point relating to the size of commune LDFs is that it appears that one reason that people have problems remembering the LDF is that they try to remember the whole figure, and therefore if they are allocated 15,423.87 the task of remembering 7 digits is too much and they forget. One CDC chief remembered his allocation as “more than \$10,000”, when in fact it was \$19,787. We suggest that in order to assist in making the commune’s LDF more widely known that allocations are rounded to the nearest thousand dollars.

LDF allocations to communes to be rounded to the nearest thousand dollars.

Allocations by province or national level?

As policies are developed within Seila for decentralised funding one question which arises is how funding for communes will be decided: while this does not impact directly on decision-making for CARERE-funded Seila, it is a key question for the government as it takes over the model. In either case, it will be necessary for the national level to work out its own criteria whether it is allocating to province or to commune. It is probable that having the province working out the allocations does not add value to the process and that a national level formula will better achieve horizontal equity¹ across all provinces and communes. In this regard, it will be particularly important that close attention is paid to the impact of the new allocation criteria on Ratanakiri which has both radically different population and poverty profiles from the other provinces and may receive disproportionate allocations if the formula is not carefully balanced to incorporate these differences.

¹ Equity does not mean equality, but means justice. Horizontal equity means justice in allocations between different governments at the same level, in this case between different communes (in the same or different provinces)

Close attention must be made to inter-provincial equity when devising allocation criteria, and a programme/nation wide focus must be incorporated into formulations of any further iterations of the LPP beyond 2000.

What are the implications for resource allocation of a party politicised local government system?

There is a risk that if commune councils become known by the political party which elected them that allocation of development funds will also become more party politicised. To some degree politically motivated development funding is part of the national context and it need not be imagined that Seila can stop this. However, in order to limit the possibility the key strategies could be:

- Persuading the government that non-party elections are the best way to proceed.
- Wide publicity of allocation criteria in the media (newspaper, television, radio) in order that officials can be better held to account.

Collaboration

2. *Collaboration:* What is the state of coordination and collaboration between the commune and village development committees and: government line departments; NGOs; Buddhist institutions; the private sector? Are there relationships being created that show signs of becoming sustainable? Is the plan integration process resulting in greater and more effective development activity at the local level?

The Seila experiment involves all concerned in an attempt to redefine not only the functions of different 'layers' of government, but also the balance between government and civil society.

Conduct of Integration meetings

Within the current Local Planning Process, a district integration meeting is the key focus of the relationships between both provincial line departments and non-governmental organisations. According to the design, the integration meeting should occur after the commune development plan has been updated and before the commune decides how to spend its commune LDF. In this way it is intended that sector spending responds to local preferences, and that the CDC can allocate its own money with the knowledge of what sectoral activities will be occurring in the commune.

There have been variations from province to province with regard to who has been in charge of the integration meetings: in some cases the provincial Planning chief in others the District Chief and in others the CARERE LCBs in coordination with the Secretariat facilitators. Where district chiefs had a role they were noticeably more enthusiastic about the LPP and about Seila; where they were less involved we were more likely to hear the criticism that Seila bypasses the district level. We believe that there are opportunities for an increased role for the district to improve efficiency within the Local Planning Process; a key foundation for this is achieved by requiring the District Chief to take charge of the district integration meeting. It is therefore suggested that preparation for the district integration meetings should include training for the district chief (or a designated deputy) in the conduct and facilitation of the integration meeting.

The district chief or a designated deputy should chair and take responsibility for the district integration meeting (with technical support and inputs from the Provincial Department of Planning).

Non-LDF target communes in integration meetings

A barrier to a sense of ownership of the Seila process which was mentioned at both district and provincial level officials is the concentration on selected target communes. To some extent this is a necessary evil for a pilot. However, the ultimate goal of the experiment is to reassign responsibilities more effectively and efficiently, both within government and between government and civil society. It is therefore important that as soon as possible the model enables officials to focus on the full range of their responsibilities rather than just selected communes which are receiving CARERE-funded development activities.

A first step in this regard will be the attendance at district integration meetings of all communes in the district. This does not currently happen in most provinces. This is

something which can happen immediately and which can be a component from the beginning of the implementation of decentralised Seila processes in new districts.

All communes to be represented in district integration meetings.

When the team visited Banteay Meanchey province a dialogue was beginning with regard to what sort of representation non-Seila communes should have in the integration meetings¹; what sort of information they should take to the meeting and what sort of process they should go through in order to be able to collect that data.

We would suggest that for communes where the rural development structure has not been put in place, that a provisional CDC could be appointed consisting of one man and one woman from each village (appointed by the commune/village chief) and commune chief, one of his deputies and a representative of the women's association. This body could then prepare a presentation which would include:

- Matrix ranking of the villages by poverty by the CDC
- Matrix ranking of sectors by priority by the CDC
- A limited selection of data from the village data books

A training video should be produced to support the facilitation of this day and it is anticipated that the process could be completed in one day by a district facilitator.

A simple one-day process should be designed to enable non-LDF target communes to participate in Seila district integration meetings.

A related issue is the allocation of sectoral funds to non-LDF communes. Arguably, there is very little difference at present between a sectoral and an LDF project. Sectors are required to spend their money only in LDF communes² while all LDF projects have to be approved by relevant provincial sectoral departments.

One of the strengths of the current integration process is that sectors have developed selection criteria for their activities. It would be desirable for them to be able to apply these criteria across the entire district. There are clearly advantages to implementing activities in areas with a rural development structure that has received the experience and training associated with LPP implementation. We believe that sectoral officials should have the freedom to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of investing money into non-LDF communes. The integration meetings would provide an opportunity for facilitation and management issues in non-LDF communes to be discussed, with the possibility of NGOs, pagodas or existing CDCs being able to offer assistance.

Provincial sector funding should not be restricted to communes that are receiving LDF.

¹ In fact in Battambang province non-LDF communes also attend integration so there is already a precedent from which to draw experience and lessons.

² Whilst this was the understanding which the evaluation team had during its time in the provinces, it was made clear that although this may be very close to what happens in practice the policy is that at least 75% of funds must be spent in the LDF communes.

Following up integration agreements - monitoring

A particular strength of integration agreements in Pursat province was that they included details of money allocated to each activity and also start dates for those activities. These were documented, with documentation being held at commune and village level. This is an excellent foundation for village and commune committees to be able to hold provincial departments accountable. To varying extents other provinces had elements of this. A standardised manageable documentation system for integration which ensures that all villages and communes have a record of integration agreements in accessible form would be a realistic objective of the September LPP review and would build on much of the success which has already been achieved.

A standardised system for documentation of integration agreements must be adopted. It must provide all villages and communes with the timing and cost of activities and the details of a contact person for follow-up purposes.

In almost all communes one limitation which was raised by VDC and CDC members was that things which had been promised during integration meetings had not been provided. Even where VDC and CDC members had detailed information on what they were due to receive they were not clear on its status (provisional agreements were perceived as promises) and they did not have a clear and effective way of following up agreements.

One issue that arose, and was particularly suggested in Pursat, was the possibility of a second confirmation meeting to follow the integration meeting. This would enable provisional agreements to either be confirmed or cancelled. If there continues to be a long time gap between integration and LDF spending decisions by communes then this may be a useful strategy.

However, the more overriding concern is for communes to be able to follow-up agreements and to hold departments and NGOs to account. In time, associations of local governments and NGO/development fora may have an important role in this. The current priority, however, must be to try and set up a system within government whereby the government system itself provides its own balances. Following the *Prakas* dated 28 July 1999 Monitoring and Evaluation responsibilities are due to be located within the Department of Planning. It will be important that the monitoring and evaluation system which is developed is designed to create the opportunity for communes to hold departments to account. Given that the district chief oversees the integration meeting they could be given a role in that system.

Seila Monitoring and Evaluation System should enable VDC and CDC to report on services provided following the integration meetings.

Sub-district integration activities

In both Ratanakiri and Siem Reap there is sectoral involvement in CDC workshops. In Siem Reap this enables activities to be allocated to villages as a follow-up to the district workshops which allocate to communes. There were, however, instances where VDC members did not feel able to make decisions with confidence about accepting activities either because they did not fully understand or because they were not sure that villagers would undertake to make the necessary local contributions. This relates to the general issue of how participants for sectoral

activities are chosen. As in 1998, the evaluation team observed a tendency – especially in the case of agricultural activities – for the VDC members and the village chief to receive most benefit. As far as possible, actual participants in sectoral funded activities should be chosen in public meetings in villages – this can coincide with the village workplan meeting in LDF communes.

Poverty focus in integration

The team observed that the balance of development activities from integration meetings did not always seem to be equitable. In some cases it seemed that better off villages and communes were receiving far more assistance than poorer ones. One simple measure would be for the CDC chiefs to conduct a matrix ranking amongst themselves according to poverty: that would enable all participants in integration to focus better on equity issues. One sector specific issue which arose was that in at least one case, the agriculture sector was choosing villages which are better suited for agricultural activities, eg those which have an abundant water supply. It is questionable whether in the focus of a poverty alleviation programme that this is the most appropriate focus.

Integration meetings should attempt to distribute development resources equitably within the district: poverty ranking of communes should be used to assist this.

Improving the relevance of Sector integration

Commune LDFs in the Seila system have been designed in line with what might be sustainable in a decentralised finance system. Provincial expenditures do not seem to have been designed with the same clear criteria. This, combined with the focus on a limited number of target communes has resulted on occasions in very high investments by provincial departments in communes.

For integration between provincial sectors and the LPP to become more relevant to the overall national development picture it must relate to a vision of how a provincial sector might in the future receive funding. Will all funding from the national level be earmarked by sector, possibly all from Line Ministries? Will there be a development fund at provincial level which the PRDC has some discretion over regarding which sector it will be spent in? If so, what sort of processes will be used to enable local preferences to be reflected in that decision-making process? Will they include inputs from integration? Even if a highly decentralised system is implemented in Cambodia there will still continue to be national programmes, including those which are developed in partnership with Line Ministries at national level: what attempts are currently being made to integrate such programmes?

For integration as a process to be valuable as a policy development it is necessary to raise its profile and get it more thoroughly discussed with Line Ministries at National level. However, before that can occur it is necessary for there to be a clearer vision of the role of province in a decentralised system. These are not issues to be addressed in the immediately forthcoming review, but they will need attention before the LPP and the Seila model are raised further in the context of national policy debate.

LDF spending and sectoral policies

At national and provincial levels there are sectoral targets which are in place, for instance regarding the number of households per well or the number of pupils that there should be in a village before a school and teacher can be provided. The policy question which arises is whether the communes should be restricted in only providing services up to the levels specified in national policies or whether they should have the discretion to use their own development funds to achieve higher standards according to local preferences.

In at least one province there has been confusion even amongst CAREERE staff over whether 20 households per well is a limit or a minimum. The message to government officials and CDCs has been that it should be a limit that once achieved should not be exceeded.

In the case of schools there is a general agreement that communes and villages should not be allowed to construct schools unless the department of education is in a position to fund teachers. We do not believe that this is the best policy. If a community prioritises the construction of a school and, even in the realisation that there is not a state teacher immediately available, still prefers to construct a school rather than anything else then it seems appropriate that they should build that school. They will then be in a better position to be able to attract a teacher to their community, or to make use of an available teacher when there is one. The construction of schools in this way can also serve as a way of registering a local preference for educational services with the province. The emphasis should then be on looking for ways to ensure that fully qualified or partially-qualified but state-registered (*chob geiith soniyaa*) teachers are made available.

LDF funds should be allowed to be spent on activities that exceed sectoral policy targets.
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Collaboration with NGOs and International Organisations

From what the team observed the relationship between the LPP and development organisations is healthy, with increasing evidence that Seila and the LPP are highly regarded by NGOs and International Organisations. In Pursat in particular there are signs of NGOs and NGO donors wanting to support SEILA type structures in their interventions. The style and content of development forum meetings in Pursat is one identifiable factor which we were able to observe in respect to this success.

However, in all provinces, the relationship also seems rather territorial, with NGOs often preferring to carry on their work in areas that are not served by the Seila programme. In each province we intended to go with NGO workers to visit villages which had both the LPP and the NGO working there. In two cases the NGO avoided working in the same villages as the Seila programme and in the other cases the NGO workers demonstrated little knowledge of the Seila programme and the LPP. In one case the NGO had been represented at the integration meeting but the development worker did not know about this and told us that they had not been there.

In the cases which we saw, therefore, there was not a sense that the relationships between government and civil society were changing, nor that there were new opportunities and threats with regard to a new system of governance.

That such an opportunity is not being envisioned may relate to the design of the LPP, which at present attempts to fulfil all of the commune's capacity building and facilitation needs with the services of 'higher levels' of government. It may therefore be felt that if NGOs were to become engaged with the process it would seem that this was an invasion of government space. Somehow the NGO rule of law and governance agenda must be translated into active participation in Seila.

The precedent for this sort of involvement exists with the Village Development Committee. This is an institution which CARERE (amongst others) introduced to the Cambodian development scene, and which has been adopted as policy by the Royal Government and has then been adopted by just about every local NGO, international NGO and IO programme working in rural development in Cambodia. Commune councils and district integration meetings have now got to be developed in such a way that the rest of the development community perceives them as valuable elements in a new rural governance system, and begins to mobilise resources to support them. The governance orientation of Internal NGO programmes such as those of Community Aid Abroad and Concern suggests that in the current climate this might be a realistic enterprise.

Fundamental to this is that government (at national and provincial levels) must have an incentive to create the space for NGO involvement and to welcome NGO interaction with the programme. Facilitation, technical assistance, skills training, financial monitoring, public information and private sector development are all areas where NGOs could have roles. Opportunities must be created for this to happen. This need is partly addressed in the section 'Roles and Behaviour...' below where we suggest that the commune should have a greater role in seeking out its own resources.

More resources should be focused on a policy dialogue with NGOs and government looking at how NGOs operating in Seila areas can contribute more to efficient and effective local governance.

Clearly the emerging commune council laws will be an early opportunity for NGO and other civil society figures to become engaged in the process, and the more that their participation is encouraged in consultations prior to the law being drafted the better that will augur for future relations.

Collaboration with monks.

There is general support for close collaboration with monks in principle. There is a widespread feeling that buddhist religion is in a relatively weak state because monks are not as moral or as thoughtful as they used to be. However, monks are still thought to be a beneficial and very powerful influence at local level. This is reflected in the attitudes of CARERE/Seila management at national and provincial levels, which in turn has led to both inter-province and provincial workshops to designed to share successful experiences of monks involvement and to try and extend that further.

At present, the monks are often involved in any labour that is being carried out in local projects, and also on occasions contributing significantly with money and equipment. These are sometimes, but not always, for projects which improve accessibility of pagodas.

With regard to engaging monks in planning dialogue progress has been far more limited. Both the VDC member in the evaluation team, who comes from Svay Loung commune in Pursat and the DFT, who comes from Chey Odom commune in Lumphat have witnessed direct intensive involvement by monks in all aspects of development and speak positively about the benefits. This is different to the observations of the team during the evaluation where monks were either never invited to meetings, or were only invited for the specific steps in the LPP where their presence was explicitly required in documentation. Ok Lundy's observation on why monks in her commune are so much more involved than in other communes where the team has visited was that in Svay Loung the facilitators and the LCBs go to the pagoda and meet the monks almost every day so they are kept involved. One interesting comment in a feedback meeting was that monks would be less interested in the physical aspects of the programme (quality of projects etc) and much more inspired and interested in the moral, policy issues.

Possibly the key issue is that facilitators and committee members don't really see the point of inviting the monks to specific meetings and therefore don't bother. The idea of building up relations over time and through gradual exposure enabling the monks to play a major role in all aspects of the project does not seem to occur to most facilitators and CDC members. Neither does the idea that monks could develop a vital role in the informal dissemination of information – an idea strongly supported by the evaluation team, especially the MRD representative.

Facilitators and CDC members cite their shyness of monks as a reason why it might be difficult to involve them more. This relates to a fear of disturbing monks' eating times, and also a worry that the monks might use their influence to try and refocus people's energies on developing the pagodas rather than developing the village and commune. These seem to be rather minor considerations and the opinion of the evaluation team is that CARERE and Seila management should take more time to ensure that the theory of involving monks is actually followed up in a disciplined way in practice.

Monks should be invited to attend and give advice at every development meeting, formal and informal, at every level of Seila from village to national level.
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Collaboration with the private sector

There has been significant and general progress in the introduction of bidding procedures for selecting contractors to carry out LDF projects, and a number of people – including both of the CARERE infrastructure advisors – observed that bidding was resulting in higher quality projects at lower prices. One example that we heard of was a school where the roof had been badly built. The contractor was required to dismantle it and build it again. It was agreed that had this work been done by the villagers the VDC would not have felt empowered to order them to redo the work. It is these efficiency improvements which particularly suggest to us that there has been "greater and more effective development activity at the local level".

It was notable however that in areas where bidding had not yet taken place there was a lack of knowledge of the process and more often than not, ignorance of the fact that implementation would be through use of contractors and bidding processes. This applied not only to CDC members but also in some cases to facilitators. It is inevitable that full understanding only really comes when something has been done, and we would not therefore expect lucid

explanations of the bidding process from people who have never engaged in it. We would, however, at least expect to find some knowledge of the change and the reasons for it (namely that it aims to give communities better value for money and more control over the quality of implementation). Partly this is an issue of communication and training. In Banteay Meanchey during a large 'CDC congress' there was a skit which was relayed by video to all of the participants which demonstrated bidding. This stuck in the memories of several CDC members whom we met who had seen it. They did not fully understand the process, but they were certainly aware of its existence, and sufficiently understood the process as a whole to be able to identify the specific elements (those that involved weighted scoring) which they could not understand. In this as in very many other aspects of the process video is a tool which could greatly increase the effectiveness of training and communication, provided the programme can develop the capacity to produce appropriate training videos in quick time.

The reasons for employing contractors and bidding processes should be part of an orientation video for the LPP shown in all LDF communes¹.

With regard to the point just made, namely that some CDC members have difficulty understanding the percentage weightings and the proportions given to these in the current bidding formulae, it may be that this can be addressed through improved training (and that it will develop with experience). If adequate progress is not made in this respect, an alternative would be to make price the only criteria which is subject to ranking, and make the other criteria (of equipment, experience, time) into screening criteria.

As may be expected, there is evidence that for every piece of progress, there then follows some regress as contractors or officials find another way to benefit from the system. This is the case anywhere in the world at any time: the challenge is to try and ensure that the process is designed and redesigned such that public interests can take precedence over private ones. The points which follow are some of the issues which were noted.

Publicising bidding

Regarding the bidding process, the publicising of individual bidding meetings is not yet clear in all provinces. In some cases it is the commune which is responsible for deciding how much publicity is given to any particular contract. Building on the successes of some provinces it would seem sensible to make someone at provincial level responsible for ensuring that every bidding is publicised on all of the available media in addition to any local publicity by the CDC. Provincial boards, radio and television have all been demonstrated to be effective ways of communicating with contractors. We are not sure who at provincial level could best fulfil this role but possibly the PRDC Secretariat.

Every commune bidding process must be publicised by the PRDC Secretariat on Provincial and District Boards as well as radio and television if they are available.

¹ During updates to the Programme Manager in April and July the Team Leader expressed the opinion that a stock of 10-20 training and orientation videos and the capacity to update these in a short time is required to adequately support the LPP.

Authorising payments

Possibly one of the greatest benefits which the LPP has to offer is to change the attitudes of villagers towards work which is done in their villages by outside contractors and development organisations. In some cases, VDC members or appointed sub-committees have possession of the technical plans for projects, can understand them and are monitoring the work of the contractor every day to ensure that the project is of high quality. However, there is still a tendency amongst many LCBs and facilitators to not really see this as a strength of the project and to see technical supervision as a TSS responsibility.

There is considerable appetite amongst villagers and CDC members for more control over the quality of development interventions. They are quick to point out bad work done by contractors on behalf of senior politicians, international loan agencies, United Nations' agencies and NGOs. They express their willingness to have a role in monitoring the work and controlling the payment of contractors.

People have varying perceptions of who has the right to authorise payment for projects, and we have encountered cases of VDC members not being satisfied with work, but the contractor still being able to be paid by negotiating either directly with the commune chief or the finance officer of the Secretariat. The key improvements that can be made lie in the understanding of rights and responsibilities. We believe that a project management sub-committee should be selected for each project and that the contractor should not be paid until this subcommittee has signed to say that the quality of work is adequate.

Payments for contractors must be authorised by a project management subcommittee.

Private Sector Development

Contractor training in provinces is providing benefits, and the difficulty of balancing between ensuring that the contractors are sufficiently empowered to get a good deal for themselves, but not so organised that they are able to fix prices and deals beforehand is being negotiated effectively. One concern is that private sector development issues such as these are largely being led by expatriate CARERE infrastructure advisors. Ultimately, someone in government will have to take responsibility for private sector coordination and development: at this stage there are two concerns in relation to this:

- ◆ The institutional location of such a function has not yet been clearly defined.
- ◆ There is no independent (or separate) watchdog or ombudsman to whom people might make complaints in the case of impropriety.

In at least one province it is necessary for contractors to register in order to qualify for bidding. The desirability of replicating this in all provinces needs to be discussed, particularly in the light of who will be responsible for making the decisions about a company's eligibility, and who will provide the oversight for this process.

Given the PDRD's role in facilitation and coordinating technical inputs into rural development and the Department of Planning's role in monitoring and evaluation, these seem to be the two departments which should take on the two lead roles with regard to private sector inputs to the LPP (and to Seila in general).

The Provincial Department of Rural Development should take the lead role in Private Sector Development including contractor training and registration. The Provincial Department of Planning (which now includes the Monitoring and Evaluation officers) should be the focal point for complaints and for monitoring.

Prompt payment of contractors

One of the key objectives of the Local Planning Processes must be to earn the government a reputation for being a good payer. This means payments made in full and in good time. If payments are slow or less than complete it will narrow the number of contractors who will have the confidence to bid for local government work. Both the UNCDF-funded infrastructure advisor (looking at the issue of prompt payment) and the evaluation team (looking at reducing and simplifying CDC/VDC workloads) have been considering the option of one payment only rather than a series of three instalments. Potentially, this may relieve the bureaucratic strain on the Finance department and in itself result in more rapid payments. However, another issue is final inspection of projects – is there a need for provincial level inspection prior to payment or might the commune's be enough? If there is a need for provincial level final inspections, what level of resources are required to enable these inspections to be completed sufficiently quickly to achieve prompt payments? In practice what other hindrances have there been to prompt payment of contractors? The Independent Team was not sufficiently exposed to this issue to be able to offer valuable insights, but recommends that this issue be given high priority during the forthcoming review.

A task force should review factors affecting speed of payments to contractors and make recommendations before or during the September LPP review.

Full payment of contractors

One threat, as it was described to the evaluation team, is that Finance officers simply deduct a percentage of the money which is to be paid and require the recipient to pay in full. This becomes widely known, and therefore bidders simply factor in the extra percentage in their bids so that quality of work is not (necessarily) effected, but public development money goes into private hands. This type of problem was being discussed in most provinces. In one province the Finance officer withheld \$20 per payment to communes for commune resource centre construction. Eventually senior CARERE management in the province was informed and the money was repaid. The Finance officer remained in place.

Encouraging the reporting of such information and always taking follow-up action which rewards such reporting is key to preventing such occurrences. While the Planning chief as overseer of the monitoring and evaluation system has a key role, it is ultimately the attitude and responses of the provincial Governor which will determine whether information really does get reported. The incentive for the Governor to keep the system clean is that donors (both the Cambodian government and international donors) are ideologically in favour of local funding, but are not yet confident that money will be efficiently spent. The best chance that provincial Governors have of receiving a functional level funding with which they can facilitate development in their provinces is to prove themselves capable of managing development funding through the Seila experiment. For certain, any issues relating to money do not remain secret – it is just a question of how long it takes before they become apparent.

The five provincial Seila governors should work together to develop policy including sanctions with regard to financial impropriety in payments to contractors. This should include them making recommendations regarding the design of the Monitoring and Evaluation system. The Chairman of the Seila Task Force should also be invited to participate in this process.

Payment from province to contractor?

As interpreted at present CARERE/Seila staff see a choice of making payments from the provincial Finance department to the contractor or making payments from the Finance department to the CDC to the contractor. For the purposes of keeping the process as open as possible there are clear advantages to sending the money through both the CDC and the Project Management Sub-Committee. This would increase the number of people who would be directly aware of any money which was missing, and therefore increase the chance that it will be reported. The risk, of course, is that if everyone who touches the money takes a percentage from the person who they give it to that more may be taken. Nevertheless, according to our analysis, a system whereby payments are made through communes and project management sub-committees will be far less susceptible to significant leakage.

Payments should be made through the Commune Development Committee and not direct from the Finance Department to the contractor.

CDC Evaluations of Contractors

As part of the general movement towards the monitoring and evaluation system being a system that empowers the CDCs to hold others to account, it would be useful for CDCs to complete a one-page report on each contract completed by a contractor. Every time a contractor bids for a new contract all of these reports should be made available to the CDC where the contractor is bidding.

A one-page evaluation report to be completed by the CDC for every contract completed, and to be made available to other CDCs for future bidding.

Participation

3. *Participation*: Who is participating in the LPP? Has any progress been made on improving communication and information flow to villagers regarding the LPP? If so, has this enhanced understanding and influence over the process?

The 1999 Terms of Reference for the Independent team give a narrower definition of villagers' "influence over the process". This is a useful and appropriate focusing of the term. In this section we will further break down the definition into two ways in which villagers may exercise their influence over the process:

1. Direct participation – where people are brought together to participate in the taking of decisions.
2. Representation – where elected representatives make decisions and do work on behalf of people, who have ways of holding them accountable for those decisions.

Hence the process can be considered participatory to the extent that people are able to either directly influence decisions, or to indirectly influence them by influencing their representatives.

A pre-requisite for either of these is information. People at least need to know that the meeting is happening before they attend it; people at least need to know who their representatives are, and something about their duties, if they are going to hold those representatives accountable.

Information – overall findings

We found almost no awareness in the villages of the fact that there is a commune development fund and a commune development committee that is responsible for deciding how that fund will be spent. Most VDC chiefs we have met do not perceive themselves as being CDC members: most VDC members did not know their commune LDF for the year and I do not believe we have met a single villager outside VDCs who could answer with any confidence the questions "Does your commune have a CDC?" and "Who is on it?", much less the question "What does the CDC do?"

Regarding the project that is to be implemented in the village, despite the fact that CDCs had already made their decisions about how to spend the LDF, in none of the Main Case Study villages did villagers know clearly what project would be implemented in their village. In most of the Short Studies the same situation obtained.

While a Village Information Strategy is incorporated in the 1998 LPP Review workshop in Pursat and in the subsequent October memo, we did not meet any VDC member, CDC member or facilitator who was aware of any new strategy or who had received training in a new strategy. There was no general understanding of what is key information which villagers should know.

A number of CARERE staff asked the team why villagers need to know about CDC work or about the commune development fund. There was little or no evidence that LCBs or facilitators regarded information as a priority in their day to day work. Indeed, during dialogue with internal teams in the provinces the idea of publicising the commune's LDF allocation was challenged because if villagers were very aware of this it might cause problems.

Delegation of public information responsibilities to CARERE Communication Information and Documentation staff had resulted in delays caused by the carrying out of needs assessment and training programmes which meant that new measures were only being implemented around the time of the 1999 Evaluation Team's visit, which was after most of the LPP decision-making had already taken place. In the case of one province it seemed that much of the delegated CID activity was resulting in Television programmes about Seila at provincial level but not with content which was designed to enable villagers to participate.

Thus both the effectiveness of the public information and the management of its implementation were found to be disappointing.

The 1998-9 'village information strategy'

Some of the explanation for the ineffectiveness of public information in the LPP comes from the content of the 'village information strategy' itself. Changes from the strategy recommended by the 1998 Independent Team introduced serious flaws.

Firstly, in information to be shared before the village carries out planning activities it had been recommended to include VDC members' names, the village's representatives on the CDC and the commune LDF (or IPF as it was called then). In the adopted strategy *the commune LDF was removed* from these pieces of information.

After the VDP was completed it was recommended that the highest priorities (x5), the commune LDF (again) and the date for the commune planning meeting be shared. *The commune LDF was (again) removed, as was the date of the commune planning meeting.*

Key information recommended for after the commune planning meeting was to be the date of a meeting at village level which would be the participatory workplanning meeting where arrangements for local contributions, project locations, project maintenance would be decided. *The time for the village workplan meeting was removed from key information.*

Regarding means of dissemination we suggested weekly loudspeaker announcements and village boards. Loudspeaker was included only for only one piece of information - the village's "village allocated proposed project" following the CDP - with the proviso "if available".

The final sentence of the recommended strategy was "*Where these means of communication are not workable or sufficient (ie if most villagers are not getting the message), LCBs should work with facilitators and VDCs to devise an appropriate strategy for that village. Results of any alternatives should be shared, via the senior technical advisor, with the rest of the LPP programme*" [italics in original]. *This requirement to monitor, evaluate and modify village information was also removed.*

For the coming year, it will be important that the public information component of the LPP is placed within a coherent strategy which includes a purpose, which identifies relevant information and which includes a commitment to monitoring and evaluating the spread of information (on a weekly and monthly basis, not annually).

The rationale behind public information within the LPP must be widely understood. Public information is the information which people need in order to be able to participate effectively

in the LPP. Participation is influence over the process. The theory in the LPP is that elected representatives and appointed officials should respond to people's wishes. This theory introduces new rights and responsibilities to Cambodian villagers for monitoring and influencing officials and representatives. The responsibility for introducing these new rights and responsibilities is therefore a central responsibility of the programme.

The **purpose** of public information in the LPP must be to give people the information that they need to be able to participate.

The **key information** should therefore include:

- The size of the commune's LDF
- That the CDC decides how the commune LDF is spent
- To know at least one of the CDC members
- When the key meetings (village consultation, commune LDF allocation by CDC, project workplan) take place
- Who is responsible for managing the contract for any projects which effect them

The **monitoring and evaluation** of public information must include monthly evaluation reviews at Ex-com level of the results of public information surveys

Use of radio and television

One element of the LPP which has received effective work from a public information perspective has been bidding. While there is some inconsistency in this (see Collaboration above) the overall results have been impressive. The use of radio and television in order to broadcast bidding opportunities has been effective. There is clearly an opportunity to extend this to other elements of the process. This is particularly relevant given the rapidly increasing number of televisions which are available in many of the communes: it is possible to purchase a black and white set for \$23-: all villagers which are within range of a television station will have some televisions. In one of the better off villages which the team visited in Battambang one in six households had a television.

There are clearly limits to access to television, and it clearly benefits the better off and less remote areas more. However, television sets in noodle shops at provincial markets mean that even indirectly it is possible that communities beyond the range of television stations may benefit from such information.

Key information about the commune LDF and the LPP, including timing of commune allocation meetings and the names of people appointed to project management sub-committees should be shared on provincial Television and Radio.

Village Information Boards

In only one province did we see evidence of consistent efforts to ensure that village boards were prepared to a high standard. This included regular monitoring visits and information which included photographs of villagers engaging in development activities, writing which was generally large and clear and information which was well spaced and clearly laid out. Most of this had just been initiated a number of weeks before the evaluation team had arrived, however, the general finding, both from the evaluation team and from staff in the province was that very few people were looking at the board. One case was particularly striking: a woman who was literate, who had a stall just 15 metres from the board which had a stone bench in

front of it but who said that she had never gone over to see what it said. This was not untypical and we do not really understand this. One conclusion may be that more work needs to be done on explaining to people why they may benefit from reading their information boards. Another conclusion, however, is that village information boards cannot be realistically expected to produce rapid results even if they are managed to a high standard.

While efforts should continue to try and make village boards work in existing provinces, they should not form part of the 'Seila model' for LPP in new provinces unless there is evidence of their increased effectiveness.

In Ratanakiri levels of literacy (in any language) are much lower than in other provinces, creating even greater doubts about the effectiveness of village boards. It is suggested that a quite different level of content should be aimed at on boards in Ratanakiri. Possibly just an A3 group photograph of the Commune Development Committee and the commune LDF in 30 cm high brightly coloured letters.

A separate policy for village information boards should be developed in Ratanakiri, with the emphasis on much less information and minimum requirements for literacy (see text above for suggestion).

Information trees or pyramids

In 1997 and 1998 we refrained from recommending solutions which involved people going house to house with information. During 1999 the possibility arose again and given the ineffectiveness of other methods we believe that it should be tried in selected experimental areas. In Battambang the possibility of using information trees or pyramids was suggested by the CARERE PPM: in these cases one person has a responsibility for passing on key information to four or five others who in turn have the same responsibility to pass the information on. We believe that this might work. In particular, we believe that once people have the experience of being well-informed this in itself creates a desire for information which will lead to more active use of these information channels to demand and obtain further information and to make protests and requests.

If piloting of information trees in Battambang has proved successful resources should be mobilised to extend it as practice in all provinces. If results are not yet clear, there should be further experimentation.

Loudspeakers

Another recommendation both in 1997 and 1998 had been that loudspeakers could be used to spread key information. Observing that this recommendation had not been accepted the Team Leader stopped raising it. However, a number of people have since raised it again, including the Seila Task Force focal point from the Ministry of Rural Development. Furthermore, the chief of the Provincial Department of Planning in Pursat province reported in the 12th August 1999 meeting that he has recently been trialling this, and that it is proving very effective. This, therefore, may be a strategy that could be considered during the review.

Direct participation – villager consultation

Presently, there are two key meetings where villagers have an opportunity to influence the process. The first is during the formulation or update of the village development plan¹, when the villagers are able to articulate their development priorities and the second is during a meeting to develop a workplan for any projects which have been chosen for implementation by the CDC in the village area.

Regarding **village plan formulation**, we believe that it is appropriate to engage the wider village population in an exercise to develop its priorities. Where there could be valuable change is in the **village level update** process. In the October memo this is described as “VDC village meeting to review Village Future Action Plan”. In some places this has been interpreted as a meeting with just the VDC and some village elders which is then validated at a later stage with a larger village meeting. We believe that a village meeting to update the VFAP is not necessary and that a meeting with the VDC is sufficient for this. However, we would also argue that updating the VFAP is not particularly important, and that a village consultation at this stage should focus on the commune picture.

Village consultations at this stage would be an opportunity for villagers to give their opinions with regard to what the CDC should do with the commune LDF. For such a meeting, therefore, it would be necessary to present to villagers: the commune LDF; a commune map; the rules for the sorts of projects which LDF can fund; some approximate prices to assist in discussions; the points which the commune must think about when deciding what is important to implement.

The output of this meeting would be the village’s recommendation to the VDC chief for how the people think that the commune LDF should be spent. This dialogue would then ensure that the engagement of the community in LPP dialogue is actually relevant to the LPP decision-making process (unlike the VFAP update, which can focus dialogue on projects that are completely beyond the scope of the commune LDF). It would also strengthen the understanding of the VDC chief’s role as a representative of the village at commune level.

VFAP to be updated by the VDC. Village consultation to be in a village meeting which makes recommendations regarding how the commune’s LDF should be spent.

Related to this is a general design point, which is that every effort must be made during the LPP to make absolutely sure that it is very clear to participants whether they are participating in an open-ended ‘wish list’ exercise, or in an exercise to make decisions about known funding. Currently both exist in the LPP and there is occasional confusion on behalf of participants with regard to which it is that they are participating in.

¹ In project literature the Village Development Plan has been replaced by the Village Future Action Plan, a more streamlined document. I don’t find the new term very useful in either English or Khmer languages. In particular the word plan seems to have little meaning at village level. I have heard alternatives discussed and I think “Village project list” would probably be appropriate, possibly subtitled “projects which our village would like to do” (*gomrong dael phum yeung chong tveu*). To sidestep this issue and also to include the innovations which we are suggesting I have adopted the term village consultation for this report.

Direct participation - project workplanning

A 'VDC/village meeting to validate project proposal and develop work plan for project' was adopted following the 1998 independent evaluation in response to the fact that many of the most important decisions are taken immediately after the CDC allocation by VDC members and facilitators who are in a rush to send project proposal documents off to the province. Thus villagers are excluded from key decisions regarding such things as the location of wells, how local contributions will be collected, how what will be built should be maintained, who should be a member of any technical or social sub-committees related to the project. Unfortunately, the meeting which was introduced is scheduled **after** the province has approved the project, so once again the key decisions are being made without the participation of the villagers. This needs to be changed. In order for the CDC and VDC to be confident in carrying out participatory work planning and decision-making with villagers at this stage it is important that Ex-com understands that if it has specific policy positions which extend beyond the 'rules for types of projects' that these must be raised before the LPP begins and that as far as possible CDC allocation and planning decisions must be respected once made.

PRDC Ex-com must clarify any policy positions that extend beyond the 'rules for types of projects' before the LPP begins.

One of the tasks which must be carried out in the project workplan meeting is the **identification of members of a project management sub-committee**. One of the key recommendations made by a VDC/CDC member on one of the internal teams was that it is essential to try and find people with relevant technical ability for this work. This means looking beyond the VDC and CDC members to other people in the community who might not be regular participants in state or voluntary work, but who might be willing to contribute their expertise. This includes local business people and monks with construction experience.

Another task in the workplan meeting is the **arrangements for local contributions**. It was noted that in some places a special sub-committee to collect these had been selected by villagers and that this seemed to be a good way forward (and much different to other cases where sub-committee members' names had been written down in forms but where they had no role in practice).

If integration is correctly scheduled after the CDP update and before the CDC decides how to spend its LDF the workplan meeting can also be used to **publicly decide who will be a direct beneficiary of any sectoral projects allocated to the village** from the integration meetings.

The public project workplan meeting should occur after the CDC has decided how to spend the LDF and before project proposals are written and sent to Ex-com.

Where a project serves more than one village, a process is required in order to make the same decisions. This process should begin with a meeting of all members (not just selected representatives) of the VDCs in those villages, who can then make agreements which they report back to their own villages.

For projects serving more than one village, a CDC representative should facilitate the workplan meeting with all of the members of all of the VDCs of villages that are served by the

project. The VDC members would then report back to village meetings where the decisions could be validated (and any village specific decisions made).

Village meetings and the Local Planning Process

We heard from villagers, from facilitators and from committee members that it is difficult to get people to meetings and that there are too many meetings.

In order to ensure that the two meetings where villagers have an opportunity to participate directly are effective it is necessary to publicise them well in advance and make their purpose clear. This is an issue that has been clear in all provinces when we have talked to VDC members about how meetings are called. For villagers, whether it is a meeting about the census, or a meeting held by the Cambodian People's Party or a SEILA meeting, it is most unlikely that they will know until they get there what it is about. Given that village chiefs and commune chiefs in meetings often speak quite quietly and that people in the back often take the opportunity to socialise quite vocally, it is unsurprising that even after meetings people don't know what they were about. If meetings are to work as decision-making arenas there must be fewer meetings that are just 'another time where they speak and we listen'.

A ground rule for LPP design must be that meetings are only to be used for direct participation in important decisions and not as a way of trying to disseminate information (in order that the incentive for going to meetings is that you will have a chance to influence decisions which affect you).

The district chief in Preah Net Preah who has had little direct involvement with the LPP but has been able to observe much of it in the last year spoke very highly of the skills of SEILA staff in addressing meetings, and actually making the effort to engage people's attention by monitoring their reactions and telling jokes or stories to recapture their attention and by using clear simple visual aids.

In the interests of effective participation, there must be continued focus on the quality of dialogue in village meetings.

Training (supported by a training video) must be given to all VDC and CDC members in how to invite people to meetings; how to arrange a village meeting; how to speak in a village meeting; how to facilitate a village meeting.

Financial contributions and Participation in the Local Planning Process.

The reason for supporting financial contributions which the Evaluation Team has always stressed is in order to give villagers a stake in the project/process. If people have given money then they are more likely to feel that they have the right to know what is going on and to demand high standards. The local contribution is in other words a tool to encourage people to exercise their rights and responsibilities.

In 1999 we saw for the first time that financial contributions were being taken seriously in all areas. This had a number of impacts.

One was regarding information. People who had already given money were generally better informed than people who had not yet given money. However, the other side of this was an increasing proportion of people who said that they had given money because they were told to, but that they did not know what project they were contributing to or how that money was being spent. Clearly in such circumstances the participatory objectives of local contributions are not being fulfilled.

Ensure that retraining and orientation includes the reasons for local contributions, and that people should always know what project they are contributing to and why. This point should be stressed in the revised LPP video.

One good development which was seen in Battambang in (almost) all villages which the team visited was the use of a receipt book for local contributions. Issuing receipts and keeping a record lays the foundation for a more accountable system than just a thumbprint in an exercise book, or the collection of contributions without documentation of individual contributions. In Siem Reap and Pursat lists of contributions were often displayed on the village board. This is something which can occasionally be observed at pagodas where the monks write up the names of people who contributed to the construction at the site. It should also be made programme-wide policy.

All local financial contributions should be recorded in a receipt book with a receipt issued to the contributor. Lists of contributors and their contributions should be publicly displayed.

Appropriate levels of financial contribution

The requirement of 3%, assigned by project, is pushing poorer people and poorer villages away from being direct beneficiaries. We certainly found examples of ring wells and water pumps where local contribution is a key factor in ensuring that only the better off benefit directly. One of the factors here was that local contributions were being charged as though they were user fees for private consumers rather than public charges for public goods. If our recommendation to not allow more buffalo banks, water pumps etc is not accepted, then we certainly think that the community as a whole should contribute the local contribution and the first recipients should be decided after that contribution has been decided. Otherwise the two processes become confused and it is the people who are best able to pay who are the ones most likely to become direct beneficiaries.

Local contributions for projects such as ring wells, buffalo, water pumps to be collected from across the village **before** the location and direct beneficiary is decided.

This does not address the issue of villages being unable to accept projects because the local financial contribution is too expensive for them. We are not sure whether this is an issue or not – it is possible that the larger projects (schools, water gates etc) are the ones which communities are able to raise funds for, and therefore in practice the 3% can be found.

If, however, this is found to be an issue there are two alternative strategies that could be applied:

1. Local contribution not collected as a percentage but as a flat rate head count eg. 1,000 riel per person who can do labour. (This seems to be the system operating in parts of Ratanakiri). It would be possible to weight this according to area and even according to wealth ranking within the village
2. The 3% local contribution to be collected from across the commune as a pre-requisite for qualifying for LDF funding. This would set a precedent for local tax collection and would help to publicise the LDF and the role of the CDC (soon to be commune council) and is the preferred solution of the evaluation team.

The policy of 3% local financial contribution by project should be reviewed from the point of view of equity¹, and the options of either per capita contribution rates or 3% financial contribution rate as pre-qualification for LDF funding (the evaluation team's preference) to be considered.

Non-financial contributions

It is useful to quantify and record non-financial contributions in a credible way in order to be able to present the case for the comparative efficiency of the LDF as a mechanism for funding development. This can therefore continue. We do not, however, think there is any need to specify a minimum level for local contribution overall and suggest that it confuses thinking with regard to contributions.

Non-financial contributions also need to be reviewed. Not paying unskilled labour has had a beneficial effect in preventing people from choosing labour-based projects as a way of getting rice and constructing wasteful or unnecessary projects (such as the 1997 pond at Ondong Traich which was dug before the policy was introduced). However, this undoubtedly places a heavier burden on the poorer communities, where there are more people who have to live on what they have earned or found during the day. Implementing projects during the two or three months after harvest should be a major improvement in this regard, and we would not recommend any other change in policy regarding non-payment for unskilled labour.

One issue that has arisen is that some communities are failing to respect their agreement to provide unskilled labour for projects. This means that contractors have to fund this out of their profits otherwise they will not get paid for the job. If contractors sense that this is the prevailing condition they will quickly put up prices and make the labour payments unofficially. This will make the whole LDF less efficient.

Where local communities fail to provide agreed labour contributions the sanction of withdrawing LDF facility from those communities should be invoked.

Large village strategies – sub-village organisation

It is a failing of previous LPP evaluations that we have not raised this issue which has major implications for the rural development structure and deserves extensive policy dialogue with the Ministry of Rural Development.

¹ The best translation we know of this is either 'justice' or 'justice for the poor'; it is not the same as equality.

Put briefly, it is not realistic to expect that a village development committee can facilitate the participation of all families in a process in villages that have upwards of 300 families. This is particularly the case where there is a requirement for village meetings as decision-making fora. There must be some form of sub-village organisation to facilitate this work. This is an issue which is raised tentatively by the Learning from Rural Development Programmes in Cambodia study (Charya et al 1998) and which needs further follow-up.

We believe that some form of sub-village grouping is required in order to facilitate effective participation through representation. This harmonises with information trees as mentioned above. We have some concerns about using the existing *Krom* which were formed as "Solidarity Groups" (or *Krom Samaki*) under the State of Cambodia, and formed various State and Party functions. It may be useful to form new sub-village groups. This, however, would be a huge amount of work. We therefore recommend that one commune with a number of very large villages is chosen as a trial for this, and that the trial is monitored in collaboration with the Ministry of Rural Development (as this may be of value to them in their policy development).

Realistically, something more modest is required in the short term. We believe that in villages with more than 200 households public meetings should be held with one man and one woman from every existing *Krom* required to be present. This would guarantee a certain level of geographical representation throughout the village and would also ensure that even with full attendance the village is of a manageable size.

In villages with more than 200 households, attendance at public meetings should include one man and one woman from every *Krom* in the village.
An experiment should be conducted in one commune with large villages trialling the use of new administrative sub-village groupings, and this should be monitored and evaluated in collaboration with the Ministry of Rural Development.

Roles and Behaviour of Local Authorities and other Government staff

4. *Roles and behavior of the local authorities and other government staff.* How do the local authorities, especially the commune and village chiefs, influence the planning and resource allocation process? How do they engage with the process? Has their behavior changed at all as the result of the training provided or as the result of changing ideas and demands from the people participating in the LPP? To what extent are government staff and institutions providing effective and appropriate services for and within the LPP?

Village chief-VDC relationships

One of the findings of the 1998 evaluation was that within the areas visited that VDCs were becoming gradually less and less functional with only one or two people active. At the same time, commune chiefs were becoming more and more inclined to communicate with village chiefs rather than VDC members. One of our conclusions was that it was important that VDCs be strengthened in their work as a committee. We recommended that work should be better divided amongst the members and that the VDC should occasionally meet. This year we did not notice any improvement in the cohesiveness of the VDCs: certainly there was no evidence that VDCs ever meet as a group without facilitation.

This led to a range of different situations in the Main Case Studies. In Chroab Chas there is both a cohesive VDC with good participation from all five members and a supportive village chief who is willing to support the VDC even in situations where there is some dissatisfaction with the CDC. In Doun On the village chief is the VDC chief: he is quite dominant and there is no formal consultation or process within the VDC. In Snam Preah the whole VDC was changed following an election: there were a mixture of attitudes and relationships which certainly included some tension but which were beyond our capacity to understand in the four days. In Ondong Traich the relationship with the village chief was very poor, also relationships within the VDC were poor. One change is that the appointment of the village chief (who is not a VDC member) as deputy VDC chief by the commune chief seemed to have been forgotten or resisted so that once again the older woman in the VDC was clearly the VDC deputy and the village chief was not in the VDC.

A common feature of all of the above cases was the lack of intervention by either facilitators or LCB staff to improve the situation. The most useful conclusion to draw from this is that the management and facilitation capacity for strengthening VDCs is not immediately available within the current programme. It is therefore most unlikely to be available in new provinces where if Seila is introduced it is unlikely to be with the support of such a well-funded and well-staffed support unit as an existing CARERE PSO.

One way to address this is to identify VDC capacity strengthening as an area on which NGO activity should focus. The Team Leader carried out an evaluation of an NGO in a Seila village in September 1998. There was a Seila VDC and an NGO VDC. Most of the VDC members were in both committees, however, the two committees continued to function separately and the NGO continued not to have any involvement in Seila work. This is a waste of resources which does not serve the interests of the community. One of the reasons that this situation persisted was that the NGO was hesitant about intervening in what were perceived as government (or Seila) matters.

Provincial Departments of Rural Development should be looking to make use of every possible opportunity to draw NGOs into assisting with capacity building, and especially team building of VDCs. This is an issue that can be raised in both provincial development forum meetings and in district integration meetings.

CARERE to encourage and facilitate PDRD in creating opportunities for NGOs to assist in strengthening VDCs in Seila areas.

At present there is nothing in the LPP which requires VDCs to meet on a regular basis. As a result the degree of involvement of the other members depends on the attitude of the chief and any outsiders. If a central responsibility of the VDC was to meet monthly, and this was established from the time that it is elected, then this would greatly increase the chances of the VDC functioning effectively as a group. It is anticipated that much business which is carried out on an adhoc basis with the VDC could then be submitted for consideration at that meeting. If this is introduced the key management facilitation issue for CARERE/Seila is to ensure that right from the start that there are things for the VDC to discuss and solve and that the meetings are therefore worthwhile from the start. Evening meetings would probably be ideal (one can imagine an ideal situation where the VDC members take it in turn hosting the other members for dinner before the meeting). During the 13 August 1999 feedback meeting with government representatives it was suggested that there may be some lessons to be learned from the Community Action for Social Development programme (which is integrated with Seila in some Battambang communes) about the best way to build VDC solidarity – especially through commune level congresses.

We believe that regular meetings are a low-cost strategy for building VDC capacity - while it is clear that not everyone will attend every meeting, it is also clear that any meetings at all would be a major improvement on the current situation where VDCs do not meet.

Village development committees should meet every month as one of their responsibilities.

Commune chiefs and Commune Development Committees

The tendency for the commune development committee to be dominated by the commune chief is strong. In 1999 this has been exacerbated by a tendency to increasingly regard the commune chief, his deputies and the commune secretary (plus, if they happen to be active, a school principal, a local woman or two, a health worker) as the real CDC and the VDC members as extra or guest members. It was more common in 1999 for us to ask who is on the CDC and for the answer to not include the VDC chiefs than in previous years. Even when prompted it was not always accepted that VDC chiefs were CDC members.

This has been most obvious in provinces where the TSS and Secretariat and PDRD carry out technical appraisal of projects after the project proposal has been completed. In some cases the provincial level officials persuade the commune to change its decisions. In these cases (which were most clearly observed in Ratanakiri and Banteay Meanchey) the provincial and district officials who were leading the change process only consulted the commune chief and not the whole CDC. Effectively they gave responsibility for wider consultation to the

commune chief, but it was not always clear that time for this existed even if it had been a realistic expectation.

Given that the VDC chiefs are geographically dispersed it is very difficult to enable them to be consulted when day to day business arrives. Similar to the VDCs, however, the evaluation team found that in fact the CDC rarely does business on anything other than a day to day basis. There are not regular meetings. Thus all of the work tends to be concentrated on the commune chief or his staff who are in the office.

We believe that it is necessary and desirable for the CDC to meet regularly in order that it can begin to function as a committee and not as an individual except when there is a large meeting. In Svay Loung commune the VDC chiefs come to the commune office every Monday morning to meet and find out if there is any work to be done. This is probably too often for the communes which are less well off and more dispersed. As a general rule we think that monthly meetings should be instituted at commune level – again all efforts should then be made to ensure that other meetings are not called at short notice and that work is concentrated on those times. (This enables VDC chiefs to plan the trip to coincide with a trip to market and save their costs, and also to know in advance that they should arrange for a replacement to attend if they cannot). The theory behind this recommendation, therefore, is not that it should result in more meetings, but that the arrangement of this predictable schedule should actually result in fewer meetings and more efficient work practices.

Commune development committees should meet monthly as a routine responsibility.

When the issue of regular meetings was discussed it was mentioned that this had been tried but that it was often disrupted by other work which the commune chief was required to do in his role as a Local Authority or for the Party. Given the level of commitment now being demonstrated by the Excom members, it should be quite possible to ensure that whatever time is put aside for CDC meetings can be safeguarded from other interruptions.

The issue of meetings also relates to the issue of facilitation (see below). One of the functions which facilitators are now performing is messenger between all the levels from village to province. Commune radios is certainly one effective way of reducing the dependence of facilitators for this role; regular meetings will be another. In the team we have discussed monthly meetings at district, commune, and VDC level. There are clear advantages to having them in quite quick succession so that information can be passed on quickly (eg one on Monday, one on Tuesday, one on Wednesday). The question is, should they be scheduled from bottom to top (VDC on Monday, CDC on Tuesday and district on Wednesday) so that the agenda is defined more from the bottom-up, or the other way round? Both could be trialled in different districts and comparative evaluation of a full cycle would be possible by late 2000.

Importantly, a system where meeting times are formalised and systematised makes the whole system more accessible to everyone who is officially involved. This will be particularly important for those who might not be informally consulted by chiefs and facilitators. In this respect we expect it to be particularly beneficial for women.

System of monthly meetings for all development meetings put in place by Provincial Ex-coms and evaluated in September 2000.

In two of the five Main Case Study communes we found that the commune chief had cooperated with the contractor and/or the Secretariat to ensure that payment was made for projects which the VDCs were not satisfied with. In neither case did the commune chief live in the village concerned. This will always be a risk. It will be much reduced if the VDCs which are in the villages that directly benefit from projects are given the lead role in appointing the project management committee and the signature of the project management sub-committee is required before payment can be made.

This is relevant to the current dialogue within the programme about a lighter more commune-focussed process and also the dialogue within the Ministry of Interior about the way in which the Commune Council is composed. There is much in the CARERE/Seila experience which demonstrates the difficulty of achieving accountability of the commune to rural people. For this reason we see public information and village representation at the commune level as the foundation stones for an accountable Commune Council. If Commune Councils are appointed from party slates it is likely that they will tend to replicate the current pattern of commune chiefs and deputies all coming from the same one or two villages and tending to be susceptible to looking for private profit in transactions involving other villages in the commune.

Currently, the prevailing model being discussed within the government is one of a commune council directly elected under proportional representation. We suggest that CARERE/Seila representatives should ensure that alternatives are considered, including the option of a commune assembly with a man and a woman being represented from every village being formed. This commune assembly could then elect from within its own ranks a 4-person executive who would carry out day to day work on behalf of the commune.

During consultation with the Ministry of Interior during the drafting of the Commune Council Law CARERE/Seila representatives should ensure that there is dialogue about the possibility of a commune assembly being formed including a man and woman representative from each village (see text of analysis for detail and explanation).

Capacity building in the LPP

One of the assumptions in the programme is that people's capacity can be built through participating in a facilitated process. We find increasing evidence to suggest that it is very difficult for a facilitator to both facilitate work and to build capacity at the same time. We think it is necessary to think of alternative ways of arranging the work so that the skills of the facilitators are used more effectively, and that capacity is built more effectively.

At the moment, especially because time is short, facilitators often do work on behalf of CDC and VDC members. This is leading to both bad feeling in the case of the more capable committee members who say that they are not learning enough and to feelings of grateful dependency on the part of the less capable ones. Neither of these is in line with the strategic objectives of the Seila programme which demands that committees develop the capacity to carry out the functions assigned to them in a decentralised structure.

Facilitation is a skill that requires considerable intellect, insight and flexibility. To facilitate well even in a way which does not build capacity is difficult. To facilitate and to build capacity at the same time is an even greater challenge.

Our analysis is that it is too difficult to both facilitate and teach and get work complete all at the same time. This is especially the case when everyone (facilitators and committee members) are fairly inexperienced in their work. It would be much clearer and easier if training was done at one time, and then when people have completed the training, that they should do the work (wherever possible without the presence of a trainer or facilitator).

We therefore recommend an approach which emphasises formal training more and outside facilitation less. In other words, that all of the functions which committee and sub-committee members are required to perform must be itemised and training packages developed for each of these functions. This should include formal testing of trainee's competence and retraining for those who do not achieve basic standards. It is believed that such an approach would much better suit both the capacities and experiences of both provincial/district officials and of local representatives. The modelling that is a key element of a facilitation approach will best be achieved through video.

We also believe that formal training and assessment of the results of such training will be particularly beneficial to the less confident people, who through attending and succeeding in training courses will have their own competence demonstrated to themselves and to others. Again we believe that this will be beneficial in correcting in gender imbalances.

Training packages must be developed for every function that needs to be carried out in the LPP.

For some skills, such as filling in financial request forms or how to write a project proposal, a training package which relies on documents as training materials will be sufficient. However, for elements of the process which require interpersonal skills – such as conducting village meetings; carrying out the CDC allocation process; managing workplan meetings – training videos will be an essential tool to enable good skills to be modelled.

Training videos must be made to assist in teaching inter-personal skills and processes within the LPP.

A comprehensive analysis of the LPP looking at all of the skills which require training support will undoubtedly yield a large list of training needs. It is recommended that these are best addressed at district level through the establishment of a district training office. The district training office would work under the district chief (or DDC chief if this title exists) and would have a deconcentrated civil servant from the Provincial Department of Rural Development: this person would be the district training officer and would replace the current position of PFT.

PDRD and district chiefs should be encouraged to seek financial and technical support from NGOs and International Organisations to assist in developing the highest possible quality of training support at district level.

Establishment of district training offices in all Seila districts, where possible with additional support from NGOs.

Support to Commune Development Committees – the case of Ratanakiri

We found that the conditions in Ratanakiri are quite different in certain respects. CDC members are generally less well-educated and therefore their capacity at the start of the programme is lower; locations are more remote, both that the commune is further away and that it is more likely to become inaccessible during the wet season; Khmer language is not normally the first language of CDC members, whereas it is the first language of almost all the LCBs and facilitators.

We also found differences in the level of support offered to Ratanakiri communes. In lowland provinces there is one or more DFT per commune, and most CDCs are issued with a radio and a motorcycle in order to assist them in their work. None of these is provided in Ratanakiri.

It was observed that CDC members in Ratanakiri are sometimes less involved in the work than in other provinces, and one reason was that they are more isolated. A CDC chief in a remote commune in Siem Reap can call any other Seila commune in the province and can also call the PRDC Secretariat for information about work. The evaluation team believes that a set scale of equipment for all communes in the Seila programme should be provided. This must include Ratanakiri.

The question which needs to be asked at programme level is whether Ratanakiri CDCs are intended to develop the same capacity as communes in other provinces. If this is the objective then it is essential that they get more resources devoted to them than other provinces.

This includes an adequate number of facilitators/trainers. It may, for instance, be appropriate for each Ratanakiri commune to have two facilitators in order that there is always at least one facilitator in the commune helping to train people in their rights and responsibilities. Certainly, there should be at least one DFT (or equivalent) per commune the same as in other provinces.

The evaluation team also believes that any person who is making a serious and professional effort to work at community level in Ratanakiri must make a concerted effort to learn a local language. From a programme point of view, this means ensuring that formal language training is provided in all of the minority languages. In some communes there is more than one minority language: however, this should not be used as an excuse for not doing any formal language training.

All Ratanakiri CDCs must be equipped with an ICOM radio.

All Ratanakiri CDCs should be equipped with a motorcycle.

There must be at least one DFT per commune in Ratanakiri, and the possibility of 2 per commune with one always present in the commune should be considered.

All CARERE and Seila staff must have formal language training in the minority language that is most relevant to their work.

All of these changes carry with them an extra management and administrative work-load, because there will be implied tasks related to the above, eg. Teacher training for the language teachers, training in maintenance of ICOM radios, recruitment and training for new facilitators. Management and financial resources will need to be mobilised for these implied tasks.

The role of the district chief

We see the district as a level at which technical and coordination services can be concentrated. We therefore foresee an increased role for the district chief in arranging these services. At the same time, however, we would not wish to see districts become more involved in commune level decision-making. Some district chiefs told the Team Leader that they had attended a number of commune development committee meetings where the commune LDF was allocated. This should be discouraged, and if it has to be allowed it should be made very clear that the district chief's only rights at such a meeting are the rights of an observer. He must not facilitate. Similarly we recommend that project proposals should not be signed by district chiefs prior to going to Excom, but should be copied to them afterwards by the PRDC Secretary.

In order to achieve better balance at district level we recommend that if there is a district development committee that the District Chief should be the chief and the head of the District Department of Women's Affairs should be the deputy.

District chief, in cooperation with the DDWA chief¹, should have increased role in managing integration and the district training office, but should not have any role in facilitating or approving commune decision-making.

Such rights and responsibilities would probably be welcomed by district chiefs in Seila areas who are used to having less line responsibility for CDCs in the Seila system and would welcome an opportunity to have more of a role in other ways. In new districts and provinces this would again be a sensitive issue, with current Seila district chiefs a key resource in ensuring that it is negotiated effectively.

Role and employment of district facilitators

District facilitators are currently providing services to communes on behalf of the province. It is not yet absolutely clear whether the service they are providing is a temporary one (ie capacity building until the commune can work unsupported at which time the work finishes) or permanent (ie monitoring the committees on behalf of the people and the province and providing permanent support). If the role is temporary, a better title might be commune training officer – focussing the person and all who they work with on their primary role.

¹ The absence of women in the position of district chief and deputy district chief leads to a requirement for DDWA to have a more prominent role. Clearly, within the public sector reform and governance agenda the issue of women's representation at this level is a priority. Unfortunately, district chiefs and deputies have just been reappointed so the moment has been missed, one way forward on this would be to ensure that as many DDWA chiefs are supported to end national administration training in order that they are all qualified to become district chiefs or deputies in the future.

A related issue is the way in which deconcentrated government staff are appointed and employed. There is some possibility of the new commune law including a provision of a Ministry of Interior-appointed commune clerk. If this is allowed then there is the danger that it could be a way for communes to be dominated either by a political party or by a powerful official at a higher level (or both), thereby endangering many of the gains which come from decentralized operations. If DFTs are to continue to have a role in the near future, a very useful precedent could be set by giving them the right to hire and fire their own DFTs from within the pool of available district officials. All CDC members we spoke to liked this idea; facilitators were divided about it; Secretariat chiefs seemed less enthusiastic. We strongly recommend it, especially to address the issue of CDC members who feel that they are not receiving sufficient training from the facilitators.

District Facilitators must become deconcentrated employees of the CDC, which has the right to recruit and dismiss its own facilitator from within the pool of available district officials.

Demand-driven capacity building

The UNCDF supported District Development Fund pilot in Uganda not only had decentralised capital development funds, but also decentralised capacity building funds. The theory behind this is that local government units can identify their own capacity needs and have access to resources which enable them to decide how these should be addressed. It will be valuable for the Seila Task Force to establish relations with the Decentralization Secretariat of the Ministry of Local Government in Uganda in order to receive information on the progress of this experiment which is at a very early stage.

Meanwhile, a more conventional approach will be to incorporate all of the training objectives in the LPP into a monitoring system such that progress towards all position-holders having the required training qualifications can be monitored, and if necessary PDRD can assist district training offices which are not succeeding in meeting their objectives with extra resources.

Training levels of all members of the Seila RDS to be collated in the LPP Monitoring and Evaluation system.

Technical support for communes.

Communes need to access capacity for the following:

1. Estimating prices of projects
 2. Technically appraising potential projects
 3. Developing project proposals of sufficient technical quality
 4. Local sub-committee or project owner trained in monitoring work of the contractor
- Currently all of these functions basically come from the TSS, who are acting on behalf of both the commune and the province. The TSS both assist the commune in developing its project proposals and also assist the province in technical approval. If there is a need for both of these functions they possibly should not be carried out by the same person or people. Equally, if communes are to develop genuine capacity to plan and implement local development activities this must include the capacity to access technical resources. In one province where TSS resources were most thinly stretched our analysis was that support services to commune had

been neglected in favour of services to the province with the result that technical work and responsibility had effectively been recentralised back to province.

In practice it is extremely difficult to get an adequate number of engineers at provincial level (in all but one of the provinces the TSS are regarded as extremely under-qualified for the tasks which they are performing). Are there therefore any options for enabling the commune to access its own technical services separate to those of the province? One option is that communes are delegated funds to enable them to recruit their own technical assistance for appraising projects, estimating prices, developing project proposals and supporting bidding. In the District Development Project-Pilot in Uganda 10% of the LDF is allocated as an Investment Servicing Cost. The potential costs and benefits of such an approach should be debated and it should be trialled if there is considered to be any possibility that it might be beneficial.

Another alternative would be to build the capacity of technical officials at district level to be able to provide technical assistance to communes.

Arrangements for communes to recruit their own technical assistance should be investigated and trialled.

Rejected project proposals.

There are variations from province to province in the amount of proposals which come from CDCs which are rejected. This suggests widely different interpretation of the rules. Every effort must be made in every province to ensure that a technical appraisal of projects is carried out before the project proposal is submitted by the commune development committee, in order that it can be forwarded rapidly to Excom and be returned to the commune as quickly as possible (maximum two weeks).

If a project is rejected the commune development committee should reconvene and using the same process as in the original CDC meeting decide how best to reallocate this money. If, in the September Review this is not judged to be not always practicable it is recommended that an alternative shortcut procedure be developed which still allows the CDC members to have a reasonable degree of influence over the investment decision.

Procedures for reallocating LDF money when a CDC project proposal is rejected should be reviewed.

Project proposal approval and project agreement

The result of the 1998 review was an undertaking that project proposals would be approved or rejected within two weeks of submission and that money would be released within 3 days of being requested (the latter a more demanding target than the Evaluation Team had recommended).

While these commitments exist on paper the team did not find evidence that anyone on either the CARERE or the Seila side had remembered them or had made arrangements to ensure that

the targets were met. CDC members were not aware of the existence of such targets and therefore were not in a position to hold provincial officials to them.

Siem Reap was the one province where there were cases of rapid approval of project proposals in the Main Case Study Commune and also where there was instructive dialogue during the Feedback Meetings about reasons for delays. It is clear that setting performance targets such as these will not have an impact if they are not publicised to communes nor followed up by management: targets depend on some sort of monitoring either from above or below. The one point that we would make is that most of the delays were not caused by Excom, but between the commune and Excom when Secretariat staff were involved.

Commitment to approving or rejecting project proposals within 2 weeks of submission and project agreements within a week of submission must be reaffirmed during the Review and arrangements made to publicise these commitments to all the communes.

National level leadership for the LPP

The reassignment of roles and responsibilities within Seila in general and within the LPP in particular requires a balance between different sectoral departments in different roles. The emergence of new responsibilities balanced between rural development, planning and finance which is in the 28 July 1998 *Prakas* issued by Keat Chhon (Minister of Economy and Finance and Chairman of the Seila Task Force) is an achievement of the Seila experiment and sets a valuable foundation for future cooperation both within the government and between government and non-governmental entities.

This achievement has been possible through the experience of working through inter-departmental collaboration mechanisms such as the Ex-com and the Secretariat, and through joint reflection of experience.

A continuing source of concern for the LPP is that there is not yet evidence of a national level institution which works inter-ministerially in this way and which understands the importance of broad and carefully balanced arrangements in order to introduce effective decentralised governance. The Seila Task Force did not have a lead role in the drafting of either Decree 002 or the Commune Council Law. While there are signs that other Ministries will have input into the Commune Council Law¹ it is not yet clear that these are sufficient to guarantee a strong base for development of broadly supported decentralisation policy development. A priority for the extension and expansion of the LPP in a coherent governance framework is the existence of appropriate institutions at national level for policy development. These institutions are unlikely to be well-designed if they are the product of single-ministry initiatives.

CARERE/Seila leadership to lobby for the creation of effective inter-ministerial consultation in order to create effective national level institutions to lead Cambodian decentralisation and governance reform.

¹ At the 13 August 1999 feedback meeting the Ministry of Rural Development representative confirmed that he had seen a draft of the commune law; we also understand that there is further public consultation regarding the Commune Council Law due in October.

Other issues

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5. *Other issues:* While it is essential that the team focus on the above key issues for this year's research, the team may opt to explore other matters that may arise from their experiences. Any proposed expansion or alteration in the focus research areas should be first discussed with the research supervisors and with the Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor for the LPP.
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Timing of the process – “Why do you always come with the rains when we are busy?”

One issue mentioned more than any other by people whom we met when we asked how the LPP could be improved was the timing of the process. They felt that planning meetings and implementation should all be done before and after the harvest and not during the rainy period after Khmer New Year when people are busy ploughing and transplanting.

This was partly due to management oversight. In the provinces people were waiting until they had closed one subproject before opening the next and were not initiating the planning and updating in the villages and communes until the new subproject had started. A factor in this was the staff appraisals and recruitment of new staff was carried out between subprojects and caused delay in some cases.

It is essential that the management and funding of the process be arranged such that implementation can be carried out at the latest from January until April. This means that planning and integration activities must be concluded during October-December. The implications of this must be discussed with the CAREERE finance advisor in order that the Seila system can be made compatible with government financing arrangements – through flexibility in either one or the other if it is necessary.

That the 2000 planning cycle will begin in October 1999 regardless of the state of implementation of the 1999 project is a useful precedent for other donors – Cambodian government and international – of the overwhelming importance of ensuring that the LPP is correctly harmonised with the seasons in Cambodia.

In the LPP model developed by the end of the Seila experiment, it must be made clear to future donors and managers that the implementation of the LPP in synchronisation with the seasons is an absolute priority.

The LPP within Cambodian Public Sector Reform

Seila has been an impressive step forward in a process of reforming Cambodian governance. The whole initiative has to some extent lived with the risk that Royal Government policy-makers do not fully subscribe to its public sector reform objectives but see it largely as an area development project rather than an area development policy initiative. The adoption by the World Bank of most of the key features of Seila in what looks to be a highly compatible initiative in the north-east of the country is a promising development.

There remain significant question marks regarding the replicability of Seila structures. Not least amongst these are the issues of national level institutions and of civil servants' salaries and incentives.

CARERE/Seila must make every effort to ensure that the UNDP Public Administration Reform project provides a bridge enabling CARERE/Seila achievements and lessons to have a central place in the public sector reform dialogue in Cambodia.

Technical Assistance Resources for the Final Year of CARERE/Seila

Funding for technical assistance for CARERE/Seila declines as the project continues, so that coming into its final year the programme has less funds available for recruiting expertise. This severely limits flexibility and reduces the extent to which lessons which have been learned can be put into practice. Whilst it may be desirable for blueprint capacity building programmes in highly predictable environments to be designed with ever-declining funding for specialist technical assistance, this does not seem to be appropriate for a policy experiment in an uncertain environment such as Seila. This evaluation implies needs for all of the following technical assistance which does not appear to the evaluation team to be available in adequate quantities in either CARERE or Seila beyond October 1999:

- Training and training of trainers
- Video production (especially in the context of training)
- Capacity for assessing and designing institutional arrangements for local level technical support which utilise private sector and NGO resources in addition to governmental ones
- Planning/allocation specialists who can advise on the relative benefits of different formulae and approaches for allocation of commune LDF and also, if it is to exist, a discretionary provincial LDF.
- Assistance in decentralisation and local governance policy development for the Seila Task Force and other national level institutions engaged in developing policies on Cambodian local governance.

This is an important lesson for donors and programme designers with regard to the design of future initiatives of this sort. In the immediate term it is for programme management to review whether the Evaluation Team's judgements regarding available capacity are accurate and whether extra resources need to be mobilised.

Towards new functions for Local Governments in Decentralised Development

While planning has a pre-eminent role in the LPP, the process is also introducing new responsibilities which are not directly related to planning. One possible output of the Seila experiment will be to suggest mandated responsibilities for local government arising from Seila experience. An example might be school, well and latrine construction. It may be that direct management of government contracts for all such work within a commune could and should be the responsibility of the commune council. Bidding procedures, project management sub-committees, payment arrangements could all be used for these activities even if they are located within provincial or national programmes. The benefits of the LPP may therefore be able to extend to activities which are not locally planned.

List of Recommendations

1.0 Allocation of Resources

1.1 *Types of projects*

- Existing rice banks, buffalo, rice mills, water pumps should be monitored and evaluated in order to draw long-term lessons with regard to the factors which might make them suitable as locally managed, LDF funded projects.
- A list of project types allowed for funding within the programme should be drawn up. These should be projects which are likely to succeed. It should include roads, schools, bridges, culverts, wells, irrigation channels, water gates, animals for stud. It should not include rice banks, buffalo, rice mills, water pumps, commune resource centres.
- Projects requested by communities which are outside the approved list should only be permitted if approved by the Seila Task Force as programme level policy experiments, which the STF itself will oversee monitoring and evaluation of.
- A basic scale of equipment should be supplied to all communes entering the LPP – this should be from a fund which is separate to the LDF.

1.2 *Commune focus and village focus*

- The concept of the 'village project' and the 'commune project' should be ended. All projects should be implemented by project management sub-committees.

1.3 *Administration fees*

- 3% administration fee should be allocated at 1% to the CDC, 1% split equally between all VDCs, 1% to project management sub-committees (proportional to the cost of each project).

1.4 *What sort of process is needed in order to enable commune development committees to spend their LDF?*

- The September LPP Review should develop Terms of Reference for a working group of CDC representatives from each province to complete the work of designing a simple, new commune-focussed allocation process.

1.5 *The relationship between the 3-year commune development plan and the annual spending decisions regarding the commune LDF*

- The CDP should include
 - a matrix ranking of villages by poverty.
 - a matrix ranking of sectors by priority.
 - lists of prioritised projects by sector for the commune.

1.6 *Suggestions for the new commune process*

- Screening and Ranking Criteria must be renamed in English and Khmer and Ranking criteria reduced to two or three points which assist dialogue (see analysis for detailed suggestions).
- The evaluation team's suggested process to be considered alongside provincial review findings when formulating the new commune process to decide how to spend the annual LDF allocation

1.7 *LDF Allocation to communes*

- The next round of allocations to communes must be based on a formula which incorporates poverty and which uses population as the means of measuring the size of the commune.

1.8 Commune LDF size: capacity and efficiency

- Province to commune allocation criteria should be applied in the same way to all communes regardless of how many years they have received LDF for.
- A minimum annual commune LDF figure should be adopted – probably \$10,000.
- LDF allocations to communes to be rounded to the nearest thousand dollars.

1.9 Allocations by province or national level?

- Close attention must be made to interprovincial equity when devising allocation criteria, and a programme/nation wide focus must be incorporated into formulations of any further iterations of the LPP beyond 2000.

2.0 Collaboration

2.1 Conduct of Integration meetings

- The district chief or a designated deputy should chair and take responsibility for the district integration meeting (with technical support and inputs from the Provincial Department of Planning)

2.2 Non-LDF target communes in integration meetings

- All communes to be represented in district integration meetings.
- A simple one-day process should be designed to enable non-LDF target communes to participate in Seila district integration meetings in all provinces.
- Provincial sector funding should not be restricted to communes which are receiving LDF.

2.3 Following up integration agreements – monitoring

- A standardised system for documentation of integration agreements must be adopted. It must provide all villages and communes with the timing and cost of activities and the details of a contact person for follow-up purposes.
- Seila Monitoring and Evaluation System should enable VDC and CDC to report on services provided following the integration meetings.

2.4 Poverty focus in integration

- Integration meetings should attempt to distribute development resources equitably within the district; poverty ranking of communes should be used to assist this.

2.5 LDF spending and sectoral policies

- LDF funds should be permitted to be spent on activities which exceed sectoral policy targets.

2.6 Collaboration with NGOs and International Organisations

- More resources should be focused on a policy dialogue with NGOs and government looking at how NGOs operating in Seila areas can contribute more to efficient and effective local governance.

2.7 Collaboration with monks.

- Monks should be invited to attend and give advice at every development meeting, formal and informal, at every level of Seila from village to national level.

2.8 Collaboration with the private sector

- The reasons for employing contractors and bidding processes should be part of an orientation video for the LPP shown in all LDF communes¹.

2.9 Publicising bidding

- Every commune bidding process must be publicised by the PRDC Secretariat on Provincial and District Boards as well as radio and television if they are available.

2.10 Authorising payments

- Payments for contractors must be authorised by a project management subcommittee.

2.11 Private Sector Development

- The Provincial Department of Rural Development should take the lead role in Private Sector Development including contractor training and registration. The Provincial Department of Planning (which now includes the Monitoring and Evaluation officers) should be the focal point for complaints and for monitoring.

2.12 Prompt payment of contractors

- A task force should review factors affecting speed of payments to contractors and make recommendations before or during the September LPP review

2.13 Full payment of contractors

- The five provincial Seila governors should work together to develop policy including sanctions with regard to financial impropriety in payments to contractors. This should include them making recommendations regarding the design of the Monitoring and Evaluation system. The Chairman of the Seila Task Force should also be invited to participate in this process.

2.14 Payment from province to contractor?

- Payments should be made through the Commune Development Committee and not direct from the Finance Department to the contractor.

2.15 CDC Evaluations of Contractors

- A one-page evaluation report to be completed by the CDC for every contract completed, and to be made available to other CDCs for future bidding.

3.0 Participation

3.1 Information strategy

The purpose of public information in the LPP must be to give people the information which they need to be able to participate.

The key information should therefore include:

- The size of the commune's LDF
- That the CDC decides how the commune LDF is spent
- To know at least one of the CDC members
- When the key meetings (village consultation, commune LDF allocation by CDC, project workplan) take place

¹ During updates to the Programme Manager in April and July the Team Leader expressed the opinion that a stock of 10-20 training and orientation videos and the capacity to update these in a short time is required to adequately support the LPP.

- Who is responsible for managing the contract for any projects which effect them
- The monitoring and evaluation of public information must include monthly evaluation reviews at Ex-com level of the results of public information surveys.

3.2 *Use of radio and television*

- Key information about the commune LDF and the LPP, including timing of commune allocation meetings and the names of people appointed to project management sub-committees should be shared on provincial Television and Radio.

3.3 *Village Information Boards*

- While efforts should continue to try and make village boards work in existing provinces, they should not form part of the 'Seila model' for LPP in new provinces unless there is evidence of their increased effectiveness.
- A separate policy for village information boards should be developed in Ratanakiri, with the emphasis on much less information and minimum requirements for literacy (see text above for suggestion).

3.4 *Information trees or pyramids*

- If piloting of information trees in Battambang has proved successful resources should be mobilised to extend it as practice in all provinces. If results are not yet clear, there should be further experimentation.

3.5 *Direct participation – villager consultation*

- VFAP to be updated by the VDC. Village consultation to be in a village meeting which makes recommendations regarding how the commune's LDF should be spent.

3.6 *Direct participation - project workplanning*

- PRDC Ex-com must clarify any policy positions which extend beyond the 'rules for types of projects' before the LPP begins.
- The public project workplan meeting should occur after the CDC has decided how to spend the LDF and before project proposals are written and sent to Ex-com.
- For projects serving more than one village, a CDC representative should facilitate the workplan meeting with all of the members of all of the VDCs of villages that are served by the project. The VDC members would then report back to village meetings where the decisions could be validated (and any village specific decisions made).

3.7 *Village meetings and the Local Planning Process*

- A ground rule for LPP design must be that meetings are only to be used for direct participation in important decisions and not as a way of trying to disseminate information (in order that the incentive for going to meetings is that you will have a chance to influence decisions which effect you and not just for it to be 'another meeting where they speak and we listen').
- Training (supported by a training video) must be given to all VDC and CDC members in how to invite people to meetings; how to arrange a village meeting; how to speak in a village meeting; how to facilitate a village meeting.

3.8 *Financial contributions and Participation in the Local Planning Process.*

- Ensure that retraining and orientation includes the reasons for local contributions, and that people should always know what project they are contributing to and why. This point should be stressed in the revised LPP video.
- All local financial contributions should be recorded in a receipt book with a receipt issued to the contributor.

3.9 *Appropriate levels of financial contribution*

- Local contributions for projects such as ring wells, buffalo, water pumps to be collected from across the village before the location and direct beneficiary is decided.
- The policy of 3% local financial contribution by project should be reviewed from the point of view of equity¹, and the options of either per capita contribution rates or 3% financial contribution rate as pre-qualification for LDF funding (the evaluation team's preference) to be considered.

3.10 *Non-financial contributions*

- Where local communities fail to provide agreed labour contributions the sanction of withdrawing LDF facility from those communities should be invoked.

3.11 *Large village strategies – sub-village organisation*

- In villages with more than 200 households, attendance at public meetings should include one man and one woman from every Krom in the village.
- An experiment should be conducted in one commune with large villages trialling the use of new administrative sub-village groupings, and this should be monitored and evaluated in collaboration with the Ministry of Rural Development.

4.0 Roles and Behaviour of Local Authorities and other Government staff

4.1 *Village chief-VDC relationships*

- CARERE to encourage and facilitate PDRD in creating opportunities for NGOs to assist in strengthening VDCs in Seila areas.
- Village development committees should meet every month as one of their responsibilities.

4.2 *Commune chiefs and Commune Development Committees*

- Commune development committees should meet monthly as a routine responsibility.
- System of monthly meetings for all development meetings put in place by Provincial Ex-coms and evaluated in September 2000.
- During consultation with the Ministry of Interior during the drafting of the Commune Council Law CARERE/Seila representatives should ensure that there is dialogue about the possibility of a commune assembly being formed including a man and woman representative from each village (see text of analysis for detail and explanation).

4.3 *Capacity building in the LPP*

- Training packages must be developed for every function which needs to be carried out in the LPP.
- Training videos must be made to assist in teaching inter-personal skills and processes within the LPP.
- Establishment of district training offices in all Seila districts, where possible with additional support from NGOs.

4.4 *Support for Commune Development Committees in Ratanakiri*

- All Ratanakiri CDCs must be equipped with an ICOM radio.
- All Ratanakiri CDCs should be equipped with a motorcycle.
- There must be at least one DFT per commune in Ratanakiri, and the possibility of 2 per commune with one always present in the commune should be considered.

¹ The best translation we know of this is either 'justice' or 'justice for the poor'; it is not the same as equality.

- All CARERE and Seila staff must have formal language training in the minority which is most relevant to their work.
- 4.5 *The role of the district chief***
- District chief, assisted by DDWA chief, should have increased role in managing integration and the district training office, but should not have any role in facilitating or approving commune decision-making.
- 4.6 *Role and employment of district facilitators***
- District Facilitators must become deconcentrated employees of the CDC, which has the right to recruit and dismiss its own facilitator from within the pool of available district officials.
- 4.7 *Demand-driven capacity building***
- Training levels of all members of the Seila RDS to be collated in the LPP M&E system.
- 4.8 *Technical support for communes.***
- Arrangements for communes to recruit their own technical assistance to be investigated and trialled.
- 4.9 *Rejected project proposals.***
- Procedures for reallocating LDF money when a CDC project proposal is rejected should be reviewed.
- 4.10 *Project proposal approval and project agreement***
- Commitment to approving or rejecting project proposals within 2 weeks of submission and project agreements within a week of submission must be reaffirmed during the Review and arrangements made to publicise these commitments to all the communes.
- 4.11 *National level leadership for the LPP***
- CARERE/Seila leadership to lobby for the creation of effective inter-ministerial consultation in order to create effective national level institutions to lead Cambodian decentralisation and governance reform.

5.0 Other issues

- 5.1 *Timing of the process – “Why do you always come with the rains when we are busy?”***
- In the LPP model developed by the end of the Seila experiment, it must be made clear to future donors and managers that the implementation of the LPP in synchronisation with the seasons is an absolute priority.
- 5.2 *The LPP within Cambodian Public Sector Reform***
- CARERE/Seila must make every effort to ensure that the UNDP Public Administration Reform project provides a bridge enabling CARERE/Seila achievements and lessons to have a central place in the public sector reform dialogue in Cambodia.

Terms of Reference.

UNDP/CARERE TERMS OF REFERENCE LEAD RESEARCHER: MONITORING AND EVALUATION OF THE LOCAL PLANNING PROCESS

Background and purpose of consultancy

In 1997 a two-person team of researchers, one expatriate and one Khmer, carried out an independent monitoring and evaluation of the first cycle of the Local Planning Process. This was part of the CARERE Monitoring and Evaluation system and was intended to be the first of an annual assessment. By annually having a research team return to the same core villages and interview the same key stakeholders, CARERE hopes to be able to track the progress towards achieving local understanding and ownership of the LPP, as well as its actual impact on the lives of participants.

CARERE supported a similar exercise in 1998. The team consisted of four persons, an expatriate Lead Researcher and three Khmer team members. The team covered all five provinces where the LPP is being implemented, adding Ratanakiri to the four provinces covered in 1997. The research team visited the same core village in each province, as well as examining the LPP experience in other villages.

The annual independent review of the LPP is an integral part of the monitoring and evaluation system of the CARERE project. The 1997 and 1998 review reports have stimulated thinking within the project and among counterparts regarding the challenges of meeting the high expectations for participation and empowerment of Cambodian villagers in the local planning and development process. Adjustments have been made in the LPP based on the results of the independent review.

As per the 1999 monitoring and evaluation workplan CARERE proposes to repeat the study in all five SEILA provinces in 1999. A team of four people, headed by the Lead Researcher, will return to the core villages in each province, as well as examining the experience of the LPP in a few other selected villages. Efforts will be made to have provincial teams work with the external researchers in order to enhance learning on the key issues related to the LPP within each province.

Dates of consultancy

19 April to 13 August 1999

Supervision

The consultant reports to the CARERE Programme Manager, but the Deputy Programme Manager will provide day-to-day oversight and program support. The Lead Researcher will also liaise on a regular basis with the Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor for the LPP/LDF.

Terms of Reference

- A. The Lead Researcher, in close collaboration with the three Cambodian members of the research team, will examine the CARERE support to the Local Planning Process and the progress being made towards realizing its overall purpose. The team will identify strengths and weaknesses of the planning process, as well as factors that enhance and hamper it.

The research this year is being conducted in the context of the government's commitment to hold commune council elections either late in 1999 or early in 2000. These commune councils are likely to function as the local government body responsible for area development. The need to strengthen the commune councils and enable them to function effectively throughout the provinces is likely to be a major focus of the next phase of the SEILA programme.

The research this year therefore should focus on issues within this context. The key question that the SEILA LPP is facing is how to achieve scale within the province through management by the commune while retaining aspects of local participation and consultation. The research team will be expected to contribute to programme and project reflection on this key question based on their research in the five provinces.

The team will focus on the following key issues for this year's research:

1. *Allocation of resources:* How are resources being distributed through the LPP/LDF and are they addressing identified development priorities? Is decision-making about resource allocation transparent?
 2. *Collaboration:* What is the state of coordination and collaboration between the commune and village development committees and: government line departments; NGOs; Buddhist institutions; the private sector? Are there relationships being created that show signs of becoming sustainable? Is the plan integration process resulting in greater and more effective development activity at the local level?
 3. *Participation:* Who is participating in the LPP? Has any progress been made on improving communication and information flow to villagers regarding the LPP? If so, has this enhanced understanding and influence over the process?
 4. *Roles and behavior of the local authorities and other government staff:* How do the local authorities, especially the commune and village chiefs, influence the planning and resource allocation process? How do they engage with the process? Has their behavior changed at all as the result of the training provided or as the result of changing ideas and demands from the people participating in the LPP? To what extent are government staff and institutions providing effective and appropriate services for and within the LPP?
 5. *Other issues:* While it is essential that the team focus on the above key issues for this year's research, the team may opt to explore other matters that may arise from their experiences. Any proposed expansion or alteration in the focus research areas should be first discussed with the research supervisors and with the Monitoring and Evaluation Advisor for the LPP.
- B. The Lead Researcher will organize interviews with the same key stakeholders who were initially interviewed as part of the 1997 research. These interviews will be compared with those of the previous years as one way of assessing the degree of progress of the SEILA program at provincial and local level in encouraging the creation of a sustainable system of decentralized planning, financing, and management of local development.
 - C. The Lead Researcher is responsible for overseeing the work of the three local researchers who will form a part of the research team for this exercise. He is responsible for ensuring that the team understands the terms of reference and is able to carry out the research effectively in both the data gathering and analytical phases of the consultancy.
 - D. The Lead Researcher is responsible for managing the budget associated with the consultancy and for complying with the administrative and financial procedures of CARERE and UNOPS.
 - E. The Lead Researcher, with the support of the national and provincial staff of CARERE, will be responsible for organizing the presentation of the findings of the research to the provincial authorities responsible for the SEILA program and to senior managers and staff of the CARERE project and UNDP. A comprehensive report, including recommendations for subsequent follow-up and action, is due at the close of the consultancy. Upon agreement on the text of the main report in English, CARERE will arrange the translation and dissemination of the main report in Khmer.

2 April 1999

Appendix 3.

Evaluation Schedule

18-22 April	Orientation week in Phnom Penh
25 April - 14 May	Pursat Province
17 May - 4 June	Battambang Province
7 - 24 June	Banteay Meanchey Province
27 June - 16 July	Siem Reap Province
19 July - 6 August	Ratanakiri Province
6 -11 August	Write-up and Debriefings
12 August	Presentation to CARERE staff
13 August	Presentation to Government staff
16 August	Draft Final Report submitted to CARERE
27 August	Comments to Team Leader
14 September	Final Report submitted to CARERE

Three-week Schedule in each province

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Sat	Sun
Writing/travel.	am. Orientation briefing. pm. Commune Study 1*. All team members to a LPP commune. Overnight.	Commune Study 2**. Two communes. Overnight. Men to one commune. women to the other.	Commune Study 3***. Four different communes. one team member to each. (Return to provincial town this evening).	Team discussions and write-up. Interviews: PDRD chief. Secretariat chief. PPM.		
Orientation day for internal and external teams.	Move to Main case study commune – interview district chief and meet facilitation teams at district town.	In main case study villages.	In main case study villages.	AM feedback with VDC. Lunch with commune staff. PM full CDC meeting. Evening – return to provincial town.		
Both teams' writing and feedback – together.	Both teams writing and feedback – together. Followed by Evaluation of the process.	Preparation of feedback (external team only).	am. Feedback to Excom. Secretariat and CDC/VDCs pm. Feedback to CARERE	Write-up/travel.		

Regarding the studies, communes and villages were selected by Secretariat/PSOs according to criteria set by the evaluation team and agreed in a meeting with Senior LCBs during the first week of the consultancy.:

- Commune study 1: an NGO with a community development orientation, not funded by CARERE working in an LPP area. NGO staff without UN or government staff to accompany all members of the team to one village only.
- Commune study 2: two different communes chosen, each featuring the outcomes of integration processes. Two men in the team go to one commune accompanied by two Commune staff from other Seila communes in the province. Two women in the team go to the other commune accompanied by two woman facilitators from other Seila areas in the province.
- Commune study 3: four different communes. Chosen in order to highlight the most important achievements, constraints or issues which people would like the team to encounter.
- Main case study: the external team returns to the same village that was visited in 1997 and 1998. The internal team goes to the poorest other village in that commune.

Internal Team Training notes

The following notes describe in brief outline the method used for orienting the internal team in each province. This is included in response to requests from the LPP M&E Advisor and other M&E staff.

1. Introductions (40 minutes)

Internal and external team members paired off with someone they do not know. Spend ten minutes introducing each other and then each person introduces their partner to the rest of the group.

2. What is Monitoring and Evaluation? (30 minutes)

The same pairs discuss what they understand by monitoring and evaluation. No attempt is made to restrict the possible interpretations, nor is any distinction drawn between monitoring and evaluation. Checklist of things which should be included in discussions:

- Both strengths and weaknesses are equally interesting – it is possible to build on strengths and also to reduce weaknesses.
- The purpose of M&E is to improve the programme not to judge people or places in the programme.
- M&E should focus on the impact not just on the activities and outputs, eg not just whether the mosquito nets were distributed and the training in their use delivered, but whether malaria rates have reduced.

3. Why Internal and External Teams? (15 minutes)

Explanation and history of the idea from the Team Leader. Includes:

- Improving the level of understanding of the external team regarding all aspects of the programme in the province.
- Capacity building of the internal team.
- Avoiding the threat of disruption of the work of the external team (eg by internal team members who try and 'correct' the answers of villagers)
- Bridging the gap between the people on the programme and the people in the evaluation team so that there is better mutual understanding and so that findings are more readily accepted and there is less conflict.

4. Terms of Reference (30 minutes)

A presentation of the key points in the TOR. Thus in 1999 this included the need to look at probable expansion to all communes while maintaining participation, and then an explanation of each of the four headings.

5. Schedule

A presentation of the timetable of the work for the internal and external teams (see table above) with explanation of key methodological points including:

- The purpose of meeting the commune chief before going to the villages is to get an overview of the commune situation – how many years of LPP; how much LDF; how is it being spent and why. In-depth interviews with him can happen later
- On arrival in the village pay respects to the village chief.
- Try and stay with a woman VDC member.
- Before doing any work in the village go for a walk as a team so that people can see the team and know that we are in the village – hopefully they will then be curious about us and not afraid.
- “Looking for a friend”. As you wander about as a team, it is good for individuals to break off and chat with someone who they think they might like and get on with (eg the 1999 team included an enthusiastic gardener, a mother of small children, an ex-soldier and a returned refugee). Again, the purpose is not to interview and get information, but just to start to have a good contact point and someone who you might be able to build a relationship with in a short period of time.
- Every evening the team sits together to summarise findings from the day. Discussion is structured around the TOR headings and team members are discouraged from reading their notes aloud. This is also a chance to identify extra questions that need to be asked on the second day.
- Day 2 (first full day in the village) interview poorer households – can be identified by just looking, but also can ask.
- Day 3 interview people with ability – includes: achars, krom chiefs, VDC members, business people, traditional birth attendants; traditional healers; teachers; health workers. Their names can be obtained from the house owner.
- Afternoon of day 3 – group discussions. One group of poor women (3 direct beneficiaries; 3 non-beneficiaries if projects do not benefit all) and one group of people with ability. Use VDC member or village chief to arrange this – make sure participants are people who have not yet been met. Use questions in lists to start discussions, but then try to let them talk to each other rather than talk with team members. Team members should just make sure that any quieter people have a chance to speak and that dominant people don't speak too much.
- Morning of day 4. Purpose of meeting with the VDC is:
 - To ask them for more information about points which are not clear
 - To share findings (including negative ones) so that anything which we say about the village elsewhere we have already discussed with the VDC
 - To ask their opinions and ideas about what should be done to address issues which have arisen (programme-wide not just for that village)
- Lunch with commune chief and staff: purpose of this is to spend some informal time with the commune authorities.
- CDC meeting without facilitators. Purpose of this is to assess some of the dynamics and the capacity of the CDC in the absence of facilitators. Everyone introduces themselves at the beginning (don't let the commune chief introduce 'his' people); then it means that everyone has already spoken once so that it is easier for them to have the courage to speak again in discussions. Evaluation team members take it in turn asking any question they like (from the list, or something else which is interesting). It is OK to ask follow-up questions

to other people's questions, but make sure you are not interrupting either them or the interviewee.

6. Interview methods (20 minutes)

Always introduce yourself and explain clearly that you are not coming to give assistance or to plan assistance. You are just coming to learn about the development situation in the village. If the person is not likely to know that you are an evaluation team, do not use that word. If they do know, explain that the purpose of the evaluation is not to judge this village or these people, but is to look for what needs to be improved before the programme expands to more communes.

Work in pairs, normally one person interviewing and one taking notes, but it depends on the situation and on your preferences.

Always concentrate on the feelings of the person you are interviewing. If they seem nervous then try different approaches. Stop taking notes if that seems to be upsetting them. Stop using the interview questions if that seems to be worrying them. If they continue to seem worried about the interview, just stop it and thank them and move on.

If you are not really confident that you understand a question on the question lists, do not ask it. You can discuss it with other team members in the evening.

If you think that the question is too difficult for the villager to understand then no need to ask it – but try and make it a simpler question if you can.

If an answer does not really answer the question properly, do not stop or correct the interviewee. Accept all of the information and ask the original question another way. If someone tells you something that is different to what you asked about they may have their reason for this, so pay close attention.

After you have finished the interview questions, close your book but don't go. Stop and have a chat for a little while. It may be that there is something important that they want to tell you, but it did not arise in the questions. Also, they may be less nervous once the book is closed and they may give more normal, informal information which is interesting. Often the best information comes after the interview seems to be over.

7. Review question lists (one hour)

A chance for all team members to read through the questions and make sure that they understand the questions and are confident in using them with the villagers and commune/district officials. This includes that they should understand why each question is being asked. Change any questions which are confusing or difficult to understand for the interviewers.

8. Practice interviews (two hours – longer if possible).

Using question lists, volunteers interview other members of the internal/external teams while the others all watch. Afterwards discuss the interview – including the interviewee saying how he or she felt – and offer suggestions to each other for how to improve the interviewing style.

Question Lists Used By The 1999 Internal and External Evaluation Teams

The following tables are the questions that the research team used as the basis for their interviews. Team members were free to add or delete questions according to their own initiative during their work. Team members were encouraged to change the wording if it needed to be changed so that the interviewee could understand immediately. Other questions were added when specific issues arose which the team wanted to explore further.

Facilitators.	
Resource Allocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How are allocations from province to commune decided? • How are allocations by the CDC decided? • During the CDC planning and allocation processes do the VDC chiefs dare to argue for projects for their village?
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are the strengths and weaknesses of integration between departments and the LPP? • Do NGOs help the work of the LPP in this area? How? • Does the existence of the LPP help NGOs who work in this area? How? • What do monks do in development work in this commune?
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Was there/will there be bidding this year? • Who will organise bidding? • How will contractors be informed about bidding? • How and when are project locations decided? • Who supervises project construction? • Why are local contributions collected?
Role and Behaviour of Local Authorities and Government Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you know how long it takes for project proposals to pass through commune and then through province for approval? Why? • Do you know how long it takes for project agreements to pass through commune and then through province for approval? Why? • If there were no facilitators could the LPP still work? Why?

CDC Members	
Resource Allocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are allocations from province to communes decided? How are allocations of the LDF by the commune decided? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the 1999 commune level planning activities? What was the total LDF for this commune this year? How was it spent? How many facilitators were present for the meeting to decide how to spend the LDF?
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What are the strengths and weaknesses of integration of the provincial departments and the LPP? Do NGOs help the work of the LPP in this area? How? Does the existence of the LPP help NGOs who work in this area? How? What do monks do in development work in this commune?
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Was there bidding this year? Who will organise it? How will contractors be informed? Regarding technical matters – who takes responsibility for overseeing construction? Why are local contributions collected?
Role and Behaviour of Local Authorities and Government Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you know how long it takes for project proposals to pass through commune and then through province for approval? Why? Do you know how long it takes for project agreements to pass through commune and then through province for approval? Why? If there were no facilitators could the LPP still work? Why? Have you been to visit other Seila communes and have they come to you? How was it?

VDC Members	
Resource Allocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are allocations of the LDF by the CDC decided? Before the CDC allocation of the LDF, what did your village want to do this year? In fact what was the result of the plan? Why was it different? What do you know about this year's commune spending? How do you know?
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What projects is this commune getting from the various sectors? What projects is this village getting from the sectors? Who decides what sectoral projects are implemented? When? Where?
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who supervises project construction? Why are local contributions collected? How is the size of each family's local contribution decided?
Role and Behaviour of Local Authorities and Government Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Is anyone from this village a member of the commune development committee? Since Seila came to this village is the village chief different (fierce/gentle; fair/corrupt) compared to before? When does the VDC meet? What happens when it meets? (How long are the meetings, what do you talk about, who talks?) If there were no facilitators could the LPP still work? Why?

Village Chief	
Resource Allocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How are allocations of the LDF by the CDC decided? What are the strengths and weaknesses of the 1999 planning activities at commune level?
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Do you know what is an LDF project and what is a sector project in your village? Can you compare them? What is the same? What is different? What do monks do in development in this commune?
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Who supervises project construction? Why are local contributions collected?
Role and Behaviour of Local Authorities and Government Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are your duties different since Seila came here? Now that there is peace and democracy in Cambodia, could a village council do the work of both the VDC and the village chief? Would that be better? If there were no facilitators could the LPP still work? Why?

Villagers	
Resource Allocation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This year does the commune have money for development? How much?
Collaboration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What outsiders come to this village to help with development? How often do they come? What do they do? Do you ever chat with them? Have villagers ever had a chance to tell government and organisations what they want? What do monks do in development in this commune?
Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Does this village have a development project this year? What is it? Who decided the project for this year? How do you know about it? Who supervises project construction? Why are local contributions collected? Who is on the VDC? When was it chosen? By whom?
Role and Behaviour of Local Authorities and Government Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What do the VDC do? What does the village chief do? Do they think of everyone or just their friends? Who is the commune chief? What is he like? Do the commune chief and village chief behave differently since Seila?

Stakeholder Interviews – Questions.

Villagers (Interviews 1,2 &3)

Background

Changes in household/livelihood in past year.
Changes in the village in past year.
Changes in the development field in the last year .

Information

Does the village have a development plan? What is in it? How long for?
What in the plan has been implemented? How funded and organised?
What else will be implemented? How will it be funded and organised?
When was the last development meeting in the village? What was it about?
Have you heard of Seila? What is it?

Decision-making

In your opinion, what are the main priorities to improve 1. Your life, 2. The village.
Has the plan been changed this year? Did you join in the discussions? What different ideas were discussed? Who spoke?
Where was the activity located? Why? Where did the decision come from?
Did you have to contribute something? What? Why? Where did the decision come from? Do you think that villager's contributions are a good idea? Why?

Performance of Individuals and Institutions

Does this village have a VDC? Who is on it?
Do you ever meet the VDC members? When? Where? What do you talk about?
What is the job of the VDC? Do they do it well?
Is there a CDC? What is the role of the CDC? Do they do it well?
Is anyone from this village on the CDC?
Do people from outside this village come to help with development? Who? What do they do?
What was built in this village? Is it good? Could it have been better? Were there problems in the building? How could these have been solved?

Future

How will what has been built be maintained?
Would you be willing to help? Will others in the village help?
Do the VDC receive payment? Do you think they will continue to work without payment?

Distribution of Benefits

What have been the results of what has been built in the process? (Good: look for direct benefits, indirect effects, human resource benefits, community cooperation)
Have there been any bad results? Who for?
How much difference has the development made for the better off people in the village?
How much difference has the development made for the poorest, landless people?
Do you think that this year's development has helped men more, or women, or both the same?

VDC Member

Background

Development in the last year
LPP activities in the last year

LPP Decision-making

- What changes, if any, have been made to the plan?
- Who was consulted? Who had different ideas?
- How were decisions made at commune level about which projects should be implemented? (Who was present? Who spoke? what was your aim? What did you achieve?)
- How were decisions about site of the project made?
- How were decisions about local contributions made?

Information

- What should villagers know about the LPP, and how is this information communicated?
eg. Result of last meeting
Commune's LDF
- Do other villagers talk with you about development? Who? When?

Performance of Individuals and Institutions

- Who does the most work on the VDC? Do others contribute equally? Why?
- What is the role of the commune development committee?
- Who is a member of the commune development committee? Why?
- When do DFT, PFT, TSS come to the village? What is different in their work?
- Were activities implemented technically difficult?
- Problems? Solved or not? How?
- Have villagers cooperated easily, or has it been difficult to engage their participation?

Future

- Have any of your colleagues stopped in the last year? Why?
- How long will you remain as a VDC member?
- How long will your colleagues continue the work?
- How long will the things which you have built last?
- What arrangements have been made for maintenance? Will these be enough?

Gender

- Did PRA and other discussions in the process lead to anything in the plan which specifically responded to the needs of either men or women?
- How have men's and women's participation in different stages differed?
- LPP benefits to men and women different or the same?
- Who is the gender member on the VDC, CDC? What do they do?
- Do you think that either men or women have any special separate training needs?

Village Chief

Background

- How has the village changed in the past year?
- How did last year's implementation proceed?

Information

- How does the VDC communicate with the villagers? (Meetings, boards, announcements)
- What are the priorities in the village plan?
- Have these priorities changed since last year? How?
- What money was allocated by commune for this village this year? What was commune total?
- What is the rate of local contribution this year?

Decision-making

- How was this year's priority project chosen? How many attended? Who spoke?
- What was your role?
- How was the CDP prepared?
- What was your role?

What was this village hoping for? What did it get? Why?
Are you a member of the CDC? Is the VDC chief? (What was your role?)
Generally, what is your role in village development?

Interaction

What other organisations work in this village?
How does their interaction compare with Seila?
What is the relationship between Seila and other organisations?

Benefits

What was the benefit of last year's project?
What will be the benefit of this year's project?
Do you think the VDC is more capable than before? All members or just some? In what ways?

Commune Chief.

Background

How many villages are there in this commune? What is the total population? IPF: 1997? 1998?
What IPF projects last year?
What IPF projects this year?

Decision-making

Who is a member of the CDC?
Before the CDC updated the CDP this year, what happened in the villages?
How was the CDP updated?
How did you decide how much money to give to each project?
How did you decide which projects to implement?
How would you improve the planning and allocation process?

Information

What do you think villagers should know? (eg. amount of money allocated to commune, how it is spent, when planning meetings are held, what projects are being implemented in the village, what Seila is)
How should this information be transmitted?

Accountability

Regarding money, what are your responsibilities?
What is the role of the TSS? Do they do it well? If not ...

Progress and Benefits

What have been the main benefits of LPP in this commune? To whom?
Has the LPP drawn in other resources?
Has ability increased? (Who: CDC, VDC, villagers; to do what?)

District Facilitation Team member

Background

What changes have been made since last year?
Did you carry out evaluation activities in your district after the first round?
What did you learn from the evaluation? Did it affect the changes made?
How has the first round in new villages differed from the first round in the original villages?
How does the first round differ from the second in the original villages?

Decision-making

What decisions do the VDC make on their own, and what decisions do the whole village participate in?
How are other villagers able to influence VDC decision-making?
What impact does the gender member have on the VDC work?
How are decisions made in the commune planning process? How much do the VDC chiefs contribute? Is the commune workshop currently a good mechanism for allowing the VDC chiefs to influence the commune plan?
Do you think the commune plans reflect commune priorities, or do you think they reflect a wish to try and give equal resources to each village? In your opinion is this an important question?
What impact do the gender members have on the CDC discussions and decisions?
If there were no facilitators or CARERE staff present at the commune planning workshop would it still work effectively? What would be different?

Information

How do VDCs communicate with the other villagers?
What should villagers know about the Local Planning Process?
eg. Result of last meeting
Commune's LDF

Distribution of benefits

What do you think are the most important results of the LPP (for whom?)
Do you think that men and women have different development priorities?
Do you think benefits of the LPP are distributed differently between men and women?
Do you think that either men or women have any special separate training needs?

Dialogue and Interaction

What contacts have you had with other agencies working in LPP villages?
What contact do you have with your old department now that you are in the Secretariat?
What contact do you have with the district chief now that you are in the secretariat?

Future

Have any of your colleagues stopped in the last year? Why?
How long will you continue as a DFT?
How many hours do you work each week on the LPP?

District Chief

Background

What Seila Local Planning activities have happened in your district in the past year?
What have been the strengths and weaknesses of CARERE support to Seila in this district?
What role, as district chief, do you have in the local planning process?

Sustainability and Decentralisation

What is Seila?
At the moment, there is funding for both local area planning and spending and also sectoral planning and spending. What links have you seen between sectoral and local planning?
What money has been spent by the sectors in your district? How did they decide what to spend and where?
Some people find that capacity at village and commune levels is low, especially in technical matters. In future, do you think that it is appropriate for the government to send money to local levels.
What is the role of monks in Seila in this district?

Relevance

What is the main development priority for your district?
How do you think Seila could be improved?

PRDC Secretariat Chief

Background

How do you feel about changes which were made to the LPP this year? Are there other changes which should have been made?

What is the role of monks in the LPP in this province?

Intergovernmental relations

Do you think that the CDC planning workshops (1) produce good plans and (2) allow VDC chiefs to have a strong influence over decisions?

What is the national government's role in Seila? How might this effect the LPP?

Do you think that the structure including PRDC, excom, secretariat is clear?

Are you satisfied with the role of the PRDC Secretariat in this structure?

Future

Given the possibility of expanding the LPP to all communes, and all provinces, What are the key human resource issues regarding sustainability of the LPP, specifically regarding (1) skill shortages and (2) terms and conditions of Seila staff?

What should CAREERE do in the next 2 years to best support the LPP?

Many people I speak to believe that corruption will increase greatly when CAREERE withdraws from, Seila. What system would be needed to prevent this?

What have been the main achievements of the LPP thus far?

PDRD Chief

Background

How do you feel about changes which were made to the LPP this year? Are there other changes which should have been made?

What is the role of monks in the LPP in this province?

Intergovernmental relations

Do you think that the CDC planning workshops (1) produce good plans and (2) allow VDC chiefs to have a strong influence over decisions?

What is the district authorities role in the LPP? Do they feel it is too small?

What is the national government's role in Seila? How might this effect the LPP?

Do you think that the structure including PRDC, excom, secretariat is clear? Are you satisfied with the role of the PDRD in this structure?

How does PDRD's role differ in Seila areas and outside Seila areas?

Future

What are the key human resource issues regarding sustainability of the LPP, specifically regarding (1) skill shortages and (2) terms and conditions of Seila staff.

What should CAREERE do in the next 2 years to best support the LPP?

Many people I speak to believe that corruption will increase greatly when CAREERE withdraws from, Seila. What system would be needed to prevent this?

What have been the main achievements of the LPP thus far?

CAREERE Provincial Programme Manager

Background

How do you feel about changes which were made to the LPP this year? Are there other changes which should have been made?

What is the role of monks in the LPP in this province?

Information

What information do you think villagers need to know if they are to be able to participate in LPP decision-making?

Have new strategies been implemented in this province this year in order to make villagers better-informed?

What lessons have been learned (and by whom?) with regard to information sharing in villages during the implementation of the LPP?

Decision-making

What have been the key achievements regarding commune development planning?

What are the key challenges which remain regarding commune development planning?

At provincial level, do you sense that there is genuine support for allowing commune and village levels to make financial decisions and control implementation?

Future

If LDF was to be the permanent funding mechanism for all communes in this province, what would need to happen before that could occur?

Currently, Seila is receiving technical assistance and advice from the CARERE project, which also has a monitoring role. Would it be possible to remove the CARERE support project in this province at the end of this year and replace it with a small team (say half a dozen) of donor monitors? What would be the consequences of such a change?

Progress and Benefits

What progress do you hope for in the coming year with regard to the LPP?

Up to this point in time, what have been the major achievements of the LPP?

To: CARERE Deputy Programme Manager
 From: Independent LPP Evaluation Team Leader
 13 September 1999

Consultant's note: Recommendations on Steps in the LPP

The following note is a response to feedback on the Final Draft of the 1999 Independent LPP Evaluation report, where it was felt that that it would be helpful to have all recommendations relating to steps in the LPP "in one place in the document".

The most important recommendations in the evaluation this year were not related to the steps in the process, therefore the points which are reviewed here are by no means the most important ones in the evaluation.

Summary of Steps in the Local Planning Process (from October 1998 internal memo).

NEW TARGET COMMUNES AND VILLAGES	REVIEW PROCESS
1.1 PRDC meeting to allocate LDF to communes 1.2 CDC/VDC meeting for LPP orientation 1.3 VDC/village meeting: Village Future Goals and Village Data Collection 1.4 Village Future Action Plan (formerly Form I) preparation 1.5 Validation of Village Future Action Plan 1.6 CDC Workshop to formulate Commune Development Plan 1.7 VDC/Village meeting to provide information on Commune Development Plan 1.8 CDC Meeting to prepare for Sector Integration Workshop 1.9 PRDC Meeting to prepare for the Sector Integration Workshop 1.10 District Sector Integration Workshop 1.11 CDC meeting to review results of Sector Integration Workshop 1.12 Project Proposal (Formerly part of Form II) Preparation: feasibility study, cost estimates including local contribution 1.13 PRDC and Executive Committee meeting to appraise projects; letters of intent issued to start bidding process 1.14 VDC/Village meeting to validate project proposal and develop work plan for project	1.1 PRDC meeting to allocate LDF to communes 1.2 CDC/VDC meeting: training and refresher meeting 1.4 VDC/village meeting to review Village Future Action Plan 1.6 CDC Workshop to review CDP 1.7 VDC/Village meeting to provide information on CDP 1.8 CDC Meeting to prepare for Sector Integration Workshop 1.9 PRDC Meeting to prepare for Sector Integration Workshop 1.10 District Sector Integration Workshop 1.11 CDC meeting to review results of Sector Integration Workshop 1.12 Project Proposal Preparation: feasibility study, cost estimates including local contribution 1.13 PRDC and Executive Committee meeting to appraise projects; letters of intent issued to start bidding process 1.14 VDC/Village meeting to validate project proposal and develop work plan for project
1.15 Bidding 1.16 Preparation of Project Agreement Form (formerly part of Form II) 1.17 ExCom signing of Project Agreements 1.18 PRDC releases LDF funds to CDC (contingent on prior collection of local cash contribution) 1.19 CDC allocates LDF to activities 1.20 CDC Workshop to reflect on lessons learned	1.15 Bidding 1.16 Preparation of Project Agreement Form 1.17 ExCom signing of Project Agreements 1.18 PRDC releases LDF funds to CDC (contingent on prior collection of local cash contribution) 1.19 CDC allocates LDF to activities 1.20 CDC Workshop to reflect on lessons learned

Summary of major recommended changes.

1.2 CDC/VDC¹ meeting for LPP orientation.

At this stage there should be a CDC orientation meeting where, in new communes, a commune map is developed (for use in the village meetings) and where villages are matrix ranked for poverty (see Recommendation 1.5). In both new and existing the commune LDF, the rules for the type of project, date of integration meeting, date of CDC meeting to decide how the LDF will be spent should be shared.

1.3 VDC/village meeting: Village Future Goals and Village Data Collection

Village Future Goals being projects list by sector for each village.

1.4

It should be clarified that the VDC writes up the project lists and submits them to the CDC. In existing communes the VDC can update the project lists without reference to the wider village community.

1.5 currently the *Validation of the Village Future Action Plan*, the main purpose of this meeting should change, and should be to make recommendations for how the CDC should spend the commune's LDF. (The VDC chief will then present these during the commune meeting at 1.11, see Recommendation 3.5).

1.6 and 1.8.

These two steps can be combined to one meeting where village project lists are consolidated into commune project lists prioritised within each sector and the sectors are prioritised by matrix ranking of sectors by the CDC (see Recommendation 1.5).

Step 1.7 *VDC/Village meeting to provide information on the Commune Development Plan* is not necessary and should be eliminated (see Recommendation 3.7).

Step 1.11 CDC meeting to review results of Sector Integration Workshop.

This is actually the key annual decision-making meeting when the CDC decides what projects to fund from the LDF for that year. The step should be renamed accordingly. At the September review terms of reference should be developed for a working group to design a detailed process, incorporating rules for types of project (formerly screening criteria) and points for comparison (formerly ranking criteria). See Recommendations 1.4 and 1.6 and Analysis p.27-8.

1.13

Should more accurately be renamed *Each proposal is appraised and submitted for Excom to approve or reject and an answer given to the CDC within two weeks of the proposal being submitted by the CDC* (see Recommendation 4.10).

1.14

¹ It would probably be better to avoid ambiguities such as CDC/VDC meeting and VDC/Village meeting as it is not clear what (if any) tasks are implied for the VDC in such instructions.

This village consultation must occur **before** the project proposal is developed in order that villages can have influence over key decisions eg who will be on project management sub-committees, maintenance arrangements, project locations etc (see Recommendations 3.6).

1.17 and 1.18

These could be one step (compare with step 1.13) which could be renamed *Each project agreement form is approved by Excom and funds released to the CDC within one week of the agreement being submitted by the CDC* (see Recommendation 4.10).