

Cambodia

Improvement Plan

Thematic window: Culture & Development

Programme Title: Cambodia Creative Industries Support Programme (CISP)

Responses to the recommendations made by the midterm evaluation for the MDG-F Creative Industries Support Programme (CISP)¹

1.1. Strengthening CISP’s Sustainability

MDGF policy currently calls for the JP to terminate at the three year point. In the consultant’s opinion results will not be sustainable. The scope and nature of change contemplated in this programme is such that it will take a generation or more to achieve. Therefore, stakeholders need to focus on sustainability going forward. Fortunately, much of the JP effort is undertaken by local NGOs in the field and in Phnom Penh under contract. These institutions will carry on after the project. Everything possible should be done to make the project’s research, operational procedures, tools and techniques such as training manuals part of the permanent operations of the contracted NGOs. In this way, sustainability is enhanced. The CISP communications strategy and the monitoring & evaluation system being finalized at this time by consultants should be used to enhance prospects for sustainability.

As well, JP stakeholders should prepare a proposal for a second phase to be funded in part by the participating UN agencies and through funds mobilization, from selected bilateral donors. A follow-on programme would not require as much funding as this JP because much of the research and technique will be in place. What is required is a small initiative to maintain the momentum of the current JP in working with the contracted NGOs.

Proposed response: Strengthening sustainability of CISP’s interventions is indeed a major concern given the limited timeframe of the Joint Programme. The Joint Programme Team has from the start been concerned about the issue of sustainability considering the significant and rather unique challenges the programme is facing. It is proposed to focus even more on it after Year 3 funds have transferred. Sustainability strategy will include advocacy to develop new proposals for follow up activities and continuing strengthening of partners and target groups (capacity building and support to formal group formations or to merge existing informal groups with formal Community Forest).

Regarding the possibilities of a “second phase”, modalities would have to be defined as no mechanism has currently been created for after the end of the current programme and the announced closure of the MDG-F.

¹ These responses have been prepared with the reference group and approved by the PMC during its 5th meeting on 22 September 2011.

1.2. Adjust commercialization component of project

Commercialization of producer groups' products is critical to CISP success. In the JP, UNDP is responsible for commercialization of indigenous people's products. In the consultant's opinion, the level and orientation of UNDP's commercialization contribution spelled out in the JP document is not appropriate to the circumstance of the indigenous people. To talk of international markets and export when indigenous women are afraid to go to the local market is overreach. In the consultant's opinion, a much more focused UNDP effort going forward will bring better results. UNDP needs to focus its commercialization assistance on the products being produced by the groups formed by the project. UNDP needs to contract individual consultants and/or local business development NGOs operating in the localities and perhaps some based in Phnom Penh. These individuals and organizations can assist local producer groups with the marketing and sale of their products whether handicrafts, resin, jars & pottery or tourism. It is understood UNDP had revised its approach prior to the mid-term review mission and moved in the direction of this recommendation.

Proposed response: *The commercialization component is indeed crucial to the CISP's impact on its target beneficiaries' livelihood. Commercialization has already been adjusted (focus is set on grassroots) and is now being actively implemented, as presented to the 4th PMC Meeting. Especially, UNDP has adopted a vertically integrated approach and to implement all recommended strategies for the selected cultural products by relying on the same institutions and NGOs currently working with local/Indigenous producers coupled with appropriate on-going training conducted by FAO-ILO in the field*

Commercialization-related outputs have been customized so that implemented activities can better relate to the grassroots: legal assessment and trainings will focus on field stakeholders; public-private dialogues will focus on the commune/village level; trainings on legal knowledge will be customized for grassroots stakeholders (NGOs, local/ethnic producers, Provincial Dept of line ministries as well as Line Ministries senior officials themselves), handicraft strategy has been customized to different context of provinces and local partner NGOs (8 strategies for 8 local partner NGOs) through one to one coaching sessions. Furthermore, grants have been given to the partner NGOs for strategy implementation while resin commercialization is about to be implemented through a very experienced NGO in the subject matter, in support to local NGOs based in the targeted provinces.

1.3. Adjust Micro-Credit component of project

The JP should not attempt to mount its own micro-credit programme because micro-credit is available in the localities. If there is a demonstrated need for micro-credit in some of the producer groups the JP should contract a local micro-credit agency or simply make the linkage for the local agency to provide credit. This would allow the JP to respond to the need and to test out and learn from the experience without mounting its own micro-credit component.

Proposed response: *A microcredit component was indeed included in the original project document but after careful consideration, it has been agreed to leave it aside, based on the rationale detailed below.*

Considering the complexities of delivering appropriate business services, especially services such as micro-credit and other micro-finance products which are not that straight forward to deliver to an already Indigenous vulnerable, and often illiterate target group, the JP Team has proposed to not pursue the matter in the manner envisioned in the initial project document. Furthermore, given the limited time frame of the JP, it is considered most appropriate and cost effective to achieve the desired outcomes by focusing on issues of sustainability and activities currently underway relating to other BDS services and NGO capacity building.

These conclusions and recommendations were achieved through analysis in the field (a financial literacy needs assessment with a specific focus on gender, provided during the 4th PMC) as well as inputs from the ILO Micro-finance expert who has ample experience dealing with the issues at hand, including those issues specific to Indigenous groups. It is understood that the JP should not approach the issue of access to finance lightly, as experience shows that micro-finance often does more harm than good if not approached in a consistent and dedicated manner.

As such it has proposed to address the issue by: providing financial literacy training to the target group; linking beneficiaries with existing Micro Finance Institutions and/or partners with existing projects or sub-projects where appropriate (which is more about promoting networking than actual contracts); and providing business skills and group formation trainings promoting knowledge about credit discipline, loan and savings.

Finally, adequate training on raising awareness on possible benefits (including seeking external funding sources once CISP shuts down as well as seeking future MFI support in due time) of creating such formal associations would be taught to stakeholders during the Training on Trade Practices within legal Framework to make them more sensitive to the issue.

1.4. Adjust cultural product certification

Output 3.4 Official certification introduced to promote cultural products/services. This output is a good idea in principle but is beyond the capability of the projects' producer groups in their current state. The seal of excellence may only serve to discourage and defeat the project's producer groups by their being rejected for the seal of excellence. This output should either be eliminated or adjusted so that IP products have their own standard appropriate for the level/quality of their products. This output would be more appropriate for a second phase of the JP should there be one.

Proposed response: *Although being aware of the above mentioned risks, the JP Team and the PMC understand that there is a need for cultural certification of Cambodian IP products sold in the country as they face stiff competition from cheaper, imported products sold as Cambodian handicrafts (cf. 4th PMC Report). Therefore, JP Team is working to design an approach linking both UNDP and UNESCO components with regard to possible certification which starting point would be a design competition. Consultations by the JP Team with existing CISP-ILO partners such as Artisans Association of Cambodia have been initiated in this regard while possibilities are also being explored by UNDP to make use of existing*

Government “labelling” such as OVOP (One Village One Product) to provide some official authenticity certification to locally made products which cost is much higher than the above mentioned mass imports made in Vietnam and other neighbouring countries. It is strongly believed that potential buyers (whether foreign or local) would indeed see the justification of paying a reasonable premium for genuine items made by Indigenous groups according to traditional production methods.

Furthermore, the JP Team is looking into existing regulations and related issues (relevance, degree of enforcement...) so as to see whether these legal instruments could be further developed or implemented in this regard. Beyond its own timeframe, the JP Team also considers making recommendations for training and awareness raising of sales people on their products. Recent consultations organized in the framework of the JP and gathering representatives of the local authorities and civil society have helped to further highlight the issue and to initiate a common reflection about it.

1.5. Strengthen Training

Training of indigenous people in product design and technique and in commercialization is key to the success and sustainability of this project. More attention to the training will have a large payoff. There are challenges to training of indigenous people. Often they only speak their own language and are illiterate. Most of the target group are indigenous women who can be shy and uncomfortable with a male trainer. Classroom training alone is insufficient to the task. Finally, training must be carefully monitored and evaluated for its impact and adjusted accordingly and this takes extra effort and skill on the part of the trainers.

The Joint Programme is in a unique position to mount a training-of-trainers initiative in the second half of the JP involving all the NGOs. Training should be more of a mentoring system whereby classroom training is complemented with a mentoring programme where the trainer gives the trainee exercises to do and the trainee is in contact with the trainer as a coach. The JP should serve as a forum for the NGO trainers whereby they can share experience and learn from each other. Finally, much effort must be put into the monitoring and evaluation of training. Each training session must be evaluated to determine whether trainees understood and found it useful and adjustments made for the next training session.

Implementation of this recommendation will involve the contracting of a training organization to design and implement the intervention. Management of this intervention could be the responsibility of FAO or ILO or it could be jointly managed.

Proposed response: *The JP Team and the PMC fully agree with this assessment which has been at the core of its preoccupations since CISP’s initial steps (cf. Reports of PMC meetings). Series of trainings have been taking place and will keep on taking place until the end of the project to ensure the transfer of technical knowledge, train new masters, promote financial literacy as well as with basic business and rural marketing skills. Through the past year of implementation, a total of 38 training sessions covering 14 different topics have thus been delivered to partner NGOs and individual/group producers in all 4 CISP target provinces. Each training session concerned between 10 to 262 persons representing 2 to 42 producers’ groups and 7 different local NGOs. In the coming weeks, consultations will be organized to*

determine the contents of future trainings which will take place during the final year of the Joint Programme.

Additionally it should also be mentioned that as much as refresher and follow-up mentoring are a real necessity (in spite of the time constraints faced by target groups rhythm of life is set by agricultural cycles and taking into consideration the legitimate willingness by IP groups to preserve as much as possible to their traditional ways of life), it is also a fact that certain specific technical trainings are extremely costly. Furthermore in-depth field survey since the beginning of the JP implementation have revealed that there are insufficient numbers of qualified trainers existing in the target areas for the entire range of Business Development Services which the target group (and NGOs supporting them) require while developing this human resource base takes a long time.

1.6. CISP Communications Strategy & Monitoring & Evaluation System

At the direction of the JP, two consultants under contract to UNDP were finalizing their reports on a CISP communications strategy and a monitoring and evaluation system for the duration of the project. This work was commissioned prior to and independent of this evaluation and are good initiatives so long as they do not burden the CISP team with more report writing and administration. The communications strategy and M&E system should be kept as straightforward and simple as possible so as to support rather than hinder implementation and sustainability.

The communications strategy should:

- Focus inside CISP on its management and stakeholders and externally on media, civil society groups and potential future CISP donors;
- Clarify JP message and achievements and share with stakeholders so that JP gains more traction and cross fertilization
- Link up with the national conference for the JP proposed below in this report.

The ‘meat’ on this communications strategy will be the successes of producer groups and individuals going forward. It will be important therefore for CISP to make rapid progress in the second half and to document the success stories and lessons learned so that they can be shared inside and outside the project. The JP should deploy its contracted NGOs to document success stories and feed them to the Communications Officer currently being contracted by CISP.

The M&E system should:

- Collect stories and lessons from producer groups and other JP stakeholders such as the museums and cultural centers that can be used by the communications effort and the proposed national conference;
- Use field visits by JP management to collect and document implementation and success stories;
- Submit a brief M&E report to the PMC meetings summarizing progress and highlighting implementation problems.

It is understood there is no budget for the communications strategy implementation. If so then funds will have to be re-allocated from other parts of the JP.

Proposed response: A Communication and Advocacy Strategy has been finalized (the evaluator met with the specialist contracted to design it during his mission to Cambodia) and approved by the 4th PMC meeting. A Communication Officer has been hired in August 2010 to implement this Strategy and Agencies have been setting (with difficulty as it was not in the initial programme document) funds aside for relevant activities. The approved Communication and Advocacy Strategy includes all points suggested by the evaluator. Furthermore, the Monitoring and Evaluation tools developed by the JP also contain reporting sections for success stories (including human interest stories) and lessons learned which can also be of use to the implementation of the communication strategy.

1.7. Tourism

Tourism is set to take off in Cambodia's north with the entire road infrastructure linking up with Laos and Vietnam currently under construction. Middle class Cambodians and tourists from neighbouring countries will be coming to this unexplored region with the Preah Vihear Temple serving as the anchor. Wealthy Western and East Asian tourists will soon be making the circuit from Siem Reap to Preah Vihear in a couple hours once the road is completed.

The critical question is what will happen to the IP? Siem Reap is still Cambodia's second poorest province after a decade of booming tourism. How to avoid this outcome in the northern provinces? The JP is in a unique position perhaps to examine and report on this strategic issue assuming that the Ministry of Tourism is not already doing so. A coming tourism tsunami is a double-edged sword for the IP. On the one hand it may well bypass them entirely as tourism has done in Siem Reap. Even worse, it could have the effect of rendering their culture even more vulnerable. On the other hand, if IP can somehow tap into future tourism revenues it could have a powerful impact on their livelihood and preservation of their culture.

The JP approved tourism support in Kampong Thom, one of the four provinces in which the JP operates. Currently UNDP is engaged in hiring a consultant to carry out a scoping study for this tourism support. While an explanation of the current scope of the study was provided to the consultant at the debriefing, it would be preferable if the terms of reference for this study could be broadened to take a look at tourism development in all four provinces with particular reference to how it will impact IP and what can be done to ensure they benefit in some way. The terms of reference should involve an examination of Siem Reap to determine how the local people have been bypassed by tourism and what needs to be done to avoid this unfortunate outcome in the JP's four northern provinces.

Proposed response: Although tourism was initially considered as a cultural product in itself by the JP, limited timeframe and resources as well as the understood need to focus on commercialization from the grassroots have led the JP Team to propose a more practical approach using tourism as a channel for the commercialization of cultural products, rather than treating as an end in itself, which has been agreed upon by the 4th PMC meeting. Focusing on tourism would indeed require the dedication of a whole new programme and resources whereas focusing on cultural products better answers the object of the CISP and is

key in helping handicraft producers to prepare themselves to face future socio-economic changes that will be brought by the present accelerated pace of infrastructure development.

1.8. Indigenous Youth Apprentice Programme

Indigenous youth are the key to the future of indigenous culture. The challenge is that many leave their indigenous locality for the urban areas in search of adventure and jobs. This is a well known global phenomenon. Youth will only stay in their locality if there is some prospect of livelihood in the market economy. The JP should link its LHT component to youth so that they are attached to trainers/mentors/living human treasures to establish career prospects for the youth in their village in handicraft production or the performing arts.

***Proposed response:** It is indeed understood that youth has a major role to play in the preservation and promotion of Indigenous culture. The JP has been working on linking youth to its activities through its Mentorship Programmes, whereby masters transfer their traditional knowledge to enable the new generation to make cultural products (sometimes with a degree of improved equipment/techniques), and its entrepreneurship and commercialization components, and whereby the newly trained producers learn how to more efficiently earn their livelihood through by selling their traditional products. Furthermore it is indeed the object of the Living Human Treasures System to promote the transfer of traditional knowledge in the field of intangible cultural heritage while the CISP collaborates with other partners like Cambodian Living Arts to help promoting the professionalization of intangible cultural heritage disciplines. Furthermore, in the event that more funds could be made available and that partners would be interested (which should be the case), specific tools are readily available for Youth Entrepreneurship Development. These could easily and logically be linked to the existing training tools.*

1.9. A National Conference

CISP will have important achievements and lessons learned in the new fields of IP and cultural preservation and livelihood enhancement. These achievements should be shared more broadly in Cambodia. One way of doing so is to hold a national conference at the project's conclusion to showcase achievements, techniques and lessons learned. A national conference will enhance the identity and self-esteem of the IP. It will also gain traction for more attention and resources to be devoted to IP. The conference might be held in the northern provinces perhaps at the new Preah Vihear museum that the JP has supported.

The CISP communications strategy and M&E system being developed by consultants at this time should be designed to feed into this national conference. Success stories on an individual IP basis and lessons learned need to be documented over the next 18 months so that they can be showcased in the conference.

***Proposed response:** The organization of such an event at the closure of the CISP has been previously discussed and is currently being considered by the JP Team. However, the format*

of this event (participants and focus) is still under discussion. A proposal will be submitted to a future PMC meeting.