



■ 4 ONG UNIVERSITAIRES BELGES AU SERVICE DE LA COOPERATION ■

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE

PROJECT TITLE:

UpScale (Upgrading Strategy for Small-Scale Farmers)

FES (Food and Economic Security)

Table of contents

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE	1
PROJECT TITLE:	1
A. Identity	2
B. Summary of the managerial response	3
C. Major findings of the evaluation	4
D. Reminder of the context and overall objective of the evaluation	8
E. Follow up on the evaluation	11
E.1. Decision on whether or not to take into account the recommendations	11
E.2. Summary of follow-up to recommendations	16
E.3. Indicative planning of activities to implement the selected recommendations	16
E.4. Details on the implementation of the main recommendations	17
E.5. Reinforcement of the Theory of Change assumptions	18
E.6. Modalities for disseminating the evaluation and the managerial response	20
F. Quality of the evaluation process and report	21

A. Identity

Project	UpScale Project and FES Project Program DGD 2017-2021 Uni4Coop in Cambodia
IATI code	BE-BCE_KBO-0432503697-PROG2017-2021_cambodiaOS1 BE-BCE-KBO-0422717486-PROG2017-2021-KH-OS2
Objective concerned	(1) SO1: "Small-scale family farmers and their family members strengthen their capacities to achieve food sovereignty, to defend their interests and to generate pro-poor growth"; implemented by Eclosio under the name of UpScale project. and (2) SO2: "The food and economic security (FES) and the level of organization of vulnerable rural populations have improved in a sustainable way" implemented by LC under the FES project.
Evaluation date	December 2021 to April 2022
Evaluators	External Evaluators: CRCC team (Dul Ponlork and Edward Maningo)
Date of the managerial response	May 2022
Author of the response	Christophe Goossens, Phillippe Devaud, Giuliana Zegarra

B. Summary of the managerial response

Being the final evaluation at the end of the Uni4Coop program 2017-2021 in Cambodia, the managerial response focused mainly on the recommendations to be addressed by the implementation of the next Uni4Coop program 2022-2026 in Cambodia. The evaluator mentioned the following main recommendations:

For UpScale:

- Train the young/educated workers of ACs (committee members and youths) on computer literacy
- Organize AC membership seminars in communities
- Implement Volunteer Programs
- Conduct financial literacy training for the farmers and members of the ACs
- Train in food processing (meat, fish, and vegetables)
- Assist the AC/Producer Groups putting up of slaughterhouse and slaughterhouse management and meat quality inspection
- Conduct a survey and groundwater mapping that are contaminated with pesticides
- Establish Community Fish Refuge Areas and Development of Communal Forest.

For FES:

- Develop the skills of local youths through volunteer and internship programs at the ACs.
- Develop a potential product (i.e. “champion products”) linked to the government’s programs such as the One –Village-One Product movement and to the regional value chain.
- Institutionalize the use of TAPE Tool
- Introduce biodigester to the members of the ACs
- Conduct a survey and mapping of pesticide contamination of the soil and use of software to model the extent of groundwater contamination using models such as MODFLOW
- Monitor the impacts of the intervention in terms of reducing GHGs.

The details of the recommendations, the justification for taking them into account as well as an indicative plan for their implementation in the future program 22-26 are given in section E4.

C. Major findings of the evaluation

After 5 years of project implementation, a final evaluation has been conducted between December 2021 and April 2022. The data collection has been done in the target areas of both projects. For Upscale, these areas are Takeo, Kampong Speu, Prey Veng, Svay Rieng, Battambang and Kampong Thom. For FES, the target areas are Kampong Thom and Kampong Cham. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected from the beneficiaries, partners, and the stakeholders of both projects.

THE UPSCALE PROJECT

Relevance. The UpScale Project provides a model for technology dissemination through a Farmer-to-Farmer extension, where the farmers teach fellow farmers. The farmer-to-farmer extension also transmitted technologies through learning-by-doing and promotion of local innovations. The project provides a space to women and youths to participate in the decision-making in Agricultural Cooperatives (ACs) and Union of Agricultural Cooperatives (UACs) to improve their business performance. The participation of youths brings to the ACs and UACs manpower that have higher education and can contribute to a more effective running of the business.

The project contributed to the Joint Strategic Goals 1, 5 and 6.

Effectiveness. The effectiveness of UpScale project is assessed based on the achievement of SO1 indicator and the five results: (1) Farmers and their family improved sustainably their production through better natural resources access and management; (2) Organized small-scale farmers increase the total value of their production through better access to market and allows the creation of job and business opportunities; (3) FOs and their members improve their access to finance to develop production and collective commercialization; (4) FO improve skills and capacities to manage their structures and advocate for SSFF interest including those for women and youths; and (5) Actors supporting small-scale family farmers and their family' members are sharing and improving their practices and approaches.

Achievement of SO1 Indicators (Small-scale family farmers and their Family Members Strengthen their capacities to achieve food sovereignty, to defend their interests to generate pro-poor growth). There are two indicators under SO1: (1) Income of the targeted farmers increases more than the average income of similar population in the framework of the program; and (2) Increase of Women and Youth among FAEC Operational Actors. The project has achieved all the targets under SO1. The income of the beneficiaries has increased by 35.3%, which is higher than the target of 25%. The project also exceeded the target of having at least 50 % of women and 40% of youths involved in FAEC operations.

R 1: Farmers and their family improved sustainably their production through better natural resources access and management. There are three indicators under this result: (1) Number of family farmers having access to on-farm small irrigation system; (2) Number of AE techniques adopted by targeted family farmer's increases; and (3) Percentage of production' quantity increases for rice, rice seed, chicken, vegetables. The project has exceeded the target of 25 families to have access to irrigation. The small-scale irrigation put up by ISC has empowered the farmers to improve their production. About 41.5% of the respondents have adopted AE practices, representing an increase of 235%. This exceeded the target of 70% increase of farmers who adopted the AE

techniques. The farmers posted an increase in production of paddy rice by 11.1%; rice seeds = 86%; chicken = 2.39%; and vegetables = 66.18%. Although in general the production of farmers has increased, the level of increase is below the targeted level (i.e. 30% increase for rice; 200% for rice seed; 100% for chicken; and 100% for vegetable). The target set by the Project Design appears to be too high and unrealistic. The target increased production of paddy rice by 30%, through SRI and use of good quality seeds, means that the farmer should reach approximately 5.41 t/ha which is deemed very high for Cambodian farmers. This is very high compared with the production level of other countries. The assessment by the project in 2017 found out that the farmers did not make money from paddy production. The project then decided to support them in valorizing by-products from paddy rice instead which are used as input to Bokashi type of fertilizer.

Due to exposure and vulnerability of the farmers to climate change (e.g., flood and drought), the project supported the farmers with climate-resilient farming practices through access to irrigation or innovative practices such as using seeders and keeping spare seeds for replanting when losses occur.

R 2: Organized small-scale farmers increase the total value of their production through better access to market and allow the creation of job and business opportunities. All the indicators under this result were achieved by the project. There are two indicators under this result: (1) Percentage increase of quantities of products sold collectively by agriculture cooperatives; and (2) Number of cooperative scoring over 80/100 on SCM grid. The input sold by the ACs has increased by 410% which exceeded the target. The project has met its target of having 20 FOs that receives SCM grid score above 80/100. The target for the program is for at least 20 ACs to reach a target of 80 points. The SCM scoring was applied in ACs assisted by MB in Kampong Thom province.

R 3: FOs and their members improve their access to finance to develop production and collective commercialization. There are two indicators under this result: (1) Access of ACs to Finance for Collective Commercial Activities; and (2) Percentage of AC capital increases during the program. All the targets under this Result were achieved. The project has met its target of facilitating more than 28 ACs to access loans from financial institutions. FAEC provided training to strengthen the capacity of the AC Committee and provided direct coaching on the production of business and marketing plans, as well as other documents required by the Bank. The project has exceeded its target. More than 30% of the total FAEC members have increased their capital.

R 4: FO improves skills and capacities to manage their structures and advocate for SSFF interest including those for women and youths. This result has three indicators: (1) Amount of qualified Service Providers of FAEC /FCFD trained and operational; (2) Amount of FAEC /FCFD annual services delivered to FOs and individual members; and (3) Increased percentage of FAEC / FCFD AC members. A total of 138 service providers of FAEC/FCFD were trained, which exceeded the target of 55 Service Providers. FAEC provided 150 services to the FOs and individual farmers. The project has supported two Farmers' Organizations federations (FAEC and FCFD) for sustainable seed supply service to their members. The project was not able to meet its target of increasing the membership of FAEC and FCFD. The project achieved only 48% as against its target of 50%. The shortfall was triggered by the withdrawal of the membership of ACs due to governance issues. FAEC at that time was embroiled with a corruption controversy. This issue was confirmed by an audit conducted and was reported in the Board of Director's Meeting.

R 5: Actors supporting small-scale family farmers and their family members are sharing and improving their practices and approaches. This result has the following target indicators: (1) number of studies published during the program; (2) number of collaborations with other actors on exchanges of experiences

and capitalization of knowledge processes developed during the program. The target 10 studies published during the program are achieved. The project also established 20 collaborations which exceeded the target of 10 collaborations.¹

Efficiency. The activities of UpScale project were efficiently implemented. The targets were achieved according to plan. The program coordinator assures a complementary and synergy among the components to save funds and the expenses were strictly monitored according to financial procedures. Eclasio works and coordinates with donors and other supporters to avoid redundancy and make an efficient use of staff.

Sustainability. The sustainability of the project considers the following areas: (1) technical; (2) financial; (3) social; (4) environmental.

Technical Sustainability. The technologies introduced by the project are considered practical and appropriate to the site. The approaches and methods are designed to be adapted to beneficiary capacities and financial means.

Financial Sustainability. The activities can be sustained as the ACs have started a business and building their capital. Training has been provided to the ACs which enables them to access loans from financial institutions.

Social Sustainability. The increased participation of women in the program improves the social and gender equity in decision making processes in rural areas. The program increases rural participation in local governance, improves service delivery, speeds-up agri-business development, overcomes scale problems, and exercises influence on policy issues.

Environmental Sustainability. The farmers are expected to sustain the AE practices as they realized the benefits of agroecology. The farmers practiced proper management of chemical agricultural waste and proper way of using the chemical fertilizer, as well as composting.

THE FES PROJECT

Relevance: The FES program aims to create structures that can help farmers develop their activities and find both technical and financial support. FES helped the ACs in accessing credits by linking the ACs with microfinance and banking organizations, improved the skills of the farmers in managing their capital and paying their debts, and developing business plans.

The project has contributed to the achievement of JSF-G6 through the development of climate change mitigation and measures that mitigate the impacts of the environment.

Effectiveness: The project has achieved all the targets under **SO2**: (1) Households having enough food to eat all year around; (2) Increase of women beneficiaries' income above the average level; and (3) Number of new registered Agricultural Cooperatives (ACs) in the target areas. Most of the target indicators under SO2 were achieved. A higher number of respondents had enough food to eat (97.4%), the number beneficiaries who lack food decreased

¹ FAEC Report for Ending UpScale Program, Item 5.1, p. 9 |

from 30.8% (baseline) to 2.6%. The income of female-headed households improved by \$12.10 compared to the baseline with a 10.2% average increase. The on-farm income of female-headed households had a 51.07% increase. However, there was a low increase from non-farm income (2.3%). Finally, the target of having 5 new registered Agricultural Cooperatives (ACs) was achieved. The newly registered ACs received training and coaching by the project and the PDAFF staff.

The level of achievement of the indicators and targets is as follows:

R1: The institutional strengthening of local partners and SHGs allows improving their technical capacity in relation to supporting small-scale farmers and their management capacity. The overall capacity building index score for local partners was 87%. The project also achieved the target of conducting studies and training on finance, and management to 79 SHGs' leaders from 25 SHGs.

R2: SHG members that applied a sustainable agricultural approach, improved their level of organization and increased their food production
The project brought positive changes to the livelihoods of beneficiaries like increasing the number of small-scale farmers who adopted sustainable agriculture practices; 18% practiced 3 or more technologies, 30.8% practiced 2 technologies and 43.6% practiced only 1 technology; and increasing the farmers' yields through improved agriculture practices. In addition, 60%, 56% and 47.67% of SA farmers managed to increase their yields of rice (floating rice, dry season rice, and wet season rice). The endline survey indicates that the production of rice has increased by 11% from the production before the project and 20% increase for rice seeds. There were 47.2% of the rice farmers whose production has exceeded 20%. This fell short of the target of 60% of rice farmers whose production has increased by more than 20%.

For vegetables, there was a 66.18% increase in production, which exceeded the target. The production of chicken has significantly increased from 49.43 to 97.76 kilos per HH (97.8% increase).

R3: The revenue of the targeted vulnerable beneficiaries is improved. The assessment revealed that there was 54% of the FES beneficiaries whose profit from IGAs have reached over \$50. And, a total of 65 beneficiaries were referred by health partners of LC's health outcome, exceeding the original target.

R4: Improve environmental protection and climate changes awareness and resilience. The project has exceeded its target of having 47 SHG members develop a climate change mitigation plan (65 in year 5, which represents 10.83% of the total number of SHG members). About 31% of the FES beneficiaries reported they have self-determined commitments, after the implementation of the IOE-Producer tool, to adapt measures to mitigate the impacts of the environment, and the project achieved its target of 35 families who have put up a disposal pit system and properly discard wastes at community level.

R5: Evidence-based information, studies and operational research on farmer's issues are conducted and results are disseminated among farmers and key stakeholders in the sector. The project produced 18 knowledge management products, organized 8 thematic working groups (below the target of 10 working groups) and held 3 National Seminars instead of 2 with the collaboration of Eclasio.

Sustainability: The following actions must be deployed to guarantee the sustainability of the project: (1) the assistance of NGOs remains crucial in the establishment of Self-Help Groups (SHGs) and the formalization of Agriculture Cooperatives (ACs), (2) the ACs need to be linked to do business with private companies, (3) poor farmers easily adopt the technologies by imitating successful farmers, and (4) poor farmers can be competitive in their farming through collective trading.

Efficiency: The project was implemented efficiently, particularly in the utilization of the resources. The project tapped different partners to provide their expertise. This approach was able to optimize the use of experts. The program is considered to be economically efficient based on its relatively low investment compared to the expected results like economic advances, livelihood improvement (including aspects such as food security and health), disaster preparedness and social inclusiveness, in relation to the size of the beneficiary population. The efficiency (accomplished activities against the input) is estimated to be 78.7%.

The evaluator team hasn't given an alternative use of the resources allocated.

D. Reminder of the context and overall objective of the evaluation

In Cambodia, the Uni4Coop Program is implemented by two of the four Belgian University NGOs, ECLOSIO and Louvain Coopération (LC). The first step undertaken to set up the program was a context analysis that gathered inputs from all the different Belgian ANG (Actors of Non-Governmental Cooperation) engaged in Cambodia that was ensued by a Joint Strategic Framework that foreseen common strategies and objectives for each of the sectoral interventions supported by the Belgian Cooperation (DGD).

The Uni4Coop program in Cambodia has 3 Specific Objectives (SOs) tackling two sectors, Agriculture/Rural Economy and Health. ECLOSIO and LC are both involved in the agriculture and economic sector (SO1 and SO2), LC alone is involved in the health sector (SO3).

This Final Evaluation is covering the evaluation of SO1 and SO2 formulated as follows:

	Specific Objectives	Partner²; Synergy/collaboration
Eclosio	Small-scale family farmers and their family members strengthen their capacities to achieve food sovereignty, to defend their interests and to generate pro-poor growth. <u>Target areas:</u> 11 provinces	Partners: CIRDA, FAEC, ISC, BUAC, TrUAC Collaborations: WWF, FCFD, DACP, NF3, ALiSEA, ITC, Liège University, St Paul Institute
LC	The food and economic security and the level of organization of vulnerable rural populations have improved in a sustainable way. <u>Target areas:</u> Kampong Thom and Kampong Cham provinces	Partners: FAEC, RUA-ECOLAND Research Center, MB Collaborations: GRET, ITM, ALiSEA, UCLouvain, DEMETER

The aim of Eclosio's SO was, together with structural (FAEC) and technical partners specialized in relevant fields, to promote food sovereignty, to create favorable conditions to enable small-scale farmers to defend their rights and interests, get proper incomes from sustainable agricultural activities to durably maintain their living conditions above poverty line, empower women in their communities, and enable youth to live with dignity in their rural areas. On the other hand, LC's SO aimed at creating structures (Self-Help Groups (SHGs) including the participating populations from LC's health programme) that can help farmers to develop their activities and find both technical and financial support to develop small businesses. The key approach involved the building of capacity, technical knowledge, and awareness.

The Lead Questions related to the OS level were:

1. Has the transition to a more sustainable agriculture brought economic growth to small-scale farmers? How is the increment of income being invested? In AE production?
2. What have been the COVID-19 implications/effects in the income generated from farming by small scale farmers? What coping mechanisms have been implemented by small-scale farmers, the community, AC's and Farmers Associations? What has been set by farmers, AC, and UAC to solve specific social problems to the benefit of the poor or disadvantages?

The Lead Questions related to the Results were:

3. How does a sustainable agricultural practice contribute to protecting the environment in Cambodia's context? What business processes have been established and applied to improve ecological sustainability?

² Annex 3: Brief description of partners

4. Has there been a change in the behavior (mindset) of small-scale farmers towards the use of organic (not chemical) inputs before/during the program intervention? => link to the production (increase the yield of AE production.)
5. What is the level of efficiency and small-scale farmers' management of the small irrigation system developed by ISC (Disaggregated by types of farming: family consumption, commercial, and semi-commercial). How can the model be scaled up? Adapted?
6. What are the challenges in establishing SHGs and FAs, ACs; what is the efficiency of these organizations and what are the motivations and benefits that small-scale farmers have to join them?
7. Are the business models (initiated by the participating populations of the programme) of family farming, AC, and UAC financially viable? (Revenues exceed costs? What was done with the surplus (does the surplus cover profits for the formation of capital to expand business and stay competitive)? What has been done to increase the volume of products sold or to increase the sale price obtained?
8. Evaluate with a gender perspective, what were the benefits gained and constraints faced by farmers in the different forms of collaboration that were promoted by UpScale and FES projects? How cooperation among farmers generated an economy of scale? Did the UpScale and FES projects activities supporting producers' cooperation (market orientation, technical and business performance, organizational development) made them viable and sustainable?
9. After the training received from FAEC, are Service Providers strong enough now? What about the local Service Providers (master farmers)? Are they able to provide their services (Decision-making & management for ACs, SHGs; market access; and AE technical practices for producing chicken feed, vegetables and rice seeds) to their members (including women/youth) independently? Or are they still relying on FAEC?
10. Integration of women and youth in decision making spaces of AC and UAC is to improve their business performance; is this hypothesis verified? What has been done to improve participation of women and youth in AC and UAC businesses?
11. How the interventions (UpScale and FES) have helped overcome small scale farmers' challenges imposed by the micro-finance and banking organizations to access credits? What is the capacity of farmers to manage their capital and repay their debt? Has it changed during the program? What other resources for financial access have been developed?
12. Which factors influence trust-building in the provision of technical assistance in AE and capacity building in business development for small-scale farmers?
13. What tools/strategies for sharing knowledge among farmers are the most effective for the Cambodian context? Khmer versions of the studies, videos, manuals ?.

E. Follow up on the evaluation

E.1. Decision on whether or not to take into account the recommendations

N°	Recommendations for UpScale Project	Taking into account: yes, no, partial	Argument
ACs, SHGs and Producer Groups Strengthening			
1	Train the young/educated workers of ACs (committee members and youths) on computer literacy.	yes	The core business work of targeted ACs is linked to collective commercial activities, at the larger scale level of Union of several ACs. It provides sufficient economy of scale to invest in human resources and engage youth. The use of information technology will ease the implementation of business procedures, ensure transparency, and reporting.
2	Organize AC membership seminars in communities to internalize the purpose of collective actions	partial	The development of ACs' commercial activities will require the inclusion of more members to respond the increase of volumes to reach better markets. These are to be promoted by the UACs and not the Federations, as Federations are not the business owners.
3	Implementation of Volunteer Programs to support the ACs in running their businesses	partial	The UACs are already receiving young graduates from neighboring educational institutions to implement on-fields trials and experimentations. Also, it is foreseen to engage local young graduates to support interns from Belgium. There is no partnership foreseen in the new program with FAEC. However, the UACs partners are members of FAEC and will receive services from FAEC on-

			demand; the project will facilitate to ensure that it occurs.
Business Development			
1	Conduct financial literacy training to the farmers and members of the ACs/SHGs (saving and investment).	yes	The Uni4Coop organization chart includes one “FO Capacity Strengthening Officer” dedicated to directly support ACs and UACs members to comply with good governance practices when proceeding with their commercial businesses and their reporting.
2	Training on food processing (meat, fish and vegetables).	yes	This constitutes the main actions for strengthening the added value of value-chains in which the cooperatives are involved and are foreseen in the new program plans.
3	Assist the AC/Producer Groups putting up of slaughterhouse, slaughterhouse management and meat quality inspection.	yes	This is foreseen in the new program for the promotion of the free-range chicken value-chain.
Environment and Natural Resources Development and Management			
1	Establish Community Fish Refuge Areas and Development of Communal Forest	partial	The agroecological practices promoted by Uni4Coop and their partners include the use of agricultural inputs and ecosystem services that are available from their surrounding natural resources. The protection of these natural resources and their efficient use is therefore always at the center of the concerns and good practices promoted.
Project Operation and Management			
1	More budget should be allocated to operation (on fertilizers, irrigation, production value chain and institutional strengthening)	yes	On the new project PARtNER 2022-2026, the distribution of budgets between investment for UACs (4%) and operations (48%) are reflecting the recommended changes.

N°	Recommendations for FES Project	Taking into account: yes, no, partial	Argument
ACs, SHGs and Producer Groups Strengthening			
1	Develop the skills of local youths through volunteer and internship programs at the ACs.	<u>Partial</u>	This plan was put in place through an agreement between South Engineer students (a program developed by LC and UCLouvain) and ECOLAND. Belgian students shared and built knowledge with their local peers. For the new program, it is foreseen to engage local young graduated students to co-design and support technical interventions with the Belgian interns from UCLouvain and the University of Liège, and conduct research for their thesis. Uni4Coop will make efforts to make connections with local and Belgian universities.
Business Development			
1	Develop a potential product (i.e. “champion products”) linked to the government’s programs such as the One – Village-One Product (OVOP) movement and to the regional value chain. This movement is seen as a tool for development, especially due to strong political support from the Prime Minister.	<u>Partial</u>	FAEC and MB promoted free-range chicken, chicks and eggs; and vegetables that are environmentally friendly. These products aren't considered champion products but they are considered agroecological products. In the next program we will continue fostering an agroecological transition with the integration of the SRP rice, vegetables, slaughter house and chicken feed production. The OVOP is a movement created

			by the Royal government of Cambodia but it is now receiving less attention due to various constraints. The OVOP is not yet developed in the target areas.
AE/SA Technology Adoption			
1	Institutionalize the use of TAPE Tool	<u>Yes</u>	Based on the TAPE pilot project conducted by LC in 2019 with several local organizations, we have already included many elements of TAPE in the indicators of the logical framework of the programme 2022-2026 in Cambodia. Therefore, TAPE tool will be used with some adjustments to further localize it to the Cambodian context and to help its use.
Environment and Natural Resources			
1	Introduce biodigester to the members	<u>Partial</u>	<p>The project offered financial support to the beneficiaries for completing the payment of the biodigester that was subsidized by the government through the National Biodigester Program (NBP). This tool serves to process the agricultural wastes and animal manures for generating fertilizers and cooking energy.</p> <p>The subsidy provided by the Cambodian government through the PDAFF is planned to continue over the next years. If needed, LC could facilitate the access of biodigester offered by the government to supply the beneficiaries through promotion at events such as training, workshops, and annual general assemblies.</p>

2	Conduct a survey and mapping of pesticide contamination of the soil and use of software to model the extent of groundwater contamination using models such as MODFLOW	<u>Partial</u>	A survey on the impacts of farmers agricultural practices on water quality was conducted with the support of ECOLAND. This study brought benefits at the research level and the results were disseminated among the farmers. In the next program, we will still promote the use of less chemical inputs and environmentally friendly agricultural practices.
3	Monitor the impacts of the intervention in terms of reducing GHGs.	<u>Partial</u>	We used the EIT-Producers tool with farmers to assess the mutual influence between producer's activities and the environment. The farmers elaborated self-determined commitments and an action plan to address the environmental issues highlighted. After, we followed up the activities and provided technical and financial support for the development of the action plans. In the next program we will use TAPE to characterize the agroecological transitions of farmers and to evaluate the performance of agroecological systems.
Project Operation and Management			
1	More budget should be allocated to operation	<u>Yes</u>	On the new project PARtNER 2022-2026, the distribution of budgets between investment for UACs (4%) and operations (48%) reflects the recommended changes

E.2. Summary of follow-up to recommendations

The Managerial Responses reflect the considerations that have been initiated within the new project PARtNER 2022-2026. Supports have been provided through the “FO Capacity Strengthening Officer” to build capacities of ACs and UACs that are partners to enable them to improve their business development (financial and computer literacy) through the use of better procedures and IT practices. The PARtNER project is also promoting value-chains on which ACs and UACs are engaged, mainly fertilizer, animal food, chicken meat, vegetables.

The other recommendations receiving partial account are engaged differently (through internship), or embedded in agroecological practices (communal forest, fish refuge areas), or foreseen through the expansion of AC businesses. There are no recommendations that are not considered.

E.3. Indicative planning of activities to implement the selected recommendations

N° Rec	Activities/actions	Program 2022-2026		
		Start	Continue	Annual
1	Train the young/educated workers of ACs (committee members and youths) on computer literacy. With these skills, trained youth will continue working on the implementation of business procedures, ensuring transparency, and reporting		x	
2	Conduct financial literacy training for the farmers and members of the ACs (saving and investment).		x	

3	Training in food processing (meat, fish and vegetables).		x	
4	Assist the AC/Producer Groups putting up of slaughterhouse, slaughterhouse management and meat quality inspection.	x		
5	More budget should be allocated to operation (on fertilizers, irrigation, production value chain and institutional strengthening)	x		X (for the 5 years)
6	Institutionalize the use of TAPE Tool		x	X (year 1 and year 5)

E.4. Details on the implementation of the main recommendations

The implementation of the recommendations is described in more detail as follows:

1. Train the young/educated workers of ACs (committee members and youths) on computer literacy.

In the new program we will facilitate the training on computer literacy to all the UAC board of members. Among them there are young educated farmers and women who are the target of our intervention. Training will include computer literacy, online marketing and trading, social media and video production. Trainers will be experienced partners and Uni4Coop staff. After training, it's planned to follow-up the application of the gained skills and provide coaching and refreshing training if needed.

2. Conduct financial literacy training for the farmers and members of the ACs (saving and investment).

At the beginning of the program, the Uni4Coop "FO Capacity Strengthening Officer" will directly support ACs and UACs members to comply with good governance practices when proceeding with their commercial businesses and their reporting. The project will also support refreshing training and coaching. In addition, the project is putting special attention to provide financial literacy training to women and the youth to empower their participation in decision-making process within the ACs and UACs and also within the community.

3. Training in food processing (meat, fish and vegetables), and
4. Assist the AC/Producer Groups putting up of slaughterhouse, slaughterhouse management and meat quality inspection.

It is planned to provide training on food processing (chicken, SRP rice, chicken feed and vegetables) to AC and UAC members. All this training was requested by the farmers, members of those organizations. In particular, it was also demanded to facilitate the setup of a slaughter house at the UAC "TrUAC" in Takeo province; and the UAC "BUAC" in Battambang province will receive technical support and equipment to start the milled rice business. These activities are among the main actions for strengthening the added value of value chains in which the ACs will be involved.

5. More budget should be allocated to operation (on fertilizers, irrigation, production value chain and institutional strengthening)

When developing the budget for the new program, we analyzed the effectiveness of our previous actions in terms of costs and results. Based on this, we decided to put more emphasis on the operation of the activities (including human and financial resources) and less on overhead costs expended by the partners and collaborators. The distribution of budgets in the new project is 4% for investment in the UACs and 48% for operations.

6. Institutionalize the use of TAPE Tool

In the new program, TAPE has become the main tool to assess the level of agroecological transitions and to evaluate the performances of agroecological systems. We will use this tool for the baseline and endline assessments. As mentioned by the evaluation team, this tool would benefit from being further adapted to the local context, Uni4Coop will participate in the adaptation along with other stakeholders working in the same areas (GRET, CIRAD, etc.).

E.5. Reinforcement of the Theory of Change assumptions

Desired impact:

The common Theory of Change envisioned is to improve the economic security of farmers and contribute to reach better food sovereignty. The family farmers would have improved their agricultural productivity through sustainable and climate-resilient agriculture, and increased income through informal and formal, individual, and collective income generating activities. For this purpose, farmers' organizations (SHGs, FAs, ACs, UACs, FO-Federations) will be able to deliver quality and inclusive services to support farmers' technical knowledge and business skills.

Hypothesis 1: Collective structures are an effective means to improve the productivity and competitiveness of small-scale farmers and micro-enterprises, the added value and the quality of the products and services delivered.

Hypothesis 2: The Federations provincial and national representation of small-scale farmers, are essential to increase rural population participation in local governance, improve service delivery, speed-up agri-business development, overcome scale problem, exercise influence on macro policy issues, serving pro-poor development.

Hypothesis 3: Reinforcing small scale sustainable agriculture will build resilience to recurrent natural disasters.

Hypothesis 4: The increase in productivity generated by sustainable agricultural practices, and the provision of additional value with no or fewer costs of production contributes to increased incomes which is sustainable.

Hypothesis 5: Linkages between farmer-to-farmer networks and Cambodian and Belgian universities enable the use of research results for the advantage of farming households' development.

Hypothesis 6: Improving nutrition pass through targeting smallholder farmers, women and poor households, by enhancing diversification of farm production and improving income for insecure households.

Impact achieved

According to the evaluation team, the information collected at the beneficiary level revealed that:

The UpScale project focused on strengthening operational and support services to 66 AC members of the FO-Fed FAEC and FCFD in 11 provinces. Among these, 6 ACs in Battambang province were organized under BUAC in 2017. The operational and support services provided at Battambang included access to credit, access to quality rice-seeds, performance evaluation of AC (using SCM), the participation to the inter-profession on rice (CRF – Cambodian Rice Federation), the capacity building to AC (simple accounting, internal control, business planning), and the access to market. From 2017 to 2021, the UpScale project supported the implementation of a number of pilot initiatives and mechanisms, notably the establishment of a system of service-supply by one Federation of FO, the FAEC. The services provided by FAEC intended to be supplied to their AC members. In 2019 FAEC was federating 45 ACs from 11 provinces. FAEC's services include supply of Rice-Seeds and Fertilizers, Paddy-Rice collective sale, Credit facilitation, AC's Organizational Development, and Advocacy. Several members of AC have been trained to provide quality services, notably facilitation skills, training skills, and technical and managerial support.

The FES program created structures that help farmers to develop their activities and find both technical and financial support. The farmer groups were initially mobilized into Self-Help Groups and then transformed to Agriculture Cooperatives certified by the Provincial Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (PDAFF). The 24 self-help groups created through the project included health beneficiaries (families with MH patients & people with disabilities). Farmers structures are good mechanisms to create a space for exchanges, solidarity and help members to develop small business activities and setting up of collective actions. The key approach of the project involved building capacity, technical knowledge and awareness.

Close to one third of the beneficiaries (33%) revealed that they have climate change mitigation plans in place and also adopted measures to mitigate the impacts to the environment. The most common adaptation measures adopted by the farmers include the use of drought resistance crops (20.5%), installation of rain water catching jars in the houses (17.9%), and storing crop seeds for planting (17.9%).

In addition, farmers who attended the sustainable agriculture/integrated farming systems training and applied those techniques, achieved more yields and income than those who did not participate.

The number of FES beneficiaries who reported lacking food to eat decreased from 30.8% in the baseline to 2.6% when the endline assessment was conducted.

For Hypothesis number 5, the evaluation team didn't get access to enough information to provide an argument on this regard.

E.6. Modalities for disseminating the evaluation and the managerial response

DGD: transmission of the report and the managerial response on the DGD extranet

General public: publication of a summary on the Eclasio, Louvain-Cooperation, and Uni4Coop web pages with the option to consult the documents in their entirety

UNI4COOP:

- Sharing of all documents relating to the evaluation with the COSEPRO (UNI4COOP Monitoring-Evaluation Committee).
- Sharing the evaluation summary with other UNI4COOP members.

Within the NGO:

- Sharing of all documents (institutional server) with the CAP (Programme Support Unit) and cross-country analysis of the conclusions of all final evaluations and their managerial responses
- Dissemination of the main conclusions of the managerial responses to Eclasio's and LC's Board of Directors.

F. Quality of the evaluation process and report

The methodology of the evaluation was discussed during an inception meeting; one remark was made on the attention that while the many questionnaires, implemented by a large team of young surveyors, would certainly provide quantitative indicators on the situation of the target groups, Eclasio and LC were mainly interested on qualitative indicators to fill elements for recommendations, that would require the evaluator team to develop their personal opinion from meeting directly the target groups. The evaluation report reflects this remark, is well documented, it provides a lot of analysis of the information retrieved from the questionnaires, and the evaluator's opinion and recommendations are limited to a few interpretations. This leaves more to the reader to form his/her own opinion and we regret that the lesson-learned parts were constrained by this limit.

A series of remarks and suggestions were made to the evaluation team when submitting the interim report. It was requested to restructure the lessons learned, to specify the methodological approach in the report and to ensure that the evaluation questions were addressed.

Most of the remarks were answered during the submission of the final report.

In general, the evaluation report was well documented. It provided evidence and collected relevant data. However, the Uni4Coop team feels that this report lacks analysis and argumentation.