CACS Project Monitoring and Evaluation System

Background

In response to a request by the Royal Thai Government (RTG) to learn from international experience with appropriate and effective approaches to working in conflict-affected areas, the World Bank mobilized grant financing through its State and Peace-Building Fund (SPF) to first study and then pilot approaches to local development to help mitigate the conflict in the southern provinces of Pattani, Yala, and Narathiwas.

The Piloting Community Approaches in Conflict Situation Project was approved in 2009. As a learning activity, the project was designed to accommodate adjustments in response to lessons emerging from implementation experience. Such learning is underpinned by a monitoring and evaluation system to track implementation progress and assess results.

This note, the fifth in a series of brief, operationally relevant pieces meant to inform a broad range of stakeholders about the design, implementation, and results of the CACS Project, describes the project's monitoring and evaluation system.
Conflict Context

Secessionist movements in Thailand’s southernmost provinces date back more than a century. Following decades of dormancy, a separatist insurgency re-emerged in early 2004. Over the past six years, killings and bombings have been regular occurrences – claiming the lives of over 4,000 people.

The conflict stems from various factors, key among them are the following: lack of sufficient sensitivity towards Malay ethnic and religious identity and language and limited political integration, including under-representation of Malay Muslims in local political and government structures. Relative economic deprivation as well as government policies and approaches since 2004 contribute to the sense of injustice.

This sense of injustice and alienation is reportedly evident in a growing divide within communities and among communities (between Muslims and Buddhists) and between communities and the state apparatus.

Project Description

The overall objective of the CACS Project is to develop effective community approaches to local development that create “space” and opportunity for increased interaction within and among communities and between communities and the state apparatus in an effort to promote trust-building in the conflict-affected provinces of Southern Thailand.

Two financing “windows”

To achieve its objective, the project finances grants through two facilities or “windows.”

Block grants of approximately THB 300,000 (or USD 10,000) are given directly to both participating communities and sub-districts/municipalities for local development activities that members themselves identify, propose, implement, monitor and sustain. This community-driven development (CDD) process involves a series of steps aimed at ensuring inclusion of all groups in the planning process and community ownership of project activities. To facilitate broad participation, procedures are simplified, training in community analysis tools and techniques and project management is provided, and information is made widely available. Funds are transferred directly to a local account in installments based on a time-bound implementation schedule thereby engendering ownership and accountability.

The Peace-building Partnership Fund (PPF) offers grants of THB 150,000 to 300,000 (USD 5,000 to 10,000) to community-based organizations, civil society organizations (CSOs), and civic networks working in the conflict-affected areas for innovative approaches and partnerships that promote trust, peace, and development. Training and knowledge-sharing activities are aimed at improving PPF proposals and the capacity of organizations to implement them.
Coverage

Over the three-year implementation period, the project intends through its block grant window to finance a total of 72 grants to 27 communities in seven sub-districts (tambons) and two municipalities in the three southern border provinces. During the same period, approximately 50 Peace-building Partnership Fund grants will be disbursed to local organizations throughout the project area.

Management

The management of the CACS Project is the responsibility of the Local Development Institute (LDI), a non-governmental organization that aims to promote community, local, and civil society strengthening. Community facilitators and provincial coordinators, hired by the project, ensure implementation of the participatory approach and achievement of grant objectives, and establish relationships with key local government agencies and civil society organizations in the project areas. Multiple mechanisms at the central and local levels have been established to support implementation, including project advisory and steering committees, a network of local technical specialists, village implementing committees, and tambon/municipality committees.

Training, learning and knowledge management

In addition to capacity-building for block grant and PPF recipients, learning forums created at multiple levels seek to strengthen the capacity of participating communities and civil society organizations and ensure results. The community participatory processes provide opportunities for all stakeholders to discuss various aspects of the project and sub-projects, thus enabling the application of lessons learned from operations to improve local and provincial planning. The project steering and advisory committees are forums for representatives from government agencies, private sector, and civil society organizations to discuss relevant policies, partnerships, implementation progress, and impediments and lessons. A series of local, national and international consultations, informed by knowledge extracted from implementation experience, enables lessons to be shared and disseminated more broadly.
Monitoring and Evaluation

The objective of the CACS Project’s monitoring and evaluation (M&E) system is to assess the project’s progress, reveal impediments to implementation, ensure adherence to financing and procurement requirements, measure outcomes, and identify lessons learned. Reflecting the project’s objectives, it seeks to monitor and evaluate participatory processes as well as physical outputs and outcomes. The M&E system relies predominately on the routine collection of data embedded in the sub-project planning and implementation processes, supplemented by periodic qualitative assessments.

From the start of the project, monitoring has relied predominantly upon the monthly meetings held among LDI staff, facilitators, and provincial coordinators at which experiences are shared and joint decisions made about how to adjust processes to fit with actual conditions.

Results Chain

The development of the monitoring and evaluation framework is based on an agreed understanding of the project’s results chain which links project outputs/activities to outcomes and to the development objectives and overall goal (see Figure 1).

Indicators

The M&E framework identifies specific, measurable and realistic indicators for each step in the results chain. Where relevant, indicators are disaggregated by gender, religion and type of group. Baseline data inform the setting of annual targets used to measure progress towards their achievement.

Each indicator is matched with a data source and methodology and assigns responsibility for data collection. To capture such information, the system relies predominantly on the systematic and routine collection of data throughout the sub-project planning, preparation and implementation process. Monitoring activities are complemented by periodic qualitative evaluations focused on specific dimensions of project progress, effectiveness and results.

Essential to achieving the project’s objective of developing and refining effective local approaches that can be adapted to other affected communities is the development and implementation of a simple, adaptable and effective monitoring and evaluation system.
Figure 1: CACS Project Results Chain

Components of the M&E System

Designed to provide for continuous learning and to cross-validate and triangulate information from different sources, the monitoring and evaluation system is comprised of multiple components. Responsibility for implementing the system is shared among village implementing committees, civil society organizations and their networks, community facilitators and provincial coordinators, LDI management and the World Bank. Training and technical assistance seek to build the capacities of local organizations and LDI to conduct effective monitoring and evaluation.

Community/CSO Participatory Monitoring

As part of the design and implementation of grant-financed activities, village implementing committees and PPF grant recipients, assisted by community facilitators and provincial coordinators, define their work plans and activity-specific indicators and monitor progress towards achieving these goals. Community participation monitoring, in addition to tracking progress, seeks to build ownership and empower beneficiaries and enhance accountability and transparency.

Internal Monitoring

Community facilitators and provincial coordinators prepare regular progress reports which track inputs, processes and outputs. Data is entered into a simple, computerized management information system administered by LDI.

LDI Oversight

LDI staff and management receive and verify the progress reports, and use the information to monitor implementation and results, and adjust processes and procedures accordingly, as well as to promote learning. The project's advisory and steering committees help define the monitoring and evaluation priorities.

Audits and Financial Reviews

Participatory monitoring of community and CSO finances is supported by training provided by the internal auditor. This monitoring is supplemented by annual audits, as well as periodic assessments of financial management and procurement performance conducted as part of World Bank supervision.
Expanding Community Approaches in Southern Thailand

Social capital, broadly defined as the “norms and networks that enable collective action,” refers to a set of assets present in social relationships.

Special Studies

Special studies are periodically undertaken on issues of particular interest identified during implementation. In the first year, LDI published *Community Learning: Collective Learning and Searching for Social Capital* which describes the experience and learning gained from the participatory community assessment process conducted in the first nine communities. Additional topics to be studied are being identified.

Trust Survey

A trust survey seeks to assess changes in levels of trust among community members, and the relationship between trust, security and confidence and types of “space” or interactions. Semi-annual in-depth interviews with affected families in one community in each of the three provinces are combined with annual questionnaires administered to village implementing committee members to evaluate both individual/societal and structural dimensions of social capital. The first round of interviews was conducted in June 2010. The second round of interviews, together with the administration of questionnaires, is scheduled for January 2011.

Beneficiary Assessment

Annual beneficiary assessments will use conversational interviews and focus group discussions with targeted beneficiaries, civil society organizations, local government authorities and other stakeholders in each of the three provinces to evaluate perceptions of the effectiveness of project-financed activities. The first assessment, to be repeated annually, will be conducted in December 2010. Grievance and Redress Mechanism The M&E system also includes a process within participating communities and sub-districts/municipalities, adapted to the local conflict context, for receiving and handling grievances and complaints.

Learning Forums

Regular learning forums and stakeholder workshops with broad participation enable the review of implementation experiences and lessons learned to inform changes to procedures and the development of effective approaches to creating “space” to increase trust.

World Bank Supervision Missions

The World Bank reviews management arrangements, implementation progress and emerging results, and works with LDI to address issues that arise. The monitoring and evaluation system is designed to be revised and refined periodically in response to issues or questions that emerge during implementation.

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