



CARE Cambodia: Preparing for the Strategic Plan Unifying Framework & Underlying Causes of Poverty Workshop in Cambodia

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Introduction

CARE Cambodia designed an ambitious iterative process for developing their 5-Year Strategic Plan. One part of the design was to hold a 3-day training workshop on CARE's Unifying Framework and Underlying Causes of Poverty. This short paper highlights some of the key aspects of the 3-day training workshop process.

Purpose

The purpose of the workshop was two-fold. The first purpose was to train CARE Cambodia staff on CARE's Unifying Framework (UF) and Underlying Causes of Poverty (UCP) work, paying particular attention to how the UF and UCP evolved and how they relate to CARE's Vision. The second purpose was to use the workshop as a space for discussing and analyzing, in an experiential way, the underlying causes of poverty in Cambodia, in preparation for the upcoming strategic planning process.

CARE Cambodia's Strategic Plan Design

CARE Cambodia's strategic planning process was designed to build knowledge and understanding over time rather than analyze data and make strategic decisions at one critical stage. Its design includes several distinct moments for data analysis and discussion (see outline below). Prior to the UF/UCP workshop, CARE Cambodia held a causal analysis meeting (SOM Meeting July 2007); and a comprehensive secondary literature review was conducted (Mugnai 2007¹) which includes data across sectors as well as key issues such as gender, migration & human trafficking, climate change, avian influenza, etc.

This strategic planning process design allowed us to see the 3-day UF & UCP workshop as a stage in the iterative process. We were able to combine the data already generated with staff expertise and local knowledge, to help CARE Cambodia staff better understand the UF & UCP work, and how they can be used to enrich the strategic planning process. The multi-stage analytical design allowed us focus our efforts on training and increasing staff understanding, and we did not have to worry about getting the analysis 100% correct (as if they ever are). We hope that this training and experiential learning will provide the groundwork for a compelling strategic plan.

CARE Cambodia Strategic Plan Design:

- SOM meeting data review and analysis (July 2007)
- Cambodia Analysis Papers (Mugnai 2007):
Comprehensive Secondary Data Review
- 3-Day UF and UCP Training Workshop: Using Data to Enhance Learning (August 2007)

Upcoming:

- CARE Cambodia staff consultation (programmatic and organizational)
- Key Partners in Development Workshop with partners, community representatives, and representatives from key government departments)
- LRSP Workshop

¹ Cambodia Analysis Papers: A Comprehensive Secondary Data Review, prepared by Margherita Mugnai, CARE Cambodia intern, 2007.

The Workshop

The following is a brief overview of the CARE Cambodia Unifying Framework and Underlying Causes Workshop.

The Vision Circle

The Vision Circle is designed to build community around the Vision at the beginning of the workshop, to forefront the vision as the cornerstone of all CARE's work. The words of the Vision are written on large sheets of paper, and cut into sections based on how many participants are in the workshop. The sections of paper are then rolled up and tied into scrolls with ribbon (see photos above).



To begin the exercise, we asked each staff person to select a scroll and open and read it. Their task was to find another member of staff who had the scrolls with the Vision sections that came before and after the word(s) on their scroll. This exercise created a lot of energy as people strolled around looking for their partners and trying to remember the words to the Vision. Once everyone was in the correct place and the words to the Vision were in order, we read the Vision around the circle. Each person was asked to read the words they were holding with "unshakeable commitment" one after the other. Participants were then asked to comment to the rest of the group about what CARE's Vision means to them, or what particularly stood out for them during the reading.

Participant comments on the Vision:

- For me the most powerful aspect is that we are now talking about social justice.
- Hope, tolerance, and social justice, isn't that what we all want?
- I was struck by the words our unshakeable commitment.
- It made me realize just how aspirational our Vision really is.

Exploring Poverty

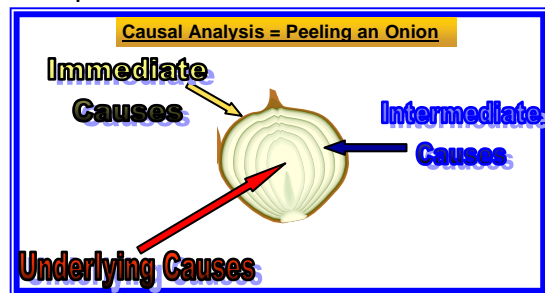
Until recently CARE's work has mainly addressed immediate (emergency) and intermediate level causes of poverty. As a result, CARE field staff have minimal experience analyzing and designing interventions to address underlying causes of poverty. Typically when we ask staff to tell us what they think are the underlying causes of poverty in a country context, they often respond by citing intermediate level causes: lack of access to health or education, maternal mortality, low agricultural productivity, lack of infrastructure, rather than underlying causes. The Exploring Poverty exercise is designed to help staff become more comfortable differentiating between

Hierarchy of Causes of Poverty: Definitions & Some Examples from the Literature		
Immediate Causes	<p>These are causes that are directly relate to life and survival and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Disease • Famine • Environmental disasters • Conflict 	Addressing the Underlying Causes of Poverty = Improving Human Conditions, Social Positions, & Enabling Environment
Intermediate Causes	<p>These causes affect people's well-being and opportunities for development and livelihood security, and include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low livelihood (agric or income) productivity; • Limited livelihood opportunities; • Lack of skills; inadequate access to food; • Inadequate care for women and children; • Lack of basic services, e.g., health, education, water and sanitation, education 	
Underlying Causes	<p>These causes are related to the structural underpinnings of underdevelopment, specifically social systems and political and economic structures, and environmental issues. They involve:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economic: Inequitable resource distribution (distributive justice); globalization; terms of trade; structural adjustment • Political: Poor governance and institutional capacity; corruption; violent conflict; lack of political will; domination by regional/global superpowers • Social: Marginalization, inequality, social exclusion (based on gender, class, ethnicity); harmful societal norms, customs and cultural practices, over-population • Environmental: Carrying capacity; resource-based conflict; environmental disasters; propensity for human disease; propensity for crop & livestock disease 	

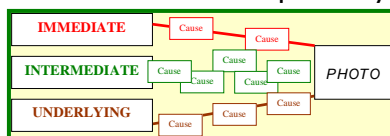
immediate, intermediate, and underlying causes of poverty, with a focus on the distinction between intermediate and underlying causes, the area where people tend to have the most difficulty.

We started by brainstorming some of the key underlying causes of poverty in Cambodia, and followed this with a presentation on CARE’s Hierarchy of Causes (see above right), which provides a definition for each level of causation, along with some examples from the development literature on each level of cause. CARE’s Hierarchy of Causes was developed as a simple three-level classification in an effort to help CARE staff more systematically differentiate between the various levels of poverty.

Since the development of the Hierarchy, some staff have told us that putting the list of definitions in a table gives an overly linear impression of the levels of causes. To overcome this, we also used two other graphics to explain the concepts. The first is the “onion” analogy developed by SWARMU staff at a recent training workshop hosted by CARE Zambia². Staff at the workshop felt that the search for underlying causes is more “like peeling an onion” (see right). We also used an analogy of an iceberg to illustrate that what we may see, may only be symptoms of a much more deeply rooted problem. Different analogies are welcome as long as they help staff understand CARE’s *causal level definitions*, and we encourage staff to be creative.



After discussing the Hierarchy of Causes of Poverty, we used photographs to generate more in-depth discussion about the levels of causation³. Prior to the workshop, staff were asked to send in 8X10 photo(s) that they felt illustrated poverty in Cambodia. Participants worked in groups to brainstorm and discuss the causes of poverty that they felt the photographs represented. They then selected one photo that they felt best represented poverty to explore in more detail. Finally, they developed a list of the causes of poverty that they saw represented in the photo, and separated them into immediate, intermediate, and underlying causal categories.



Using the colors of the Cambodia flag, we used different colored string to post the causes between the level of cause and the photo.

² SWARMU and IPFT joined forces to design and conduct a Training of Facilitators Workshop in June 2007 hosted by CARE Zambia. Many of the exercises used in Cambodia were developed by the SWARMU-IPFT facilitation team. We were also lucky to have Kath Copley, a skilled facilitator and learning expert, on the SWARMU TOF facilitation team. The workshop report and facilitation guide can soon be found on the CARE portal.

³ The photo exercise was developed by Jennifer Rowell at the CARE UF Urban Governance Workshop (2006).

Each group reported on their discussion, and a question and answer session followed. In many cases, the participants and facilitators questioned the group on why they chose to put a cause at a certain level. Our goal was to have a discussion that would help staff think through the definitions and logic of the different levels of causation. The facilitation approach was to probe and question, rather than correct, as we knew we had three days with which to build staff capacity. The questioning, however, often led staff to realign causes with different levels.

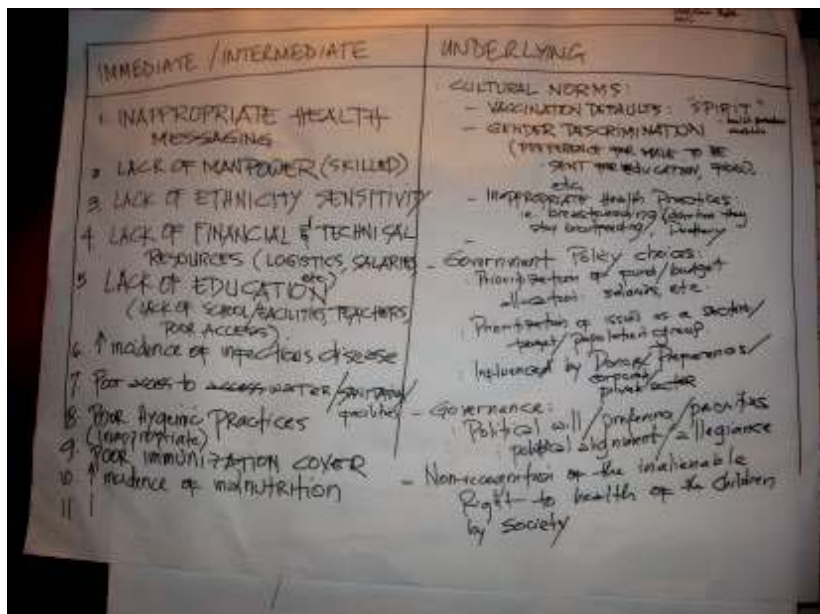
Expanding the picture

Prior to this workshop (July 2007), CARE Cambodia had already held one workshop to explore causes of poverty, primarily according to specific categories. The workshop analyzed and documented findings based on the following five indicators: poverty rates, mortality of children under one year of age, mortality of children under 5 years of age, and women's illiteracy. We decided to weave the findings from the SOM workshop into the following exercise.

In groups, participants reviewed with the findings from a section of the SOM Meeting report listed above to refresh their memories about the SOM Meeting findings and to update any participants who had not attended the previous workshop. They then took the SOM findings and listed them by level of causation. This time, however, in order to enhance the focus on identifying underlying causes, we merged immediate and intermediate causes into one category.

This exercise proved very interesting because the SOM workshop analysis was done differently according to each category and the outcomes were very much sector specific. When the findings were listed according to level of cause, it was much easier to see the cross-sectoral nature of the previous findings. This reaffirms the need for cross-sector solutions and a program rather than project approach.

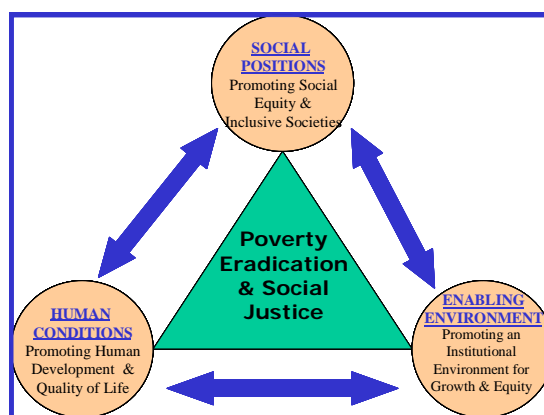
We then went back to the findings from the photo exercise and compared those findings to the SOM findings. The comparison identified considerable overlap; and more importantly, it identified many additional underlying causes that had not previously emerged. This data comparison allowed more time to practice differentiating between levels of causes, as well as allowing us to enlarge our database with the addition of the SOM Meeting data.



In the plenary report-out, questions from the wider group often resulted in a decision to reassign a cause to a different level. Again, this usually resulted in moving causes that had been identified as underlying to a more appropriate fit at the intermediate level. Over and over this reaffirmed our tendency to think at the intermediate level and the usefulness of this type of training to push our analytical thinking and our comfort level with working with underlying causes of poverty.

The Unifying Framework: The Triangle

We began discussion of the Unifying Framework for Poverty Eradication and Social Justice (UF) using the simple triangle diagram, which focuses on the three final outcome areas of the Unifying Framework⁴. We discussed the fact that the UF was developed to show how CARE's conceptual approaches (i.e., HLS, RBA, GED) fit together. We also talked about how the UF shifts us to think about our work more holistically, and, importantly, in terms of desired outcomes – to identify the change we want to see in the world? We discussed our belief that in order to achieve CARE's Vision, there is a need to work across the Unifying Framework's three final outcome areas: social positions, their human conditions, and the enabling environment. Below is a synopsis of how we discuss the final outcome areas.



Social Positions is about supporting people's efforts to improve their position and social status in their own society. It is about supporting people's efforts to live in dignity, rather than being viewed and treated as second or third class citizens in their own societies by their own fellow citizens. In essence, it is about supporting people's efforts to use their voice and organizational capacity to weave the fabric for an inclusive and pro-poor society and not merely a pro-poor political environment⁵.

Human Conditions is about supporting people's efforts to improve their lives. It is about people being able to work and make a living, as well as having for improving their standard of living. It is about having access to basic services: health care, education, and clean water, for example. It is about people becoming livelihood-secure so that they can manage risks and cope with uncertainty. Essentially, improving human conditions is about people having opportunities and capabilities to improve their well-being and live a dignified life, while at the same time contributing to a secure future for generations to come.

⁴ The Triangle was adapted from a similar graphic developed by CARE Ethiopia (2005).

⁵ A pro-poor political environment is a critical aspect of the Enabling Environment.

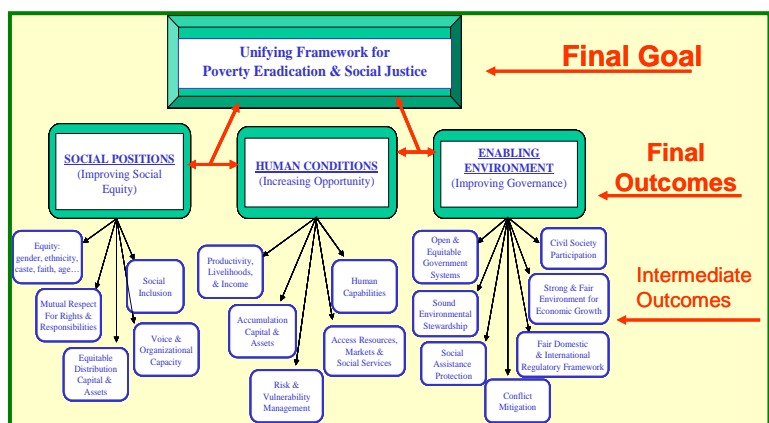
Enabling Environment is about supporting efforts to create a sound and fair institutional environment⁶. It is about promoting efforts to ensure that Government recognizes and respects human rights; is open to political participation; promotes fair economic growth and trade; and provides a sound legal and regulatory framework. It is about promoting a political environment where civil society can safely engage and contribute to the political process and the development of the enabling environment. It is about promoting policies that encourage growth while ensuring that private sector and other economic forces operate in a socially responsible manner.

Beyond the Triangle

After The Triangle discussion, we moved to a discussion of the intermediate outcome level of the Unifying Framework. The intermediate outcomes can be considered the stepping stones to enable us to reach the final outcomes and ultimately the final goal. The Unifying Framework is a logical model, a simple design with three levels: intermediate outcomes, leading to final outcomes (discussed above), which lead to a final goal.

While the logic is simple, the model has sometimes been perceived as too complex.

This confusion might stem from the original graphic model, for which we have always sought support in improving (see right). Since we have not developed a more satisfactory graphic, we use additional graphics to explain the intermediate outcome levels of the UF in our training sessions to overcome the complexity, confusion, or absolute boredom of the original graphic.



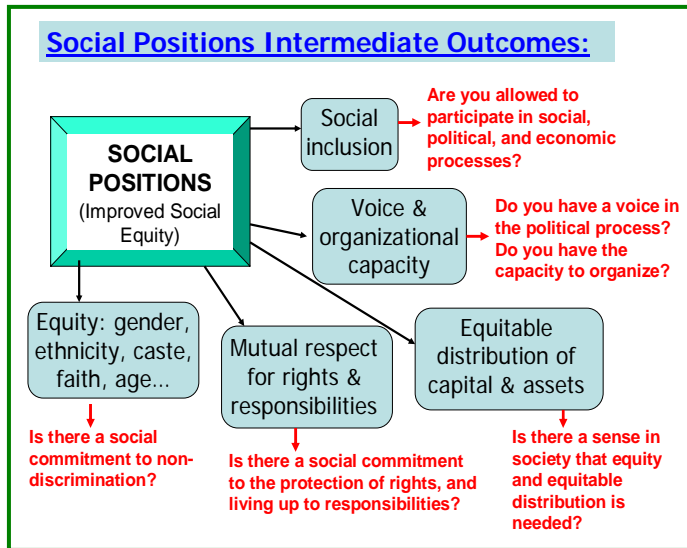
At the CARE Cambodia Workshop we used the following slides to discuss and explained the rationale behind the UF intermediate outcomes⁷: the key variables that lead to improved social positions, human conditions, and enabling environment. To help explain their meaning we developed questions for each intermediate outcome area.

⁶ Institutional environment refers to the systems and mechanisms that keep a society running, e.g., government, private sector, civil society, the economy, politics, social support & protection institutions, etc.

⁷ The Unifying Framework does not cite all intermediate causes related to each final outcome category. In an effort to keep the framework more straightforward, we chose to diagram only the key intermediate outcomes that are critical to improving (or not) the final outcome categories.

Social Positions

For Social Positions, the questions we developed to explain that intermediate outcomes focus on people's ability to live and participate in a society that supports inclusion and equity. So some of the questions might be, "Can people improve their lot in life or move up through the social, class, or caste, etc. ranks? Can people improve their place and perceived value in their own societies?" (see additional questions bulleted below).



- Are people allowed to participate in social, political, and economic processes?
- Do people have the capacity to organize and voice their interests and concerns? Can they do this without fear?
- Is there a social commitment to the protection of rights, and living up to responsibilities?
- Are people discriminated against? Based on what criteria? Is there a social commitment to non-discrimination?
- Is there a social commitment to equality and the universality of rights?

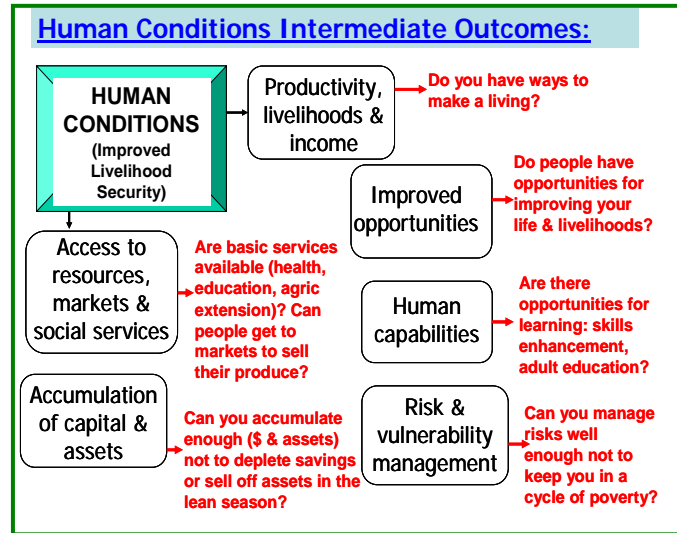
The questions used to help explain Social Positions intermediate outcomes focus not only on the individual and community level, but also importantly at the level of society. The UF deliberately suggests that we need to work not only on political (RBA, governance, etc), but also on the societal factors that lead to and perpetuate poverty, exclusion, and discrimination. Numerous examples are found in history where a group won their political rights, but the lack of emphasis on working to change social views and values resulted in the new "rights holders" continuing to hold an inferior position, as well as quality of life, in the society.

A few examples of CARE's work to improve social positions include CARE's gender empowerment and rights and responsibilities work. Additionally, CARE's work to promote inclusion of ethnic minorities into primary education, and the work to help indigenous women obtain citizenship cards are all efforts that contribute to improving people's social position.

Human Conditions

Human Conditions intermediate outcomes focus on the ability of people to live a healthy and secure life. CARE has worked to improve people's human conditions for much of its history, and the bulk of CARE's work continues to be geared toward improving human conditions and peoples' overall well-being. Below are some of the questions we used to explore the intermediate outcomes for human conditions.

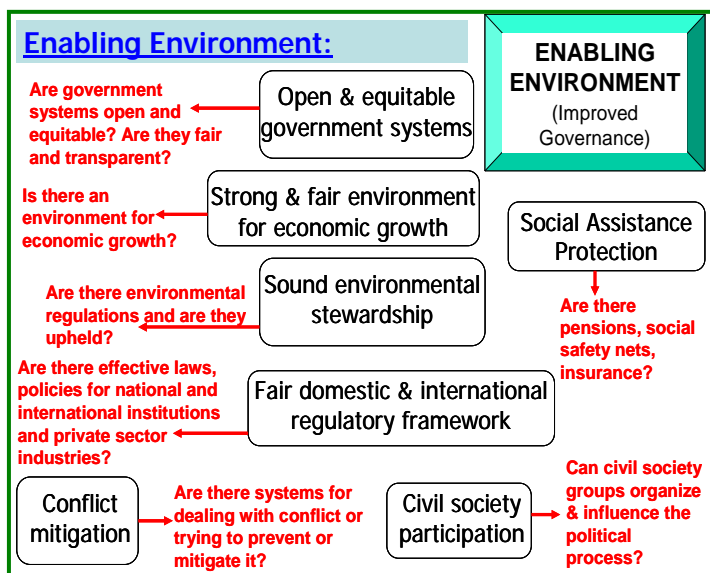
- Do people have ways to make a living?
- Are there opportunities for learning: skills enhancement, adult education?
- Do people have opportunities for improving their life & livelihoods?
- Are basic services available (health, education, agric extension)? Can people get to markets to sell their produce?
- Can people manage risks well enough keep out of a cycle of poverty?
- Can people accumulate enough (\$ & assets) not to deplete savings or sell off assets in the lean season?



While CARE has expanded its role to improve social positions and the enabling environment, improving human conditions continues to be a relevant and important part of CARE’s work. However, to achieve CARE’s Vision, a shift toward playing a facilitation role in improving human conditions is vitally important. In this way, we will help local NGOs expand their efforts to improve human conditions and develop local solutions, as well as local safety nets, to support fellow citizens who are poor, vulnerable, and/or discriminated against.

Enabling Environment

The *Enabling Environment* is about supporting the systems, institutions, and processes that promote a healthy and fair political, institutional, and macroeconomic environment. We used the following questions to help staff better understand the enabling environment intermediate outcomes:



- Are government systems open and equitable, fair and transparent?
- Is there a government recognition of and commitment to human rights?
- Can civil society groups organize & influence the political process?
- Are there laws and policies to protect citizens and promote development?
- Are there environmental regulations and are they upheld?
- Are there systems for mitigating conflict?
- Does government take responsibility for social safety nets, pensions, insurance, etc.?

CARE has several examples of projects that are aimed at improving the enabling environment. Probably CARE’s earliest example is CARE Honduras’ strengthening municipal decentralization project (1996). This project supported government decentralization efforts; developed participatory planning between local government, INGOs, local NGOs, and communities; and helped lay the foundation for an open and transparent municipal government environment.

Improving policies is also an important aspect of improving the enabling environment. Many CARE country offices have worked with ministries to develop, implement, and/or shift policies to improve human conditions (health, education, water and sanitation, etc). As well, CARE has also begun to work with private sector companies, particularly mining firms in Latin America and Asia, to promote social responsibility and environmental considerations.

Following the Beyond the Triangle presentation, we held a plenary session for staff to ask questions for clarification, make suggestions, and express uncertainties. We followed the plenary session with a group exercise to allow staff to experiment with the concepts.

Bringing it all together

Once we had looked at the Unifying Framework, groups were asked to map the list of causes that they had developed by level onto the three outcome areas: social positions, human conditions and enabling environment. This involved linking each cause to its best fit among the three final outcomes. While this is problematic in that a cause can be associated with more than one final outcome, the process of trying to determine the “closest” relationship, or best fit, is hugely important, because it forces us to think through the various relationships across the UF more carefully. Staff were asked to use a table format like the example above.

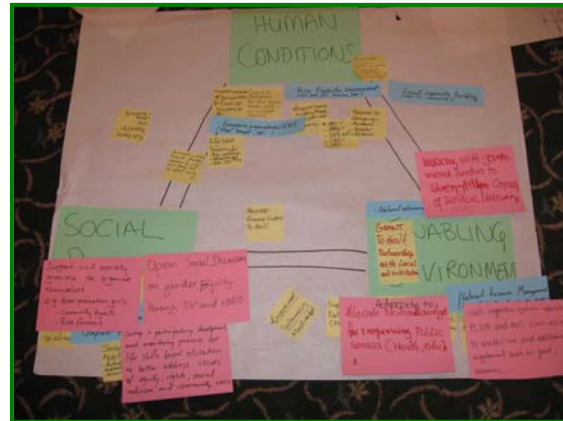
	Human Conditions	Social Positions	Enabling Environment
Intermediate			
Underlying			

This exercise can be frustrating for staff, so facilitators should expect some push back. At first staff might say it can not be done or that the relationships are too complex to make this type of association. However, the push back actually gets the results that we want, which is to get staff talking about and unpacking the issues. For example, a person might say that gender discrimination works across all outcome areas and can not be assigned to an outcome category. Then we might ask if there is a policy of equal rights for women in the country. If the answer is yes, then we ask why women are still discriminated against. This type of questioning often takes us into the murkier area of social positions, where we might actually discover that culture and society are the greatest barriers to ending women’s discrimination. Forcing ourselves to use the UF final outcomes as a screen assists us to deepen our analysis.

Interestingly enough, when underlying causes are mapped onto the UF, we rarely see underlying causes associated with Human Conditions. Instead, most often the human conditions final outcome has the bulk of the intermediate causes and no underlying causes. Some have suggested that this proves that the Unifying Framework is flawed. However, many others have argued that maybe not finding underlying causes at the human conditions level is the reason why after 50 years of concerted international development efforts we have seen so little improvement. Let us hope that this shift to working at the underlying cause level, which takes us into new social and political territory, will bring with it a greater impact on overcoming poverty.

What are we doing now?

The next exercise was to discuss and map CARE Cambodia’s current portfolio onto the Unifying Framework. This allowed staff to step back and look at their current work in light of the intermediate and underlying causes that they have been working with over the past two days. We used the triangle diagram for this exercise and asked each group to list all current interventions/projects on green cards. We then asked them to place the cards onto the diagram beside the associated final outcome category.

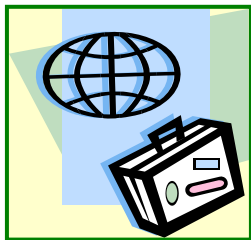


What can we do differently?

After they finished placing the green cards, we asked them to look at the underlying causes of poverty that they identified and mapped, to see if these causes were being addressed through current interventions. If causes were not being addressed, we asked staff to brainstorm interventions that could be implemented to address these causes and write each one on a pink card. We then asked them to add the pink cards to the diagram.

“Unpacking” underlying causes

We used the term “unpacking” to refer to the more detailed analysis required to understand the complexity of underlying causes. While causes at any level require deeper analysis than a workshop like this could provide, underlying causes require special attention due to their complexity and their often culturally or politically sensitive nature. As well, underlying causes require deeper consideration, because CARE has less experience working at this level. CARE Cambodia has started to unpack several critical underlying causes of poverty in Cambodia. Some of the issues for further analysis and unpacking prior to the strategic plan are gender discrimination, land alienation, the notion of “harmful cultural norms”, and failing governance.



Conclusion

The CARE Cambodia Unifying Framework and Underlying Causes of Poverty Workshop included a mix of staff training and data analysis. While analytical rigor was secondary to our training agenda, we hope that the training will result in a knowledge shift that will enhance CARE Cambodia's analytical work for years to come. Workshop participants commented that they found the level of analytical thinking exciting. The staff enthusiasm for this new type of conceptual and analytical thinking will be an important asset to the upcoming analysis workshops that CARE Cambodia has planned prior to the Strategic Planning Workshop. Specifically CARE Cambodia has designed additional exercises (including a Staff Consultation Meeting a Partner Meeting, and further analysis meetings) where they will continue to build and triangulate their knowledge and data base before the actual strategic planning exercise. We hope that this training has helped lay the groundwork for a productive strategic planning exercise.