

Corporate Unit Evaluation

Central Project Evaluation

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# Central project evaluation

Regional Economic Development IV, Cambodia

Project number 2015.2150.9

## Evaluation Report

On behalf of GIZ by Klaus-Peter Jacoby (iSPO GmbH) and Runsinarith Phim (independent consultant)

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## Abbreviations

BMZ	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development
CDC	Council for the Development of Cambodia
CRAS	Strengthening the Climate Resilience of Agriculture in Cambodia and Viet Nam
CSDGs	Cambodian Sustainable Development Goals
CWEA	Cambodian Women Entrepreneurs Association
DAC	Development Assistance Committee
DMA	District and municipal administration
GDC	German development cooperation
GIZ	Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
ICONE	Improved Competitiveness of National Enterprises
IDPoor	Identification of the poor (national poverty identification system)
LED	Local economic development
LNOB	Leave no one behind
MSME	Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises
NCDD-S	National Committee for Subnational Democratic Development Secretariat
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
PDAFF	Provincial Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery
QDPM	Quality declared planting material
RED III	Regional Economic Development III
RED IV	Regional Economic Development IV
RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation
SDGs	Sustainable Development Goals
SNA	Subnational administration
SRP	Sustainable Rice Platform
TC	Technical cooperation
TVET	Technical vocational education and training



## The project at a glance

Cambodia: Regional Economic Development (RED IV)

Project number	2015.2150.9
Creditor reporting system code	43040 – Rural Development
Project objective	The economic and employment situation of disadvantaged rural households in selected provinces has improved.
Project term	April 2018 – March 2022
Project value	EUR 9,575,200, of which EUR 3,435,200 was co-financed by the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC)
Commissioning party	German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ);SDC
Lead executing agency	Council for the Development of Cambodia (CDC)
Implementing partner organisations (in the partner country)	CDC, provincial and district administrations, Provincial Associations of Municipalities, Communes and Sangkatas
Other development organisations involved	n/a
Target group(s)	Final (and, in part, directly addressed) target groups were small farmers, the landless, not regularly employed workers and jobseekers, poor and vulnerable households, as well as micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs) in the provinces of Siem Reap, Preah Vihear, Banteay Meanchey and Oddar Meanchey. Special attention was given to households with disabled family members and women-headed households. Intermediary target groups were technical and managerial staff of subnational administrations (SNAs) at provincial, district and village levels, associations of farmers and rural MSMEs, self-help groups, local non-governmental organisations and private service providers.
Development cooperation (DC) programme	Rural Development (until 2019: Rural Economic Development)
Implementing organisations of the DC programme	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW Development Bank), Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH
Organisation responsible for implementing and coordinating the DC programme	GIZ
Reporting year of central project evaluation (CPE)	2022
Sample year of CPE	2019

# 1 Evaluation objectives and questions

This chapter aims to describe the purpose of the evaluation, the standard evaluation criteria, and additional stakeholders' knowledge interests and evaluation questions.

## 1.1 Evaluation objectives

Central project evaluations (CPEs) of projects commissioned by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Co-operation and Development (BMZ) fulfil three basic functions: they support evidence-based decisions, promote transparency and accountability, and foster organisational learning within the scope of contributing to effective knowledge management. Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) structures the planning, implementation and use of evaluations so that the contribution the evaluation process and the evaluation findings make to these basic functions is optimised (GIZ, 2018a).

The project under evaluation – Regional Economic Development IV (RED IV) – ended in March 2022. A follow-on project (Improved Competitiveness of National Enterprises, ICONE) was due to start during the evaluation period (project term: March 2022 to February 2025). This evaluation primarily assesses and summarises the impacts of the project. However, it also draws conclusions to provide meaningful recommendations and lessons learnt for the follow-on project. The project was selected for evaluation as part of the regionally stratified random sample, meaning further specific situational evaluation objectives did not drive the selection.

## 1.2 Evaluation questions

The project is assessed on the basis of standardised evaluation criteria and questions to ensure comparability by GIZ. This is based on the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development ([OECD/Development Assistance Committee \(DAC\) evaluation criteria](#) (updated 2020) for international cooperation and the [evaluation criteria for German bilateral cooperation \(in German\)](#): **relevance, coherence, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability**.

Specific assessment dimensions and analytical questions have been derived from this framework. These form the basis for all CPEs in GIZ and can be found in the **evaluation matrix** (see annex). In addition, contributions to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its principles are taken into account, as well as cross-cutting issues such as gender, the environment, conflict sensitivity and human rights. Also, aspects regarding the quality of implementation are included in all OECD/DAC criteria.

Project staff and national partners were consulted for additional evaluation questions. Expressed interests further specify some standard evaluation questions or aspects that are already highlighted in the results model:



Table 1: Knowledge interests by main evaluation stakeholder groups

Evaluation stakeholder group	Knowledge interests in evaluation/ additional evaluation questions	Relevant section in this report
Political partner	<p>Assessment of the quality and flexibility of the cooperation.</p> <p>Further capacities that are required at the level of subnational administrations.</p>	<p>Effectiveness (dimension: implementation quality)</p> <p>Sustainability (dimension: capacities of stakeholders)</p>
Subnational administrations (governors and planning departments)	<p>Verify benefits for rural farmers (such as formalisation of businesses, branding, access to markets).</p> <p>Focus on behavioural changes among farmers (application of innovative farming practices) and the role of cooperatives as catalysts for market access.</p> <p>Ability of farmers to maintain results without further support from the project.</p> <p>Further optimisation of the institutional setting (e.g. regarding coordination between the entities involved).</p> <p>Contribution to poverty reduction and effects on the living situation of farmers.</p>	<p>Effectiveness (dimension: goal attainment)</p> <p>Effectiveness (dimension: contribution of the module)</p> <p>Sustainability (dimension: capacities of stakeholders)</p> <p>Sustainability (dimension: capacities of stakeholders)</p> <p>Impact (dimension: achievement of overarching goals)</p>
GIZ Central Office (sectoral unit, country manager)	<p>Pertinence of the follow-on project in light of the prevailing economic background (e.g. cross-sectoral approach vs focus on the agricultural sector).</p> <p>Key requirements of the partners that drove the design of the follow-on project; consequences for ownership?</p> <p>Contribution to the nutritional situation of the target groups.</p> <p>Extent to which COVID-19 affected the project and contribution to the COVID-19 response (e.g. work status of returning migrant workers).</p> <p>Synergies with regional projects of German development cooperation (GDC) and opportunities for further links.</p>	<p>Recommendations (for the follow-on project)</p> <p>Recommendations (for the follow-on project)</p> <p>Impact (dimension: contribution of the project)</p> <p>Relevance (capacity to adapt); Effectiveness (dimension: unintended results)</p> <p>Coherence (dimension: internal coherence) and Sustainability (dimension: forecast of durability)</p>

## 2 Object of the evaluation

This chapter aims to define the evaluation object, including the theory of change and results hypotheses.

### 2.1 Definition of the evaluation object

#### General conditions and core problem

The Cambodian economy is transforming from one with a strong focus on agriculture to one with a growing emphasis on the industrial and service sectors. In addition to agriculture, the relevant economic sectors include textile and footwear production, construction (the sector that has experienced the most significant growth since 2014) and tourism. The stable macroeconomic environment (consistently high growth rates of around 7%) has had a positive impact on the rural economy, in the form of increased production; intensification and mechanisation of agriculture; emergence of new products such as cassava; and the expansion of plantation production. China, Thailand and Viet Nam are the main markets for agricultural products (GIZ-RED, 2019a).

Agriculture still forms the backbone of the rural economy and is one of the main sources of income for the rural population. According to the World Bank (2021), the agriculture sector accounted for 22% of gross domestic product in 2018; the share had been decreasing progressively for 25 years but started to grow again during the COVID-19 pandemic (2020: 22.8%). Approximately half of the workforce still works in agriculture. However, better transport links and modern communications technology have improved the links between rural regions and urban centres, opening up new economic opportunities for the local economy (e.g. access to markets, services, agro-processing). Low labour costs attract foreign investment (especially in the light-industry sector). This creates new employment opportunities for the rural population. The mobility of the population has increased accordingly and includes massive migration, especially to Thailand (GIZ-RED, 2017b).

Despite the economic growth of recent years, rural areas are still characterised by a high proportion of people living in poverty and at risk of poverty (core problem). Though national poverty rates have been constantly decreasing over the last two decades (17.7% in 2017), there is a considerable distribution gap in household disposable income, with rural households on only 71% of the income of households in urban areas and 57% of that of households in the capital, Phnom Penh. Rural populations, particularly farmers, also face a higher risk of falling below the poverty line owing to their vulnerability to natural-resource degradation, climate change and other adverse external shocks (Andersen, 2019: 4). According to the most recent Social Protection System Review by the OECD (2017), broader measures for deprivation have fallen much less quickly than income poverty. Malnutrition remains a particular concern, especially among children. More women than men rely on agriculture for livelihood and income (Andersen, 2019: 4) and are disproportionately affected by these risks. Gender inequalities limit women's participation in other economic activities. The consequences of climate change add to the problem. Cambodia is one of the ten most severely affected countries that will increasingly suffer from extreme weather events. The overexploitation of natural resources, essential for a sustainable water regime (such as forests), exacerbates the situation.

#### Changes in the general conditions due to the COVID-19 pandemic

The successful growth path described above was interrupted in January 2020 when the first case of COVID-19 was detected in Sihanoukville. While many other parts of the globe experienced high case numbers in early and mid-2020, Cambodia has thus far (at the time of writing) averted a major health crisis through a successful combination of factors: an alert and responsive public, strong and decisive government leadership, and effective public-health measures underpinned by well-coordinated donor support. The country registered only 360 SARS-CoV-2 cases, with no fatalities, up to 15 December 2020, when its first community outbreak was

detected. Major outbreaks followed from March 2021 onwards, leading to close to 3,000 deaths by the end of 2021. The epidemic dynamic is being mitigated by an exceptionally successful vaccination campaign, with close to 80% of the entire population fully vaccinated (at least two doses) by the end of 2021 (OWD, 2021).

Despite the successful management of the pandemic, the effects of national measures to control the spread of COVID-19, coupled with the global consequences of the pandemic on trade and tourism, inflicted severe damage on the national economy. Three of the four sectors driving Cambodia's economic success story up to that point – textiles, tourism and, to a lesser degree, construction – were severely hit, causing the direct and indirect loss of hundreds of thousands of jobs within a matter of weeks. The agricultural sector continued to thrive on exports and ensured enough food supply for local markets. Overall, gross domestic product contracted by 3.1% in 2020. As a result, the size of the poor and near-poor population will rise again, at least in the short to medium term, increasing the vulnerability of large sections of the population (World Bank, 2020).

### Regional Economic Development IV

The specific object of this evaluation is the technical cooperation module Regional Economic Development IV (RED IV), hereafter referred to as the project. The project was carried out by GIZ on behalf of BMZ, together with its partners. It had a **duration** of four years, from April 2018 to March 2022, and a **budget** of EUR 9,575,200, of which EUR 3,435,200 in co-financing was provided by the Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC). The project design was based on results of the predecessor project Regional Economic Development III (RED III), which ended in March 2018 (see section 4.1).

The module (project) **objective** was: 'the economic and employment situation of disadvantaged rural households in selected provinces has improved'. Module objective indicators focused on: economic and employment situation of rural households benefiting from economic development measures of subnational administrations (SNAs) (M1); income of rural farmers from sustainable agricultural activities (M2); employment opportunities in rural areas (M3); and situation of women-led households (M4). For this purpose, the following output goals were formulated:

- **Output A – Good Economic Governance for Local Economic Development (LED):** 'Authorities and councils at provincial and district level increasingly implement measures for inclusive economic development oriented towards the needs of the local population.'
- **Output B – Micro, Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (MSMEs) Development and Employment Promotion:** 'The local business environment is better oriented towards promoting employment opportunities and the economic development of MSMEs.'
- **Output C – Promotion of Agricultural Value Chains:** 'Small and micro enterprises in selected agricultural value chains improve their production and sales opportunities.'

The project's final (and partially directly addressed) **target groups** were small farmers, the landless, not regularly employed workers and jobseekers, poor and vulnerable households, and MSMEs in the provinces of Siem Reap, Preah Vihear, Banteay Meanchey and Oddar Meanchey. Special attention was given to poor households, households with disabled family members and women-headed households (between 10.1% and 13.1% in the project provinces, according to the Commune Database 2016). **Intermediary target groups** were technical and managerial staff of SNAs at provincial, district and village levels; associations of farmers and rural MSMEs; self-help groups; local non-governmental organisations; and private service providers.

With its main office based in Siem Reap, the project's interventions focused on the regional and local levels (provinces and districts). The **capacity development strategy** focused on the organisational and staff capacities of SNAs, public and private service providers, and agricultural cooperatives; improving public, private and civil society dialogue and coordination on LED; and increasing the capacities of rural farmers to apply innovative agricultural techniques. The **regional focus** of the project was on the provinces of Siem Reap, Oddar Meanchey, Banteay Meanchey and Preah Vihear.

## 2.2 Results model including hypotheses

The results model of the project (figure 1) was developed during the project term and therefore reflects the reality of the methodological approach well. The discussion of the results model during the inception mission of this evaluation led to some adjustments in the formulation of specific changes, the optimisation of causal links depicted in the model and a reformulation of the intended impact. Though indicators are not a standard element of the results model, they reflect different dimensions of the module objective that were added to the results model, including the contributions of specific output-level changes to each of the dimensions.

**Output A** addressed subnational authorities' implementation measures for inclusive local economic development (LED). For this purpose, the project sought to introduce concepts and instruments for LED to the subnational administrations and other stakeholders involved and support the establishment of LED subcommittees as spaces for intersectoral dialogue aimed at coming up with proposals for investment measures to promote LED (**A-1**). On this basis, subnational councils would be able to decide on respective investments (**A-2**). Using the instrument of the Matching Fund – already developed by the predecessor project RED III – the project sought to help district and municipal administrations (DMAs) raise funds (**A-3**), on the assumption that the combined resources from different sources would allow LED measures to be incorporated in the investment planning of DMAs (**A-4**). Modified investment programme guidelines were intended to be formulated to enable the DMAs to plan their investment volume more effectively, thereby enhancing the number of LED investment measures finally implemented (**A-5**). In parallel, the project aimed to build the districts' capacities to fulfil their so-called permissive function of LED (**A-6**). It also aimed to support the planning and investment divisions in Oddar Meanchey and Banteay Meanchey by introducing quality management (heading towards ISO 9001 certification) (**A-7**). Better fulfilment of the administrative functions around enabling LED and improving quality management was intended to facilitate further implementation of LED measures by authorities and councils at the provincial and district levels in the project areas (**A-9**), thus contributing at the **outcome level** to improving the economic and employment situation of rural households (**M1**), including women-led households (**M4**).

**Output B** aimed to improve the local business environment by promoting employment opportunities and the economic development of MSMEs. The output consisted of various workstreams: demand-driven technical vocational education and training (TVET) and employment promotion activities were mainly implemented in Banteay Meanchey. The aim was for TVET providers to develop training programmes in relevant areas for LED (such as business planning, sales and marketing, and accounting) (**B-1**). They were to be supported in strengthening their cooperation with MSMEs (**B-2**) to ensure the training offered was needs-oriented and to increase the reach of their training offer. Technical assistance to the provincial job centre and other employment promotion actors focused on closing the information gap between employers and jobseekers in rural areas (**B-3**), with the aim of building the capacities of both sides to interact more effectively (e.g. professional career counselling and career guidance, information events on job openings). Involving business associations as service providers and facilitators (e.g. via entrepreneurship training for MSMEs) and training trainers for local business-development service providers and associations would enable them to identify services that could be sold in an economically viable way (**B-4**). Sustainable tourism was promoted through several activities – including consultation workshops, training modules on community-based tourism and study tours – to improve the management skills of communities and tourism companies and thus build their capacity to promote tourism in a sustainable manner (**B-5**). The project further promoted public-private dialogue forums aimed at developing recommendations to improve the business environment, with special reference to women-led MSMEs (**B-6**). Altogether, these intermediary results were expected to contribute to improving the local business environment and its orientation towards LED, and the promotion of employment opportunities (**B-7**), thus increasing the number of jobs offered by MSMEs (**B-8**), which implies – at the outcome level – new employment opportunities in rural areas (**M3**). Aside from indirect contributions to the other dimensions of the module objective, the output also aimed to enhance private-sector actors' technical, managerial and cognitive skills (**O-1**) as a prerequisite for further results processes beyond the end of the project term (see impact level, below).

**Output C** aimed to support the MSMEs in selected agricultural value chains in improving production and sales opportunities. Provincial Departments of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery (PDAFF) and other relevant institutions were to be supported in facilitating the introduction of quality standards and technical innovations, and the conclusion of commercial agreements for agricultural products through value-chain stakeholder dialogue (**C-2**). In parallel, the project aimed to support agricultural cooperatives and producer networks in developing business plans for their services (**C-1**) to enable the cooperatives and networks to provide their respective services in a self-sufficient way (**C-3**). PDAFF activities and the availability of business development services would facilitate different processes, including the engagement of MSMEs in the production of or trade in high-quality inputs (such as seeds or seedlings) for sustainable crop production (**C-4**). The aim here was to increase small-scale farmers' investment in productivity, environmentally friendly technology and quality standards (**C-6**), and the conclusion of commercial agreements between rural producer networks and agricultural cooperatives with traders and processors of agricultural products (**C-5**). The results logic assumed that these factors combined would improve production and sales opportunities for farmers and MSMEs in the selected agricultural value chains (rice, cassava and vegetables) (**C-7**). Increased local agricultural production would improve the market position of farmers and MSMEs and contribute to improving their nutritional situation in terms of quantity and quality (**C-9**). This intended result was further backed by better education on fundamental aspects of nutrition (**C-8**). At the outcome level, increased production and sales by agricultural MSMEs would lead to increased household incomes for family farms (**M2**), improve the situation of women-led households (**M4**) and, indirectly (see output B), create new employment opportunities in rural areas (**M3**).

At **outcome level**, the module objective states: 'The economic and employment situation of disadvantaged rural households in the selected provinces has improved.' Results hypotheses to be evaluated were as follows:

- Technical advice to subnational administrations in planning and implementing investments (**A-4** and **A-5**) and to the institutional strengthening of subnational authorities (**A-6** and **A-7**) enables them to implement more measures for inclusive economic development (**A-9**), thus leading to improvement of the economic and employment situations of rural households, including poor and vulnerable ones (module objective indicator **M1**).
- Technical advice for small-scale farmers regarding investment in productivity and environmentally friendly technology (**C-6**) enables farmers to apply technical innovations (**C-7**), thus leading to an increase in household income from farming (**M2**).
- Improved production and sales opportunities for women-led and disadvantaged households (**C-7**) and education on fundamental aspects of nutrition (**C-8/C-9**) lead to improvements in the household situation in terms of (a) balanced diet, (b) children's school attendance, (c) access to health care, (d) investment in housing, (e) acquisition of production inputs and (f) acquisition of durable household goods (**M4**).

At the **impact level**, the project contributed to increasing the productivity and competitiveness of the agricultural sector (**I-1**), with a more direct contribution to the sector's development in the four target provinces. Further impact beyond the regional scope of RED IV was achieved by scaling up processes (**I-2**). Key results hypotheses at the impact level were:

- Proven success of measures for inclusive economic development (as measured by the module objective indicators, in particular **M1**) and the transfer of suggestions to the national level (**A-8**) lead to further scaling up of promoted LED innovations (Matching Fund, quality management, improved planning process, LED subcommittees) beyond the project provinces (**I-2**).
- The agrotechnical innovations introduced (**C-7**) and the availability of technical know-how (**O-1**, e.g. through research, manuals and guidelines) lead to scaling up of agrotechnical innovations by institutions and/or programmes in other provinces (**I-2**).

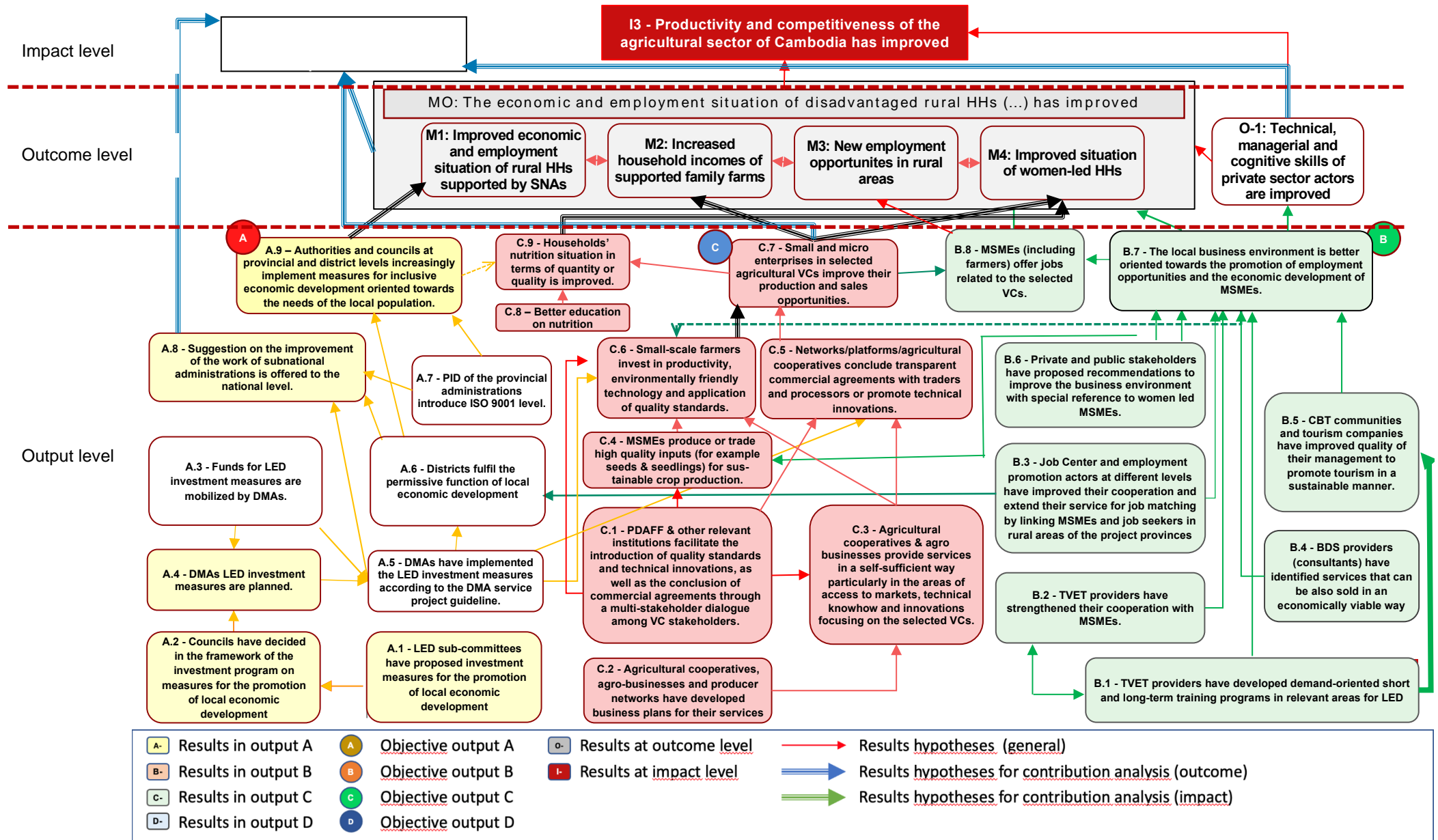
The employment opportunities created with project support in rural areas were a direct contribution to the final beneficiaries' achievement of the right to work (Article 23 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights) and a better livelihood. The agricultural techniques promoted also included contributions to environmental sustainability and adaptation to climate change.

Overall, the **stakeholder landscape** included the national government (the Council for the Development of Cambodia, CDC), subnational administrations, private-sector associations, public, private and civil society service providers, agricultural cooperatives, TVET institutes, academia and – at the final target-group level – rural farmers and MSMEs. In the original results model, the demarcation of the **system boundary** was not clear, since the formulation of the programme objective did not differ significantly from the module objective, i.e. the outcome and impact levels could not be clearly distinguished, as both referred to income generation for the target groups. This was adjusted in the results model used for the evaluation, which – at impact level – focuses more on scaling up. For contributions to **Agenda 2030**, see section 4.2 on relevance.

**Potential risks:** Risks anticipated in the project proposal refer to (a) the risk of political turmoil and instability following the 2017 communal elections and 2018 general election, (b) delays in the transfer of functions to subnational administrations, (c) limited staff capacity of subnational administrations, (d) limited availability of the Cambodian counterparts' contribution to local economic development measures, (e) hesitance of rural MSMEs to use business development services of public and private providers (also owing to fears of corruption), and (f) external events such as drought, extreme rainfall and flooding and the subsequent negative impact on agricultural production.



Figure 1: Current results model (November 2021), adapted during the evaluation



## 3 Evaluability and evaluation process

This chapter aims to clarify the availability and quality of data and the evaluation process.

### 3.1 Evaluability: data availability and quality

This section covers the following aspects:

- availability of essential documents,
- monitoring and baseline data, including partner data, and
- secondary data.

#### Availability of essential documents

All commonly used essential documents were available for this evaluation. These include the project proposal, programme and project progress reports, Safeguard and Gender documents, quality assurance in line management (QSIL in German) documents (such as results logic, capacity development strategy, plan of operations, etc.), strategy documents of the German and Cambodian governments, and cost data, among others. Instead of a bilateral German country strategy, a common European Union strategy served as a strategic reference framework.

#### Monitoring and baseline data, including partner data

Although integrated tools such as GIZ's online results monitor or the equivalent Excel tool were not used for results monitoring, the process nevertheless followed the structure of the planning tools (results matrix, plan of operations), including:

- yearly 'log-frame indicators achievement reports', which detail the current state of the indicators and differentiations for relevant target groups (such as poor households and women-led households), and
- yearly reports on the overall state of implementation of the operational plan, which contain assessments on the state of implementation of activities, as well as milestones and conflict monitoring.

Causal links were addressed in the log-frame indicators achievement reports by briefly specifying the contribution of each output to the achievement of the respective module objective indicators at the target group level were followed up via impact assessment studies (available at mid-term and at the end of the project, which implies that not all indicators were updated annually). The final impact assessment even provided data that approximate the counterfactual situation, i.e. comparing farmers and households that have adopted techniques and recommendations promoted by the project with those that have not. This provided a reasonable basis on which to carry out the contribution analysis during the evaluation.

All indicators relied on process-generated data, the use of available statistics or primary data collected by the project; there were no partner monitoring systems that could have provided project-specific output or outcome data. However, the political partner did get involved in the monitoring process by discussing yearly progress and indicator achievement reports in steering committee meetings.

KOMPASS qualitative survey tools were not used, but the above-mentioned impact assessment complies with their observational function to a certain extent.



## Secondary data

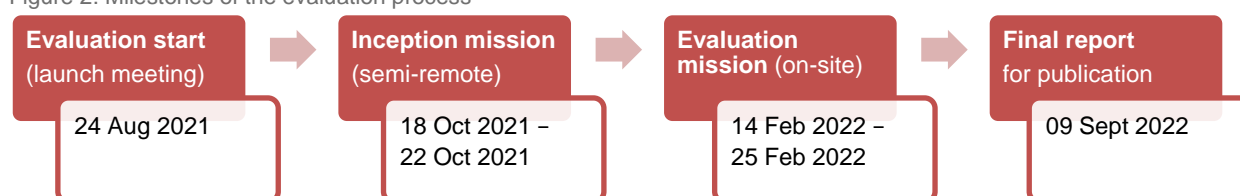
Secondary data play a minor role in this CPE. As stated above, output and outcome indicators relied upon the collection of primary data (such as the impact assessments) by the project. At the impact level, provinces' overall economic performance indicators were included in the assessment.

## 3.2 Evaluation process

This section covers the following aspects:

- milestones of the evaluation process,
- involvement of stakeholders,
- selection of interviewees,
- data analysis process,
- roles of international and local evaluators,
- context and conflict sensitivity within the evaluation process.

Figure 2: Milestones of the evaluation process



### Involvement of stakeholders

A variety of stakeholders was involved at all stages of the evaluation.

- During the inception phase:
  - project staff: discussion and adjustment of the results model; discussion of the results hypotheses for the contribution analysis; discussion of stakeholders to be consulted during the field phase; revision of the inception report, and
  - political partner and selected implementing partners (in particular, SNAs) and GIZ central office staff: consultations for priority topics and additional research questions to be considered for the evaluation (see section 1.2 above).
- During the evaluation phase:
  - all stakeholder groups: participation in interviews (Int) or focus group discussions (FGDs) (see table 2 below for the list of selected stakeholders), and
  - presentation and discussion of preliminary results at the end of the field mission with the project team and discussion of selected results with the political partner.
- Reporting phase:
  - revision of the final report by designated members of the project staff.

### Selection of interviewees

The selection of stakeholders to be considered for interviews and focus groups was discussed with the project staff during the inception mission. The international and local evaluators made the final selection. Stakeholders were selected in such a way to ensure that all outputs and all major intervention areas within the outputs were covered. Field visits and interviews/focus groups concentrated on three of the four project provinces: Oddar Meanchey, Banteay Meanchey and Siem Reap, where most of the project interventions had taken place.

The interviews and focus groups covered all intervention and stakeholder levels. Interviewees and focus group participants were selected according to the following criteria (see also table 2 below):

- GIZ and donors:
  - co-financing agency (SDC),
  - project: principal advisor and senior technical advisors for each output → all relevant staff,
  - GIZ headquarters sectoral departments and the regional department → all relevant staff,
  - other technical and financial cooperation projects of German development cooperation (GDC) → selection according to the relevance of synergies and the intensity of coordination/cooperation.
- Public-sector partners:
  - political partner → representative on the steering committee,
  - SNAs → selection of political and technical representatives according to their involvement in project-related areas; coverage: Oddar Meanchey, Banteay Meanchey and Siem Reap.
- Civil society and private sector:
  - representatives of private-sector associations → assigned by the project according to their relevance to the topic areas of the project,
  - service providers in the intervention areas (e.g. training providers) → selection of prioritised key players in coordination with the project.
- Universities and think tanks:
  - one key institution with relevant research and/or training activities in the topic areas of the project → assigned according to the extent of involvement with the project.
- Final beneficiaries:
  - farmers and rural MSMEs → stratified random samples (first level: selection of locations) for the value chains supported by the project.

Table 2: List of evaluation stakeholders and selected participants

Organisation/company/ target group	Overall no. of persons involved in the evaluation (incl. gender dis- aggregation)	No. of inter- view partici- pants	No. of focus group partici- pants	No. of work- shop partici- pants	No. of sur- vey partici- pants
<b>Donors and GIZ</b>	12 (10m/2f)	10 (8m/2f)		6 (5m/1f)	
Swiss Agency for Development Cooperation (SDC), GIZ project team (officer responsible for the commission, output managers) GIZ headquarters Germany (sectoral unit, country coordinator) Other GIZ projects: Development Support to Micro, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (MSME) Regional Cooperation for the Development of TVET (RECOTVET III) Strengthening the Resilience of Poor Population Groups to Climate Change in Selected ASEAN States, taking Special Account of the Impact of COVID-19 in Cambodia and Viet Nam (CRAS)					
<b>Partner organisations (di- rect target group)</b>	18 (16m/2f)	18 (16m/2f)			
Council for the Development of Cambodia (CDC) – National Committee for Subnational Democratic Development Secretariat (NCDD-S) Provincial administrations (deputy governors, PDAFF, Department of Water Resource Management) District administrations (Svay Chek, Preah Net Preah, Chong Kal, Samroang, Banteay Ampil)					
<b>Civil society, private-sec- tor actors, universities and other stakeholders (e.g. public actors, other devel- opment projects)</b>	16 (12m/4f)	16 (12m/4f)			
Rural Economic and Agriculture Development Agency (READA)					

Organisation/company/ target group	Overall no. of persons involved in the evaluation (incl. gender dis- aggregation)	No. of inter- view partici- pants	No. of focus group par- ticipants	No. of work- shop partici- pants	No. of sur- vey partici- pants
International Finance Corporation (IFC) Chamber of Commerce, Banteay Meanchey Young Entrepreneurs Association of Cambodia (YEAC), Banteay Meanchey Cambodian Women Entrepreneurs Association (CWEA) TVET schools (Don Bosco, École d'Hôtellerie Paul Dubrule, Polytechnical Institute Banteay Meanchey) Employment Centre Rice and vegetable traders (2) National University of Battambang Trainers in agricultural value-chain activities					
<b>Final beneficiaries/indirect target groups (sum)</b>	75 (46m/29f)	5 (3m/2f)	69 (42m/27f)		
Rice farmers	12 (10m/2f)		12(10m/2f)		
Cassava farmers	23 (15m/8f)		23 (15m/8f)		
Vegetable farmers	33 (16m/17f)		33 (16m/17f)		
Agro-input entrepreneur	1 (1f)	1 (1f)			
Agricultural cooperatives	6 (5m/1f)	4 (3m/1f)	1 (1m)		
Note: f = female; m = male					

### Data analysis process

Interviews in English were recorded on-site via digital note-taking (Nebo); for interviews in Khmer, the local consultant translated these and provided English transcripts. Interviews and project documents were analysed according to the assessment dimensions and questions of the evaluation matrix. The qualitative data analysis tool MaxQDA was used to thematically code text passages and interview segments according to the elements of the evaluation matrix and, subsequently, to refine the analysis within each assessment dimension. The evaluation team received already processed quantitative data from project monitoring, the impact assessment and additional sources. Hence, no further statistical analysis had to be carried out by the evaluation team itself, apart from the analysis of the quality of the above-mentioned data.

Qualitative and quantitative data from project documents, monitoring and impact assessment data, secondary data and the primary data collected by the evaluation team (via stakeholder interviews and focus groups) allowed for triangulation of methods and sources.

### Roles of international and local evaluators

The evaluation team consisted of one international and one local evaluator. Tasks were distributed as follows:

- *International evaluator:* Team leader (coordination of the evaluation process and communication with GIZ), evaluation design, data collection, conducting interviews with English-speaking interviewees, leading the presentation of results and the report writing (inception report, evaluation report and by-products).
- *Local evaluator:* Critical feedback for the above-mentioned tasks and providing contributions as agreed with the team leader, document and secondary data research in the partner country (between inception and evaluation missions), preparation of the agenda for the evaluation mission, data collection, conducting and transcribing interviews in Khmer.

Research triangulation was ensured through regular discussions between the two evaluators at the end of interview days. Such constant exchange between the evaluators was of utmost importance, since a significant share of the interviews had to be led by one evaluator only because of the language barrier.

### **Context and conflict sensitivity within the evaluation process**

The Peace and Conflict Analysis for RED IV identified several socio-political conflict lines and socio-economic deprivations addressed by the project design (see section 4.2 on relevance). However, no related risk of unintended effects of the evaluation or harm inflicted to any stakeholders were anticipated nor did they materialise. Culturally sensitive communication was ensured by the presence of a national evaluator, who led the interviews and focused on the local level, particularly with final target groups (farmers, rural MSMEs, etc.). The international evaluator had already carried out several evaluation missions in Cambodia and was therefore familiar with communication norms. Some cultural norms, such as the common hesitance to express criticism, posed a methodological challenge for the evaluation but were able to be dealt with through the team constellation.

## **4 Assessment according to OECD/DAC criteria**

### **4.1 Impact and sustainability of predecessor projects**

This section analyses and assesses the impact and sustainability of the predecessor project: Regional Economic Development III (RED III).

#### **Summarising assessment of predecessor project**

It is beyond the scope of this evaluation to update the current state of the module objective indicators of the predecessor project, since all relied on primary data collected by the project on direct beneficiaries of project-supported measures. However, from a more systemic point of view, several instruments were tested and introduced by the predecessor whose application and dissemination by RED IV and the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) can be identified as a sustainable result of RED III. These are, in particular: the further continuation and dissemination of the LED subcommittees, the national-level endorsement of the Matching Fund for small-scale economic development projects and further application of value chain-upgrading approaches.

#### **Analysis and assessment of predecessor project**

RED IV built substantially on the methodological approach and the results of the predecessor project RED III. Hence, there was a pronounced methodological continuity from RED III to RED IV. RED III addressed two main results areas: at the target group level, i.e. farmers and rural MSMEs, the project sought to generate additional employment and income; at the institutional level, the project aimed to increase the capacities of SNAs and councils to fulfil their so-called permissive functions regarding the promotion of LED. The outputs are also congruent with the current methodological approach, namely:

- implementation of regional economic development measures by SNAs,
- the joint implementation of regional economic development measures by public, private and civil society stakeholders, and
- improved access of farmers and MSMEs to business development services, and jobseekers to employment.

Similarly, the module objective of RED III (enhanced income of the rural population due to improved business and employment opportunities) and the indicators (covering households benefiting from regional economic

development measures, income generation and employment generation in supported value chains) focused on elements that remained equally relevant in RED IV. The main differences between the two projects were that:

- the RED III results framework put more emphasis on the transfer of experiences from the regional to the national level (reflected in one specific intervention area and a related module objective indicator),
- RED III focused on three provinces (Oddar Meanchey, Banteay Meanchey, Siem Reap), while RED IV extended the regional scope to three districts of Preah Vihear province, and
- a few topics were added to the RED IV methodological approach that were not addressed by RED III, such as the support of TVET institutions and community-based tourism networks as contributors to improving the local business environment.

As stated in the inception report, it is beyond the scope of this evaluation to update the state of the module objective indicators of the predecessor project, since all relied on primary data collected by the project on direct beneficiaries of project-supported measures. For value chains that were not further supported in RED IV, i.e. bamboo and poultry, no statements can be made about the sustainability and impact of the effects achieved at the target group level within the framework of RED III. For value chains that were continued, i.e. rice, cassava and vegetables, the conclusion of RED III was essentially the baseline for RED IV, which means that the impact of RED III was identical to the final results of RED IV (see sections 4.4 and 4.5).

From a more systemic point of view, however, several instruments were tested and introduced by the predecessor whose application and dissemination by RED IV and the Royal Government of Cambodia (RGC) can be identified as sustainable results of RED III:

- RED III first followed a bottom-up approach by forming informal multi-stakeholder groups and networks to gradually enhance dialogue processes on regional development. It then shifted towards emphasising the strengthening of the district administrations and introducing the LED subcommittees as an instrument to empower district administrations to fulfil their permissive LED functions. The LED subcommittees, which were started by RED III as a pilot, became the cornerstone for LED steering and planning in RED IV and contributed to enhancing the capacity of subnational administrations to steer multi-stakeholder dialogue and planning and improve economic conditions for the population at large.
- RED III also introduced the Matching Fund as a tool for participatory planning, financing and implementation of small-scale economic development projects within the districts. The instrument was introduced through a pilot followed by the main phase, and improved in various evaluation and adjustment steps. In the main phase, 16 projects were implemented, with the districts having to contribute at least 15% of the costs. In terms of content, the measures included the establishment or support of various production and marketing communities, primarily in the field of tourism but also for agricultural products, the strengthening of communities' capacities to protect communal natural resources (forests, water bodies) and the improvement of local markets through market regulations and small infrastructure measures. RED IV replicated and enhanced the use of the Matching Fund, while the RGC endorsed its further use nationwide (see section 4.5).
- RED III (and earlier predecessors) also accumulated extensive experience in value-chain upgrading. Based on internationally recognised experience-based approaches, RED III generated good practices adapted to the Cambodian context, e.g. regarding production techniques, increasing the degree of organisation of smallholder farms, supporting production and marketing groups, networks, cooperatives and associations. It is beyond the scope of this evaluation to follow up on specific market actors that benefited from RED III interventions. However, it is evident that the approaches and concepts tested by RED III were continued or replicated by RED IV, thus adding significant value to the results of RED IV, as discussed in sections 4.4 and 4.5 of this report.

## Methodology for assessing predecessor project

Table 3: Methodology for predecessor project

Assessment dimension: predecessor project	Basis for assessment	Evaluation design and empirical methods	Data quality and limitations
<b>Impact of the predecessor projects</b>  <b>Sustainability of the predecessor projects</b>	Extent to which developed concepts, approaches and instruments have been used and/or further developed by RED IV. Particular focus on: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Matching Fund</li> <li>• LED subcommittees</li> <li>• Public-private dialogue</li> <li>• Organisational capacities of producer networks and cooperatives.</li> </ul> Stakeholders' assessment of the added value of past experiences for the conceptualisation of RED IV	<b>Evaluation design:</b> Analysis followed analytical questions from the evaluation matrix; triangulation of methods and sources.  <b>Empirical methods:</b> Document analysis (project proposals of RED III and IV, final report of RED III, national policies). Semi-structured interviews with stakeholders (same as RED IV). Focus groups (farmers and other beneficiaries).	Module objective indicators of RED III could not be updated for the purpose of analysing sustainability.  Regarding the focus on further use of concepts and instruments promoted by RED III, sufficient data will be accessible.

## 4.2 Relevance

This section analyses and assesses the relevance of the project Regional Economic Development IV (RED IV).

### Summarising assessment and rating of relevance

Table 4: Rating of OECD/DAC criterion: relevance

Criterion	Assessment dimension	Score and rating
<b>Relevance</b>	Alignment with policies and priorities	30 out of 30 points
	Alignment with the needs and capacities of the beneficiaries and stakeholders	30 out of 30 points
	Appropriateness of the design	14 out of 20 points
	Adaptability – response to change	17 out of 20 points
<b>Relevance total score and rating</b>		<b>Score: 91 out of 100 points</b> Rating: Level 2: successful

The project was consistently aligned with the strategic reference frameworks of Cambodian and German government policies and priorities, and with Agenda 2030 and the Cambodian Sustainable Development Goals (CSDGs). The core problem – a high proportion of people in rural areas living in poverty and at risk of poverty – was highly relevant and there was broad evidence of its existence. The project also undertook systematic efforts to generate evidence on demands and needs, and its needs orientation was rated high by all stakeholders during the evaluation. The project's focus on gender mainstreaming, its orientation towards the poor and special measures for people with disabilities complied with the 'leave no one behind' (LNOB) principle. The project pursued an integrated, systematic LED approach, but integrating the vast array of workstreams in an effective way was difficult to achieve, particularly under COVID-19 restrictions and related conceptual changes, delays and suspensions of activities. Nevertheless, the project managed to adapt to the changing environment within the bounds of possibility, both by adjusting work modes and introducing additional emergency measures to mitigate the socio-economic effects of the pandemic.

**In total, the relevance of the project is rated as Level 2: successful, with 91 out of 100 points.**



## Analysis and assessment of relevance

### Relevance dimension 1: Alignment with policies and priorities

To evaluate alignment with relevant strategic frameworks, the project design was assessed according to the extent to which the methodological approach was consistent with (a) the policies and strategies of the Cambodian government, (b) the strategic orientation of German development cooperation in Cambodia and with strategy papers, policies and guidelines of BMZ, including the BMZ 2030 reform concept, and (c) the reference framework of Agenda 2030.

The **Cambodian government's relevant overarching strategic reference frameworks** are the so-called Rectangular Strategy IV and the National Strategic Development Plan 2019–2023, both aligned with the ongoing decentralisation process in Cambodia. In addition, the project was designed to contribute to several sectoral strategies. The Rectangular Strategy IV for Growth, Employment, Equity and Efficiency (RGC, 2018) defines the socio-economic development agenda of Cambodia according to the four pillars of (1) human resource development, (2) economic diversification, (3) private sector and job development, and (4) inclusive and sustainable development. The aims of the project corresponded to several of these pillars and, within each pillar, to several strategic objectives. Pillar 3, on the private sector and job development, envisages interventions on MSME promotion, the strengthening of public-private partnerships and job-market development, which were addressed by output B (MSMEs) of the project. Output C (value chains) contributed to pillar 4 on inclusive and sustainable development, which includes the promotion of the agricultural sector and its role in generating jobs, ensuring food security and reducing poverty in rural areas. Output A (LED) was directly related to one of four overarching strategic goals beyond the four pillars, relating to strengthening the capacities of public institutions, including subnational governments. The strategic goal refers explicitly to the government's capacity to improve the business and investment environment. The National Strategic Development Plan 2019–2023 (RGC, 2019a) is the RGC's second important policy document and is the roadmap for implementing the Rectangular Strategy IV. Among other aspects, it specifically mandates the strengthening of subnational administrations' capacity to formulate and implement their development plans (output A of RED IV), the promotion of MSMEs and labour-market development (output B), as well as the improvement of agricultural value chains, the promotion of value-adding and sustainable agricultural techniques, and food security (output C).

The project's alignment with sectoral strategies was also high. The strengthening of LED planning and steering at the level of SNAs (output A) corresponds to the objectives of the decentralisation process (RGC, 2018). The Industrial Development Policy 2015–2025 (RGC, 2015a) emphasises the relevance of strengthening skills development and employment promotion systems, as addressed by project output B. The same goes for related objectives of the National TVET Policy 2017–2025 (RGC, 2017). Output C, on value-chain strengthening, addressed several objectives of the Agricultural Sector Strategic Development Plan 2019–2023 (RGC, 2019b), such as enhancing agricultural productivity and improving the efficiency of support services. The strong formal alignment of the project with government strategies was underlined in positive statements of the political partner and the representatives of provincial governments (Int\_12–14, 16–18).

From both a sectoral and regional/country perspective, the project corresponds with **German development cooperation's relevant concepts and strategies**. Instead of a bilateral country strategy, a common strategy framework of the European Union was followed by GDC (timeframe of relevant version: 2014–2018, a new framework was in preparation during the evaluation period). The German contribution focused on three pillars: (a) good governance, (b) inclusive and sustainable rural development, and (c) health. Under the rural development pillar, the strategy mandated the promotion of sustainable and climate-resilient agricultural production, the incorporation of value-chain stakeholders and improved food security. Though RED IV belongs to the rural development programme, it also contributed to objectives in the area of good governance, since it developed the capacity of SNAs to fulfil permissive functions in the area of local economic development, contributing to the decentralisation of public administration. From a sectoral perspective, the project proposal was oriented

towards the BMZ concepts Promotion of Sustainable Agriculture (BMZ, 2013) and Development of Rural Areas and their Contribution to Food Security (BMZ, 2011a). The project's interventions in output C (support to small farmers, climate-resilient production techniques, and particular attention to women and vulnerable groups) corresponded to the first of these concepts, which also formulates the principle of embedding agricultural development in more comprehensive strategies for the development of rural areas. This principle is addressed more explicitly in the second concept – the development strategy for rural areas – and was a guiding principle for the design of RED IV. Regarding the current strategic framework of the BMZ reform concept 2030, Cambodia remains the only bilateral partner country of BMZ in South-East Asia, while rural development (under the core topic One World without Hunger) and private-sector development (under the core topic Vocational Training und Sustainable Growth for Good Jobs) continue to be part of 15 prioritised fields of action.

Regarding the **alignment with Agenda 2030**, the project objectives were linked to several Cambodian Sustainable Development Goals (CSDGs), namely:

- Goal 1 – No poverty: CSDG 1.2.1 (proportion of the population living below the poverty line → corresponds to RED programme indicator 1),
- Goal 2 – Zero hunger: CSDG 2.3.1 (value of agricultural production), and
- Goal 8 – Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth: CSDG 8.1.1 (annual gross domestic growth rate).

Further secondary contributions to Sustainable Development Goals (e.g. gender equality, action against climate-change impacts) did not correspond to specific CSDG indicators.

Overall, the project was consistently aligned with strategic reference frameworks at all levels. Relevance dimension 1 – Alignment with policies and priorities – scores **30 out of 30 points**.

## **Relevance dimension 2: Alignment with the needs and capacities of beneficiaries and stakeholders**

The following were analysed for this assessment dimension: (a) the extent to which evidence confirmed the core problem, (b) the extent to which the project objectives contributed to the solution of the core problem, and (c) the extent to which the project objectives addressed the needs of the target groups.

The **core problem** defined in the project proposal (GIZ-RED, 2017b) was the persistently high proportion of poor and near-poor people in rural areas. The core problem was highlighted in all relevant national strategies (see relevance dimension 1) and interviews with national and subnational government representatives (Int\_12–21). Because of Cambodia's rapid and sustained economic development up to 2019, it has emerged among the global frontrunners in terms of poverty reduction. The country's poverty incidence, i.e. headcount under the national poverty line, significantly declined from 47.8% in 2007 to 9.5% in 2019. However, nearly 90% of the poor reside in rural areas, and there are sharp regional disparities. Rural incomes are between 50% and 60% of incomes in urban areas, including remittances. In short, the core problem as defined in the project design was highly relevant and there was strong evidence of its existence (ADB, 2021).

The project undertook systematic efforts to generate evidence of the **demands and needs** of stakeholders and target groups in each intervention area. Preparatory studies in the run-up to project interventions addressed district development needs for LED promotion, market and production cost surveys for value chains, or business surveys on skills needs and business environment aspects (GIZ-RED, 2018g; 2018h; 2018i; 2020l). Intermediaries were supported in developing their capacity to better address the needs of their respective target groups. Examples are the project workshops for the DMAs on the conduct of their local economic surveys and development of district economic overviews (output A), or the support to public administrations and TVET institutions to help them interact with the private sector and better adjust their services to private-sector needs (output B). Given this approach, the needs orientation of the project was rated high by all stakeholders interviewed during the evaluation. This included representatives of SNAs, private-sector and civil society organisations, farmers, agricultural cooperatives and other final target groups.



The project's goal system and related documents did not explicitly refer to the '**leave no one behind**' (LNOB) principle but did consider objectives and interventions for several disadvantaged groups. This included a module objective indicator on the situation of women-led households and subtargets of indicators of the extent to which poor households benefited from project results. The project further implemented several measures to support the agricultural activities of people with disabilities and the food security of poor households (e.g. training on fundamental aspects of nutrition, promotion of vegetable home-gardening). COVID-19 emergency measures extended the project's outreach to poor and vulnerable target groups, e.g. through income-generating measures (cash-for-work). In conclusion, the principles of inclusiveness and LNOB were integral parts of the project's approach. To highlight their relevance, Special Measures and Gender Promotion was managed as a fourth work area in addition to the three formal outputs.

**Contributions to gender equality** were part of the above-mentioned work area. Aside from some activities specifically targeting women-led households (e.g. skills development training for silk scarf-weaving), the work area was established to ensure that gender issues and mainstreaming strategies were incorporated into the work plans of all components. Through numerous activities, the project facilitated dialogue on gender-related aspects of LED with relevant stakeholders from the public sector, private sector and civil society. In output B, MSME promotion activities included organisational development support to the regional chapter of the Cambodian Women Entrepreneurs Association in Siem Reap; in output C, the project explicitly targeted a minimum proportion of women-led households to be reached in the context of agricultural value chain-upgrading activities.

Overall, the core problem was confirmed by broad evidence. The project objective corresponded to the needs of the stakeholders involved, and gender mainstreaming aspects and the LNOB principle were adequately considered. Relevance dimension 2 – Alignment with the needs and capacities of the beneficiaries and stakeholders – scores **30 out of 30 points**.

### **Relevance dimension 3: Appropriateness of the design**

Evaluating the appropriateness of the project design required determining the extent to which the methodological approach addressed the causes of the core problem as described in the project proposal. The quality of the project design, including the results model, was assessed against current GIZ quality criteria.

The project pursued an integrated local development approach that considered the strengthening of specific (agricultural) value chains (output C), as well as the improvement of the enabling environment, including the capacities of SNAs to promote local economic development (output A), and MSME promotion through public-private dialogue, strengthening of TVET providers, enhancement of business development services, and employment promotion (output B). While conceptually plausible from a panoramic perspective, effective integration of the different workstreams was difficult to achieve in practice. The overarching relevance of district government strengthening in output A was evident and confirmed by relevant stakeholders (Int\_1, 3–5, 12, 35). Output B (MSMEs) addressed a wide range of business environment aspects and thus opted for thematically broad individual measures that had little depth in terms of system development (e.g. support to upgrading specific TVET offers without further ambitions to strengthen the TVET system). It should be noted that output B was also particularly affected by COVID-19-related restrictions (e.g. suspension and replanning of activities in the tourism sector, temporary suspensions and changed work modes of TVETs, worse environment for employment promotion, severe economic challenges for some MSME segments), which made it even more difficult to assure the convergence of the wide array of measures towards one common goal. Output C had a more clearly defined focus on upgrading three specific agricultural value chains based on a methodologically sound and comprehensive approach (GIZ-RED, 2020j). Owing to the narrower focus, it was also more clearly oriented towards direct target-group benefits.

Regarding the formal quality of the planning documents, the project's log frame reflects the above-mentioned design issues. The module objective was formulated at the target-group level – and since it is output C that most directly benefited a relevant quantity of target-group members, the module objective indicators mostly measure results emerging from output C. Formally, some indicators were fed by results from different outputs, such as indicator 1 (situation of rural households), which is, conceptually, also related to LED measures (output A). Impact assessments only managed to quantify the contribution of output C, however, while contributions of output A were estimated more via extrapolations than measures (see section 4.4 on effectiveness). Thus, an overly narrow look at the module objective indicators would ignore other equally relevant outcomes of the project, in particular, the systemic strengthening of participatory LED planning and steering.

Despite these critical aspects, the project design was still pertinent to achieving the module objective and its indicators. The key results hypotheses for the module objective were plausible. The process and methodological design at the level of individual workstreams were generally strong. Overall, relevance dimension 3 – Appropriateness of the design – scores **14 out of 20 points**.

Photo 1: Irrigation channel built with Matching Fund resources



© GIZ, Marie Hoffmann

#### **Relevance dimension 4: Adaptability – response to change**

For this dimension the pertinence of eventual adjustments to the methodological approach(es) required by changes in the external general conditions was assessed.

The main change in the project environment was the COVID-19 pandemic and its social and economic consequences. Though Cambodia managed to hold off major outbreaks for a long time, project activities were affected significantly. Several planned events requiring the participation of international trainers or experts had to be postponed. COVID-related restrictions hampered the implementation of farmer training, multi-stakeholder meetings and workshops (GIZ-RED, 2021a).

The overall methodological approach remained relevant under the pandemic conditions, but work modes were considerably adjusted, and special measures to mitigate the socio-economic consequences of the pandemic

were introduced. Regarding the work modes, the use of virtual communication methods intensified, and in-person coaching and training – where these were still possible – were restricted to maximum numbers of participants. The interruptions were felt to different extents by the stakeholders interviewed. Among local farmers, as well as among SNAs, some interviewees did not attach great importance to temporary disruptions in the project support, while others lamented the significant effects on the fulfilment of common objectives and the lack of time for the consolidation of project results (Int\_14–22; FGD\_1–7). All stakeholders recognised the efforts of the project to maintain communication and continue ongoing processes. In contrast, internal project documents concluded that the COVID situation created a lack of communication, missed information and missed opportunities, particularly for less digitally-skilled target groups (GIZ-RED, 2020k). While the project adjusted to the situation within the bounds of possibility, the negative effects of the COVID-related restrictions could not be fully compensated for. The project report for 2020 concluded that close to 20% of the project activities and milestones were severely delayed (3% cancelled) owing to the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Additional COVID-19 emergency measures were implemented with extra funding from SDC. So-called cash-for-work measures targeted unemployed returning migrant workers in Banteay Meanchey and Oddar Meanchey, providing temporary job opportunities in activities that benefited the local communities (e.g. work on small infrastructure projects). In output C, special measures for poor and vulnerable farmers were significantly increased, with production inputs distributed to participating farmers and home-gardening activities promoted to improve nutrition security. A training cycle on the fundamental aspects of nutrition was expanded and implemented earlier than planned (in 2020 instead of 2021 – see GIZ-RED, 2021a). Interviewed stakeholders who felt the project had responded adequately to the changed general conditions mostly emphasised how it had adjusted work modes (e.g. virtual or hybrid methods – Int\_12, 14, 16, 17, 19, 26–28, 30) and introduced additional project measures. In particular, the usefulness of the cash-for-work measures for target groups and local communities was very much emphasised by the district administrations interviewed (Int\_13, 16, 19, 21).

To sum up, RED reacted to changes in the general conditions in a highly flexible and appropriate way. Operational adjustments mitigated the negative effects of the pandemic on project implementation, while special emergency measures helped mitigate negative socio-economic effects at the target-group level. Relevance dimension 4 – Adaptability – response to change – scores **17 out of 20 points**.

## Methodology for assessing relevance

Table 5: Methodology for assessing OECD/DAC criterion: relevance

Relevance: assessment dimensions	Basis for assessment	Evaluation design and empirical methods	Data quality and limitations
<b>Alignment with policies and priorities</b>	Extent to which the design aligned with government policies and strategies, e.g. Rectangular Strategy, National Strategic Development Plan, Agricultural Sector Strategic Plan. Strategic orientation of German development co-operation in Cambodia (GDC programme, EU country strategy). Policies and guidelines of BMZ on private-sector promotion; BMZ 2030 reform concept. Reference framework of Agenda 2030.	<b>Evaluation design:</b> The analysis followed the analytical questions from the evaluation matrix; triangulation of methods and sources.  <b>Empirical methods:</b> Document analysis (strategy documents). Semi-structured interviews with stakeholders (BMZ, GIZ, CDC, provincial governments).	Data availability and quality: high. Evidence strength: high.

<b>Alignment with the needs and capacities of the beneficiaries and stakeholders</b>	<p>Extent to which available evidence confirmed the core problem.</p> <p>Extent to which the project objectives contributed to the solution of the core problem.</p> <p>Extent to which the project objectives addressed the needs of the target groups.</p>	<p><b>Evaluation design:</b> The analysis followed analytical questions from the evaluation matrix; triangulation of methods and sources.</p> <p><b>Empirical methods:</b> Document analysis (proposal, context analyses, needs assessments). Semi-structured interviews with intermediaries (SNAs, private-sector associations, service providers, academia). Focus groups with final target groups.</p>	<p>Data availability and quality: high. Evidence strength: high.</p>
<b>Appropriateness of the design*</b>	<p>Extent to which the methodological approach actually addressed the causes of the project objective and the core problem as described in the project proposal.</p> <p>Quality of the project design according to current GIZ quality criteria.</p>	<p><b>Evaluation design:</b> The analysis followed the analytical questions from the evaluation matrix; triangulation of methods and sources.</p> <p><b>Empirical methods:</b> Document analysis (project proposal, results model, context analyses). Semi-structured interviews and plenary discussion with project staff.</p>	<p>Data availability and quality: high. Evidence strength: high.</p>
<b>Adaptability – response to change</b>	<p>Pertinence of eventual adjustments in the methodological approach(es) due to changes in the external general conditions – in particular: modification of offers of 2017, 2020 and 2021; adaptation to the conditions wrought by the COVID-19 pandemic and related economic crisis.</p>	<p><b>Evaluation design:</b> The analysis followed the analytical questions from the evaluation matrix; triangulation of methods and sources.</p> <p><b>Empirical methods:</b> Document analysis (modification offers, operational plans, activity monitoring, progress reports). Semi-structured interviews (all stakeholders).</p>	<p>Data availability and quality: high. Evidence strength: high.</p>

\* The project design encompasses the project's objective and theory of change (GIZ results model, graphic illustration and narrative results hypotheses) with outputs, activities, instruments and results hypotheses, as well as the implementation strategy (e.g. methodological approach, capacity development strategy, results hypotheses).

## Conflict sensitivity in the project design

Table 6: Dividers/escalating factors in the project context

Which dividers/escalating factors were identified in the project context?	Addressed by the project? (yes/no)	If addressed, how were they considered by the project design?
Politically motivated intimidation, violence and prosecution, with increased monitoring, restrictions and pressure on organised civil society.	Indirectly	The project did not intervene in the respective political spheres. However, it contributed to a better State-society relationship by promoting dialogue and mutual understanding between the public and private sectors within its topic area (LED).
Associations representing MSMEs and farmers are manifold in Cambodia and are often led by powerful, well-connected businessmen. This tends to exclude especially small and informal businesses and farmers, as they do not see their place in these mechanisms.	Yes	Strengthening the quality and inclusiveness of associations and cooperatives.
Exclusive economy: strong overlaps and personal connections (intra-family) between political and economic elites.	Indirectly	Dialogue and partnership with provincial, district and commune-level partners; strengthening the role of provincial councillors in mobilising impartial support mechanisms. Introduction of particular instruments (LED subcommittees) to support the participation of civil society in economic development planning.
Socio-economic inequality and distributional conflicts (especially regarding land, corruption/ patronage, civil servant salaries, migration).	Yes	Promotion of access to markets for smallholder family-farm enterprises, as well as access to fair employment relationships and the development of (even limited) career paths (skills development) for poor and vulnerable jobseekers in rural areas.

## 4.3 Coherence

This section analyses and assesses the coherence of the project. It is structured according to the assessment dimensions in the GIZ project evaluation matrix (see annex).

### Summarising assessment and rating of coherence

Table 7: Rating of OECD/DAC criterion: coherence

Criterion	Assessment dimension	Score and rating
<b>Coherence</b>	Internal coherence	47 out of 50 points
	External coherence	46 out of 50 points
<b>Overall score and rating</b>		Score: <b>93 out of 100 points</b>  Rating: <b>Level 1: highly successful</b>

Within the GDC programme Rural Development in Cambodia, synergies concentrated on the cooperation between RED IV and the 'Promotion of Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises' (MSME) project. Both projects complemented each other and benefited at the design level from the co-development of concepts and at the operational level from using some of the same service providers. RED IV was conceptually well-aligned with a small-infrastructure investment programme ('Rural Infrastructure Programme') of the financial cooperation (FC), though synergies did not fully materialise during the project term. There were further significant synergies with projects in other GDC programmes and regional measures. The project largely complied with the



subsidiarity principle. It was well-aligned with the expectations and strategic orientation of SDC (co-financer), apart from in relation to SDC's preference for a greater focus on governance. The potential for synergies with other donors was limited owing to the strictly regional focus of RED IV. Areas of opportunity were pursued whenever possible, though.

**Overall, the project's coherence is rated as Level 1: highly successful, with 93 out of 100 points.**

### **Analysis and assessment of coherence**

#### **Coherence dimension 1: Internal coherence**

For this dimension the internal coherence of the project was assessed. This involved assessing (a) the extent to which the project was designed in a complementary manner vis-à-vis other GDC projects in the sector, (b) the extent to which the projects of GDC are interlinked and (c) the extent to which the project was consistent with international and national norms and standards relevant for GDC.

Within the Rural Development GDC-programme, there were synergies between two projects: (a) the MSME TC project and (b) the financial cooperation 'Rural Infrastructure Programme'. Three other projects – on food security, fisheries/aquaculture and energy efficiency – concerned other areas of intervention and/or had a different geographic focus. The **MSME project**, too, focused on a particular geographic area, i.e. Battambang province, but was designed as an offshoot of RED IV, which involved similar concepts and interventions in the areas of business environment improvement, strengthening of business service providers and skills development. Since the projects were implemented in different regions, they operated independently from each other. Still, the co-design of similar interventions in the respective project regions ensured the conceptual coherence of German technical cooperation interventions. Synergies at the operational level were produced in the form of efficiency gains by occasionally contracting the same consultants and service providers for both projects (Int\_3, 4). Coordination between RED IV and the **FC module** 'Rural Infrastructure Programme' focused on the adjoining regions of Banteay Meanchey and Oddar Meanchey. RED IV communicated the needs of its target group for small-scale community infrastructure measures (e.g. local roads, irrigation systems), which were assessed, addressed and financed by the FC project. As these measures were finalised at a late stage of RED IV, in 2021, further synergies at the outcome level were unable to be assessed at the time of this evaluation.

RED IV was also complementary to several projects outside the Rural Development GDC-programme:

- Decentralisation and Administrative Reform Programme (DAR) (2019–2022) aimed to strengthen the capacity of local administrations to provide social and administrative services in a coordinated, transparent and accountable manner. Whereas DAR focused on enhancing overarching capacities, structures and processes – such as introducing one-window services at district administrations – RED IV supported strengthening the specific permissive function of the district administrations, which is to plan and steer local economic development. In this particular area of work, RED IV directly contributed to the objective of DAR.
- Strengthening the Climate Resilience of Agriculture in Cambodia and Viet Nam (CRAS) (2021–2024) aims to enhance climate resilience in selected agricultural value chains. This topic had already been introduced by RED IV. One of the value chains supported by CRAS is cassava, and the project is scaling up concepts previously tested and validated by RED IV – specifically, the training concept and the material and monitoring mechanism on quality declared planting material (QDPM) for cassava (Int\_3, 6, 11).
- The Regional Cooperation Programme to Improve the Training of TVET Personnel (RECOTVET III) in South-East Asian Nations (2020–2023) promotes the active participation of the business community in vocational education and training. Red IV, in its workstream on tourism in output B and in coordination with RECOTVET, replicated virtual skills development measures in digital marketing initially developed by the bilateral Indonesian project Innovation and Investment for Inclusive Economic Development (ISED). The transfer between the two countries and further replication through RECOTVET at the regional level is

evidence of the complementarity of bilateral RED IV interventions to strategic regional German technical cooperation (Int\_3, 9).

Regarding compliance with **international norms and standards**, the project objectives were linked to several Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of Agenda 2030 (in particular, SDGs 1, 2 and 8) and – through gender mainstreaming and the inclusion of people with disabilities – contributed to the LNOB principle, as already analysed in section 4.2 on relevance. The project was in line with BMZ's Human Rights in German Development Policy (BMZ, 2011b), since a significant proportion of the target group consisted of economically marginalised, poor rural farmers, who benefited from opportunities to improve their livelihood and to participate on an equal footing in Cambodia's economic development.

Considering the conceptual complementarity and synergies of the project under evaluation with other GDC programme modules and bilateral or regional projects, and its compliance with international standards, coherence dimension 1 – Internal coherence – scores **47 out of 50 points**.

### **Coherence dimension 2: External coherence**

For this dimension the external coherence of the project was analysed. This involved assessing (a) the extent to which the project supported the partners' own efforts (principle of subsidiarity) and (b) the extent to which the project design and implementation were coordinated with the activities of other development partners.

Concerning the **principle of subsidiarity**, the project methodology assessed the needs of stakeholders and strengthened the partner systems in the four intervention regions. In all workstreams, key stakeholders were supported with capacity development and most project measures were carried out directly through or in close cooperation with the partner organisations: in output A, SNAs carried out LED measures; output B added value to the service provision of TVET institutions, job centres, business service providers and private-sector associations; in output C, value chain-upgrading activities were closely coordinated with the Provincial Departments of Agriculture, Forestry and Fishery (PDAFF), and further stakeholders were supported to ensure the availability of support functions within the partner system (e.g. cooperatives, lead farmers). Output A pursued a genuine system-strengthening approach, in which the function of GIZ was limited to building the capacities of SNAs. At the same time, the planning and implementation of LED measures took place under the full responsibility of the SNAs themselves. The only – albeit significant – function of GIZ was to make local subsidies available to implement Matching Fund projects, to test and validate the Matching Fund as an investment instrument for LED. Output B also focused on strengthening service provision capacities and other elements of the local business environments but was different from output A, thus complying with the subsidiarity principle at the level of bilateral working relationships. Nevertheless, the overall planning and steering of very diverse interventions was rather dominated by GIZ. This meant that the project primarily orchestrated specific activities to improve specific aspects of the business environment. Still, it is unclear how further systemic business environment strengthening would have been carried forward without external technical cooperation. In output C, the project temporarily assumed partner functions by implementing and rolling out farmer training to an extent that would not have been possible through the partner structure alone. It also worked on the system capacities necessary to stabilise and maintain the achievements (development of PDAFF capacities, training demo and lead farmers, strengthening agricultural cooperatives, etc.).

**Synergies with other donors:** These existed with SDC as co-financer and with some other donors in specific thematic areas. SDC contributed approximately 35% of the project budget in a classic co-financing scheme, with BMZ and SDC resources pooled in one overall project budget under the same project objective and indicators, i.e. there were no specific SDC vs BMZ workstreams or indicators. The SDC Country Programme 2018–2021 for Cambodia focused on three domains: (a) Local Governance and Citizen Participation, (b) Agriculture and Food Security, and (c) Skills Development and Employment. These domains reflect the three outputs of RED IV, and, in fact, RED IV interventions were related to all three thematic areas. From the point of view of

SDC, though, RED IV was co-financed under the umbrella of the Governance domain, focusing on the capacities of the SNAs to promote local economic development. While the broader contribution of RED IV may be seen as an added value, SDC was advocating a more focused approach. The design of the follow-on project ICONE – somewhat simplistically described as ‘RED IV without the agricultural component’ – was felt by SDC to be more in line with its main focus on governance.

Plenty of other donors are engaged in the rural development sector in Cambodia, including Australia, the United States, France, China, Japan, New Zealand, Korea and Switzerland, as well as multilateral donors, such as World Bank, the International Fund for Agricultural Development, the Food and Agriculture Organisation of the United Nations, the EU and the Asian Development Bank. The common goals of the donors are to diversify agricultural production and improve productivity while adhering to sustainable practices, promote agricultural commercialisation and improve market integration. Against this background, the objectives of RED IV were fully in line with those of other donors. Synergies between RED IV and other donors were relevant, depending on donors’ presence in the project regions of RED IV or the existence of interfaces with national platforms. These synergies were screened and opportunities for cooperation were pursued with a wide range of international development partners. (Non-exhaustive) examples of close cooperation on specific workstreams are:

- Cooperation with the International Finance Corporation (IFC) on promoting the Sustainable Rice Platform (SRP) and introducing the SRP standard. Whereas IFC focused on establishing cooperation agreements with big international rice traders and developing training guidelines on SRP standards, RED IV implemented capacity development activities for rice farmers, agricultural cooperatives and other local stakeholders to enable the fulfilment of SRP contract farming agreements (GIZ-RED, 2020j).
- Cooperation with the Science and Technology Research Partnership for Sustainable Development (SATREPS) of the University of Battambang funded by the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA) on quality declared planting material (QDPM) for cassava. Whereas SATREPS focuses on developing a monitoring system for cassava QDPM, RED IV facilitated the identification of producers that could implement QDPM seed production as a business. It also engaged in developing a control system that ensures the application of QDPM standards.
- Cooperation with the Cambodia Horticulture Advancing Income and Nutrition (CHAIN) programme funded by SDC and carried out by Swisscontact. The CHAIN programme deals with the promotion of commercial vegetable production. In cooperation with RED IV, several co-organised multi-stakeholder workshops and training sessions for members and partners of the CHAIN programme were carried out, thus increasing the overall scope of RED IV’s capacity development activities.
- Support to joint activities of MSMEs and TVET providers for project development under the Cambodian Skill Development Fund, financed by the Asian Development Bank.

Considering that (a) the project mostly complied with the subsidiarity principle, (b) the alignment with the expectations and strategic orientation of SDC was high, apart from SDC’s preference for a more focused approach, and (c) there was systemic screening and use of synergies with the activities of other development partners, coherence dimension 2 – External coherence – scores **46 out of 50 points**.



## Methodology for assessing coherence

Table 8: Methodology for assessing OECD/DAC criterion: coherence

Coherence: assessment dimensions	Basis for assessment	Evaluation design and empirical methods	Data quality and limitations
<b>Internal coherence</b>	<p>Extent to which the project was designed in a complementary manner vis-à-vis other German projects.</p> <p>Extent to which the instruments of GDC were inter-linked.</p> <p>Extent to which the project was consistent with norms and standards to which GDC is committed (human rights, gender).</p>	<p><b>Evaluation design:</b> Analysis followed analytical questions from the evaluation matrix; triangulation of methods and sources.</p> <p><b>Empirical methods:</b> Document analysis (standard documents of the respective projects). Semi-structured interviews (BMZ, GIZ sectoral/regional department, project).</p>	<p>Data availability and quality: high.</p> <p>Evidence strength: high.</p>
<b>External coherence</b>	<p>Extent to which the project supported the partners' own efforts (principle of subsidiarity).</p> <p>Extent to which the project design and implementation were coordinated with the activities of other development partners.</p>	<p><b>Evaluation design:</b> Analysis followed analytical questions from the evaluation matrix; triangulation of methods and sources.</p> <p><b>Empirical methods:</b> Document analysis (progress reports, monitoring, documents of development partners). Semi-structured interviews (project, political partner, SNAs, development partners).</p>	<p>Data availability and quality: high.</p> <p>Evidence strength: high.</p>

## 4.4 Effectiveness

This section analyses and assesses the effectiveness of the project. It is structured according to the assessment dimensions in the GIZ project evaluation matrix (see annex).

### Summarising assessment and rating of effectiveness

Table 9: Rating of OECD/DAC criterion: effectiveness

Criterion	Assessment dimension	Score and rating
<b>Effectiveness</b>	Achievement of the (intended) objectives	30 out of 30 points
	Contribution to achievement of objectives	27 out of 30 points
	Quality of implementation	18 out of 20 points
	Unintended results	17 out of 20 points
<b>Overall score and rating</b>		Score: <b>92 out of 100 points</b> Rating: Level 1: highly successful

Overall, the evaluation team concluded that goal attainment was high, with two indicators overachieved, one achieved, and one indicator almost achieved by the end of the project term. Outcomes obtained according to the indicators included increases in the rural population's income, the generation of employment and improved livelihoods of women-led households. Results hypotheses on the project's contribution to improving the livelihoods of rural households, the income of cassava, rice and vegetable farmers, and the situation of women-led and vulnerable households were confirmed. The implementation quality was high, based on the assessment of the dimensions of Capacity WORKS (the GIZ management model for sustainable development). Unintended effects, both positive and negative, mostly resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic and the response by the project, which contributed significantly to mitigating the socio-economic consequences of the pandemic.

**In total, the effectiveness of the project is rated Level 1: highly successful, with 92 out of 100 points.**

## Analysis and assessment of effectiveness

### Effectiveness– Dimension 1: Achievement of the (intended) objectives

Table 10 provides an overview of the quality of the indicators, adaptations for the evaluation and indicator achievement (current values at the time of the evaluation vs target values). It is followed by a detailed quantitative and qualitative analysis of each outcome-level indicator.

Table 10: Assessed and adapted objective indicators (outcome level)

Project's objective indicator according to the (last change) offer	Assessment according to SMART* criteria	Specified objective indicator (only if necessary for measurement or understanding)
<p>20 % of 30,000 rural households – including identified poor (IDPoor), according to their share in the reference area, which was supported by sub-national administrations, confirm that their (a) economic situation or (b) employment status has improved by 1 level on a scale from 1 to 5.</p> <p>Base value (04/2019): 0</p> <p>Target value (12/2021): 20 % of 30,000</p> <p>Final value (12/2021): 36 % of 53,880</p> <p>Achievement in %: 180 % (for share of beneficiaries), 100 % (for no. of beneficiaries: overachieved)</p> <p>Source: Final impact assessment</p>	<p><b>Specific:</b> Despite considerable exposure to external factors, the indicator was specific to the module objective and a direct effect of the project.</p> <p>There were, however, some overlaps in the operationalisations of indicators 1, 2 and 3, which led to double counts of beneficiaries and closely correlated results.</p> <p><b>Measurable:</b> Yes (based on samples and considering the limitations of a subjective personal assessment scale as applied by the indicator).</p> <p><b>Achievable:</b> Yes</p> <p><b>Relevant:</b> Yes</p> <p><b>Time-bound:</b> Yes</p>	<p>All indicators are based on periodic <i>impact assessments</i> on which the evaluation had to rely. Results were validated through triangulation rather than a further specification of the indicator.</p> <p>Secondary analysis of the <i>impact assessment</i> paid close attention to the operationalisation of each indicator to avoid double counts of closely correlated results.</p>
<p>Out of 10,000 supported family farms, 6,000 have increased their household income from farming by an average of 10 % (among them: 20 % poor).</p> <p>Base value (04/2019): 0</p> <p>Target value (12/2021): 6,000 (1,200 poor)</p> <p>Final value (12/2021): 5,619 of 13,780 (48 % poor)</p> <p>Achievement in %: 94 %</p> <p>Source: Final impact assessment</p>	<p><b>Specific:</b> Despite considerable exposure to external factors, the indicator was specific to the module objective and a direct effect of the project.</p> <p>There were, however, some overlaps in the operationalisations of indicators 1, 2 and 3, which led to double counts of beneficiaries and closely correlated results.</p> <p><b>Measurable:</b> Yes</p> <p><b>Achievable:</b> Yes</p> <p><b>Relevant:</b> Yes</p> <p><b>Time-bound:</b> Yes</p>	As above
<p>750 new employment opportunities are generated for rural areas (among them: 50 % women, 25 % poor)</p>	<p><b>Specific:</b> Yes</p> <p><b>Measurable:</b> Yes</p> <p><b>Achievable:</b> Yes</p> <p><b>Relevant:</b> Yes</p>	(-)

Project's objective indicator according to the (last change) offer	Assessment according to SMART* criteria	Specified objective indicator (only if necessary for measurement or understanding)
Base value (04/2019): 125 Target value (12/2021): 875 (750 new) Final value (12/2021): 948 (823 new) Achievement in %: 100 % Source: Final impact assessment	<b>Time-bound:</b> Yes	
40 % of 500 supported women-led households indicate that their household situation has improved in two out of the following aspects: (a) balanced diet, (b) regular school attendance of children, (c) improved health care, (d) investment in housing, (e) acquisition of production or (f) long-living household goods. Base value (04/2019): 0 Target value (12/2021): 40 % of 500 Final value (12/2021): 38 % of 1,612 Achievement in %: 95 % (for the share of beneficiaries), 100 % (for the no. of beneficiaries: overachieved) Source: Final impact assessment	<b>Specific:</b> Despite considerable exposure to external factors, the indicator was specific to the module objective and a direct effect of the project. There were, however, some overlaps in the operationalisations of indicators 1, 2 and 3, which led to double counts of beneficiaries and closely correlated results. <b>Measurable:</b> Yes (based on samples and considering the limitations of a subjective personal assessment scale as applied by the indicator). <b>Achievable:</b> Partly <b>Relevant:</b> Yes <b>Time-bound:</b> Yes	As above
* SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound		

***Indicator M1:** 20 % of 30,000 rural households – including identified poor (IDPoor) according to their share in the reference area, which was supported by sub-national administrations, confirm that their (a) economic status or (b) employment status has improved by 1 level on a scale from 1 to 5.*

The indicator refers to the beneficiaries of agricultural value chain-upgrading activities, including COVID-19 special measures and LED measures, e.g. Matching Fund projects (GIZ-RED, 2022b). To assess indicator achievement, the project carried out a final impact assessment, interviewing more than 1,000 households that participated in cassava, rice and vegetable value chain-upgrading activities up to March 2021. The results of the sample were extrapolated to the total number of households supported (GIZ-RED, 2021I).

The number of households supported during the project term, at 53,880, was nearly double the initial target of 30,000. In all, 23,014 people benefited from value chain-upgrading activities, 25,781 from LED projects and 5,085 from COVID-19 special measures. Of the households interviewed, 36% (target: 20%) reported improvements in their economic or employment situation as measured by the indicator. Extrapolated to the population of households supported, this would add up to approximately 19,400 actual beneficiaries (target: 6,000). The reliability of this extrapolation is limited since the interviews focused on the beneficiaries of value chain-upgrading activities rather than the beneficiaries of LED measures. However, the contribution of value chain-upgrading activities alone (5,700 beneficiaries confirmed improvements) was already close to the target value (GIZ-RED, 2021I; GIZ-RED, 2022b). Even if the proportion of beneficiaries of the effects of LED measures was lower, it is still reasonable to conclude that **indicator M1 was overachieved**.

***Indicator M2:** Out of 10,000 supported family farms, 6,000 have increased their household income from farming by an average of 10 % (among them: 20 % poor).*

The household income of family farmers was also measured through the financial impact assessment. Overall, 13,780 family farms (cassava: 6,296; rice: 5,645; vegetables: 1,839) participated in value chain-upgrading activities during the project term – 3,780 more than anticipated. However, the proportion of the supported

population that increased income by 10% or more was significantly lower than expected. According to the indicator, 60% of the supported population should experience an increase in income; according to the final impact assessment, this was only true for approximately 41%. Despite the broader reach of the project measures, the absolute number of beneficiaries fell slightly short of the target, therefore. In total, 5,619 family farms reported an increase in income of at least 10% (target: 6,000).

On the other hand, the subtarget for benefiting poor households was clearly overachieved: 48% of the family farms supported were registered by the IDPoor system compared with a target of 20% – or in absolute numbers: 2,685 households compared with a target of 1,200 (GIZ-RED, 2021I; 2022b). In short, **indicator M2 was not fully achieved** in terms of the overall target value for farmers experiencing income increases but clearly **over-achieved** in terms of the subtarget for income increases of poor households.

*Indicator M3: 750 new employment opportunities are generated for rural areas (among them: 50 % women, 25 % poor).*

Measuring new employment opportunities is challenging, since jobs based on daily payment without working contracts are common in the agricultural sector in Cambodia. However, some labourers are also hired for longer, similar to a permanent work agreement. In the final impact assessment, the total period of employment for the same labourers varied from a few days to a few weeks to a few months, depending on the farms' size and the number of labourers working on them. To standardise the measurement unit, the impact assessment followed the stipulations of the GIZ results from the data collection guideline, which means that 1 unit was understood as a full-time job equivalent, equal to eight hours over 225 days in the year. Overall, additional employment identified in the cassava, rice and vegetable farms supported added up to 823 full-time job equivalents. The proportion of women was higher than anticipated (60%, against a target of 50%), likewise the proportion of poor beneficiaries (38%, against a target of 25%) (GIZ-RED, 2021I; 2022b). In summary, the **indicator M3 – including all sub-targets – was overachieved**.

*Indicator M4: 40 % of 500 supported women-led households indicate that their household situation has improved in two out of the following aspects: (a) balanced diet, (b) regular school attendance of children, (c) improved health care, (d) investment in housing, acquisition of production or (f) long-living household goods.*

The number of women-led households supported reached 1,612 (target: 500). At the same time, the proportion of households that improved in the specified livelihood dimensions was only marginally lower than expected (38%, target: 40%). Thus, there was clear **overachievement of the indicator**, with a total of 615 women-led households reporting an improved household situation as defined by the indicator (target: 200). Among the aspects mentioned in the indicators, the most frequently reported were investment in housing (443 cases) and durable household goods (403 cases). Reinvestment in economic activities, i.e. goods required for production, was reported in 340 cases. Improved health care and a more balanced diet were reported in 196 and 189 cases, respectively. More regular school attendance by children played a minor role (13 cases). Among the poor beneficiaries, mentions of the effects of a more balanced diet and better health care were above average, while there were fewer mentions of reinvestment in productive activities (GIZ-RED, 2021I; 2022b).

Overall, the evaluation team concluded that goal attainment was high, with two indicators overachieved, one achieved, and one almost achieved by the end of the project term. Effectiveness dimension 1 – Achievement of the (intended) objectives – scores **30 out of 30 points**.

The four module objective indicators relied predominantly on the effects of the project activities in the agricultural sector, mostly carried out in the context of output C. Therefore, goal attainment according to the indicators did not fully capture the project's outcome. Further effects of the strengthening of subnational administrations,

MSMEs and employment promotion, as well as the effects of COVID-19 special measures, are considered below in the contribution analysis and in sections 4.5 (impact) and 4.7 (sustainability).

## Effectiveness – Dimension 2: Contribution to achievement of objectives

Table 11: Results hypothesis 1 for effectiveness (situation of rural households)

<b>Results hypothesis 1 (activity – output – outcome)</b>	Technical advice to subnational administrations in planning and implementing investments (A-4 and A-5 in the results model – see figure 1) and the institutional strengthening of subnational authorities (A-6 and A-7) should enable them to increasingly implement measures for inclusive economic development ( <b>output</b> , A-9), thus <u>leading to</u> the improvement of the economic and employment situations of rural households (including poor and vulnerable households) ( <b>outcome</b> , M1).
<b>Main assumptions</b>	LED measures increase productivity and yields of the agricultural producers targeted, thus increasing household income.
<b>Risks/unintended results</b>	(-)
<b>Alternative explanation</b>	<p><i>Positive:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall economic growth/market developments (e.g. demand for specific products, volatile price changes of major commodities).</li> <li>• Gross vs net effect at the output level: to what extent could local authorities have carried out LED measures without project support?</li> </ul> <p><i>Negative:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Natural disasters that occurred during the project term.</li> <li>• Socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and its effect on the work modes of the project and financial means of SNAs.</li> </ul>
<b>Confirmed/partly confirmed/not confirmed</b>	Confirmed

To strengthen the role of district and municipal administrations in local economic development (LED), the project supported the establishment of LED subcommittees in 11 DMAs in the provinces of Banteay Meanchey, Oddar Meanchey and Preah Vihear. A further six DMAs had not yet, at the time of this evaluation, established LED subcommittees but had been supported in LED-related planning and steering processes. The project further supported the analysis of the socio-economic characteristics of the respective districts to guide local economic development and investment planning. Together with the secretariat of the National Committee for Subnational Democratic Development (NCDD-S), modified investment programme guidelines were presented in 2019 to enable the DMAs to plan their investment volume better.

All DMAs that were interviewed during the evaluation (Int\_18–22) confirmed the positive effect of the project support on the participatory nature of the planning processes, i.e. the involvement of the public sector, private sector and civil society, and the results of the planning processes. All interviewees confirmed that the multi-stakeholder processes contributed to setting priorities for LED investments and incorporating project ideas in the planning instruments, namely the five-year development plan and the three-year rolling investment plans at the district level. Depending on the socio-politic characteristics of each district and the duration of the project support, there were visible differences regarding the institutional consolidation of the LED subcommittees (Int\_18–20, 22) and the capacity to steer multi-stakeholder processes. However, all DMAs involved confirmed that planning quality had improved compared with the situation at the beginning of the project.

According to the project monitoring, 65 LED support measures were implemented during the project period (target: 42), which included, among others: (a) 13 Matching Fund projects, i.e. projects with combined local resources and GIZ local subsidies, for small infrastructure or community-based tourism initiatives, (b) 16 livelihood measures for unemployed migrant workers through cash-for-work measures and agricultural training, (c) eight special measures projects to support disabled persons in agricultural production (GIZ-RED, 2022b).

Overall, LED measures benefited more than 25,000 rural households in the provinces of Banteay Meanchey, Oddar Meanchey and Preah Vihear. As mentioned above, the final impact assessment provided data for a thorough quantitative analysis of the results of value-chain upgrading (see results hypothesis 2 below), whereas no comparable data was available for the LED activities. Since the measures were more diverse – some directly, others rather indirectly benefiting target groups – there could be no quantitative measurement of the outcome at the target-group level. However, internal reports of the project and the interviews and focus groups carried out during the evaluation mission provided sufficient evidence for the effectiveness of LED measures. DMA representatives involved in Matching Fund projects particularly highlighted the positive effect of water and irrigation infrastructure projects on agricultural production and, thus, the livelihood of local farmers (Int\_15, 17, 21). Owing to the pandemic, Matching Fund projects in the area of community-based tourism had not yet shown the same effects of tangible outcomes at the time of the evaluation (Int\_20, 22).

Alternative explanations for the results observed were mostly ruled out. According to the DMAs, LED planning could not have achieved a similar level without the project's process consulting and capacity development support. The socio-economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic temporarily hampered the continuity of consulting and training processes and the effectiveness of some LED measures (particularly community-based tourism), but positive results were still predominant. Considering the weaker data basis compared with results hypothesis 2, **results hypothesis 1 is confirmed (evidence: medium)**.

Table 12: Results hypothesis 2 for effectiveness (income for farmers)

<b>Results hypothesis 2 (activity – output – outcome)</b>	Project advice for small-scale farmers regarding investment in productivity and environmentally friendly technology (C-6) enables farmers to improve their production and sales opportunities ( <b>output</b> , C-7), thus <u>leading to</u> an increase in household income from farming ( <b>outcome</b> , M2).
<b>Main assumptions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The innovations promoted by the project increase productivity and yields of the agricultural producers, thus increasing household income.</li> <li>• Farmers adopt innovations and are investing in new services and inputs.</li> </ul>
<b>Risks/unintended results</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase of factor prices (land, labour, seed) due to higher demand.</li> <li>• Smallholders (particularly from vulnerable households) give up agricultural activities and migrate to Cambodian urban centres and Thailand.</li> </ul>
<b>Alternative explanation</b>	<p><i>Positive:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall economic growth/market developments (e.g. demand for specific products, volatile price changes of major commodities).</li> <li>• Facilitating factor: increasing demand for safe products (domestic markets) and environmentally friendly products (international markets).</li> </ul> <p><i>Negative:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extreme weather, particularly droughts and flooding, destroyed yields.</li> <li>• COVID hampered stakeholder cooperation, access to new markets, producer/buyer relations, logistics (particularly cross-border).</li> </ul>
<b>Confirmed/partly confirmed/not confirmed</b>	Confirmed

The results hypothesis refers to the value chain-upgrading activities in output C and the effect on the household income of local farmers. The project supported value-chain stakeholders in upgrading rice, vegetable and cassava value chains. The support was oriented towards implementing environmentally friendly cultivation techniques by local farmers, improving cooperation between different value-chain stakeholders (e.g. among farmers, between farmers and buyers), improving the safety and quality of agricultural goods, improving access to inputs (e.g. seeds) and establishing new business development services (GIZ-RED, 2020j).

According to the final impact assessment, nearly 16,000 small-farming households participated in project activities, including beneficiaries of the special measures for people with disabilities. After discounting households that ceased agricultural cultivation, and double counts (e.g. cases with more than one beneficiary per



household), the impact assessment calculated 11,517 supported households. Recommended innovations included selection of better planting material, better handling and storage of planting material, better spacing in planting, selection of more environmentally friendly fertilisers, more efficient use of fertilisers, crop rotation, pest control, safer use of pesticides and better weed management. The project's impact assessment used an index for the adoption level, counting as 'adopters' those farmers with indices equal to or higher than 0.5, which equals the adoption of at least half of the recommended practices. Based on this, adoption rates ranged from 67% among cassava farmers to more than 90% among vegetable farmers (GIZ-RED, 2021I).

Photo 2: Farming training



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Income data were available for 2017 (base year) to the end of 2020. For the three value chains, the following changes were measured through the project's final impact assessment (GIZ-RED, 2021I):

- The average net income, i.e. gross income minus operation costs, of cassava farmers grew from USD 1,213 in 2017 to USD 1,621 in 2020, i.e. by 34%. Some of the recommended practices – e.g. crop rotation and intercropping with other plants – make cassava production more sustainable but reduce the yield per hectare. This means the total increase in income would have been even higher had the monitoring recorded income from cassava and added extra income from other non-cassava crops. On the other hand, a price increase for cassava of 12.5% from 2019 to 2020 contributed as an external factor to the income growth.
- The average net income of rice farmers grew from USD 743 in 2018 to USD 958 in 2020, i.e. by 29%. This includes a decrease in 2020, when yields were negatively affected by heavy floods in the late rainy season, particularly in Banteay Meanchey. On the other hand, the ability acquired by some farmers to plant more than one crop cycle enhanced yields, so that the overall production volume remained stable despite the negative influence of the climatic event and increased production costs. A lower selling price for rice in 2020 also reduced the income increase. Despite these negative external factors, income grew significantly if the entire project period is considered.
- The average net income of vegetable farmers grew from USD 767 in 2018 to USD 1,103 in 2020, i.e. by 30%. As in the case of rice farmers, income for vegetable farmers stagnated in 2020, despite increased yield per square metre, due to COVID-19-related interruptions to timely transport to consumer markets (e.g. Phnom Penh) and the closure of many vegetable wholesale and retail markets and corresponding price reductions. However, the income increase was still considerable for the entire project period.

In addition to measuring income changes over time, the impact assessment calculated the correlation between the adoption of production techniques and changes in income. According to the assessment result, the average net income of farmers who adopted innovations was much higher than the income of farmers who did not (fully) adopt new practices:

- In the cassava value chain, farmers/households who adopted innovations (adoption index above 0.5) earned USD 2,048 on average, compared with USD 738 for 'non-adopters'.
- In the rice value chain, farmers/households who adopted innovations (adoption index above 0.5) earned USD 1,089 on average, compared with USD 433 for 'non-adopters'.
- In the vegetable value chain, farmers/households who adopted innovations (adoption index above 0.5) earned USD 1,140 on average, compared with USD 561 for 'non-adopters'.

In conclusion, the adoption of recommended production techniques – in combination with other above-mentioned value chain-upgrading activities – was the predominant factor in the income changes observed. External factors (e.g. climatic events, COVID-19 restrictions, market prices) had a rather negative effect. This means that in the absence of the external factors observed, the positive effects of the project on the net income of farmers would probably have been even higher. Overall assessment: **results hypothesis 2 is confirmed (evidence: strong).**

Table 13: Results hypothesis 3 for effectiveness (women-led households and disadvantaged groups)

<b>Results hypothesis 3 (activity – output – outcome)</b>	Improved production and sales opportunities for women-led and disadvantaged households (C-7) and education on fundamental aspects of nutrition (C-8/C-9) <u>lead to</u> improving the situation of women-led and disadvantaged households in terms of (a) balanced diet, (b) school attendance of children, (c) access to health care, (d) investment in housing, (e) acquisition of production inputs and (f) acquisition of durable household goods (outcome M4).
<b>Main assumptions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women-led and disadvantaged households' additional income is spent on improving the above-mentioned aspects of the household's situation.</li> <li>• Recommendations on fundamental aspects of nutrition are applied in a way that leads to a more balanced diet.</li> <li>• Increased local production of vegetables improves the access of the rural population to healthy food.</li> </ul>
<b>Risks/unintended results</b>	Increase in factor prices (land, labour, seed) due to higher demand.
<b>Alternative explanation</b>	<p><i>Positive:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Overall economic growth/market developments (e.g. demand for specific products, volatile price changes of major commodities).</li> <li>• Facilitating factor: increasing demand for safe products (domestic markets) and environmentally friendly products (international markets).</li> </ul> <p><i>Negative:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extreme weather, particularly droughts and flooding, destroyed yields.</li> <li>• COVID hampered stakeholder cooperation, access to new markets, producer/buyer relations, logistics (particularly cross-border) and school attendance (because of school closures).</li> </ul>
<b>Confirmed/partly confirmed/not confirmed</b>	Confirmed

According to the final impact assessment, 14% of the 11,517 households that supported production techniques (see results hypothesis 2) were women-led households. This means that the project contribution analysed under results hypothesis 2 included support to 1,612 women-led households. This includes the beneficiaries of special projects that were carried out for women-led households and disadvantaged households, including IDPoor households and households with disabled persons. These special measures included the establishment of agricultural communities, support for cassava, vegetable and rice planting, and other economic activities (e.g. silk-scarf weaving). Furthermore, more than 3,000 households (82% women-led, 40% IDPoor)



participated in a comprehensive cycle of training on fundamental aspects of nutrition – among these, around 400 poor households participated in vegetable home-gardening training (GIZ-RED, 2021l).

Though the income of women-led households and other vulnerable households is significantly lower than the average, adoption rates and the project effect on income increases did not differ considerably from what was observed for the overall population of beneficiaries. The intended effect on the households' situation has also been confirmed, particularly regarding investment in housing, goods required for production, balanced diet and health care. The results confirmed that additional income was spent as anticipated, thus contributing to better livelihoods. The application of nutrition training content was exceptionally high, with about 98% of the respondents reporting the adoption of at least two out of 12 recommendations (69% adopted at least three recommendations), such as planting moringa and fruit trees, increasing fruit and vegetable consumption, small-scale animal farming for household consumption, sanitation and hygiene-related recommendations. Nearly half of the participants increased their production and consumption of vegetables (GIZ-RED, 2021g). Unlike the project's effect on income, the net project effect on the livelihood dimensions mentioned could not be statistically assessed. Focus group participants, however, confirm a strong causal relationship between (a) income increase and the above-mentioned household expenses and (b) special measures and nutrition training on the availability of agricultural goods for household consumption and a more balanced diet (FGD\_5).

Effects mediated through commercial agriculture and income generation were exposed to the same external factors as analysed for results hypothesis 2 (see above). Regarding the adoption of home gardening and recommendations on nutrition, no alternative explanations for the changes observed were reported. Overall assessment: **results hypothesis 3 confirmed (evidence: strong)**.

Overall, the three results hypotheses for effectiveness were confirmed. The evidence was strong for the outcome of value chain-upgrading activities (results hypothesis 2) and the measures oriented towards women-led and vulnerable households (results hypothesis 3), and medium for the outcome of LED measures, owing to the more complex causal contribution to the outcome at target group level. Effectiveness dimension 2 – Contribution to the achievement of objectives – scores **27 out of 30 points**.

### **Effectiveness – Dimension 3: Quality of implementation**

The assessment of the quality of implementation took into account selected Capacity WORKS success factors (strategy, cooperation, steering, processes, learning and innovation) and the results-oriented monitoring.

The project **steering structure** considered three levels:

- annual national steering committee meeting under the NCDD-S for the discussion and approval of the annual operational plan and annual revision of the current State strategic foresight,
- several provincial steering committees per year for the discussion of operations in each province and revision of the respective results, and
- different types of stakeholder partnerships at the implementation level within each area of intervention.

Overall, the steering structure was conducive to ensuring ownership and stakeholder engagement at all levels (Int\_3, 4, 12). Given the predominantly regional focus and presence of the project, the purpose of the national steering committee was mainly to provide updates on the state of the project and promote the dissemination of project results, rather than to involve national-level stakeholders in the project planning and implementation. Therefore, it was functional for the project to concentrate steering activities on the subnational level.

The project **strategy** for the different areas of intervention was extensively discussed and agreed upon and well understood by the implementation partners. Interviews during the evaluation found that stakeholders at all levels were aware of the objectives and approach of the intervention areas in which they were involved. This was less the case for the overall project approach, i.e. the integration, interconnections and synergies of the

different areas of intervention. While interconnections between output A (LED) and output C (value-chain upgrading) were conceptually clear and frequently mentioned by evaluation interviewees (Int\_12, 13, 14, 16, 17), stakeholders of output B (MSMEs) appeared to be more focused on particular topics within the boundaries of the specific measures in which they were directly involved.

The project put much emphasis on building and facilitating **cooperation** structures and processes between stakeholders to ensure the systemic strengthening of the partner landscape. This included:

- emphasis on multi-stakeholder participation in the LED subcommittees in output A,
- emphasis on public-private dialogue mechanisms in MSME promotion and the cooperation between TVET institutions and the private sector as a prerequisite for needs-oriented TVET in output B, and
- strengthening agricultural cooperatives and producer-buyer relationships in the cassava, rice and vegetable value chains in output C and support of broader networks, such as innovation platforms (Cassava Innovation Platform, Drum Seeder Innovation Platform), unions of agricultural cooperatives and producer-trader networks.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, the development and performance of multi-stakeholder processes, networks and platforms suffered because of travel and meeting restrictions (GIZ-RED, 2021d) but had regained momentum by the time of the evaluation and were assessed by many interviewees as among the key elements and added values of the project (Int\_12, 19, 26–28). This assessment was not affected by the fact that cooperation formats were still somewhat fluid and subject to change when mandates, structures and functions adjusted to a changing stakeholder landscape (e.g. due to overlapping functions of different networks, networks of agricultural cooperatives duplicating the tasks of participating cooperatives themselves, etc.; see GIZ-RED, 2022a; 2022b).

The project strongly emphasised the promotion of **learning and innovation** processes. Partners were supported in generating evidence for the formulation of strategies and design of interventions (e.g. needs and potential analyses, stakeholder surveys, local economic and value-chain analyses, feasibility studies), advocated tools and concepts were documented, implementation experiences were systematised and project outcomes in key workstreams were thoroughly assessed. Such assessment included the mid-term and final impact assessments – based on surveys with more than 1,000 beneficiaries – as cornerstones of the project's comprehensive **monitoring system**. Considering that the project operations concentrated on the regional level and that there was no national level workstream beyond the national steering committee meetings, consistent documentation and communication of learning experiences was a prerequisite for the transfer of regionally tested concepts to the national level (see section 4.5 on impact). If there's one critical aspect of the project documentation, it was the difficulty in moving from the comprehensive systematisation of the different workstreams to an accessible, panoramic narrative for the project as a whole. Despite the availability of some overarching documents (e.g. the annual report to the National Steering Committee and the internal log-frame indicator achievement reports), the documentation was stronger in terms of analyses of single intervention and result areas than at providing a strategic overview.

Based on the Capacity WORKS factors assessed, implementation quality was high. Critical aspects related to the project's thematic complexity were more related to the project design (see chapter 4.2 on relevance) and were therefore not given much weight in the evaluation of this dimension, to avoid double counts of the same aspects. Overall, effectiveness dimension 3 – Quality of implementation – scores **18 out of 20 points**.

Photo 3: Handover of books at the University of Banteay Meanchey



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#### **Effectiveness – Dimension 4: Unintended results**

The assessment distinguished between three different categories of unintended results: (a) anticipated unintended results, i.e. the extent to which the project anticipated and adequately managed risks, (b) unanticipated negative results and (c) unintended positive results.

No unintended negative results, in the narrow sense, were reported by the project or in interviews with stakeholders. What was observed was a discrepancy in the extent to which project support for different target groups could be continued during the restrictions on contact during COVID-19. Owing to COVID regulations, many activities were either postponed, amended or cancelled in 2020. Since it is easier to adapt activities with digitally skilled target groups, support to those groups tended to continue. Activities with less digitally skilled target groups, on the other hand, were more often cancelled or postponed, which created a lack of communication and lower levels of support. In that sense, the COVID-19 situation particularly affected cooperation with target groups that were already underprivileged (GIZ-RED, 2020k).

Aside from this socio-structural self-reinforcing obstacle, the project reacted in various ways to the restrictions resulting from the COVID-19-pandemic (see section 4.2 on relevance and the response to change). Aside from operational adjustments, the adaptations included special measures to mitigate the negative socio-economic consequences of the pandemic. Those measures were not unintended in the narrow sense but neither were they anticipated in the original project design, so they led to additional outcomes. Interviewed DMAs mostly emphasised the positive outcome of the so-called cash-for-work measures for returning migrants. As well as generating short-term income for the target groups, the work measures contributed to infrastructure upgrades, such as the rehabilitation of reservoirs and other water infrastructure. Home-gardening training helped farmers start small-scale vegetable production. Those farmers who were already maintaining a home garden increased the size of their gardens and grew more types of vegetables, thus the diet and food security of those farmers were improved (GIZ-RED, 2021g).

**Risk monitoring** was less formalised than the monitoring of indicators and operations, but the reflections on the degree of indicator achievement showed sufficient awareness and consideration of risk factors and, indeed, considered a much wider array than just the overarching general risks documented in the project proposal. Overall, effectiveness dimension 4 – Unintended results – scores **17 out of 20 points**.

## Methodology for assessing effectiveness

Table 14: Methodology for assessing OECD/DAC criterion: effectiveness

Effectiveness: assessment dimensions	Basis for assessment	Evaluation design and empirical methods	Data quality and limitations
<b>Achievement of the (intended) objectives</b>	Extent to which module objective indicators were achieved (see indicators in table 10).	<p><b>Evaluation design:</b> The analysis was mainly based on the analysis of secondary data from the project's <i>impact assessment</i>, contextualised by qualitative data from stakeholder interviews.</p> <p><b>Empirical methods:</b> Document analysis (progress reports, impact assessments); semi-structured interviews (all).</p>	<p>Impact assessments provided data required for the indicator assessment.</p> <p>Double counts of beneficiaries were an issue but could probably be eliminated.</p> <p>Limited precision of subjective assessment scales.</p> <p>Evidence strength: medium.</p>
<b>Contribution to achievement of objectives</b>	<p>Extent to which the outputs of the project have contributed to achieving the module objective.</p> <p>Hypotheses: (1) Contribution of LED measures to the situation of rural households (table 11), (2) Contribution of agrotechnical innovations to the income of farmers (table 12), (3) Contribution of production and sales opportunities for women-led/disadvantaged households to household situation (e.g. diet, health care, etc. – table 13).</p>	<p><b>Evaluation design:</b> Contribution analysis.</p> <p><b>Empirical methods:</b> Document analysis, including secondary data analysis (progress reports, impact assessments, reports on specific workstreams); semi-structured interviews (all stakeholders); focus groups with final beneficiaries.</p>	<p>Same limitations as indicator analysis.</p> <p>High exposure of intended outcomes to external factors.</p> <p>Evidence strength: medium.</p>
<b>Quality of implementation</b>	<p>Quality of steering and implementation based on Capacity WORKS dimensions, i.e. quality of strategy, cooperation, steering, processes, learning and innovation.</p> <p>Quality of the results-oriented monitoring system.</p>	<p><b>Evaluation design:</b> Analysis followed the analytical questions from the evaluation matrix; triangulation of sources.</p> <p><b>Empirical methods:</b> Document analysis (standard documents, reports on individual interventions); semi-structured interviews (all stakeholders); focus groups with beneficiaries.</p>	<p>Data availability and quality: high.</p> <p>Evidence strength: high.</p>
<b>Unintended results</b>	<p>Extent to which the project did or may contribute to foreseeable/identifiable unintended outcomes.</p> <p>Assessment of the risk monitoring and management of the project.</p>	<p><b>Evaluation design:</b> Outcome harvesting.</p> <p><b>Empirical methods:</b> Document and secondary data analysis (progress reports, reports on individual interventions); semi-structured interviews (all), focus groups with final beneficiaries.</p>	<p>Data availability and quality: medium to high (not all existing unintended effects may be identified as such by interviewees).</p> <p>Evidence strength: medium to high.</p>

\* SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant and time-bound

## 4.5 Impact

This section analyses and assesses the impact of the project. It is structured according to the assessment dimensions in the GIZ project evaluation matrix (see annex).

### Summarising assessment and rating of impact

Table 15: Rating of OECD/DAC criterion: impact

Criterion	Assessment dimension	Score and rating
Impact	Higher-level (intended) development changes/results	26 out of 30 points
	Contribution to higher-level (intended) development results/changes	33 out of 40 points
	Contribution to higher-level (unintended) development results/changes	30 out of 30 points
Impact score and rating		Score: <b>89 out of 100 points</b> Rating: <b>Level 2: successful</b>

RED IV sought to contribute to two of the three programme indicators of the current Rural Development programme of German development cooperation, measuring the reduction of (a) the proportion of IDPoor households in the target provinces and (b) the proportion of the population with low food security. Both indicators are following a positive long-term trend but this was interrupted by COVID-19. Their validity as a goalpost for the project under evaluation was therefore limited. However, the project did have significant direct effects on household income and food security, which were proven and quantified by the project's impact assessment studies. The project has successfully laid the foundations for the dissemination of innovations in LED and in agricultural value chains – both related results hypotheses were confirmed or partly confirmed. While further dissemination beyond the project boundaries is probable, there may be implementation challenges and further external support may be required. No unintended negative results at the impact level were observed.

**In total, the impact of the project is rated Level 2: successful, with 89 out of 100 points.**

### Analysis and assessment of impact

#### Impact dimension 1: Higher-level (intended) development changes/results

The project was designed under the former development cooperation programme Rural Economic Development (valid until 2019). With the transition to the new Rural Development programme, the focus of GDC was broadened but the general orientation of the relevant programme indicator for the project (proportion of the population under the poverty line) was maintained. Owing to their different wording, regional scope and sub-indicators, the indicators from both programmes are listed here. The goal system of the new development programme contains a further indicator on nutrition, which is also relevant for the RED IV project:

- *Previous programme indicator 1 (up to 2019):* 'Increasing the family income of the rural poor in Siem Reap province by (a) reducing the proportion of poor households in Siem Reap province and (b) reaching women-headed households at least in line with the proportion of all women-headed households in the programme provinces.'
- *Current programme indicator 1 (since 2019):* 'Reducing the share of IDPoor households in the intervention areas of German development cooperation.'

Poverty rates have constantly been declining in Cambodia over the last two decades. From 2019 to 2020 – precisely the year between the new programme baseline and the most recent indicator reporting – there was, for the first time, a rise in poverty rates, due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Tourist areas such as Siem Reap



were more severely hit than areas with predominantly agricultural activity. However, the share of IDPoor households is still lower than in 2018 (the baseline year of the RED IV project). The average share of IDPoor households in the four project regions was 11.8% in 2020 compared with 13.3% in 2018 (MoP, 2022). In 2013, the baseline year of the previous DC programme, the poverty rate in Siem Reap was as high as 32% (GIZ-RED, 2014a).

The changes in IDPoor rates were due to multiple factors and strong overall economic trends and cannot only be attributed to German development cooperation. However, within its scope of intervention, RED IV had a strong direct effect on improving the income and livelihood of a quantitatively significant target group (see section 4.4 on effectiveness for detailed data). It can be argued that the results measured by the module and the programme indicator are nearly at the same level, except for the fact that the module objective indicator refers to a more limited target group (beneficiaries of LED measures and value chain-upgrading activities), whereas the programme indicator covers the entire population of the target provinces. Thus, according to the results reported in section 4.4 above, the significant share contributed by the project is evident, regardless of whether external factors distorted the poverty data at the overall province level.

- *Current programme indicator 2: 'Average proportion of IDPoor households in the total population of the intervention areas that have medium or low food security according to the IDPoor scoring system.'*

The baseline for the indicator was set in November 2019 (5.42%), just before the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, which led to an increase (5.75%) by the time of the last report, in November 2020. Therefore, it will take further measurements over several years for the indicator to become a valid goalpost for GDC. As for the previous programme indicator, however, the project under evaluation benefited a significant sub-segment of the population, contributing to food security at the outcome level either directly, through stimulating home-gardening and behaviour-change measures, or indirectly, through the increase in household income achieved (see section 4.4). Of the 359 households trained in home-gardening techniques by the end of 2020, 338 had adopted some activity. The share of households consuming vegetables five times a week increased by 19%, with home gardening being the main source of the vegetables consumed for 97% of the households. An impact assessment of nutrition training in Oddar Meanchey showed that 1,885 of 1,923 households adopted at least two recommendations (planting moringa trees – 83%, planting fruit trees – 67% or planting vegetables – 46%) (GIZ-RED, 2021g; 2022b).

Regarding the project's contribution to Agenda 2030, the results analysed in section 4.4 and in this section coincide or directly contribute to several Cambodian Sustainable Development Goals (CSDGs). Programme indicator 1 measures the achievement of CSDG 1.2.1 for poverty reduction (reducing the proportion of the population living below the poverty line). The analysis, in section 4.4, of the project contribution to the income of small farmers showed a more than two-fold increase of the value of agricultural production (CSDG 2.3.1) for a relevant target-group size. Changes in the annual gross domestic growth rates in 2020 and 2021 (CSDG 8.1.1) were dominated by the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, such that a project-specific contribution cannot be estimated. However, the aforementioned increase in farmers' income is closely related to CSDG 8.1.1.

In short, the programme indicators are following a positive long-term trend, which was interrupted by COVID-19. Their validity as a goalpost for the project at the time of its evaluation was therefore limited. However, the project did directly affect household income and food security, as proven and quantified by impact assessments. Therefore, impact dimension 1 – Higher-level (intended) development changes/results – scores **26 out of 30 points**.

## Impact dimension 2: Contribution to higher-level (intended) development results/changes

Table 16: Results hypothesis 1 for impact (scaling up of LED innovations)

<b>Hypothesis 1 (outcome – impact)</b>	Proven success of measures for inclusive economic development (as measured by the module objective indicators, in particular M1) and the transfer of suggestions to the national level (A-8) <u>lead to</u> further scaling up of promoted LED innovations beyond the project provinces (I-2).
<b>Main assumption</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of the positive outcome of LED measures is available.</li> <li>• The RGC endorses and further promotes the replication of project-supported innovations beyond the project provinces.</li> </ul>
<b>Risks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SNAs in other provinces may not have the capacity to implement the promoted innovations without external support.</li> <li>• Reduction of financial means for the SNAs (cut by 50% with effects on staffing, ability to function, etc.).</li> </ul>
<b>Alternative explanation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presence of other development partners</li> </ul>

As shown in section 4.4 (effectiveness), project-supported LED measures and value chain-upgrading activities together reached more than 50,000 rural households, of which more than a third reported an improved household situation. Though the impact assessments did not capture all target groups to the same extent (e.g. more abundant data availability for beneficiaries of value-chain upgrading than for LED measures), the project generally emphasised impact assessments. Therefore, quality data to prove the success of LED measures are available and summarised in documents that are available for all project stakeholders. Supported concepts, implementation experiences, good practices and success stories were summarised and documented as reading material, manuals or technical guidelines. This is the case for the LED instruments (e.g. the Matching Fund manual – GIZ-RED, 2019e), for project experiences with the wide range of stakeholders in the business environment component and, in particular, for the value chain-upgrading activities, covering both the documentation of the overall approach and specific interventions at different points along the value chain.

Most of the documents did not specifically address the national level, i.e. the national counterpart NCDD-S. Also, the results horizon of the project was mainly limited to the target regions, and scaling up at the national level was not a primary objective. However, based on the project experience, there were several proposals directed at the national level and further advocated by the project. These were:

- **LED subcommittee secretariats:** The project promoted and tested the implementation of LED subcommittee secretariats as part of the local administrative structure to strengthen and sustain the effectiveness of these subcommittees. This was incorporated by NCDD-S in the decentralisation reform for DMAs, so that each DMA in Cambodia is now obliged to have an office dedicated to LED (Int\_3, 12).
- **LED planning processes:** The LED planning process, including the updated, more realistic district economic overview, was the main focus of the project's support to the DMAs. The planning functions, like the subcommittee secretariats, are mandated by the DMA decentralisation reform (GIZ-RED, 2022b).
- **Matching Fund:** The Matching Fund manual has been endorsed by the NCDD-S, and it is assumed that Matching Fund projects are being carried out in other provinces, either with the help of government resources or in alliance with other donors or NGOs (Int\_3, 5, 12).
- **Quality management:** RED IV supported the Planning and Investment Divisions in Oddar Meanchey and Banteay Meanchey and the One Window Service Unit in Banteay Meanchey by introducing a quality management system based on ISO 9001:2015, which was implemented as a pilot to be shared with the national counterpart (Int\_12, 22).



Photo 4: Community-based tourism training



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By the end of the project, foundations had been laid for the dissemination of the LED-related structural and procedural innovations, and their dissemination beyond the project provinces appears probable. The national counterpart is, indeed, concerned about uneven capacities to implement LED planning and steering processes without external support and about the overburdening of district administrations that lack personnel and financial resources. However, the share of subnational administrations capable to implement LED processes is expected to gradually improve (Int\_5, 12, 13, 16). Demand for Matching Fund projects is expected to be high beyond the boundaries of the project provinces, although complementary national resources or donor and NGO contributions will still need to be identified, probably on a case-by-case basis (Int\_12). Further dissemination may be slow but is expected to happen by key stakeholders (Int\_12, 14–18). Interviewees did not comment on prospects for the dissemination of quality management but, unlike the other proposals, it was presented more as a learning experience than an immediately replicable tool (Int\_12).

Though it was not yet possible, at the time of the evaluation, to empirically confirm **impact hypothesis 1, its occurrence is probable (results hypothesis confirmed – evidence strength: medium)**. While the dissemination of LED instruments is likely to continue, the challenge for the Royal Government of Cambodia will be to ensure a sufficient quality of implementation.

Table 17: Results hypothesis 2 for impact (scaling up of agricultural innovations)

<b>Hypothesis 2 (outcome – impact)</b>	The agrotechnical innovations introduced (C-7) and the availability of technical know-how (e.g. through research, manuals, guidelines, O-1) <u>lead to</u> a scaling up of agrotechnical innovations by institutions and/or programmes in other provinces (I-2).
<b>Main assumption</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Evidence of the positive outcome of the agrotechnical innovations introduced is available</li> <li>• The RGC, relevant private-sector organisations or development programmes endorse and further promote the replication of project-supported innovations beyond the project provinces.</li> </ul>
<b>Risks</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Possible changes in factor prices (land, labour, seed) may interfere with the scaling up of innovations.</li> <li>• Lack of supporting actors (e.g. business development service providers).</li> <li>• Risk of extreme weather (droughts and flooding, destroyed yields).</li> </ul>
<b>Alternative explanation</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presence of other development partners.</li> </ul>

As already shown in section 4.4 (effectiveness), the rates of adoption of new agricultural techniques have been extraordinarily high, ranging from about 67% of the cassava farmers supported by the project to more than 90% of the vegetable farmers who adopted at least some innovations promoted by the project (see also GIZ-RED, 2021l). Technical know-how has been documented in the form of technical guidelines, systematisation of good practices and impact assessments (GIZ-RED, 2021m). Support to innovative platforms and networks should make experiences with agrotechnical innovations available to a wider audience, both within and beyond the project regions. Among the platforms and networks supported, two are operating with a wider regional or national scope: the Cassava Innovation Platform (CIP) and the Drum Seeder Innovation Platform (DSIP).

The CIP is a multi-stakeholder platform with 33 members (as at December 2021), comprising the likes of research institutions, universities, agricultural cooperatives, PDAFF from several provinces, cassava processors, development programmes and NGOs, under the chairmanship of the General Directorate for Agriculture (GDA). It promotes the production of quality declared cassava planting material (QDPM) and regular information-sharing on technical innovations via field visits and a telegram group (GIZ-RED, 2022b). The DSIP – primarily a multi-stakeholder platform of machinery producers, agricultural cooperatives, key farmers and skills development centres that has, for many years, frequently been used during the joint development, testing and optimisation of drum seeding – extended its focus and transformed into the Agro-machinery Network NW-Cambodia (GIZ-RED, 2022b). It facilitates experience exchange and the promotion of innovations for all kinds of agricultural machinery among its 200-plus members.

Whereas LED innovations are promoted at the national level in the context of decentralisation reform (see impact results hypothesis 1), dissemination of value chain-upgrading experiences is mostly limited to information-sharing. Owing to the strictly regional focus of the project, there has been no follow-up of potential uptake in contexts outside the project area. An exception is the scaling up that is happening through the regional project Strengthening the Climate Resilience of Agriculture in Cambodia and Viet Nam (CRAS), which has adopted the training concept and material and the monitoring mechanism for cassava QDPM. Through cassava, innovations will be disseminated in the provinces of Kampong Thom and Kratie, which have a combined population of more than one million. Though implementation of CRAS had just started at the time of this evaluation, the dissemination process is very likely to happen. Since it is a direct and explicit adoption of RED IV, an analysis of intervening variables is unnecessary.

Taking into account the adoption by CRAS and the low traceability of dissemination processes beyond the project regions, **impact hypothesis 2 is partly confirmed (evidence strength: medium)**.

Since the project has successfully laid the foundations for the dissemination of innovations in LED and in agricultural value chains, both results hypotheses are confirmed or partly confirmed. While further dissemination beyond the project boundaries is probable, this may face implementation challenges and depend on the presence of further external support. Overall, impact dimension 2 – Higher-level (intended) development changes/results – scores **33 of 40 points**.

### Impact dimension 3: Contribution to higher-level (unintended) development results/changes

Regarding the occurrence of **unintended negative results** and the **monitoring of risks**, no unintended negative results were observed during the evaluation. Interactions between the different **dimensions of sustainable development** were an integral part of the project design and were therefore considered in the first part of this section. Given the absence of unintended negative results, impact dimension 3 – Contribution to higher-level (unintended) development results/changes – scores **30 out of 30 points**.

### Methodology for assessing impact

Table 18: Methodology for assessing OECD/DAC criterion: impact

Impact: assessment dimensions	Basis for assessment	Evaluation design and empirical methods	Data quality and limitations
Higher-level (intended) development changes/results	Extent to which results of the overarching GDC programme were achieved: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increase in family income of the poor rural population,</li> <li>• increase in the trading volume of agricultural goods,</li> <li>• contributions to CSDGs 1, 2 and 8.</li> </ul>	<b>Evaluation design:</b> Analysis was based on secondary data, contextualisation and complementary qualitative data.  <b>Empirical methods:</b> Document analysis (progress reports, impact assessment, official poverty and economic data); semi-structured interviews (project, CDC, academia).	Official data on required indicators were delayed and will not show the current state at the end of the project.  Stakeholder and expert interviews will be crucial to extrapolate trends.  Evidence strength: medium.
Contribution to higher-level (intended) development results/changes	Extent to which it is plausible that project outcome has contributed or will contribute to the overarching results hypotheses: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• contribution of successful LED measures to scaling up innovations (table 16),</li> <li>• contributions of applied agrotechnical innovations and the available know-how to scaling up innovations (table 17).</li> </ul>	<b>Evaluation design:</b> Contribution analysis,  <b>Empirical methods:</b> Document analysis, including secondary data analysis; semi-structured interviews (project staff, CDC, academia, other development partners).	Same limitations as for indicator analysis.  Evidence strength: medium.
Contribution to higher-level (unintended) development results/changes	Extent to which the intervention did or may contribute to foreseeable/identifiable unintended higher-level results.	<b>Evaluation design:</b> Outcome harvesting.  <b>Empirical methods:</b> Document and secondary data analysis (progress reports, reports on individual interventions); semi-structured interviews (all stakeholders).	Data availability and quality: medium (more than for unintended outcome level effects, interviewees may not be aware of unintended changes).  Evidence strength: medium.

## 4.6 Efficiency

This section analyses and assesses the efficiency of the project. It is structured according to the assessment dimensions in the GIZ project evaluation matrix (see annex).

### Summarising assessment and rating of efficiency

Table 19: Rating of OECD/DAC criterion: efficiency

Criterion	Assessment dimension	Score and rating
Efficiency	Production efficiency (Resources/Outputs)	70 out of 70 points
	Allocation efficiency (Resources/Outcome)	20 out of 30 points
Efficiency score and rating		Score: <b>90 out of 100 points</b> Rating: <b>Level 2: successful</b>

Despite the adverse conditions of the COVID-19 pandemic from March 2020 onwards, the project excelled in maximising results within each output and exceeded eight out of nine output targets. In all outputs, strategies for maximising results were consistently applied. Overall, the project design was not configured to maximise the attainment of indicator targets but was well-balanced in the parallel pursuit of direct target-group benefits (indicators 1, 2 and 4) and an improved systemic environment for LED. Synergies between workstreams were pursued but did not materialise equally between all outputs.

**In total, the efficiency of the project is rated Level 2: successful, with 90 out of 100 points.**

### Analysis and assessment of efficiency

#### Efficiency dimension 1: Production efficiency

Production efficiency was assessed according to the extent to which the outputs were (a) maximised with the given resources and (b) maximised by reallocating resources between outputs. For the cost analysis, GIZ's 'efficiency tool' was used to capture data of the GIZ cost-accounting reports and expenses attributed to the outputs, to understand their relative cost-intensity (follow-the-money approach). The reliability of the attributions is limited, since the project was not yet subject to cost-per-output planning and monitoring. In discussions with project management staff, the distribution of costs had to be estimated ex-post.

Figure 3: Cost per output

	Output A	Output B	Output C	Output D
<b>Outputs</b>	Authorities and councils at the provincial and district levels implement measures for inclusive economic development oriented towards the needs of the local population.	The local business environment is better oriented towards the promotion of employment opportunities and the economic development of MSMEs.	Small and micro enterprises in selected agricultural value chains improve their production and sales opportunities.	(Special measures and gender promotion.)
<b>Costs incl. committed costs</b>	EUR 2,285,325	EUR 1,868,465	EUR 2,192,152	EUR 218,750
<b>Co-financing</b>	Included in the total costs (not separately administered)			
<b>Partner contribution</b>	Monetary value not quantified			
<b>Total cost</b>	EUR 2,285,325	EUR 1,868,465	EUR 2,192,152	EUR 218,750
<b>Share of total cost</b>	33%	27%	32%	3%

The contract value of the German contribution was EUR 9,575,200, of which EUR 3,435,200 was co-financed by SDC. The input was distributed quite evenly between the three outputs, with 33% allocated for output A (LED), 27% for output B (MSMEs) and 32% for output C (value-chain upgrading). The remaining 3% was assigned to a fourth intervention area, internally established by the project, i.e. not formalised in the framework of the commission, to deal with the promotion of gender and special measures for disadvantaged households,

IDPoor families and other marginalised groups. This assignation certainly underestimates the cost of gender promotion measures, since only special measures in the narrow sense were considered, while activities for incorporating gender as a cross-cutting subject within the other intervention areas were fully assigned to the respective outputs. Overarching costs were relatively low, accounting for approximately 5% of the total costs.

During the evaluation period, the project team consisted of four international long-term experts (a principal advisor and three output leaders) and 11 national long-term experts. The contract periods of two development workers hired during RED III were extended until December 2018 and May 2019, respectively, contributing to output C. For output B, one development worker was placed by RED IV in the Polytechnical Institute of Banteay Meanchey. Approximately 45% of the overall production costs consisted of expenses for project staff, with a further 21% for external providers (including for human capacity development measures). Financing instruments accounted for 15% of the production costs, and procurement of goods for roughly 5% (remaining costs went on other minor categories). Though overall allocations to each output were similar, the cost structures were somewhat different, particularly for outputs A and C. For output A, strengthening SNAs, a significantly higher input of international long-term experts was required, while output C required the highest input of national staff and local consultants for the advisory service on the wide spectrum of value chain-upgrading activities. Output B required an average number of resources in all the categories mentioned.

Project expenditure, including on staff assignments, was checked against the initial estimations for the main cost positions (see the previous paragraph) and managed according to an operational plan. However, as expenditure was not yet subject to cost-output assignment, it was managed flexibly according to progress and the need for action within each working area. The COVID-19 pandemic led to significant deviations from the original planning, owing to temporary cessation of in-person activities, adaptation of work modes (e.g. from offline to online communications) and new activities to support the COVID-19 response of the Cambodian partners, e.g. the cash-for-work emergency measures with additional funding from SDC (GIZ-RED, 2021d). The changes did not significantly influence the overall cost distribution between outputs, though. Within each output area, the project worked consistently to maximise results and pursued specific strategies for this purpose, such as the following:

- In output A, the project promoted the Matching Fund as an instrument to involve beneficiaries in cost-sharing schemes and mobilise local resources as well as third party funds. The positive effect of Matching Fund projects on leveraging resources and maximising results was unanimously highlighted by all interviewees involved (Int\_5, 12, 13, 14–16, 18, 20, 21).
- Matching Fund projects were also carried out under outputs B and C. For example, projects were started in tourism and employment promotion under output B, and in composting for organic fertiliser production and the establishment of a community market for agricultural products under output C (GIZ-RED, 2022b).
- Output B consistently focused on local implementers (private-sector associations, TVET schools, job centres, among others) to mobilise local change agents with limited TC input for each partner but at the same time maximising its indirect outreach towards the target group of MSMEs (Int\_4, 26, 28, 29–31).
- Outreach under output C was enhanced through the use of demo, lead or multiplication farmers, a related train-the-trainers approach and support for producer networks, e.g. agricultural cooperatives.

In all outputs, interventions were affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, but outputs B and C were worst hit. Output B suffered from the negative effect of the pandemic on the local non-agricultural economy and job markets (in general), and the extreme shock for the tourism sector (particularly in Siem Reap). Output C was not affected by economic adversities (local agriculture actually grew during the pandemic) but by restrictions on contact and mobility. Farmer training was not suitable for online teaching (GIZ-RED, 2021d). Despite these adversities, the project still maintained the output-level results within the target corridor. Moreover, eight of nine output objective indicators were overachieved, with goal-attainment ranging between 117% and 179%. An additional indicator for the internal output area on gender and special measures was overachieved by 343%.



Overall, the allocated resources were flexibly used and systematically adjusted to maximise results, even under adverse general conditions. Efficiency dimension 1 – Production efficiency – scores **70 out of 70 points**.

### **Efficiency dimension 2: Allocation efficiency**

Allocation efficiency was assessed according to (a) the extent to which the outcomes were maximised with the given resources, (b) the extent to which the outcome-resource ratio and alternatives were considered during the design and implementation process, and (c) the extent to which more results were (or could have been) achieved through cooperation.

Regarding the extent to which the intended outcomes could have been maximised with the same resources (**maximum principle**), conclusions had to rely on stakeholder opinions and qualitative analysis, since there were no comparable benchmarks for the complex and holistic set of interventions that comprised the project. Furthermore, the results of the analysis would differ depending on whether the maximum principle was strictly applied to the module objective indicators or to a broader concept of local economic development. This is because – as described in section 4.4 – three of four module objective indicators predominantly captured the outcome of output C. This means that the degree of goal attainment as defined by the module objective indicators mostly correlated with the specific outcome of output C, complemented by the strengthening of the SNAs (output A plus the sector-specific strengthening of the PDAFFs in output C). Output B absorbed nearly a third of the resources without providing a significant direct contribution to the indicator targets. Nevertheless, two of four module objective indicators were overachieved by more than 300 %.

Within a broader concept of local economic development, strengthening the business environment for MSMEs would be an essential field of intervention. However, the goal system of the project adhered to the narrower focus on rural (predominantly agricultural) development of the predecessor project and so did not encompass the intended systemic outcome of strengthening the business environment and the potential synergies with the other outputs. Synergies between outputs B and C were also limited. Results that enhanced the effectiveness of activities in the other outputs were most evident under output A (LED). This was the case for the implementation of Matching Fund projects (introduced as an LED instrument in output A but used to carry out projects within the other output areas). It also applied to development planning under the umbrella of the LED subcommittees, which potentially concerns all economic sub-sectors, including those represented in outputs B and C of the project.

Whereas inputs were flexibly administered *within* the outputs (particularly in response to the pandemic situation), there was little scope to reallocate resources *between* outputs. This was because there were separate teams for each output, i.e. other than monitoring and support staff no team members were assigned to more than one output, and because key interventions required certain minimums of further financial resources, for example for Matching Fund contributions (output A) or local subsidies for key partners (outputs B and C). However, this limited flexibility didn't seem to be problematic, as the distribution of inputs between outputs seemed to be well-balanced. None of the outputs seemed to be over- or underfunded.

Despite significant operational adjustments and the need to incorporate additional COVID-19 response activities, the project was very much implemented according to the original methodological approach (GIZ-RED, 2017b and 2017c). Some interviewees questioned initial strategic decisions, e.g. the selected value chains against alternatives such as bamboo or livestock, or the overall package of interventions in the three outputs against a stronger focus on LED and business environment improvement (Int\_1, 3, 8). However, there was no evidence of the discussion of significant strategic alternatives, mainly because the above-mentioned matters comprised the strategic core of the project design, which becomes path-dependent once the implementation has started.

As already assessed in section 4.2 (external coherence), the project took some opportunities to cooperate with other development partners and maximise results through that cooperation. No efficiency losses due to insufficient coordination or lost cooperation opportunities were identified. Cooperation with other German projects in the sector was assessed in section 4.2.

Overall, the project design was not configured to maximise the attainment of indicator targets but was well-balanced in the parallel pursuit of direct target-group benefits (indicators 1, 2 and 4) and an improved systemic environment for LED. Synergies between workstreams were pursued but did not materialise equally between all outputs. Efficiency dimension 2 – Allocation efficiency – **scores 20 out of 30 points**.

### Methodology for assessing efficiency

Table 20: Methodology for assessing OECD/DAC criterion: efficiency

Efficiency: assessment dimensions	Basis for assessment	Evaluation design and empirical methods	Data quality and limitations
<b>Production efficiency</b> (Inputs/Outputs)	Extent to which outputs were maximised with the given number of resources – or to which inputs were minimised for a given output. Extent to which outputs were maximised by reallocating resources between outputs.	<b>Evaluation design:</b> The analysis was based on the follow-the-money approach and followed the analytical questions from the evaluation matrix; triangulation of methods and sources. <b>Empirical methods:</b> Analysis of cost-output data; document analysis (standard project documents, activity and results monitoring); semi-structured interviews (project staff, national and subnational counterparts).	Cost-per-output planning and monitoring was not yet mandatory for the project – analysis based on the estimated distribution. Outputs are broad categories, while workstreams are more differentiated and interconnected, both within and between outputs; this means the cost-per-output distribution should not be overinterpreted. Evidence strength: medium (considering the complementary analysis of cost data and qualitative data from stakeholder interviews).
<b>Allocation efficiency</b> (Input/Outcome)	Extent to which the outcome was maximised with the given number of resources – or to which inputs were minimised for a given outcome. Extent to which the outcome-resource ratio and alternatives were considered during the design and implementation process. Extent to which more results were (or could have been) achieved through cooperation.	<b>Evaluation design:</b> The analysis was based on the follow-the-money approach and followed the analytical questions from the evaluation matrix; triangulation of methods and sources. <b>Empirical methods:</b> Analysis of cost data; document analysis (standard project documents, monitoring); semi-structured interviews (project staff, national and subnational counterparts, other development partners).	



## 4.7 Sustainability

This section analyses and assesses the sustainability of the project. It is structured according to the assessment dimensions in the GIZ project evaluation matrix (see annex).

### Summarising assessment and rating of sustainability

Table 21: Rating of OECD/DAC criterion: sustainability

Criterion	Assessment dimension	Score and rating
Sustainability	Capacities of the beneficiaries and stakeholders	17 out of 20 points
	Contribution to supporting sustainable capacities	27 out of 30 points
	Durability of results over time	40 out of 50 points
Sustainability score and rating		Score: <b>84 out of 100 points</b> Rating: Level 2: successful

A majority of the stakeholder groups have acquired the necessary capacity to sustain the project's results. Capacities were consolidated to varying degrees among stakeholder groups and remained fragile in some sub-groups (e.g. among farmers, agricultural cooperatives, district administrations and private-sector associations). Nevertheless, relative capacity enhancements during the project period were confirmed unanimously. The project paid a great deal of attention to individual, organisational or systemic capacity needs for sustaining the achieved results. The contribution was most evident where it could focus on a few central stakeholders (output A on LED) or on more narrowly defined intervention areas in which all stakeholders were aiming for the same outcome target (output C on agricultural value chains). Overall, the project strengthened the capacities of stakeholders and created a conducive environment for the durability of the results achieved. For results emerging from outputs A and B, the follow-on project ICONe may further stabilise the current level of progress. However, stakeholders in the tourism sector, in particular, and, to some extent, local farmers also, are exposed to external risks beyond the control of the project.

**In total, the sustainability of the project is rated Level 2: successful, with 84 out of 100 points.**

### Analysis and assessment of sustainability

#### Sustainability dimension 1: Capacities of the beneficiaries and stakeholders

For this dimension assessments were made of the capacities of (a) the SNAs in the project regions, (b) selected stakeholders in the supported agricultural value chains (agricultural cooperatives, demo/lead farmers, small farmers) and (c) selected key stakeholders who were relevant for improving the business environment, such as TVET institutions and private-sector associations.

The evaluation encountered a solid understanding among the representatives of **district administrations** interviewed of the importance of participatory LED planning and the use of specific instruments such as the district economic overviews. According to the interview results, the extent to which district administrations had the capacity to steer the LED committees and related processes varied depending on the time that had elapsed since implementation and the general quality of human resources. Overall, however, district representatives showed an understanding of planning methodologies, and it can be assumed that most district administrations will have the capacity to further consolidate LED planning processes (Int\_12, 13, 16, 18–22).

The aforementioned capacities of the SNAs to steer LED processes are a key condition for further improvement of the **business environment** in the project provinces. There are, however, further key stakeholders that have been supported by RED IV and that face very different challenges regarding their capacities to sustain achieved results:

- In the area of skills development, RED IV cooperated with leading **TVET institutions**, which are generally able to maintain the training content and methodologies introduced. Three schools were visited during the evaluation. The Don Bosco General and Technical High School of Poipet has the equipment and trained teachers to continue Programmable Logic Controller (PLC) training. A graduate placement rate of close to 100% indicates training quality and the school's reputation. The *École d'Hôtellerie et de Tourisme Paul Dubrule* has a strong background in terms of staff capacities to address sustainability topics. It won't face internal bottlenecks in replicating the course or even incorporating sustainability content into its curricula more broadly. However, it is still grappling with the severe impact of COVID-19 on the tourism sector and thus struggling to reach sufficient enrolment numbers. The public Poly-technical Institute of Banteay Meanchey also reported increased capacities among teaching staff and more solid ties with the private sector, which ensures the needs orientation of curricula (Int\_29–31).
- **Private-sector organisations** such as the Chambers of Commerce and the Young Entrepreneurs Association of Cambodia (YEAC) play a key role in private- and public-sector dialogue on issues relevant to the business environment and as service providers to their member MSMEs. The Siem Reap chapter of the Cambodian Women Entrepreneurs Association (CWEA) was also supported in improving its overall administration, membership registration and membership services. Owing to its location in fully tourism-dependant Siem Reap, however, it was badly hit by the pandemic. At the time of this evaluation, the challenge consisted of maintaining basic operations rather than project-related capacities (Int\_28). Regardless of the development of the organisations' capacities, all are more aware of the benefits of **public-private dialogue**. All organisations interviewed saw public-private dialogue as a valuable tool to increase cooperation between the public and the private sectors and provided examples of action taken based on public-private dialogue (Int\_26–28).
- Siem Reap and Preah Vihear **community-based tourism sites** had clear visions on development goals and have installed attractions in their communities. While the impact of COVID-19 increased interest in attracting local tourism, it also prevented the activities from reaping their potential. At the time of the evaluation, the communities interviewed considered themselves capable of continuing their initiatives but also reported declining local support and difficulties in maintaining momentum (Int\_18, 20).

At the target-group level, **value chain-upgrading activities** culminated in increased production, increased income of farmers, better livelihoods, and environmentally more sustainable and resilient agriculture. However, the extent to which these improvements can be sustained depends on several factors other than the supported farmers themselves.

- At the level of **individual farmers**, it can be assumed that those who have adopted innovative techniques and experienced the benefits, i.e. they succeeded in increasing yields and income, will be motivated and generally able to maintain production techniques such as the use of irrigation tube systems, drip irrigation, use of net houses and greenhouses or better use of fertilisers. However, some farmers also reported difficulties in applying production techniques (FGD\_2, 4, 7).
- The participation of '**demonstration farmers**' and '**lead farmers**' in skills development measures was an important tool to enhance the rate of adoption of innovative agricultural techniques (see section 4.4 on effectiveness) and is also a sustainability mechanism. Farmers who encounter problems in production can seek advice and expertise from other demonstrators and lead farmers, even beyond the end of the project term. More than 30 demonstration and lead farmers in the project area are available as resource persons (GIZ-RED, 2020j).
- Production increases can only be maintained if there is **access to quality inputs**, such as safe and high-quality planting material. Essential inputs, such as vegetable seedlings, seedling germination compost, high-quality rice seeds and clean cassava planting material, are now locally produced and

available at a growing number of locations in Banteay Meanchey and Oddar Meanchey provinces. For example, in May 2021, around 15 multiplication farms were applying the monitoring protocol for quality declared cassava planting material and selling clean seeds to local cassava farmers. However, the availability of **machinery services**, albeit compared with the situation before the project, has not improved to the same level as access to quality inputs (GIZ-RED, 2020j).

- The farmers' capacity to sustain new agricultural techniques must be matched by the capacity to engage in reliable producer-buyer relationships. While production is under the individual control of each farmer, a better negotiating position vis-à-vis buyers can only be achieved through economies of scale, i.e. collectively. For that purpose, agricultural cooperatives have signed **contract farming agreements**. In the rice value chain, more than 450 farmers are benefiting from contract farming agreements with Battambang Rice Investment Co., Ltd. (BRICo), which provide access to new overseas markets for stable quantities and against stable prices if SRP quality criteria are met. Not all contract farming initiatives were equally successful: integrating Cambodia-based cassava trade and processing facilities in contract farming agreements failed for several reasons (e.g. complex management procedures). In general, however, contract farming agreements contribute significantly to the sustainability of commercial results (GIZ-RED, 2020j).
- **Agricultural cooperatives:** Organisational capacities of many cooperatives are still very limited, e.g. regarding management and leadership skills of board members, and even lack of commitment and motivation (GIZ, 2020j). However, a final survey of the most intensively supported cooperatives showed positive results regarding their capacity to provide membership services (12 agricultural cooperatives offering a total of 36 fully operational membership services related to trading agricultural inputs and products, machinery services, credit services and rice-seed production (GIZ-RED, 2022b)).

Overall, most of the stakeholder groups have acquired the necessary capacities to sustain the results achieved during the project period. In some stakeholder groups, capacities were unevenly distributed and remain fragile in some subgroups (e.g. among farmers, agricultural cooperatives, district administrations and private-sector associations). Even in those cases, however, relative capacity enhancements during the project period were confirmed unanimously. Therefore, sustainability dimension 1 – Capacities of the beneficiaries and stakeholders – is rated **17 of 20 points**.

## **Sustainability dimension 2: Contribution to supporting sustainable capacities**

For this dimension the extent to which the intervention contributed to enhancing stakeholder capacities and strengthening their resilience to sustain the project results was assessed.

In the area of economic governance for LED, the **subnational administrations** involved mostly attributed increased planning, steering and management capacities to project interventions (Int\_13–22). Capacity strengthening was achieved through project-driven coaching and training during implementation activities or training via the Provincial Associations of Municipal, District, Communal and Sangkat Councils (PAMDCS) and the General Secretariat of Associations of Subnational Administrative Councils (ASAC). Through these channels, representatives of subnational governments received coaching and/or training on LED-related topics and technical issues, such as communication, facilitation and proposal-writing (see also GIZ-RED, 2021d).

In terms of **strengthening the business environment**, the project contribution to supporting sustainable capacities was specific for each stakeholder group. TVET actors received support in identifying skills gaps (both internal and related to the labour market), capacity-building, developing curricula and strengthening the cooperation with the private sector. Depending on their respective comparative strengths and weaknesses, the TVET institutions interviewed emphasised some interventions over others – for example, *Ecole Paul Dubrulle* valued the support relating to curricula and virtual training modes, and Don Bosco highlighted the installation of technical equipment and related induction of teaching staff. However, all of them agreed that the project support made a significant contribution to their organisational capacity and/or training offer (Int\_29–31). The capacity of

private-sector organisations to engage in public-private dialogue was addressed by helping them organise and prepare for public-private dialogue events. However, the representatives of private-sector associations interviewed were more appreciative of the initiative and momentum that the presence of GIZ brought to public-private dialogue, rather than the effects on organisational capacities in the narrower sense (Int\_26–28). More intense capacity development efforts were directed towards the CWEA in Siem Reap, e.g. training for board members in strategic planning, leadership, entrepreneurship and social marketing (GIZ-RED, 2021d). Though appreciated by the training recipients, the limited absorption capacities of CWEA during the COVID-19 crisis must be taken into account.

Regarding upgrading **agricultural value chains**, the stakeholders involved were addressed by a broad set of capacity development interventions that coincided with the capacity development measures described in section 4.4 on effectiveness (contribution analysis, result hypothesis 2). The strategy for building the capacities and preconditions for sustainability was based on promoting feasible and profit-generating business opportunities and helping private-sector actors to implement promising business models (e.g. membership services for agricultural cooperatives). Therefore, private-sector stakeholders were the main partners to introduce innovations. Capacity development for the target groups, i.e. training for farmers on cultivation techniques, quality standards or financial literacy, emphasised the importance of continuous learning and awareness of challenges such as disease, climate-change impacts or changing demand. The project further addressed the need to strengthen various kinds of support systems, such as dialogue forums (innovation platforms, producer-buyer networks), sharing the demo and lead farmers' profiles with other relevant institutions (donors, NGOs, PDAFF) and strengthening the capacity of agricultural cooperatives to act in a business-oriented manner as providers of membership services.

Generally, the project paid a great deal of attention to individual, organisational or systemic capacity needs for sustaining the achieved results. The contribution was more evident – and more strongly emphasised by interviewees – where it could focus on a few central stakeholders (output A on LED) or on more narrowly defined intervention areas where all stakeholders were working towards the same outcome target (output C on agricultural value chains). In total, sustainability dimension 2 – Contribution to supporting sustainable capacities – is rated **27 of 30 points**.

### **Sustainability dimension 3: Durability of results over time**

For this dimension the extent to which the project results (positive or negative) are deemed durable was assessed. This involved further analysing the stability of the context and its possible influence on the durability of results.

Despite the positive assessments of the project's effectiveness, impact and the capacities developed, the sustainability of several achievements faces serious risks. Some of these risks have their origins in the temporary COVID-19 restrictions and their impact on the timeline. These led to delays in activities and did not allow for full consolidation of results in several workstreams. Other risks are due to external factors outside the project management's sphere of influence.

Given their incorporation into DMA decentralisation reform, it can be assumed that LED subcommittees will endure as a standard element of the district government organisational structure. This was confirmed by interviews at the national and the subnational levels (Int\_12, 13, 16, 18, 19). Furthermore, the follow-on project ICONE will continue working with DMAs (particularly in sustaining public-private dialogue and coordination, see output B) and thus support the consolidation of the improvements achieved (GIZ-ICONE, 2022). While key stakeholders expressed concerns about the general overburdening of district administrations and resulting risks for the continuity of high-quality LED planning processes (Int\_12, 22), they were mostly optimistic that behavioural changes and management capacities can be maintained. Since the national government has endorsed the Matching Fund manual, it is also assumed that the instrument will continue to be used, with local

resources being complemented either with national public funds or by other donors and NGOs (Int\_12). At the local level, acceptance of the instrument and ownership of Matching Fund projects are high and will be driving factors for further use of the instrument.

In output B, the durability of results may vary between topic areas and the stakeholders supported. As stated in the first part of this section, public-private dialogue processes have been embraced by participating stakeholders. At the time of the evaluation, the provincial administration in Banteay Meanchey and private-sector organisations were preparing the first public-private dialogue event without significant project support. Moreover, in the longer-term, public-private dialogue processes are expected to continue (Int\_4, 13, 16, 26, 27). The methodology of the follow-on project ICONE is also based on public-private coordination and cooperation processes, which will further strengthen the ties established during RED IV. The presence of the follow-on project may also compensate for the backlash suffered by MSME subsectors due to the COVID-19 pandemic (in particular, in the tourism sector in Siem Reap) and the temporary weakening of private-sector associations, such as the Siem Reap chapter of CWEA. The results of the interventions in the TVET sector are also deemed durable with regard to the TVET schools' ability and willingness to continue new or enhanced TVET offers. Again, at the time of the evaluation (February/March 2022), one of the supported schools (Int\_30) was reporting ongoing difficulties in reaching sufficient registration numbers for courses in the field of tourism, in particular, since students had become more reluctant to opt for a hospitality-sector career even though the tourism sector was gradually reopening. Previous tendencies whereby qualified and skilled labour moved to Phnom Penh have intensified and will pose a serious challenge to TVET institutions and employment promotion stakeholders. It should be noted, however, that two months after the evaluation mission, the project reported increasing demand and better prospects for the upcoming school year. The uncertain prospects of the tourism sector also pose challenges for the community-based tourism initiatives under RED IV, though at the time of the evaluation, the situation and outlook for local tourism (the actual target group of the initiatives) were better than those for international demand. Despite the challenges mentioned in the previous section, the local administrations responsible are still eager to continue and promote their respective initiatives (see the assessment of sustainability dimension 1, above).

In output C, the upgrading of farmers' skills, strengthened networks, support services, local production of inputs, and established producer-buyer relationships and mechanisms provide a solid systemic basis for the sustainability of results achieved at the target-group level. The degree of consolidation is particularly noteworthy in light of the temporary slowdown of on-site activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. At the end of the project term, many of the business development services introduced for farmers were planned to be offered to private-sector partners, such as agricultural cooperatives of agribusinesses (Int\_14, 17, 33, 34, 36, 37). The PDAFFs and the new SRP and QDPM dialogue platforms will require further support, but handover of RED IV experiences and concepts to other local and international development partners had been arranged (Int\_2, 6, 10, 11, 14). In focus group interviews, most farmers confirmed that they feel confident in further applying new or improved production techniques. The existence of accessible support structures was repeatedly mentioned as a critical success factor. Nevertheless, many farmers said they still feel exposed to significant risks and mentioned examples of critical and even disruptive events affecting their economic activities, e.g. related to natural disasters, market disruptions, disease and oligopoly practices (FGD\_1–8). Farmers acknowledged, however, that the above-mentioned support structures and the (technical and business-related) know-how imparted significantly enhanced their resilience.

Overall, the project strengthened stakeholders and created a conducive environment for the durability of achieved results. For results emerging from outputs A and B, the presence of the follow-on project ICONE may further stabilise the current level of progress. However, stakeholders in the tourism sector and, to some extent, local farmers are exposed to external risks beyond the control of the project. Therefore, sustainability dimension 3 – (anticipated) durability of results over time – scores **40 out of 50 points**.

## Methodology for assessing sustainability

Table 22: Methodology for assessing OECD/DAC criterion: sustainability

Sustainability: assessment dimensions	Basis for assessment	Evaluation design and empirical methods	Data quality and limitations
<b>Capacities of the beneficiaries and stakeholders</b>	<p>Extent to which beneficiaries and stakeholders have the capacity and resources to sustain results, e.g.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SNAs: knowledge of LED concepts and instruments, planning capacities; capacities to manage governance instruments.</li> <li>• Farmers/MSMEs: capacities to apply agro-technical innovations; business-related capacities.</li> <li>• Intermediary stakeholders (e.g. service providers): capacities to maintain service offer.</li> </ul> <p>Extent to which beneficiaries have the resilience to overcome risks.</p>	<p><b>Evaluation design:</b> The analysis followed the analytical questions from the evaluation matrix; triangulation of methods and sources.</p> <p><b>Empirical methods:</b> Document analysis (progress reports, impact assessment, reports on specific workstreams); semi-structured interviews (project staff, stakeholders mentioned in column 2).</p>	<p>Interviews as the main source may provide a positively biased picture, as the evaluation had to rely on the perceptions of the interviewees and could not carry out sound capacity assessments.</p> <p>Evidence strength: medium.</p>
<b>Contribution to supporting sustainable capacities</b>	<p>Extent to which the project contributed to enhancing stakeholder capacities and strengthening resilience to sustain results.</p>	<p><b>Evaluation design:</b> See assessment dimension 1 above.</p> <p><b>Empirical methods:</b> Document analysis (capacity development strategy, progress reports, impact assessment, reports on specific workstreams); semi-structured interviews (as above, plus other development partners).</p>	<p>Interviews as the main source may provide a positively biased picture, as the evaluation had to rely on the perceptions of the interviewees and could not carry out sound capacity assessments.</p> <p>Evidence strength: high.</p>
<b>Durability of results over time</b>	<p>Extent to which the results of the project (positive or negative) are deemed durable.</p>	<p><b>Evaluation design:</b> See assessment dimension 1, above.</p> <p><b>Empirical methods:</b> Document analysis (capacity development strategy, progress reports, impact assessment, reports on specific workstreams, sector policies); semi-structured interviews (all stakeholders).</p>	<p>Interviews as the main source may provide a positively biased picture.</p> <p>Evidence strength: medium.</p>

## 4.8 Key results and overall rating

Overall, RED IV attained and even exceeded its output and outcome objectives. The strong performance is particularly noteworthy given the temporary delays and suspensions of activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Against the background of the absence of international tourism (mainly hitting Siem Reap province) and the economic crisis in 2021, some results areas of the project faced more challenges than others, e.g. the



business environment support in Siem Reap province or activities in the hospitality and community-based tourism sector. Overall, however, the project succeeded according to all evaluation criteria.

Regarding the **relevance** criterion (assessment: successful), the stakeholders and evaluation critically discussed some design issues, which were compensated for by the project's ability to adjust dynamically to changing conditions and partner needs. Alignment with policies and priorities, and with the needs of beneficiaries and stakeholders, scored highly, as did appropriateness. However, the SDC as a co-financer favoured the more focused approach of the follow-on project. **Coherence** within German development cooperation and with other development partners was rated as highly successful. The conceptual complementarity with other national or regional projects and compliance with BMZ strategies or relevant international standards were high. The potential for synergies with other development partners was systematically screened and opportunities were adequately used. The basis for the positive assessment of **effectiveness** (highly successful) was the methodologically sound project management and implementation quality, which also included significant efforts for impact assessments and the provision of evidence for achieved results. With only one exception, all output targets were far exceeded, and the project contributions to the outcome objective were supported by medium to strong evidence. All results hypotheses selected for the evaluation have been confirmed. Determinants of the **impact** assessment (successful) were the direct contributions to the relevant GDC programme indicators (though the indicators themselves were not achieved under the prevailing pandemic conditions). The project has successfully laid the foundations for disseminating LED innovations and innovations in agricultural value chains – both related results hypotheses were confirmed or partly confirmed.

Several strategies for maximising results enhanced the **efficiency** (successful) of the project, e.g. the pooling of resources, strengthening of local implementers and strengthening of potential multipliers. Most stakeholder groups have acquired the necessary capacity to **sustain** the project's results. Capacities are consolidated to different degrees among stakeholder groups and are still fragile in some subgroups, but relative capacity enhancements during the project period were confirmed unanimously. The project paid a great deal of attention to individual, organisational or systemic capacity needs for sustaining the achieved results.



Table 23: Overall rating of OECD/DAC criteria and assessment dimensions

Evaluation criteria	Dimension	Max	Score	Total (max.100)	Rating
Relevance	Alignment with policies and priorities	30	30	91	Level 2: successful
	Alignment with the needs and capacities of the beneficiaries and stakeholders	30	30		
	Appropriateness of the design	20	14		
	Adaptability – response to change	20	17		
Coherence	Internal coherence	50	47	93	Level 1: highly suc- cessful
	External coherence	50	46		
Effectiveness	Achievement of the (intended) objectives	30	30	92	Level 1: highly suc- cessful
	Contribution to achievement of objectives	30	27		
	Quality of implementation	20	18		
	Unintended results	20	17		
Impact	Higher-level (intended) development changes/results	30	26	89	Level 2: successful
	Contribution to higher-level (intended) develop- ment results/changes	40	33		
	Contribution to higher-level (unintended) devel- opment results/changes	30	30		
Efficiency	Production efficiency	70	70	90	Level 2: successful
	Allocation efficiency	30	20		
Sustainability	Capacities of the beneficiaries and stakeholders	20	17	84	Level 2: successful
	Contribution to supporting sustainable capacities	30	27		
	Durability of results over time	50	40		
Mean score and overall rating		100	90		Level 2: suc- cess- ful

Table 24: Rating and score scales

100-point scale (score)	6-level scale (rating)
92–100	Level 1: highly successful
81–91	Level 2: successful
67–80	Level 3: moderately successful
50–66	Level 4: moderately unsuccessful
30–49	Level 5: unsuccessful
0–29	Level 6: highly unsuccessful
<b>Overall rating:</b> The criteria of effectiveness, impact and sustainability are knock-out criteria: If one of the criteria is rated at level 4 or lower, the overall rating cannot go beyond level 4 although the mean score may be higher.	

# 5 Conclusions and recommendations

## 5.1 Key findings and factors of success/failure

Overall, RED IV attained and even exceeded its output and outcome objectives. The strong performance is particularly noteworthy given the temporary delays and suspensions of activities due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Against the background of the absence of international tourism (mainly hitting Siem Reap province) and the economic crisis in 2021, some results areas of the project faced more challenges than others, e.g. the business environment support in Siem Reap province or activities in the hospitality and community-based tourism sector. Overall, however, the project succeeded according to all evaluation criteria. With only one exception, all output targets were far exceeded, and the project contributions to the outcome objective are supported by medium to strong evidence:

- The implementation of district LED subcommittees and the introduction of LED instruments, such as the Matching Fund, enabled DMAs and local stakeholders to implement a total of 65 LED support measures, reaching more than 25,000 rural households. Project reports and the interviews and focus groups carried out during the evaluation mission provided sufficient evidence of the contribution of LED measures to improving the livelihood of rural households (outcome hypothesis 1: confirmed; evidence strength: medium).
- Impact assessments confirmed and quantified the extent to which the project enabled small-scale farmers to apply innovations, increase yields and enter new producer-buyer relationships, thus improving their income (outcome hypothesis 2: confirmed; evidence strength: strong).
- Impact assessments also included evidence on the effect of improved production and sales opportunities for women-led and disadvantaged households on improving their household situation (outcome hypothesis 3: confirmed; evidence strength: strong).

Impact-level hypotheses refer to ongoing or future scaling-up processes; therefore, they could not be confirmed with the same evidence strength as the outcome-level hypotheses. However, the conditions for the intended scaling-up processes are in place:

- In the area of LED, several proposals were directed to the national level and further advocated for by the project, namely the institutionalisation of the LED subcommittee secretariats, principles for LED planning processes, the Matching Fund instrument and the introduction of ISO 9001-style quality management in DMAs. LED subcommittee secretariats and the Matching Fund have been endorsed for the ongoing decentralisation reforms in Cambodia, though implementation processes may be challenging for the RGC (impact hypothesis 1: confirmed; evidence strength: medium).
- Good practices and lessons from value chain-upgrading activities are being shared through several channels, but because of the strictly regional focus of the project there has been no follow-up of potential uptake in contexts outside the project area. Nevertheless, there are some examples, such as the adoption of training concepts and monitoring mechanisms for cassava QDPM by the regional project Strengthening the Climate Resilience of Agriculture in Cambodia and Viet Nam (CRAS) (impact hypothesis 2: partly confirmed; evidence strength: medium).

Among the wide range of success factors, the following were highlighted during the evaluation:

- The emphasis on multi-stakeholder processes in LED, in particular the different formats of private-sector involvement, e.g. in the LED subcommittees (output A) or public-private dialogue (output B).
- The leveraging of local resources, e.g. through the pooling of resources (Matching Fund in output A) or the enhancement of the service-provision capacities of local businesses through limited technical support and comparatively small financial contributions.

- The build-up of support structures to enhance the scope and sustain the results of value chain-upgrading activities (output C), e.g. qualifying demo, lead or multiplication farmers to be able to respond to specific needs of farmers in their respective communes or enabling local producers of inputs such as cassava QDPM or quality declared rice seed.
- The good quality of results monitoring and impact assessments, including mid-term impact assessments, which allowed for identifying strengths and weaknesses of ongoing interventions and making necessary adjustments.

## Findings regarding Agenda 2030

Regarding Agenda 2030, contributions to the SDGs include:

- Goal 1 – No poverty – CSDG 1.2.1 (proportion of the population living below the poverty line → coincides with RED programme indicator 1): LED measures and value chain-upgrading activities significantly increased income and improved rural livelihoods of rural populations. The percentage of poor and vulnerable beneficiaries was above the target.
- Goal 2 – Zero hunger – CSDG 2.3.1 (value of agricultural production): Despite the climate-induced fluctuation, yields in all supported value chains increased throughout the project. Additional activities on improving nutritional habits or stimulating home gardening further contributed to better food security.
- Goal 8 – Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth – CSDG 8.1.1 (annual gross domestic growth rate): Achieving sustainable economic growth was the main goal of the project under evaluation. Though effects on overarching indicators – such as gross domestic product – cannot be measured and attributed by a single project evaluation, the project has laid structural, instrumental and capacity-related foundations for local economic development that provide better general conditions for economic growth. The project interventions in the agricultural sector have had a proven effect on income growth for the directly targeted population.
- For effects on gender equality and the LNOB principle, see below.

## Universality, shared responsibility and accountability

The methodology of RED IV was based on sound needs assessments, engaging multiple stakeholders (e.g. in the LED subcommittees), creating dialogue platforms (e.g. public-private dialogue mechanism) and identifying change agents who could keep on promoting topics, concepts and tools beyond the duration of the project. When necessary, the project temporarily took the wheel for target group-level interventions (e.g. in steering the complex value-chain interventions and the project's extensive training and coaching measures) but was always accompanied by the counterpart organisations (e.g. PDAFF) and eager to strengthen the capacities of those organisations and other change agents. Aside from BMZ reporting, yearly progress reports for the National Steering Committee of the project were compiled to keep the national counterpart informed. Implementation experiences, lessons learnt and good practices were consistently documented and shared.

## Interplay of economic, environmental and social development

In the goal-system, methodological approach of RED IV, economic and social development are inseparably connected. Though the support to the SNAs and the strengthening of the business environment aimed to advance economic development in the project provinces in general, most target group-specific interventions were directed towards improving income, employment and the livelihoods of poor and vulnerable populations. The environmental dimension of sustainability was also an integral part of the project design in terms of the promotion of environmentally friendly and climate-resilient production techniques in the value chains supported. Also, in other intervention areas, environmental objectives were pursued in several initiatives (e.g. implementing a sustainability course at the *Ecole Paul Dubrulle* in Siem Reap).

## Inclusiveness/leaving no one behind

Aside from the three official outputs, the project established a fourth area of intervention designed to promote gender and special measures for disadvantaged households, IDPoor families and other marginalised groups. For the module objective indicators, the proportions of women, IDPoor and people with disabilities among actual beneficiaries were consistently measured and compared with the average proportion of such groups in the target population. The figures show that the groups concerned benefited from the project to an above-average extent (GIZ RED, 2021j; 2022b). In addition, the project carried out several special measures directly targeting one or several of the above-mentioned groups. For example, the project established agricultural cooperatives for disabled people to sell agricultural inputs. For women-led households, the project supported agribusiness networks for women weaving sedge and silk/cotton products, strengthened the Siem Reap chapter of the Cambodian Women Entrepreneurs Association and paid special attention to women-led households engaged in small farming activities.

Photo 5: Female weaver



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## Findings regarding the follow-on project

The follow-on project is continuing and expanding core workstreams of outputs A and B of RED IV by (1) further strengthening the capacity of subnational administrations in three provinces in complying with their mandate for local economic development planning and steering, and (2) further improving the business environment in cooperation with private-sector associations, and consulting with industry and selected educational institutions (TVET providers, University of Battambang). The main difference between the two projects is that the follow-on project is not focused on the agricultural sector. Without this specific sectoral focus, it will identify those sectors in each of the three target provinces in which there are comparative competitive advantages for dynamic economic self-development, in particular regarding the potential for export and integration into international value chains.

Based on the evaluation results, the conceptual re-orientation is in line with the priorities of key stakeholders, such as SDC – the co-financer of the project under evaluation – and the national counterpart NCDD-S. Despite

the successful upgrading of selected value chains, a more pronounced shift towards manufacturing industries is considered pertinent to enable Cambodia to enhance its competitiveness and integration into international production chains. Since the wider range of different measures was also repeatedly criticised as a lack of strategic focus, the stronger emphasis on the role of subnational administrations and a better business environment, i.e. outputs A and B of the project under evaluation, is also considered a pertinent concentration of efforts.

## 5.2 Recommendations

The evaluation confirmed the validity of the conceptual approaches and good management practices of the project, resulting in the following recommendations for the management of the GIZ follow-on module in Cambodia (ICONE):

- Since the follow-on project builds on two major workstreams of the project under evaluation, several of the success factors highlighted by the evaluation should be further emphasised in the follow-on project, namely (a) the emphasis on multi-stakeholder processes in local economic development, in particular the continuation of public-private dialogue; and (b) enhancement of the capacities of local businesses to provide services through limited technical support and comparatively small financial contributions. From a management perspective, the methodologically sound quantitative impact assessments should be adjusted to the goal system and maintained as good practice for the results-oriented monitoring.
- Though the three outputs of the project under evaluation were conceptually connected, interfaces and synergies remained at the development stage, in practice. The broad thematic scope of the project under evaluation forced the project team to split into specialised subteams for each output, with few personnel and tasks shared between the outputs. The more focused approach of the follow-on project, concentrating on strengthening subnational administrations, enhancing public-private dialogue and improving the business environment, also provides an opportunity for more integrated management of the different outputs. Avoiding silos within the project's organisational structure and avoiding thematic silos in project implementation go hand in hand.
- The results hypotheses of the follow-on project assume that subnational administrations will be in charge of using the enhanced macroeconomic competencies, promotional instruments and consultation mechanisms to engage with the private sector in anticipatory and opportunity-based economic development that is aligned with local characteristics, market development and technological conditions. According to the evaluation results, district and municipal administrations have consolidated LED structures and processes, but personnel and organisational capacities still vary and may still be too nascent to fulfil the upcoming requirements. Balancing rather basic human capacities and organisational development measures, while, at the same time, optimising the pace of self-sustaining local economic development will be a challenging task. Though module objective indicators are formulated at the target-group level (measuring benefits and change processes in companies), consolidation of the organisational capacities of subnational governments should be considered a high priority for maximising the outcome.

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## Annex: Evaluation matrix





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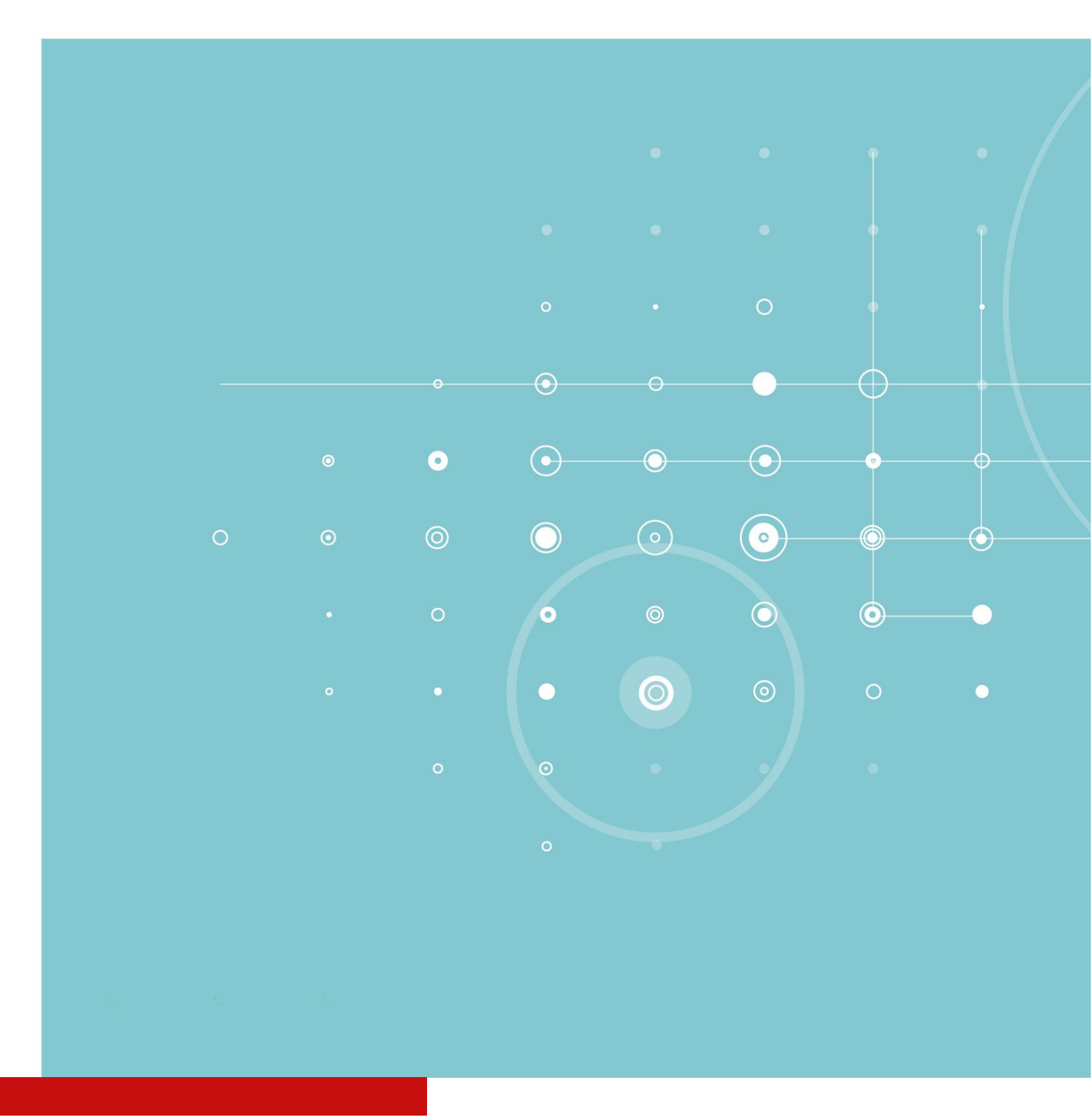
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