

Measuring Results of Private Sector Development in Conflict-Affected Environments:

A Case Study of the Employment Promotion Programme in Sierra Leone



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The Donor Committee for Enterprise Development

1 Introduction

The Donor Committee for Enterprise Development (DCED) has published [Practical Guidelines for Measuring Achievements in Private Sector Development in Conflict-Affected Environments](#) (CAEs), using the [DCED Standard for Results Measurement](#), hereafter referred to as the DCED Standard.¹ The DCED Standard is a framework that enables private sector development programmes to better measure, manage, and demonstrate results.²

Brief Description of the DCED Standard

The DCED Standard specifies eight elements of a successful results measurement system. Programmes using the DCED Standard begin by clarifying what exactly they are doing, and what results they expect to achieve. This is represented in a 'results chain', and indicators are set to measure each key change expected.

This provides a flexible, credible way to demonstrate results and manage projects, based on an inter-agency understanding of good practice. For more information, visit the DCED website at <https://www.enterprise-development.org/measuring-results-the-dced-standard/>

This case study is one in a series³ that supplements the Guidelines with detailed analysis of how elements of the DCED Standard have been applied in a CAE. This specific study examines how the Employment Promotion Programme (EPP), funded by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and implemented by Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ), applied the DCED Standard in Sierra Leone. EPP was selected because it is one of the only projects as of the date of publication with experience using the DCED Standard in a CAE and thus offers a unique learning opportunity.⁴

The case study opens by describing the Sierra Leonean context, and the Employment Promotion Programme. It then examines the application of four elements of the DCED Standard within the EPP.⁵ First, it examines EPP's use of results chains. In particular, it discusses how results chains can be combined with the Do No Harm approach, and used to monitor negative and positive impacts on conflict. It then examines three other elements of the DCED Standard; defining indicators, measuring indicators, and managing the results measurement system. It concludes with a summary of the key learning points. The study is based on a review of programme documents and a week-long field visit to Sierra Leone to interview key staff.⁶

Feedback on this case study is welcome and should be sent to admin@enterprise-development.org

¹ Fowler, Ben and Adam Kessler, [Practical Guidelines for Measuring Achievements in Private Sector Development in Conflict-Affected Environments](#), Ben Fowler Consulting Inc., 2013.

² For more information on the DCED Standard, see the website [here](#). For an online library with a wide range of useful resources on private sector development in conflict-affected environments click [here](#).

³ A further case study, on the SEED programme in Somalia, can be accessed [here](#).

⁴ Thanks are due to the GIZ staff who hosted the case study. In particular Beatrice Tschinkel who organised the trip, arranged accommodation and transport, and provided valuable insights into the programme. She also provided many of the photographs shown here. Many other staff were generous with their time, and discussions with them were always fruitful and interesting.

⁵ At the time of writing, the DCED Standard consisted of eight elements (now seven). Due to time limitations, this case study concentrates on the four elements which provided the best learning.

⁶ The field work was conducted by Adam Kessler. In total 12 people were interviewed, and a workshop held with field staff in Kenema, Sierra Leone.

2 Context

Sierra Leone's civil war ended ten years ago, leaving up to 200,000 people dead and two million displaced.⁷ The leading rebel force, the Revolutionary United Front (RUF), perpetrated an exceptionally high level of violence, especially against civilians, and forcefully recruited child soldiers to their cause.⁸ The complex conflict was caused by multiple factors, including:⁹



- **State Failure.** Decades of bad governance left the Sierra Leone state fragile and corrupt with weak local administrations, an ineffective justice system, and an inefficient and corrupt bureaucracy. This contributed to a lack of state legitimacy and a poor delivery of public goods. In particular, the army was too poorly trained and equipped to prevent the RUF invasion.
- **Exclusion and marginalisation.** Poverty, unemployment, and a lack of educational opportunities provided a good breeding ground for violence. Male elders held disproportionate power within communities, a situation resented by the marginalised and excluded younger generation.¹⁰
- **Regional Interference.** The rebel force was supported by the neighbouring Liberian President, Charles Taylor, who aimed to weaken Sierra Leone and gain access to the diamond wealth.¹¹ He is serving a fifty year jail sentence from the International Special Court for Sierra Leone for his part in the conflict.
- **Economic Gains.** The conflict started in the diamond-rich provinces in the east of Sierra Leone, and easily accessible diamonds were a key driver of the conflict. They provided an incentive for rebels to fight and a means of obtaining further weapons. They also fuelled the involvement of other combatants, including government forces, national soldiers collaborating with the rebels, and mercenaries from Liberia and Burkina Faso.

Sierra Leone has made great progress since the end of the civil war. Two successful democratic elections have been held, and the country is largely peaceful. However, many of the tensions that caused the conflict are still present. Inequality is rife, and 70% of the population live below the poverty line. An estimated 800,000 youth between the ages of 15 and 35 are searching for employment,¹² which has the potential to spark further conflict. The International Crisis Group, for example, warns "an ever-growing army of unemployed, socially alienated youth is a perennial threat to security".¹³

3 GIZ's Employment Promotion Programme

The Employment Promotion Programme, funded by BMZ and implemented by GIZ, aims to improve employment opportunities and income of youth in rural areas of Sierra Leone. It has been

⁷ Iro, Andrew, The UN Peacebuilding Commission – Lessons from Sierra Leone, Universitat Potsdam, 2009.

⁸ Fuchs, Merel, Challenging Traditional Power Structures? Youth and Women in Kailahun, 2013.

⁹ Categorisation drawn from Iro, Andrew, The UN Peacebuilding Commission – Lessons from Sierra Leone, Universitat Potsdam, 2009.

¹⁰ Manning, Ryann, Challenging Generations: Youths and Elders in Rural and Peri-Urban Sierra Leone, Justice and Development Working Paper Series, 2009.

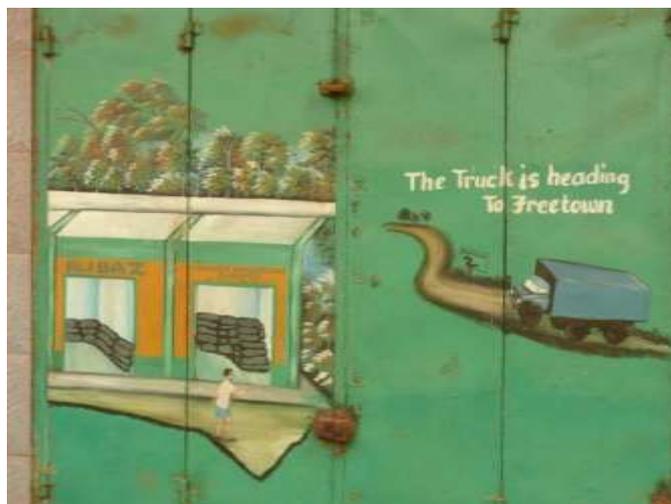
¹¹ Fuchs, Merel, Challenging Traditional Power Structures? Youth and Women in Kailahun, 2013.

¹² Bah, Abdul, [Sierra Leone: Tackling Youth Unemployment](#), UNDP.

¹³ 'International Crisis Group, Sierra Leone: A New Era of Reform? 2008, Africa Report No 143.

operational since 2005, and is shortly entering a new phase of funding that will last until 2016. It comprises three components.

1. **Decentralised economic planning.** EPP offers training and technical assistance to support national and district authorities to develop economic plans and strategies to promote youth employment.
2. **Local Economic Development.** EPP supports farmers in four value chains; cocoa, coffee, livestock, and rice. Activities include training and extension on farming techniques, distribution of inputs, and rehabilitation of inland valley swamp. EPP also resettles youth who moved from the villages to the cities or diamond fields during the war, helping them to return to the village where they grew up, and earn a steady income.
3. **Market-orientated qualification of youth.** EPP trains youth in business management, basic literacy, and vocational skills. They aim to train a total of 6,000 youth, qualifying them for employment or self-employment.



Kenema, a town in the diamond-rich eastern provinces, is full of billboards advertising traders' services

EPP staff expects these activities to increase employment, and so to contribute to maintaining peace in Sierra Leone. However, peacebuilding is not an explicit aim of the programme, and not included in the results framework.

EPP operates in three of the districts worst affected by the civil war, with 55 staff and a budget of approximately 15 million dollars over three years. Their team includes a peace and conflict advisor and a results measurement advisor. EPP's results measurement system is intended to be broadly compliant with the DCED Standard, and uses results chains, monitoring plans, and baseline studies. However, they do not aim to follow all detailed control points of the DCED Standard, and have no plans to undertake an audit.

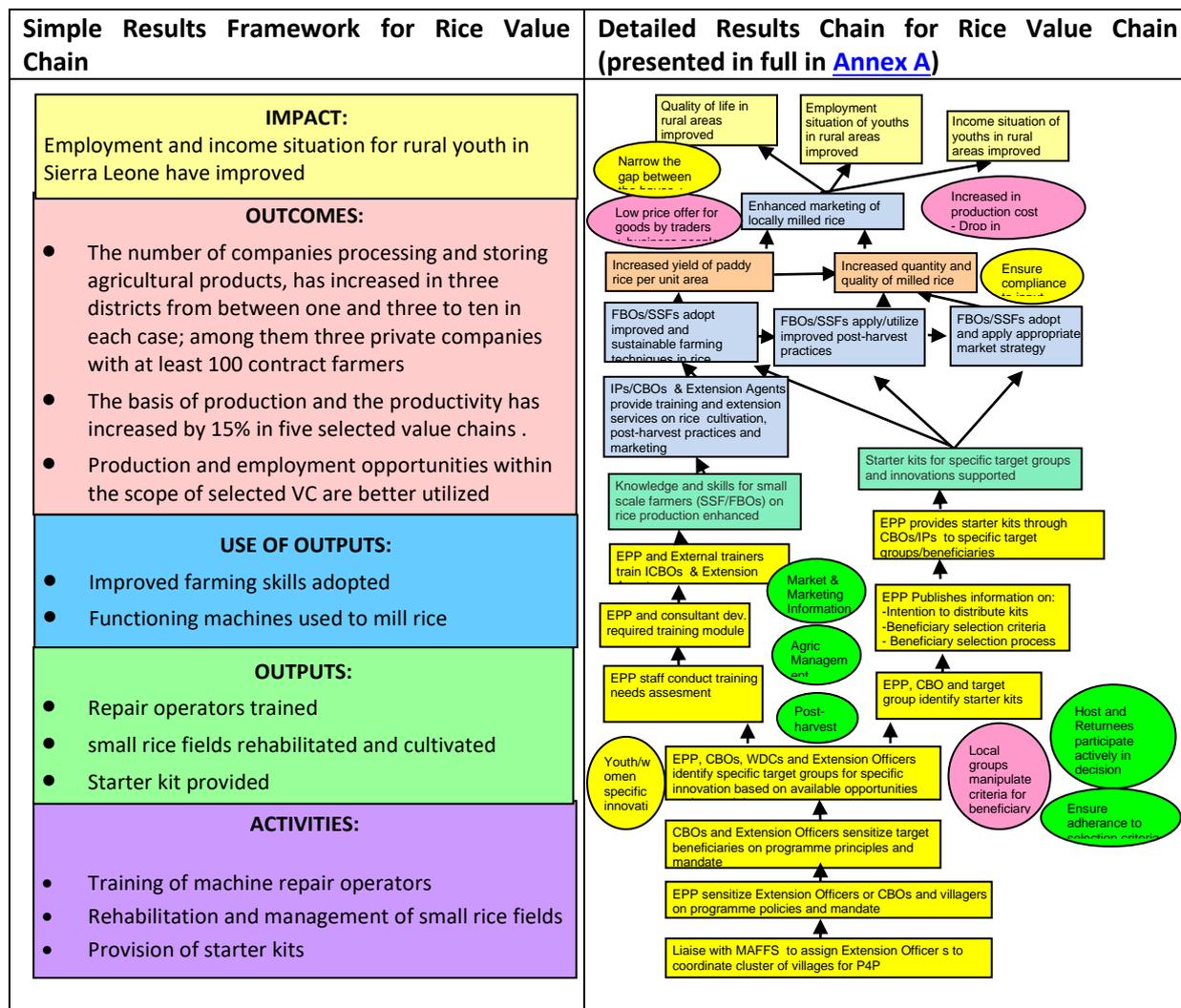
4 Articulating the Results Chain

4.1 Using Results Chains

Results chains are the foundation of results measurement using the DCED Standard. The [DCED Practical Guidelines for Measuring Achievements in PSD in Conflict-Affected Environments](#) suggests that it may be necessary to use simpler results chains in a CAE, given the constraints imposed by time and staff capacity. EPP's experience shows the challenge of developing a simple tool that is sufficiently complex enough to be useful for managing and measuring the project.

The EPP programme uses a simple project-wide results framework. This lists activities, outputs and the 'use of outputs' for each individual project, and shows how they contribute to common outcomes. Each project component has a separate results framework, as shown in the table below on the left for the rice value chain.

Overall, this results framework is much less detailed than the results chains that are advocated by the DCED Standard. Outputs and outcomes are grouped together into single boxes, without showing interrelations. This format was appreciated by the staff for its relative simplicity, especially since a relatively small team in Freetown managed the portfolio.



While the results framework provided a useful overview, it proved too simplistic for project management and monitoring. For example, as discussed in [section 5](#), the results framework was not sufficiently detailed to guide the development of indicators. Staff ended up developing new indicators not based on the results framework, which increased the complexity of the system. In response, one of the field teams had developed a more complex results chain, to show the exact nature of their programme. This is shown to the above table on the right, for the same rice project, and in full in [Annex A](#). As well as showing the relationships between different activities, outputs and outcomes in significantly greater detail, it included assumptions and risks as separate boxes in the diagram.

EPP found that by using a simple results framework for overall MAFFS management of the programme, and more complex results chains for project management teams, they were able to simplify the system

and ensure that staff was not overwhelmed with information. Faced with human resource constraints, this solution helped the team to reduce their workloads.

4.2 Monitoring the Negative impact on Conflict

Inappropriate interventions in a CAE may worsen the conflict and endanger staff, partners and project clients. Consequently, the [DCED Practical Guidelines for Measuring Achievements in PSD in Conflict-Affected Environments](#) recommends that all projects monitor their potential negative effects on conflict in order to assess and mitigate these risks. This can be done by combining the DCED Standard with an alternative approach, such as the Do No Harm methodology, to ensure that risks are systematically monitored.

4.2.1 Using the Do No Harm Approach

EPP assesses their potential negative effect on conflict with the [Do No Harm \(DNH\) approach](#), which was developed in 1994 and has been popularised by over 150 trainers in 30 countries. It is a simple framework that aims to reduce the likelihood of development interventions exacerbating conflict and help people to develop systems for settling the problems that prompt conflict within their communities.

GIZ applies the DNH approach by organising workshops for GIZ staff and community leaders. Workshops were held at the end of every intervention, and often at the beginning as well. In the initial workshop, participants are trained in the DNH methodology and conflict management strategies. This learning is immediately applied to discuss issues that cause and mitigate conflict in the community, ensuring that it is not just a theoretical exercise. In the final workshop, an assessment is made of the project's impact on conflict, and lessons recorded for future projects. If conflict arises during the project, additional workshops are organised to reinforce the training and help the community find solutions. A full list of questions asked at a workshop is given in [Annex B](#).



Workshop participants in Kenema. The red cards on the right represent possible negative effects on conflict.

For example, one Do No Harm workshop examined a partnership between GIZ and a palm-oil producer that assisted about 80 farmers to plant palms. The workshop revealed both positive and negative effects on conflict. On the positive side, farmers cooperated to prepare land for the planting of palms, bringing together groups from different ages and backgrounds. However, local political and traditional representatives were dissatisfied with their lack of involvement, in particular because they had little control over the distribution of resources. While this was a deliberate choice by EPP to avoid the risk of misuse of resources, it also generated resentment from chiefs who were not involved in the planning process. To mitigate these negative effects, the team resolved to develop and communicate extremely clear beneficiary selection criteria, and use these to justify the distribution of resources.

4.2.2 Combining the DNH Approach with Results Chains

As recognized by several staff, EPP could strengthen its Do No Harm approach by better integrating it into the results measurement system.

The field staff had taken an innovative step towards integrating the DNH with the DCED Standard by developing a results chain that included potential negative effects of the conflict. The full results chain is shown in [Annex A](#), and an excerpt demonstrating how risks and mitigation activities were included is shown in the table below.

| Step in Results Chain | Risks | Mitigation activities |
|-----------------------|-------|-----------------------|
| | | |

Using results chains alongside the DNH approach encourages staff to consider the longer-term risks of project activities. DNH often focuses on the short-term risks of project activities and appropriate mitigation strategies, as in the example above. However, the longer-term risks that result from the outcome and impacts of the project are, in practice, less commonly analysed. For instance, additional income generated from the training activity (the outcome) may be captured by particular groups or spent on goods that fuel conflict, such as alcohol or guns. Basing the DNH analysis on a results chain ensures that risks are considered at outcome as well as activity level, which strengthens the application of both the DNH approach and the DCED Standard.

4.3 Monitoring positive impact on conflict

The Practical Guidelines for Measuring Achievements in Private Sector Development in Conflict-Affected Environments recommend that all projects monitor potential negative impacts on conflict, but only measure positive impacts if they have adequate resources to do so effectively. This is because monitoring positive impacts on conflict can be valuable, but is also challenging. It is tough to detect any change in conflict, and even harder to attribute it to any single project. To measure peacebuilding successfully is likely to require significant amounts of expertise and money, and perhaps a partnership with a university or research institution.

4.3.1 Developing Peacebuilding Results Chains

The EPP team believed that increasing employment and income would reduce levels of conflict, but had not defined or measured this link. The team did not contain the expertise to confidently embark on the process, which appeared expensive and time-consuming. However, in the upcoming second phase of the programme EPP wanted to improve their conflict monitoring, and were exploring ways to measure their positive impact on conflict in order to improve their impact and demonstrate it to donors.

EPP believed that employment generation would contribute to increased stability. For example, a 2009 peacebuilding assessment from GIZ described “youth employment and empowerment” as a key peacebuilding need in Sierra Leone.¹⁴ This is supported by academic literature that argues youth unemployment, especially in rural areas, was a key driver of the conflict.¹⁵

In order to assess whether EPP contributes to peacebuilding, it is essential to understand exactly how increased employment could reduce the likelihood of conflict. This is a ‘theory of change’, a description of how the programme is expected to lead to the desired outcome. Results chains are one way of representing a theory of change, and the results chain on the right is an initial attempt to capture EPP’s contribution to peacebuilding, based on discussions and workshops with GIZ staff. It would sit above the main EPP results chain, with the box at the bottom (the employment and income situation for youth in rural areas has improved), being the top outcome in the main EPP results chain. This reflects the fact that peacebuilding is an extremely long-term aim, and may not demonstrate results over the length of the project.



The results chain suggests two main ways that increased employment reduces conflict. First, with more income youth will experience less stress and deprivation, as represented on the right of the results chain. As a Sierra Leonean saying has it: “A hungry man is an angry man”. With more income, it is assumed that there will be less incentive to fight for material gain. This is a common assumption in PSD projects that aim to build peace that is discussed further on page 13 of the DCED Guidelines on Measuring Achievements in Private Sector Development in CAEs.

Second, as represented on the left of the results chain, employment and income increases the social status of young people. It is hoped that this will improve intergenerational relations, giving youth more voice and representation in the community and reducing a key cause of conflict between them and the elders. This link is specific to Sierra Leone, where intergenerational conflict is a serious issue.¹⁶ This reflects the importance of tailoring the results chain to each context.

4.3.2 Challenging the Results Chain

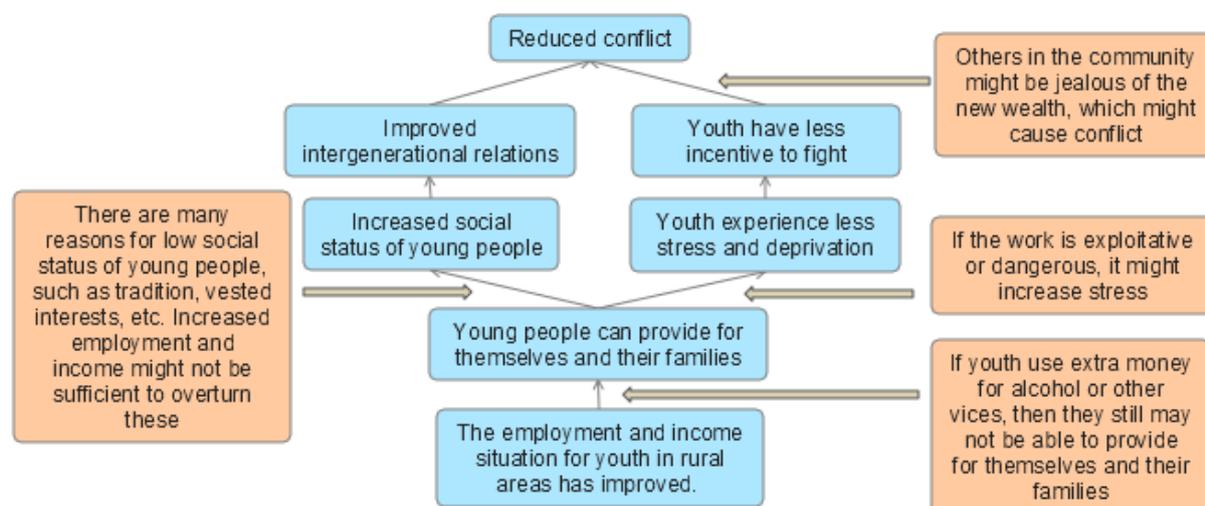
Any results chain is a simplification of an extremely complex situation. This is particularly true in conflict affected areas, where the complexity and unpredictability of the situation mean that any

¹⁴ Hakobyan, Peacebuilding Relevance Assessment of German Development Cooperation in Sierra Leone, GTZ, 2009.

¹⁵ Hanlon, Joseph, Is the International Community Helping to Recreate the Preconditions for War in Sierra Leone, 2005.

¹⁶ Manning, Ryann Challenging Generations Youths and Elders in Rural and Peri-Urban Sierra Leone, Justice and Development Working Paper Series, 2009.

results chain is only an approximation. By clearly considering and documenting the possible reasons why the results chain might not be valid, it will make it easier to test the results chain through further research. Example suggestions for why the links in the above results chain might not hold are shown below, in red boxes:



5 Defining Indicators of Change:

In a CAE, it is often not possible to monitor large numbers of indicators. Consequently, care should be taken to ensure that all indicators are useful, measurable, and clearly linked to the results chain.

GIZ defined an indicator for each level in the results framework, and documented this in a monitoring plan. The monitoring plan usefully specifies the ‘box in results framework’ as well as the indicator, which helps the reader understand how the indicator relates to the results framework.

An example row is shown below, from the vocational training component:¹⁷

| Level in Results Framework | Box in Results Framework | Indicators | Data Collection | | Responsible |
|----------------------------|---|---|-----------------------------------|--|----------------------|
| | | | Tool for data collection / Source | Frequency/ Timing | |
| Direct Result of Program | Participants in entrepreneurship training start their own businesses. | No of start-ups after ending of entrepreneurship training (disaggregated by gender, type of business, location of business) | Interviews with all participants | Directly after end of entrepreneurship training (May 2011) | Training Coordinator |

However, the monitoring plans were considerably more complex than the original results framework, and contained additional steps. In other words, the column labelled ‘box in results framework’ contained steps which weren’t actually in the results framework. For example, the results framework for the district planning project included 11 steps, while the monitoring plan for the same project contained 20 steps.

¹⁷ This has been modified slightly to improve readability.

The disparity was due to the simplicity of the higher level results framework, which did not fully capture what the project was doing or expected to happen. When staff realised that additional indicators were needed to measure the project, they added them to the monitoring plan without updating the results framework. This contributed to an extremely large number of indicators in use; over 200 across the programme. It also led to a more confusing results management system, as it was no longer clear how the results framework matched the monitoring plan.

The team struggled to collect, analyse, and use the data generated from all these indicators them on a regular basis. This reinforces one of the key messages of the DCED Standard: ensuring that indicators correspond to the boxes in the results chain to ensure that they are relevant and useful for the project. It is essential to regularly update both results chains and monitoring plans, and ensure that they link together to form a coherent system. It is also important to prune old indicators and to be realistic in indicator design. If it is difficult to collect data, then decisions must be made about what indicators to leave out, as well as which to include.

6 Measuring Changes in Indicators

Obtaining quality information is a challenge in CAEs. Information is often unreliable, and there are few secondary sources. It is essential to conduct regular field visits, use local staff trusted by the community, and triangulate data.

EPP faced a number of challenges in collecting data in Sierra Leone. Owing to the heavy influx of aid following the conflict, EPP's target communities were accustomed to donor agencies and understood that accentuating the positive impact of the programme may lead to more aid. European staff was particularly likely to be given positive feedback about projects, as they were more closely associated with the donors.



“One troublesome community was continually complaining”, explained one staff member, “and never happy with the project. So we brought one of the managers from Germany to visit them. As soon as she got out of the car, the community greeted her with singing and dancing, and never said a word about their problems!”

The EPP team addressed this through regular field visits. The majority of the field staff were from the local area, and built up sufficient trust with the community to receive honest feedback about the project. It was important not to give the impression that the visit was related to future funding, as that would be likely to lead to overly positive answers.

On field visits, staff triangulated the information that they received. For example, following the development of a seed bank, they would visit to ask the community how they found the training, whether they used the seed bank, and if any problems had arisen. Moreover, staff would insist on seeing the seed bank itself, the records kept, and the fields which had been planted, in order to verify interview information.

Triangulation is particularly important when measuring conflict. As one partner said, “you get information in segments”. This partner conducts regular field visits to interview farmers, has a local

committee for farmers to discuss their issues, and collects anonymous feedback forms on an annual basis. By offering multiple ways for people to give feedback, they increased the reliability of the information that they received. Anonymous feedback also gives the community more confidence to report sensitive information, including complaints, suggestions, or information about the conflict.

7 Managing the system for results measurement

Hiring good results measurement staff is a serious challenge in a CAE; but an essential prerequisite to a successful results measurement system. Time must be set aside to use results for management of the project.

EPP experienced difficulty finding results measurement staff. Their results measurement manager left in October 2012, after less than a year, and had not been replaced at the time of the case study (February 2013). This is a common challenge in CAEs, as the demand for results measurement staff outstrips the supply.

While there is no simple solution, good results measurement staff is necessary for an effective monitoring system. In a country like Sierra Leone, where finding qualified employees can be challenging, it may be more effective to hire several results measurement personnel, accepting that they may not all have the desired qualifications or experience. Strong performers can then be offered additional training and support, with the aim of promoting them to more senior positions. If one staff member leaves, the team can continue.

A key challenge for EPP was to use results effectively for management. EPP presented the results from indicators at quarterly team meetings, but staff expressed concern that they were not fully benefitting from the information that they collected. As they move towards the next phase of the project, GIZ plans to clarify when results will be measured, when they will be discussed and who will be responsible for implementing the lessons learnt.

8 Conclusion

The EPP case study suggests that the DCED Standard is a valuable framework for results measurement in CAEs. Although results measurement is challenging, it can be even more important in unstable, rapidly changing contexts.

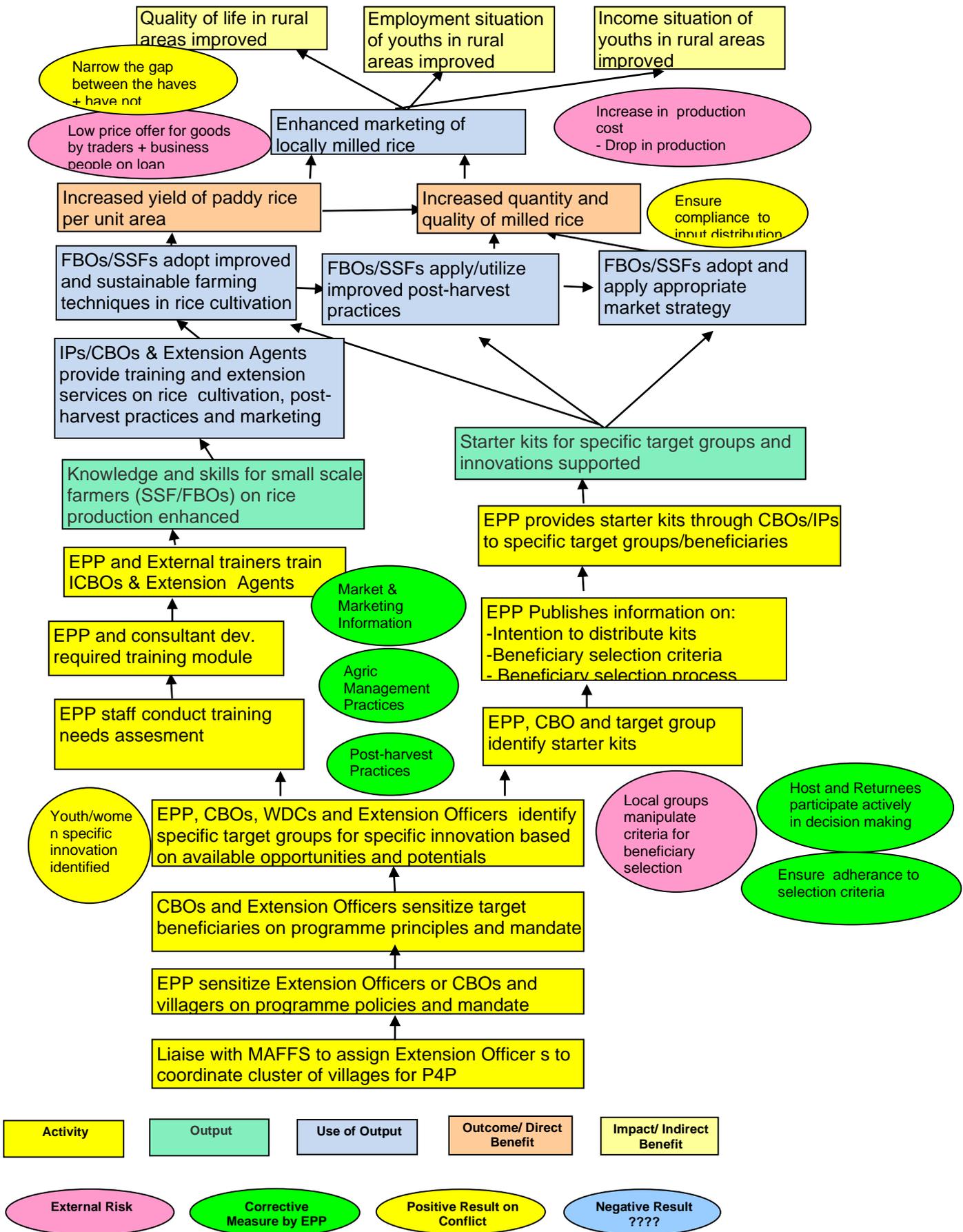
Positive and negative changes in conflict can be monitored through the results chain, using indicators at each level to detect change. As the EPP programme demonstrated, integrating other frameworks with the DCED Standard – such as the Do No Harm approach – can combine insights from different fields, leading to a stronger overall results measurement system. In particular, the results chain offers a valuable framework for examining impacts of the project on conflict. Negative impacts can be included in separate boxes at various levels of the results chain, to show how the activities, outputs and outcomes may have separate negative effects.

The results chain and results measurement plan should be as simple as possible. However, if they are overly simple they cannot be used for management and monitoring. A useful test is whether the results chain is detailed enough to enable a clear results measurement plan to be drawn up around it. Explicitly linking the results chain and measurement plan should make the monitoring system simpler and easier to understand and regular review will help to ensure coherence between them.

There are many challenges in collecting information in CAEs, and reliable data is often hard to obtain. Trust between project staff and the community is essential, in order to obtain honest answers to sensitive questions. EPP built up trust by conducting regular field visits, and hiring local staff with a good knowledge of the field sites. Triangulating information from different sources is often necessary to obtain accurate data.

Finally, the management of the results management systems is more challenging in a CAE. EPP found it very difficult to recruit and retain specialized staff. Its experience suggests that knowledge management systems and staffing structures need to be designed to withstand the potential loss of staff. Addressing this would help ensure that projects use the information they collect to inform project management. It is essential to allocate sufficient time to review monitoring findings and reflect their findings in project strategy and implementation.

Annex A: Example EPP Results Chain



Annex B: Sample agenda at a Do No Harm workshop

1. Impacts /influences of the project on the economic situation of the farmers and other stakeholders (e.g. income, loans taken)
2. Impacts / influences of the project on the social situation in the villages (e.g. conflicts, tensions)
 - How does/did the project influence/affect the relations between the youth and the elders
 - How does/did the intervention influence/affect the role of the women in the community
 - How does/did the project influence/affect the role of the young people in the community (esp. Their participation in conflict mediation, decision making, social life)
 - Did/does the project raise/ignite any disputes/tensions in the community (between who and whom)
 - Did the project solve/minimise any already existing disputes/tensions in the community (between who and whom)
3. Motivation of the different stakeholders to participate in the project (including reasons for not participating)
4. Roles of the different stakeholders (responsibilities, contributions, exact activities...)
5. Process and criteria for selecting the participating farmers
6. Communication between the different stakeholders (conflicts, loss of information...)
7. Do-No-Harm Analysis:
 - Before the project:
 - What tensions were there in the community before the project?
 - What united the community before the project?
 - What brought the unity?
 - With the Project:
 - During the project:
 - What tensions arise/ came into the community?
 - What other problems came?
 - What brought the community together?
8. What was going really well?
9. Problems / challenges / possible improvements
10. Plans for the future