

COMMUNITY CAPACITY BUILDING

INTRODUCTION

CARE puts in place sustainable mechanisms by building the capacity of the communities with which it works. This ensures that the community is supported to maintain and improve on the livelihood gains obtained through the project activities. The key sustainable outcomes of this project are the improvement of individual household linkages to multiple government agencies and service providers through cross visits, forums and training.

STRATEGY

CARE's approach aims to empower communities through participatory planning, direct training and by building ownership. A key strategy is to facilitate strong networks between community members and service providers - CBOs, and government departments who will continue to support these activities after the project is completed. Strengthening the capacity of Commune Councils (CCs), Support Committees (SCs), Self Help Groups (SHGs), Farmers Cooperatives and related agencies of the Royal Government of Cambodia to use participatory approaches in their ongoing work is an important component of CARE's exit strategy.



OUTPUT AND OUTCOMES

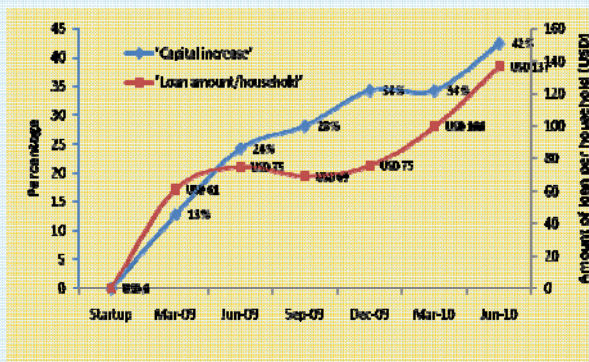
Resource mobilization:

Most of the CBOs supported by CARE in the project target areas carried out micro-finance/micro-credit activities in the form of cash or seed credit. As well as credit, some Farmer Cooperatives started business activities in order to sell their farm outputs. By the end of June 2010, a 42% increase in the capital was observed for the Commune Council Development Funds (CCDFs), 73% for Village Seed Credit, and 28% for Village Saving and Loan Associations (VSLAs).

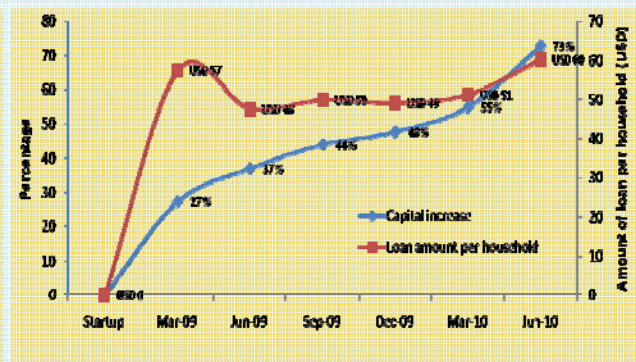
CBO Types	Total	# Members	% Female	% Disabled	Activities
Farmer Cooperatives	16	941	44	15	Cash Credit + Seed Credit + Business
Self Help Groups	80	4412	55	—	Livelihood improvement activities
Village Savings and Loan Association (VSLA)	143	2431	63	—	Savings + Cash Credit
CCDFs	17	80*	7.5	—	Cash Credit
Village Cash Bank	73	321	28	—	Cash Credit
Village Rice Bank	43	197	29	—	Rice Credit
Village Seed/Cash Credit	15	509	27	5.5	Cash Credit + Seed Credit

* Number of management committee members as whole community is the members of CCDF and can access the credit.

Capital increase and loan amount per household for CCDF



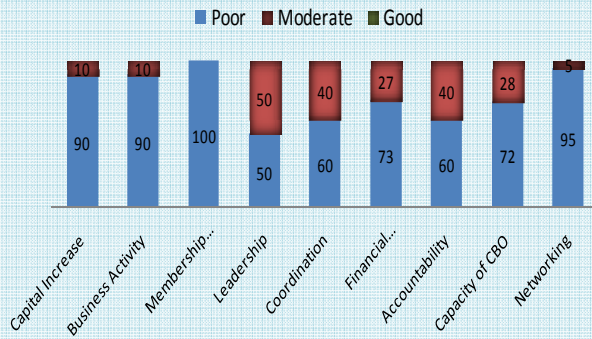
Capital increase and loan amount per household for VCB



CBO Functioning

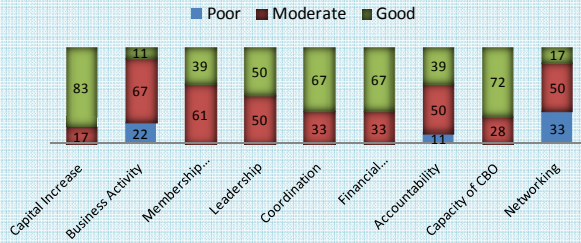
CARE facilitated the establishment of linkages between Farmer Cooperatives (FCs) and the private business partners. A total of 7 FCs contacted seed companies for credit and 2 FCs established shops for selling their farm outputs. Monitoring has shown that 38% of FCs are functioning well without support from CARE and 25% could operate with less support, whilst others still require a high level of support from CARE.

Functioning of SHGs

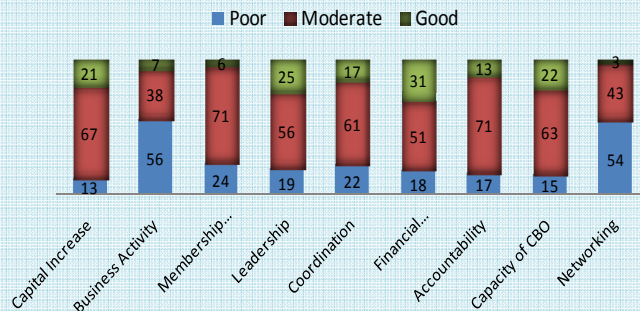


39% of all VSLA groups were observed to be functioning independently, 44% could operate with less support whilst the rest still require more support. CARE is focused on building their capacity to meet their needs.

Functioning of CCDF

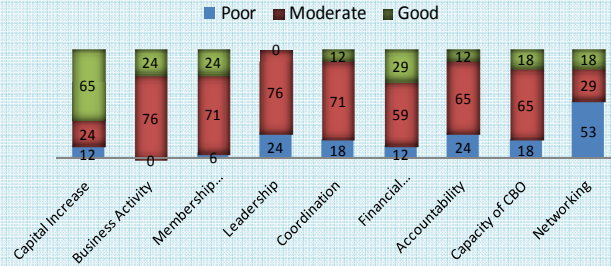


Functioning of Village Cash Bank (VCB)

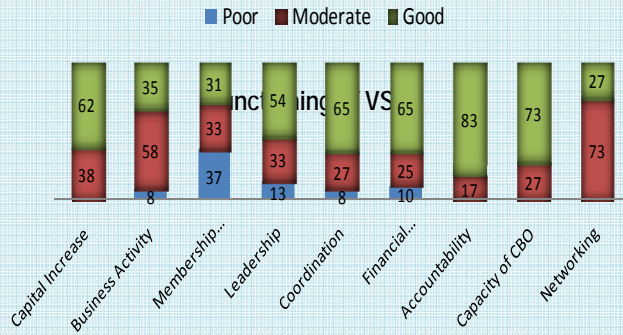


60% of all VCBs and VRBs are functioning with minimum support, while more than 32% of them need higher level of support while 4% of VCBs and 10% of VRBs found to be not functioning well.

Functioning of Farmer Cooperatives

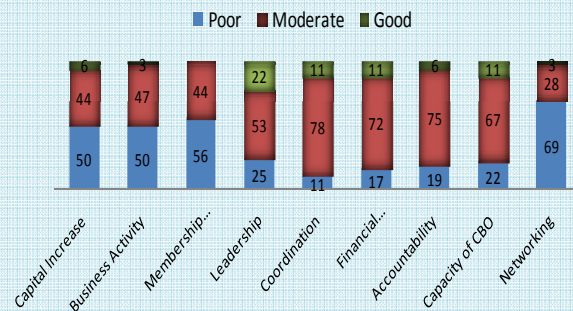


In a short period of time, 6% of established SHGs carried out their activities with minimum support whilst the remainder required higher levels of support. CARE has identified the capacity needs and is working to close the gap.



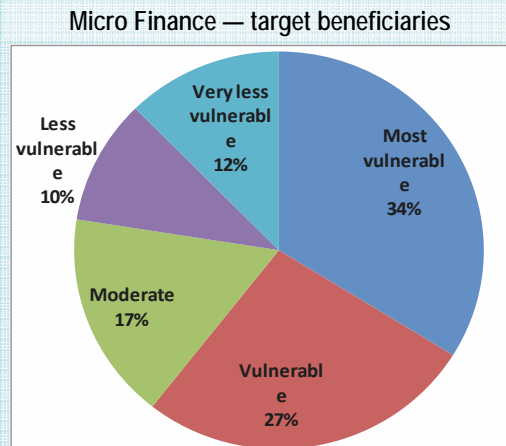
As per CARE's assessment, 6% of all CCDFs could carry out their activities independently, 50% needed less support, and others required strong support from CARE mainly on financial management and coordination. CARE is focused on filling these gaps through providing further support.

Functioning of Village Rice Bank (VRB)



Impact of CBOs Activities on the Community

- The establishment and strengthening of CBOs ensures a higher level of participation from the community in making decisions on the local development activities.
- CBOs are able to respond to the community needs appropriately as they have a better understanding of the local conditions and challenges.
- The micro-finance services established and facilitated by CARE provide loans to the poor farmers with much lower interest rates. This has enhanced their access to agricultural inputs, as well as capital for small scale business activities.



- Low interest rates have benefited the most vulnerable (34%) and vulnerable (27%) project beneficiaries.
- With official recognition through registration with the government line departments along with good management, Farmer Cooperatives have been able to build confidence and credibility with communities and business partners.



from different segments of the community to assist in developing more CBOs such as VSLA and FCs.

- VSLA activities drew high levels of attention from community members and experienced a considerable increase in membership over the project period. It is expected that with ongoing support from CARE in management skills and with active participation from members, VSLA will be able to expand their business activities by the end of the project in June 2011.

- Non beneficiary households in the community have benefited indirectly from capacity building activities implemented by CARE. CARE have received multiple requests

KEY LESSONS LEARNED

- Collective activities by CBOs such as SHG, VSLA and FCs involving government line department at multiple levels contribute significantly to promoting participation from the community in development activities.
- Farmers cooperatives should start early; at least two to three years of support are needed in order for them to run credit and savings groups, manage their own business plans, and develop strong leadership. Whereas, a VSLA group should have a minimum of 14 months to ensure sufficient time for group formation, training and follow up.
- Building capacity of the government line departments ensures sustainability, however, close coordination among relevant agencies is required to ensure increased responsiveness of the service delivery organizations to address the needs of poor and marginalized communities.
- Proper structures and policies, intensive follow-up and technical support as well as involvement and recognition from the government line departments, and facilitation in developing linkages between community based groups and private sector business agencies were the main factors in setting up and mobilization of CBOs for development initiatives in the target areas.
- Recognition from the government line departments contributed to enhance the credibility of CBOs, which helped in gaining the confidence of business partners.
- Micro-finance activities proved to very useful for taking forward the CBO activities and greatly contributed to improve livelihoods of the poor farmers through increased access to credit and reduced reliance on the private money lenders with higher interest rates.
- There is a need to ensure that the credit services provided by SHGs and FCs, are inclusive of non-shareholders as well.

Case Study—Women Empowerment Through Self Help Groups

Chhoun Arb, 40, was born in Thlork village, Spueu Khar commune in Ba Phnom district of Prey Veng province. Her husband's name is Mr. Cheng Leng and she has five children, three of whom are girls. As well as being a rice farmer she engages herself in growing vegetables and rearing livestock.

During September 2009, with the support of CARE, the Commune Council and the Village Support Committee established a Self Help Group in her village with 74 members, 48 of whom are female. This SHG was further divided into five activity groups of Rice Growing, Vegetable Growing, Fish Raising, Livestock Raising and Irrigation.



Chhoun Arb, registered her name with the Commune Council and Support Committee to run for the post of Management Committee member of the SHG. She was elected as the chief of SHG Committee as well as chief of the Vegetable Growing group. As a leader of SHG, Chhoun Arb received support and training on roles and responsibilities, proposal writing, management skills, small business development and financial management. CARE conducted monitoring support visits to the SHG and helped them in developing guidelines for the group members.



Through these efforts Chhoun Arb was able to understand her roles and duties clearly and utilized her skills effectively in this leadership role. She spends her time and energy informing members about SHG meetings and actively takes part in the meetings, freely expressing her opinions and at the same time encouraging other members to share their ideas and raise questions.

"Regulations and laws have been developed by the Self Help Group members, so we have to listen to all the points and provide feedback. As a members of the group, we have to strictly follow these rules so that the group can function effectively making our SHG successful in achieving its objectives," said Chhoun Arb.

Being the SHG leader, she urges the community members to participate in developmental activities such as canal digging. She uses her free time to explain the benefits and importance of vegetable growing, fish raising and livestock raising activities to other members of the community. She says *"Vegetables, fish and livestock in the family help us to reduce expenditure on food items and also in improving the livelihood situation of the household members"*.

She has seen significant changes in the community since CARE started implementing IRDM project supported by AusAID. Through her active participation, she has gained a great deal of knowledge, technical skills and experience. She is now a popular leader in her village and has earned the trust of the community. *"Now, my wife's confidence has developed and it is unbelievable to me,"* admires her husband.

She says *"prior to the project my family was very poor, but now I have everything because of CARE initiatives and support. I would like to thank CARE for encouraging me to take up the leadership role in my SHG and for implementing multiple activities in my village. We will continue with these activities even after CARE project finishes"* smiles Chhoun Arb.