



The Effectiveness of Farmer Organization Management in Kamchaymear and Baphnom Districts, Prey Veng Province

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Abstract ‘Farmer organization’ is a new concept for Cambodian people, and capacities to effectively manage farmer organizations are limited. Thus, a study was conducted with two objectives, (1) to explore aspects of management and leadership capacities of management committees, and (2) to look into the management processes for farmer organizations. After finishing an interview with all stakeholders, the results showed that educational level of the management committee is so low, with 64.50% finishing primary school and only 1.4% university. Even though they have low education, among 95.1% of the management committees had the ability to write their small project proposals to be submitted to supporting non-government organizations or other donors for both financial and technical support. After their assessment, each farmer organization received 1-3 grants for implementing their own economic initiatives, 62% of the management committees and the members interviewed were provided with technical trainings. All farmer organizations have all the necessary characteristics such as logo, organizational chart, by-laws, recording tools and they conducted meetings regularly. Furthermore, they maintain good relationships with all stakeholders and also received official recognitions from the local authorities. Overall, we can say that the management capacity of the committees have improved even though they still need further support from outsiders in terms of capacity building, working capital, etc. so as to make sure they continue to function well to serve the interest of the members in the long run.

Keywords farmer organization, committee, Prey Veng province, Cambodia

INTRODUCTION

The Cambodian government is focusing on the reduction of poverty of the people. Over 80% of Cambodian population is living in rural areas and more than 70% of labor force in the whole country do farming (MAFF, 2006). Even though many farmers are self-sufficient, 86% of them are below the poverty line (NPRS, 2002; MOP, 2003).

The government is now trying to improve the livelihood of people and develop the national economy through the implementation of government and civil development projects, in order to get effective success and sustainability. Government, non-governmental organizations and other institutions have been organized and used many new strategies to support and develop more effectively farmer groups, associations, communities, cooperatives and federations. All of them were defined as farmer organizations (FO) and facilitated with managing, funding, training and so on. In the inventory of Cambodian farmer organizations, it has been found that before 1995 there were 616 FOs, between 1995 and 2000 3,785 FOs, and after 2000 there were 10,157 FOs (Couturier et al., 2006). The type of farmer organizations in Cambodia can be divided into 10,487 farmer groups, 662 farmer associations, 1,769 farmer communities, 93 farming business communities, and 6 farmer federations, and a total of 13,017 FOs (Couturier et al., 2006).

In 2001, a Royal Decree on Agricultural Cooperative, Union of the Agricultural Cooperative and the Pre-Agricultural Cooperative was published, giving a legal framework for farmer economic organizations. Also in 2003, Prakas of Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries on statute and regulation format was used on Agricultural Cooperatives.

Farmer organizations can be successful or fail. It depends on the leading of committee members, members' participation and supporting agencies or stakeholders. Committee members have enough management qualifications. They can well manage their FOs such as meeting facilitation ability, planning activities annually, strategy plan preparation, knowledge transfer, experience sharing, bookkeeping, and implementing, monitoring and evaluating of farmer organization projects etc. (Sophany, 2010). On the other hand, to become a good manager, the applicant has to be honest, self-sacrificing, try to learn what he is weak at, and good internal and external communication. Most farmer organization leaders are lacking abilities such as general management, financial management, communication, bookkeeping, and agricultural techniques (Couturier et al., 2006).

METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted in Prey Veng province with the target area of Komrong Daikou of Agronomes et Vétérinaires Sans Frontières, that have been working in Baphnom and Kamchaymear districts. There are 33 farmer organizations (2 agricultural cooperatives, 29 rice bank associations, and 2 village animal health worker "VAHW" associations).

The sample selection for interviewing was divided into 3 parts:

1. All farmer organization committee members were interviewed (100%), the total sampling being 142 persons.
2. All project implement staff and commune councils collaborating with project were interviewed (100%), being the total sampling 8 persons.
3. Farmer organization members' samplings were selected by stratified sampling method based on the scoring evaluation of farmer organization types in 2009. Each type of farmer organization limited 50%, but not less than 2 farmer organizations. The formula of Yamane Taro (1967) by randomized method was used. So, a total of 314 members were interviewed.

The primary and secondary sources of information were compiled together for analyzing by SPSS and SWOT.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The research results showed that farmer organizations that were successful in its development rely on the committee members' capacities mainly, because committee is the leader of farmer organizations responsible to achieve progress and sustainability. So, many non-government organizations and institutions have been trying different approaches to support farmer organizations such as training by theory and actual practice, conducting exchange visits, etc. in order to improve the committee's capacity in accordance with their situations.

Through questionnaires it was observed that committee members' education as well as the opportunity to get capacity building and institutional strengthening was different among farmer organizations.

Table 1 Educational attainment of committee members

Type of FO	No. of FO	No. of committee (person)	Education (%)			
			Primary	Secondary	High school	University
Agriculture cooperative	2	16	62.50	25.00	12.50	-
VAWH association	2	12	33.30	41.70	8.30	16.70
Rice bank association	29	114	68.40	26.30	5.30	-
Total	33	142	64.80	27.50	6.30	1.40

Most of the committee members' education in the three types of farmer organizations was low, with 64.80% finishing primary school, 27.50% finishing secondary school, 6.30% high school and only 1.4% university. The reason why many administrative committee members studied only at primary schools was that most of them are farmers. Furthermore, if they have higher education, they do not want to be administrative committee members because of little interest in the benefits. As shown in Table 1, we found that only committee members of Village Animal Health Worker Association have university degrees since they got income from animal treatment. They want to strengthen their capability and be more effective in their profession.

Regarding administrative committee members who have low education, many institutions of development agencies started changing their approaches not only focusing on providing fund, materials and technical training support but also strengthening the committee capacity building of farmer organization in leadership and management. As a result, 76.1% of administrative committee members received farmer organization management training, 61.3% financial training, 32.4% communication and marketing trainings, 34.5% leadership training and 88% proposal writing training. With these approaches, 50% of administrative committee members had participated in various exchange visits on animal raising, vegetable growing, farmer organization management and other enhancements.

Table 2 Administrative committee capability of funding proposal writing

Education	No. of administrative committee chief (person)	Fund proposal writing from 2007-2010	
		Success (%)	Failure (%)
Primary school	18	88.90	11.10
Secondary school	11	100.00	-
High school	2	100.00	-
University	2	100.00	-
Total	33	93.90	6.10

Based on the support and strengthening from various development agencies, the capacity building of administrative committee members was improved. The committee has improved its ability of leading farmer organizations, preparing clear organizational charts, communicating with donors and stakeholders. Because of the improved ability, they now got 1 to 3 grant(s) from donors through proposal writing for implementing micro-projects from 2007 to 2010. Table 2 shows that administrative committee chiefs who studied only at primary school got 88.90% of success and only 11.10% a failure. Compared to others who studied at secondary school or above, they now could get 100% of success. As a result, this success contributed as an idea from other committee and members in their farmer organizations. They now not only receive funds, but most of committee members get various training also, for example, rice seed production, 21.80%; fertilizer use, 26.80%; pig rearing, 36.60%; marketing, 32.4% and proposal writing 88%, etc.

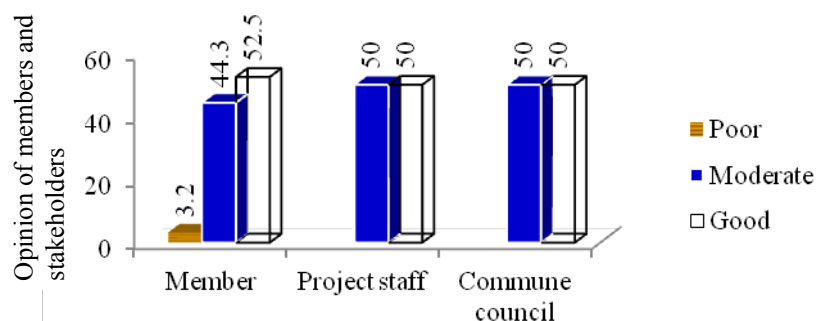


Fig.1 Opinion of members and stakeholders about committee capability

The result showed that only 3.2% of the members said that committee capacity was not good, but others (44.3%) said that it was moderate and 52.5% that it was good. For the project staff and commune councils, 50% replied moderate and the other 50%, good. In accordance with the results

shown, the committee's capability was not good enough in leading farmer organizations yet. They still need more support on capacity building and other skills that involve development agencies and other stakeholders.

The process of farmer organization establishment depends on the types of farmer organization, objectives, and steps taken by farmer organization creators. There were different steps/methods referring to the aims of the creation of projects or laws. If someone wants to be a member of a farmer organization, he has to pay membership fee or share buying, and anyone who wants to be a committee member has to go through an election process.

Table 3 Recruitment of administrative committee members of FO

Type of farmer organization	No. of committee members (persons)	Assigment to a committee	
		Election (%)	Appointment (%)
Agricultural cooperative	16	100	-
VAHW association	12	91.70	8.30
Rice bank association	114	75.40	24.60
Total	142	79.60	20.40

According to the results of Table 3, 100% of Agricultural Cooperative committee, 91.70% of Village Animal Health Worker association committee and 75.40% of Rice Bank association committee were selected by election. Only 20.40% of committee members were selected by appointment as it was based on the criteria selection rule. For example, rice keepers were selected by appointment because they provided their lands for rice store construction and also because it is difficult to move the rice store from one place to another. The mandate of election is 3 years, but some farmer organizations do not apply the written statute and internal rules because of no new candidates. Members let old committees to continue, and sometimes committees do not organize elections.

Table 4 Application of duties and responsibilities to administrative committee members

Education	No. of committee (person)	Organizational chart (%)		
		Not done	Partly done	Well done
Primary school	92	4.30	58.70	37.00
Secondary school	39	2.60	48.70	47.70
High school	9	-	55.60	44.40
University	2	-	50.00	50.00
Total	142	3.50	55.60	40.80

In order to have a more effective management of farmer organizations, each farmer organization committee as well as its members must apply organizational charts to divide the duties and responsibilities among members. The questionnaires showed that all farmer organizations created organizational charts, but their duties and responsibilities stated in the organizational chart were not done well. In the results of the survey, 40.80% of the duties were well done, 55.60% partly done and 3.50% not done. One reason is that some committee members could not do their duties alone, such as organizing bookkeeping or conducting meeting, etc.

Table 5 Application of statute and internal rules of administrative committee members

Education	No. of committee (person)	Statute and internal rule (%)		
		Not done	Partly done	Well done
Primary school	92	3.30	53.30	43.50
Secondary school	39	-	43.60	56.40
High school	9	-	44.40	55.60
University	2	-	50.00	50.00
Total	142	2.10	50.00	47.90

Table 5 shows that 100% of farmer organizations have conducted meetings and made statutes and internal rules to be followed and performed. As a result, there were only 47.90% well done, 50% partly done and 2.10% not done.

To be easily recognizable or identifiable by donors, development agencies and other stakeholders, 93% of farmer organizations had to have logos, and only 7% didn't have. Farmer organizations at least got a recognition letter from the commune office.

Table 6 Committee capability for conducting meetings

Type of farmer organization	No. of committee members (person)	Meeting duration		
		1-month	3-month	6-month
Agricultural cooperative	16	50.00	50.00	-
VAHW association	12	66.70	33.30	-
Rice bank association	114	24.60	72.80	2.60
Total	142	31.00	66.90	2.10

A meeting is very important for all committee members and members or stakeholders to have time for discussion, sharing information, planning preparation, or participating to solve any problem and other matters. Even though the committee education is low, they have sufficient capability to conduct meetings at least for their own farmer organizations. In Table 6 it is expressed that meeting duration depends on their activities. If they have many activities, more meetings will be conducted. As a result, 66.90% of farmer organizations conducted a 3-month meeting. By the support from development agencies, committees did not only have the ability to facilitate the meeting but also could prepare agenda for meeting, and take minutes.

Referring to research results, relationship between farmer organization committees and members depends on the point of views of each one. Overall, the opinions of project staff and commune councils about committees and members relationship were moderate and good.

To encourage administrative committee members in farmer organization that can manage well, members and committee members also discussed and agreed to provide salaries for committee members under facilitation of local authority or development agencies. As a result, each committee member can get 80 kg to 120 kg of paddy rice per year or get cash. It depends on the resource or income of the micro-project activities.

CONCLUSION

A farmer organization is a type of farmer group that was created to be responsible for the overall objectives and interest of farmers and to serve the interest of economic and natural resource management that involved direct and indirect agricultural activities implemented by farmers. In Cambodia, farmer organization was divided into 5 types, such as group, association, community, agricultural cooperative and federation.

In accordance with the research results, we can conclude as follows.

- Leading capability of farmer organization committee members were improved, even though they were selected from farmers and had low education as well.
- Leading and managing farmer organizations improved, as they set up organizational charts, statute, internal rules, logo, and conducted meetings regularly as well as they were able to get grants and trainings through proposal writing. Furthermore, their knowledge on how to manage and process farmer organization was also improved.

Finally, farmer organizations' success or failure depend on how good the committee members and participating members as well as development agencies function and manage.

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