



Cambodia

Accountability

2014/15

Strengthening partnership towards participatory and accountable governance

The project works to ensure equitable and sustainable use of natural resources in four provinces in Cambodia - Kampong Thom, Preah Vihear, Kratie and Stung Treng. These provinces were selected for the project as they were forested, not densely populated, and are where the majority of ethnic minority groups live. In these provinces natural resource exploitation and agriculture are the main source of livelihoods. Development activities began at the end of the civil war in 1998. The war has resulted in land conflicts and both the legal and illegal exploitation of natural resources. Illegal exploitation of resources in the province where the project operates has had considerable effect on the ecosystems, mainly due to deforestation. This deforestation has had serious negative effects on people's livelihoods and on natural resources such as water, land and fish.

The project aims to:

1. Enhance capacities and platforms for engaging with state agencies at sub-national level on the governance of land and natural resources.
2. Build capacity and establish platforms for civil society and rights holders and, at state level, to advocate for equitable management of land and natural resources.

Outcome areas are: strengthened capacity of all participants for better participatory engagement in policy dialogues; better engagement mechanisms for developing and implementing policies and strategies for land use and development; better access to legal services for resolving cases of land disputes and conflict, and increased capacity for claim-making and demanding good governance of land and natural resources.

Due to time and budget constraints, the Accountability Review was conducted in two of the four target provinces (Kampong Thom and Stung Treng) where the project was implemented.

Evaluation Design

Accountability Reviews seek to assess the degree to which a project meets Oxfam's standards for accountability. Drawing on a number of data sources, external consultants consider and reach judgements on both Oxfam's mutual accountability in our partnerships, and Oxfam and partners' shared accountability to those it works on behalf of. For details on evaluation design, see the 'How are effectiveness reviews carried out?' document, and the full report for how these designs were tailored by individual reviews.

Project date: April 2013–December 2015

Evaluation: December 2014

Publication: December 2016

Results

	Oxfam's accountability to partners					Oxfam and partners' accountability to communities				
	Score	1	2	3	4	Score	1	2	3	4
Transparency	Oxfam					Oxfam/Partner				
	Partner					Community				
	Review team					Review team				
Feedback	Oxfam					Oxfam/Partner				
	Partner					Community				
	Review team					Review team				
Participation	Oxfam					Oxfam/Partner				
	Partner					Community				
	Review team					Review team				
Overall Accountability	Oxfam					Oxfam/Partner				
	Partner					Community				
	Review team					Review team				

Transparency:
Project documents were shared with all concerned partners before the project started and from the beginning of implementation. Reports, monitoring, recruitment, auditing and work delivery documentation had been shared properly and widely among all project partners.

"Honestly I do not know how much money the project has, but witnessing these positive changes regarding general and technical knowledge of local authorities as well as local people and plus close connection between people and their authorities would bring better future."

"Never have I observed any work such as Oxfam that bring sub-national authorities and NGOs this close!"

Communities felt Oxfam and partners always accepted villagers' requests and concerns and had good relationships with the commune council and other local representatives. However, the review team assessed a more continuous effort is required to further improve existing feedback mechanisms in order to enhance the quality and culture of feedback.

"Through monthly and quarterly meetings and especially during the discussions we raise real problems from the fields and we exchange ideas."

"Every single staff I work with is very enthusiastic and keen to learn from one another and this really helps when we are discussing things."

Participation: Oxfam could reframe its strategies in involving partners' participation in modifying key project frameworks and implementing strategies that can be open and flexible over space and time. For example, Oxfam is compliant with expenditure and financial management standards, but needs to explain its funding policy, communicating it coherently with partners and stakeholders before they take part in project activities, to improve Oxfam's stakeholder engagement strategies and partnership alliance.

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

All quotes from Community Based Organizations in Stung Treng or Kampong Thom Province

Key Commitments

As Oxfam in Cambodia goes through significant structural and management changes the project will advocate strongly that lessons learned from this review, and the review process itself, are used to build analysis and programmes of the future. Impressed with the methodology of the review, Oxfam in Cambodia will introduce some aspects into its approach to programme management. All recommendations from the Accountability Review will be incorporated into the soon-to-be-written three-year project workplan. Resources for recommendations to be implemented will be found from within the project budget. The project's main donor, the European Union, expressed great interest in the review. Findings and learning from the review will be shared with them.

Photo credit: Caroline Gluck/Oxfam