

Medium Term Cooperation Program Phase 2 Terminal Report

Executive Summary

1. The Medium-Term Cooperation Programme with Farmers' Organizations in Asia and the Pacific Region – Phase 2 (MTCP 2) was proposed by national FOs and their regional networks based on the MTCP 1 experiences and lessons learnt; its design was participatory done and the implementation gave emphasis on the FO led management processes at both the levels of approaches and strategic direction. The MTCP 2 is consistent with IFAD Strategic Framework 2011-2015 and its grant policy, particularly in aligning with the strategic objectives of enabling poor rural women and men and their organisations to manage profitable, sustainable and resilient farm and non-farm enterprises or take advantage of decent work opportunities (SO3), enabling them to influence policies and institutions that affect their livelihoods (SO4), and enabling institutional and policy environments to support agricultural production and the full range of relate non-farm activities (SO5). It responds directly to IFAD's engagement with farmers' organizations through the Farmers' forum.

2. The MTCP2 was approved by IFAD on 12 June 2013, and the Large Grant Agreement became effective on 4 September 2013. MTCP2 aims to further strengthen the capacities of farmers' organizations (FOs) in Asia and the Pacific to deliver better, improved and inclusive services to their members and to engage in effective dialogues with governments, thereby making FOs more viable, responsive and accountable to their members, more respected by their partners and with greater participation in policy-making and program implementation processes of governments and IFAD country operations. Its primary beneficiaries are smallholder farmers who are current or potential members of participating FOs. The Programme is articulated around four components: (i) Component 1 - Strengthen FOs and their networks; (ii) Component 2 - Support participation of FOs in policy processes; (iii) Component 3 - FO Services and Involvement in Agricultural Development Programmes; and (iv) Component 4 - Programme management and coordination.

3. The unique delivery mechanism of MTCP2 is through federated national farmers organizations (NFOs) within a broad and inclusive national level/ country platform. MTCP2 in span of 5 years was able to double its geographical reach from 11 countries in MTCP phase1 to 22 countries (8 in Southeast Asia plus China, 5 in South Asia and 9 in Pacific) with expanded and strengthened national platforms) composed of 86 NFOs, 1,628 sub-national farmer' organizations (SNFOs) representing 43.5M individual farmer members, 21M of whom are women and 13M are young farmers. The project has reached far beyond the programme target of 12M individual farmers represented in the national and regional platforms. The inherent strategic objective of national farmers organizations to increase their membership to gain credibility and representativeness to public and private sector fuelled by the MTCP2 program objective of building the institutional capacity of FOs and their network towards effective policy engagement and improved economic services to small-scale farmers served as the perfect match that facilitated the very high program outreach.

4. The component 1 of MTCP2 have supported various organizational capacity building programs which facilitated the organizational growth of FOs. More FOs grow into higher level of organizational maturity having gone through formal processes of strategic planning (53 NFOs and 638 SNFOs) and increasing number of FOs underwent regular external audit by accredited/certified auditing firms making them compliant to various accreditation processes and qualifying them to access support from government agencies and financing institutions as well as partner of private sectors. Democratic governance within the FOs have been supported through the regular conduct of general assemblies where competent farmer leaders are duly elected by members. Significant number of leadership and FO governance/management trainings have also been supported by the program leading towards greater confidence of farmer leaders to manage their organizations. Learning exchanges and more opportunities for interaction among FO leaders have been instrumental in boosting the skill as well as connections among the farmers. Innovations in organizational management have been facilitated through these learning exchanges and have resulted to more matured farmers organizations. These interventions allowed FOs to reach a better position to be heard and have more leverage to negotiate and be properly represented as indicated in their formal partnerships with public/government entities (93 FOs) and private entities (77 FOs), in the process raising around USD13M and a total of 40 other projects.

5. Special attention to active engagement of women farmer and youth have been proactively addressed under component 1. Affirmative actions including the setting of a minimum number of women farmer leaders in the governance structures of the organization as well as the creation of women committee have been pursued in xxx number national FOs. . Similarly, youth committees have also been created. The selection of participants to include women farmers and youth to various capacity building activities have been undertaken resulting to thousands of women farmers and youth trained. Monitoring of women and youth participation in MTCP2 activities have been proactively included in various tools e.g.

6. The increased capacity, credibility and accountability of the FOs compelled the government to listen to the demands of FOs resulting to an enabling policy environment for small-scale farmers. Thus, one of the major outcomes of component 2 is the number of pro-poor policies approved both at the national and sub-national level:

- 86 policies which can be clustered into eight – sustainable agriculture (14 policies); land tenure (7 policies and 9 victorious court cases); agriculture cooperative (6 policies); price control (6 policies); representation of farmers in consultative and decision-making bodies ((5 policies); farmers and fishers' welfare (4 policies); youth involvement in agriculture (3 policies); and seeds (3 policies). There are also policies that were pushed at the village, municipal/township and provincial levels that are unique to the community. Some of the sustainable agriculture policies include climate smart agriculture ban on harmful chemical farming inputs. Other policies include approval of subsidy for farmers and fishers, government purchasing price for rice, policy to establish and support agricultural cooperatives, gaining back sequestered farms to the farmers, provision of soft loan for farmers, providing seats to farmers in consultative and decision making bodies, etc.

- 37 bodies where farmers are represented – Farmers' Commission, Ministry of Labor, Immigration and Population (MOLIP), National Anti-Poverty Commission (NAPC), etc. – to ensure that farmers' concerns and issues are taken into consideration in planning and budgeting

- 54 researches/studies were done including the impact of the lifting of tariff on imported rice, etc.

- 63 issue papers are made public (published in newspapers, aired over the radio, and posted on social media)

7. MTCP2 also supported FO engagement at the regional and international level recognizing the fact that there are critical policies that needs to be addressed collectively by countries. In line with this and capitalizing on the established network and credibility of regional FOs like AFA and PIFON and international FO network/movement like LVC, policy engagement with intergovernmental regional bodies such as the Association of Southeast Asian National (ASEAN), South Asia Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) and the Pacific Island forum (PIF). Through these engagements, specific policy framework supportive of small-scale farmers have been promoted. In Southeast Asia, the partnership between the consortium AFA/LVC and ASEAN foundation through the EU co-financed project ASEAN Farmers organization Support Program (AFOSP)-MTCP2, have significantly promoted the drafting and approval of the ASEAN roadmap on enhancing the role of agricultural cooperative in global value chain which ensures member states support to the growth of agricultural cooperatives. Various regional events intended to strengthen the cooperation of FOs with the ASEAN specifically with the ASEAN Sectoral Working Group on Agricultural Cooperative (ASWGAC) and the ASEAN Center for the Development of Agricultural Cooperative (ACEDAC) were also conducted. There were xxx regional activities supported by AFOSP-MTCP2 to bring in the strong participation of MTCP2 FO partners particularly in three (3) ASEAN Cooperative Business Forum , five (5) ASEAN Learning Series and Policy Engagement on Agri.Coop (ALSPEAC) focusing on coffee and coconut value-chain. Exposure of FOs in international agricultural fair has been supported e.g. Thailand Food Expo (ThaiFEX). In Cooperation with Grow-Asia of which AFA is a steering committee member, the ASEAN Guideline for Responsible Agricultural investment has also been passed. The ASEAN guideline on Social Forestry has also been successfully passed in cooperation with CSOs in the ASEAN Social Forestry Network.

In South Asia, partnership with SAARC Agricultural Center (SAC) and Food and Agriculture Organization-Regional Office for Asia and Pacific (FAORAP) has been done to conduct regional workshop which for the first time brought together Farmers organization and all member states of SAARC on forum focusing on community seed bank, agricultural cooperative, women and youth has been facilitated with the support of MTCP2.

In the Pacific, PIFON have worked closely with both SPC and PIF in working on Breadfruit initiatives, they have also been tapped as co-organizers of side events on Pacific week of Agriculture. PIFON have also produced a manual entitled “Farmers have a Say” with the support from SPC aimed at increasing the awareness and appreciation of the role of FOs in policy processes.

At the global level, AFA with support from MTCP2 have actively cooperated with the World Rural Forum in the promotion and eventual approval of the United Nations Decade for Family Farming (UNDF). AFA together with LVC, PIFON and other regional groups are part of the International steering Committee for the UNDF. The MTCP2 platform at the national level are also mobilized to be part of the national committee for family farming and in drafting the national action plan for the decade. In addition, La Via Campesina have also successfully promoted and got the approval of UN for the UN Declaration on the Rights of Peasants. LVC have also continued to promote the concerns and interests of small-scale farmers on seed at the International Treaty for Plant and Genetic Resources for Agriculture (ITPGRA). Both AFA and LVC also promotes the concerns of Asia-Pacific farmers at the Committee on Food Security (CFS) processes. AFA also represents farmers at the Global Agricultural and Food Security Program (GAFSP).

8. With strengthened partnership with private sector and more favourable policies, FOs are able to provide services to their members as indicated by increase in the number of FOs reporting agribusiness (598 FOs in 258 value chain). A total of 86 FOs also received focus capacity training. This enhanced the technical and farmer-to-farmer extension services such as improving farm productivity, value-adding initiatives, meeting market standards, collective marketing, etc. Some concrete examples include Samoan pineapple farmers who earned 100% more by growing off-season pineapples compared with the regular in-season pineapples, thanks to the series of farmer-to-farmer (FTF) learning exchange between Fiji and Samoa. This and more examples of FTF exchanges serve as proof for farmers that coming together in one platform gives more benefit to farmers in the long run. Catalytic support of MTCP2 in developing farmer friendly machineries have also contributed in increasing yield and reducing production cost as shown in the case of Pakistan where MTCP2 FOs partnered with local agri-based consulting group to develop potato seeder which resulted to 25% increase in yield and 65% reduction in production cost thereby increasing income of the farmer. With minimal support from MTCP2, FOs were also able to build alternative models of collective marketing which serves as effective showcase to both government and private sector for replication and mainstreaming as in the case of the Laos Farmers Network which have facilitated more active engagement of FOs in organic rice and vegetable contract growing arrangement with local companies.

9. Re-structuring and transformation of farmers organization to be more responsive for economic services has been supported towards the mid of project implementation which resulted to the consolidation of farmers into commodity clusters to be able to strengthen position of farmers along the value chain. Towards this, MTCP2 have facilitated the registration of xxx new agricultural cooperatives. Policy dialogues where also done at the country and regional level to promote favorable policy framework for the registration of agricultural cooperatives and other policies which provide incentives for farmer groups engaged in collective production and marketing.

10. Developing Farmers to be resilient amidst the challenges of climate change and various disasters has been consciously addressed by the program. MTCP2 have supported xxxx trainings as well as the initiatives of farmers to identify and promote indigenous and innovative farming practices that helps farmers to address problems related to drought (efficient water management, solar-powered irrigation pump, etc) including use of climate and pest resistant seeds and crop varieties.

11. As a regional grant supported by IFAD, MTCP2 partners have been in varying stages of promoting complementation with IFAD country program. The program have identified 3 levels of engagement with the basic level 1 where FOs are engaged in COSOP processes, Level 2 where FOs are part of the project management committee and level 3 where FOs are included as project beneficiaries and service providers for IFAD country programs. Given this level of engagement, most (68%) of MTCP2 FO partners are in level 1, around 10% are at level 2 (India, Bangladesh) and 22 % (Indonesia, Vietnam, Cambodia, Philippines, PIFON) are in level. In addition, efforts to institutionalize the cooperation between IFAD and the FOs have been done through the signing of the Declaration of Commitments (DOC) or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). 3 DOC or MOU have been signed between IFAD and FOs in Pacific, Indonesia and Laos. Continuing engagement with Sri-Lanka has been undertaken related to potential piloting of cooperation between MTCP2-FOs in IFAD-SriLanka country program specifically the Smallholder Agribusiness Partnership Program (SAPP) and the Smallholder Tea and Rubber Revitalization (STaRR) program. In the Philippines, the MTCP2-FO partners have been represented in the National project steering committee of the Rural Agro-enterprise Partnerships for Inclusive Development and Growth

(RAPID) program. MTCP2 FOs in the Philippines are also actively engaging in the provincial and regional processes related to the development of the strategic investment development plan (SIDP). At the regional level, a declaration of commitment has been signed by the Asia-Pacific Regional Director Nigel Bret with the MTCP2 FO partners represented by the consortium AFA-LVC consortium during the Asia-Pacific Farmers Forum. In addition, MTCP2 platform have been mobilized to provide inputs for the regional and global farmers forum (FAFO) process. MTCP2 also ensures participation of FO partners in Knowledge sharing events of IFAD e.g. KLMPE in the Philippines and also in Mekong Knowledge Learning Fair (MKLF). In Pacific, PIFON was contracted out by IFAD to organize their regional workshop.

12. In 2019, MTCP2 have won the IFAD grant award for best in knowledge management in recognition of the strong knowledge sharing and management strategies which include an annual knowledge Management Fair which serves as a platform for documenting and sharing good practices promoted by FOs and their network. It has been useful learning opportunity highlighting best practices and identifying learning and experience that can support policy dialogue as well as inspire FOs to innovate from the good practices of fellow FOs. The healthy competition during the KM fair in the quest for best practices per component as selected by fellow FOs and with participation from IFAD and other partners provided incentives for FOs to document their good practices through videos, photo stories and simple case studies. All good practices are published on-line and is disseminated through the MTCP2 website, youtube channel and fb page.

13. MTCP2 employed serious effort on communication and visibility recognizing the need to be share to greater public the initiatives of the FOs with the support of MTCP2. The communication strategy is basically maximizing the social media to popular to raise public awareness on FOs issues, challenges and initiatives. It supports the policy advocacy as well as the promotion of FOs product for markets. To date the MTCP2 website have 1,085,624 hits and the facebook page has 66,131 followers. The program also uploaded practical “how to” videos from FOs ranging from making organic fertilizer, liquid pesticide to tecniques on packaging products. In addition, conscious efforts and measures were made to recognize and promote the financial support provided by donors and partners (e.g. IFAD, EU, SDC).

14. The two main factors which contributed to the success of MTCPE I feature of MTCP2 consists of its program design which is responsive to the needs of the FOs and the FO-led management arrangement. First, in terms of program design, the components generally capture the key areas which are very much aligned with the strategic thrust of farmer organization. It is flexible and instructive enough to allow FOs to understand and carry out the activities and desired outcome. In addition, the achievements across the program components are complementary and have boosted over-all impact of the program. To wit, with more economic services being provided (component 3), more farmers are attracted to join the FOs resulting to an expanded constituency which has been critical in influencing agricultural policies as well as expanding access of FOs to economic opportunities. Second, the institutional arrangement of the program meaningfully and operationally put FO at the center of the program, MTCP2 has become a program FOR, BY and WITH Farmer Organizations. The program beneficiaries are at the same time the holder of the project which ensured the high level of accountability, transparency and commitment from the FOs. The coordination mechanism installed at all level national, sub-regional and regional have been instrumental in facilitating participatory planning, implementation and monitoring. The operational cost is not just a mere overhead cost of the project but it also represented as an investment on the organizational capacity of the Farmer organization.

The technical support of IFAD through the regular supervision and implementation support (SIS) mission have been very much welcomed by the FOs as an important source of feedback/oversight. The openness of FOs to accept critical assessment have been instrumental in ensuring that the recommendation is acted upon.

15. The total MTCP2 grant amounting to two million USD (\$2.0M) under IFAD financing was fully utilized as of June 30, 2019. The fund has been essentially catalytic in nature as it was able to catalyse key initiative of FOs which are usually unfunded under the mainstream financing institution. The fund has been instrumental in mobilizing other funds particularly from SDC (\$3 million) and EU (euro 6.9 million). It has been significantly used as leverage to ensure that it can cover the operational cost which the other donor does not cover.

It is important to note that efforts on pre-financing have been done both by AFA as grant recipient in behalf of the regional implementing agency (RIA). At the national level, some national implementing agencies (NIAs) have also done pre-financing to bridge the financial gap while the waiting for the next tranche which usually takes 2-3 months. This pre-financing has helped in fully utilizing the fund at the completion date. More importantly, MTCP2 have recognized the counterpart contribution both in kind (voluntary work of leaders, preparation of food for training during on-site trainings mostly by women farmers, the foregone income every time farmer leaders attended policy consultations, workshops, etc) and in cash (purchase of local materials used in constructing green houses,etc) mobilized by FOs in the course of implementing MTCP2. The very high outreach of the program and the significantly high achievement of its targets have been made possible with this strong contribution and commitment from the partner FOs themselves.

16. The main sustainability measure of MTCP2 is having a strong federated FOs within a national platform. The federated structure serves as the key exit strategy of the program. The output of the organizational strengthening activities guarantees that the federated structure is able to manage their organization are sustain its policy engagement with the support of the national platform. The economic services initially operated by FOs are potential source of additional income both at the farmer level and at the organ izational level. With the increased income of the individual farmer, they will be able to pay service fees to the farmer organization and with the service fees and margin the FOs get from operating the economic activities will help expand, intensify and sustain the gains of MTCP2.

Conclusions and Lessons learned

Over the five years of implementing the programme, with FOs as both implementer and beneficiaries, there are five key lessons worth noting and sharing: (1) programme for the FO and by the FO; (2) solidarity and inclusiveness via the national platform; (3) purposive intervention to strengthen NFOs; (4) regional fund catalytic of claim-making at the country level; and (5) IFAD as a strategic partner of FOs acting as conduit for public and private funds.

1. **Programme for the FO and by the FO.** MTCP2 is a programme that was designed primarily for FOs to manage within a clear, accountable and participatory project management mechanisms, supported by competent FO staff. This mechanism ensures efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability at the FO level. Actual program management by themselves enhances the FOs' capacity as well as builds their track record. With FOs on top of the program, they hold themselves accountable not only to the funding partners, but more importantly, to their own members – like a family constructing their own house, they would naturally ensure sturdy structure with optimal use of budget. Some of the cost-efficient means employed within the programme duration includes reasonable staff salary rate, office location closer to the field, twin-sharing arrangement during training and other events, on-site training venues, home-grown experts as resource persons/technicians, etc. Moreover, FOs are given the option to outsource service providers who are more responsive to their needs.

2. **Solidarity and inclusiveness via the national platform resulting to greater credibility.** The mechanism by which the program is being steered is designed in a way that promotes inclusiveness and encourages FOs to work together thereby achieving greater solidarity and transcending their differences. The FOs with varying history and advocacy are compelled to work together in a platform, with programme targets as basis of unity. Their ability to work together in a national platform increases the FOs' social capital, facilitating greater solidarity and cooperation, and enabling them to transcend their differences – celebrate them even.

The platform set the stage for the FOs to discover and appreciate each other's strengths and weaknesses leading towards better complementation. When farmer leaders become friends, their FOs tend to cooperate more to the point of merger/consolidation. Initially, the national platform cooperates on participation in policy processes. Strengthened, FOs can compel the government to listen to the demands of FOs.

With greater trust, they are able to extend their collaboration to include economic cooperation – e.g. inclusive value chain through commodity platform (e.g. coconut platform) or giving birth to a new platform such as the agricultural cooperative union. This arrangement also provides a more efficient communication channel where information and feedback can easily be shared. There is a cost however to inclusivity – that is efficiency. Achieving consensus in the beginning was tough as each FO, have their own priorities. Through time, this difficulty is slowly addressed.

3. **Purposive interventions to strengthen the NFOs.** NFOs are primarily targeted as efficient delivery mechanism for providing services to their members. This allows the programme to reach more farmers federated under the national organization. There is a greater chance as well of continuity of programme gains because of the capacity building and competency enhancement that they inherit by actually doing it first. Having the programme targets and objectives aligned with the strategic plan of the NFOs, they also gain the perspective of moving it forward even after the program.

Management of the program becomes easy as well, with the sub-regional and regional platforms in place. Sharing of lessons learned and good practices also becomes easier given this mechanism. Moreover, the national platform becomes an effective mechanism for enhancing sustainable engagement.

4. **Catalytic fund.** The fund allocated for FOs under the regional grant is a small amount. However, the amount is sufficient to allow FOs to work together in an inclusive platform that has achieved a threshold of cohesiveness, enabling mutual support instead of divisiveness. The amount however is too small to allow the platform to be more inclusive. For example, India could not invite more NFOs in the platform because there is not much budget for implementation.

With catalytic fund, FOs are encouraged and supported to do claim-making of publicly available fund intended for farmers including leveraging the catalytic fund to access more fund and services from financing institution, public sector and different development partners. When programmatically supported by partnership arrangement with the IFAD country program, it can ensure greater complementation between the regional grant and the county program e.g. RAPID in the Philippines, AIMS in Cambodia.

It would be beneficial to have an innovation fund to complement the catalytic fund to allow FOs to build alternative models that can be advocated to government and other partners for replication/upscaling. While the program can support claim-making of existing programs, it limits the FOs to innovate and build models which cannot be accommodated within the framework of existing programs. Based on experience, there are many programs that are not responsive/ not appropriate to the real needs of farmers. While advocacy is being done by FOs to reform the programs and policies, FOs also need to show that their advocacy is based on actual experience. FOs need to show alternative models that captures the elements it wants to promote.

5. **Making IFAD as FO-preferred conduit of public and private fund for FOs.** IFAD's mandate is spelled out in its name. Being a UN institution dedicated for agricultural development, IFAD brings both the mandate and the necessary network that FO could work with at the country level.