

Working Paper Series

Resource Politics and Cultural Transformation in the Mekong Region

Farmers' Associations in Cambodia: Internal Functions and External Relations

(Work in Progress)

Ngin Chanrith

Regional Center for Social Science and Sustainable Development (RCSD)

Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University, Thailand

September, 2008

Acknowledgement

I would like to thank Dr. Chayan Vaddhanaphuti, Director of the Regional Centre for Social Science and Sustainable Development (RCSD), Faculty of Social Sciences, Chiang Mai University, for inviting me to the fellowship. The fellowship program is funded by the Rockefeller Foundation. My gratitude also goes to RCSD faculty who commented on the earlier manuscript and RCSD staff who supported me during my fellowship.

Hak Sochanny, Thorn Riguen and Keo Phally commented on, and assisted in, primary data collection. I gratefully acknowledge CEDAC staff and volunteers for their logistic arrangements during my fieldwork. I highly appreciate CEDAC, Sre Khmer and FNN staff and FA leaders and members for their valuable time in sharing their insightful information and allowing me to learn from them.

Finally, Cambodian students at Chiang Mai University shared their good times with me during my stay there. I deeply thank them for their fraternity and brotherhood.

I. Introduction

In Cambodia, agriculture accounts for 34% of GDP and employs 70% of the labor force (MAFF, 2006). Although the current economy is significantly contributed by industry (27% of GDP) and services (36% of GDP) (Phim et al., 2007), given 35% of the populace living in poverty and most of them being farmers in rural areas improvement in agriculture is the most effectual approach to accelerate poverty reduction in Cambodia (RGC, 2006; World Bank, 2006; NGOF, 2007). Agriculture is identified as a key to diversifying sources of economic growth with the potential to reduce poverty if focussed on smallholders (CDRI-IDS, 2006). If growth in agricultural productivity can be increased between 3-4 percent, the Cambodian MDG on poverty can be achieved.

Agriculture in Cambodia predominantly comprises subsistence rice production despite rice surplus in recent years. The bulk of the poor are rice farmers who only grow enough rice to feed themselves and their families for half the year. Most poor rice farmers are expected to run out of their remaining rice stocks by June, at which point they have to buy rice at the market (WFP, 2008). Among three million hectares of agricultural land, farms are small, with an average size of 1.5 hectares; and approximately 70 percent of them are smaller than one hectare (World Bank, 2005). In 2004, around half of rural families or more than a million rural families owned less than half hectare of land.

According to research to date, chief bottlenecks to agricultural development in Cambodia constitute: poor infrastructure (particularly irrigation systems and transportation), absence of an efficient marketing system, absence of adaptable technologies, inadequate extension services, lack of agro-processing facilities, inadequate rural financial structures, insecure land tenure, poor management of natural hazards (especially flood, drought and insects), and burden of informal road passage and market access fees (World Bank, 2005; MAFF, 2007; Nou, 2006; Hang et al., 2007). It is widely emphasized that individual farmers are unable to effectively address these pitfalls. Unless institutional arrangements to refine collective action by smallholders are undertaken, small farmers cannot lever up their productivity and bargaining power vis-a-vis external actors in an effectual manner (Julie et al., 2005; Nou, 2006; CDRI-IDS, 2006).

This study examines internal functions and external relations of farmers' associations (FAs) in Cambodia. Concretely, it attempts to answer the following questions:

- (1) What internal organizational factors attribute to success of Cambodian FAs? and
- (2) What external environmental factors attribute to success of Cambodian FAs?

This paper is divided into the following parts. The next section presents an overview of farmers' organizations in Cambodia. Section III deliberates a conceptual framework of the study, followed by research methodology in Section IV. The following section provides an overview of the research site. Section VI discusses research findings. Finally, the last section delivers a conclusion and pertinent policy implications.

II. Overview of Farmers' Organizations in Cambodia

Organization by farmers is generally acknowledged as an effective means of promoting 'social capital' significant for rural development (e.g., FAO, 1996; Marlo and Iean, 2004). The main rationale behind farmers' organizations is self-help and collective power vis-à-vis external institutions. Collective action mitigates transaction costs and regulates markets to increase values of goods and services catered by members.

In Cambodia, ‘working together’ in agriculture is traditional. According to Chandler (2000), in the 1960s ‘agricultural cooperatives’ were established and sponsored by the State. In 1975-1979, during the Khmer Rouge period, cooperatives were ‘forced collective labor’. In the 1980s, cooperatives took the form of ‘solidarity groups’. Currently, farmers’ organizations (FOs) cover a wide variety of forms. Julie et al. (2005) classify five categories of FOs operating in Cambodia: farmer groups, associations, communities, cooperatives and federations. Despite variations in working definitions, these FOs constitute a common aim: to better help each other through ‘collective bargaining power’ (see Tath, 2006 for a detailed history of agricultural cooperatives in Cambodia).

Julie et al. (2005) put the number of FOs in Cambodia at 13,017. The bulk of the FOs are farmer groups (80.5%), followed by farmer communities (13.6%) and farmer associations (5.0%) (see Table 2.1). Over 60% of these organizations were formulated after 2000.

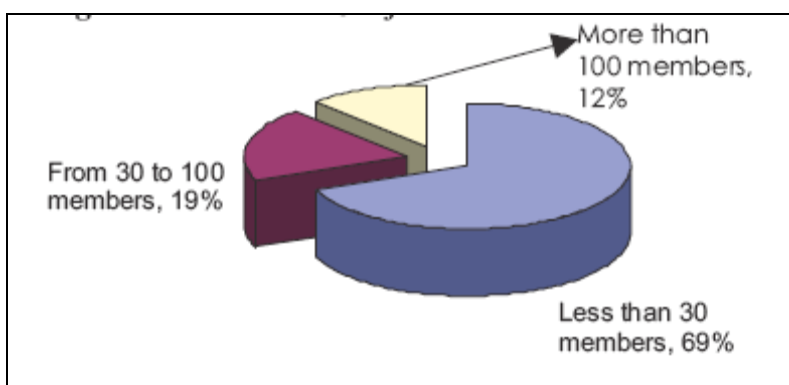
Table 2.1: Numbers and Types of FOs in Cambodia

FOs	Number	%
Farmer groups	10,487	80.5
Farmer communities	1,769	13.6
Farmer associations	662	5.0
Agricultural cooperatives	93	0.7
Farmer federations	6	0.05
Total	13,017	

Source: Julie et al. (2005)

FOs in Cambodia are small in terms of membership size. Around 70% of them have fewer than 30 members, about 20% have between 30 to 100 members, and only 10% have a membership greater than 100 (see Figure 2.1).

Figure 2.1: Membership Size of FOs in Cambodia



Source: Julie et al. (2005)

Almost all FOs are technically and/or financially supported by NGOs or government and few farmer groups are formed by the private sector such as British American Tobacco and the CP Group (Neou, 2006). Most of them are not legally registered, have untrained managers/leaders and have difficulty accessing services of government or credit institutions.

Farmers’ organizations in Cambodia are supported by various legal frameworks (Julie et al., 2005).

Major legal materials comprise: 1996 Draft Law on Local Associations and Non-Government Organizations; 2003 Royal Decree on Establishment and Functioning of Agricultural Cooperatives, Unions of Agricultural Cooperatives and Agricultural Pre-Cooperatives; 2003 Prakas (Edict) Promulgating Model Statutes and By-Laws of Agricultural Cooperatives; 2003 Model Statutes of Agricultural Cooperatives; and 2003 Model By-Laws of Agricultural Cooperatives. Yet, most FOs and supporting agencies are rarely aware of these legal texts as afore-mentioned the bulk of FOs are not formally listed. In 2005, for instance, only 54 agricultural cooperatives were on a rooster with the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF).

At present, more farmers' associations (FAs) have been formed by NGOs (Malena and Chhim, 2008). For example, local NGO Centre d'Etude et de Développement Agricole Cambodgien/Cambodian Center for Study and Development in Agriculture (CEDAC) has since 1998 supported establishment of 1,017 FAs in 11 provinces, reaching approximately 27,500 households. According to previous studies (e.g., Kusakabe, 2004; Johnsen and Prom, 2005; Julie et al., 2005; Neou, 2006; Malena and Chhim, 2008), farmers' organizations, particularly village-based farmers' associations, perform a vital role in promoting mutual help, solidarity and cooperation among villagers as well as coordinating and undertaking collective action in developing ecological agriculture, natural resource management, cooperative business and community development. Typical activities of these FAs include agricultural extension, community-led saving and credit, group marketing, training for young farmers, capacity building for women groups, support to poorest families, and awareness raising on issues related to conservation of natural resources. Some FAs have also started to play a role in seeking to influence local development plans and challenging local authorities to be more effective in the areas of community development and natural resource management by regularly attending commune council meetings to ask questions and propose initiatives and actions to be undertaken in collaboration with local authorities.

Notwithstanding, there is a common consent that FAs in Cambodia constitute shortages of organizational capacity to internally manage their associations and to externally deal with other development agencies in an effectual and sustainable manner. This study concretely contemplated FAs' areas of internal and external capacity and specifically identified their organizational capacity tenets for improvement.

III. Conceptual Framework of the Study

There is a broad variety of farmers' organizations with dissimilar conceptual definitions. Also, internal organizational and external environmental factors attributing to success of FOs are not uniform, contingent on contexts and categories of individual FOs. The following sections attempt to define farmers' associations in Cambodia and elaborate common success attributes of FOs in developing countries identified from the existing literature.

1. Defining 'Farmers' Associations'

In Cambodia, Farmers' Associations (FAs) are registered with Ministry of Interior under 1996 Draft Law on Local Associations and Non-Government Organizations. Under this draft law, a local association is defined as "*a group of natural persons organized by Khmer citizens for the purpose of seeking a common objective serving the moral or material interests of its members, without seeking private profits*" (Nou, 2006:10). An FA is distinct from an Agricultural Cooperative (AC) which is defined as "*a commercial enterprise that is democratically managed by its members, who contribute their capital and hope for dividends, and are also willing to incur losses according to the proportion of their shares contributed*" (Nou, 2006:10). ACs are registered with Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) principally under 2003 Royal Decree on Establishment

and Functioning of Agricultural Cooperatives, Unions of Agricultural Cooperatives and Agricultural Pre-Cooperatives.

2. Defining ‘Success of Farmers’ Associations’

Crowley et al. (2005:4-5) assert that a grassroots membership-based organization (MBO) is “successful” once it in minimum: *“achieves the objectives agreed upon by members at its creation; retains or expands its membership; shows progress towards financial and managerial self-reliance in terms of members’ own resources and capacities, inspiring members to maintain or increase their equity stake in the organization through financial, labour, or other contributions; and brings some improvement to the self-esteem, economic and social status, or well-being of its members.”*

3. Defining ‘Internal Organizational Factors Attributing to Success of FAs’

Crowley et al. (2005) delineate common internal organizational factors that attribute to success of MBOs. First, MBOs have to be representative of their constituencies, allowing for broad and equitable member participation in decision making. This means members constitute an equal share or equity stake in the organization (e.g., one member with one vote) and hold management/ leadership accountable for meeting the organizational objectives. Second, communication between members and leaders is two-way. Third, members invest some of their own resources in the organization and see some return for this investment over time. Fourth, the organization manages financial resources effectively, without increasing debts. Finally, members gain a good net return on their membership. The sections to follow elaborate the factors that permit these facets.

3.1. Objectives and improvement in well-being

Members define and agree to the organizational objectives (Ali and Baas, 2004 cited in Crowley et al., 2005). In this way, they analyze their own problems and identify the needs they aspire to achieve. Otherwise, they may perceive that the organization lacks the qualities they value most and they thus lack ownership of the organization (Narayan et al., 2000 cited in Crowley et al., 2005). Later on, members assess the value of their membership by the organization’s ability to accomplish its objectives. The accomplishment is reflected principally in the improvement in well-being of members.

Over time, members may review and adjust the organizational objectives to accommodate their changing needs once there are significant changes in the membership and financial status of the organization, as well as changes in the social, economic, and policy environments and the emergence of other organizations in their community.

3.2. Composition of membership

MBOs which include a few non-poor members, elites, organizers, or “outsiders” with skills absent in the rest of the membership tend to perform more effectively than those which include merely the poor (de Haan and Sen, 2005; IFAD, 2000a; Stedile, 2002; Kilavuta, 2003 cited in Crowley et al., 2005). The principal reason is that non-poor members possess literacy and numeracy, organizational skills, and knowledge of legal and regulatory frameworks and public and private services and responsibilities that are scarce among the bulk of members. These skills and knowledge help boost efficacy of MBOs.

In some development and training activities, poorer members can benefit from financial, human, and social resources of relatively better-off members. Non-poor members can bring entrepreneurial capacities, technical skills, awareness of other organizations and regions, facilitated market linkages,

and play a critical role in transfer of these skills and capacities to poor members (Ali and Baas, 2004 cited in Crowley et al., 2005). Yet, social and economic heterogeneity in membership contributes very little to removing socio-economic disparities and hierarchies existing between poor and non-poor members.

3.3. Development of governance structure

The structure and rules by which an MBO is governed, such as incentives for engagement, methods of representation and leadership, by-laws and moral codes of conduct, directly induce the organization's internal cohesion and achievement of its objectives. The most critical characteristic of the governance structures of successful MBOs is that they are formulated by the members themselves.

Equity stake

An essential dimension of effective governance is equity stake of members in the organization. "Equity stake" refers to labor, in-kind or financial contribution that members make for membership in the organization. Equity stake makes members interested in governing or controlling the organization to protect or gain a fair rate of return on their investment (IFAD, 2000b cited in Crowley et al., 2005). Members with equity stake actively engage in all phases of activities, thus holding a strong sense of ownership. In most MBOs, each member has the equivalent of a single vote although some invest more time and resources in the organization.

Size and structure

A second element that affects governance is organizational size and structure. Contingent on the organizational objectives, the effective size and structure differ. For instance, informal saving groups with small and close memberships tend to work best (IFAD, 2000a; IFAD, 2000b cited in Crowley et al., 2005), while for social movements with politico-economic agendas large and loose memberships are effective (Stedile, 2002 cited in Crowley et al., 2005). The effective organizational structure is also a function of the organizational objectives. Up to the objectives, organizational structures may range from highly decentralized movements to very hierarchical groups.

Leadership

A third factor of governance that is attributable to successful MBOs is leadership. Like structure and size, effective characteristics of leaders depend on the type of organization and its objectives.

Many successful MBOs are led by leaders elected by members. But, election alone is far from adequate for good leadership. Effective leaders are proactive on critical concerns, visionary of changes, and capable of setting high but obtainable goals (Kilavuka, 2003 cited in Crowley et al., 2005). Moreover, they are able to motivate and mobilize members, and are responsible and accountable to members. Regular meetings between members and management are crucial for developing and maintaining a common vision and modus operandi.

Furthermore, MBO leaders usually possess other socio-cultural qualities embedded in their social context, such as age, experience, strong oral communication skills, and repute for sincerity. Yet, highly personalized leadership can make members' responsibility and involvement less active. MBOs with well-trained leaders and members precisely comprehending their responsibilities, obligations and rights tend to perform better than those with leaders undergoing all tasks (Ali and Baas, 2004; Douglas and Kato, 2004; IFAD, 2000b cited in Crowley et al., 2005). Finally, successful MBOs hold regular elections or periodic confirmation or rotation of selected leaders and

mentoring of future leaders.

External financial assistance may induce MBOs to form certain specialized functions and offices (Douglas and Kato, 2004 cited in Crowley et al., 2005). Specialized functions can help ensure transparency in accounting, active engagement in collective decision making, effective communication between leaders and members in regular meetings, and organizational credibility.

Weighted representation in management structures including various socio-economic groups is crucial for the cohesion of heterogeneous MBOs. For instance, in many contexts, particularly in mixed-gendered MBOs, women's representation in management is minimal, unless specific measures are in place (Kilavuka, 2003 cited in Crowley et al., 2005).

Formulating honorary advisory positions in governance structures for traditional leaders proves to be useful for some MBOs. Active participation of local leaders can urge members to participate and can bolster organization credibility (Douglas and Kato, 2004 cited in Crowley et al., 2005). Precise roles and responsibilities for local leaders and their participation in developing the constitution and by-laws are positive for MBOs. Notwithstanding, involvement of local elites in the rule-making process can culminate in 'elite capture', at the expense of the bulk of membership (IFAD, 2004c cited in Crowley et al., 2005).

Internal rules or by-laws

A fourth characteristic of the internal governance of successful MBOs is development, by members, of a set of internal rules to govern group operations (FAO, 1995, 2002; IFAD, 2000a, 2000b cited in Crowley et al., 2005). These rules are clearly understood and consistently applied to all members. This is particularly critical for heterogeneous MBOs that are easy to fracture due to social and economic distinctions of membership.

The internal regulations of successful MBOs contain some common characteristics: the rules are established by members themselves, refined through wide consultation with and inputs from members, and are in line with broad parameters of national laws. It is also important that MBOs adjust rules in accordance to their evolution in order to accommodate emerging needs of members.

The formal or informal status of MBOs and their legal status do not clearly attribute to their success or sustainability. But for large MBOs, the formalization process can at times reduce internal conflicts and disputes over internal rules as it clarifies and backs responsibilities, obligations, benefits and profit sharing among members (Ali and Baas, 2004 cited in Crowley et al., 2005). This is particularly true for MBOs assisted by a higher-level legal framework or external entity.

Codes of moral conduct

A fifth characteristic of many successful, large MBOs is an explicit code of moral conduct. Successful MBOs often adopt positive elements of tribal and customary practices, norms, and regulations into their governance structures as vehicles for development, conflict resolution, solidarity, and appropriate ethical and moral behaviour. Such codes, at times following religious or philosophical ideologies, ascribe ethics, value system, and moral behaviour that members observe (SEWA, 2002 cited in Crowley et al., 2005). Sometimes, moral codes are used to incur inclusiveness and acceptance of historically marginalized subjects and to maintain unity despite socio-economic heterogeneity.

3.4. Scope and diversity of organizations' activities

Identifying needs, mobilizing resources, and implementing activities to satisfy these needs are chief activities of most MBOs. Successful MBOs undertake activities to meet members' priorities, but organizational resources determine the number and scope of activities. Small MBOs reliant completely on members' savings tend to conduct limited activities.

Building capacities to run the organization

Successful MBOs build members' capacities, through training activities, to run their organization. They provide peer support to members to reduce isolation, determine their own priorities, define and control their own institutions, and do their own planning.

Capacity building is initially offered by external agencies. Common areas of capacity building may comprise group formation, enterprise development, accounting and financial management, and leadership training, among other skills (Ali and Baas, 2004; Hanco and Chantrabumrongs, 2003; IFAD, 2000a, 2000b, 2004 cited in Crowley et al., 2005). It is essential to provide training in these areas on a regular and ongoing basis, not merely in the early or expansion stages, so as to enable new members to become active and to profit from membership at once.

Capacity building and learning-by-doing also fosters members' organizational ownership and participation, and enables MBOs to maintain pro-poor emphasis despite challenges from other entities and the wider social and political context. Capacity building serves a dual purpose: it develops skills and self-esteem of members and it refines organizational effectiveness and sustainability.

Increasing financial or other security

A second set of core activities of successful MBOs relates to generating productive or financial capital, assuring members with financial or in-kind security (Hussain, 2004 cited in Crowley et al., 2005). The most common reason for membership is to accumulate savings or obtain access to credit, insurance, employment, land, or other capital that can offer a safety net during emergencies. MBOs usually implement or assist such activities that significantly profit poor members.

Building influence and negotiation power

A third set of core activities of MBOs is to induce the external environment (institutions, laws, and policies) that affects members' concerns and interests. By joining organizations, poor individuals gain access to collective information, skills, knowledge and experience of other members, as well as to power and social capital that the total members and their assets represent (IFAD, 2001 cited in Crowley et al., 2005). Successful MBOs collectively negotiate with donors, banks, NGOs and other international institutions on behalf of members. They offer members the leverage to influence markets, state institutions and local structures of power to respond to their needs and interests (Hussain, 2004 cited in Crowley et al., 2005). Moreover, inter-group associations and clusters or horizontal networks, coalitions and alliances are effective for extending visibility, bargaining power and impact of MBOs (IFAD, 2000c cited in Crowley et al., 2005).

For example, triumphant MBOs induce public services to form pro-poor procedures, press employers to better workers' labor conditions and lessen farmers' vulnerability, convince the court by legally representing members, and incentivize traders and middlemen to offer greater prices for members' produce.

Accommodating emerging needs through new activities

Successful MBOs balance between reaching basic organizational objectives and responding to members' emerging needs (SEWA, 2002 cited in Crowley et al., 2005). For instance, to adapt to new needs of members successful MBOs may flexibly introduce such on-demand initiatives as income generating, vocational training, literacy education, disaster relief, household advocacy, conflict management and rehabilitation, or cultural, health, religious, sport or other activities. Notwithstanding, to succeed MBOs must ensure that they possess an effective extent of organizational maturity and membership participation prior to diversification of activities and the diversification process undergoes incrementally, appropriately making adjustments overtime (IFAD, 2000b; Ali and Baas, 2004; Crowley, 2001 cited in Crowley et al., 2005).

3.5. Scaling up and linking with other institutions

As afore-mentioned, to expand and influence the external environment (laws, institutions and policies), effective associations with and impacts on other entities are significant. MBOs' external linkages tend to be forged through contacts and initiatives of members, and their family or friendship connections. MBOs with enduring external relations and thus strong social and political capital constitute specific mechanisms to transform personal bondages into broader institutional transactions.

If MBOs and governments institute a precise, common understanding on their dissimilar but supplementary roles and responsibilities, as well as some coordination, they have peaceful co-existence and subsequently enhancement of their work. In some cases, shared comprehension enables MBOs and local governments to acknowledge the value added of these distinctions, to tackle legislative inconsistencies, and to determine a mutually supportive legal relationship.

Some MBOs undertake policy and operational linkages with local and higher level governments that permit joint development planning and complementary sharing of responsibilities. Some local governments provide scaffolding to MBOs in terms of social infrastructure, such as schools, drinking water supply, health centres, and roads. At times, MBOs organize to press the central government to make local authorities provide basic public services (Stedile, 2002 cited in Crowley et al., 2005). In turn, many MBOs offer support-services for productive, income generating activities to complement government initiatives.

Yet, in some cases external policy advocacy groups of MBOs are dominated by well-off (wealthy and powerful) members who progressively overtake the primary economic services, activities, and concerns of the overall membership; making them lose pro-poor focus. This phenomenon, as mentioned above, is dubbed 'elite capture'. Some MBOs manage this risk by running subcommittees in their management structures to ensure that external policy advocacy and internal economic activities are conducted separately (Ali and Baas, 2004 cited in Crowley et al., 2005). Others maintain their autonomy by standing independently from political parties and other external political and religious influences (Stedile, 2002 cited in Crowley et al., 2005).

However, acceptability of MBOs by the external social and political environment does not necessarily foster their development or success. While acceptance may facilitate and enhance MBOs' work, some MBOs are effectual owing to their alternative social model, which may not accord with the dominant political and social context. Many MBOs have to strike a balance between conformity and political pressure so as to effect long-run advancements for their members.

4. Defining 'External Environmental Factors Attributing to Success of FAs'

Various contexts, conditions, policies and approaches are conducive for emergence and survival of MBOs (Crowley et al., 2005). But, the common facilitative factors are absence of formal safety nets

and pro-poor government or private initiatives. In some settings, effective public welfare system and social funds disincentivize formation of such organizations.

Absence of informal safety nets is also facilitative. To exemplify, large, concentrated numbers of poor people and evident wealth disparities enable establishment of MBOs that transcend ethnic, religious, and social differences. Such situations make collective action easier and less costly. Volatile and transient contexts, such as post emergency, post conflict, and major migration zones, where customary social and family support systems are absent, unable to absorb, or incapable of caring for huge numbers of the poor appear to be strongly conducive to emergence of self-help organizations and labour associations (Marsh, 2003 cited in Crowley et al., 2005).

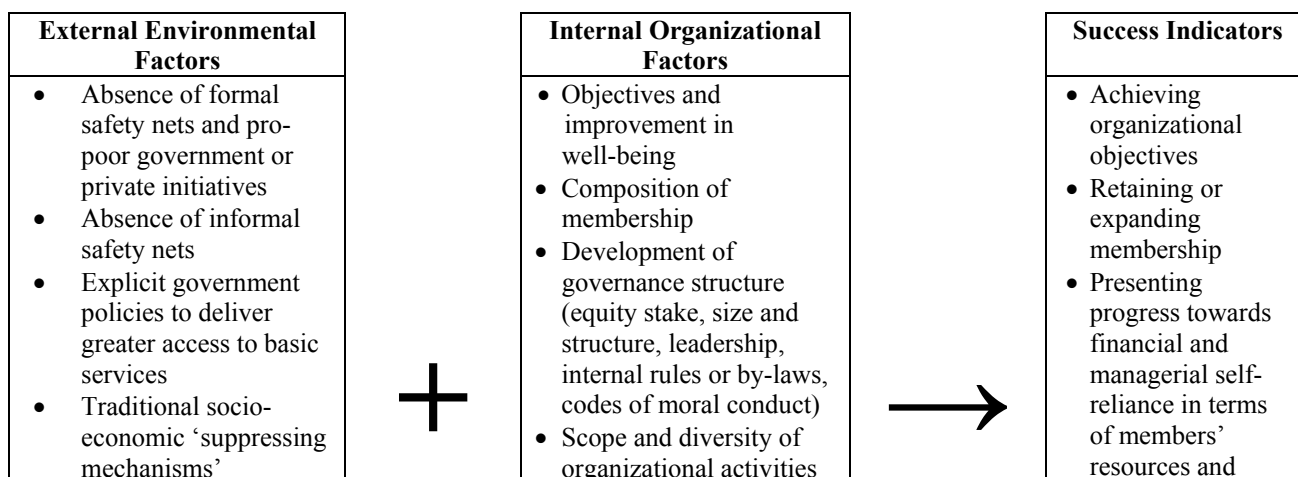
Yet, explicit government policies to deliver greater access by the poor to basic services also encourage creation and expansion of MBOs. Development paradigm shifts perform a role as well. Community development approaches, ushered in the 1940s as the prime mantra to reduce poverty, empower the poor, and refine the sustainability and effectiveness of development work, and the following mainstreaming of participatory approaches in development practice in the 1970s and 80s attributed to the establishment, multiplication, and betterment of organizations of the poor (FAO, 1978/79, 1990; Cernea, 1991; Chambers, 1997; Grillo and Stirrat, 1997; Huizer, 1983, 1997; McGee, 2002; van Heck, 1989; Watt et al., 2000; Woost, 1997 cited in Crowley et al., 2005). Development assistance for such organizations accelerated intensively in the 1980s and 90s, as the State substantially mitigated rural service provision, decentralization and privatization processes arose, and the impact of civil society proliferated. The abundance of external aid in conflict and post-conflict occurrences has also led to the soaring of MBOs.

One factor militating against formulation and growth of MBOs is traditional socio-economic ‘suppressing mechanisms’, which tend to safeguard the privileged status and interests of local power holders. Another quelling factor is open apprehension by dominant political groups who envisage large cohorts of the poor as a challenge to their own positions and civil stability. This is often evident in regimes where the rights of association are absent, curtailed, or not observed (Stedile, 2002; Marsh, 2003 cited in Crowley et al., 2005). Lack of policies and legislative and regulatory frameworks that corroborate the rights of association, assembly and freedom of expression can also bar or discourage formation or functioning of MBOs.

5. Conceptual Framework of the Study

Premised upon the above discussions, the conceptual framework of the study can thus be synopsisized as in Figure 3.1 below.

Figure 3.1: External environmental and internal organizational factors attributing to success of MBOs



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Open apprehension by dominant political groups • Lack of policies and legislative and regulatory frameworks corroborating rights of association, assembly and freedom of expression 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scaling up and linking with other institutions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improving self-esteem, economic and social status, or well-being of members
--	--	---

Source: Based upon Crowley et al. (2005)

IV. Research Methodology

This study employed semi-structured interviews to gather primary data. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 23 leaders and committee members of FAs in 4 communes randomly selected from the 168 FAs operating in the target district. 105 members/farmers of 8 FAs randomly chosen from the 23 FAs were individually interviewed. Interviews were also held with a FA specialist of a national FA federation Farmers and Nature Network (FNN), a program officer of CEDAC, and 2 representatives of Sre Khmer, another local NGO working on FAs in Takeo province (see Table 4.1). The fieldwork was done in June 2008.

Table 4.1: Number of Participants Interviewed

Participants	Male	Female	Total
1. FA leaders and committee members	15	8	23
2. FA members/farmers	18	87	105
3. FA specialist of FNN	1	0	1
4. Program officer of CEDAC	1	0	1
5. Representatives of Sre Khmer	2	0	2
Total	37	95	132

Note: Some FA leaders and committee members were village chiefs or vice-chiefs (see Section VI for their implications in FAs' functioning).

Source: Author's survey in June 2008

This research followed the following overall methodological framework (see Table 4.2). It examined both external and internal factors that attributed to the success of FAs under study. To understand the external environmental factors, the study analyzed legal and regulatory support and operating assistance provided by relevant agencies such as Ministries of Interior and Agriculture, commune and village authorities, and CBOs and NGOs working with these FAs. The internal organizational factors were discussed from the standpoints of FA members and management and supporting agencies (particularly NGOs). Finally, the success indicators were assessed based on the perspectives of FA members and management.

Table 4.2: Overall methodological framework of the study

Data Needed	Sources of Data	Data Collection Methods	Data Analysis Methods
1. External environmental factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ministry of Interior • Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries • Provincial Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (PDAFF) • Commune councils • Village authorities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured interviews with representatives • Secondary documents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative description

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NGOs, donor agencies • Other CBOs, including rice millers' associations • Rural Development Bank • Private firms • Traders/middlemen • Farmers' associations 		
2. Internal organizational factors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FA farmers/members • Management of farmers' associations (FAs) • FAs-supporting agencies (NGOs, donors, PDAFF) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured interviews with a random sample of FA farmers/members • Semi-structured interviews with representatives of FAs and supporting agencies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative description
3. Success indicators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • FA farmers/members • Management of farmers' associations (FAs) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Semi-structured interviews with a random sample of FA farmers/members • Semi-structured interviews with management of FAs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative description • Quantitative comparison

Source: Author

Following the overall methodological framework, the interviews with FA members specifically aimed to understand their personal and organizational endowments, their participation in the FA, and their assessment of functions/services delivered by the FA. The interviews with FA leaders and committee members sought to comprehend functions/services of their FA, internal workings of their FA, their organizational capacity, and their organizational relationships with other agencies. To complement the knowledge gained from FA members and management, the interviews with supporting agencies delved into how they assisted in establishment of these FAs, their assessment of organizational strengths and weaknesses of these FAs, and what and how assistance was provided to refine the organizational capacity of these FAs.

The interview questions contained both closed and open-ended questions. Quantitative responses were analyzed in terms of frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations. Qualitative responses were treated in terms of common patterns in accordance with a technique of content analysis (see the Appendix for all the interview questions).

Secondary data sources included FAs' saving records and meeting minutes, project documents (proposals and progress reports), evaluation reports, training manuals, farmers' magazines, government policies and regulations, and previous studies on farmers' organizations in Cambodia and other countries.

V. Overview of the Research Site

The study was conducted in four communes in Tramkak District, Takeo Province. Takeo is one of 15 target provinces where the supporting agency CEDAC under study has been working on integrated agricultural development. Specifically, CEDAC has been implementing a project entitled "Improving Livelihoods of Subsistence Farmers in Tramkak District (ILFARM-TK)" in the province since 2003. The project covers 230 villages in 15 communes, which has culminated in 15 commune FA clusters and 168 farmer associations with a total budget of 305,585,120 riel (CEDAC, 2008). Previous evaluations by Kusakabe (2004) and Johnsen and Prom (2005) revealed strong satisfaction of FA members. Farmer members considerably improved their farming know-how and

thus their living conditions. They particularly learnt ‘organic farming’ and system of rice intensification (SRI) among other sideline agricultural techniques. Overall, the project rendered substantial economic, social and environmental impacts among participating farmers. The economic impact mainly included increased income from farming (SRI) and saving/credit. The social impact concerned emerging local leadership, increased standing of women, reduced youth problems, increased recognition by local government, improved living conditions of poorest villagers, and enlarged social networks. In the target areas, the critical environmental impact was reduced chemical load in the environment, increased biodiversity and soil fertility, increased wild fish stock, and increased reforestation.

The prime rationale for the study site was that FAs there were deemed as “a model, a laboratory” (Johnsen and Prom, 2005:5) of membership-based organizations by other development stakeholders. It was ergo valuable to derive insightful lessons from these FAs regarding their internal functions and external relations.

Takeo Province is located in the South of Cambodia. It is about 80 km from the capital city of Phnom Penh. The Province borders with Phnom Penh to the North, Kandal Province to the North-East, Kampong Speu Province to the North-West, Kampot Province to the West, and Vietnam to the South (see Figure 5.1).

Figure 5.1: Map of Cambodia

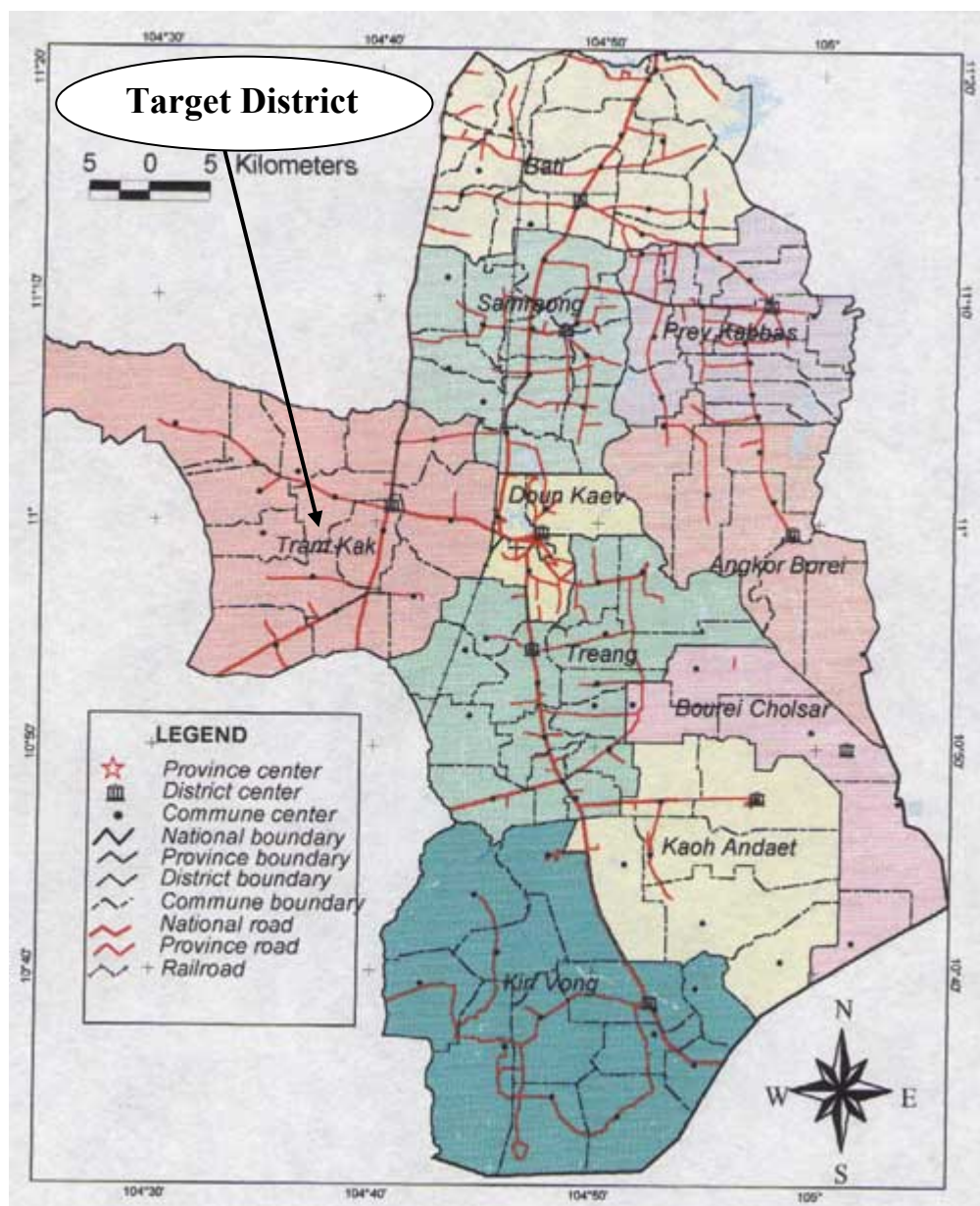


Source: http://www.travelfish.org/country_map/cambodia (Accessed on 25 July 2008)

Takeo Province is composed of 10 Districts comprising 100 Communes of 1,116 Villages (NIS, 1998). The target district of the study was Tramkak District (see Figure 5.2). Districts are the local administration organs after the provincial level. District chiefs are appointed by the Provincial Governor, who is nominated by the Ministry of Interior. Even though communes are under the formal structure of Districts, commune chiefs and commune councilors are elected based on the proportional electoral system of political parties. Finally, villages are the lowest level of local government administration.

According to the 1998 census, Takeo Province has a population of 848,953 people living in 165,878 households (NIS, 1998). As with the national populace, its female population accounts for 52%, of which 48% are over-15 year-old adults. The female-headed households are many, which stand at 18.50%. The bulk of the population, which are around 90%, are agricultural farmers. The rest 10% are civil servants and small businesspeople.

Figure 5.2: Map of Takeo Province



Source: <http://www.canbypublications.com/maps/provtakeo.htm> (Accessed on 25 July 2008)

Of the total land area of 3,563 square km in the province, 51% are for wet season rice farming and 20% are for dry season rice farming (NIS, 2003). In fact, Takeo is the third strongest rice producing province in Cambodia. In 2005, Takeo produced the most dry season rice in the country. In addition, Takeo is one of the largest producers of fish per ton. There are 20 fishing lots in the province.

VI. Discussion of Research Findings

1. Research Findings

1.1. Components of the Project and Process of Establishing FAs

According to Kusakabe (2004), the “ILFARM-TK” project contained components of agricultural extension, formulation of FAs and community resource centers, natural resource conservation, and farmer-local government interaction. Specifically, the project instituted the following facets: (1) farmer to farmer extension on ecological agriculture (system of rice intensification “SRI”, diversification for rice-based farming system, chicken/fish raising, vegetable production) through selection and training of cooperating farmers and key farmers; (2) facilitating and supporting establishment of farmers’ associations; (3) construction of community resource centers; (4) community-based environmental protection and natural resource management initiatives (including pagoda-based tree nursery and tree planting); and (5) organizing local development workshops where farmers and local authorities discuss different issues.

The supporting organization CEDAC exercised a gradual and on-going approach to facilitate the formation of FAs. Concretely, the agency took the following steps to organize FAs in the target district: (1) Staff discussed with Provincial Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (PDAFF) and selected Tramkak district as the project area; (2) Staff discussed with District Office of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (DAFF) and decided to work in all but one commune in the district; (3) Staff discussed with Commune Councils and selected villages; (4) Staff conducted rapid rural appraisal on the selected villages to choose a smaller number of villages; (5) Staff met with chiefs of the finally-selected villages; (6) Staff met with villagers. Key farmers from pilot villages were invited to the meeting to explain to the villagers of the project. Interested farmers were identified (around 10-20 farmers per village); (7) Among the interested farmers, 5 farmers were selected and taken to see successful farmers in other project areas; (8) Training sessions were provided to interested farmers in the villages. Farmers who wanted to cooperate with the project were identified (in general, around half of interested farmers became cooperating farmers); (9) Staff made follow-up visits to cooperating farmers. Monthly training was provided to these farmers on various topics; (10) Around 6-8 months later, general meetings of cooperating farmers were held, and 5 key farmers (at least one of them was a woman) were selected; (11) Key farmers were grouped and trained for further 6 months, not only on agriculture technology, but also on group building and organizing; (12) In some villages, key farmers organized groups and started savings and credit among the group members. In some villages, women’s groups were organized around this stage – either before or after the farmers’ groups were organized; and (13) Association by-laws, rules and regulations were set up and committee members were elected (no quota for women members) by the members, and associations were formally set up with the approval of local authorities (village and commune authorities). Finally, CEDAC clustered the associations at the commune and district levels and linked them to provincial and national level farmers’ federations.

As seen above, the process of forming FAs was not absolutely grassroots; i.e., they did not emerge from farmers themselves at the initial stage. It was a long process in which CEDAC staff and local authorities played a pivotal facilitating and nurturing role. The project involved extensive capacity building on agriculture and organizational management for key and devoted farmers. The interviews with farmer members pointed out that 95% of them became members of their FA

through the above process, i.e. through CEDAC staff or the village chief inviting them to attend the first meeting of their FA formation. The rest of the interviewed farmers became members of their FA through their family members or neighbors who had been members of the association introducing them to the FA. This result signifies the scaffolding of external agencies in initiating and nurturing FAs given farmers' limited resources and capacity.

1.2. Internal Organizational Attributes of FAs

Composition of Membership

In general, FA members are perceived as poor. The interview result showed that their farm land averaged 0.70 ha, with an average family size of 3.5. However, according to the interviews with FA management, around 70% of FAs instituted a particular group for the destitute poor called "Happy Life Group". This special group operated saving among the poorest in the village with lower rates of principal and interest. The poor group members could also borrow from the "Saving Group" of FA with special treatments, i.e. with a lower interest rate and longer grace period. The management of FAs comprising the poor group indicated that further to saving and loans, members could learn how to change their "mindset" of poverty by growing vegetables and rearing animals around their home and by spending on necessary stuff in needy circumstances. Doing so, they were less likely to migrate to other villages or provinces to sell their labor, particularly in farming, and had more time to stay with their children in the village.

Equity Stake

Since all FAs consisted of a saving group, members contributed monthly saving ranging from 1,000 to 10,000 riel for membership. The bulk of FAs, i.e. 93% of the interviewed FAs, also required members to pay "emergency and supporting" budgets of 100 to 300 riel. These budgets were used for helping members in times of emergency (e.g., death and illness) and for administration support (such as notebooks and travel of committee members to attend meetings and training in town). Concerning decision making, FAs' statutes stipulate that decisions are made by a majority of members. Notwithstanding, 58% of the interviewed farmers who attended the monthly meetings with committee members reported that they just listened to reports on saving and loans by FA leadership or committee members, and never asked questions, raised issues and advised or recommended on FA activities. Moreover, only 42% of them both discussed and decided matters related to saving and loans during the meetings. When asked who was influential in their association, 74% of them reported the FA leader. The common reason for this option was that the leader was "knowledgeable" (65%), in addition to his or her position in the village authority as the chief or vice-chief of the village (45%). As reflected in a farmer's reasoning: "He is also the village chief who controls all the villagers. Decisions rest with him" (FA member in Pakbang-orng Village). This result unveils a common sense of 'paternalism' enlisted by FA leadership among farmers.

Size and Structure

The average membership size of the FAs under study was 37 people (approximately 20-30% of a village populace), ranging from 10 to 95 members. The average number of groups within an FA was three, ranging from one to ten groups. The common groups (78%) were 'Saving Group', 'Women's Group', and 'Organic Rice Group'. The majority of members (83%) were women, reflecting the popularity of saving group existing in every FA. The small sizes of membership and groups enabled the committee members to know all the members' names and homes, and created so close relationships among members that at times they sent their money through one another in case they could not attend the monthly meetings.

Most FAs (91%) followed a structure of management committee comprising a leader, a sub-leader, an accountant, and a treasurer. Some FAs (43%) added to the committee a secretary, a farmer representative or an honorary advisor who was the village head, the commune chief or a commune councilor. Despite the committee, according to the interviews with FA management, the burden of running FAs fell on the leader or sub-leader who did ‘almost all the work’, including book keeping and ‘safeguarding of money’. A common reason for the lack of participation from the other committee members pointed out by the interviewees was the ‘voluntary’ nature of the job and a strong perception of trust in the FA leadership (also see Section xxx). As an FA leader complained: “I often do book keeping late at night after the monthly meetings. I sometimes ask my wife to help. My committee members even sometimes do not attend the monthly meetings” (FA Leader in Prey Taley Village). This dependency on FA leadership reflects its ‘trusted’ paternalism not only among common members but also among committee members, and reveals organizational weakness of the established structure.

Leadership

FA leaders and committee members were elected by members at the first meeting where an FA was formed or re-formed in case it was dissolved. The election was facilitated by CEDAC staff, with presence of village and/or commune authorities. The composition of management committee was then recognized by these local authorities. According to FA statutes, the mandate of management committee was one year with unlimited renewable terms.

As indicated above, FA leadership was strongly personified and paternalistic. Leaders were quite well-known in their village and contained relatively better wealth and education endowments. The interview results of FA management display that the average education level of FA leadership (78%) and other committee members (69%) was lower secondary school. Moreover, 74% of FA leaders and committee members held other occupations, including working for other NGOs, and 35% of them had an additional position as the village chief or vice-chief. Three former FA leaders were voted commune councilors in the 2007 commune elections.

In spite of considerable capacity building assistance offered by their supporting agency, most FAs seemed to lack a long-term, concrete sight for sustainability. When asked about their future in the next three-five years, almost all FA leaders and committee members (97%) envisioned a ‘village bank’ as a consequence of their FA in order to increase saving and loans to members and non-members in their village. However, they admitted a need to shore up membership in order to mobilize sufficient fund to materialize their ‘dream’. They particularly appealed to the village and commune authorities to help ‘educate’ non-member villagers to join their FA. This seems to be a worrying issue since CEDAC has recently receded its technical assistance to FAs and planned to fully charge them for its services in 2009 (Interview with CEDAC Program Officer), and FNN planned to work only with ‘viable’ FAs in the near future as it will charge them for membership (Interview with FA Specialist of FNN).

FA leaders rated organizational weaknesses in ‘*strategic capacity*’ (i.e., capacity to propose a vision of the future of members (objectives) that takes into account their expectations and to design a program to achieve the vision) (mean = 3.56; SD = 1.53) and ‘*capacity to mobilize and manage human resources*’ (i.e., capacity to mobilize members to participate efficiently in activities, to manage power, to share responsibilities, to train new leaders, to inform members) (mean = 3.06; SD = 1.44). They reported organizational strengths in ‘*financial and accounting capacity*’ (i.e., capacity to mobilize internal resources (fees, margins from economic services) and external resources (subsidies, credit), to manage resources properly, to develop resources, and to report on results) (mean = 4.70; SD = 1.33), ‘*capacity to negotiate and manage relationships with other stakeholders*’ (i.e., capacity to communicate with other actors, to identify allies and opponents, to develop

partnerships) (mean = 4.09; SD = 1.41), and ‘*capacity to organize and implement action*’ (i.e., capacity to implement activities, to share responsibilities, to adapt to unexpected situations) (mean = 4.00; SD = 1.20) (see Table 6.1). However, FA leaders indicated the following areas of capacity for further improvement (see Table 6.2): entrepreneurship/doing business (mean = 4.83; SD = 1.64), management/leadership (mean = 4.55; SD = .97), financial planning and management (mean = 4.23; SD = 1.29), and resource mobilization (mean = 4.27; SD = 1.20).

Table 6.1: Self-Evaluation of Organizational Strength by FA Leaders (n = 23)

<i>Capacity Item</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Strategic capacity	3.56	1.53
2. Capacity to organize and implement action	4.00	1.20
3. Capacity to mobilize and manage human resources	3.06	1.44
4. Financial and accounting capacity	4.70	1.33
5. Capacity to negotiate and manage relationships with other stakeholders	4.09	1.41

Note: Values indicate average scores of capacity items measured by a 5-point (1-5) scale.

Table 6.2: Capacity Areas FA Leaders Wanted to Improve Further (n = 23)

<i>Capacity Area</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Agricultural techniques	3.50	1.83
2. Entrepreneurship/doing business	4.83	1.64
3. Management/leadership	4.55	.97
4. Financial planning and management	4.23	1.29
5. Communication	3.33	1.52
6. Facilitation	3.66	1.42
7. Resource mobilization	4.27	1.20
8. Community development	3.45	1.20
9. Natural resource management	3.06	1.70
10. Democracy/human rights	2.85	1.63

Note: Values indicate average scores of improvement levels measured by a 5-point (1-5) scale.

This is relatively in line with indication by FA members when asked what capacity areas they wanted their FA management to refine (see Table 6.3): management/leadership (72.38%), resource mobilization (67.61%), and entrepreneurship/doing business (64.76%). FA members reported their leaders were kind/helpful (94.60%), friendly/popular (91.47%), responsible (85.55%), and active (85.04%). Less FA members reported their leaders were efficient/effective (68.50%), decisive (61.76%), and risk-taking (56.08%). Only 4% of FA members said their leaders called a meeting to discuss the recently increasing rice price and advised them to store up some portions of rice for sale at a higher value at markets and not to sell it immediately to middlemen.

Table 6.3: Capacity Areas FA Members Wanted their FA Management to Improve (n = 105)

<i>Capacity Area</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
1. Management/leadership	76	72.38
2. Decision-making	32	30.47
3. Communication	37	35.23
4. Facilitation	41	39.04
5. Resource mobilization	71	67.61
6. Entrepreneurship/doing business	68	64.76

Note: Values indicate frequencies and percentages of capacity areas wanted to be improved.

This result confirms the traditional endowments of FO leaders in generosity, popularity, and activeness, and their weaknesses in organizational management, decision-making process, and entrepreneurial skill (Csaki and Kisev, 1993; FAO, 1996; Couture et al., 2002).

The average age of FA leaders was 44 years. Leadership was regularly elected by members, but there was no leadership training/monitoring for young members provided by FAs or supporting agencies. CEDAC offered management/leadership training to FA leaders during the initial stage of formation. Their training later intensified in agriculture, financial planning and management, and entrepreneurship. FA leaders indicated receiving training from CEDAC in the following major areas (see Table 6.4): agricultural techniques (100%), entrepreneurship/doing business (86.95%), management/leadership (91.30%), financial planning and management (86.95%), facilitation (78.26%), communication (78.26%), and resource mobilization (73.91%).

Table 6.4: Training Areas Received by FA Leaders (n = 23)

<i>Training Area</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
1. Agricultural techniques	23	100.00
2. Entrepreneurship/doing business	20	86.95
3. Management/leadership	21	91.30
4. Financial planning and management	20	86.95
5. Communication	18	78.26
6. Facilitation	18	78.26
7. Resource mobilization	17	73.91
8. Community development	15	65.21
9. Natural resource management	12	52.17
10. Democracy/human rights	12	52.17

Note: Values indicate frequencies and percentages of received training areas.

Of 35% of FAs led by management with positions in village authorities, 18% of them had other village authority members or commune chiefs/councilors as ‘advisors’ in their management committee. Obviously, these FAs reported working rapport with local authorities. Overall, FA leaders mentioned good relationships with village authority (mean = 4.85; SD = .89), commune council (mean = 4.70; SD = 1.34), other FAs in the commune (mean = 4.12; SD = 1.25), other FAs outside the commune (mean = 4.07; SD = 1.32), and CEDAC (mean = 4.89; SD = 1.22) (see Table 6.5). They indicated less relationships with provincial agencies (particularly DAFF and Department of Rural Development) (mean = 3.02; SD = 1.87), other CBOs in the commune (mean = 2.67; SD = 1.65), and other local NGOs in the commune (mean = 2.70; SD = 1.55). This is illustrative of a lack of contact between FAs and these agencies.

Table 6.5: Assessment of Levels of Cooperation of Other Organizations by FA Leaders (n = 23)

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Village authority	4.85	.89
2. Commune council	4.70	1.34
3. Provincial agencies (DAFF and DRD)	3.02	1.87
4. Other FAs in the commune	4.12	1.25
5. Other FAs outside the commune	4.07	1.32
6. Other CBOs in the commune	2.67	1.65
7. CEDAC	4.89	1.22
8. Other local NGOs in the commune	2.70	1.55

9. INGOs in the commune	2.67	1.05
-------------------------	------	------

Note: Values indicate average scores of cooperation levels measured by a 5-point (1-5) scale.

Internal Rules or By-Laws

As indicated in Section xxx, the internal rules or by-laws of FAs were formulated by the initial members, with facilitation by CEDAC staff. The rules mainly entailed the objectives and functions of FA, conditions for membership, terms for saving and loans, and punishment for rule violation. In the wake of election of leadership and committee members, FAs were then recognized by the village authority and commune council. According to the FA specialist of FNN, FAs would be transformed into ‘Agricultural Development Communities’ and they would be registered by MAFF.

All FA members could identify the objectives/functions of their association, which mainly linked to saving/loan. Among the FAs interviewed, only 69% had functions other than saving/loan. Basically, members understood they were obliged to attend the monthly meetings to settle their saving/loan, to join invited training, and to partake in other activities of FA (such as local development activity).

One peculiar of FAs’ internal rules was that punishment was never exercised. Although the rules stipulated fine or punishment for absence from or late coming to the meetings and late payment of saving/loan, such enforcement was not carried out due to ‘close sentiment’ and ‘tolerance’ among management and members. As one FA leader expressed, “We know each other well and are so close to enforce fine or punishment” (FA Leader in Trapang Chouk Village). Some FA leaders were concerned with losing members if practising the rules. “If we are so strict, some members will quit. We do not want to lose members” (FA Leader in Prey Khvav Village).

Building Capacities to Run the Organization

Capacity building was mainly provided to FA management by CEDAC. As presented above, the main capacity building areas offered were: agricultural techniques (100%), entrepreneurship/doing business (86.95%), management/leadership (91.30%), financial planning and management (86.95%), facilitation (78.26%), communication (78.26%), and resource mobilization (73.91%). FA leaders and committee members were supposed to ‘transfer’ what they learnt to members mainly at the monthly meetings after tackling saving/loan. Only 63% of FA members said they attended training conducted by CEDAC and other agencies (see Table 6.6). Their training items mainly included (see Table 6.7): agricultural techniques (100%), entrepreneurship/doing business (53.00%), and community development (34.84%). Those who received training reported improvement in agricultural know-how among such other knowledge as domestic violence, primary health care, and entrepreneurship. This result points out concentration of capacity building in FA leadership/management. Given the personification and paternalism of leadership and the absence of leadership nurturing/mentoring of young generations, FAs could run the risk of discontinuity once the current leadership/management leaves.

Table 6.6: FA Activities Participated in by FA Members (n = 105)

<i>Activity</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
1. Meeting with leader/committee members	101	96.00
2. Training	66	63.00
3. Study tour/exchange of visit	31	29.50
4. Market fair	60	57.00
5. Local development	88	83.80

Note: Values indicate frequencies and percentages of participated activities.

Table 6.7: Training Areas Received by FA Members (n = 66)

<i>Training Area</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
1. Agricultural techniques	66	100.00
2. Entrepreneurship/doing business	35	53.00
3. Community development	23	34.84
4. Natural resource management	16	24.00
5. Democracy/human rights	15	22.72

Note: Values indicate frequencies and percentages of received training areas.

Increasing Financial or Other Security

The main functions/objectives of FAs were: provision of technical information/advising (particularly on agriculture), provision of access to market (particularly market information), provision of financial means (i.e., loans), representation of farmers' interests (particularly raising members' issues to village and commune authorities), local development (e.g., building or restoring roads or ponds), and natural resource management (e.g., protection of common forests, prevention of illegal fishing). Table 6.8 depicts FA members' assessment of the characteristics (responsiveness, effectiveness, quality, and reliability) of their present FA functions/objectives. They offered high values to: provision of financial means (responsiveness: mean = 4.93, SD = .98; effectiveness: mean = 4.88, SD = 1.55; quality: mean = 4.67, SD = 1.23; and reliability: mean = 4.80, SD = 1.15), provision of technical information/advising (responsiveness: mean = 4.80, SD = 1.05; effectiveness: mean = 4.76, SD = 1.26; quality: mean = 4.33, SD = 1.76; and reliability: mean = 4.65, SD = 1.09), representation of farmers' interests (responsiveness: mean = 4.63, SD = 1.23; effectiveness: mean = 4.00, SD = 1.86; quality: mean = 4.09, SD = 1.74; and reliability: mean = 4.85, SD = 1.37), and provision of access to market (responsiveness: mean = 4.61, SD = 1.56; effectiveness: mean = 4.05, SD = 1.13; quality: mean = 4.33, SD = 1.76; and reliability: mean = 4.05, SD = 1.23). FA members gave less values to: local development (responsiveness: mean = 3.66, SD = 1.84; effectiveness: mean = 3.89, SD = 1.53; quality: mean = 4.00, SD = 1.33; and reliability: mean = 3.81, SD = 1.67) and natural resource management (responsiveness: mean = 4.00, SD = 1.36; effectiveness: mean = 3.85, SD = 1.85; quality: mean = 3.68, SD = 1.67; and reliability: mean = 3.83, SD = 1.55). This assessment reflects that FA members mainly appreciated direct benefits they gained from their associations. They perceived a less important role their FAs performed in extending activities that could also profit the communities at large.

Table 6.8: Assessment of Characteristics of Current FA Functions/Objectives by FA Members

<i>Objective/Function</i>	<i>Responsiveness</i>		<i>Effectiveness</i>		<i>Quality</i>		<i>Reliability</i>	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Provision of production facilities	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
2. Provision of equipment for production	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
3. Provision of technical information/advising (n = 103)	4.80	1.05	4.76	1.26	4.83	.96	4.65	1.09
4. Provision of inputs	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
5. Provision of access to market (n = 81)	4.61	1.56	4.05	1.13	4.33	1.76	4.05	1.23
6. Provision of storage and processing	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
7. Provision of financial	4.93	.98	4.88	1.55	4.67	1.23	4.80	1.15

means (n = 105)								
8. Provision of social services	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
9. Provision of subsidies	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA	NA
10. Representation of farmers' interests (n = 96)	4.63	1.23	4.00	1.86	4.09	1.74	4.85	1.37
11. Local development (n = 68)	3.66	1.84	3.89	1.53	4.00	1.33	3.81	1.67
12. Natural resource management (n = 46)	4.00	1.36	3.85	1.85	3.68	1.67	3.83	1.55

Notes: Values indicate average scores of characteristic levels measured by a 5-point (1-5) scale. The numbers of responses varied in accordance with the different functions/objectives individual FAs performed.

The average budget of FAs was 1-3 million riels (56.50%). Many FAs reported growth in saving capital, but they were not able to specify the incremental amounts since some of them (33.70%) experienced 'dissolving' of Saving Group for some time. Over half of FAs (52%) secured their budget from saving and loan interest. Only 48% of FAs could earn income from running a community store (35%) and fees from study tour visitors (13%) further to saving and loan interest. According to FA leaders, almost all cash was circulated to borrowers at the monthly meetings and the demand for loans from members was greater than the capital FAs possessed.

However, when asked about the benefit of membership the common response among FA members (98.50%) was that of being able to borrow back with low interest (2-3% compared to 5% or higher from private lenders or financial institutions), particularly in times of emergency (illness, loss of crops due to bad nature, and other shocks). The second common benefit of membership (81.70%) was gaining or improving knowledge on agriculture, especially organic farming and SRI.

Overall, FA members were satisfied with their membership. But, a common comment expressed by FA members was that they needed their association to do more beyond saving/loan. When asked about the needs that their FA did not respond to, 68.60% of FA members voiced agricultural infrastructure (restoration of canals and irrigation system), raw materials (rice and vegetable seeds), and common rice storage. These needs were also reflected in the importance of FA functions/objectives rated by FA members (see Table 6.9). Crucial functions/objectives included: access to production facilities (mean = 4.90; SD = 1.10), equipment for production (mean = 4.90; SD = 1.40), inputs (mean = 4.83; SD = 1.65), storage and processing (mean = 4.75; SD = 1.70), financial means (mean = 4.87; SD = 1.63), and subsidies (mean = 4.80; SD = 1.20). FA members placed less significance on: access to technical information/advising (mean = 3.55; SD = 1.33), provision of social services (mean = 3.65; SD = 1.55), and local development (mean = 3.42; SD = 1.55). This result is comparatively similar to the rating by FA leaders, except their emphasis on representation of farmers' interests (mean = 4.70; SD = 1.09), local development (mean = 4.22; SD = 1.57), and provision of social services (mean = 4.12; SD = 1.23) (also see Table 6.9).

Table 6.9: Levels of Importance of FA Functions/Services Rated by FA Leaders (n = 23) and FA Members (n = 105)

<i>Function/Service</i>	<i>FA Leaders</i>		<i>FA Members</i>	
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>
1. Access to production facilities	4.94	1.20	4.90	1.10
2. Access to equipment for production	4.90	1.45	4.90	1.40
3. Access to technical information/advising	3.65	1.33	3.55	1.33

4. Access to inputs	4.85	1.05	4.83	1.65
5. Access to market	4.55	1.65	4.00	1.70
6. Access to storage and processing	4.65	1.70	4.75	1.70
7. Access to financial means	4.88	1.34	4.87	1.63
8. Provision of social services	4.12	1.23	3.65	1.55
9. Access to subsidies	4.85	1.15	4.80	1.20
10. Representation of farmers' interests	4.70	1.09	3.70	1.45
11. Local development	4.22	1.57	3.42	1.55
12. Natural resource management	3.65	1.78	3.75	1.36

Note: Values indicate average scores of importance levels measured by a 5-point (1-5) scale.

Building Influence and Negotiation Power

According to FA leaders, FAs had a good relationship with village and commune authorities. As afore-illustrated, FA leaders rated the levels of cooperation with these local authorities high (village authority: mean = 4.85; SD = .89; commune authority: mean = 4.70; SD = 1.34). This rapport partly stemmed from the recognition of FAs by these authorities and FAs' regular activity report to them. As mentioned above, village and commune authorities officially approved the establishment of FAs and attended the monthly meetings of FAs when invited. At times, these authorities utilized the structure of FAs to disseminate information (e.g., invitation to meetings and raising awareness on particular issues) to villagers. 63.50% of FA leaders reported attendance in monthly meetings with the commune council, where they discussed local development issues and reported their FA activities. This participation by FAs was part of a 'Local Governance Improvement' project assisted by an INGO called PACT through CEDAC, where representatives of villagers served as a 'Monitor' of the commune council's development activities. The working rapport with local authorities was also a consequence of consultative workshops arranged by CEDAC, aiming at bettering comprehension and collaboration between FAs and other development stakeholders. The workshops were held regularly (once a month in the first year, once every two months in the second year and once every three months at present) and participated by various agencies, including FA clusters, PDAFF, PDRD and other district and provincial bodies.

CEDAC Program Officer and FA Specialist of FNN indicated that FAs were clustered at commune and district levels. Commune and district clusters of FAs belonged to provincial and national federations of FAs. Through these clusters and federations, FAs collectively voiced their needs and concerns to appropriate authorities and they accumulated cooperation and appreciation from relevant stakeholders. In the words of CEDAC Program Officer, "At the outset, local authorities were reluctant and uncooperative. They feared for politicization among FAs. But through continuous reporting about FAs' activities and repeated invitations to FAs' meetings, they commenced to comprehend the significant role of FAs and offered to cooperate with and assist FAs." The recognition of FAs also stemmed from their active role in local development in their villages. 87.50% of FAs and 83.80% of FA members reported cash and/or labor contribution to community development such as building or restoring roads or ponds. Another attribute was, as discussed above, some FAs had leadership/management holding positions in village and commune authorities. Of 35% of FAs led by management with positions in village authorities, 18% of them had other village authority members or commune chiefs/councilors as 'advisors' in their management committee. Obviously, these FAs reported working rapport with local authorities.

Moreover, based on FA leaders, FAs with 'Organic Rice Production Group' (65.00%) could maintain a set price of organic rice with CEDAC. Members selling organic rice to CEDAC consented to contribute 100 riel per kilogram for their FA's operation costs. Another exemplar was with FAs containing 'Chicken Raising Group' (38.60%), which could fix with businessmen in town

a high value for chicken bought from members. Analogously, selling members devoted 50 riel per kilogram to their association.

Accommodating Emerging Needs through New Activities

FAs were insufficiently capacitated to meet emerging needs of members. As stated above, the chief function/objective of most FAs was saving/credit. Only 69% of FAs had other functions, mainly: ‘Organic Rice Production Group’, ‘Women’s Group’, and ‘Natural Resource Conservation Group’. Such other needs of members as agricultural infrastructure (restoration of canals and irrigation system), raw materials (rice and vegetable seeds) and common rice storage could not be satisfied by FAs. All FAs did not provide social services (such as literacy education and primary health care) to members. They needed to beef up their organizational and financial capability so as to expand and diversify their activities to gratify their members’ emerging needs.

Scaling up and Linking with Other Institutions

Most FAs (78%) started with one group, namely ‘Saving Group’. Their membership at the commencement averaged 27 individuals. 84.50% of FAs reported an increase in groups and membership, mainly 2-3 groups and 7-50 people respectively. As precedingly presented, CEDAC performed a critical facilitating role in forging FAs into clusters and federations at local and national extents. FAs were inter-linked and exchanged via study tour, training, regular meetings, and other events (such as market fair and competition at annual congressional meetings).

Overall, as reported in the previous section, FA leaders mentioned good relationships with village authority (mean = 4.85; SD = .89), commune council (mean = 4.70; SD = 1.34), other FAs in the commune (mean = 4.12; SD = 1.25), other FAs outside the commune (mean = 4.07; SD = 1.32), and CEDAC (mean = 4.89; SD = 1.22). They indicated less relationships with provincial agencies (particularly DAFF and Department of Rural Development) (mean = 3.02; SD = 1.87), other CBOs in the commune (mean = 2.67; SD = 1.65), and other local NGOs in the commune (mean = 2.70; SD = 1.55).

As unveiled above, FAs had a good working relation with village and commune authorities for various reasons. Oftentimes, these authorities employed the structure of FAs to perform state functions such as inviting villagers to meetings and delivering awareness on development issues. Since village and commune authorities were regularly invited to FAs’ meetings, they at times took advantage of this platform to communicate with villagers. The working rapport also derived from the merit of some FA management and advisors holding positions in village and commune authorities and from FAs’ contribution to local development.

Yet, FA leaders reported less cooperative relationships with provincial agencies (DAFF and DRD). Where contact occurred, these agencies just gathered information on FAs’ activities or conducted rare agricultural extension activities through FAs. According to some FA leaders, these agencies and other organizations seldom worked with FAs for they “trusted the capacity of CEDAC in carrying out the work” (FA Leader in Pakbang-orng Village).

According to Johnsen and Prom (2005), some political parties have already been impressed by FAs for their role in local development. They caveated about feasibility of cooptation of FAs by potical parties for their vested interests. The present study stopped short of finding out whether FAs were politicized although two FA leaders and one FA advisor frankly admitted that they were respectively activists and a commune councilor of an opposition party and the FA management-cum-village authorities belonged to the ruling party. Notwithstanding, Johnsen and Prom (2005) asserted that most FA leaders vowed to keep up their independence and reciprocal, collective action.

1.3. External Environmental Attributes of FAs

Generically, government's development policies and strategies incentivize formation of farmers' organizations. For instance, the government's 'Rectangular Strategy' signifies agriculture as a leading contributor to poverty eradication in Cambodia (RGC, 2006). One of the major thrusts of the agricultural development strategy is "facilitating establishment of agricultural cooperatives to ensure better prices of products". As stated in Section xxx, the government provides a variety of supportive legal instruments for moderating formation of FOs. Major legal materials comprise: 1996 Draft Law on Local Associations and Non-Government Organizations; 2003 Royal Decree on Establishment and Functioning of Agricultural Cooperatives, Unions of Agricultural Cooperatives and Agricultural Pre-Cooperatives; 2003 Prakas (Edict) Promulgating Model Statutes and By-Laws of Agricultural Cooperatives; 2003 Model Statutes of Agricultural Cooperatives; and 2003 Model By-Laws of Agricultural Cooperatives. Somehow, most FOs and supporting agencies are rarely aware of these legal texts as the majority of FOs are not formally registered.

MAFF itself, with some donor assistance, have also created its own FAs. Johnsen and Prom (2005) claimed that government-initiated FAs, where 'incentives' (such as loans and seeds) were offered for membership, may face 'control', 'supervision', or 'direct management' by state agencies, and thus be subject to political conditions and manipulation. Sometimes, government-assisted FAs may cause 'negative' competition with CEDAC-assisted FAs. According to FA leader in Trapang Trabek Village, to exemplify, an FA initiated and assisted by MAFF drew out some members of his FA as it had a huge amount of starting capital and provided members with greater loans without requiring them to deposit savings.

The increasing presence of development agencies (particularly NGOs and donor organizations) since the early 1990s, following suit the mainstream global development paradigms of 'participatory development', 'empowerment' and 'social capital', has encouraged establishment and multiplication of FOs. As Julie et al. (2005) pointed out, FOs in Cambodia take many forms and work with a wide variety of stakeholders for various development aims. As a consequence, many FOs are outsider-initiated, donor-oriented and short-lived.

In a broader policy framework, FOs fall in the sphere of civil society whose development role is considered a 'crucial, complementary partner' by the government and donor community (Kao, 1999). The proliferation of civil society organizations (CSOs) in Cambodia chiefly attributed to two conducive factors: the post-conflict, 1993 Constitution favoring 'rights of association' and the subsequent influx of international development aid into the country. This paved the way for CSOs, including FOs, to flourish and cooperate with state and donor bodies in the development arena.

FA leaders generally contended that though they had relatively less working contact with some government agencies (such as DAFF and DRD), they did not attest government rules and regulations hindered the formulation and functioning of their FAs. Furthermore, they enjoyed the good collaboration with village and commune authorities.

2. Discussion of Research Findings

Based on the research results presented in Section 1, the sections to follow discuss the internal functions and external relations of FAs in the realms of their organizational strengths and challenges and capacity-building needs.

2.1. Organizational Strengths of FAs

The most obvious strength of FAs was the usefulness of saving/loans among members. Despite limitations in capital and membership, FAs functioned well in this area, providing members with needy loans for use in agriculture and small businesses further to in times of emergency. Another strength of FAs lied in members' know-how of agriculture, specifically organic farming/SRI. Members also spread their knowledge to interested non-member villagers. This is in line with a previous survey (PDAFF Takeo, 2005) which indicated that organic farming/SRI was widely adopted by farmers in Takeo province since CEDAC ushered this agricultural technique in their target areas. The third remarkable strength of FAs was commitment and satisfaction of leaders and members. FA leaders were committed to running and nurturing their associations. They performed their role on a voluntary basis and at times spent their own resources (time, labor and cash) for FA activities. FA members were satisfied with their membership, stating the advantages of saving/loans and improvement in agricultural practices. Most importantly, they embarked upon their Saving Group without external monetary inputs.

Concerning working relationships with external agencies, FAs had rapport with village and commune authorities for a variety of reasons. First, FAs regularly reported their activities to these local authorities and invited them to their monthly meetings. Second, these local agencies made use of FAs to communicate with villagers for state functions, and some FAs had regular contact with commune authority via attendance in commune council's local development meetings. Third, some FAs had leadership and/or management members holding positions in village and commune authorities. Fourth, FAs and local authorities regularly attended consultative workshops arranged by CEDAC, aiming at enhancing their mutual understanding and cooperation. These factors enabled intimate and conductive working liaisons between FAs and these local agencies.

FAs also enjoyed good networks with other FAs in and out of their commune via commune and district clusters. Facilitated by CEDAC, FAs exchanged ideas and experiences on agriculture and association management through study tour, market fair, training and meetings. At provincial and national levels, FA clusters were federated. Farmer and Nature Network (FNN) acted as a national FA federation, delivering technical assistance to FAs to refine their organizational capacity and alliance. This multi-extent networking allowed FAs to act collectively on common concerns among themselves and vis-à-vis external institutions such as commune councils. This collective strength of 'social capital' conforms with a study by Malena and Chhim (2008) that promises the potential of FAs, as an element of civil society, in bettering 'local governance' at commune level.

Another blessing attribute for FAs was supportive regulatory and legal environment. Government and international donor community alike are favorable of nurturing FAs by offering legal and technical facilitation. FAs were officially reckoned by village and commune authorities, and they would be registered at provincial and ministerial levels. FAs are considered an integral component of civil society that plays a pivotal, auxiliary role in development work in Cambodia. Government and donor actors consent that agriculture is a backbone for economic growth and poverty reduction, and that FAs are an effectual approach to improving farmers' productivity and bargaining power within a free-market economy.

2.2. Organizational Challenges of FAs

Notwithstanding the above organizational strengths, FAs still need to tackle a great deal of organizational challenges. Chief pitfalls comprise: weak organizational structure, weak organizational capacity, and weak organizational relationships with other development actors. Although FA leadership and management committee members were elected by members, the established structure did not function well. In most cases, FA leaders were the most influential

figures who made decisions on saving/loans and management issues. Management committees, in many instances, were nominal, leaving the work to FA leaders. Participation by members was also weak, limited to attendance in monthly meetings where mainly they settled saving/loans. This created personification and paternalism of FA leadership and a feasible risk of organizational discontinuity provided a 'next cohort' of leadership was not to be promoted. This challenge is common among FOs in developing countries, which tend to have paternalistic management and limited sense of member ownership (FAO, 1996).

In general, FAs were competent in responding to members' needs and interests as stipulated in their organizational objectives, chiefly to aid each other financially and agriculturally. Besides, some FAs were able to organize such social groups as 'Women's Group', 'Youth Group', 'Poorest Group' and 'NR Conservation Group', and contribute to their community development. Somehow, FA leaders and members underlined some limited capacity areas needed to be bolstered in order to enhance their organizational capability. These included: management/leadership, financial planning and management, entrepreneurship, strategic capacity, and mobilization and management of human resources. Actually, FA leaders and committee members had been considerably trained in management/leadership, financial planning and management, and entrepreneurship. Still, to increase organizational effectiveness and accountability, these capacity areas were valid for FA leadership/management to refine. A large number of FAs were interested in initiating or extending community business activities (such as community store and bulk purchase and sale of rice, animals and vegetables). Hence, entrepreneurship skill is of vital importance for them to commence or expand their business initiatives so that they will be able to beef up their pecuniary capital and organizational viability.

As to strategic capacity, it seemed that FAs needed to be more 'proactive' and to contemplate 'out of the frame' in a longer term if they were to be more triumphant within a pressingly challenging environment. A vivid exemplar was their foreseeable wish of transforming their FA into a 'village bank' without back-up of a concrete plan. Most FAs needed more monetary capital and membership to materialize this dream. Another instance was their inertia in response to 'rising rice price'. Most FAs did not act to increase members' collective bargaining power vis-à-vis middlemen and protect members from vulnerability to 'price signals'. Only a couple of FAs called a meeting to discuss the increasing rice price and advised members to store up some portions of rice for sale at a higher value at markets and not to sell it immediately to middlemen. Another capacity area needed to be boosted was mobilization and management of human resources. This was reflected in the weak participation by members in decision-making and other initiatives of FAs. As iterated above, there existed a grave sense of paternalism of leadership among members.

FA leaders underscored less cooperative relations with provincial agencies (DAFF and DRD), other CBOs and NGOs. The limited linkages with these development players demonstrated the dominant role that supporting organization CEDAC performed in facilitating and nurturing FAs. Although FAs attracted other development entities (Johnsen and Prom, 2005) and some FAs also worked with other donor agencies, many FAs concentrated their activities with CEDAC. Since CEDAC was locally renowned for its development caliber in the field of agriculture, other actors around 'confided in' its institutional competence and seemed to leave the work with FAs 'untouched'.

All in all, the above organizational challenges may have hindered FAs in leveraging up their efficacy and impact. To scale up their effectiveness in responding to members' aspirations and in gratifying members' unmet needs, FAs should overcome these challenges incrementally. Otherwise, their performance as an essential core of civil society in ameliorating poverty of members and communities at large would be impeded.

VII. Case Study of Trapaing Srang Farmers' Association

Farmers' Association in Trapaing Srang village, Angtasom commune, Tramkak district, Takeo province, is regarded as a model FA in the "ILFARM-TK" project. It is a three-time champion of competition at Annual FA Congress organized by FNN/CEDAC. The FA has drawn other development agencies (other FAs, CBOs, NGOs, government institutions, mass media) to work with, or learn from, it. This case study aims to comprehend the formation process, internal workings, external support, and success factors of this FA. It is based on the interview with the FA leader by the author and Suon (2006).

1. Overview of Trapaing Srang Village

Tropaing Srang village is an area of 118 ha, of which 86 ha is cultivation land and 32 ha is residential land. All of 113 families residing in the village hold certificates of land possession issued by various local and provincial authorities. The village is just 6 km away from Angtasom market, the main market in the commune situated on National Road 3 where villagers trade goods, food, and agricultural produce and equipment. The village is accessible in all seasons due to a laterite road built by the government in 2006.

The main economic activity of villagers is agriculture. Most villagers do wet season rice farming. Dry season rice farming is impossible due to insufficient irrigation systems. Only 5 ha of the total rice field can go double cropping- first cropping at the start of rainy season and second cropping in the middle of rainy season. Further to rice farming, villagers grow other crops, raise animals (cows, buffalos, ducks, pigs, chicken, fish) and do fishing in ponds, rivulets and canals in the rainy season.

Some villagers derive extra income from non-agriculture activities. Their secondary jobs include: motor-taxi driver, construction worker and garment worker in Phnom Penh, grocer, operator of battery charging, motorcycle mechanic, agricultural laborer, carpenter, basket maker, mat weaver, and roof-leaf weaver.

CEDAC commenced its development activities in this village in 2003. It focuses on two areas of support: agriculture and farmers' association. Major agricultural activities comprise: System of Rice Intensification (SRI), animal husbandry, vegetable and cash crop growing, natural fertilizer collecting, compost making and botanical pesticide production.

In addition to CEDAC, two credit institutions are operating in the village. Thaneakea Phum of Cambodia (TPC), a village bank, has been providing credit services to villagers since 2006. ACELEDA, formerly a credit NGO and presently a commercial bank, has been servicing in the village since 2003. Another local micro-finance institution PRASAC worked there from 2003 to 2005. Private money lenders do not exist in the village.

2. Process of Formulating Trapaing Srang FA

The process of establishing Farmers' Association in Trapaing Srang village, as in other target villages, concerned gradual and on-going facilitation and capacity building by CEDAC. In early 2003, CEDAC introduced SRI/organic farming techniques and the aim of FA formation to the village authority and several other villagers. Six families (three villagers, the village chief, the village vice-chief and the village secretary) volunteered to be focal farmers to experiment the new methods and disseminate them to other villagers. The focal farmers were trained in the new techniques and attended study visits to learn them from other villages. They practiced what they had learnt in some portions of their rice fields and enjoyed better yields with less production costs (especially rice seeds and fertilizers). They afterwards held meetings with other villagers to disseminate the techniques and took them to witness the aftermath in the experimented rice fields. Consequently, many villagers became interested in adopting the new innovations. In late 2003, project staff assisted the focal farmers in forming a women's group, whose main function/objective

is saving/loan among members in addition to learning agricultural innovations. Then, in 2004, with more interested farmers and facilitation by CEDAC the management committee of women's group created Farmers' Association, which intended to expand and diversify services beyond saving/credit and agriculture. Other groups of the association were later formed by the FA management committee members themselves without assistance by project staff, such as poorest group and youth group in 2005. The association currently consists of 95 households (71 females) belonging to ten groups: saving group, women's group, youth group, poorest group, organic rice production group, farmer-to-farmer extension group, seed purification group, bulk business group (community store), self-development group, and happy rural children group. The average group membership was 28 people, ranging from 10 to 60 individuals. Most of the groups conduct saving/loan as a core activity besides other economic and social (such as domestic violence and primary health care) endeavors. The average group capital was around 800,000 riel, ranging from 50,000 to 2 million riel. All the groups have their own management committee, some of whom are also members of the FA management committee. CEDAC provided training in agriculture, group organization and financial management to FA committee members, who would transfer the knowledge and skills to their respective group members.

3. Structure and Functioning of Trapaing Srange FA

FA and group management committees were elected by individual members. The election was facilitated by project staff and attended by village and commune authorities who would provide official recognition. A typical committee structure consists of a leader, a sub-leader, and a treasurer. The FA management committee includes a leader, a sub-leader, a secretary, a treasurer, two member representatives, and an advisor who is the village chief.

One of the organizational strengths of Trapaing Srange FA was, unlike many other FAs, commitment and collaboration among committee members. Decisions, responsibilities and tasks were shared among management members in accordance with the FA by-law. Committee members are relatively well-off in terms of economic and social status. However, due to the large number of groups (10 groups in total) some committee figures assumed many roles and hence became too occupied with administrative work, meetings, training, study tours and other events required of their participation.

As mentioned above, the core FA function/service is saving/loan further to agricultural education. Normally, members deposited an initial amount of 5,000-10,000 riel and a monthly amount of 500 riel in order to be qualified as a member and able to borrow from the association. They also pay 100 riel per month as 'support fund' for use in administration and emergency (e.g., when they fall sick or decease). Members have to attend their group's monthly meetings to settle their saving/loan, received knowledge and skills on agriculture, and gained information on socio-economic activities of the association. Trapaing Srange FA, unlike many other FAs, experienced greater activeness among its members. Very few members played truant to their group's meetings and tackled their loans late. The FA consumes a strong sense of solidarity, reciprocal understanding and collaboration among management committee and general members. No serious conflict has ever occurred.

The aggregate amount of principal and interest incurred by the FA for the time being stands at over ten million riel. The additional sources of income derive from margins of its community store, fees from study visits by other organizations, and prize cash. It is notable that in addition to loan interest, any profit garnered from groups' business is appropriated to the whole association. For instance, 2% of revenue gained from the community store and 100 riel per kilogram of organic rice sold to CEDAC goes to the FA coffer. In this way, the FA accumulates both social and monetary capital.

4. Achievements of Trapaing Srange FA

One of the most achievable merits delivered by Trapaing Srange FA is probably the decline in the number of villagers loaning from outside sources of finance. By 2006, only ten (9%) of 113 families in the village remained clients of two credit institutions. PRASAC, a local micro-credit institution, ceased its business in 2005 after two years of operations in the village as villagers no longer subscribed its services. The subsicion of villagers' loans from formal credit institutions was triggered by a variety of factors. First, most of the villagers (84% of the village households) are members of various FA groups and thus are accessible to low-interest (2% per month) loans from their individual cohort. Second, greater income earned from the growth in agricultural productivity (rice, vegetables and domestic animals) enabled villagers to borrow less. Third, the subsequent increase in business activities in the village helped improve the income of villagers and therefore reduce loans by them. Fourth, FA members became more knowledgeable and analytical as to loaning that they accessed credit when they really needed it and they managed it more wisely (i.e., spending it on necessary items). Fifth, the rather troublesome arrangements (e.g., land title as collateral and warranty by the village head, family members or neighbors) required by formal financial institutions disincentivized villagers to apply for loans. Sixth, the relatively higher interest rates (3-5%) and strict enforcement in cases of regulation breach also factored in the decrease in villagers' loans from official lenders.

Another achievement of Trapaing Srange FA is their contribution to local development in the village. Further to financially aiding chronically-ill or deceased villagers, the association contributed cash, ideas/initiatives and human resource mobilization to erect and/or maintain village roads, drainage loos and bridges. The FA leader is a member of Community Monitoring Committee (CMC), a community-based body charged with monitoring development activities delivered by the commune council (CC). It is part of a 'Local Governance Improvement' project supported by an INGO PACT, which requires CMC members to partake in monthly CC meetings deliberating commune development plan, budget and expenditure, and contribution in order to refine relevance, efficacy and accountability of commune development schemes. This is an effective avenue for the FA to induce the commune development plan and incorporate some of its activities into it. In this way, the FA is positively recognized by the village and commune authorities for its outstanding contribution to local development.

The FA was able to contribute to local development thanks to the improved livelihoods of its members. By practicing SRI/organic farming, they could lessen production costs (particularly that of chemical fertilizers) and boost up the value-added of their produce. Growing vegetables and cash crops and raising domestic animals, enabled by credit from the FA, also helped them to earn extra income. The improvement in FA members' living conditions impressed non-member villagers, elders and the local authorities. In 2006, the FA membership was 75 households belonging to four groups with an aggregate capital of over three million riel. By now (2008), the membership has grown to 95 families (representing a rise of 18%) belonging to ten groups with the total capital of over ten million riel. This is reflective of the soaring impact of the FA in terms of bettering its members' living standards and trickling down its development to the community at large.

5. Success Factors of Trapaing Srange FA

What has driven the substantial triumph of Trapaing Srange FA? The success of this FA is attributed to five main factors. First, technical assistance and capacity building provided by CEDAC to key and devoted members at the start-up and throughout the project was crucial. Without this, the FA could not fly up. The association evolved from a successful women's group, whose opportunities to saving/credit and know-how on agricultural innovations drew other villagers to join. After being assisted to formulate the full-fledged association, the initial committee figures established other groups based on members' emerging needs by training group committee members

in group management and agricultural skills. This farmer-to-farmer transfer of knowledge and skills was effective and stimulating as they built on their own, hands-on trials and victories. The relatively better-off economic and educational conditions of FA management committee enabled them to effectively train group members and inspired non-members to participate in the association.

Second, building on available resources existing in the village was also critical. The villagers had already possessed a certain stock of pecuniary, natural and social capital. What CEDAC did was effectively mobilizing the existing resources by ‘conscentizing’ the villagers to appreciate the significance and potential of their own capital. Put another way, starting from villagers’ genuine needs and employing their locally-accessible endowments triggered ownership and commitment of membership. Commencing from a women’s group based on the interested members’ capital and natural resources to practice SRI/organic farming, the initial members demonstrated benefits gained from their group to other villagers. Witnessing the advancement of group members and merits of membership, non-members partook in the group, which led to the establishment of the association and other affiliated groups. In sum, the practical advantages obtained by, and mutual trust among, members attributed to the smooth functioning of the association.

Third, another determinant of success was the senses of cooperation and competition embedded among FA members. The group committees and members were determined to effect prosperity in their village and were therefore devoted to assisting one another through knowledge and skill transfer. Also, members possessed a firm sense of competition. They contested in cultivating organic rice and vegetables in order to win prizes from the FA as the best and largest producers. This sort of incentive motivated members to deliver greater efforts and consequently enhance their livelihoods.

Fourth, the FA could institute cooperative and supportive relations with local authorities via regular interactions in their respective meetings and activities. Village and commune representatives took part in FA meetings and events where invited. The FA participation in village and commune meetings enabled them to report their activities and contribute to local development planning and implementation. The working rapport with local authorities was partly a consequence of consultative workshops arranged by CEDAC, aiming at bettering comprehension and collaboration between FAs and other development stakeholders. The workshops were held regularly (once a month in the first year, once every two months in the second year and once every three months at present) and participated by various agencies, including FA clusters, PD AFF, PDRD and other district and provincial bodies. The village and commune agencies used the well-structured channel of the FA to involve villagers in their development initiatives. As indicated previously, the village chief is the advisor to the association. In fact, the FA leader is the wife of the village vice-chief, and the commune chief himself is an active member of the saving group. The intimate and conductive relationships with these local authorities enabled the FA to enjoy their support, incentivization and advisement that expedited its internal workings and external relations.

Fifth, the physical location of the village contributed to the success of the FA as well. As mentioned earlier, the hamlet is accessible in all seasons thanks to a well-conditioned road linking it with National Road 3. It is merely six km away from Angtasom market, the central marketplace in the commune where villagers trade goods and services. The blessing accessibility to the market enables villagers to sell off their agricultural produce if they cannot do it in the village. Or they can sell their products at the weekly agricultural market fair administered by CEDAC nearby Angtasom market. Also, the easy access conveniently enables business people in town to come to their village to do transactions with them. Moreover, the ease in travel allows FA management and members to regularly attend meetings and training conducted at the commune office of CEDAC.

6. Challenges of Trapaing Srange FA

In spite of the above accomplishments, Trapaing Srange FA still encounters a number of challenges. First, given the many affiliated groups the FA management, particularly the leader, seems overwhelmed with the many administrative and development activities espoused by the groups despite their enthusiasm and commitment. The management committee itself is obliged to attend seven meetings per month in addition to other meetings, training, reception of study visits and other events required of their participation. Thus, the FA needs to streamline and professionalize its organizational structure in a manner that eases the workload of the management and accelerates the efficiency and effectiveness of the operations of the association.

Second, as with many other FAs, Trapaing Srange FA has little working interaction with provincial agencies, particularly PDAFF and PDRD. Instead, these agencies came to learn from it regarding agricultural innovations, and the FA reported its development activities to them. PDAFF provided extension services on chemical-fertilizer agriculture and FA members were not interested in it as they practiced organic farming introduced by CEDAC. Since the FA is already active and strong, these agencies did not establish working relationships with it. Hence, its external relations are confined to the village and commune authorities and supporting agency CEDAC.

Third, although members were satisfied with the access to credit, the demand for loans was greater than the capital the FA endows. As indicated above, the average group capital was around 800,000 riel, ranging from 50,000 to 2 million riel while the average group membership was 28 people, ranging from 10 to 60 individuals. What the FA did was lend an equal amount of credit to all group members. The fund paucity was exacerbated by the need for loans from non-member villagers, which the FA would respond to in the future. As afore-iterated, two financial institutions are still operating in the village.

Fourth, loan utilization was not followed up by the management committee. Although loans yielded overall improvements in members' living standards through increasing agricultural productivity and economic activities, assessment of credit use would refine its relevance and effectiveness. The lack of follow-up on loan employment was culminated from the too many roles assumed by the FA committee members.

Fifth, like many other FAs, the internal rules were not enforced upon late payers, meeting truants or late comers. Even though very few members settled their loans late (for a couple of months) or were absent from the monthly meetings, it did cause discontent and contagion among regulation-abiding members. By-law enforcement was weak because "familiarity breeds contempt." The management was too intimate to members to apply the rules for the sake of 'solidarity' or for fear of displeasing or losing members. This is typical in small community organs where the leader and members constitute a sense of personal relationship.

7. Conclusion

Trapaing Srange Farmers' Association represents an inspiring FA model in Tramkak district, Takeo province. It has levered up members' livelihoods through access to low-interest credit capitalized among members themselves, increasing agricultural productivity by growing organic rice and vegetables and raising domestic animals, and rising business activities in and out of the village. Moreover, it has contributed to local development in terms of building and/or maintaining physical infrastructure in the village and aiding poorer villagers in times of shocks.

The triumph of the association was derived from a number of intertwined factors: extensive technical assistance and capacity building by CEDAC; capitalization on the financial, natural and

social resources existing in the village; senses of cooperation and competition among members; supportive and collaborative relationships with local authorities; and favorable accessibility of the village. However, the FA still faces a variety of shortcomings: heavy workload of management committee; minimal working relation with provincial agencies; inadequate loan supply; lack of assessment of credit use; and weak rule enforcement.

Therefore, to bolster the organizational efficacy and accountability of the FA, the above drawbacks need to be tackled. The association has proven substantial strengths of internal functions and external relations. What is additionally needed is professionalization of the FA to enhance its workings. Furthermore, as the capital and membership keep growing it is critical for the FA to refine its strategic capacity as to planning of its evolution or transformation in the forthcoming future.

VIII. Conclusion and Policy Implications

In Cambodia, agriculture is a bedrock for economic growth and poverty reduction providing smallholders are taken into account. Typical loopholes of agricultural development comprise: poor infrastructure, absence of an efficient marketing system, absence of adaptable technologies, inadequate extension services, lack of agro-processing facilities, inadequate rural financial structures, insecure land tenure, poor management of natural hazards, and burden of informal road passage and market access fees. There exists a common consent among the development circle that farmers' organizations, particularly village-based farmers' associations (FAs), can address these malfeasances in an effectual and sustainable manner. Notwithstanding, FAs in Cambodia constitute shortages of organizational capacity to internally manage their associations and to externally deal with other development agencies. The current research concretely contemplated FAs' areas of internal and external capacity and specifically identified their organizational capacity tenets for improvement.

FAs under the study have already proved a considerable amount of triumph in accomplishing their organizational ends. Members have become better off economically and socially due to access to financial services (saving/loans) and refinement in agricultural practices. A number of FAs have also founded social groups (such as women's, youth, poorest and NR conservation groups) to further serve the interests of members and communities at large. They have been clustered and federated locally and nationally, and acknowledged for their criticality in community development by local authorities. FAs have been regarded as a substratum of civil society in improving local governance by holding local authorities accountable for their development activities.

This study uncovered dominant determinants of success of Cambodian FAs as follows. In regards to internal organizational factors, FAs demonstrated the strengths in the functioning of financial services, members' know-how of agriculture, and commitment and satisfaction of leaders and members. As to external environmental factors, FAs unfolded the positive attributes in working relations with village and commune authorities and corroborating organization CEDAC, networking with other FAs, and favorable regulatory and legal environment. Still, FAs need to tackle the following organizational challenges lest they are to render greater efficacy and effects: weak organizational structure (personification and paternalism of leadership and limited participation by members), weak organizational capacity (particularly in management/leadership, financial planning and management, entrepreneurship, strategic capacity, mobilization and management of human resources), and weak organizational relationships with other development actors (specifically with provincial agencies, other CBOs and NGOs).

Thus, capacity-bolstering aid needs to build on FAs' organizational strengths and concretely address their organizational weaknesses. If FAs are to fully extend their potential, becoming full-

fledged and able to respond to unmet needs of members, they need to take into account the following capacity-building areas. In the immediate term, FAs need to raise up membership and saving capital so as to meet the rising credit demand of members and non-member villagers and to realize the wish of establishing a 'village bank'. One of the viable approaches to increase membership is through 'advertising' FAs' activities at village and commune meetings and community events. Another way is to increase contribution to local development as much as possible. Concerning organizational capacity, further to improving management/leadership and financial planning and management, three capacity areas should be prioritized: strategic planning, business skill, and human resource management. Strategic planning is significant for FAs to reach their future direction with tailor-made acumen and resources. Entrepreneurship skill is crucial for FAs to initiate or extend their business activities. They have already proved success in some areas such as community store, organic rice and poultry. To mitigate paternalistic leadership, human resource mobilization skill needs to be additionally built up in order to elicit more participation and responsibility from members. Moreover, a 'second wave' of leadership needs to be nurtured so that organizational viability is to be warranted. Village youngsters with some level of education should be tapped to work with FA management so that they can be mentored for future leadership.

In the long run, organizational relationships need to be expanded with such other development players as provincial agencies and other CBOs and NGOs so that they can build on FAs' experiences to scale up impacts within the target areas and elsewhere. Where feasible, joint development activities (such as extension services, entrepreneurial initiatives, and community work) should be conducted with these bodies. FAs need to synergize their working alliance in order to enhance their local influence within the development arena.

As concluding remarks, although in a growing phase FAs have unveiled notable triumph in improvement in members' livelihoods and in local development at large. There exists a great potential that FAs will become a 'full-fledged' actor in agricultural development and local governance if appropriate 'partnerships' are forged with them by building on their organizational strengths. FAs have already garnered a substantial stock of experience and resources to become sustainable, both fiscally and technically. Since CEDAC is terminating its 'scaffolding' (and will charge for its future services), this leaves greater room for impressed stakeholders to work with FAs in areas of common interests. To conclude, it is a viable and plausible imperative for all development actors (government, donors, civil society and private sector) to engage in institutional strengthening of FAs lest they aspire to effectually attack the chief bottlenecks of agricultural refinement, which retard economic growth and poverty eradication.

Areas for Further Study

This research constitutes some facets worth additionally delving into. First, it would be interesting to examine local dynamics between FAs and other CBOs within the contexts of 'local culture' and 'social capital'. Improvement in the dynamics among these grassroots entities would scale up the impact of FAs internally and externally. Second, as FAs are performing an increasing role in NRM (e.g., protection of common forests and prohibition of illegal fishing) within their vicinity, it would be worthy looking at their organizational capability within this area. Third, since FAs have impressed some political parties for their role in local development, the issue of politicization or 'micro-politics' among FAs needs to be further explored whether it would advance or impede their internal functions and external relations. These items for additional research could be investigated based on particular, in-depth and process-oriented case studies of FAs and/or their affiliated cohorts.

References

- Ali, O. and S. Baas. 2004. *Lessons learned and good practice: CBOs in Yemen*. Rome: FAO.
- Cambodian Center for Study and Development in Agriculture (CEDAC). 2008. List of Farmers' Associations in "Improving Livelihoods of Subsistence Farmers in Tramkak District (ILFARM-TK)" Project (in Khmer). Phnom Penh: CEDAC.
- Cambodia Development Resource Institute and Institute of Development Studies (CDRI-IDS). 2006. *Roundtable discussion on Cambodian development issues*. Phnom Penh: CDRI.
- Chandler, D. 2000. *A History of Cambodia*. Chiang Mai: Silkworm Books.
- Cernea, M. M. 1995. Knowledge from Social Science for Development Policies and Projects. In *Putting People First: Sociological Variables in Rural Development*, ed. M. M. Cernea. Oxford: World Bank and Oxford University Press.
- Chambers, R. 1997. *Whose Reality Counts? Putting the First Last*. London: Intermediate Technology Publications.
- Couture, M.F. et al. 2002. *Transition to cooperative entrepreneurship: Case studies from Armenia, China, Ghana, Poland, Russia, Uganda and Vietnam*. Geneva: International Labor Office.
- Crowley, E. 2001. *Back to Office Report: Exposure and Dialogue Programme SEWA, Gujarat India, 18-28 July 1999*. Rome: IFAD.
- Crowley, E. et al. 2005. Organizations of the poor: Conditions for success. *Paper presented at International Conference on Membership-Based Organizations of the Poor: Theory, Experience, and Policy*. Ahmedabad, India.
- Csaki, C. and Y. Kisev. eds. 1993. *Agricultural cooperatives in transition*. San Francisco: Westview Press.
- de Haan, A. and S. Sen. 2005. Working class struggles, labour elites and closed shops: The lessons from India's trade unions and experiences of organization. *Paper presented at International Conference on Membership-Based Organizations of the Poor: Theory, Experience, and Policy*. Ahmedabad, India.
- Douglas, Z. and R. Kato. 2004. *Institutional analysis and livelihood profiling in fishing communities in Masaka District, Uganda*. Rome: FAO/FNPP.
- FAO. 1978/79. *Small Farmers Development Manual, Vol. I and II*. Bangkok: FAO Regional Office for Asia and the Far East.
- 1990. *Participation in Practice – Lessons from FAO People's Participation Programme*. Rome: FAO.
- 1996. *Sustainable Rural Development: Progress and Challenges*. Rome: FAO.
- 2002. *The Group Savings Resource Book*. Rome: FAO.
- Grillo, R.D. and R.L. Stirrat. 1997. *Discourses of Development: Anthropological Perspectives*. Oxford: Berg.
- Hanko J. and M. Chantrabumroung. 2003. *Mushroom Training for Disabled People: Thailand*. Rome: FAO.
- Hang, C. et al. 2007. Developing the Rural Economy: Pro-poor Growth Policies. *Paper presented at 2nd Cambodian Economy Forum*. Phnom Penh: Supreme National Economic Council (SNEC).
- Huizer, G. 1983. *Guiding Principles for People's Participation Projects*. Rome: FAO.
- 1997. *Participatory action research and people's participation: Introduction and case studies*. SD Dimensions, <http://www.fao.org/sd/PPdirect/PPre0022.htm> (May).
- Hussain, A. 2004. Poverty in Pakistan: A new paradigm for overcoming poverty. http://www.unmc.edu/Community/ruralmeded/underserved/poverty_in_pakistan.htm (December).
- IFAD. 2000a. *The Exclusion of the poorest: Emerging lessons from the Maharashtra Rural Credit Project, India*. Rome: IFAD.
- 2000b. *The Republic of India: Tamil Nadu Women's Development Project (240-N). Completion Evaluation*. Rome: IFAD, Office of Evaluation Studies.

- 2000c. *Gender perspective-focus on the rural poor: An overview of gender issues in IFAD-assisted projects*. Rome: IFAD.
- 2001. *Rural Poverty Report 2001: The Challenge on Ending Rural Poverty*. Rome: IFAD.
- 2004. *Republic of Indonesia. Country Programme Evaluation. Evaluation Report*. (1523-ID). Rome: IFAD.
- Johnsen, S. and T. Prom. 2005. *Evaluation on "Improving Livelihoods of Subsistence Farmers in Trankak District (ILFARM-TK)" Project*. Phnom Penh: CEDAC/JICA.
- Julie C. et al. 2005. *Inventory of Farmer Organisations in Cambodia*. Phnom Penh: Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries, Cambodia/Ministry of Foreign Affairs, France.
- Kao, K. 1999. Emerging civil society in Cambodia: Opportunities and challenges. *Conference Working Paper No. 2*. Phnom Penh: Cambodia Institute for Cooperation and Peace (CICP).
- Kilavuka, J. M. 2003. *A comparative study of the socio-economic implications of rural women, men, and mixed self-help groups: A case of Kakamega district*. Ethiopia: OSSREA.
- Kusakabe, K. 2004. *Association Strengthening and Gender Mainstreaming in Improving Livelihoods of Small Farmers in Trankak District (ILFARM-TK) Project*. Phnom Penh: CEDAC/JICA.
- Malena, C. and K. Chhim. 2008. *Linking citizens and the state: An assessment of civil society contributions to good governance in Cambodia* (Final Draft). Phnom Penh: World Bank.
- Marlo, R. and R. Iean. 2004. Emerging structures farmer cooperatives in Vietnam: Case studies from the Mekong Delta. Hanoi, Vietnam (Technical Report).
- Marsh, R. 2003. *Working with local institutions to support sustainable livelihoods*. Rome: FAO.
- McGee, R. 2002. Participating in Development. In *Development Theory and Practice: Critical Perspectives*, eds. U. Kothari and M. Minogue. Houndmills: Palgrave.
- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF). 2006. *Agricultural Statistics 2005-2006*. Phnom Penh: MAFF.
- Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF). 2007. *Annual Conference 2007 on Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries*. Phnom Penh: MAFF.
- Narayan, D. et al. 2000. *Voices of the poor: Crying out for change*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, published for the World Bank.
- National Institute of Statistics (NIS). 1998. *1998 Population Census*. Phnom Penh: Ministry of Planning/Royal Government of Cambodia.
- National Institute of Statistics (NIS). 2003. *Statistical Year Book 2003*. Phnom Penh: Ministry of Planning/Royal Government of Cambodia.
- NGO Forum on Cambodia (NGOF). 2007. *NGO Position Papers on Cambodia's Development in 2006*. Phnom Penh: NGO Forum on Cambodia.
- Nou, K. 2006. Emerging Structures of Agricultural Cooperatives in Cambodia. *Cambodia Development Review* (10:1). Phnom Penh: Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI).
- Phim, R. et al. 2007. Macroeconomic Performance. In *Annual Development Review 2006-07*. Phnom Penh: Cambodia Development Resource Institute (CDRI).
- Provincial Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (PDAFF), Takeo Province. 2005. *Survey of Outcomes of ILFARM Project* (in Khmer). Takeo: PDAFF.
- Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC). 2006. *National Strategic Development Plan 2006-2010*. Phnom Penh: Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC).
- SEWA. 2002. *Annual Report 2002*. Ahmedabad: Shri Mahila Sewa Trust.
- Suon, V. 2006. *Assessment of farmers' association and saving groups in Trapaing Srang village, Angtasom commune, Trankak district, Takeo province*. Phnom Penh: CEDAC.
- Tath, S. 2006. *Local development based on farmers' associations in Takeo, Prey Veng and Kampong Speu provinces* (in Khmer). MA thesis, Faculty of Agricultural Science and Rural Development, International University, Phnom Penh, Cambodia.
- van Heck, B. 1989. *Draft Guidelines for Beneficiaries' Participation in Agricultural and Rural Development*. Rome: FAO.

- Watt, S. et al. 2000. Community participation in the development of services: A move towards community empowerment. *Community Development Journal* 35:2, pp. 120-132.
- Woost, M. D. 1997. Alternative Vocabularies of Development? 'Community' and 'Participation' in Development Discourses in Sri Lanka. In *Discourses of Development: Anthropological Perspectives*, eds. R.D. Grillo and R.L. Stirrat. Oxford: Berg.
- World Bank. 2005. *Cambodia Rural Sector Strategy Note: Towards a Strategy for Rural Growth and Poverty Reduction*. Washington, D.C.: World Bank.
- World Bank. 2006. *Cambodia: Halving Poverty by 2015?* Phnom Penh: World Bank.
- World Food Program (WFP). 2008. Cambodia hit hard by inflation. Phnom Penh: VOA.

Appendix

Questionnaire for Members of Farmers' Associations (FAs)

Village:.....Commune:.....District:.....

Questionnaire ID: Interviewer's name:
Date of interview: Time start: Time end:

Introduction: Hello! My name is....., a researcher from RUPP. I am here to learn about how you have participated in your association and other groups or organizations. There is no right or wrong answer. Please feel free to provide detail as much as you can. All information you reply will be kept confidential and will be collectively used for the study purpose only. No particular individuals' and associations' identity will be disclosed.

I. Personal Information

1. What is your relation to your family?

- 1. Household head
- 2. Spouse of household head
- 3. Parent of household head/wife
- 4. Child of household head
- 5. Other. *Please specify:*

2. Provide the following information about you and your family members.

No	Relationship to Family	Sex	Age	Marital Status	Education	Main Job	Secondary Job(s)
2.1	Respondent				<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes: Grade:.....		
2.2	Spouse				<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes: Grade:.....		
2.3					<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes: Grade:.....		
2.4					<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes: Grade:.....		
2.5					<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes: Grade:.....		
2.6					<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes: Grade:.....		
2.7					<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes: Grade:.....		
2.8					<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes: Grade:.....		
2.9					<input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Yes: Grade:.....		

Notes:

- Sex: (1) Male, (2) Female
- Marital Status: (1) Single, (2) Married, (3) Separate/Divorced/Widowed
- Education: (1) No school experience, (2) Primary school, (3) Lower secondary school, (4) Upper secondary school, (5) Other. *Please specify:*

- Main Job: (1) Rice farmer, (2) Worker, (3) Motor Dop driver, (4) Factory worker, (5) Seller, (6) State employee, (7) NGO employee, (8) Animal rearing, (9) Housewife, (10) Student, (11) Other. *Please specify:*
(12) Unemployed

-Secondary Job(s): (1) Rice farmer, (2) Worker, (3) Motor Dop driver, (4) Factory worker, (5) Seller, (6) State employee, (7) NGO employee, (8) Animal rearing, (9) Housewife, (10) Student, (11) Other. *Please specify:*
(12) Unemployed

3. Family Property:

3.1. How large is the farming land your family owns? _____Ha

3.2. How many following livestock does your family own?

- Pig [1] Chicken [2] Duck [3] Cow [4]
 Buffalo [5] Other : _____[6]

3.3. How many following things does your family own?

- Motor bike [1] Bicycle [2] Rice mill [3]
 Radio [4] TV [5] Other: _____[6]

4. Family Income:

4.1. What is the main source of income of your family?

- Farming [1] Livestock [2] Fishing [3] Civil servant [4]
 Selling something [5] Other: _____[6]

4.2. How much is the average annual income of your family? _____Riel/year

4.3. Who earns the income of your family?

Earner	Origin of Income	Monthly Amount
1. Respondent
2. Spouse
3. Family members:		
3.1. Who:.....
3.2. Who:.....
3.3. Who:.....

5. Besides you, who else in your family is a member of this association?

- Spouse Parent(s) Son(s) Daughter(s) Uncle(s)
 Aunt(s) Niece(s) Nephew(s) Grand parent(s) Other:.....

6. How long have you and/or your family members been a member of this association?

- 6.1. Respondent:month(s)
6.1. Family members:month(s)

7. How did you and/or your family members become a member of this association?

7.1. Respondent:

- The village head asked you to attend the first meeting to discuss ideas of forming the association.
- The commune chief or a commune councilor asked you to attend the first meeting to discuss ideas of forming the association.
- An external agency asked you to attend the first meeting to discuss ideas of forming the association. What agency?:.....
- You yourself knew about and attend the first meeting to discuss ideas of forming the association.
- Your family member who is a member of the association asked you to join the association. Who?.....
- Your neighbor who is a member of the association asked you to join the association.
- Other:.....

7.2. Family members:

- The village head asked your family members to attend the first meeting to discuss ideas of forming the association.
- The commune chief or a commune councilor asked your family members to attend the first meeting to discuss ideas of forming the association.
- An external agency asked your family members to attend the first meeting to discuss ideas of forming the association. What agency?:.....
- Your family members themselves knew about and attend the first meeting to discuss ideas of forming the association.
- You asked your family members to join the association.
- Your neighbor who is a member of the association asked your family members to join the association.
- Other:.....

8. What groups of this association do you and/or your family members belong to?

8.1. Respondent:

- Organic rice group Organic vegetable group Savings group Women's group
- Youth group Chicken group Pig group Cow bank group
- Rice bank group Natural resource conservation group Poor or happy life group
- Farmer to farmer extension group Other. *Please specify*:.....

8.2. Family members:

- Organic rice group Organic vegetable group Savings group Women's group
- Youth group Chicken group Pig group Cow bank group
- Rice bank group Natural resource conservation group Poor or happy life group
- Farmer to farmer extension group Other. *Please specify*:.....

9. Besides this FA, did/do you and/or your family members belong to any organizations/institutions? Yes No (Skip to II)

No.	9.1. Name of Organization	9.2. When?	9.3. Who in your family belongs to it?	9.4. Position
1	<input type="checkbox"/> Past [1] <input type="checkbox"/> Now [2]months	Who:..... Age:.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Chair [1] <input type="checkbox"/> Vice-chair [2] <input type="checkbox"/> Member [3] <input type="checkbox"/> Other:____[4]

2	<input type="checkbox"/> Past [1] <input type="checkbox"/> Now [2]months	Who:..... Age:.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Chair [1] <input type="checkbox"/> Vice-chair [2] <input type="checkbox"/> Member [3] <input type="checkbox"/> Other:____[4]
3	<input type="checkbox"/> Past [1] <input type="checkbox"/> Now [2]months	Who:..... Age:.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Chair [1] <input type="checkbox"/> Vice-chair [2] <input type="checkbox"/> Member [3] <input type="checkbox"/> Other:____[4]
4	<input type="checkbox"/> Past [1] <input type="checkbox"/> Now [2]months	Who:..... Age:.....	<input type="checkbox"/> Chair [1] <input type="checkbox"/> Vice-chair [2] <input type="checkbox"/> Member [3] <input type="checkbox"/> Other:____[4]

II. Participation in this Association

1. What are the main objectives/functions of this association?

- Provision of production facilities (e.g., irrigation network)
- Provision of equipment for production (e.g., pump, power tiller/tractor)
- Provision of technical information/advising (e.g., agricultural or SRI techniques)
- Provision of inputs (e.g., seeds, fertilizers, animal feed, pesticides, fuel)
- Provision of access to market (e.g., transportation, trading, information on market)
- Provision of storage and processing
- Provision of financial means (e.g., loans)
- Provision of social services (e.g., health insurance, literacy)
- Provision of subsidies (e.g., in case of natural disaster, loss of profit)
- Representation of farmers' interests (e.g., collective buying and selling of produce, raising members' issues at commune council meetings)
- Local development (e.g., infrastructure construction, social development activities)
- Natural resource management (e.g., forest protection, forestation)
- Other:.....
- Don't know.

2. Use the following scales to assess the characteristics of the current objectives/functions of this association.

(1) Very little (2) Little (3) Average (4) Much (5) Very much

<i>Objective/Function</i>	<i>Response to Needs</i>	<i>Effectiveness (e.g., timely delivery)</i>	<i>Quality</i>	<i>Reliability (e.g., insurance to get services)</i>
1. Provision of production facilities	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
2. Provision of equipment for production	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
3. Provision of technical information/advising	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
4. Provision of inputs	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
5. Provision of access to	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

market				
6. Provision of storage and processing	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
7. Provision of financial means	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
8. Provision of social services	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
9. Provision of subsidies	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
10. Representation of farmers' interests	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
11. Local development	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
12. Natural resource management	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5
13. Other:.....	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5	1 2 3 4 5

3. Use the following scales to rate the importance of each objective/function of this association.

(1) Not so important (2) Not important (3) Average (4) Important (5) Very important

<i>Objective/Function</i>	<i>Level of Importance</i>
1. Provision of production facilities	1 2 3 4 5
2. Provision of equipment for production	1 2 3 4 5
3. Provision of technical information/advising	1 2 3 4 5
4. Provision of inputs	1 2 3 4 5
5. Provision of access to market	1 2 3 4 5
6. Provision of storage and processing	1 2 3 4 5
7. Provision of financial means	1 2 3 4 5
8. Provision of social services	1 2 3 4 5
9. Provision of subsidies	1 2 3 4 5
10. Representation of farmers' interests	1 2 3 4 5
11. Local development	1 2 3 4 5
12. Natural resource management	1 2 3 4 5
13. Other:.....	1 2 3 4 5

4. What are your needs that this association does not respond to?

.....
.....
.....
.....

5. Who do you think are influential persons of this association?

Leader Committee members Active members General members
 Other. *Please specify*:.....

6. Why do you think these persons are influential?

.....
.....
.....
.....

7. What do you contribute in order to be a member of this association?
 Cash Labor Material (Specify:.....) Other:.....

8. How does your membership contribution to this association benefit you?

9. What do you think of characteristics of the current leader of this association?
 Kind/helpful Friendly/popular Efficient/effective Responsible
 Decisive Active Risk-taking Other:.....

10. What do you want the current leader of this association to improve?
 Management/leadership Decision-making Communication Facilitation
 Resource mobilization Entrepreneurship/doing business Other:.....

11. Use the following scales to indicate frequency of your participation in this association's activities?
 (1) Never (2) Once in two months (3) Once a month (4) Twice a month (5) Weekly

<i>Activity</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
1. Meeting with leader/committee members	1 2 3 4 5
2. Training	1 2 3 4 5
3. Study tour/exchange of visit	1 2 3 4 5
4. Market fair	1 2 3 4 5
5. Local development	1 2 3 4 5
6. Other:.....	1 2 3 4 5

12. Why do you not attend the meetings with the leader/committee members of this association?
 Lack of information Lack of time Lack of interest Not invited
 Don't think it's useful Lack of bravery Other:.....

13. What do you do when you attend the meetings with the leader/committee members of this association?
 Just listen to reports of FA Ask questions about activities of FA Raise issues about FA
 Advise or recommend on issues about FA Demand for transparency of FA activities
 Other:.....

14. What do you discuss and decide at the meetings with the leader/committee members of this association?

<i>What?</i>	<i>Discuss (✓)</i>	<i>Decide(✓)</i>
1. Saving/loan		
2. Technical knowledge/information		
3. Issues/difficulties faced by members		
4. Management of the association		
5. Local development		
6. Other:.....		

15. Do you regularly see or know about the budget of this association?

- Yes (Skip to Q.17) No

16. If no, why? Choose only one answer.

- Not interested Not told

17. Have you ever attended any training activities conducted by this association and/or other agencies? Yes No

18. If yes, what were the training activities about within the last two years? How long for each course? What external agencies got involved?

<i>Training Content</i>	<i>How long?</i>	<i>By FA (✓)</i>	<i>By FA with External Aid (✓)</i>	<i>By External Agency (✓)</i>
1. Agricultural techniques			What agency?	What agency?
2. Entrepreneurship/doing business			What agency?	What agency?
3. Community development			What agency?	What agency?
4. Natural resource management			What agency?	What agency?
5. Democracy/human rights			What agency?	What agency?
6. Other:.....			What agency?	What agency?

19. How have these training activities benefited you in general?

.....

20. Recently, rice price has dramatically increased, locally and globally. How has your FA responded to this phenomenon? (e.g., increased bargaining power with middlemen/buyers; increased collective selling).

.....

III. Final Comments

Do you have any other comments to improve the effectiveness of this association?

.....

Thank you for the interview!

Questionnaire for Management of Farmers' Associations (FAs)

Village:..... Commune:..... District:.....

Questionnaire ID: Interviewer's name:
Date of interview: Time start: Time end:

Introduction: Hello! My name is....., a researcher from RUPP. I am here to learn about how you have managed your association and dealt with other groups or organizations. There is no right or wrong answer. Please feel free to provide detail as much as you can. All information you reply will be kept confidential and will be collectively used for the study purpose only. No particular individuals' and associations' identity will be disclosed.

I. Respondent's Information

1. Respondent's sex: Male Female
2. Respondent's age:
3. Respondent's education level:
4. Respondent's position:
5. Number of years in position:
6. Respondent's main jobs:
 - 1.....
 - 2.....
 - 3.....

II. FA's Information

1. Year of FA establishment:
2. Composition of FA committee members: Males:..... Females:.....
3. FA committee members' education level:
 - 1.....
 - 2.....
 - 3.....
 - 4.....
4. FA committee members' main jobs:
 - Member 1:
 - 1.....
 - 2.....
 - 3.....
 - Member 2:
 - 1.....
 - 2.....
 - 3.....
 - Member 3:
 - 1.....
 - 2.....
 - 3.....
 - Member 4:
 - 1.....
 - 2.....
 - 3.....
5. Number of current active groups of FA:
6. Number of groups at start of FA:
7. What groups have increased?:

Why?:

8. What groups have decreased?:

Why?:

9. Number of current members of FA: (Females:.....)

10. Number of members at start of FA: (Females:.....)

11. Main reasons for increase or decrease in membership:

12. Number of members who have left FA: (Females:.....)

13. Main reasons for leaving FA:

14. Current budget of FA (Riels):
 Below 1 million 1-3 million 3-5 million 5-10 million Above 10 million

15. Further to membership fees, what are your sources of funding of FA activities? Check all applicable sources and give their percentages to the total budget.

- Interest from saving/loan (.....%) Business activities:.....
- Local NGOs (.....%) Int'l NGOs (.....%) Int'l organizations (.....%) Government (.....%)
- UN agencies (.....%) Other:.....

III. Inventory of Organizational Functions

1. What services does this association provide to its members?
(More than one answer is possible. Specify each function.)

- Access to production facilities (irrigation network,
- Access to equipment for production (pump, power tiller,
- Access to technical information, technical advising:.....
- Access to inputs (seeds, fertilizers, animal feed, pesticides, fuel,.....)
- Access to market (transportation, trading, information on market,.....)
- Access to storage, to processing:.....
- Access to financial means:.....
- Provision of social services (health insurance, literacy,.....)
- Access to subsidies (from projects, from NGOs, from government agencies, donors,.....)
- Representation of farmers' interests: in commodity chain, to access natural resources, to access to land,.....

- Local development:.....
- Natural resource management:.....
- Other:.....

2. Use the following scales to rate the importance of each function/service.

(1) Not so important (2) Not important (3) Average (4) Important (5) Very important

<i>Function/Service</i>	<i>Level of Importance</i>				
1. Access to production facilities	1	2	3	4	5
2. Access to equipment for production	1	2	3	4	5
3. Access to technical information/advising	1	2	3	4	5
4. Access to inputs	1	2	3	4	5
5. Access to market	1	2	3	4	5
6. Access to storage and processing	1	2	3	4	5
7. Access to financial means	1	2	3	4	5
8. Provision of social services	1	2	3	4	5
9. Access to subsidies	1	2	3	4	5
10. Representation of farmers' interests	1	2	3	4	5
11. Local development	1	2	3	4	5
12. Natural resource management	1	2	3	4	5
13. Other:.....	1	2	3	4	5

IV. Analysis of Organizational Functions

1. What activities does this association conduct to fulfill the services provided to members?

.....

2. What organizations/agencies has your FA been working with? How long? In what activity? What role/capacity do these organizations/agencies play? (Use additional sheets where necessary.)

<i>Organization</i>	<i>How long?</i>	<i>What activity?</i>	<i>What role/capacity?</i>
1. Village authority			
2. Commune council			
3. Provincial agencies:			
4. Other FAs in the commune			
5. Other FAs outside the commune			
6. Other CBOs in the commune:			

.....			
7. CEDAC			
8. Other local NGOs in the commune:			
9. INGOs in the commune:			
10. Other:.....			

3. Use the following scales to assess the level of cooperation of the organizations/agencies your FA has been working with.

(1) Not so cooperative (2) Not cooperative (3) Average (4) Cooperative (5) Very cooperative

<i>Organization</i>	<i>Level of Cooperation</i>				
1. Village authority	1	2	3	4	5
2. Commune council	1	2	3	4	5
3. Provincial agencies:					
4. Other FAs in the commune	1	2	3	4	5
5. Other FAs outside the commune	1	2	3	4	5
6. Other CBOs in the commune:	1	2	3	4	5
7. CEDAC	1	2	3	4	5
8. Other local NGOs in the commune:	1	2	3	4	5
9. INGOs in the commune:	1	2	3	4	5
10. Other:.....	1	2	3	4	5

4. What constraints/difficulties does the association face in providing the services to members?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

5. What are the final impacts of these constraints/difficulties?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

6. What initiatives does the association take to cope with the identified problems?

.....
.....
.....
.....
.....

7. Are these initiatives effective? Why/why not?

.....
.....
.....
.....

8. What difficulties is the association unable to overcome? Why?

.....
.....
.....
.....

9. What solutions could be applicable to future problems?

.....
.....
.....
.....

V. Analysis of Organizational Capacity

1. Use the following scales to evaluate the strength of your association against the capacity items below.

(1) Very weak (2) Somewhat weak (3) Average (4) Somewhat strong (5) Very strong

<i>Capacity Item</i>	<i>Level of Strength</i>				
1. Strategic capacity	1	2	3	4	5
2. Capacity to organize and implement action	1	2	3	4	5
3. Capacity to mobilize and manage human resources	1	2	3	4	5
4. Financial and accounting capacity	1	2	3	4	5
5. Capacity to negotiate and manage relationships with other stakeholders	1	2	3	4	5

Notes:

Strategic capacity: Capacity to propose a vision of the future of members (objectives) that takes into account their expectations and to design a program to achieve the vision.

Capacity to organize and implement action: Capacity to implement activities, to share responsibilities, to adapt to unexpected situations...

Capacity to mobilize and manage human resources: Capacity to mobilize members to participate efficiently in activities, to manage power, to share responsibilities, to train new leaders, to inform members

Financial and accounting capacity: Capacity to mobilize internal resources (fees, margins from economic services) and external resources (subsidies, credit), to manage resources properly, to develop resources, and to report on results

Capacity to negotiate and manage relationships with other stakeholders: Capacity to communicate with other actors, to identify allies and opponents, to develop partnerships

2. Have you ever attended any training activities conducted by this association and/or other agencies? Yes No

3. If yes, what were the training activities about within the last two years? How long for each course? What external agencies got involved?

<i>Training Content</i>	<i>How long?</i>	<i>By FA (✓)</i>	<i>By FA with External Aid (✓)</i>	<i>By External Agency (✓)</i>
1. Agricultural techniques			What agency?	What agency?
2. Entrepreneurship/doing business			What agency?	What agency?
3. Management/leadership			What agency?	What agency?
4. Financial planning and management			What agency?	What agency?
5. Communication			What agency?	What agency?
6. Facilitation			What agency?	What agency?
7. Resource mobilization			What agency?	What agency?
8. Community development			What agency?	What agency?
9. Natural resource management			What agency?	What agency?
10. Democracy/human rights			What agency?	What agency?
11. Other:.....			What agency?	What agency?

4. How have these training activities benefited you in general?

.....
.....
.....
.....

5. Use the following scales to indicate the capacity areas that you want to improve further.

(1) Very little (2) Little (3) Average (4) Much (5) Very much

<i>Capacity Area</i>	<i>Level Needed to Improve</i>				
1. Agricultural techniques	1	2	3	4	5
2. Entrepreneurship/doing business	1	2	3	4	5
3. Management/leadership	1	2	3	4	5
4. Financial planning and management	1	2	3	4	5
5. Communication	1	2	3	4	5
6. Facilitation	1	2	3	4	5
7. Resource mobilization	1	2	3	4	5
8. Community development	1	2	3	4	5
9. Natural resource management	1	2	3	4	5
10. Democracy/human rights	1	2	3	4	5
11. Other:.....	1	2	3	4	5

6. Recently, rice price has been dramatically rising both locally and globally. How has your association dealt with this phenomenon internally and externally?

.....
.....
.....
.....

7. How do you want your association to be in the next 3-5 years?

.....
.....
.....
.....

VI. Final Comments

Do you have any other comments to improve the effectiveness of this association and make it sustainable?

.....
.....
.....
.....

Thank you for the interview!

Interview Guide for FA Support Organizations

I. Background Information:

1. Respondent's Position:..... Years in Position:.....

2. Type of Organization:..... Year of Establishment:.....

II. Support Activities:

1. When did your organization start to support FAs in Takeo Province?
2. Why has your organization been supporting these FAs?
3. What support has your organization been providing to these FAs?
4. Has your organization been collaborating with other support agencies to support these FAs?
If yes, how?
5. What do you think are the organizational strengths and weaknesses of these FAs?
6. What are your organization's short-, medium- and long-term plans and strategies to improve the organizational capacity of these FAs?
7. Recently, rice price has been dramatically rising both locally and globally. Have you noted how these FAs have dealt with this phenomenon internally and externally?
8. What other support agencies do you recommend to be asked for further details on support to FAs in Takeo Province? Why do you recommend these support agencies?
9. Do you have any materials on FAs (e.g., studies, evaluation reports) you want to share?

Thank you for your interview!

About the Author

Dr. Ngin Chanrith is Director of Graduate Program in Development Studies at the Royal University of Phnom Penh, Cambodia. He obtained his Ph.D. in International Development from Nagoya University, Japan, in 2004. He is a member of the Research Advisory Committee at the Mekong Institute, Thailand. His research interest includes civil society, local government, participation, accountability, and decentralisation. He has published scholastic works on Cambodian NGOs' capacity-building and accountability, beneficiary participation in local development, and development assistance.