



Evaluation Summary



International
Labour
Office

Evaluation Unit

Children, food security and nutrition - Cambodia Joint MDG Programme - Mid-term Joint Evaluation

Quick Facts

Countries: Cambodia

Mid-Term: September 2011

Mode of Evaluation: Independent Joint

Technical Area: ED/DIALOGUE

Evaluation Management: United Nations
MDG Fund – (UNDP lead) Partners:
UNICEF, WHO, FAO, WFP, ILO and
UNESCO; Consultant: Keith Jeddere-Fisher

ILO Project Code: CMB/09/50/UND

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WFP: 638,790 WHO: 789,660

ILO: 345,610 FAO: 235,935

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Taken from the Executive Summary of the MDG Joint Evaluation Report

The MDG Achievement Fund (MDG-F) is an initiative funded by the Government of Spain in 2006 and implemented by UN agencies to support countries in their progress towards the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and other development goals by funding innovative programmes that have an impact on the population and potential for duplication. The Fund operates through UN teams in each country and uses a joint programme mode of

intervention. The Fund has currently approved 128 joint programmes in 49 countries. These reflect eight thematic windows that contribute in various ways towards progress on the MDGs.

The 'Children, food security and nutrition' thematic window supports 24 joint programmes and specifically contributes to MDG 1 - eradicating extreme poverty and hunger and MDG 4 - reducing child mortality.

The "Joint Programme for Children, Food Security and Nutrition in Cambodia (CFSNC)" with a budget of US\$ 5 million was started in January 2010 and will end in December 2012. It is implemented by six government agencies and six UN agencies.

The overall goal of the Joint Programme (JP) is to reduce mortality and under nutrition among children 0-24 months and pregnant and lactating women and improving food security. The JP has three planned outcomes:

- Outcome 1: Improvement of the nutritional status of children aged 0-24 months and pregnant and lactating women, involving nationwide behaviour change communications and targeted interventions in two food insecure provinces;
- Outcome 2: Implementation of existing nutrition, food security, and agricultural policies strengthened, and new policies on nutrition developed;
- Outcome 3: Integrated food security and nutrition monitoring system developed.

This mid-term evaluation (MTE) is managed by the MDG:F Secretariat and its goal is to generate knowledge, identify best practices and lessons learned and improve implementation of the programmes during the remaining period of implementation. The conclusions and recommendations generated by this evaluation are addressed to its main users: the Programme Management Committee (PMC) and the Secretariat of the Fund.

The findings presented in this report are based on a desk review of project documents and on interviews with key informants and programme staff during a two-week mission to Cambodia in September 2011. The findings were triangulated through the use of multiple sources of information when possible.

Evaluation Findings

Design, relevance and structure

Key government agencies participated in the design process, identifying priority outcomes and all of them describe the MDG:F JP as having a very good fit with their development needs. The JP is seen as a means to introduce already planned interventions into the two target provinces bringing resources that are additional to the national budget. The intervention logic is clearly presented in the programme document and there is a complementary mix of interventions that support the development of the enabling environment in the area of policy and information analysis and those that are focused on the delivery of services at the provincial and health centre level. The monitoring framework focuses on activity monitoring with a limited number of outcome indicators. The consequences of these weaknesses are that although the JP has carried out a lot of activities, for much of the work, particularly the knowledge-based training under outcomes 1 and 2, there is almost no information available on whether they have contributed to the intended outcome.

Management and coordination

The JP has been implemented efficiently with the exception of the release of the 2011 budget which

was only available in May 2011 due to delays in the endorsement of the work plan and budget by the National Steering Committee (NSC). At June 2011, exactly half way through the 3-year period of implementation, 57% of funds had been committed and 32% disbursed.

The PMC has good Government of Cambodia and UN representation and has functioned effectively. The JP Technical Team facilitates good coordination among the UN agencies and with the members of the team located in their own UN agency offices promotes real representation of the agency in the JP. Provincial Coordination Committees have facilitated effective coordination among government agencies and with UN agencies.

Effectiveness

Outcome 1. The improvement of nutritional status of children aged 0-24 months and pregnant and lactating women.

The bulk of the JP's activity comes under this outcome. At the national level behaviour change communications have been developed and implemented as planned. The training on maternity protection for employees of large factories has resulted in good levels of knowledge on baby feeding practices amongst direct participants with some transfer to non-participants but with apparent limited changes in practices.

The provision of an integrated package of nutrition and food security in the targeted provinces focuses on the provision of multiple micronutrient powders (MNPs) and on the management of acute malnutrition. The distribution of MNPs is expanding to achieve total coverage of both provinces and shows some qualitative early indicators of effectiveness. The management of acute malnutrition is being piloted in five health centres (HCs) and has shown to be effective but also has a high default rate and is demanding on the resources of the HC.

A lot of training has been provided to mainstream FSN in 'Early Childhood Care and Development' and in non-formal education in the two provinces but it is not possible to assess the contribution that this has had on the outcome. Farmers have been trained in homestead food production

through 'Farmer Field Schools' and this has clearly resulted in increased vegetable production and utilisation amongst the participants. The process of selection of participants has probably reduced the positive impact of this activity on the intended outcome.

The potential to involve NGOs to provide support in achieving this outcome has not been utilised. A shortage of IEC materials and some weaknesses in the provision of inputs at the best time have limited the effectiveness of some of the activities.

Outcome 2: Implementation of existing nutrition, food security, and agricultural policies strengthened, and new policies on nutrition developed.

The 'National interim guidelines for the management of acute malnutrition', the 'National Policy and Guidelines for Micronutrient Supplementation' and a curriculum for MSc in nutrition have all been developed through consultative processes and are valuable developments in the FSN policy environment. Support has been provided for the development of the 'Early Childhood Care and Development' National Action Plan and this is waiting ministerial endorsement. Training has been provided to increase the capacity of provincial, district and commune staff in FSN. The outcomes have not been monitored.

Outcome 3: Integrated food security and nutrition monitoring system developed.

The Food Security and Nutrition Data Analysis Team (FSNDAT) have been established and are instrumental in carrying out studies and in developing a number of products. Three editions of the FSN Bulletin have been published providing useful analysis of data. The FSNIS website which is managed by CARD has been redesigned with support from MDG:F to make it easier to use.

Sustainability

Due to the high level of participation by government ministries in identifying priority issues to be included in the JP, and the inclusion of these, most of the activities of the JP are additional inputs and resources for existing or planned government interventions. They are also embedded in existing government structures and are likely to remain on the agenda of the relevant ministry. Continued implementation of the

delivery interventions, especially MNPs and the management of acute malnutrition will depend on further development assistance and this is likely to be available for this high priority area.

A significant aspect of the JP's intervention at the provincial level has been for the development of human capacity; skills, knowledge and awareness, among government staff in different departments, amongst elected representatives and amongst community members and volunteers. This investment in human capacity at the provincial, district, HC and local levels is likely to continue to promote the objectives of the JP beyond the programme period.

The important policy products will have long-term positive effects. Now that the FSNDAT has been established and trained they will be able to continue their work and produce the FSN Bulletin. The coordination mechanism at the provincial level, the PCC, is not a government institution and all stakeholders are clear that without further external support it will not continue. A recently established government committee could take on this role.

Lessons Learned and Recommendations

LESSONS LEARNED

- In situations where a number of UN agencies are working on a common theme in the same location, an UN-supported provincial coordinator can have a positive role in both representing and coordinating the UN agencies and in facilitating the coordination of relevant government departments. This role can be supported in situations where there is no formal UN 'joint programme'.
- A JP management team, where members are located in their own UN agency's office may face communication and coordination challenges but is likely to be more effective in promoting real UN coordination through increased mutual understanding and cross agency representation on specific themes.
- Regular food preparation and cooking demonstrations by volunteers is an effective way

to extend principles learnt in training and also provided a nutritious meal for those involved.

RECOMMENDATIONS : Chapter 5 of the report contains the full set of recommendations made. Those that are most critical for the success of the JP are presented here.

- The NSC should be requested to review PMC recommendations when their endorsement is required and provide the necessary authorisation quickly without attempting to hold a face-to-face meeting.
- Baseline/end line studies: A no-cost extension should be given to enable the end-line survey to be carried out in April 2013, three years from the date of the baseline. The indicators to be collected by the baseline should be reviewed prior to automatically collecting them in the end line survey.
- The project work plan should be reviewed and blockages/potential blockages identified to ensure implementation is speeded up.
- The JPTT should identify ways to encourage regular involvement of RGC representatives in the JPTT meeting in order to promote coordination at the national level. This may require some changes to the agenda and the style of the meeting.
- The JP monitoring framework should be reviewed to ensure that there are some outcome indicators for each outcome that can provide an indication of progress towards the intended impact at the end of 2011 and 2012.
- A decision needs to be made quickly on the expansion plans for the management of acute malnutrition in 2011. It is suggested that in order to get wider exposure to different situations that 5 HCs in Svay Rieng are selected.
- A revised costed work plan for the limited expansion of the management of acute malnutrition in health centres over the remaining period of the JP should be developed with revised targets for the number of HCs to be covered. The priority in this work plan should be the development and testing of suitable methodologies that can be scaled up within the two target provinces and beyond. The revised work plan should include a revised budget and should specify what they will do with the funds that were originally allocated to this component. One of the methodologies should if possible include the involvement of NGOs in a situation

where an NGO is already actively promoting the community-HC link through activities with the VHSG. Such situations do exist within the targeted provinces;

- An assessment of the outcome of the training on OSH and maternity protection for factory women should be carried out identifying outcomes in direct participants and in intended indirect participants. Based on the findings the messages should be reviewed and follow up meetings held with training participants;
- A review of mainstreaming nutrition in ECCD and NFE should be carried out by the PMC/JPTTM clearly identifying the purpose and anticipated outcomes and how these interact with and support other components of the JP.
- Prior to the selection of participants for the 2012 FFS training, the participant selection criteria should be reviewed and a strategy developed so that participants are selected in accordance with the criteria.
- Resources will need to be allocated to support the additional follow up and assessment of training outcomes that the MTE is recommending. While doing this the purpose and expected outputs of these field support activities need to be carefully prepared and clearly specified to those participating.
- IEC materials should be produced and distributed to implementing partners as soon as possible after they have been finalised as part of the complimentary feeding strategy.
- Awareness of the Food Security and Nutrition website and of the FSN Bulletin should be promoted among central and provincial government and non-Government agencies.
- The future potential of the PCC should be reviewed and alternative provincial coordination forums assessed. If necessary, capacity building of an alternative forum should be provided.
- The potential for NGOs to contribute to the JP goals, particularly in support of field implementation including the distribution of MNPs and the management of acute malnutrition, should be explored and NGO staff should be included in training programmes by CARD, MoH/NNP, DoL and DoE. This refers to NGOs that have good links with the community and are strengthening community level structures such as VHSGs.