

# Real Time Evaluation of CARE's Response to the Drought and Food Security Emergency, Southern Lao, 2010-11



Conducted by Suzie Albone and Richard Hackman for CARE International in Lao PDR  
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## Introduction and Background

Following Typhoon Ketsana, in September 2009, southern Laos was negatively affected by a significantly delayed rainy season. Rainfall was low, and this had an impact on this year's main harvest of 2010. In May-June 2010, UNICEF and MOH undertook a nutrition survey in nine Ketsana affected provinces of Laos. Acute malnutrition rates were very high, particularly in the Ketsana and drought affected provinces in the south. **Notably Attapeu was experiencing very high levels of acute malnutrition, with a GAM of 18.9%.** As a result, CARE undertook a food security monitoring visit to target villages in Sekong in August, and then a rapid assessment in early October<sup>1</sup>. In November WFP and FAO undertook a Crop and Food Security Assessment Mission (CFSAM), the findings confirmed CARE's rapid assessment in Sekong.

In November 2010, CARE commenced emergency response planning and project design for Attapeu province using funds from the CARE International Emergency Response Fund (CI ERF). Proposals were developed for AusAID and ECHO in December to conduct Food Security Emergency Relief Projects which commenced in January 2011 for a period of 6 months. The emergency response provided for the distribution of non-food items to the most affected villages to help communities recover from the worst effects of the drought and to prepare farmers for a successful planting season in May/June 2011.

As part of the AusAID funding, CARE included a Real Time Evaluation (RTE) which aimed to:

1. Assess the quality of CARE Laos' response to the drought and food security emergency in southern Laos
2. Develop lessons learned and recommendations that will assist CARE Laos to a) improve the quality of current programming; and b) build disaster risk management and emergency preparedness capacities into future programming.
3. Analyze the impact CARE Laos' emergency response on women affected by drought and food insecurity, including assessing the degree to which gender has been mainstreamed in the response.

## Methodology

The methodology for this RTE was a desk review of secondary sources and qualitative data collection through Key Informant Interviews (KII), Focus Group Discussions (FGD), village walks and observation

1. Desk review of project design documents, situation reports, multi-stakeholder nutrition and food security assessments conducted in 2010, Terms of Reference of key CARE staff/ consultants and CARE International Emergency Guidelines.
2. 4 day visit to Attapeu Field Office to conduct:
  - a. FGDs with men and women (separately) in 2 target villages. The selection criteria for the villages were : one upland, one lowland, one mixed ethnic, from two different target districts, remote, where project training could be observed, two villages that had received different interventions or

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<sup>1</sup> This rapid assessment was delayed by a month as we required a senior food security technical advisor to support.

- were targeted differently
  - b. FGD with CARE Attapeu Program Staff
  - c. KIIs with Government counterparts from Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office, Provincial Labour and Social Welfare Office, Provincial Lao Women's Union
  - d. KIIs with two extension workers, PAFO Coordinator, CARE Attapeu Project Manager and two village heads and one FHH
  - e. KIIs with representatives from coordinating organizations, WFP, Health Poverty Action ( aka Health Unlimited)
3. Teleconference with Humanitarian and Emergency Response Manager CARE Australia and representation from Human Resources department CARE Australia

Interviews were conducted in either Lao or English. For data collection in communities, two ethnic translators with language skills in Alak, Tarieng and Oi were used for female FGDs. Interviews were digitally recorded; permission was requested from respondents in advance.

The RTE team was made up of the Women's Health Advisor, CARE International in Lao PDR and an International Consultant Livelihoods and Agricultural specialist with extensive experience of livelihoods and ethnicity in southern Laos. Both team members have over 10 years in-country experience in their respective fields and have strong Lao language skills. Interviews with communities were conducted in Lao unless ethnic translation was required.

Gender was explicitly addressed in the evaluation. Gender considerations were designed to be integral to all areas of questioning and specific subset of questions in some FGDs focused on access and benefits of men and women. Findings and discussion on gender are presented separately in later sections.

### **The Decision to Engage**

CARE Laos' **decision to engage** in an emergency response was a response to a number of factors:

1. Growing concern by multiple stakeholders ( FAO, WFP, CARE, UNICEF, Health Unlimited) that communities in southern Laos were affected by two disasters in subsequent years and that the populations was experiencing acute malnutrition on top of chronic poverty and malnutrition.
2. CARE's first-hand experience of Ketsana disaster and the significant challenges in livelihoods recovery
3. Nutrition assessment<sup>1</sup> that put Global Acute Malnutrition (GAM) rates at 'crisis' levels, on a par with the levels seen in drought and famine affected countries of Africa

As one of the largest INGOs in the country, with a clear global humanitarian mandate and the experience of the Typhoon Ketsana response, CARE Laos was well-positioned to respond to this situation. CARE was able to gain donor support in a timely manner and to coordinate with Laos national and provincial government to ensure full support as evidenced by signing of Cooperation Agreement (15 February 2011)

Whilst the decision to engage was clearly validated by the data coming from different field assessments, the design of the intervention is much more problematic. One of the criticisms of the nutritional assessments conducted in 2010 was that they were being compared against national level data and therefore had no regional baseline from which to assess increased malnutrition attributable to the effects of Typhoon Ketsana and the drought of 2010. Whilst this does not change the decision to engage, it does have some important implications for the type of intervention and how well CARE has been able to understand the causes of both chronic and acute malnutrition and the relationship to poverty and livelihoods.

CARE's response has been based on livelihoods recovery approach. However, it has proved difficult to strike a balance between the need for a long-term community development /DRR approach and the need to act swiftly to halt the number of new cases of malnutrition and aid recovery. The decision to conduct a six-month emergency response has meant that:

1. Many activities are project initiated and controlled, and unlikely to be sustainable
2. Activities that require capacity building and behavior change e.g. nutrition education cannot be achieved in such a short period and have therefore been omitted from the interventions although there is clear need.
3. The ability of communities to maximize certain interventions such as vegetable seed distribution is weakened if villages lack irrigation systems and water and sanitation. Yet the emergency response cannot in the time available develop such infrastructure.
4. The fact that CARE was not already operational in Attapeu has meant that significant time and resources have been used to establish strong coordination and trust with provincial authorities. This appears to have been at the expense of the community data collection (including gender analysis) and community engagement.

## **Project Design and Priorities**

The Objective of the Project as stated in the two Emergency response projects is:

- To contribute towards rapid food security and livelihood recovery of the most affected population in Attapeu Province - ECHO
- 4,300 of the most vulnerable households (26,260 people) in Attapeu Province have received sufficient support to recover from the impact of the 2010 drought.  
- AusAID

CARE has designed a package of activities that can assist recovery from the drought and attempt to bring communities back to pre-drought levels. As discussed above, this level is somewhat difficult to ascertain without a clear baseline. The indicator of *reduction of new cases of malnutrition* also reflects the aim of the project to bring the situation back to pre-drought levels.

Yet a closer look at the activities shows that the core recovery activity is rice seed

distribution (which was not possible to assess as the activity is planned for May). The other activities are less clearly recovery focused and attempt to provide some immediate assistance to:

Income - Women's Livelihoods activities, Vegetable seeds and tool kits  
Dietary diversity and support - Vegetable seeds and tool kits, fishing nets,  
Reducing Women's Workloads - Hygiene kits, water filters, water wheels  
Ensure access to potable water - Hygiene kits, Water filters

The activities are designed to target the poorest and most vulnerable through two main modalities, training and distribution. For most activities (vegetable seeds, hygiene kits and water filters), villagers are trained to use the items to be provided; distribution follows within 2 weeks.

The vulnerability of women in a food security situation has been considered and activities are designed to improve women's access to food and reduce workloads associated with finding food and accessing water. Female Headed Households (FHH) are specifically targeted for receipt of interventions. Women's livelihood activities complement the package and are described further in the gender section.

CARE has been clear to articulate to the evaluation team what can and can't be achieved within the 6 month time frame and the rationale for including or not including activities. For the most part the RTE team agrees with the reasons although this has had some implications for effectiveness that CARE might like to consider for future interventions.

#### *Prioritization of needs and targeting*

Given the time constraints in the design phase and CARE's lack of operational presence in Attapeu, the selection of target villages and beneficiaries was, for the most part, dependent on data collected by provincial and district authorities. Much of this was incomplete or inaccurate and therefore needed considerable review. Provincial authorities were influential in the selection of target districts and villages. Provincial authorities were interested in seeing CARE's interventions spread equally over all districts of Attapeu. This reflects a common ideological position in Lao PDR and highlights that CARE and provincial authorities did not necessarily have a shared understanding of the 'emergency' response in which targeting was based on need and vulnerability. After some negotiation, a compromise of the number of districts was reached. The implications of this are that coverage of CARE's resources was stretched over a wide area which necessitated additional training and coordination with a greater number of district authorities and extension workers.

In addition, provincial authorities used a standard poverty based-criteria for the selection of CARE target villages and in many cases data on malnutrition was not considered or available, (previous nutritional assessments were based on random sampling and could not be used for targeting of specific villages). WFP used a set of criteria which combined food security with an assessment of coping mechanisms for the annual 'lean season' including access to markets. In consultation with WFP, CARE refined its criteria to include the WFP focus and to narrow down villages. After some time, CARE's targeting of villages was refined to follow more closely with WFP. Selection of target districts and villages therefore consumed a disproportionate amount of staff

time.

Another aspect of targeting which has implications for implementation is related to the beneficiary numbers stated in the project proposals. Different beneficiary numbers were provided for each activity e.g. seed distribution or hygiene kits. The calculation was based on donor budget guidelines and logistics calculations. These numbers have been used to determine how many villages were selected, thus making the number of target villages fit number of hygiene kits to be distributed rather than the other way around. As the budgets allowed for more hygiene kits than vegetable seed and equipment sets, this meant more villages needed to be selected in order to complete the distributions as stated in the proposals. This meant that some target villages received only a hygiene kit, which as described below are only 'minimally appropriate' for assisting recovery from drought. The targeting process has spread the project interventions very thinly which affects both efficiency and effectiveness.

Gendered implications of targeting FHH and the most vulnerable are discussed in the section below on Gender.

### **Program Delivery – Findings**

In the interests of space and readability, the main findings have been put in table form and are attached as annexes. Findings have been reported from each group of respondents, villagers (gender disaggregated) counterparts, CARE staff and other stakeholders.

### **Discussion**

The below discussion is based on visits to only two of 39 communities which the project plans to work in. Therefore observations and the evaluators' comments can not represent the conditions in all the communities. Each of the activities is considered in the context of appropriateness, efficiency, coordination and participation, equity and effectiveness. In some sections, generalizations have been made which include all activities rather than applying each heading to all activities. Overall efficiency, coordination and effectiveness have also been considered for general project management.

#### *Appropriateness*

As there is great diversity in the livelihoods of the communities affected by the drought and their ability to cope, whether the drought constitutes an emergency response or a recovery effort is unclear. For example, some of the communities live with a chronic rice deficit, a situation to which they have adapted through the use of various coping mechanisms. Those villagers interviewed found it challenging to link the drought and project to an emergency context. They were simply aware that they had less rice than an average year. Furthermore, a lack of detailed baseline livelihood data has meant a "blanket approach" for environmentally and culturally diverse communities, means activities vary in their appropriateness. Below activities implemented (1) and observed as well as planned activities (5) are discussed.

Vegetable gardening is one component of almost all rural household's farming systems in Laos. There is great diversity in what is planted (traditional and purchased seed), where (household, upland field, rice paddy, along stream channels etc.) and when (wet or dry season). The produce from these gardens make important contribution of micro-nutrients to rural diets. But, as repeatedly stated by villagers, gardening cannot replace rice. Nor can vegetables replace protein which in some farming system is related to rice production and the subsequent rice bran is used as animal feed. In the villages the team visited, the drought did not have a major effect on vegetable gardening as most gardens are planted near a water source in the dry season (the drought occurred near the end of the rainy season) and in upland areas where vegetables are intercropped or planted near rice. For this reason, it has been difficult to generalize about appropriateness of the vegetable seed interventions.

In one of the two communities visited, there was a long tradition of vegetable gardening. A village walk showed that many gardens had already been planted with existing seed stocks when the project vegetable seeds were distributed. Some of the distributed varieties (tomatoes) were new and if seed is collected, as the project supports, this will increase the diversity of local seed stock. The project also wisely selected drought resistant varieties which will build resistance to future drought events. In the second community visited there was only one stream water source approximately 200m – 800m (depending on house location) from houses. Both men and women interviewed said this was too far to carry water other than that used for consumption and that they would wait until the wet season to plant the seeds in their upland rice fields. The gardening tools distributed by the project were being used.

Based on the impacts the drought had on rice yields, reduced carbohydrate intake from rice and the ability of vegetables to replace these, the **appropriateness** of vegetable gardens to meet the goal of the project to provide "*sufficient support to recover from the impact of the 2010 drought*" **is not high**. The supporting activity of agricultural tools (hoe, shovel, rake, water cans etc.) will assist in gardening and other agriculture activities.

The second and only other activity to be observed by the evaluators was the training for hygiene kits and water filters; distribution was planned to follow the training. The contents of the hygiene kits (hand soap, dish soap, plastic cups and bottles, water storage container, buckets, scoops, wire cleaning brush, kettle etc) are meant to ensure better health and translate into more time to invest in food production or coping mechanisms. As no baseline data is available on water borne diseases and health, the impacts of the kits is difficult to measure. However, it does seem unlikely that the kits will significantly improve peoples' ability to produce or acquire more food/calories. However, hygiene kits, especially the large 120 litre water storage container will likely play an important role in increasing resilience to disease and saving valuable time in water collection. These are important support component for communities attempting recovery and may enhance existing coping mechanisms if used correctly. Previous monitoring of hygiene kits within CARE's development program have been favorably evaluated particularly in regard to durability.

Water filters may have immediate positive benefits on the health of people if they are adopted and maintained. **Water filters are appropriate** especially as the dry season

continues and activities near water sources (human and livestock) become more concentrated and water quality decreases. However, again, a lack of baseline data will make monitoring and evaluating the impacts difficult.

**Rice food distribution is appropriate** in all communities but in particular in communities with limited coping mechanism (non-timber forest products, ability to migrate or to generate income). Given the amount of rice for distribution (72MT) in the 6 most needy and targeted communities, will decrease the number of months without rice by 2. Another **appropriate and key activity is rice seed distribution** which will assist in the recovery from the drought; especially as rice seed stock have been or are being consumed and the poor quality of rice seed due to the drought. All those interviewed fully supported the above activities and encouraged the project to distribute rice food immediately.. Although it should be noted that this is an expected response from communities in the lean season and that this need has been validated by the WFP CFSAM in March 2011, paving the way for food distribution to complement CARE's response in many overlapping target villages.

Water wheels have been established in 3 communities with more planned; The Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office have been involved in this activity. Of 3 established 2 are now idle because stream levels are too low to turn them. One is still being used to irrigate a garden started by the community level Lao Youth Union. It is expected they can also be used to irrigate rice seedling gardens in the coming year if rainfall is low. When established on streams locally known to be perennial in low rainfall years the **water wheels are appropriate**. Waterwheels established on dry beds in the dry season can be beneficial in the rainy season, enabling the expansion of paddy rice fields and providing a good source of water for rice seedlings when the rains are intermittent thereby having a positive impact on yields. This intervention is therefore acting as a recovery intervention. A final activity discussed with government and project staff but not with villagers (communities visited were not selected for nets) was nylon fishing nets. Following successful distribution of high quality fishing nets in the neighbouring Sekong Province following Typhoon Ketsana, this activity was included in the Attapeu response during the rapid proposal development phase in December 2010. The project has already selected the villages to receive these based on the likelihood they will be useful. Some people interviewed who were familiar with local fisheries said that the activity was not appropriate as fisheries are not in a healthy state due to overfishing and pollution. Hours of fishing yield very small amounts of fish; Typhoon Ketsana's impacts on fish habitat could be influencing this. There were reports of local government telling villages to avoid consumption of fish due to mining related toxic chemical contamination. Given these circumstance **fishing nets may not be appropriate**. The project team is currently reviewing the fishing net activity which is expected to be based on accurate information and include information on village reliance on fishing and actual fish stocks.

#### *Efficiency*

The activities implemented thus far: vegetable gardens and tool distribution and the start of the hygiene kits and water filters have been **implemented efficiently**. Planning from the office to the field is efficient and has meant the project is staying within the very tight timeline it is operating on. One observation is that the project is operating in 39 communities across 4 districts using 8 field staff. If the project was operating in a

small geographic area resources would be more efficiently used. During the early stages of the project, changes in the selection criteria for poor communities and families combined with a predetermined number of target hold holds, resulted in changes (increases) in the total number of communities. This has translated into ***project resources being stretched and decreasing efficiency*** (and effectiveness discussed below).

#### *Coordination and participation*

There several levels for cooperation and participation to occur in the project. One is the community level. Interviews with people in the villages showed that during the project planning and assessment they were not directly consulted with regarding what activities would be most useful and practical during a drought. Coordination of the activities in the communities normally goes through the Village Head who represents the community. People were also not aware of what activities the project was planning to provide or the length of the project.

Coordination and participation was operating well with Provincial Social Welfare (PLSW) and Labour as the main partner and with the District Agriculture and Forestry Offices (DAFO). Field Extension Workers came from both PLSW and DAFO which the project trained and coordinates. Interviews with the technicians showed coordination between them and the project was good but it remains difficult for extension workers to develop the same level of ownership and commitment to the project when it is only a part of their long-term workload. Project staff said they acted too autonomously at times. The Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office, had worked on the procurement process of seeds and tools and seed testing, and had been involved mainly on water wheels. Whilst the PAFO respondent was interesting in participating more in activities, invitation from the project are regularly forthcoming, PAFO staff have not attended many distributions,

#### *Equity*

The project's main concerns with equity are at the community level. Provincial government encouraged the project to include several districts to increase coverage and equity which, the project has done. Selection of communities within a district was done through government poverty criteria and based on a previous determined number of poor households to be targeted. The number of communities was increased in order to encompass the number of poor households listed in the project proposals. The selection of the neediest families within one village is something the government itself did not fully support as it can disrupt unity, yet they have embraced the concept of poverty reduction which adheres to poverty segregation. People in villages where certain interventions were further targeted at household level also had difficulties to understand the cutoff point between the poor and non-poor families or distinguish between the groups. This was questioned by some people and instances of minor conflict were described. (Note from CARE Laos – this has been noted and followed up).

One instance where villagers were not satisfied was with the distribution of seed and gardening tools to households rather than families. One village visited had as many as 4 families residing in one house which each plant their own garden. Seeds could be divided up into smaller amounts but gardening tools could not and had to be shared. Or

in some cases the senior head of the household took control of the tools. The gendered aspects of equity are discussed in the section below.

### *Effectiveness*

Given the early stage of activity implementation, effectiveness, as related to the project's goal, is not yet obvious or measurable. But, some predictions are possible.

- Vegetable gardens, once producing, will be **somewhat effective** in supporting household to provide some contribution to the diet and income during the period of extreme rice deficiency of the drought which have been mainly on rice yields.
- Hygiene kits if used and maintained correctly will have a **reasonable effect** on the communities' ability to increase access to potable water but can only support recovery as a component of a broader response
- Water filters **are effective** to reduced water borne diseases and increase the health of people which may result in greater time invested in acquiring food or other coping mechanisms.
- Rice food distribution will have **immediate positive effects** on families. A balanced food basket is the most desirable intervention to ensure the range of proteins and micronutrients needed for optimal nutrition
- Rice seed distribution will be **very effective** in helping families to recover from the drought but, the performance of some rice varieties, particularly dry land rice, in Attapeu Province has yet to be tested this.
- Fishnets **may be effective** in assisting families increase protein intake or income though the sales of fish.

## **Gender Considerations**

The following discussion looks at the gendered dimensions of the project from design to implementation and assesses how gender has been addressed thus far. It is important to note that this evaluation does not aim to conduct a gender analysis with communities or to provide specific inputs into the design of women's livelihood activities within the project. This latter task will be undertaken by the CARE Laos Gender Advisor in April. The gender dimensions of this Real Time Evaluation have been guided by the IASC framework<sup>i</sup> and CARE International Gender and Emergencies Toolkit. The CARE International Women's Empowerment framework has been consulted as a broad frame of reference.

### *Gender in the design and start up phase*

CARE's emergency response in Attapeu has clearly been designed with strong gender considerations in three key areas, in the types of activities, targeting of activities and the distribution of goods in order that women can gain equitable benefit from CARE's interventions. The reference points for the activities design appear to have been CARE's experience of the Typhoon Ketsana's emergency response<sup>ii</sup> and the results of a number of influential food security assessments by CARE and other stakeholders namely WFP and UNICEF. For the most part these assessments were gender blind, data was not disaggregated, and little attempt was made to seek answers to the following four

questions that are recommended as a minimum gender analysis requirement for gender and livelihood emergencies<sup>iii</sup>

1. What are the population demographics?
2. What type of access and control of livelihood assets do women and men have and how have they been affected by the emergency?
3. What are the normal cultural and social roles and practices of women and men that existed before the onset of the emergency?
4. How have workloads, responsibilities and gender roles changed as a result of the emergency?

The weakness of these reference materials has made it imperative that a gender analysis was conducted by the project in the design and start up phase. Project documents outline a plan to conduct further community needs assessments in January / February 2011. However, this did not appear to include a basic gender analysis. The TOR of the first on-site emergency coordinator does not detail any explicit responsibilities for this beyond the references to CARE Emergency toolkit which outlines minimum standards for Gender in Emergencies. The priority tasks in the initial phase were; coordination with government counterparts, logistics for setting up a sub-office and procurement and proposal development.

#### *Gender appropriate activities*

The key activities of rice and vegetable seed distribution, garden tools, hygiene kits and water filters all theoretically operate in the female locus of control, building on existing community activity for which there is an established pattern of gender roles. Activities were designed to ensure that women are strengthened in their role as food provider for the family. Some activities such as water filters and water wheels were introduced in CARE's Post Ketsana response and in CARE's development program and have been evaluated to reduce women's workloads. Improving women's ability to produce food in garden settings also reduced the amount of forest foraging (although not for protein sources) that women need to conduct therefore reducing workloads.

CARE has engaged a deliberate policy of targeting interventions towards the poorest of the poor and has identified female headed households and households with disabled members as being particularly vulnerable. However, as described above (from page 6 on targeting), the environment in which this approach is being implemented is not fully supportive of needs-based targeting. Consistent communication with stakeholders at all levels is needed to ensure this can be fully implemented.

The findings also show some confusion about targeting of households rather than families. There are some gendered implications in cases where 2 -3 families live in one household. The socio-cultural norms default to a male head of the household, so sons and son in laws are selected or assume the role often bypassing older widowed or divorced women who may constitute a family head but not a household head. This situation is strongly linked to ethnicity. Local knowledge around ethnic kinship and domicile structures is needed to avoid any unintended consequences of CARE's targeting approach and to ensure that women are receiving equal access to and benefit from CARE's activities.

The distribution procedure was strongly guided by the CARE Emergency Response Tool Kit – Distributions. Although the RTE team did not view a distribution in progress, staff and management were able to provide details and description of the process and how gender was taken into account in terms of safety and security, prioritization of vulnerable groups and equity. Project staff felt that this provided a good opportunity for CARE to promote and model gender awareness and equal rights. It is interesting that in women's focus group discussion, although communities described the distribution as well organized, the prioritization of pregnant or lactating women and FHH was not spontaneously mentioned. This suggests that CARE's efforts went largely unacknowledged by communities and that the promotion of gender awareness in many remote communities is a multi-layered long-term undertaking.

#### *Gender and Project Staff*

CARE was not able to achieve a gender balance within its staffing of this emergency response. All international staff recruited for the emergency were male. Amongst national staff, there are only two females in a team of 11 people and only one woman is in the program team as distribution coordinator. Among district level extension workers, there is only one woman out of a team of eight. Project managers describe a challenging recruitment environment for female staff, in terms of ability, experience and willingness to work in the far south of the country. The project also struggled to recruit local staff from Attapeu province and neighboring southern provinces. Recruitment by traditional means, (newspapers and internet as used in the capital Vientiane) does not function in provincial areas. CARE has also been careful not to 'poach' experienced staff from the few NGOs and international organizations operational in Attapeu. The decision not to recruit from existing staff in the Sekong development program was made based on the current level of strain on that program as it transitions back from the post Ketsana emergency response of 2009/2010. The implications of recruitment difficulties have affected the gender balance somewhat negatively and this does appear to have had an important impact on CARE's ability to deliver a gender sensitive project. Staff recognized this gap and prioritized a female community engagement specialist as a human resource need. For extension workers, many respondents described significant barriers to engaging women for this type of intense emergency response work, namely safety and security related to travelling to remote areas and negative community attitudes towards dealing with female extension workers. It should also be acknowledged that extension workers are recruited from district agriculture and labour and social welfare departments where the likely recruitment pool of women is limited by structural factors beyond the influence of CARE.

National project staff showed limited gender awareness beyond the issue of gender balance in their team and the need to target female headed households. The lack of gender analysis in the project start up was considered a necessary trade off given the urgent nature of the response and the lack of skills in the current team. Staff have now requested help with this. Observation by the RTE team showed how male staff and extension workers oriented themselves towards the male power structures within a village and mainly communicated with women through male leaders, missing important opportunities to learn about women's needs, perceptions of the project and impact of the activities and reinforcing gender norms. Gaps in routine monitoring of gender disaggregated data show that the team needs significant gender sensitization. Staff were

not clearly able to articulate barriers to women’s participation in the project beyond the standard answer that ‘women don’t participate’.

The table below provides an assessment of the project against the IASC Good Practices for Gender and Emergencies.

<b>Good Practice / Standard</b>	<b>Achieved</b>	<b>Comments</b>
<b>Gender and Livelihoods</b>		
A gender-sensitive approach to livelihood programmes requires an understanding of the different skill sets, needs, vulnerabilities and responsibilities of affected women and men and adolescent girls and boys.	Partially	Activities were gender sensitive but not specific enough to the communities that were affected. The way that Gender and ethnicity are connected and moderate each other was not considered in needs assessments
Ensure equal access to and benefits from livelihoods programmes for women, girls, boys and men	Satisfactorily	Strong distribution mechanisms and targeting has been important part in supporting equal access but other barriers to participation have not been considered
Equal participation of women, girls, boys and men in livelihoods programming	Partially	Community participation in program decision making was weak. Consultations followed the accepted social structure of the Village heads and Lao women’s union village representative Men, women, boys are girls were all equally under-consulted
Livelihood activities in an emergency provide the opportunity to promote gender equality in a way that reshapes social roles.	Partially	CARE’s distribution procedures have challenged traditional mechanisms and prioritized pregnant women, elderly and disabled. This was considered important first step in awareness arising on gender
Include marginalized and vulnerable populations in programme activities	Satisfactorily	Targeting of FHH, prioritizing pregnant women elderly and disabled
Raise awareness and build capacities of local implementing partners on gender sensitivity.	Minimally	This was not considered feasible given the time constraints and possibly the lack of gender expertise within the current staff
Understand cultural differences and meet the needs of vulnerable populations.	Partially	The staffing profile was not favorable to understanding local cultures, many opportunities were missed for greater community engagement with ethnic women
<b>Gender and Food Security</b>		
Gender sensitive needs assessment including priority needs and constraints of men and women to increase household food security in short and long term	Minimally	Most of the external food security needs assessments on which CARE has based its programming were somewhat gender blind. Once operational, a comprehensive gender sensitive food security was not conducted
Use Vulnerability mapping to identify sectors of the population	Partially	This was done at province level rather than individually affected communities

most at risk of food insecurity		
Ensure collection of gender disaggregated data and formulation of gender sensitive indicators including monitoring and evaluating the impact of food insecurity of men, women, boys and girls	Partially	Current monitoring of training activities is falling short of collecting gender disaggregated data This RTE will contribute towards evaluating the impact of food insecurity on men, women, boys and girls
Gender sensitive targeting to reach target groups, assess women' participation and ensure flexibility	Satisfactorily	Generally community participation and consultation has been poor but gender sensitive targeting has been very strong. It remains to be seen if the project can flexibly adapt programming where targeting is adversely affecting any group
Capacity building and awareness raising of decision makers and extension workers in the importance of gender issues in emergencies	Minimally	This is a major gap in the current implementation

### **Program Support and Efficiency**

CARE has developed a strong program support team and given a clear priority to procurement and logistics. The recruitment of an international consultant to set up the procurement and distribution system appears to have paid off, and the project is on schedule against the work-plan in a difficult distribution environment. In the initial phase before project funding was secured, ability to conduct more extensive community assessments and consultation appears to have been limited by having the use of only one vehicle. Procurement processes, where possible, have taken into account locally sourced materials and seeds which are therefore familiar to villagers. There is a good awareness of the need for seed varieties that require less water.

Government partners are substantially engaged with the project and all projects documents and plans have been made available to government partners, along with opportunities for consultation and review. Significant effort was put into developing a cooperative relationship with two key government partners in the initial phase and this was evidenced by the speed at which the Cooperation Agreement was obtained. The design of the proposals to AusAID and ECHO appear not to have been done in full consultation with provincial government counterparts. However this is always hard to assess as it is somewhat dependent on internal communications within the department and who in the provincial department the RTE team was assigned to talk interview. Provincial and district staff have played an important role in providing technical advice on vegetable and rice seeds although some upland seed varieties remain untested in the target villages.

Much of the project implementation is dependent on the district level extension workers. There are a variety of skills and commitment levels among the eight extension workers and the project has only limited control over a range of factors such as; number of hours worked, extent of communication with the community and quality of training.

Although working through district staff is the most sustainable system, the extension workers have competing workloads and responsibilities.

### **Mobilization of Resources**

CARE Laos has been very successful in responding to this emergency in a timely manner. It took just 2 months from the identification of the crisis to receiving firm donor commitment. This RTE has highlighted the preparation, coordination and data collection needed to get this response underway in Attapeu and this would not have been possible without the initial funding from CARE International. CARE's experience of the governance environment in Lao PDR led to channeling greater human resources into the initial response to ensure that approval did not slow down implementation.

CARE has received approximately USD670,000 total funding for the response from two different donors (ECHO Euro200,000 and AusAID412,000). Importantly, CARE has developed a global log frame in order to ensure that funding channels don't artificially segregate project interventions. Donor visibility remains strong.

The table below summarizes the project interventions against a set of standards developed by ALNAP<sup>2</sup> for Slow-onset disasters: drought and food and livelihoods insecurity.

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<sup>2</sup> Active Learning Network for Accountability and Performance in Humanitarian Action [www.alnap.org](http://www.alnap.org)

## Assessment against ALNAP standards

ALNAP Lessons	Extent to which CARE has drawn on these lessons	Comments
1. Understanding and protecting people's livelihoods is integral to saving lives and reducing future vulnerabilities	Good	CARE was able to draw on experience from development project of local traditions and practice which was very beneficial but lacked fine tuning to Attapeu communities Most analysis was limited to key staples (rice and vegetables) lack of analysis of markets ( important for the many lowland target villages that are engaging in cash economy) savings behavior and social networks Paucity of technical skills from team and counterparts to build a stronger multi-sectoral response influenced decisions to focus on a few key interventions that did not require a high level of technical input ( not readily available or affordable within existing budgets).
2. Knowing whether and when to intervene depends on an objective needs assessment that contributes to an understanding of the immediate and underlying causes of the crisis and their impacts	Very good	CARE's decision to engage was based on rigorous multi agency assessments. CARE's own rapid assessment further validated the decision. Although not all the multi-agency assessments included strong focus on the neediest groups, CARE included this in the activity design based on its own programming principles. Again, a lack of data specific to target communities has meant this has been challenging to implement. ALNAP lessons also urge interventions not to underestimate the impact of food prices on livelihoods. As described above, no market and savings analysis was conducted.
3. Choice of intervention is based on a thorough understanding of the problem, clear program objectives and an analysis of the response options and associated risks	Good	CARE's decision not to distribute food aid was based on the presence of WFP in Attapeu. Yet delays in WFP decision making on rice / food basket distribution to overlapping target villages have meant that until May / June 2011, CARE's distributions are not being complimented with what villagers describe as their main priority. Despite a general trend for fewer seed distributions in emergency responses (because it doesn't allow for optimal beneficiary participation and it is hard to source appropriate quality seeds) CARE has worked closely with government partners to ensure quality. Alternative interventions such as seed fairs and vouchers are new to Laos and would be prohibitive to set up within the project timeframe. Irrigation interventions were not considered possible in a 6 month emergency response.
4. Without an exit strategy the shift from crisis to recovery is more difficult.	Satisfactorily	CARE's response is essential a 'recovery' and is designed to exit with distribution of rice seed ready for the planting season in June. However, the communities will continue to require additional support over the traditional 'lean' season until rice harvest in November. CARE has been working with WFP to highlight the need for targeted food distribution of a balanced food basket. It is unknown if WFP emergency stocks of rice can be distributed in time to fill this gap. Extension workers are well positioned to follow up with routine monitoring but additional support and training may be needed.

5. Improving acute malnutrition requires integrated response based on sound understanding of local causes of malnutrition not just food aid	Satisfactorily	The project has included MUAC <sup>3</sup> indicators in the log-frame but it is not clear how this will be verified. Although some opportunities have been missed for greater linkages to community health services, generally speaking village services and outreach are very weak and limited awareness raising and capacity development could be achieved in a 6 month project.
6. Even in slow onset disasters participation continues to be traded off against other program demands	Weak	More could have been done to consult communities earlier in a slow onset crisis. CARE was newly operational in Attapeu. However the RTE team feels that the balance of focus and human resources favoured logistics and procurement over community participation. Poorly facilitated participation may have reinforced traditional power structures that marginalize certain groups. To date participation is not being well-monitored
7. Not all targeting strategies work in all circumstances	Satisfactorily	The complexities of targeting have taken a considerable amount of project time and human resources. CARE may need to do a further review of its targeting strategy given the parameters and dependence on government criteria and data.
8. Coordination and partnership require commitment and a recognition of their benefits	Good	Coordination and partnership have taken time and commitment in the initial set up. This is essential in the Lao environment and the project is currently reaping the benefits. However, this relationship also needs to be nurtured during the implementation phase.
9. Learning is more likely when it is programmed, facilitated and funded	Very Good	CARE's decision to conduct a RTE shows the commitment to learning and improving in emergency response in the Lao context. The funding of this evaluation by AusAID has provided a safe learning space for CARE. The TOR for the RTE has also been designed to draw out as many practicable recommendation and learning points as possible
10. Risk and vulnerability reduction links to National Disaster Management Strategy	??	??

## Conclusions

CARE should be commended for the speed and decisiveness of its actions to support the most affected populations of Attapeu. CARE has designed a set of interventions that respond to a complex food security emergency situation. CARE's response attempts to capture both the chronic and acute nature of the problem. However at times the RTE team have sensed that the project has an 'identity crisis' as it tries to meet longer term development needs as well as immediate needs to address crisis malnutrition rates. The timeframe was critical in shaping this. A longer term response would have given more opportunities for the assessments which are necessary for so many livelihoods activities, and could have supported the activities to maximize effectiveness. The evaluation of a livelihoods response will always be considered against the immediate needs for food, water and shelter. It is therefore unfortunate that food distribution through WFP has not been organized in a timely way that compliments

<sup>3</sup> Mid-upper Arm Circumference

CARE's response. It should also be acknowledged that the RTE team bring expertise in development programming and are less familiar with emergency interventions. It is from this perspective that many of the activities are viewed. CARE has identified that these areas of southern Laos desperately need longer-term development programming in livelihoods and food security and is continuing to look for funding to undertake this. This would allow some of the interventions already undertaken to be scaled-up, better targeted and evaluated.

Given certain key parameters<sup>4</sup>, CARE has designed and implemented activities that will aid recovery and have strengthened access to basic support services such as clean water which allow the recovery process to be realized.

The challenges arising from the time frame, capacity and operating environment constraints described above are considerable. However, they have been identified, analyzed through the RTE and as this report is being finalized, are already starting to be addressed. CARE's ability to address these challenges and continue to implement effective activities clearly validates the decision to engage.

### **Recommendations for Immediate Action**

1. Review all activities with all counterparts and target communities for their appropriateness and effectiveness to contribute to recovery from the impact of the drought, including fishing nets. This should be based on each communities' specific livelihood conditions (i.e. water filters to communities with a nearby water source, communities not already planting gardens, fishing nets to communities with sufficient and safe fish stocks, water wheels in communities with streams flowing in the dry season). Changes to planned activities should only be done after wide (one time given the timeframe of the project) community level consultations with the end users (villagers including women).
2. Combine training for hygiene kits and water filters with distribution of both to rationalize resources.
3. As a matter of priority, set up community feedback mechanisms from communities to the project, including ensuring women's voice. Given the project short time frame, this could be done through the Extension Workers periodic contact with female and male village leaders (formal and non-formal) and combined with monitoring.
4. Finalize target villages and immediately roll out a communication plan to inform villagers of the entirety of the package they will be receiving including rice seed, so that communities can plan their coping strategies. The total length of the project and the reasons for this should be further explained. This could be done

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<sup>4</sup> Reliance on WFP for food assistance and limited time frame

through a one off community meeting, village authorities or village health volunteers.

5. Establish a monitoring system to collect:
  - a. Forms which include routine data including gender disaggregated training statistics;
  - b. Data (qualitative and quantitative ) on utilization of seeds and other distributed items

The monitoring system used should however not impede implementation of planned activities and may include using village authorities, village health volunteers and random section of target communities for visits by project staff. Well planned Extension Workers movements within their target areas could also allow for some level of monitoring and should include the checking of community to project fed back mechanisms. Work in partnership Health Unlimited and UNICEF, to ensure monitoring data from their projects informs CARE's ongoing analysis.
6. Include basic gender training and practical application into the Attapeu specific TOR of CARE Gender advisor. This should be prioritized above the women's livelihood activities as implementation of such livelihood activities cannot be effective at current capacity levels and CARE is at risk of designing in appropriate activities where women are not fully consulted and that may even reinforce gender norms. Extension workers should be involved in this training.
7. Immediately begin employment of female indigenous translators for the remainder of the hygiene kit and water filter training and distribution and for subsequent activities to ensure that women are informed, can benefit from training and are not excluded from the feedback mechanisms. This should be done after a complete understanding of the existing linguistic groups in the communities has been established and be supported with gender segregated training if requested by women.
8. Maximize the opportunistic use of extension workers and CARE staff to collect village specific data on; ethnicity, housing arrangements, criteria for FHH, and availability of water and traditional coping mechanisms and use this for reflective learning in project. CARE will then be in a better position to adjust approaches for specific villages in order to manage risks related to selection of only certain HH
9. Follow up with HU to get village level data from the overlapping partner villages to inform any changes in activities and to avoid replication of activities.

10. Consider no-cost extension for 2 -3 months to complete outstanding activities, give a longer time frame for women's livelihoods activities, and replication of water wheels and to conduct follow up M&E. Doing this could contribute valuable information to both CARE and AusAID's future emergency response capacity.
11. Review process for collecting goal level indicators especially the data on Nutrition Monitoring (MUAC) and engage in dialogue with health services to get feedback on the current trends and projections for malnutrition rates in the short term.
12. Explore and set up more effective communication systems to inform villagers of visits and distributions including use of mobile phones build on the informal systems already in place to reach remote villages, including role of Kum Ban level (village development cluster) and existing Village Health Volunteers (VHV), to minimize resources and time for travelling by extension works and project staff.

### **Recommendations for Future Action**

#### *Decision to engage*

- The decision to engage should be clearly documented and a **risk assessment completed** to highlight issues that could affect implementation and effectiveness.

This might include:

- Staffing and recruitment
- Relationship and coordination needed to operate in a new location
- Time constraints
- Sustainability
- Exit strategy and/or transition to a development program
- Donor flexibility

#### *Design and planning phase including HR*

- Human resourcing for a future emergency response must include a consultant with local knowledge on livelihoods and or food security to advise an emergency coordinator. Ideally, the initial stages of an emergency response are supervised by an experienced, senior development program manager. It is recognized that periodically there are a number of challenges occurring in the development projects, and this is not always possible. Consideration should be given to resources being committed to a humanitarian response coordination position, who is immediately deployable, and is trained and experienced in the issues raised in this RTE (eg comprehensive assessment, gender analysis, targeting)..
- Country office emergency preparedness should include an up-to-date roster or database of both national and international staff who could be contacted as soon as the decision to engage is made. It should be noted in the database which of these staff have competencies in gender mainstreaming, other cross cutting issues and participatory assessment techniques.
- To enhance accountability, CARE should establish a community feedback

mechanism and a set of parameters for community engagement. Adherence to International standards and good practices on this issue and others could be included in Emergency Managers TOR so that it can be effectively monitored and assessed by the line manager. Development of a Lao specific community engagement plan could be undertaken as part of the Country Office Emergency Preparedness Plan

- Women's Livelihood Activities require a long-term commitment and detailed analysis across a number of dimensions as set out in the CAREs Women's Empowerment Framework. This type of activity should only be considered as part of emergency programming when there is sufficient experience in-country on programming for women's empowerment and there is a real likelihood of continuing funds to sustain the initiative.

#### *Implementation*

- CARE would benefit from developing a clearer communication strategy for both government officials and communities to explain CARE's humanitarian mandate and development programming principles especially in regard to targeting of the poorest and most vulnerable.
- An internal review of the selection of target communities for both Ketsana and Attapeu responses should be conducted and lessons learned fed into future emergency programming in Lao PDR.
- The RTE was very useful to analyse and capture learning about the emergency response. However, external RTE should enhance but not replace the need for ongoing participatory learning mechanisms that promotes analysis and reflection and has the potential to improve staff ownership..

#### *Gender*

- Gender analysis should be a mandatory output in the TOR of the Emergency Coordinator and preferably this should be done in the design phase. At least one focal point within the CARE country office should be trained to conduct or guide a team through a basic gender analysis for emergency program. Ideally this would be part of the role of the CARE Laos Gender Advisor if this position becomes a permanent staff post.
- Any future emergency program would benefit from capacity strengthening in gender awareness of all CARE program staff. This is particularly important in emergencies when recruitment or secondment of staff from other CARE projects is a widely used approach which is shown to be effective.

#### *Exiting*

Time and resources should be provided for follow up evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the response. Where this is not possible due to funding or other reasons, capacity should be built for local authority staff to continue monitoring and evaluating the intervention. This is particularly important for reoccurring slow-onset disasters such as floods and drought.



### Annex 1 – Tables of Findings

<b>Activities in progress Focus groups – Xaydonekhong Village</b>		
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Women’s FG</b>	<b>Men’s FG</b>
Appropriateness	<b>Vegetable gardens and agriculture tools</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vegetable gardens were useful but limited by lack of water near houses</li> <li>• Vegetable gardens position too far from houses, some suggestion of lessened security( theft) which led to decreased motivation to be bear the risk of being the first to plant</li> <li>• Tools had multiply other uses not just for planting seeds</li> <li>• Seed varieties appropriate to local area and past experience</li> <li>• Due to limited water, many people won’t plant seeds until rains arrive, delaying result of intervention</li> <li>• Seeds eased the situation, easy to produce if have equipment</li> <li>• Vegetable species were appropriate to local areas Water is far away</li> <li>• Priority needs are rice, rice seed and water</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In general it was felt that support for vegetable gardens was useful. However, given drought had reduced rice yields there was agreement that rice was a more critical requirement than vegetables.  <i>“We are already out of rice”.</i></li> <li>• Vegetable species selected were well suited for the local environment.</li> <li>• There is not water available nearby so we will plant the gardens in our upland field during the rainy season.</li> <li>• Numerous local varieties of vegetables are already being planted and seed was stocked.</li> </ul>
	<b>Hygiene Kits and water filter</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women could not articulate connection between drought and hygiene kits</li> <li>• Use of water tank limited by human resources to fetch water to keep it topped up</li> <li>• Relation between hygiene kits and drought not understood</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too early to know but do not see the link between this and hunger</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Water filter useful for those most vulnerable , for people who don't have time to boil and collect safe water</li> <li>No knowledge of additional activities (head of village )</li> </ul>	
Efficiency	<b>Vegetable gardens and agriculture tools</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Well ordered distribution</li> <li>No mention / recognition of project attempts to prioritize women in distribution</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Timing and coordination was well done.</li> <li>Unclear on origins of the activity (project, Village Authorities or higher level of government)</li> <li>Training did not include a demonstration due to a lack of water in the village.</li> <li>Methods of distribution to selected families understood as a limitation in project budget.</li> </ul>
	<b>Hygiene Kits and water filters</b>	
	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Headman told about training and we went.</li> </ul>
Coordination and participation	<b>Vegetable gardens and agriculture tools</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Good follow up by head of village to distribute ration cards with those who didn't come to training</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coordination with communities was clear and well planned.</li> <li>Participation included women and men.</li> <li>Unclear on origins of the activity (project, village authorities or higher level of government).</li> <li>Village Head used as a means of coordination.</li> </ul>
	<b>Hygiene kits and water filters</b>	
	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Headman told us about training and we went.</li> </ul>
Equity	<b>Vegetable gardens and agriculture tools</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Unclear about selection of families to receive seeds and vegetable gardens</li> <li>Dissatisfaction with choice of HH rather than family as unit of distribution caused 'small conflict'.</li> <li>Everyone should get the same</li> <li>Potential for man to promote themselves as head of household to obtain tools, at expense of FHH (</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Complete coverage not doable due to budget constraints.</li> <li>Some households have two families but this is alright as they farm together.</li> <li>Women attended training.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>usually mother in law)</li> <li>• Rational for selection of some HH was given as insufficient donor funding, 65 HH selected as experiment</li> <li>• Rationale for HH as unit of distribution rather than family was not well understood, considered unfair</li> <li>• Resulted in small conflicts</li> </ul>	
	<b>Hygiene kits and water filters</b>	
	-	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not understand why everyone does not receive these.</li> </ul>
Effectiveness	<b>Vegetable gardens and agriculture tools</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Would help to provide some food but wouldn't solve the 'rice' problem</li> <li>• Vegetables 'not enough' still hungry</li> <li>• No articulation of need for range of vitamins and minerals especially for children</li> <li>• Effectiveness limited by water problems</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have not planted the gardens do to a lack of water, will be planted later in the year.</li> <li>• Not sure of the effectiveness</li> </ul>
	<b>Hygiene kits and water filters</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not know yet</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not know as we have not received them yet.</li> </ul>
<b>Activities in progress – Focus groups – Darkpok Khao Village</b>		
<b>Theme</b>	<b>Women's FG</b>	<b>Men's FG</b>
Appropriateness	<b>Vegetable gardens and agriculture tools</b>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seeds considered useful ( in some cases to add to existing stocks) and could use stream water for irrigating vegetables</li> <li>• Seeds useful to stop some of hunger but rice, chilli and salt considered as more beneficial</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In general it was felt that support for vegetable gardens was useful. However, given drought had reduced rice yields there was full agreement that rice was a more critical requirement than vegetables. <i>“We are still hungry after eating vegetables”</i>.</li> <li>• Vegetable species selected can be planted in the local environment but not familiar with all of them (tomatoes).</li> <li>• Numerous local varieties of vegetables are already being planted and seed is available</li> </ul>
	<b>Hygiene kits and water filters</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not aware that they were receiving any</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not aware that they were receiving any</li> </ul>
Efficiency	<b>Vegetable gardens and agriculture tools</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribution well organized ( lines and vouchers)</li> <li>• Training was clear and was relevant new information</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Timing and coordination of training and distribution was well done.</li> </ul>
Coordination and participation	<b>Vegetable gardens and agriculture tools</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of understanding of CARE project and all interventions</li> <li>• Mostly men attended initial meetings</li> <li>• Skepticism and lack of trust about CARE’s engagement</li> <li>• One person from each HH went to training, not always same person who went to initial meeting</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordination with communities was clear and well planned.</li> <li>• Participation included women and men.</li> <li>• Unclear on origins of the activity (project, village authorities or higher level of government).</li> <li>• Village Head used as a means of coordination.</li> </ul>

Equity	<b>Vegetable gardens and agriculture tools</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Issues with HH as the distribution unit, seen as unfair</li> <li>• Could not articulate what project was doing and what seeds she had received</li> <li>• Some awareness that activities targeted FHH but at least one e.g. of FHH who didn't receive ( went to her son-in-law)</li> <li>• Lack of understanding of CARE's targeting " support should be to everyone"</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All families are impacted as they all rely on rice as their main food source.</li> <li>• 66 of 107 families participated. Complete coverage not doable due to budget constraints.</li> <li>• Methods of distribution to selected families understood as a limitation in project budget.</li> <li>• Multi-family household received only one seed and tool set which is not enough. In some cases, these were taken by the most powerful family in the household.</li> <li>• All families would like their own garden sets as this is how they farm.</li> <li>• Both men and women attended the training.</li> </ul>
Effectiveness	<b>Vegetable gardens and agriculture tools</b>	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training was good and included information on how to compost</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Training did not include a demonstration.</li> <li>• Too early to know but we already have vegetables and they cannot replace rice.</li> <li>• Will only plant CARE seed for now.</li> </ul>

<b>CARE Project staff</b>	
	<b>CARE staff</b> –(1 women and 4 men)
<b>Theme</b>	
Appropriateness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Communities have long and short term needs which some project activities are addressing these and others are not.</li> <li>• Rice (1), water (2) and rice seed (3) are priorities.</li> <li>• Rice distribution is very appropriate especially in paddy areas where there is less nature related (forests) coping mechanisms.</li> <li>• Gardens are not appropriate in communities low in water or far from source.</li> <li>• Some of vegetable seed provided is suitable for planting in the dry season and can be saved until then.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hygiene kits are useful but do not address the village needs.</li> <li>• Water filter is appropriate as storage.</li> <li>• Rice seed involves some risk, especially the upland varieties.</li> <li>• Fishing nets may not be appropriate in some areas. Specific conditions for use need to be known.</li> <li>• Agriculture tools can be used for multiple activities.</li> </ul>
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Changes in criteria to select communities and families have meant collecting new data and losing valuable project time.</li> <li>• Government – project relations are good.</li> </ul>
Coordination and participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Extension teams are very important as they work at the community level.</li> <li>• Extension teams are not project staff and are sometimes difficult to coordinate with and need monitoring and have limited time.</li> <li>• Some villages are sub-divided into hamlets or sections which makes coordination difficult.</li> <li>• Distribution is made more difficult as many people are not in village when project visits and miss registration.</li> <li>• People move from or into the village without informing the Village Head and therefore miss distribution.</li> <li>• Name registered is not the same as the person who receives materials.</li> </ul>
Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some people do not understand why the project used criteria to separate families into poor and non-poor. Some disagreements on the system.</li> <li>• Village Head explained about the family selection as staff could not visit every village.</li> <li>• Community selection has been challenging and may not result in all poor families participating.</li> <li>• Criteria for community and family selection have changed and so have those participating.</li> <li>• Gender and women’s focus is not understood by villagers.</li> <li>• In some cases, households with multiple families have had the vegetable seeds and tools taken by the one family head.</li> <li>• Selection was done by foreign specialist and government.</li> <li>• Percent of poor families was used but in some communities all the families are actually poor (i.e.: criteria used separate families that are all poor)</li> <li>• Government wants to include all families to avoid conflict.</li> </ul>
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community level assessments have not been detailed which makes understanding real community needs difficult.</li> <li>• There has been no time for demonstration gardens.</li> <li>• Rice food distribution is delayed until communities are out of rice. Some still have rice other do not.</li> <li>• At this time of the year people of the time to search for food.</li> <li>• The 4 districts worked in are diverse and have upland and lowland activities which have different needs.</li> <li>• It is difficult to specialize on communities and their specific livelihood needs when the activities are already in the plan.</li> </ul>

<b>Gender related themes</b>	
Gender Responsiveness of project (design/ staffing/ women's engagement etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Project was responsive to gender through the design of the activities including but not limited to women's livelihood activities.</li> <li>• Recognition that project staffing was not gender balanced, because of the speed of the 'emergency response'</li> <li>• Limited focus on gender was an acceptable trade off to meet the need for a fast response, much work with gender involves long-term behavior change and it is unrealistic to expect this in an emergency</li> <li>• Areas where project is most responsive to women's needs are distribution and targeting of FHH</li> <li>• No team member received any formal training on gender for this project</li> <li>• Gender balance of extension workers was hard to achieve despite staff explaining its importance to district staff.</li> <li>• Having female extension workers was problematic due to concerns over safety and security, and cultural appropriateness of travelling – team could not suggest ways to solve this problem</li> <li>• Only 1 of 8 extension workers are female</li> <li>• Suggestion that additional female community support worker was needed as women can relate to other women better and become role models for positive change. Project would need to guarantee safety</li> </ul>
Gender appropriate activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activities have been designed around women's work, acknowledging women's key role in provision of daily food for the family</li> <li>• Some staff could articulate the rationale for the project activity design and explained how women were disproportionately affected by the drought and how the hygiene kits would reduce disease and illness of both adults and children thereby freeing up women's time to focus on finding and producing food</li> </ul>
Gender targeting and equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Selection of FHH was appropriate in order to target those most in need but has been hard to implement as definition of FHH is not uniform and can be interpreted in such a way that favours men in family ( in case of son / son in law)</li> <li>• Selection of certain households including FHH has not been well understood and has led to calls by both men and women for more equal distribution.</li> </ul>
Benefits for women	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not yet clear if project has been successful in benefitting women</li> <li>• Staff awareness of need for gender sensitive monitoring to assess the project benefits, this system is yet to be set up</li> <li>• CARE have used opportunities in community meetings and distribution to actively promote women's rights and to put this into practice into the organization of the distribution</li> <li>• The team felt this was innovative and no other NGO has been doing this, however some communities were quite confused by the approach, could not see its relevance and attempted to disregard the CARE distribution rules.</li> <li>• Recommendations that all NGOs should apply the same standards on gender for community distribution</li> <li>• Not yet clear if the women's livelihoods activities can be successful given the short time, hard to develop livelihoods activities that will see benefits within the lifetime of the project</li> </ul>

<b>Provincial Government Agencies</b>			
	<b>Labour and Social Welfare</b>	<b>Agriculture and Forestry</b>	<b>Lao Women's Union</b>
<b>Themes</b>		(2 people interviewed)	
Appropriateness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Some activities are appropriate for some villages.</li> <li>• Fishing nets are not appropriate as fish stocks in the province are not healthy from over fishing. Mining has contaminated rivers in some areas and fish should not be eaten.</li> <li>• Water filters in areas of water but some areas lack water and need assistance in clean water (wells or gravity fed) to allow for crop production.</li> <li>• Rice seed is appropriate but performance should be monitored. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vegetables seeds provide food in relatively short growing time, some modern varieties well received by traditional communities</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rice seed are very useful but are risky as the varieties to be used have not been tested much in Attapeu; especially the upland varieties.</li> <li>• Integrated farming would protect communities from drought.</li> <li>• Many non-timber forest species could be marketed for income.</li> <li>• Water wheels are good as villagers maintain and fix them.</li> <li>• Not appropriate for dry season as 2 of 3 water wheels currently cannot be used due to low stream levels. Useful to water rice seedlings in mid-year.</li> <li>• Some concern over ownership (individual or community) and future use.</li> <li>• Future vulnerability reduction should include large livestock or fish raising as now villagers go to the Policy Bank with high (13%) interest rates.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Women need jobs to generate income (weaving and small livestock).</li> <li>• Women rely on non-timber forest products to sell and buy rice.</li> <li>• Microfinance would be useful.</li> <li>• Should look at the specific needs of the women's skills in each area</li> <li>• Activities in work plan are appropriate.</li> </ul>
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Coordination with CARE is good.</li> <li>• Activity plans are available.</li> <li>• Cooperation leading up to MoU signing was good.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Aware of all donors involved, amount and MoU steps.</li> <li>• Project works directly with district which is quick.</li> <li>• Work on the water wheels was well planned and implemented.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LWU is not sure of project efficiency.</li> </ul>
Coordination and participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not sure of participation at the community level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concept note and proposal was done by CARE with no input from PAFO.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LWU not involved in project formulation.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MoU was signed with PLSW</li> <li>• Project plans available.</li> <li>• Main counter-part is here and participates in activities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No activity consultations other than water wheels.</li> <li>• Not aware of project plans and activities; “observer position”. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Never been to training or distribution.</li> <li>• Good coordination with CARE for MOU, technical support on selecting seed varieties</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provincial LWU not involved in field work but would like to be.</li> <li>• Not aware of exact project activities.</li> </ul>
Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Not sure of equity at the community level.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Targeting poor families needs to be based on accurate village data.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support a focus on FHH as they are the poorest in communities.</li> <li>• Vegetable gardening mainly women’s work.</li> </ul>
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Too early to compare what difference the CARE intervention has made</li> <li>• Lack of baseline data makes measuring effectiveness difficult.</li> <li>• PAFO and DAFO conduct annual monitoring and evaluation as part of routine work</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Water wheels are only effective during parts of the year in communities that have flowing streams.</li> <li>• Produce from some large well organized gardens may be able to be sold to buy rice.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Do not know the effectiveness of the project.</li> </ul>

<b>Coordinating and cooperating agencies</b>		
	<b>World Food Programme</b>	<b>Health Unlimited</b>
<b>Themes</b>	(1 Project Manager interviewed)	(3 Project Management Staff interviewed in group)
Appropriateness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rice distribution is very appropriate so long as it targets the communities with the greatest need.</li> <li>• Does not know the details of other CARE activities but food production of any type during a drought can be useful.</li> <li>• Some varieties of rice seed may not be appropriate.</li> <li>• Fish nets should be specifically focused (communities</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>and families) to ensure they are used and beneficial.</li> <li>• Communities supplied with vegetable gardens need to have water supplies.</li> </ul>	
Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CARE will distribute WFP supplied rice (72 MT) to 6 communities in Attapeu. Communities selected by CARE.</li> <li>• CARE and WFP have had numerous meeting and communications about food distribution criteria and methods.</li> <li>• Acquisition of rice is slow due to government. District was slow in collecting community level data which was incorrect and collected again. Provincial level document preparation and submission was slow.</li> </ul>	
Coordination and Participation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• WFP and CARE food assessment in late 2010.</li> <li>• The organisations continue to coordinate and stay updated on the status of rice supplies. The staff at CARE is cooperative and easy to coordinate with.</li> </ul>	
Equity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rice is distributed to all families in a village to maintain unity and avoid creating local rice markets.</li> <li>• Only the government can change these criteria.</li> </ul>	
Effectiveness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• It is expected that rice distribution will be effective as there is a very high demand for it.</li> </ul>	

## Annex 2 –KII Questions and FGD Topic Guide

Theme	Topic	Questions	Gender focus
<b>Appropriateness</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Drought , understanding of the situation</li> <li>2. Different vulnerabilities</li> <li>3. Local Coping mechanisms</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can you explain about the drought in 2010 and how it has affected you and your family?</li> <li>• Give some specific examples of things that are different in this lean season (confirm village walk)</li> <li>• How have you and people in this village managed with this situation?( Probe for different eating patterns, labour, workloads, children and education, children health)</li> <li>• What activities do you think would help you to cope with the lean season this year, and prepare you for next year?</li> <li>• What activities do you know about that the project will support for this village?</li> <li>• Do you think these activities are appropriate? (+environment)</li> </ul>	<p>How have women been affected differently from men? Give some e.g.</p> <p>What has been affect on children / pregnant women/ lactating women</p> <p>Do the traditional coping mechanisms affect men or women most (how?)</p> <p>If men go out of village – effect on women</p> <p>If sell some assets who decides what it is spent on?</p> <p>If smaller portions / number of meals – effect on women</p> <p>Who decides what coping mechanisms to use in a crisis?</p> <p>Do you think they will help mainly women or men? Why? How?</p>

<b>Efficiency and participation</b>	Efficiency of distribution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How did you first hear about the project?</li> <li>• Did you participate in any meetings about the project?</li> <li>• What have you received from the distribution so far?</li> <li>• How was the distribution? (organization, information, fair, orderly..) How do you think it could be improved next time?</li> </ul>	<p>Who went to the meetings?</p> <p>Were women invited to the meetings? Did they contribute / participate</p> <p>Do you think the distribution was fair for women? Why / Why not?</p> <p>Was the distribution for each person or each family? Who usually represented the family</p>
<b>Equity</b>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Selection of activities</li> <li>2. Selection of target villages</li> <li>3. Selection of households</li> </ol>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Why do you think this village was chosen to be part of the project</li> <li>• Do you know why these activities were selected for this village?</li> <li>• How have people in your village been selected for certain activities? (Ethnicity /gender)</li> <li>• What do you think about this?</li> <li>• Does everyone agree with this</li> </ul>	<p>Do you think women's needs for help is different from men's?</p> <p>How is a FHH defined? Why do you think they have been targeted</p> <p>Are there any other groups who need special support but have not received it?</p>
<b>Effectiveness</b>	1. Activities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Activities – How was the training? Can you explain some of the things you learned from the training? Who received it? Will it enable you to .....</li> <li>• This village will also receive X other activities, how do you expect</li> </ul>	<p>Benefit to women and other vulnerable group?</p> <p>What has been / will be the likely effects on women's work?</p>

		they will help you to recover from this drought	(for each activity)
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ask for each activity</li> <li>• Are there any groups who will not be able to benefit as much as others</li> <li>• Can you suggest other activities that may be more suitable for you or for this village?</li> </ul>	(Veg. for food/sale) Are there any other activities that would help women improve their food / livelihood situation
<b>Outcomes/ recovery</b>	1. Expectation of sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This project is only for 6 months; do you think these activities will be sustainable? Which ones? How?</li> </ul>	Which of the activities will help women be more prepared for future problems like a drought
	2. Preparedness for future shocks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If there was another drought next year, would these activities help you to be more prepared</li> </ul>	

### FGD Topic Guide

1. Describe the effect of the drought on people in village, who was most affected, equally affected?
2. What sort of activities can help in this kind of situation?
3. Tell me what do you know about activities from CARE project? How appropriate do you think they are for your situation? How were you informed of them?
4. Describe about the training
5. Describe the distribution (good and bad)?
6. Effect of activities – so far and in the future
7. Suggestion for improvements/ different activities

### Staff FGD

1. What do you think the communities need to help them through the drought?
2. Do you think the activities are appropriate for the target villages? Why/ why not?
3. Could you tell us how target villages were selected?
4. Do you think all the target villages have the same needs (for this emergency response)?
5. What do you think about the decision to select only some households for certain activities? Has this worked well? Have there been any problems?
6. When you go out to the villages, and see the real situation, how do you adjust the project? From the last two days (Khampy, Singpeng) what would you like to improve?

### Gender

7. Did CARE explain the way the project focuses on gender? How /give examples
8. Are there any specific groups in a village that are most vulnerable to effects of the drought? How well has the project met their needs?
9. Has the project tried to meet the different needs of men and women? (How?)
10. What have been some successes and challenges in ensuring women benefit from this emergency response?
11. If you could have had 1 or 2 extra staff on this project, in which area would they have been most useful? (admin, procurement, distribution, monitoring, supervision of extension workers etc)
12. What have been the successes and challenges in coordination with WFP, HU, PAFO, PLSW, Extension workers etc.?

### Validation

1. Have villagers been informed of whole process? Activities?
2. Villages told us rice to know is their first choice – do you agree? Think it true?
3. Veg seed not being used to max potential in 2 villages, how representative do you think this is?
4. What are the challenges of working with multiple ethnic groups? How well do you think you have been prepared for this?
5. We have seen and villagers have been positive about the distribution and logistics, how have you set up such an efficient system? Any improvement?

### Recommendations

What recommendations do you have to improve the project?

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i IASC Inter Agency Standing Committee for Gender and Emergencies [www.humanitarianreform.org](http://www.humanitarianreform.org)

ii Albone, S - 2010 An Evaluation of Typhoon Ketsana Livelihoods Recovery Activities with a Focus on Gender Analysis, CARE International in Lao PDR

iii IASC