
Country: Cambodia
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Evaluation Report

for

Welthungerhilfe e.V.

submitted by

Dr. Beate Scherrer



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I. Summary

1 Brief description of the project and framework conditions

After many years of war, social and economic uncertainty, Phnom Penh today, is a booming city. With a high migration dynamic from (and within) the countryside, a large number of Cambodia's rural population is on the move for a better living. Out of approximately 1.4 million people, more than 45% are under the age of 18 years. The project of Mith Samlanh, which was reviewed in this mid-term evaluation, is embedded in this context with all its facets of high economic growth rates, while social development is lagging behind for a series of reasons, most of all the disinterest, neglect and exploitation of the poorer sections of the population by those, who manage to control the country's natural, economic resources and political power. Nevertheless, poorer urban sections and immigrants from the countryside struggle hard to eke out a living in the squatter settlements and on the streets of Phnom Penh, which leaves them vulnerable to exploitation and abuse. Approximately 349,000 people live in the various squatter communities, including an estimated 180,000 youth (50%) who receive little or no parental support. This population is a prime target for prostitution, trafficking and violence.

Since 1994, Mith Samlanh works with these young people and their families with an aim to improve their difficult living conditions, and to prepare them for the upward socio-economic struggle of urban life. Mith Samlanh workers enable vulnerable youth at risk of becoming street children in Kampong Cham and in Phnom Penh, to become actors in their own development, and assist them in finding a sustainable future aside from street life. Young people living already on the streets of Phnom Penh are assisted by an outreach team and gain access to a youth-centred holistic programme addressing all their development needs, including general and vocational education. Subsequently, reintegration efforts into their families, home communities or job placements intend to ensure sustainability. Last but not least, the project endeavours to enhance capacities of Mith Samlanh's own staff, partner organisations and local authorities.

Overall, the evaluation process confirms that the various project teams and the management follow through with this holistic, child/youth-centred approach at all levels of work, including concepts, strategies, work plans and follow-up. All staff is well trained and goal-oriented in their daily work, knowing what they do, why, and how their particular efforts are linked to other activities of the programme.

As the whole programme is rather large and comprehensive, the evaluation concentrated on four major aspects:

- Implementation processes and results formulated in the project's logframe as related to the overall work of Mith Samlanh
- Mechanisms of outcome follow up and impacts of child protection
- Vocational training and job placement as related to labour markets
- Management and capacity building.

The main findings and recommendations are summarised below.

2 Outcomes and impacts

According to Mith Samlanh, poverty in Cambodia is characterised by low income and consumption, poor nutritional status, and limited access to public services including education and health services. Exclusion from economic, social and political processes leaves large parts of the young population vulnerable. Amongst others, young people are

also at risk of STDs, HIV/AIDS and drug consumption, which lead to a further deterioration of the current human development situation. With limited government capacity and financial resources, public provision of services is low.

F 1¹: As compared to the project's logframe, existing achievements are mostly within schedule, and work plans seem to be ambitious but realistic to reach over the remaining project period. Pending more detailed analysis of the information received from various programme teams and reports, it is likely that extension services will further increase thus reaching out to more than 3,940 young people every month (2007).

F 2: The quality of services, especially regarding outreach contacts and streamlined case management is high, promising a larger potential impact. A strong communication culture, both within and among the teams ensures a transparent internal flow of information among staff working on linked activities and key issues. However, day-to-day decisions made, e.g. in team meetings and discussions, are not put down in writing and will have to be memorised by each staff member involved, thus giving cause for confusion and misunderstandings at times. Notes taken forward into work plans may be reviewed with team leaders for clarification.

R 1²: At secondary level meetings, main decisions and analysis results should be kept in writing by minutes for further orientation and later review and following up of impacts.

F 3: Vocational training seems to be oriented towards a growing demand of skilled workers, especially in the service sector, and results to date show an adequate placement mechanism with improved follow up (up to one year) to ensure, that the young graduates stabilise their working habits and first jobs entering the labour market.

R 2: It will be essential to establish a good tracking system for following the careers of former graduates and review impacts of the vocational training at regular intervals (e.g. every 2-3 years).

3 Sustainability

F 4: As Mith Samlanh endeavours to improve its own sustainability by strengthening its staff capacity, collaboration with governmental agencies and other NGOs, the impacts of these activities are not yet clearly analysed and reviewed, because these components belong to various programme activities and issues; whereas economic contributions to sustain Mith Samlanh through training-cum-income generating activities and business to sustain operations seem to have picked up and provide a growing and stable income to the organisation. As already stated during the first ROM mission of the EU "...one cannot expect a civil society organization working with street children to ever be able to perform on such a scale without external funding. Sustainability is ultimately determined by the effectiveness of social reintegration or the ability of the trained youth to stay away from the street on the long run by earning sufficient income."

R 3: It is recommended to take a closer look at cross-cutting impacts of various activities contributing to sustainability and assess their coherence and outcome.

4 Relevance

As stated before, the project is of course highly relevant with regard to the objectives of the programme in that it aims to contribute to poverty reduction and social integration of poorer

¹ F = Findings

² R = Recommendations

sections, either living in or migrating to urban environments in Phnom Penh. Improving the living conditions of disadvantaged street youth who are among the most vulnerable groups of a generation to build a peaceful and cohesive society, is an essential step to integrate and empower young people's participation towards their societal responsibilities, from which they are largely excluded. The project not only prevents further marginalizing and provides protection and support; it also encourages them to become actors in their own development and to make informed choices for their future.

F 5: After 15 years, Mith Samlanh has become a rather strong and dynamic actor of civil society in Cambodia's social sector development. It may reach out to approx. 30 % of young migrants coming to Phnom Penh, representing the largest centre for youths aged 14-24 years and thus organises relevant response to acute urban poverty. Mith Samlanh's strategy comprises outreach, vocational training, prevention, and protection activities based on informal contacts-cum-assistance, and in-depth case management. The programme's relevance is documented in a comprehensive five year intervention logic, which describes conclusive objectives, results-oriented quantitative indicators to be achieved in a mid-term perspective.

R 4: In the process to implement the strategy and impart its implications in to staff training at all levels, it may be useful to add more qualitative description to indicators and analyse the existing quality achieved. Interviews with staff during the evaluation indicated that internal monitoring and reflection of compiled information leaves room for improvement. Mith Samlanh staff strongly looks at Friends International for technical support, research and analysis. It is suggested to gradually transfer more responsibilities on project monitoring to various staff levels in order to enhance their reflection on relevant indicators for analysis.

5 Effectiveness

Effectiveness of most project activities seems to be good and intended results will probably be achieved by the end of the project period. Most activities of the various programmes seem to be managed well with a clear orientation on effective solutions for the child. Furthermore, effectiveness shows in a highly satisfactory social reintegration of street youths, protection and prevention of risks through Child Safe Network, multiplication agents and peer education. Mith Samlanh provides a wide range of services besides training (shelter, food, information on reproductive health, HIV/AIDS or drug usage, medical treatment, life skills, counselling, seed-money for small businesses) while promoting the children's/youth's active participation in all matters concerning their future.

F 6: The case management system, which has been established recently at all levels of work, connects various programmes and teams responsible, and leaves the young client dealing with only one person of reference. Although the teams are still learning how to handle cases effectively and to find practical positive solutions for each specific child, youth, family, or group, the new system will no doubt reduce working time on coordination and duplication, and costs. At present, cost ratio per child is estimated at approximately US\$ 250-300 depending on services rendered. Costs may come down considerably, so that more children can be included. On the other hand, one has to be aware of the fact that operational costs are increasing considerably due to price hikes, increasing staff input (in four homes), food and accommodation etc., which might again contrast cost-reduction per child.

R 5: It is recommended to keep track on eventual shifts in costing per child, and also on an increase of operational costs under the current project budget. Cost effectiveness of the project should be considered as a risk of future financial sustainability after the end of the project period as well.

F 7: Outreach teams are obviously very committed and strong, consisting of different skills and serving five to seven locations every day. Considering the extraordinary stress of this type of work, and the workload included, there may be a risk of burn out to core staff after a longer period of working in the job.

R 6: It is recommended to offer the street workers periodically counselling services and/or additional time off in order to maintain a healthy balance of work of this core staff to Mith Samlanh outreach programme.

F 8: Mith Samlanh's projects are made up of result-driven programmes with education and vocational training as core activities for youths leaving street life. Ten training workshops, consisting of short-term and two- and three-level trainings are offered to the young boys and girls, adjusting to their wishes, capacities and talents. Graduates are placed either directly with employers, or e.g. for cooking & hospitality students at Mith Samlanh's restaurants for a certain period of hands-on training, before they start in outside restaurants and businesses. A job placement team follows them with additional assistance for up to a year, in order to make sure that they will finally "take off". Staff, trainees, and employers interviewed during the evaluation confirmed a high level of training, job relevant skills and further demand in the areas of employment.

R 7: In order to maintain a market oriented training of vocations needed in Phnom Penh's thriving labour market, and also in the mostly native, rural areas, it will be important for Mith Samlanh to further establish a good reference system with potential employers, as well as to keep track of former graduates. An informal but well documented "alumni-network" would in the long run provide both, an impact documentation and a resource for future support to the programme.

While each programme demonstrates its own effectiveness, the number of graduates will show the overall outcome, or children reintegrated from street life. The annual reports will show this over the period of the next two years within the five-year intervention. It can be expected that the project contributes considerably to urban poverty alleviation in a context of social exclusion and displacements, but also to restoring the much-needed human capital in Phnom Penh.

6 Efficiency

So far, project implementation went efficiently without major disturbances and disruptions. An increase of efficiency can be expected, once the case management system is fully integrated and the new mechanisms of using logical frameworks for each programme within the broader strategy are fully functioning. However, it will be important to ensure, that full understanding of these mechanisms within a "project cycle management"(PCM) will trickle down to all key staff. As Mith Samlanh's staffs already has the relevant professional skills and works with highly committed teams, the organisation seems to be ready for this next step.

R 8: It is therefore suggested to Friends International as a technical supporter and Welthungerhilfe as the responsible project authority to actively support this process, for example through PCM trainings, and subsequent transfer of responsibilities for monitoring and steering of data analysis to Mith Samlanh within the remaining project period.

F 9: As Welthungerhilfe acts as the main interface towards the EU in this project, the organisation has its main input in administration and financial management. These services to Mith Samlanh as the implementing partner may also gradually be handed over, after the project has ended. As of today however, Mith Samlanh's own financial staff seems to be overloaded and not sufficient to completely handle such EU budgets without further strengthening.

R 9: It may therefore be necessary in the future, to increase staff capacity on the financial administration within Mith Samlanh.

7 Annual cross-cutting theme

Welthungerhilfe's cross-cutting theme of encouraging self-help initiatives is certainly fully met with this project. As Cambodia's Civil Society is only at emerging stage, and still faces all the obstacles (including violence and repression by governmental and private actors) of establishing its new role in participating in the development of the country, there is ample scope for Welthungerhilfe to further engage in capacity building and support civil strengthening to NGOs like Mith Samlanh in the future.

8 Most important recommendations

Most recommendations have been made in relation to the findings as elaborated above. The following list repeats the recommendations for more comprehensive discussion within the overall evaluation:

R 1: At secondary level meetings, main decisions and analysis results should be kept in writing by minutes for further orientation and later review and following up of impacts.

R 2: It will be essential to establish a good tracking system for following the careers of former graduates and review impacts of the vocational at regular intervals (e.g. every 2-3 years).

R 3: It is recommended to take a closer look at cross-cutting impacts of various activities contributing to sustainability and assess their coherence and outcome.

R 4: In the process to implement the strategy and impart its implications into staff training at all levels, it may be useful to add more qualitative description to indicators and analyse the existing quality achieved. Interviews with staff during the evaluation indicated that internal monitoring and reflection of compiled information leaves room for improvement. Mith Samlanh staff strongly looks at Friends International for technical support, research and analysis. It is suggested to gradually transfer more responsibilities on project monitoring to various staff levels in order to enhance their reflection on relevant indicators for analysis.

R 5: It is recommended to keep track on eventual shifts in costing per child, and also on an increase of operational costs under the current project budget. Cost effectiveness of the project should be considered as a risk of future financial sustainability after the end of the project period as well.

R 6: It is recommended to offer the street workers periodical counselling services and/or additional time off in order to maintain a healthy balance of work of this core staff to Mith Samlanh outreach programme.

R 7: In order to maintain a market oriented training of vocations needed in Phnom Penh's thriving labour market, and also in the mostly native, rural areas, it will be important for Mith Samlanh to further establish a good reference system with potential employers, as well as to keep track of former graduates. An informal but well documented "alumni-network" would in the long run provide both, an impact documentation and a resource for future support to the programme.

R 8: It is suggested to Friends International as a technical supporter and to Welthungerhilfe as the responsible project authority to actively support PCM training, and subsequent

transfer of responsibilities for monitoring and steering of data analysis to Mith Samlanh within the remaining project period.

R 9: It may be necessary to increase staff capacity on the financial administration within Mith Samlanh in future.

9 General conclusions

Overall Mith Samlanh has become a key actor in social sector development for excluded parts of the population. Neither the City Municipality nor the Governmental Ministries of Cambodia have the capacity as yet to provide the necessary means in terms of funding and human resources to steer a social development process that follows economic dynamics in the country as needed. Unfortunately, the political will for social integration is largely lacking by the leadership and in the private sector as well. A strengthening of civil society through organisations such as Mith Samlanh will be needed in a foreseeable future.