

Evaluating a flood response intervention by FAO Cambodia: AAP in practice

In response to the needs of the populations affected by the floods in Cambodia in August 2011, FAO and its partner Cambodia Organization for Women Support (COWS) designed an intervention aimed at ensuring food and nutrition security and allow flood-affected communities to re-establish their previous livelihoods. The project entitled “Emergency agricultural assistance to returning flood affected farmers, Kampong Thom province” lasted 3 months and reached 10,000 food insecure farming households in 100 villages of Kampong Thom province through distribution of vegetable seeds, watering cans and hoes, and through training courses.

An evaluation was carried out once the project had ended. A FAO Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) team travelled to Kampong Thom to investigate the project outcomes, document lessons learnt and gather information required for donor reporting.

The **design and implementation of the evaluation** reflected some of the key principles of accountability to affected populations (AAP), and demonstrate how [FAO’s commitments on AAP](#) might be complied with in practice. Some examples are highlighted below:

Commitment 4: *Enable fair and representative participation of all sections of affected populations, including the most vulnerable and marginalized;*

- Community members participated in the evaluation through semi-structured interviews, questionnaires and open discussions as well as transect walk.
- Targeted households, community members, authorities (the Provincial Department of Agriculture, the District Governor and commune councilors), COWS staff, and other key informants in the villages were also invited to join focus group discussions.
- Particular attention was given to the representation of project participants from different intervention areas: for instance, farmers were randomly selected within four groups representing recipients of every type of seeds and/or training. Group specific questions were then tailored to ensure feedback and comments were captured from recipients of all services.
- House to house visits and transect walks were carried out in 12 villages to allow a wider random collection of information. Village representatives in addition to the chief of each village joined transect walks along with the evaluation team

Commitment 7: *Collaborate with peers and partners to deliver on AAP commitments in a coordinated and coherent way.*

- A debriefing meeting with partners allowed the teams to share feedback and key learning from the information collected.

The evaluation team identified a number of benefits deriving from the involvement of the stakeholders in the process. By interviewing wider communities, village chiefs, local authorities, partner and FAO staff, the team was able to capture perceptions of cross sections of the target populations and other

stakeholders of the intervention. Through formal meetings, the team learnt about differing needs and views on project objectives, clarifying relevance of the interventions and identifying potential future improvements.

Participants were also able to lead on some analysis of the evaluation when they participated in the transect walks and interviews. This created a sense of ownership from their side and allowed FAO and COWS staff to obtain a deeper understanding of community priorities. It was also noted that carrying out joint visits with the Department of Agriculture helped building trust with partners, as well as promoting accountability and allowing opportunity for further cooperation. Finally, the debriefing with partners allowed space for them to give feedback and comments and was felt as an opportunity for them to learn from the findings.



The evaluation highlighted **positive practices in AAP throughout the delivery of the project**, touching upon the following Commitments:

Commitment 2: *Greater and more routine transparency, two-way communication, and information provision for affected communities;*

- Door to door visits and meetings with village chiefs were carried out to carry out random spot checks on beneficiary selection, and ensure that target farmers were informed about the date and place of assets and seeds distributions.
- Distribution was planned and delivered with the support of the local authorities. Village chiefs and COWS staff facilitated the distribution, while authorities were invited to open the ceremonies and present the project activities.

Commitment 4: *Enable fair and representative participation of all sections of affected populations, including the most vulnerable and marginalised;*

- Families were selected through a participatory and transparent process: selection criteria were first shared with and commented on by commune chiefs and village leaders. Village chiefs themselves drafted a participants list based on these criteria, and random checks were carried out by FAO and COWS staff to check whether a) the people on the list fit the criteria, and b) the proposed lists were well received and perceived as appropriate by the villagers. Copies of target households and participants lists were posted on the villages information boards for five days.

Commitment 5: *Mainstream AAP into needs assessment, design, monitoring, and evaluation activities, ensuring an appropriate focus on AAP, participation in processes and continuous learning and improvement;*

- A participatory process was put in place for the selection of the intervention sites: FAO and COWS carried out workshops to launch the project and to identify the most affected districts and villages, and coordinated with other agencies in the area to avoid duplication. Provincial Committee for Disaster Management (PCDM), Provincial Department of Agriculture (PDA), Provincial Red Cross (PRC), and district authorities were invited to attend the workshop.
- Feedback was sought from a variety of stakeholders throughout the life of the project; men and women were encouraged to participate and lessons learnt and remaining key challenges were shared and discussed with PDA and COWS for further support and follow up after the project end. Field monitoring visits were carried out with authorities, partners, commune councilors, village chiefs, farmers group, and families to capture as much feedback as possible.

Similarly to the evaluation design, participation and communication were some of the key AAP aspects of this project. In particular, by creating spaces to communicate and inform about activities and input distribution, communities and participants were given opportunities to comment on and influence decisions and plans. This allowed FAO and COWS to plan distributions in the most effective way, setting up appropriate times and locations.

Enabling communities and other stakeholders to have an active role in the selection of project participants allowed FAO to identify and target the most vulnerable segments of the population as perceived by the community itself. As AAP is a people-centered approach, programmes taking in consideration the varying needs of different segments within a community practically apply AAP in their implementation. Stakeholders actively participated to the design, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of interventions and were included in the decision making processes during the whole life span of this project.