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An Evaluation to “Strengthening Civil Society Participation in the Agricultural Sector in Egypt-SCPAE” Project

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Community Development Associations	CDA
Focus Group Discussions	FGD
Non-Governmental Organizations	NGO
Strengthening Civil Society Participation in the Agricultural Sector in Egypt	SCPAE
The Food and Agriculture Organization	FAO

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An Executive Summary

- In its 2009 strategic framework, the United Nations' Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) introduced good governance as the new perspective for sustainable crop production Intensification. This new approach was a result of two decades of increasing emphasis on good governance in agriculture by policy makers, practitioners, and scholars in their attempt to ensure more sustainable agriculture and crop production.
- Being aware of the importance of reforming the agriculture sector from a good governance perspective, CARE International in Egypt started between 2013-2017 to implement the “Strengthening Civil Society Participation in the Agricultural Sector in Egypt-SCPAE” – co-financed by the European Union, the Austrian Development Agency and CARE Austria - with an overall objective of improving local governance and accountability within the agricultural sector in Egypt through greater participation of a stronger civil society in policy-making processes and policy dialogue.
- This study comes in light of both CARE International in Egypt and funding partners’ interest in evaluating the SCPAE project. There is no doubt that final evaluations for projects play an important role in assessing the overall efforts and their success or failure in achieving the project intended objectives. In addition, they reveal any areas of weaknesses or deficiencies that require further attention or reform, especially if the project is replicated or scaled out to other governorates in the future.
- The study depends on a qualitative methodology which includes among its research methods reviewing the various project documents, Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and in-depth interviews with the project target group (members of agricultural cooperatives, Agricultural Cooperation and Agricultural Guidance governmental officials) in addition to in-depth interviews with the project coordinators in the partner Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Minya and Beni-Suef.
- The study aims to evaluate the SCPAE project through analysing the following aspects:
 1. Assessing the rationale and significance of the SCPAE project;
 2. Assessing the efficiency of the project in achieving the planned activities and results;
 3. Assessing the impact of the project and identifying the unintended results achieved from the project;
 4. Exploring the level of project sustainability and possibility of scaling-up in the future;

5. Exploring the key challenges which the project faced or still faces;
6. Summarizing the strengths or areas of success in the project;
7. Summarizing the weaknesses or areas for improvement in the project.

The following are some of the most important findings of the study:

- The project faced seven main challenges, which are: 1) societal challenge or resistance given the fact the project tackled an issue that was never tackled before; 2) huge numbers of problems and complaints appeared with increasing openness and having clear and transparent complaint mechanisms; 3) “Lack of Responsiveness” on the side of decision/policy makers and senior service providers. Unfortunately, with lack of responsiveness, trust among stakeholders, particularly farmers and cooperatives or farmers and cooperatives on the one side and government service providers on the other side is minimized; 4) Red tap and prolonged administrative procedures; 5) availability of some aged articles in the “Cooperatives Law” whose presence limits the ability to implement governance principles in cooperatives; 6) Lack of human and financial resources; 7) securing sustainability and continuity.
- With addressing such a timely and relevant issue, the SCPAE project, however, succeeded to stir the stagnant water by approaching an area which no one dared earlier to address.
- The approach which CARE Egypt adopts in order to improve good governance in agriculture in Upper Egypt is a comprehensive approach which targets both civil society or societal actors and government officials which recognizes the need to initiate reform in both actors.
- One of the areas of strengths of the project is the participatory discussions and needs assessment which the project had run in the beginning.
- Another area of strength lies in introducing a comprehensive and condense framework that addresses the problem of lack of good governance in agriculture in addition to introducing a comprehensive training package.
- The project was able to make a cultural shift or leap in the target groups towards better implementation of good governance principles, which should set the foundation for new future habits in favor of good governance.

- In general, farmers' satisfaction with regards to the levels of transparency, participation and accountability did not rise significantly, but only because farmers' expectations increased. Farmers now expect more direct forms of transparency and participation in the making, implementation and follow up of decisions.
- This project has contributed to improving the levels of trust and confidence among farmers' communities. In overall, this project has contributed towards sustainable agricultural development processes.

The study recommendations include:

- The first and most primary recommendation is to continue with the efforts of spreading good governance principles within agricultural sector government officials and civil society with piloting some districts in the one governorate while scaling up the project to other governorates.
- Continue to equip and prepare the various participants in the project with trainings while taking into account the following: A: Increasing the representation of youth and females in the trainings, B: Carrying the trainings over a longer period of time over perhaps two terms (e.g. 3 days and 3 days over the course of three weeks or one month), C: ensuring the same group of participants receive the full package of trainings to make sure that they cumulate and process the necessary knowledge, D: Identifying cadres or pioneers of change who should be tasked with conveying the main ideas in the trainings to the rest of their colleagues E: Giving opportunity for exchange of experiences between cooperatives to share problems, solutions and best practices (either in the trainings or separate activities)
- The need to integrate additional trainings on: A) networking, income generation activities and cost effective solution and B) Advocacy and pressure exertion (e.g. through collective action, media, etc...).
- Continue with the study visits to other entities, preferably, to successful, creative and active cooperatives, Agricultural Guidance, and agricultural cooperation sectors in different governorates in Egypt, which can be done in parallel with international visits/exchange.

- Ensure that the members of the cooperatives meet up with significant decision makers in the community dialogues.
- Develop awareness sessions to farmers on their rights and duties with regards to transparency, accountability, participation or responsiveness. The awareness can be done by cooperatives.
- Cooperating from the very beginning of any project with the various relevant entities and engaging them in the preparation and planning of the project in addition to the trainings so that they become a backbone for the project to rely on.
- Improve ‘Responsiveness’ on the side of decision/policy makers by: 1) preparing an orientation introducing the project to officials from various government entities whose roles complement the roles of agricultural cooperation and Agricultural Guidance, such Irrigation, Veterinary, Land reclamation, and the Local unit; 2) integrating those officials in the trainings from the start, 3) Adding another training on advocacy and pressuring, 4) ensuring a better and more efficient platform for dialogue.
- Initiate an advocacy campaign to reform the law of cooperatives in order to ensure better representation of youth and women in the cooperatives. Such legislative reform will ensure the sustainability and continuity of some good governance principles within cooperatives. The impact of legal reform shall continue after the completion of the project and will be applied on all cooperatives across Egypt.
- With regards to this project in particular, cooperating with entities such as the Local Unit, the Irrigation, Waste Water or Veterinary would reflect very positively on solving agricultural cooperatives. Partnering with Community Development Associations (CDAs) and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs).
- Institutionalize the project activities through integrating the awareness raising and training activities within the current/available and future activities of the partnering NGOs (e.g. Better Life and Future Eve) to ensure continuation.
- Initiate efforts and advocacy towards reforming legislative reform of the Cooperatives’ Law.
- Despite the cultural shift which the project contributed in, it is still important to continue mobilizing efforts and cooperating with all possible sides towards enhancing good governance in agriculture.

1. Introduction

Good governance has been increasingly emphasized in the recent years. In 1998, the former UN Secretary General Kofi Annan underlined that “good governance is perhaps the single most important factor in eradicating poverty and promoting development”¹. This emphasis on good governance has emerged with the failure of the neo-liberal policy reforms in developing countries which some scholars and practitioners traced back to weak and ineffective implementation of the recommended reform policies and agendas. Accordingly, scholars and practitioners started to call for better governments and not only reduced roles for governments². Another important reason for emphasizing good governance is the increase in foreign direct investments and international investors’ assets abroad. As a result, investors became more interested in boosting the quality of governance in the countries where they were investing to ensure their investments are not exposed to risk³. For these particular reasons, more attention was drawn to good governance worldwide and particularly in developing countries.

Throughout the past two decades, further emphasis was placed over good governance in agriculture, in particular, in an attempt to ensure more sustainable crop production. As a result, in its 2009 strategic framework, the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) introduced good governance as the new perspective for sustainable crop production Intensification⁴. Being aware of that and while being co-financed by the European Union, the Austrian Development Agency and CARE Austria⁵, CARE International in Egypt implemented the “Strengthening Civil Society Participation in the Agricultural Sector in Egypt-SCPAE” project between 2013-2017 in cooperation with the ‘Better Life’ organization in Beni-Suef and ‘The Future Eve’ organization in Minya with an overall objective of improving local governance and accountability within the agricultural sector in Egypt through greater participation of a stronger civil society in policy-making processes and policy dialogue. More specifically, the SCPAE project aims to strengthen

¹ United Nation (1998), Meetings’ Coverage and Press Releases, Press Release SG/2048 GA/9443 21 September 1998.

² Oman, C.P. and Arndt, C. (2010) *Measuring Governance*, Policy Brief No. 39, OECD Development Centre, Paris.

³ Oman, C. (2000) *Policy Competition for Foreign Direct Investment: A Study of Competition among Governments to Attract FDI*, OECD Development Centre, Paris.

⁴ Dasgupta, S. and Roy, I. (2011), Good Agricultural Governance: A resource guide focused on smallholder crop production, Bangkok: The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations Regional Office for Asia and the Pacific.

⁵ Co-financing to this project through the Austrian Development Cooperation by 60.000 EUR, (12%) and CARE Austria by 40.000 EUR (8%).

the capacities of civil society and government authorities in Beni-Suef and Minya to engage in more structured, visible and inclusive dialogue(s). This dialogue should be targeting the reform of the agriculture sector in Egypt from a good governance perspective and while institutionalizing transparency, accountability and responsiveness mechanisms and practices and eventually boost crop production and agriculture in Egypt.

This study comes as a part of CARE International in Egypt, the European Union and the Austrian Development Agency's interest in evaluating the SCPAE project. There is no doubt that final evaluations for projects play an important role in assessing the overall efforts and their success or failure in achieving the project intended objectives. In addition, they reveal any areas of weaknesses or deficiencies that require further attention or reform, especially if the project is replicated or scaled out to other governorates in the future. This study aims to evaluate the SCPAE project through explaining the following aspects: 1) Assessing the rationale of the SCPAE project; 2) Assessing the efficiency of the project in achieving the planned activities and results; 3) Assessing the impact of the project and identifying the unintended results achieved from the project; 4) Exploring the level of project sustainability and the possibility of scaling-up the project in the future; 5) Exploring the key challenges which the project faced or still faces. The study concludes by summarizing the strengths and success of the project in addition to the points of weaknesses or areas for improvement in the project.

2. The Methodology of the Study

In an attempt to achieve the purpose of the evaluation and assess the various aforementioned aspects, the study collects qualitative in-depth data from various stakeholders on the project practices, obstacles, challenges and suggestions from their own stand point in addition to collecting other data on the effectiveness of the various project activities and the degree and scope of its impact on the target groups of the project. This evaluation report utilizes qualitative methodology including:

- A review of the literature on good governance in agriculture.
- A review of the project documents, starting from the project proposal and logical framework to the detailed periodic reports or annual ones.
- Carrying out one group interview with government officials in Agriculture Guidance in Ahnasia/Beni-Suef.

- Carrying out eight in-depth interviews with government officials in Agricultural Guidance and agricultural Cooperation in Matay and Maghagha in Minya and in Agricultural cooperation in Fashn in Beni-Suef.
- Carrying out two in-depth interviews with the project coordinators in the partner NGOs in Minya and Beni-Suef.
- Carrying out Five FGDs with members of Agricultural Cooperatives in Fashn and Ahnasia in Beni-Suef and Matay and Maghagha in Minya in order to verify the information in the project documents and collect the views of the beneficiaries and relevant partners from government with regards to the project methodology, the trainings they received, the project practices, obstacles, challenges and suggestions and, finally, the impact of the project on the target groups. Details on the numbers of in-depth interviews and focus groups and the guiding questions are available in annex 1 & 2.

3. Project Rationale and Significance

The SCPAE Project is an important project given its interest in addressing a very timely and urgent issue, which is the need to reform the agricultural sector from a good governance perspective. For without good governance in the agricultural sector, vision, policies and services will not be developed in a way that reflects the needs and expectations of society. In addition, there will be no room for communication with decision-makers, or understanding by the community to their efforts. Citizens will not be sufficiently aware of the efforts, limitations, opportunities, policies and services delivered by service providers or set by decision-makers. Most importantly, without good governance in the agricultural sector, the benefits of services and policies will not be fully and effectively accessible to all segments of society - especially the poor and the incapable - and will result in differences in the quality and availability of service among the social strata.

Indeed, applying good governance principles in the agricultural sector is expected to: 1) ensure effective follow-up by citizens, local communities and NGOs on the quality of services and aspects of expenditures as a result of increasing transparency and the existence of mechanisms for accountability and participation; 2) ensure better decision making processes based on transparency, participation and sound information that reflect the views of the various parties concerned, some of which - like civil society - are closer to citizens and more aware of their

problems; 3) increase citizens' trust in the service providers as a result of their transparency in presenting and rationalizing their policies and services, and their fairness, combating corruption, and their accountability to the non-committed, and their attempt to respond to the needs of citizens, and 4) increase the satisfaction of citizens and beneficiaries with the policies and services provided to them as the World Happiness Report found a direct relationship between good governance and increased citizen confidence in government on the one hand, and citizen satisfaction and happiness on the other.

Not only is the issue of 'governance in agriculture' a relevant and timely issue, but the choice of two governorates in Upper Egypt is also quite relevant. A high percentage of the poor resides in Upper Egypt. Their daily activities are also linked one way or another with the agricultural sector, which makes intervening in the particular sector of agriculture more impactful on the lives of those poor communities in Upper Egypt. The selection of Upper Egypt, in general, and of Beni-Suef and Minya governorates as the pilot governorates, in particular, is also a wise attempt by CARE International in Egypt to build on their long existing, accumulated experience, and strong networks in Upper Egypt, particularly in Beni-Suef and Minya.

4. The Project Efficiency in Achieving the Planned Activities

The project comprises four results involving a range of activities that have been implemented. The projects results involve the following: **R1:** Strengthened capacity of local civil society agents to apply inclusive governance mechanisms (both internal and external); **R2:** Increased capacity, knowledge and understanding of relevant local government authorities to engage with civil society in the agriculture sector; **R3:** Enhanced local governance and accountability mechanisms within the agricultural sector; and **R4:** Effective policy dialogue between agriculture sector stakeholders (through the introduction of an effective platform).

The above mentioned four results were planned to be achieved through three specific groups of activities (Annex 3 includes the relevant indicators), including:

Activities 1: Developing and implementing Capacity Building Plans: (a) for Community Development Associations and Cooperatives, and (b) for local government authorities, each tackling local policy dialogue and governance aspects;

Activities 2: Developing and implementing citizens' engagement mechanisms at local level, including satisfaction surveys and complaints procedures;

Activities 3: Creating a platform for dialogue between CSOs, government authorities and the media; preparing policy briefs and raising issues with policy makers; study tour (Netherlands).

One of the areas of strengths of the project is the participatory discussions and needs assessment which the project had run in the beginning prior to implementation. Instead of directly implementing the recommendations of the baseline satisfaction survey and the governance assessment study which the project prepared, the project shared the findings of the two studies with the target groups, validated the results and agreed together over the required interventions and future steps prior their implementation. This has reflected positively on raising the awareness of the target group with the objective of the project and ensured their ownership of the implementation steps.

4.1 Assessing the trainings or capacity building plans developed

It has been confirmed during the various FGDs that the project provided the target group with intensive training. Both members of cooperatives and government officials (mainly members of Agricultural Cooperation to some extent members of Agricultural Guidance) received a comprehensive package of trainings, where each training prepared for the next and was complemented by it. For instance, the first training was an introductory one on "Development Principles". This was later complemented by a trainings on the 'cooperatives' Law', where trainees were introduced for the first time to their rights and their duties or responsibilities according to the law. This training was followed by a series of trainings on governance, governance principles, and the means or mechanism to enhance governance principles, such as transparency, participation and accountability through participatory planning, awareness campaigns, budget formulation and discussions, the complaint mechanism, etc ... Finally, the package was concluded with final trainings on hearing sessions and platform for dialogues to enable the participants to engage actively in the hearing sessions and the platform of dialogue. In some cases, one of the participants in the trainings would go back and convey the knowledge acquired in the trainings to the rest of his colleagues. In Minya, the project coordinator in Future Eve organization used to play that role. This is, of course, a very commendable action and is

encouraged to be repeated systematically on the level of all participating cooperatives and government entities and better by one of the participants in the trainings to his colleagues.

In general, the age of most of the target groups and the participants in the project activities particularly the government officials, and as was also resembled in the FGDs and interviews, aged between 53 and 59. Targeting elder participants who fill high-rank and senior positions in the cooperatives, Agricultural Guidance and agricultural cooperation ensures that decision makers who are able to take decisions and implement procedures related to spreading and enforcing governance. However, it underscores the representation of youth with all they add in terms of energy, creativity, activism and ability to pressure. It also risks losing a considerable number of the target groups - with all what has been invested in training them and raising their capacities – in retirement, which has already occurred in some cases both Minya and Beni-Suef.

The project also relied on male participant with no representation of women at all. This is, of course, understandable given the nature of the cooperatives and the Agricultural Guidance and Agricultural Cooperation departments in Egypt. However, further emphasis on youth and females is to be made should any replication or scaling up of the project is introduced. Finally, participants in the FGDs suggested for the trainings to be more realistic and attractive practical, they should include some role model cooperatives or government departments and to showcase their experience in boosting transparency, participation, accountability or responsiveness. Few participants also referred to the timings of the trainings which in few instances coincided with the harvest times. They also referred to the content of the trainings which they felt was condense and offered over full-days' trainings. It is noticeable, nonetheless, that this issue arises even more with increase in the age of participants.

4.2 Assessing the citizens' engagement mechanisms developed at local level, including satisfaction surveys and complaints procedures

Both agricultural cooperatives and government officials in Agricultural Cooperation and Agricultural Guidance embarked on various initiatives to apply good governance principles. The flowing table (1) presents the various tools, procedures, mechanisms and measures, which agricultural cooperatives and government officials in Agricultural Cooperation and Agricultural Guidance adopted in order to boost transparency, participation and accountability in their relevant entities.

Table (1): Summary of the Procedures and Mechanisms adopted to Enhance Governance in Beni-Suef and Minya

	Transparency	Participation	Accountability
Agriculture Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Crops/farming schools, Guidance seminars (e.g. in Ahnasia, Agricultural Guidance planned 18 Guidance seminar for 36 villages). • Awareness sessions prepared by Agriculture Guidance and the members of the cooperatives on Soya beans and new types of fertilizers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The methodology of providing Agricultural Guidance has now changed into becoming more participatory (i.e the 18 Guidance seminars in Ahnasia were now planned to be Guidance by participation) • The Crops/farming schools and Guidance seminars became a 'two-way' channel for participation and communication and method of understanding and collecting the needs of the farmers not only of transferring knowledge 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activating the complaint box which they already had • Having a full complaint mechanism • Developing the skills to receive complaints and problems, analyze them and escalate the issue to senior management and relevant entities if no solution at their level was found.
Agricultural Cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness sessions prepared in cooperation with the members of the cooperatives on new types of fertilizers and seeds. • Some Agricultural Cooperation Departments initiated a Facebook page to spread information about their services: the prices, shares and timings of disbursing fertilizers, seeds, etc... (Though was forced to stop later) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A degree of participatory decision making inside the Agricultural Cooperation (e.g. the Agricultural Administration and Cooperation in Matay) • The Awareness seminars became also 'two-way' channel for participation and communication and method of understanding and collecting the needs of the farmers not only of transferring knowledge • Participation with various civil society organizations including not only cooperatives but also NGOs, such as "EL Kheir" NGO in Matay which cooperated with Agricultural Cooperation into preparing awareness seminars and providing trainings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Activating the complaint box which they already had • Having a full complaint mechanism • Developing the skills to receive complaints and problems, analyze them and escalate the issue to senior management and relevant entities if no solution at their level was found.

		<p>to female farmers for income generation activities, such as carpet making</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Facebook page which some Agricultural Cooperation Departments initiated was both a mean of availing information and of participation by users of the page: farmers and their families and cooperatives as well 	
Agricultural Cooperatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hangings over walls explaining the prices, shares and timings of disbursing fertilizers, seeds, etc...are now available in all target cooperatives. The Budget is simplified and explained clearly in the regular meetings of the cooperatives Complaint box available in a clear and visible place The complaint mechanism explained and any complaint form/template is made accessible to the users Awareness sessions prepared by Agriculture Guidance or Agriculture Cooperation and the members of the cooperatives Using medical convoys, meetings with farmers in the field, real (instead of nominal) General assembly meetings, keeping copies of the Cooperatives' law, announcements in mosques and churches, hangings over the wall, etc... 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Awareness sessions prepared by Agriculture Guidance or Agriculture Cooperation and the members of the cooperatives Using medical convoys Meetings with farmers in the field Making the General assembly meetings active and real (instead of being nominal) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Preparing a complaint box which they already had Having a full complaint mechanism Developing the skills to receive complaints and problems, analyze them and escalate the issue to senior management and relevant entities if no solution at their level was found.

4.3 Assessing the platform for dialogue between CSOs, government authorities and the media & the trip to Netherland

Platforms for dialogue are essential in initiating a two-ways communication channel between two or more parties (e.g. service providers and beneficiaries). The idea of the ‘platform for dialogue’ was designed to complement the other activities of the project. The platform for dialogue was designed to move gradually from the level of the village to the national level. In each level, problems are being discussed and most common and urgent problems are being identified so as to discuss them eventually with decision-makers on the national level. In this way, the platform would improve the responsiveness to the farmers’ problems as identified by cooperatives and would in a sense present an application to some good governance principles, such as transparency, participation and accountability. In application, however, the platform for dialogue ended up similar to trainings more than a platform for dialogue. True that the activity was useful in identifying alternative solutions cooperatives can apply to address the farmers’ problems, but, as pointed out by all the participants in the FGDs, it did not meet up the members of the cooperatives with any significant decision makers. Instead, it was implemented in the form of a ‘theoretical training’ or a workshop, as expressed in the interviews and FGDs, moderated by a trainer/academic.

Some of the project target group were selected to travel to Netherlands study on ground the roles of agriculture cooperatives and the means to agricultural success in any country. In the FGDs, the visit was extremely praised by the group who travelled. The participants in the FGDs who took part in the study visit to Netherland had learned so many lessons and best practices including: 1) Economic Development in Netherland is based on the Agriculture sector; 2) Values such as rules of law and work ethics are very important in boosting the agriculture sector; 3) the role of cooperatives and not the government is the most essential role in agricultural development; 4) Agricultural cooperatives have the freedom to take many measures and actions but with this freedom comes follow-up and accountability; 5) The role of the government is both follow-up and facilitation to make sure that the needs of the farmers and cooperatives are met; 6) Agricultural Cooperatives have a major role in marketing crops, setting prices, etc... and 7) Farmers are free to join any cooperative even if not in their surrounding area which stimulates competitiveness among cooperatives to attract more farmers’ membership. The participants highly

admired the strong role of agricultural cooperatives in Netherland and the cooperatives' ability to lead agricultural development in Netherland and to set the prices of the agricultural products through a stock market of their own, or to market farmers' products, etc... They also admired the freedoms cooperatives in Netherland enjoyed, the minimal role of the government and the solid job of the agricultural Bank in Netherland. However, some participants in the FGDs raised a valid point regarding the very different contexts in the Egypt and Netherland which might lend some difficulty in applying what the participants learned in the study visit.

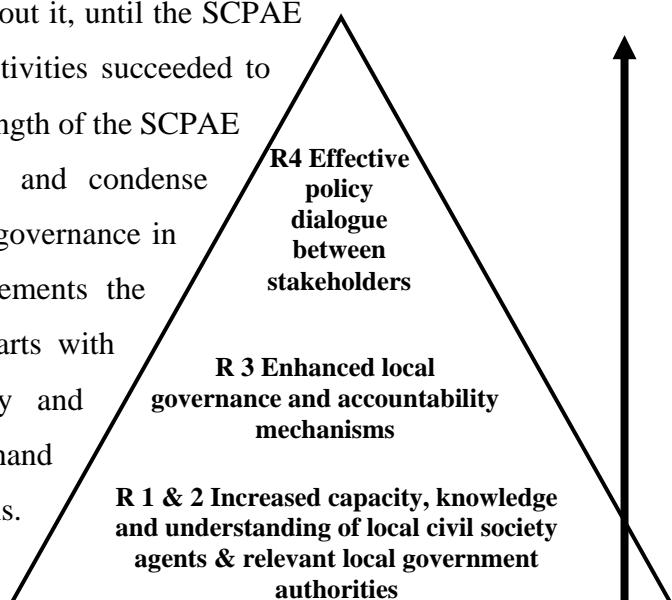
4.4 Supportive activities enhancing good governance: Hearing Sessions

Following the trainings, the hearing sessions were quite praised by the interviewees and the participants in the FGDs. In fact the hearing session, provided some essence of the platform for dialogue since the farmers, cooperatives and service providers' well used it to communicate their problems, hear back the responses and reach mutually understandable decisions or actions.

As the head of the Agricultural Department in Maghaga summarizes it, "the hearing sessions brought out very important issues and problems to the attention of government officials, taught us how to moderate a dialogue and was a real platform for dialogue where clarity, transparency, participation, sharing of ideas and accountability were all practiced on ground".

5. The Project Efficiency in Achieving the Planned Outputs

According to the expression of the participants in the FGDs, "good governance in agriculture" was like stagnant water, no one dared to talk about it, until the SCPAE project came and through its objectives and activities succeeded to stir this stagnant water". One of the areas of strength of the SCPAE project lies in introducing a comprehensive and condense framework that addresses the problem of poor governance in agriculture. Every goal in the project complements the other and supports it. The SCPAE project starts with providing trainings and raising the capacity and knowledge of civil society or NGOs hand in hand with local government agricultural institutions. This, then, leads to adopting and implementing



various governance procedures and mechanisms, including creating complaint mechanisms and other mechanisms to improve transparency, participation and accountability. With the increase in degrees of transparency, participation and accountability, the need to respond to the arising issues from farmers and cooperatives' participation and accountability/complaints would necessitate meeting with higher level decision and policy makers, which leads the third and final output of the project, which is an effective policy dialogue among agriculture stakeholders who meet up to discuss problems and decide upon solutions and alternatives. In that sense, each project output complements the other and builds on it. Increasing the capacities of both members of the cooperatives and government officials is a prerequisite and a necessity to the following output, which the application of good governance principles through particular measures and procedures to enhance transparency, accountability, participation and responsiveness.

During the interviews and FGDs, the increase in target groups' capacities in terms of both **knowledge and practices** was assessed. While assessing knowledge is considered a direct assessment to what the target group has understood from the trainings, assessing practices is an assessment of the effective use of such knowledge into useful tools, measures and various other practices. The findings with regards to the increase in knowledge and practices are discussed in the following section.

5.1 Assessing the increased capacity, knowledge and understanding of local civil society agents (cooperatives) and relevant local government authorities (Guidance & Cooperation)

Whether members of cooperatives or government officials, all the interviewees and participants in the FGDs, with no single exception, agreed that the trainings were extremely useful, informative, well prepared and important. Across the two governorates, although that participants could not accurately define governance, all of them pointed very clearly to the principles of governance especially transparency, participation and accountability. In addition, they managed very easily to put their

Related Indicators

- 25 representatives of local government authority staff trained and registering high level of satisfaction with training and support received under the action
- 25% of CSO/cooperatives staff / members showing high level of satisfaction with training and support received under the action.
- 20% of main stakeholders (service beneficiaries, civil society and local government authorities) in target communities are aware of the citizens' engagement mechanisms.

hands on the mechanisms and procedures to enhance good governance in the agricultural sector. Clearly, the trainings resulted in a significant shift in the knowledge of the project target group.

With regards to transparency, across the two governorates, the interviewees and the participants in the FGDs, whether government officials or members of the cooperatives showed very clear understanding to the concept of transparency, which they defined as availability and accessibility to clear and correct information. The participants were also keen to point out the two aspects of transparency: technical transparency (i.e. transparency pertaining their activities, decisions and actions) and financial transparency (i.e. transparency with regards to spending, annual budget and prices of pesticides, fertilizers and seeds). They also managed to clearly identify various mechanisms to improve transparency, through annual meetings, gatherings, spreading word in mosques and churches, holding conferences or hanging the information over walls and doors.

With regards to accountability, across the two governorates, the interviewees and the participants in the FGDs, whether government officials or members of the cooperatives defined very well the concept of accountability. Surprisingly, when the participants started bringing examples on accountability, social accountability was the first type they emphasized. They all stressed on the ability of the people, farmers, land owners' ability to hold service providers and cooperatives accountable (with a limited exception of Ahnasia Agricultural Guidance). They also referred to other types of external in addition to internal accountability holding them accountable financially or technically.

With regards to participation, across the two governorates, the interviewees and the participants in the FGDs, whether government officials or members of the cooperatives demonstrated very good awareness of the positives and strengths of awareness in terms of improving efficiency, providing them with an opportunity to understand the needs and problems of farmers and land-owners, members or employees and coming out with well-informed decisions. As a result, the participants found it important to involve 'participation' in needs assessment and overall planning.

5.2 Assessing the practices by local civil society agents (cooperatives) and relevant local government authorities (Guidance & Cooperation)

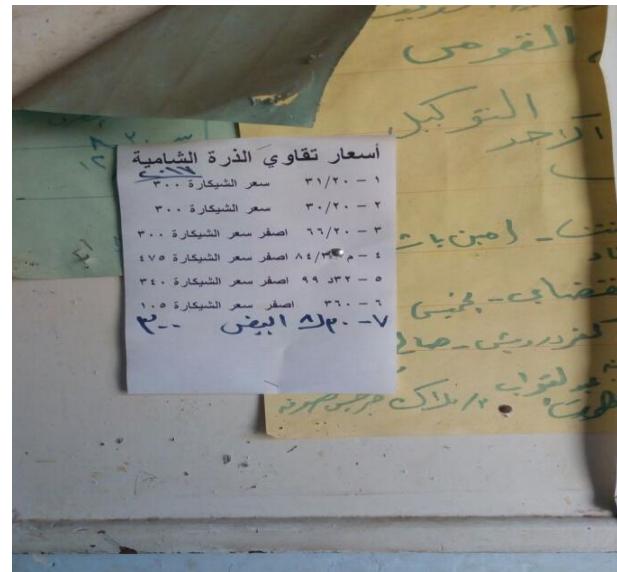
As appeared earlier in table (1), the 20 agricultural cooperative targeted by the project and relevant local government authorities (Guidance & Cooperation departments in the four districts)

managed to adopt, create and implement a wide range – over 25 - of governance measures, procedures, tools and practices. With regards to transparency, across the two governorates, participants employed various mechanisms to enhance transparency. For example, many government officials, such as the head of the Agricultural Department in Maghagha started to hold meetings before taking decisions or actions that involve those government units. The agricultural cooperation departments also held awareness sessions to the agricultural cooperatives and others to raise their awareness of our activities including for example the plantation of Cotton and its increasing price or rats' extermination. Similarly, the Agricultural Guidance departments held meetings with farmers, deployed participatory guidance, mass meetings and crops' schools to raise the awareness of farmers and the services they provide. For example, the Agricultural Guidance in Matay held five awareness meetings in cooperation with the five targeted cooperatives in Matay in addition to four mass meetings in the districts to raise farmers' awareness and avail further information on their activities.

On the other hand, the members of the cooperatives succeeded to avail both technical and financial information about their plans, activities, and budget, the Cooperatives' Law that governs them, their rules and regulations through a combination of tools and measures, such as awareness- raising seminars, medical convoys, meetings with farmers in the field, real (instead of nominal) General assembly meetings, keeping copies of the Cooperatives' law, announcements in mosques and churches, hangings over the wall, etc...

Related Indicators

- At least 20 CSOs use a wider range of social accountability tools
- 20 % improvement in the capacities of CSOs in applying inclusive governance mechanisms



With regards to participation, across the two governorates, participants employed various mechanisms to improve participation. For example, the Agricultural Guidance carried out awareness campaigns and institutionalized participatory Guidance in their regular work. The government officials in particular emphasized participatory decision making within their units, which can be seen as a real shift given the centralized nature and culture of decision making in Egypt.

On the other hand, the members of the agricultural cooperatives referred to the tools and measures which they used in order to avail information and emphasized that they the same tools used to enhance participation, listen to the farmers' problems, ideas and solutions, assess farmers' needs, plan together, implement together, etc... This involves tools and measures, such as awareness- raising seminars, medical convoys, meetings with farmers in the field, real (instead of nominal) General Assembly meetings, keeping copies of the Cooperatives' law, etc...

With regards to accountability, across the two governorates, participants employed various mechanisms to ensure accountability. One of those mechanisms is the complaint mechanism with a full running system that starts with receiving the complaints, recording them or giving them a serial number, looking at them, sorting them and referring them to the concerned employee, solving them at once if possible, escalating the problem to the upper levels if needed and responding to the complainer within no more than two days. While all

As was well stated by Mr. Mohamed Khalaf, the head of the accountancy department in Fashn/ Benis Suef, "participation is both a mean to inform the participants' of the situation and a way to ensure the decision we take is a just and collectively planned decision".

As stated by Engineer Yehia Ibrahim, the head of the Agricultural department in Maghagha/Minya "When a decision is taken individually, it always lacks something or a certain perspective unlike collective or participatory decisions which reflect various perspectives and hence their positives are more than their negatives. An example on that is participatory needs assessment in Agricultural cooperation, as unlike subsidized fertilizers which we cannot control their demand, we can order different types of seeds that suit the needs of the farmers as they express in the mutual meetings and discussions".

The evaluator has seen in person three complaints which the head of the Agricultural Department in Maghagha looked at after they were given a serial number, referred to the concerned employees, and was signing the approved actions with their regards in the time of the interviews.

members of agricultural cooperatives created a complaints mechanism, government officials activated and revived their already available mechanism. Members of cooperatives became quite aware of their ability and right to holding government officials accountable through official stamped minutes of the Cooperatives' Boards of Directors' meetings, which members of the cooperatives can use to address any government entity. In Ahnasia, the Agricultural Guidance received complaints about lack of water in the canals such as the Mamaleek and Soltan Ahnasia, which they analyzed and escalated, in cooperation with the agricultural cooperatives, to the Undersecretary of the Ministries of Agriculture and Irrigation.

5.3 Assessing the policy dialogue between agriculture sector stakeholders

As mentioned earlier, platforms for dialogue are meant to initiate two-ways communication between various stakeholders (e.g. service providers and beneficiaries). The platform for dialogue was designed initially to move gradually from one level to another in a bottom-up manner that brings the most essential and common problems on the level of villages, districts and governorate until the members of cooperatives meet up with decision-makers on the final/national level and open up a dialogue over these issues and problems. In this way, the platform would improve the responsiveness to the farmers' problems as identified by cooperatives and would in a sense present an application to some good governance principles, such as transparency, participation and accountability. Nonetheless, in reality, the platform for dialogue ended up being similar to trainings than real platforms for dialogue, as pointed out by all the participants in the FGDs. Still, one cannot deny that the platforms were useful in identifying various alternative solutions which cooperatives can apply to address the farmers' problems.

Related Indicators

- 5 % of stakeholders report high efficiency of platform in promoting dialogue and sharing information

5.4 The project activities which were most influential or impressed the beneficiaries and the various parties the most:

According to the interviewees and participants in the FGDs, the most important output is raising the capacities of the members of cooperatives and government officials. By all means, the interviewees and participants in the FGDs pointed out the usefulness and importance of the trainings, especially the training on 'the agricultural cooperatives' Law' which introduced the

trainees for the first time to their rights and responsibilities in addition to the trainings on participatory planning, mechanisms of complaints budget formulation and discussion, which all contributed in raising the target group's awareness and building of developing their capacities.

Following the trainings, the hearing sessions were quite praised by the interviewees and the participants in the FGDs. In fact the hearing session, provided some essence of the platform for dialogue since the farmers, cooperatives and service providers' well used it to communicate their problems, hear back the responses and reach mutually understandable decisions or actions.

5.5 Segments in society which participants stressed the importance of targeting or activating their role more than other

In general, the approach which CARE Egypt adopted in order to improve good governance in agriculture in Upper Egypt is a comprehensive approach which targets both civil society or societal actors and government officials which recognizes the need to initiate reform in both actors. This approach builds on the findings of international as well as national studies on good governance. For examples, according to the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific, "Government is one of the actors in governance. Other actors involved in governance vary depending on the level of government that is under discussion. In rural areas, for example, other actors may include influential land lords, associations of peasant farmers, cooperatives, NGOs, research institutes, etc..." According to CARE's 2011 study, "In Egypt key challenges in creating a culture of good governance are the limited capacities of civil society institutions and the lack of opportunity for effective and widespread citizen participation"⁶ and that, at present, "there is a large gap between the mandates of agricultural organisations be they governmental, cooperatives or research centers and the role that they actually play"⁷.

Nonetheless, when asked about any segments in the society which they felt is important and its/their role needs to be highlighted further, participants in the interviews and FGDs suggested increasing the roles and ensuring the integration of the following actors or entities: youth, women, government officials in Irrigation, Waste Water, Land reclamation, the Local Unit, etc... Cooperating from the very beginning of any project with the various relevant entities and

⁶ CARE Egypt (2011), CARE International in Egypt Report on the Validation of the Governance Programming Framework *Report of the Governance program team workshop, 7-9 March, Cairo, Egypt.*

⁷ CARE Egypt (May 2012), The Agricultural Sector and Natural Resources in Egypt – a situational analysis.

engaging them in the preparation and planning of the project in addition to the trainings so that they become a backbone for the project to rely on.

Similarly, participants in the interviews and FGDs suggested better integration of both youth and women and non-governmental organizations and community development associations NGOs/CDAs in the project activities. Integrating youth and women can be ensured through adding a new criterion to the selection of trainees that requires a minimum number of youth and females and the trainings. This will place pressure on cooperatives to integrate youth and female. It will also mainstream youth and gender justice and eventually ensure gender-sensitive governance. Hence, it will feed into another program of interest to CARE Egypt', which is Women's Rights. It shall also ensure more enthusiastic implementation and adoption of governance principles, such as transparency, accountability, participation and responsiveness. On the other hand, some CDAs and NGOs, such as "EL Kheir" NGO in Matay which cooperated with Agricultural Cooperation into preparing awareness seminars and providing trainings to female farmers for income generation activities, such as carpet making.

6. An Assessment of the Project Impact and Effectiveness

There is no doubt that measuring the impact of any project requires the passage of a period of time after at the end of the project in order to be able to assess the impact of the project on the beneficiaries, decision-makers or the surrounding community, at the local and national levels. Nevertheless and despite the passage of a short period since the completion of the SCPAE project, the SCPAE project was able to put an impressive mark on the lives of beneficiaries and decision-makers leading to existence of many success stories, which can be summarized as follows:

Related Indicators

- 5 procedural changes to improve agricultural service delivery have been issued by the end of the action
- At least 100 CDAs/agricultural cooperatives' members in the target localities report higher satisfaction levels with local/governorate and national agricultural policy (more transparent, providing accessible and relevant information, market linking)
- At least 10 examples of change in national / local government authorities practices resulting from citizens engagement mechanisms (e.g. more public consultation, participation in decision processes, transparency of budgets)
- 3 local governmental units are publishing their annual budgets to the community

6.1 Apparently, the project succeeded to create a leap in the target group- whether members of cooperative or agricultural government officials - knowledge of governance. This shift was clearly demonstrated not only in the explanations of the interviewees and participants in the FGDs for the principles and measures of good governance, but also, most importantly, in their practices of good governance. For example, the government officials' emphasis on participatory decision making within their units can be seen as a real shift given the centralized nature and culture of decision making in Egypt. In addition, referring to social accountability as the first type of accountability shows a new understanding to the rights of people, farmers and land owners, especially their right to hold them. In addition, the members of cooperatives' request from the service providers in Minya to explain to them their complaint mechanism and show them the steps they took to solve their complaint is a success story in itself that shows their awareness of their rights, their understanding to accountability and complaint mechanism and their ability to apply what they learned through the trainings and other projects' activities.

6.2 It was clear in the FGDs and interviews with the members of cooperatives and government officials that the SCPAE project, through its trainings and capacity development/building activities for members of cooperative and government officials, it has contributed to the adoption of various governance mechanisms. Improving levels of participation, transparency, accountability, and responding to the various needs resulted in a shift in the relationship between peasants, land owners, cooperatives and government service providers. The participants unanimously pointed to the increase in trust between cooperatives and service providers and between cooperatives and Farmers, especially with the increase in the levels of transparency, participation, responsiveness and accountability.

6.3 It was clear in the FGDs that the SCPAE project created a shift in the members of cooperatives' understanding of their rights and responsibilities. Members of cooperatives have now realized that they can hold officials accountable as happened in Abbad Sharona, Aba, Wefada and other villages in Minya. The Boards of Directors of these agricultural cooperatives held formal meeting and approved the minutes of the meetings where they requested a dredging excavator to purify the canals. The cooperatives sent the minutes to us and, in return, we sent it to the Land Improvement Unit and follow up on them until they sent the excavator and the canals were purified. This examples shows a shift in the cooperatives'

knowledge of their duties and responsibilities, but also their rights and how to ensure them. It also demonstrates the cooperatives' ability to hold government officials accountable and the agricultural government official's ability to hold other government officials accountable to end up with better serving and responsiveness to the needs of farmers and land owners.

6.4 The SCPAE project succeeded in creating a major shift in the trust among various stakeholders. Farmers' trust in Agricultural cooperatives in particular increased. In Fashn/Beni-Seuf, for too long, farmers complained about the lack of fertilizers. However, the members of the cooperatives succeeded to raise the awareness of farmers and land owners of the various types of fertilizers including organic liquid fertilizer which is highly available in the cooperatives. With the increasing role of cooperatives and the awareness seminars which cooperatives held in cooperation with Agricultural Cooperation, and the increasing trust farmers started to request that kind of fertilizers which they disapproved for too long despite its usefulness only because it sounded new to them. The same case happened with cotton seeds and Elshamia corn in both Beni-Suef and Minya.

As will be indicated in table (2) in the next pages, the FGD with the 17 farmers from Bani-Suef and Minya showed this increase in the level of trust as well in statements such as "To communicate with government officials, we speak first to the members of the Board of Directors of the agriculture cooperatives" and "We (farmers) communicate with government officials through the members of our agricultural cooperative, if we have a problem with irrigation, we go to the cooperative's Board of Directors and they take the necessary steps towards solving the problem". Farmers voice their complaints to their agricultural cooperative, which in turn submits it and escalate it to the relevant government entities.

One can point out the same increase in trust but to a far less and unsure degree with government officials. As brought up by the head of the Agricultural Guidance department in Matay. Before the implementation, with lack of employees in the Agricultural Guidance department and the severe cut in the budget of these departments, the role of Guidance was forsaken and the relationship between the Agricultural Guidance and the farmers was almost cut. However, with the mass meetings and participatory Guidance and the awareness sessions, farmers started to feel back the role of Agricultural Guidance and realize there is an available that can provide them with the agricultural information and knowledge they need

and stand by their side. In fact, the Agricultural Guidance succeeded in escalating the complaint of the farmers and cooperatives in one of the villages in Matay to the Irrigation Central Department, which eventually responded to the complaint. It also escalated another problem that aroused during the mass meetings in Nazlet Tabet to the Waste Water Department.

6.5 In general, this project contributed to some degree in the improvement of the agricultural production and sustainable crop production. For example, As Agricultural Guidance has changed into becoming more participatory, the farmers' crop productivity increased. According to Engineer Fathi Abdelazeem, the head of Agriculture Guidance in Ahnasia that farmers used to approach Agricultural Guidance in a very static and normal manner, where he used to receive information and do nothing with it. Now that Agricultural Guidance is being offered in a participatory manner, giving the farmer information, following up upon him, welcoming his participation with questions and ideas and responding back to him, the head of Agriculture Guidance finds an increase in farmers' productivity "by around 20%".

6.6 Finally, the SCPAE Project was able to break one of the largest "Taboo" in the lives of both CSOs (agricultural cooperatives) and government officials (Egyptian Agricultural Cooperation and Agricultural Guidance).

6.7 In general, farmers' satisfaction with regards to the levels of transparency, participation and accountability did not rise significantly, but only because farmers' expectations increased⁸. For example, farmers now expect more direct forms of transparency and participation in the making, implementation and follow up of decisions.

With regards to farmers' satisfaction on the levels of transparency, the majority of the farmers in the FGD expressed their lack of satisfaction with the way information are being communicated with them. They complain that "To communicate

Related Indicators

- 10% increase in the satisfaction of beneficiaries (men and women) with the performance of targeted civil society organizations
- New/ improved agricultural services are provided to farmers in at least 10 communities
- 10% increase in the satisfaction of service beneficiaries (women and men) with respect to governance and accountability practices applied by government authorities

⁸ This part of the Evaluation relies on the FGD with farmers implemented under the end line study. The FGD included 17 farmers from Bani-Suef and Minya. Though the evaluator uses the same raw data of the end-line survey as quotes in the tables, the evaluator provides different analysis.

with government officials, we speak first to the members of the Board of Directors of the agriculture cooperatives” and that “We (farmers) communicate with government officials through the members of our agricultural cooperative, if we have a problem with irrigation, we go to the cooperative’s Board of Directors and they take the necessary steps towards solving the problem”, as per the FGD with the farmers, farmers voice their complaints to their agricultural cooperative, which in turn submits it and escalate it to the relevant government entities. However, farmers underscore the fact that one way government officials can communicate with farmers and vice-versa is through their agricultural cooperatives, which in turn can communicate directly with the land owners. Instead, farmers now has moved one level up and starting to demand more direct communication with the government entities.

Table (2): Farmers' views on communication with officials in government agricultural agencies

- What links farmers with agricultural government authorities is the agricultural land/tenure (if there is no possession, then they do not deal with any one of them).
- To communicate with government officials, we speak first to the members of the board of directors of the agriculture cooperatives (“e.g. if there is no enough fertilizers, we go and address our cooperative and they make a complaint on our behalf”).
- “We communicate with government officials through the members of our agricultural cooperative, if we have a problem with irrigation, we go to the cooperative board of directors and they take the necessary steps towards solving the problem”, as per the FGD with the farmers, farmers voice their complaints to their agricultural cooperative, which in turn submits it and escalate it to the relevant government entities.
- The Agricultural Guidance remains inefficient, especially in light of their lack of human financial resources.

6.8 The same applies to participation. With regards to farmers’ satisfaction on the levels of participation, farmers continue to feel they do not participate properly in the making, implementation and follow-up of agricultural policies. In general, decision making in Egypt is quite centralized and top-down. Farmers can influence decision making indirectly through their cooperatives. But what the farmers are now demanding is more direct and clear role in agriculture decision and policy making, which is a step further.

Table (3): Farmers' views on their participation the making, implementation and follow-up of agricultural policies

- We do not participate in any agricultural policy.

- No involvement in agricultural policy-making.
- There is no connection to any agricultural decisions.
- There is no participation of any kind in the follow-up and evaluation of agricultural sector development plans.
- We do not know anything about the agricultural plan and do not participate in them.
- The officials “do not approach us and tells us to participate or not”.

6.9 With regards to farmers' satisfaction on the levels of accountability, the farmers in the FGDs emphasized that they do not feel they have any control over the government or can hold them accountable. However, according to them, “The only monitoring role we have is in the fertilizers and chemicals' distribution process. Each one knows how much his share is and if someone took more than the rest or someone was deprived from his share, we report this at once”. In itself, this shows an improvement in the levels of transparency, better communication from the side of the government even if it is regarding particular activities/products. It also indicates some feeling of their ability to hold the government officials accountable, especially when they possess the ‘information’ despite their continuous repetition that they do not have control or powers. This is clear in their statement in table (5) as well, “If farmers united together and reached out to the officials and issued complaints, they can make a difference”.

Table (4): Farmers' views on their ability to hold government officials accountable

- No one exercise any control over any government entities.
- We do not have any monitoring role over government entities.
- The only monitoring role we have is in the fertilizers and chemicals' distribution process. Each one knows how much his share is and if someone took more than the rest or someone was deprived from his share, we report this at once.

6.10 With regards to farmers' satisfaction on the levels of responsiveness, farmers in the FGDs continued to mention that they are unable to force the government to respond to them. However, in their statements, they reflected very good knowledge and awareness of two particular mechanisms that can force the government to respond to them, which are: Complaints and unity or collective action.

Table (5): Farmers' views on their ability to influence government policies and decisions and make them more responsive

- There are no ways we can influence government policies and decisions.
- If farmers united together and reached out to the officials and issued complaints, they

can make a difference.

7. The Project Potential Sustainability and Future Up-scaling

7.1 One of the areas of strength of the project is the follow up after the trainings. After each training, target actors, whether cooperatives or government departments, had to develop a comprehensive plan to implement what the participants acquired in that trainings. The project coordinators within the partner NGOs in Beni-Suef and Minya managed to follow up very well on the outputs of those plans. One of the commendable actions which the project coordinator in the partner NGO (the Future Eve) in Minya is going back to the department or cooperative, briefing them of the training and reviewing the plan with the rest of the members or colleagues within the department or cooperative, re-discussing or validating the plan and reforming it accordingly or leaving as it is. In itself, this represent a success story where partner NGOs have absorbed the principles of good governance – in terms of participation and especially participatory planning, transparency, , etc...– to the degree that they have started automatically applying them without knowing.

7.2 Nonetheless, the project succeeded in planting the seeds of sustainability and continuity of good governance in what could be summed up as follows:

7.2.1 The project succeeded in preparing and training societal groups – agricultural cooperatives- and government officials with general trainings related to the Principles of Development, Cooperatives Law, etc.... The knowledge and understandings that societal groups and government officials' acquired during the trainings on those issues including cooperatives' various rights and responsibility according to the Cooperatives law are a sort of a guarantee for the continuity and scaling-up of the project and for the sustainability of its outcomes even after the project completion date, with the possibility of expanding and applying what they learned to their daily life activities in the future.

As Mr. Aly Elshafeey, from Matay FGD, well states it “CARE showed us the way. It had put our hands on the first brick on the road. We now know our rights and the power of our cooperative board. We are more powerful than government officials/executives. It is ‘OUR’ board that decides and move things around not the executive mandated by government to head our board”.

7.2.2 Similar to the previous point, the project succeeded in preparing and training societal groups – agricultural cooperatives- and government officials with trainings related to governance, including transparency, participation, accountability and responsiveness. Those societal groups are equipped with the knowledge and understandings of good governance principles and the skills needed to continue practicing good governance and coming out with more governance mechanisms to ensure transparency, participation, accountability and responsiveness. Changing the ideas and perceptions through the various training and capacity raising activities, is very important in establishing new habits in favor of good governance. As the wrong customs and habits of poor governance remained for years, the new customs, habits and ideas are also expected to continue and remain for years in the future.

7.2.3 Through changing the ideas and perceptions of the community members, the SCPAE project succeeded in creating different pro- governance well institutionalized habits and practices, including complaint mechanisms, participatory needs assessment and participatory decision making, transparent technical and financial measures, etc.... These new habits and practices are expected to persist for years to come and guarantee the continuity and sustainability of good governance.

7.2.4 The project has created networks of relations and acquaintances among members of cooperatives and government officials that are expected to last for too long, and hence, increasing the sustainability of the project outputs and the possibility of continued cooperation in the future. Despite that Guidance awareness seminars has ended sometime ago due to insufficient finance, it was only because of these networks of relations, which were built between the Agriculture Guidance and the members of the cooperatives during the trainings, that they were able to prepare together a series of awareness sessions on Soya beans and new types of fertilizers in Matay. Only with these networks that agricultural cooperatives were able to solve complaints and problems regarding fertilizers and seeds only by phone calls. As well expressed by Engineer Mohamed Fath Elbab, the Head of the Agriculture Department in Matay/Minya, getting acquainted with the trainers who provided the trainings, the government officials who took part in the trainings and hearing sessions, the vets who attended the seminars, etc... gave members of the

cooperatives more access to contact information of those actors and hence more access to knowledge and to decision making. i.e more access to power.

8. Obstacles and Challenges Faced by the Project

The project was met with several challenges which it managed to overcome, including:

8.1 It was clear in the various FGDs that the first challenge the project faced at the beginning of its implementation was a societal challenge or resistance given the fact the project tackled an issue that was never tackled before. This led to the presence of resistance at the beginning of implementation of the project and made the task of the project even more difficult.

8.2 With increasing openness and having clear and transparent complaint mechanism, especially in the departments that initiated a facebook page to increase transparency and promote participation, huge numbers of problems and complaints appeared. With time, however, and with increasing responsiveness to those problems and increasing transparency in what the administration can do and what it can not and in the measures it took to escalate certain complaints, satisfaction and trust increased.

8.3 The most obvious challenge which participants in the interviews and FGDs identified was “Lack of Responsiveness” along with red tape or routine and prolonged procurements. More flexibility and creative and cost effective solutions should be pursued on the side of decision/policy makers and senior service providers. The participants referred to lack of responsiveness on the side of the agricultural directorate, for example, in responding to the needs which agricultural departments require for their district in terms of sending requested seeds and fertilizers late which obliges farmers to buy from the market so as not to spoil their crops. The situation is even more severe when those needs and demands are being lifted to other entity different from agricultural cooperation and Guidance, such as the Irrigation or Land Reclamation/Improvement. In such cases, communication is prolonged and lack of responsiveness increases. Unfortunately, with lack of responsiveness, trust among stakeholders, particularly farmers and cooperatives or farmers and cooperatives on the one side and government service providers on the other side is minimized. This challenge, in fact, threatens the wins that the project has achieved for that when one party participates, engages, holds officials accountable and pressures

them hard but is met with neglect or lack of response, this party will eventually become passive and refrain from participating or attempting to hold officials accountable.

8.4 The fourth challenge with the participants in the interviews and FGDs identified was the availability of some aged articles in the “Cooperatives Law” whose presence limits the ability to implement governance principles in cooperatives, such as the articles related to age and education. Those articles have ended up institutionalizing and keeping illiterates and old mentalities in control of cooperatives on the expense of the representation of women and youth. In a sense, the Boards of Directors of the cooperatives require themselves some good governance.

8.5 Lack of human and financial resources whether in Agricultural cooperatives or in goevrnment departments, particilarly Agricltural Guidnance.

8.6 It became clear in the FGDs that the project is struggling in securing its sustainability and continuity. This can be traced to the fact that the project touches upon a very novel issue that was rarely addressed by any other entity before, in addition to the complexity of the project activities and multiplicity of targeted actors, which makes it difficult to find one entity that can adopt all those activities and involve all those actors from government and civil society under the same umbrella while scaling it up to other governorates.

As the head of the Agricultural Guidance in Matay explained it when he referred to governance, “Every new issue/value is met with resistance and non acceptance in the beginning. However, with good application, people start to embrace that change and appreciate it”.

8.7 Another challenge that is linked to the previous one appeared at the beginning of the project. Being part and parcel of society and loaded with the same customs, traditions and heritage of society, the Boards of Directors of the cooperatives themselves suffered from aging, autocratic character and male domination.

9. A Summary of Areas of Success

9.1 With addressing such a timely and relevant issue, the SCPAE project succeeded to stir the stagnant water by approaching an area which no one dared earlier to address. In general, the SCPAE Project was able to break some of the largest "Taboos" in the

Egyptian communities in Upper Egypt regarding availability of information, holding officials accountable or allowing civil society to participate in decision making.

9.2 The approach which CARE Egypt adopts in order to improve good governance in agriculture in Upper Egypt is a comprehensive approach which targets both civil society or societal actors and government officials which recognizes the need to initiate reform in both actors. This approach builds on the findings of international as well as national studies on good governance.

9.3 One of the areas of strengths of the project is the participatory discussions and needs assessment which the project had run in the beginning. Instead of directly implementing the recommendations of the baseline satisfaction survey and the governance assessment study which the project prepared, the project shared the findings of the two studies with the target groups, validated the results and agreed together over the required interventions and future steps prior their implementation. This has reflected positively on raising the awareness of the target group with the objective of the project and ensured their ownership of the implementation steps.

9.4 The strength of the project lies in introducing a comprehensive and condense framework that addresses the problem of lack of good governance in agriculture. The project did not stop at providing trainings and raising the capacity and knowledge of civil society and local government agricultural institutions, but extended to follow up on the governance procedures and mechanisms adopted to improve transparency, participation and accountability. It then ended with an effective policy dialogue among agriculture stakeholders.

9.5 Another area of strength for the project lies in introducing a comprehensive training package. The diversity of awareness activities and the multiplicity of target groups is one of the strength points in the project.

9.6 One of the areas of strength of the project is the follow up after the trainings. After each training, target actors, whether from cooperatives or government departments, had to develop a comprehensive plan to implement what the participants acquired in that trainings. The project coordinators within the partner NGOs in Beni-Suef and Minya managed to follow up very well on the outputs of those plans. One of the commendable actions which the project coordinator in the partner NGO (the Future Eve) in Minya is

going back to the department or cooperative, briefing them of the training and reviewing the plan with the rest of the members or colleagues within the department or cooperative, re-discussing or validating the plan and reforming it accordingly or leaving as it is. In itself, this represent a success story where partner NGOs have absorbed the principles of good governance – in terms of participation and especially participatory planning, transparency, etc...– to the degree that they have started automatically applying them without knowing.

9.7 The project was able to make a cultural shift or leap in the target groups towards better implementation of good governance principles, which should set the foundation for new future habits in favor of good governance.

9.8 This project has contributed to improving the levels of trust among various agriculture stakeholders (i.e. Farmers' trust in Agricultural cooperatives, Agricultural Cooperation and Agricultural Guidance highly increased).

9.9 Following up on the project activities by the partner NGOs in collaboration with CARE is considered one of the key success points in the project and what really secured transferring the project activities into outputs and later outcome. Preparing plans and following up on members of cooperatives, Agricultural Cooperation and Agricultural Guidance ensured the materialization of knowledge and understanding in terms of practices is considered one of the key success points in the project.

9.10 In overall, this project has fed into greater farmers' satisfaction, increase productive and more sustainable development and crop production processes.

10. A Summary of Areas of Improvement

From the overall discussions with the various focus groups and the respondents' response to a question about a project activity which they would prefer CARE to add, reform or emphasize even further in order to enhance good governance in agriculture, the following was evident:

10.1 The participants in the FGDs pointed out their need to further meetings and activities for the transfer or exchange of experiences among governorates where they can discuss the challenges and innovative and low-cost solutions.

10.2 It was evident from the overall FGDs that there is a need to obtain trainings on: A) networking, income generation activities and cost effective solution in order to better

respond to the needs of the service recipients and beneficiaries; and B) Advocacy and pressure exertion (e.g. through collective action, media, etc...) in order to better pressure the senior administrations to the needs of farmers and cooperatives and better hold them accountable.

10.3 It has been clear in the evaluation that it is important to adequately target youth and women. This will mainstream gender justice and eventually ensure gender-sensitive governance and ensure more enthusiastic implementation and adoption of governance principles, such as transparency, accountability, participation and responsiveness.

10.4 On the other hand, it is very important to cooperate with the different authorities and parties, such as the local Unit, the Irrigation, Waste Water or Veterinary would reflect very positively on solving agricultural cooperatives.

10.5 A partnership between the project and various segments of the civil society (e.g NGOs) can be developed. Cooperation with ordinary NGO at the village and the governorate levels would have ensured: 1) complementing; 2) sustainability

10.6 Better planning for the sustainability and continuity of the project activities by the NGOs through capitalizing on the various activities and services that are already planned or offered by the NGO throughout the year.

10.7 Finally, the evaluation finds that it is quite essential to continue with and upscale the project activities and scaling it up to other governorates.

11. Lessons Learnt and Recommendations

Based on the previous analysis and the suggestions of the participants in the interviews and FGDs, it is recommended to take into consideration the following especially if future scale up or replication in other governorates is being considered:

As stated by Engineer Gameel, the Head of the Agricultural Administration in Ahnasia, “It takes the farmer very long time to get convinced with a new idea. When we need to convince the farmers with a new idea, we make him aware of it, but most importantly we convince one of the big farmers to adopt this new idea. When the other farmers see their eyes how successful this idea is and realize its impact, only then they start to adopt it”.

11.1 What Engineer Gameel, the Head of the Agricultural Administration in Ahnasia explained above applies in the same way to governance principles in agriculture. Spreading these

new values and principles require beacons or pioneers of change in cooperatives, Agricultural Guidance and Agricultural Cooperation. When they, themselves, and the rest of the farming community start to see the impact of applying good governance principles and values, the chances for adopting them and calling for them will increase. Therefore, the first and most primary recommendation is to continue with the efforts of spreading good governance principles within agricultural sector government officials and civil society with piloting some districts in the one governorate while scaling up the project to other governorates.

11.2 Continue to equip and prepare the various participants in the project with trainings, while bearing into consideration the following points which all participants in the interviews and FGDs emphasized:

A: Increasing the representation of youth and females in the trainings and the rest of the project activities. This will mainstream gender justice and eventually ensure gender-sensitive governance and hence feeds into another program of interest to CARE Egypt', which is Women's Rights. It shall also ensure more enthusiastic implementation and adoption of governance principles, such as transparency, accountability, participation and responsiveness.

B: Carrying the trainings over a longer period of time divided over perhaps two terms (e.g. 3 days and 3 days over the course of three weeks or one month). To reduce the cost and magnify the impact and accessibility of the trainings, the participants suggested running the trainings on the levels of the districts, especially that the project involved two districts only per governorate. This will ensure proximity to the target group and hence bigger opportunity to engage women (who were highly absent in the project activities) and more service providers and members of cooperatives who can easily travel from their villages to the districts.

C: Given the nature of the trainings, where each training builds on the one before it, it is recommended that the same group of participants receive the full package of trainings and continue along the project to ensure that they cumulate and process the necessary knowledge.

D: It is also recommended that promising cadres among government officials and members of cooperatives are being identified. Those cadres or pioneers of change should be tasked with conveying the main ideas in the trainings to the rest of their colleagues in the agricultural cooperative, Agricultural Guidance or agricultural cooperation departments. This would ensure: 1) collective acceptance and application of the principles and measures of good governance, 2) more sustainable outcomes for the project given the spread of knowledge and practices to a bigger target group who can continue disseminating knowledge of good governance and adopting practices of good governance after the completion date of the project.

E: Giving opportunity for exchange of experiences between cooperatives to discuss the challenges, innovative and low-cost solutions (either in the trainings or separate activities)

11.3 It was evident from the overall FGDs that there is a need to obtain trainings on: A) networking, income generation activities and cost effective solution in order to compensate lack of human and financial resources and better respond to the needs of the service recipients and beneficiaries More flexibility and creative and cost effective solutions should be pursued to combat routine, red-tape and prolonged administrative procurements; and B) Advocacy and pressure exertion (e.g. through collective action, media, etc...) in order to better pressure the senior administrations to the needs of farmers and cooperatives and better hold them accountable.

11.4 Given the importance of exchanging knowledge and experiences, it is highly recommended to continue with the study visits to other entities. To ensure more cost effective and better suited cases, the participants in the FGDs suggested conducting study visits to successful, creative and active cooperatives, Agricultural Guidance, and agricultural cooperation sectors in different governorates in Egypt. This can be done in parallel with the visits to foreign countries or as a substitute to it in case more cost-effective options are being considered in replicating or scaling up the project. In all cases show casing role model cooperatives and government service providers in Egypt would ensure more suitable and better applicable ideas in the Egyptian context.

11.5 Given the nature of the platforms of dialogues, it is imperative that the project meets up the members of the cooperatives with significant decision makers. This will contribute towards increasing the responsiveness of decision makers to the demands, needs and issues of the farmers and the cooperatives which is the key barriers to governance which the participants identified during the interviews and FGDs. It will also increase the trust between the two parties, create a channel of communication between them and provide the means for the two parties to contact each other in the future easily.

11.6 Developing awareness sessions to farmers on their rights and duties with regards to transparency, accountability, participation or responsiveness. Such awareness sessions can be organized by the Agricultural Cooperatives.

11.7 Cooperating from the very beginning of any project with the various relevant entities and engaging them in the preparation and planning of the project in addition to the trainings so that they become a backbone for the project to rely on. With regards to this project in particular, cooperating with enteritis such as the Local Unit, the Irrigation, Waste Water or Veterinary would reflect very positively on solving agricultural cooperatives.

11.8 To improve ‘Responsiveness’ on the side of decision/policy makers and senior service providers when replicating or scaling up the project in the future, participants in the interviews and FGD unanimously suggested: 1) preparing an orientation at the beginning of the project with an aim of introducing the project and its different components to officials from various government entities whose roles complement the roles of agricultural cooperation and Agricultural Guidance, such Irrigation, Veterinary, Land reclamation, and the Local unit; 2) integrating officials from Irrigation, Veterinary, Land reclamation, and the Local unit in the trainings from the start. This will open channels of communication with those entities, ensure better and faster responsiveness and ensure their ‘buy in’ to the governance principles. **After all, the agricultural sector should be seen as a cohesive body that needs to be addressed in its full, as much as possible, to ensure overall good governance in agriculture and boost the agricultural services at the end;** 3) Adding another training on advocacy and pressuring that raises the target group’s awareness of the various means that can make decision makers listen to their needs and complaints, including using media, collective action, etc...; 4) ensuring a

better and more efficient platform for dialogue that meets up the members of cooperatives and decision makers on the district level with those on the governorates and national levels.

11.9 It is necessary to start an advocacy campaign to reform the law of cooperatives in order to ensure better representation of youth and women and avoid the control of particular elder figures on the Boards of Directors. In parallel to this, some informal steps can be taken to encourage those boards to involve youth and women, such as adding an age and gender criterion to the selection of trainees and providing a slot on the trainings on how to reform the cooperatives' boards to ensure better representation of women and youth

11.10 Partnering with CDAs and NGOs. Some CDAs and NGOs, such as "EL Kheir" NGO in Matay which cooperated with Agricultural Cooperation into preparing awareness seminars and providing trainings to female farmers for income generation activities, such as carpet making.

11.11 Sustainability through community NGOs: The need to institutionalize the project activities through integrating the awareness raising and training activities within the current/available and future activities of the partnering NGOs (e.g. Better Life and Future Eve) to ensure the continuation of raising the awareness of cooperatives and to follow up on their application to what they learned and are still learning. The NGOs in collaboration with CARE planned for the sustainability and continuity of the observation and awareness activities which were used to be carried out by the pioneers of change and the mediation activities carried out by the mediation committees, in the following manner: 1) Partner NGOs (such as Future Eve) can capitalize on the various activities they have and the services they provide throughout the year and merge with them some governance activities, trainings or even criterions, 2) More efforts and advocacy can be directed towards reforming the Cooperatives' Law. Such legislative reform will ensure the sustainability and continuity of some good governance principles within cooperatives. The impact of legal reform shall continue after the completion of the project and will be applied on all cooperatives across Egypt.

11.12 Despite the cultural shift which the project contributed in, it is still important to continue mobilizing efforts and cooperating with all possible sides towards enhancing good governance in agriculture.

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Annexes

Annex (1):

The Composition of Interview and FGDs

- One group interview with 3 government officials in agriculture Guidance in Ahnasia/Beni-Suef
- Two FGD with 10 members of Agricultural Cooperatives in Fashn/Beni-Suef
- One FGD with 10 members of Agricultural Cooperatives in Ahnasia/Beni-Suef
- One FGD with 10 members of Agricultural Cooperatives in Maghagha/Minya
- One FGD with 10 members of Agricultural Cooperatives in Matay/Minya
- One in-depth interview with one member Telt Agricultural Cooperatives in Fashn/Beni-Suef.
- One in-depth interview with the head of the Accountancy department in the Agricultural cooperation in Fashn/Beni-Suef
- One in-depth interview with the head of the agricultural Administration in Maghagha/Minya
- One in-depth interview with the head of the agricultural Cooperation in Maghagha/Minya
- One in-depth interview with the head of the Agricultural Guidance in Maghagha/Minya
- One in-depth interview with the head of the agricultural Administration in Matay/Minya
- One in-depth interview with the head of the agricultural Cooperation in Matay/Minya
- One in-depth interview with the head of the Agricultural Guidance in Matay/Minya
- One in-depth interview with the project coordinator in the partner NGO in Minya – Future Eve NGO
- One in-depth interview with the project coordinator in the partner NGO in Minya –Better Life NGO

Annex (2)

Interviews and FGDs Guiding Questions

Personal Data
May I know your name, age and profession in order?
Questions measuring Participants' Knowledge of Governance
1. Do you know what is meant by governance?
2. What does transparency mean for you? And how can we support transparency (financial transparency as well as technical transparency and information about activities)?
3. What does good accountability refer to in your opinion? And what are the\� mechanisms to enhance accountability?
4. Why could participation be useful? And how can we strengthen participation (e.g. participation of land owners through the General Assemblies or the participation of farmers etc ...).
Questions on Project Activities
5. Were the trainings you received through the project useful and sufficient?
6. To what extent was the visit to the Netherlands useful for you – if applicable?
7 - What do you think of the platform dialogue prepared by CARE on the local and national levels? How effective and influential was it?
8. In your opinion, what project activities did you like the most? Why?
Questions on the impact of the project in the near and long term
9. After participating in the trainings, what mechanisms have you developed or steps you have taken to improve your participation
10. After participating in the trainings, what mechanisms have you developed or steps you have taken to increase transparency?
11. After participating in the trainings, what mechanisms have you developed or steps you have taken to ensure accountability
12. After participating in the trainings, what mechanisms have you developed or the steps you have taken to improve your responsiveness to different groups?

13. In your view, has improving levels of participation, transparency, accountability, responding to your work resulted in any to the lives of peasants, land owners, or society as a whole?

14. Are there any particular cases or success stories you would like to bring?

Questions about challenges and successes

15. What challenges did you face when you tried to improve the levels of governance (transparency, accountability, participation,...) in your entity/institution?

16. Is there an activity, if implemented by the project, would have facilitated or strengthened governance (transparency, accountability, participation,...)?

17. In your opinion, what are the barriers to governance in general? To what extent did you face these barriers in your way to consolidate governance?

18. Is there any actor or entity which the project should have integrated or should have been engaged with more extensively (e.g. NGOs, CDAs, youth, etc....)?

19. Do you have a plan to continue to support governance (transparency, accountability, participation, etc...) after the completion date of the project?

20. If CARE is considering upscaling in other governorates or expanding in the same governorate, can you think of any further, complementary or different activities that need to be taken into account while expanding in other areas/ governorates?

Annex (3)

The list of Indicators

- 1- 5 procedural changes to improve agricultural service delivery have been issued by the end of the action
- 2- At least 100 CDAs/agricultural cooperatives' members in the target localities report higher satisfaction levels with local/governorate and national agricultural policy (more transparent, providing accessible and relevant information, market linking)
- 3- At least 10 examples of change in national / local government authorities practices resulting from citizens engagement mechanisms (e.g. more public consultation, participation in decision processes, transparency of budgets)
- 4- 3 local governmental units are publishing their annual budgets to the community
- 5- 20 % improvement in the capacities of CSOs in applying inclusive governance mechanisms
- 6- 10% increase in the satisfaction of beneficiaries (men and women) with the performance of targeted civil society organizations
- 7- 25% of CSO/cooperatives staff / members showing high level of satisfaction with training and support received under the action
- 8- At least 20 CSOs use a wider range of social accountability tools
- 9- 25 representatives of local government authority staff trained and registering high level of satisfaction with training and support received under the action
- 10- New/ improved agricultural services are provided to farmers in at least 10 communities
- 11- 20% of main stakeholders (service beneficiaries, civil society and local government authorities) in target communities are aware of the project's citizen's engagement mechanisms.
- 12- 10% increase in the satisfaction of service beneficiaries (women and men) with respect to governance and accountability practices applied by government authorities
- 13- 5 % of stakeholders report high efficiency of platform in promoting dialogue and sharing information