Project Evaluation

Towards More Freedom of Religion or Belief in Cambodia (TFC)

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List of Abbreviations

(C)SDG	(Cambodian) Sustainable Development Goal
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FoRB	Freedom of Religion or Belief
GESI	Gender Equality and Social Inclusion
KII	Key Informant Interview
MoCR	Ministry of Cults and Religion
MEL	Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning
OECD DAC	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development Development Assistance Committee
OH	Outcome Harvesting
PAR	Participatory Action Research
IP	Indigenous People
TFC	Towards More Freedom of Religion or Belief in Cambodia
SEAFORB	Southeast Asia Freedom of Religion or Belief Network

Executive Summary

Although Cambodia is predominantly Buddhist, with Theravada Buddhism as the state religion, several ethnoreligious minorities, such as Christians and Muslim Chams, coexist alongside smaller communities practising Chinese folk religion, Hinduism and indigenous beliefs. Despite constitutional and international guarantees of freedom of religion or belief (FoRB), these groups often face challenges, including discrimination and land disputes that threaten their religious beliefs and practices. This highlights the critical importance of securing FoRB in Cambodia.

Danmission's project *Towards More Freedom of Religion or Belief in Cambodia (TFC)*, implemented from 2022 to 2024, contributed to a better understanding of FoRB issues among a diverse set of beneficiaries while promoting religious tolerance and interfaith dialogue. Based on the OECD DAC criteria, this end-of-project evaluation assesses the initiative's successes and challenges. Key findings include:

Relevance: The project was closely aligned with the needs of religious minorities and selected Indigenous communities, where a series of research and community engagement conducted pre-project and early on in the project highlighted key challenges, such as worship place registration and land-related spiritual practices. To better strengthen its relevance, the project could have more explicitly outlined its connection to Danmission's broader national and global strategic priorities to align with organisational goals and foster greater synergies across initiatives.

Coherence: As Cambodia's first dedicated FoRB initiative, the project built upon previous efforts to promote religious tolerance and social inclusion. Its intervention logic, grounded in the Participatory Action Research (PAR) process, was a key strength, fostering cross-faith collaboration and mainstreaming FoRB. Yet, the project's reliance on a linear sequence of activities contributed to delayed outcomes. In addition, the project would have benefited from a more comprehensive pre-project needs assessment before developing the project's output and outcome goals. The project could also have put in more resources to more thoroughly consider what the best Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) framework fits the proposed intervention logic and what indicators were required to be tracked for the project to best deliver on its logic.

Effectiveness: The project made notable progress, particularly in fostering inclusivity and reducing religious discrimination, with more significant outcomes at the local level. It successfully created platforms for interfaith dialogue and national-level advocacy. In this context, while engagement with national religious leaders and authorities posed challenges, part of the difficulty at the national level stemmed from the TFC project's limited initiatives toward national stakeholders. Strengthening relationships with national stakeholders and ensuring consistent engagement would be critical for future initiatives.

Efficiency: The project demonstrated an efficient use of resources, with adequate funding for community activities, training and equipment. Some stakeholders noted the limited involvement in the budgeting process and suggested more collaborative engagement in this regard, while the translation and adaptation of training materials to specific cultural settings would require more attention. The MEL system tracked output-level results effectively, but challenges arose particularly concerning tracking outcome-level results despite the project's incorporation of the Outcome Harvesting methodology where which statements were provided by project partners. Future projects should focus on creating a more balanced and resource-

efficient MEL system, while also ensuring sufficient capacity-building and human resources to support the initiative.

Impact: The project successfully advanced, as a first step, the goal of reducing FoRB violations and promoting inclusive behaviour through interfaith dialogue and human rights education. It affirmed the human rights of marginalised religious communities and fostered cooperation among diverse religious groups. Since unintended risks emerged, including increased scrutiny of religious minorities that affected participant engagement, creating more robust risk management strategies would be essential to ensure the safety of partners and beneficiaries.

Sustainability: The project's sustainability evaluation highlighted its success in fostering positive attitudes towards FoRB, strengthening community relationships and empowering marginalised religious groups. While the two-year duration limited long-term and systemic changes, the project established strong community-level relationships and opened opportunities for expanding impact through national advocacy and partnerships. Future projects can build on this foundation to enhance sustainability.

The TFC project represents a significant effort to strengthen FoRB in Cambodia, taking an important step towards fostering religious tolerance, inclusivity, and interfaith dialogue. Its achievements at the community level, particularly in addressing the unique challenges faced by religious minorities and Indigenous Peoples, underscore its relevance and impact. By building on the foundations laid by the TFC project and integrating lessons learned, while remaining attentive to the evolving dynamics of Cambodia's religious landscape, future projects have the potential to drive lasting, systemic change and further strengthen FoRB in the country.

1. Introduction

In recent years, the promotion and protection of Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) have become increasingly significant issues in Southeast Asia, particularly in Cambodia, where religious diversity intersects with complex social dynamics. This report presents the end-of-project evaluation for *Towards More Freedom of Religion or Belief in Cambodia* (TFC), a project undertaken by Danmission from July 2022 to June 2024. It highlights TFC's successes and areas for improvement and underscores the project's relevance in advancing FoRB in Cambodia.

1.1. Background

Cambodia is a predominantly Buddhist country, with over 95% of the population practising Theravada Buddhism, recognised as the state religion under Article 43 of the Constitution (1993). The Cham, a largely Muslim ethnic minority, comprise about 2% of the population, while Christianity, particularly Roman Catholicism and Protestantism, represents approximately 2.55% and includes both converts and indigenous members. Other religious groups include practitioners of Chinese folk religion (2.13%) and Hinduism (0.18%) (ACN International, 2023).

The government is committed to ensuring religious freedom for everyone. Internationally, the country has signed and ratified human rights covenants that enshrine religious freedom for everyone without discrimination such as the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966) (Article 18) and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (1965) (Article 5(d)(vii)).

Furthermore, the country's legal framework also enshrines and protects religious freedom. The Cambodian Constitution guarantees FoRB under Article 43, which stipulates that Khmer citizens shall enjoy full religious rights. The Ministry of Cults and Religion (MoCR) is established to oversee religious affairs.

According to the global religious freedom indexes (Freedom House, 2024; Pew Research Center, 2024), Cambodia exhibits religious tolerance, with minorities coexisting alongside the Buddhist majority, though smaller religious groups and indigenous populations face specific challenges. However, challenges are not non-existent and some indigenous peoples (IPs) experience localised discrimination, particularly over land disputes where spiritual practices are linked to ancestral lands (Bhagwat & Ly, 2024). The destruction of sacred forests and ponds, essential to indigenous beliefs, has caused some members to lose faith in their traditions (Ibid.). Other examples include Cham communities, who have faced forced evictions and marginalisation in urban areas, as seen with the relocation of Chroy Changvar Cham residents during city beautification efforts for the Asia-Europe Meeting (Ibid.).

Although Cambodia has signed and ratified international human rights covenants that include provisions for FoRB, and its national legal framework enshrines religious freedom for all, the examples above highlight the need to strengthen the practical implementation of religious freedom to align more closely with these national legal provisions and international standards.

Against this backdrop, between July 2022 and June 2024, Danmission and its partners undertook the project *Towards More Freedom of Religion or Belief in Cambodia (TFC)*. The project aimed to promote and strengthen FoRB across the region.

Upon completion, the project underwent a comprehensive end-of-project evaluation to provide actionable insights into TFC's successes and areas for improvement, ensuring accountability and informing the development of future FoRB programmes in Cambodia. In doing so, the project outcomes, overall impact and effectiveness in achieving its goals will be assessed. This evaluation also examines Danmission's coordination efforts with its partners, the contributions of the four co-applicants and the broader impact of the initiative in promoting FoRB in Cambodia and the region.

1.2. Methodology

The methodology for this evaluation comprised five phases:

1. **Desk research:** The process began with desk research to establish a foundational understanding of the project and the FoRB landscape. This phase involved reviewing pertinent project documentation and Outcome Harvesting statements provided by project partners. A "zero draft" report was developed, integrating insights from the desk research and analysis and was shared with Danmission for initial feedback. For the assessment of the FoRB landscape, primary and secondary sources were consulted, including legal documents (such as the Constitution and relevant laws), reports from international and local non-governmental organisations and news articles.

2. **Primary data collection:** During this phase, the Research Team engaged with internal and external stakeholders to identify key challenges and extract lessons learned from the project's implementation. Data collection methods included 10 completed surveys, 9 key informant interviews (KIIs) and 1 focus group discussions (FGDs). See Annex 1 for a list of respondents.

3. **Drafting the Evaluation Report:** With the insights from the two previous phases, the Team drafted the evaluation report. This draft was presented during a validation workshop with selected internal and external stakeholders. The purpose of this workshop was to review and verify the findings, gather feedback and ensure that the report accurately represented the perspectives and experiences of the participants. Additionally, this session provided an opportunity to address any research gaps. The arrangements for this workshop, including its location, venue and participant list, were coordinated with Danmission.

4. **Incorporating feedback into the report:** After the validation workshop, the Asia Centre made the necessary adjustments to the evaluation report based on the feedback received during the evaluation report. This iterative process was designed to ensure that the final version of the report was robust, well-informed and aligned with stakeholder priorities.

5. **Learning workshop:** The final phase involved convening a learning workshop for project staff and relevant stakeholders to present the findings of the evaluation report. This workshop not only highlighted the evaluation outcomes but also offered recommendations to Danmission and project partners, outlining action points to sustain the project's results. Moreover, it served as a strategic meeting for all involved parties to discuss the next steps. Asia Centre facilitated this workshop, with arrangements for the location, venue and participant list finalised in collaboration with Danmission.

1.3. Evaluation Framework

The end-of-project evaluation utilised the six [OECD DAC Network on Development Evaluation](#) criteria to offer a comprehensive framework for assessing the project's success and impact. This criteria consists of six elements:

1. Relevance

This criterion assesses the alignment of project objectives with the needs and priorities of the target population and stakeholders. It evaluates whether the project is appropriate and timely, considering the context in which it operates. The focus is on determining if the project addresses key issues and contributes to broader development goals, with particular attention given to its contextual foundation.

The assessment will involve evaluating how well the project design was informed by evidence-based research or on-the-ground knowledge and whether it effectively addressed a genuine and pressing need among Cambodia's FoRB civil society activists and organisations.

Additionally, the evaluation will examine the degree of alignment between the project's objectives and Danmission's priorities in advancing FoRB issues. This includes assessing whether the project is strategically relevant within Danmission's broader operational frameworks and mission. This analysis will clarify whether the project was timely and well-suited to contribute to Danmission's overarching goals in the region, ensuring its relevance in the pursuit of sustainable development and the protection of human rights.

2. Coherence

Coherence evaluates the alignment of the project with other policies, strategies and interventions within the same sector or area to assess how well the project fits within the broader context of development efforts and whether it complements or conflicts with other initiatives. It focuses on two key aspects: its alignment with existing initiatives and its consideration of gender equality and social inclusion (GESI), as well as the Cambodia Sustainable Development Goals (CSDGs).

For the first aspect, the evaluation analyses the extent to which the project leverages and complements other initiatives. This involves scrutinising whether the project builds upon or draws inspiration from both Danmission's previous work and efforts from external organisations. It also examines the degree to which the project aligns with other activities already established within Cambodia's FoRB space.

Regarding the second aspect, the evaluation focuses on the project's integration of GESI and CSDG principles. It assesses how proactively these concerns were factored into both the design and implementation stages. Specifically, it examines whether the project was structured to promote gender equality and enhance social inclusion, ensuring that these critical dimensions were embedded throughout the project's lifecycle.

3. Effectiveness

Effectiveness measures the extent to which the project achieves its intended outputs, outcomes and impacts. This criterion examines the processes and strategies employed to deliver results while considering the factors that may have influenced success or failure. Additionally, it

assesses whether the project met its targets and how effectively it responded to challenges encountered during implementation.

Central to this evaluation is the identification of primary achievements, including notable milestones, the successful implementation of activities and the overall contribution of the project to its overarching goals. The evaluation also carefully considers the challenges faced throughout the project's lifecycle. These challenges may arise from external factors as well as internal factors, including project management issues, coordination difficulties or resource limitations. This dual approach seeks to discern where the project succeeded while pinpointing specific areas that encountered difficulties.

4. Efficiency

Efficiency evaluates how resources – financial, human and material – are utilised to achieve project results. This criterion focuses on the relationship between outputs and outcomes, determining whether the project delivered results in a cost-effective manner.

The evaluation of the project's efficiency focuses on several key factors: *First,* the clarity of objectives, evaluating how well-defined the project's outputs, outcomes and impacts were and how this clarity influenced implementation; *Second,* it analyses cost-effectiveness, determining whether resources were adequately allocated to achieve the stated objectives; *Third,* the effectiveness of the Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) system is scrutinised to assess how well it was integrated into the project and whether it led to significant adjustments during implementation. *Fourth*, it considers the project's facilitation of cross-organisational engagement and partnerships, examining how the contributions of implementing partners complemented each other.

5. Impact

The assessment of the project's impact focuses on determining whether the project achieved its intended goals. The evaluation also explores any unintended impacts that emerged, including both positive and negative effects. It also reviews whether the project design incorporated a risk assessment and corresponding mitigation strategies.

6. Sustainability

The sustainability evaluation focuses on assessing the durability of the project's results beyond the designated time frame. Additionally, it will explore how the project strategically paves the way for potential future actions by Danmission and its partners. This assessment includes examining factors such as local ownership, institutional capacity and the extent to which the project has fostered ongoing engagement and support within the community.

By applying these six criteria, the evaluation not only provides a thorough review of the project's performance but also offers valuable insights that can guide future initiatives. This structured approach helps to ensure that lessons learned from the current project can inform more strategic decisions in future development practice, contributing to more impactful and sustainable outcomes.

2. Evaluation Findings

This section of the report presents the findings from the project evaluation, which is organised according to the six criteria set forth by the OECD DAC. The evaluation findings drew from an in-depth review of project documentation provided by Danmission, supplemented by an analysis of primary data collected through multiple sources. These include the online survey, KIIs with relevant stakeholders, FGDs and a validation workshop with relevant project partners. Together, these data sources provided a comprehensive overview of the project's performance and offered insights into its achievements, challenges and overall impact.

2.1. Relevance

This criterion assesses the alignment of project objectives with the needs of Cambodia's FoRB civil society and Danmission's priorities. It has two parts. First, the contextual foundation and alignment with needs. Second, alignment with Danmission's national and international priorities.

2.1.1. TFC's Contextual Foundation & Alignment with Needs

The TFC project was built upon a robust pre-project contextual foundation (distinct from the PAR process; see Section 2.2.1), enabling the natural evolution of existing peacebuilding activities into a focused FoRB initiative in Cambodia. By addressing a critical gap in such efforts within the country, the project fulfilled a pressing need. Early engagements with stakeholders involved in environmental advocacy in areas inhabited by Indigenous peoples highlighted significant concerns about spirituality, particularly due to restricted access to forests, which are integral to their spiritual practices and cultural identity.

These engagements brought to light two critical issues. First, local communities faced challenges in freely practising their religion or faith, particularly because of limitations on accessing certain forest areas for religious rituals, highlighting broader restrictions on religious expression. Second, there was a notable lack of awareness among these communities about FoRB, especially regarding their religious rights. These insights emphasised the need for an initiative that not only tackled these challenges but also promoted greater awareness and protection of religious freedoms, forming the basis of the TFC initiative.

Against this backdrop, the TFC project was supported by a series of well-structured pre-project desk research and consultations. These activities effectively contextualised the concerns on the ground, providing valuable insights that shaped the project's design and implementation. This approach ensured the initiative was closely aligned with Cambodia's needs for strengthening FoRB, enhancing its relevance and potential impact.

Firstly, a feasibility study conducted between March and July 2022 informed the project proposal by focusing on the needs, concerns and FoRB violations affecting Indigenous communities in the selected forested areas. This study identified indigenous peoples as a primary beneficiary group, reflecting the critical challenges they faced.

Secondly, desk research provided an initial overview of religious issues in Cambodia. Highlighted in the project proposal, this research underscored key dimensions such as FoRB

rights, structural and social discrimination, intersections with gender and Indigenous rights, the predominance of Buddhism, the misuse of "harmony" narratives and the lack of responsive action. Based on this analysis, the project prioritised two key groups: (1) Christians and other minority religious communities affected by worship place registration restrictions and (2) Indigenous groups in selected forest areas. This refinement of focus ensured the project directly addressed the most pressing concerns of the identified groups.

Thirdly, partner organisations actively engaged with proposed beneficiary groups to gather input during the project's formulation. This ground-up approach to beneficiary identification helped build a solid foundation for the project. Danmission's flexibility at this stage allowed partner organisations to design project components tailored to their existing work, fostering alignment with on-the-ground realities. However, this phase could have been strengthened by systematically documenting the impacts of these *pre-project* consultations to inform the design of future initiatives.

In addition to these pre-project efforts, the implementation phase saw the research and contextualisation enriched through a more systematic and holistic Participatory Action Research (PAR) process. These efforts culminated in the publication of a report which validated the findings of earlier studies and consultations while providing deeper insights into the FoRB issues faced by the target beneficiaries. However, as discussed in Section 2.2, future projects could benefit from conducting such a comprehensive PAR before establishing project objectives, outcomes, and outputs. This approach would allow for the anticipation of additional or contradictory insights that the PAR process might reveal, ensuring a more adaptive and informed project design.

2.1.2. Alignment with Danmission's National and International Priorities

The TFC project aligns well with Danmission's core focus on "Contextual Theology for Faith and Social Action – Engaging faith communities in locally-driven initiatives that foster democracy, inclusion and resilience."

Although this did not undermine the quality of the outcomes and outputs, the project design could have benefited from a more explicit articulation of how its objectives connected with Danmission's broader national and international priorities. This would have created more opportunities to demonstrate how the project complemented, contributed to or paved the way for achieving Danmission's overarching mission and strategic goals. Without such alignment, the project's added value within the organisation's portfolio might not have been fully recognised, potentially overlooking synergies that could have enhanced Danmission's overall impact. For future initiatives, incorporating a clear and explicit alignment with Danmission's strategic priorities during both the design and evaluation phases would strengthen the rationale for individual projects.

Overall, the research conducted throughout the TFC project laid a strong foundation by systematically assessing the needs and concerns of the target communities. While broad in scope rather than narrowly focused on specific rights violations, the research was appropriately designed for this pioneering initiative. It enabled the project to address key FoRB issues, advancing efforts to improve religious freedom for Indigenous and minority groups across Cambodia.

2.2. Coherence

Coherence evaluates how well the project aligns with other policies, strategies and interventions in the same sector, assessing its fit within broader development efforts and identifying any complementary or conflicting initiatives. It focuses on two main aspects: alignment with existing initiatives (including previous work by Danmission and other organisations within Cambodia's FoRB space) and integration of gender equality, social inclusion (GESI) and Cambodia Sustainable Development Goals (CSDGs) at both design and implementation stages.

2.2.1. Coherence of Intervention Logic

The intervention logic for the TFC project has been one of its key strengths, offering a clear and coherent pathway from the initial PAR activity to the three key outcomes and the ultimate project impact (see Annex 2 for a diagram of the intervention logic).

This logical progression ensured that stakeholders could easily understand how each component contributed to the project's overarching goals. The alignment between activities and objectives facilitated effective planning and implementation, ensuring that each step was purposefully designed to achieve the desired results.

Within the intervention logic, the Local Interfaith Working Groups and Celebratory Activities were highlighted as particularly impactful by participants. These initiatives effectively fostered cross-faith collaboration at the community level while mainstreaming FoRB among religious leaders and their constituencies. One end beneficiary noted the following:

> **"We participated in activities focusing on inter-religion, social integration and conflict resolution related to religion. The training covered how to integrate and develop relationships among different religious groups, as well as how to address disputes involving religion. After the training, participants started mainstreaming the knowledge in their communities. It's still in the initial stages, but progress has been made." (KII 4)**

This dual approach effectively secured the commitment and support of influential figures, such as religious leaders and members of the broader community. By engaging these key stakeholders, the project created a foundation of trust and collaboration, which was instrumental in achieving meaningful outcomes. This strategy facilitated impactful change at the grassroots level, where cross-faith collaboration and the mainstreaming of FoRB began to take root and show tangible progress (see Sections 2.3 and 2.4 for further assessment of the project's effectiveness and impact).

Certain aspects of the intervention logic could be further refined to enhance the project's capacity to fully achieve its intended impact. Firstly, the project's success relied heavily on *interconnected* assumptions, which created a dependency on a linear sequencing of activities. This reliance on sequential steps reduced flexibility, as each activity's success depended on the completion of the previous one. For example, national-level advocacy (third outcome) was contingent upon effectively engaging and securing buy-in from national-level religious leaders. This dependency introduced a potential risk: any challenges in obtaining support from these leaders could impede progress toward achieving the advocacy objectives. As a result,

opportunities for outcomes to be achieved in parallel were limited, increasing the likelihood of delays that could disrupt the project timeline and affect overall effectiveness.

The second point concerns PAR. The PAR approach was instrumental in fostering stakeholder engagement and ownership. However, it also carried risks by presuming alignment between the issues identified through the PAR process and those anticipated during the project's planning phase. Although the feasibility study mitigated some uncertainties, a more comprehensive pre-project analysis using methods such as PAR could have further strengthened the intervention logic, ensuring it was adaptable to emerging needs.

These challenges placed significant demands on the project's MEL system. The interdependence of activities necessitated a rigid framework to track outcomes, which reduced flexibility in adapting to progress. Furthermore, the lack of a clear implementation pathway for national-level interfaith committees made it difficult to evaluate their effectiveness and sustainability. As a result, additional resources were required for MEL, but its overall contribution to the project's success remained limited (see Section 2.4.2).

Therefore, while the intervention logic was thoughtfully designed and contextually relevant, its success hinged on effectively managing underlying assumptions and addressing potential barriers to engagement and advocacy. Future projects could build on these strengths by incorporating greater flexibility and refining strategies to maximise impact and sustainability.

2.2.2. Alignment with Existing Initiatives

This project stands as a pioneering initiative, marking the first dedicated FoRB programme in Cambodia and uniquely bringing together a diverse coalition of national and international partners. While not a direct continuation of any prior project, it builds upon the groundwork laid by related existing and third-party initiatives that promoted religious tolerance and the inclusion of Indigenous peoples – efforts previously undertaken by Cambodian-based project partners. These earlier activities provided essential local knowledge and connections, strengthening the project's foundation and enhancing its relevance.

The project also sought to bridge national-level activities with regional and international initiatives. Collaboration with an academic institution from outside the country specialising in FoRB allowed the institution to contribute its expertise as a FoRB knowledge provider. This partnership drew on the institution's successful experiences with similar initiatives in their home country, where the shared religious context added depth and regional insight to the project. Additionally, the TFC project engaged select partners and beneficiaries in FoRB regional networks and provided inputs to inform the Special Rapporteur on Freedom of Religion or Belief's thematic report for the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly. This strategic approach aimed to align Cambodia's FoRB advocacy with broader regional and international efforts, fostering synergy and shared learning across contexts.

By engaging with national, regional and international partners, the project made significant strides towards enhancing the understanding and promotion of FoRB in Cambodia. These efforts also began to establish meaningful connections between Cambodian FoRB advocates and their counterparts in other countries.

2.2.3. Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI) Considerations

Gender equality was a central focus of the project, with a foundational emphasis on the intersection of religious and gender rights violations (See Section 2.1.1.). This intersectional awareness shaped both the design and implementation of project activities, ensuring a comprehensive approach to addressing overlapping forms of discrimination.

Gender considerations were thoughtfully integrated during the design phase, demonstrating a strong commitment to advancing this priority. Further, this emphasis on gender equality was widely appreciated by the project holder, partners and end beneficiaries, particularly in the context of Cambodia's gender dynamics and their intersection with religious perspectives.

The MEL system showed commendable efforts in incorporating GESI considerations, particularly through the development of indicators to track gender-related aspects and outreach at the output level. However, there is significant potential to enhance this system by including holistic indicators for tracking outcome-level results of GESI-focused activities. As outlined in the table below, the absence of such indicators limited the ability of project partners to systematically assess the implementation and outcomes of efforts aimed at challenging traditional gender norms. Strengthening this aspect in future initiatives would enable a more structured and comprehensive framework for measuring progress, providing a clearer demonstration of the impact on advancing gender equality and social inclusion, and ultimately enhancing the overall effectiveness of the project.

Table 1: GESI Considerations in Project Design and in Implementation

GESI Considerations in the Project Design	Practical Implementation of the Considerations
"Understand how gender affects FoRB for women, girls, LGBTQTI and other gender identities relevant to the communities involved."	A research report – the product of the PAR process produced to form the contextual foundation of the research – dedicated a section on the intersection of FoRB and gender rights and the impact of religious policies in the country on gender rights.
"A gender analysis will [...] be included within the FLD design and will ensure disaggregated data that can provide an insight into gender perspectives"	
"Have a focus on girls'/women's lack of participation [and] consider the societal norms around gender attributions that need to be addressed"	The Outcome Harvesting tool, employed to monitor and evaluate outcome-level results (see Section 2.4.2), included a focus on whether project activities fostered improved attitudes towards women. This approach encouraged reflection on gender-specific impacts by project partners. While the project successfully motivated some women and girls to actively participate in cultural and spiritual activities, their overall visibility and inclusion remain constrained by traditional gender norms, which continue to shape their participation.

Additionally, gender-sensitive FoRB training was provided to both men and women in the the selected forested area communities, with a particular emphasis on empowering women leaders. These sessions aimed to strengthen women's roles within their communities and promote their inclusion in leadership.

Despite these efforts, the overall impact on gender equality has been incremental. Significant challenges remain in addressing deeply rooted societal norms that limit women's equal participation, particularly in leadership and decision-making roles. Future projects should build on these foundations by intensifying efforts to challenge these norms and creating additional mechanisms to support women's empowerment and visibility across all project activities. |
"Target the equal participation of women in number"	A gender ratio was established to encourage equitable representation between men and women. The following observations can be made: ● The ratio for the primary and ultimate target groups stands at 60% men and 40% women, while the secondary target group is significantly less balanced, at 80% men and 20% women.
"Set particular criteria to promote the role of women in monitoring plans"	● While some activities included disaggregated data, others did not, highlighting inconsistencies in gender considerations. ● Sexual and gender minorities were not included in the analysis. ● While a gender ratio is included in the project design, it was not made explicitly part of the list of indicators, limiting the project's ability to effectively track and promote gender equity in participation.
"Support partner organisations to integrate gender equality"	The MEL system developed included efforts to track how TFC engaged with women in order to ensure gender equality.

The gender-based impact of the project appears to have received limited focus during the outcome harvesting process. While there are promising indications of increased gender inclusion, the overall impact on gender equality has not been fully examined or clearly articulated. This underscores the need for more robust gender-sensitive indicators and a

systematic approach to assessing gender dynamics in future evaluations. Strengthening these aspects would provide a clearer understanding of the project's influence on women and girls, enabling more comprehensive reporting and better showcasing its contributions to gender equality.

The project did, however, make notable progress in advancing social inclusion. Beneficiaries from marginalised ethno-religious communities reported increased confidence in discussing their religious beliefs and cultural heritage openly. For example, an ethno-religious minority community that had previously concealed their identity due to fears of government or public backlash, observed a significant increase in pride and visibility.

Additionally, the project engaged ethnic minority and Indigenous leaders to raise awareness about FoRB. For Indigenous communities, these activities helped reinforce spiritual connections to forest areas, strengthening cultural and religious identities within their communities.

To build on these achievements, future initiatives would benefit from a more structured approach to social inclusion, including a clearer articulation of social inclusion goals in project design and enhanced data collection and analysis. This would ensure a more comprehensive understanding of the project's impact on marginalised groups. While social inclusion was partially addressed during the needs assessment and beneficiary selection, it was not explicitly articulated in the project proposal and the MEL process collected fewer indicators and limited disaggregated data in this area. Consequently, the analysis of how effectively marginalised groups were integrated into the activities was more limited.

These outcomes demonstrate meaningful progress in fostering inclusion and empowerment at the individual and community levels, even though societal-level transformations were beyond the scope of the project.

2.2.4. Integration with Cambodia's Sustainable Development Goals (CSDGs)

The project aimed to align with several SDGs, including SDG 4 on Quality Education, SDG 10 on Reduced Inequalities, SDG 11 on Sustainable Cities and Communities, SDG 16 on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions and SDG 17 on Partnerships for the Goals. However, while these alignments were identified at the design stage, mechanisms to track and evaluate contributions to these goals were not incorporated. The absence of outcome indicators explicitly referencing the SDGs limited the ability to measure the project's impact against these global benchmarks, thus presenting a missed opportunity to demonstrate its alignment with international development priorities.

Furthermore, the project did not clearly articulate its alignment with the CSDGs, which are tailored to reflect the national context and guide local development efforts. Including this alignment could have provided a more context-specific framework for assessing the project's relevance and impact within Cambodia.

For future initiatives, integrating CSDG-based indicators during both the design and monitoring stages would strengthen the project's ability to demonstrate its contributions to both national and global development priorities. This approach would enhance accountability and provide clearer evidence of the project's broader developmental impact.

2.3. Effectiveness

Effectiveness assesses how well the project met its intended outputs, outcomes and impacts, examining both the strategies used to achieve these results and the factors influencing success or failure. This part highlights key achievements, identifies challenges encountered during implementation and assesses the project's responsiveness to those challenges.

2.3.1. Achievement of Outcomes

The key achievements of the project, grouped by outcomes (see Annex 3), are as follows:

Outcome 1: *"By 2024, an inclusive and non-discriminatory attitude toward the religious other is built and actively used among a minimum of 200 faith community members and staff from CSOs."*

Significant progress was made in fostering inclusivity and reducing discrimination based on religious differences. Through interfaith dialogues, Training of Trainers activities and other capacity-building initiatives, participants not only developed more positive attitudes towards religious differences but also gained a deeper understanding of FoRB. This enhanced understanding empowered participants to apply FoRB principles to promote peace and coexistence within their communities, occasionally mitigating conflicts.

The activities under Outcome 1 laid a strong foundation for the project's further success, effectively integrating the key concepts of inclusivity and religious tolerance into participants' practices. A notable achievement highlighted in the outcome harvesting process was the successful mediation of an emerging conflict between different religious communities. In one instance, a trainee utilised the mediation methodologies learned to address tensions between Buddhist and Muslim youths. As detailed in the outcome harvesting, the mediation process involved organising separate meetings with representatives from both youth groups, as well as engaging Imams and Buddhist elders.

> **"[A trainee] successfully mediated a potential religious conflict between Buddhist and Muslim youths [...]. [They] organised separate meetings with representatives from both youth groups and discussions with Imams and Buddhist elders. In four mediation sessions [that the individual took part in], he emphasised the principles of rights, freedoms, beliefs and mutual respect [...]. As a result, [...] [this] mediation led to improved relations, with youths from both sides forming friendships, sharing transportation and even interfaith marriages [...] [and] prevented potential violence between the Buddhist and Muslim communities [...]. The story showcases how targeted interventions can lead to significant cultural and social changes, such as reduced discriminatory language and improved inter-community relationships."**

Over the course of the project, the principles of rights, freedoms, beliefs and mutual respect were emphasised, ultimately leading to improved relations. Youths from both groups developed friendships, shared transportation and even formed interfaith marriages, thus preventing potential violence. This case underscores how targeted interventions can bring about significant cultural and social changes, including reduced discriminatory language and improved inter-community relationships.

Outcome 2: *"By 2024, a minimum of 38 faith actors have organised themselves into active local, national and international committees and networks committed to promoting diversity and inclusiveness and actively advocating for freedom of religion or belief."*

Strong results in Outcome 1 contributed to successes in Outcome 2, particularly at the local level. Project partners convened multiple dialogues that led to the establishment of formal or semi-formal platforms for religious groups within each community to come together. These initiatives, though not always framed explicitly as "religious" or "rights-based," created opportunities for dialogue and cooperation, fostering deeper intra-community connections.

At the national level, progress was more modest. Efforts to engage senior Christian religious leaders in dialogue with leaders from other faiths resulted in some positive interactions, though fewer formal committees were established than initially planned. Furthermore, the pathways for sustaining these efforts proved more limited than expected, as discussed in Section 2.3.2.

Outcome 3: *"By 2024, a minimum of 24 celebration events and advocacy initiatives initiated by committees (national and local) and partner organisations have contributed to increased promotion and celebration of religious, cultural and ethnic diversity."*

Several successful events were implemented to celebrate and promote religious, cultural and ethnic diversity. These included local community celebrations that brought together diverse faith communities, as well as larger public events designed to foster mutual understanding and cooperation among religious groups. At the national level, public forums and advocacy activities helped raise attention to the importance of diversity and inclusiveness. Additionally, partner organisations engaged in international advocacy, utilising United Nations platforms to highlight the importance of FoRB and religious diversity in Cambodia on the global stage.

Please refer to Section 2.5.1 for a detailed discussion of the achievement of the project's stated impacts.

2.3.2. Key Challenges

Survey respondents and key informants highlighted several challenges that hindered the project's achievement of certain output and outcome indicators (see Annex 4). These challenges were primarily related to limitations in operational planning and risk management, as discussed in subsequent sections. Additionally, respondents identified programmatic challenges that impacted both short-term effectiveness and long-term sustainability.

One of the key challenges was the difficulty in securing full engagement from national religious leaders for inter- or intra-faith committees. Despite efforts to involve them, their active participation remained limited and sustaining relationships beyond the project's duration proved difficult. This challenge, which had been anticipated at the outset, was compounded by the withdrawal of a national faith-based organisation from the project. This withdrawal resulted in a significant gap in connecting with the leadership of that faith, which further hindered the project's efforts to establish the foundations for long-term interfaith collaboration. Consequently, the project struggled to create a lasting impact in this area, though efforts were made to build connections with senior religious leaders, as detailed in Section 2.5.1.

As extensively discussed in the workshop, the TFC project would have greatly benefited from a more comprehensive strategy to engage with the MoCR, which should have been initiated during the project design phase. Building trust with relevant government officials early on

could have been achieved through regular and systematic interactions, allowing for ongoing discussions about the project's objectives and benefits. By clearly highlighting the constructive approach and positive outcomes for all stakeholders, such engagement would have facilitated a shared understanding and stronger collaboration between the project and the MoCR.

2.4. Efficiency

Efficiency examines how effectively resources were utilised to achieve project results, focusing on cost-effectiveness and the balance between inputs and outputs. Key considerations include resource allocation, the integration of MEL for adaptive management and the extent of cross-organisational collaboration.

2.4.1. Resources

Consultations revealed that resource availability was not a significant issue for the project, particularly in terms of financial support. Adequate funding for community gatherings, training sessions and forest patrol equipment enabled networks to engage effectively with their communities.

Nonetheless, there were opportunities to enhance resource allocation, particularly for activities directly benefiting end users. For example, offering travel allowances could have facilitated broader participation in capacity-building activities. Additionally, while the project successfully provided initial support, the available funding proved insufficient to sustain long-term advocacy efforts and maintain the momentum achieved at the community level. This constraint was recognised by stakeholders from the outset of the project.

Although financial resources were generally accessible, some respondents pointed out limited engagement in the budgeting process, particularly during the re-budgeting phases. This fell short of the co-contributive approach described in the technical proposal. For future initiatives, fostering greater involvement of project partners in budgeting decisions would promote a more collaborative and inclusive approach, ensuring alignment with project goals.

Some concerns were raised regarding the technical resources provided, particularly in relation to the translation of training materials and curricula. While translations were generally provided, there were occasional challenges in ensuring that the examples used were culturally relevant and locally contextualised, which sometimes reduced their effectiveness for the target audience. Additionally, communication between material developers and trainers could have been more robust, as there was a disconnect between the intended learning objectives and the content delivered during sessions. Feedback from the validation workshop highlighted that some materials were either too advanced for the intended audience or repeated familiar content. Strengthening the curriculum development process in future initiatives could help address these concerns.

While beneficiaries appreciated the overall quality of the materials, there were observations that some workshops lacked a polished, professional presentation. Certain lessons appeared incomplete or not fully developed, particularly in critical areas like advocacy and conflict resolution. Moreover, the use of specific terminology – which can be sensitive to some groups but not to others – requires more careful consideration to ensure clarity, avoid

misinterpretation, and foster a more inclusive learning environment. Addressing these areas with greater attention to language, context, and content development will enhance the quality and impact of future training sessions.

Finally, limitations in human resources were noted, particularly within the MEL process, as discussed in Section 2.4.2.

2.4.2. Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) System

The project utilised a Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning (MEL) system to track and document results, ensuring accountability and transparency throughout its implementation. The system comprised several components:

1. **MEL Results Tracker**: A Google Excel spreadsheet was used to monitor key metrics, including participant numbers, outreach and activity outcomes, comparing them against the targets set in the initial project design.

2. **Outcome Harvesting (OH)**: The OH method assessed broader results, offering insights into outcome-level achievements and informing adaptive management. This approach also facilitated a structured review of lessons learned, contributing to the refinement of the project's implementation strategy.

3. **Theory of Change Evaluation**: The project's Theory of Change was evaluated at the midpoint and completion stages, enabling a strategic assessment of whether interventions contributed to the intended long-term outcomes.

4. **Coordinating Committee**: A Coordinating Committee, comprising representatives from partner organisations – including the project lead, co-applicants and associates (excluding the Ministry of Cults and Religion) – was established to provide strategic guidance, oversee project progress, address emerging challenges and ensure alignment with project goals. The Committee convened quarterly.

The MEL system was systematically implemented, with dedicated training for the MEL officer within the partner organisation ensuring its effective use and reducing the reporting burden at the project's conclusion. Overall, it provided a clear picture of the project's progress in terms of expected quantifiable reach. However, some stakeholders highlighted areas where the MEL system could be improved:

1. **Overemphasis on the Tracker**: The MEL system relied heavily on the spreadsheet tracker, with insufficient focus on Outcome Harvesting. The OH process lacked depth and its statements and question forms could have been designed to prompt more critical reflection on the project's long-term impact. Stronger analytical insights from OH could have significantly enriched the evaluation process.

2. **Consideration of Key Factors**: The MEL system did not fully address important considerations, such as Gender Equality and Social Inclusion (GESI), sustainability outcomes or the expansion of Training of Trainers results to communities. Stakeholder satisfaction with project activities was also not systematically assessed, despite these elements being highlighted in the project design.

3. **Enhanced Usability**: While the MEL system was effective in tracking output-level results, its structure could have been streamlined to enhance usability. Some users noted that it was challenging to conduct a comprehensive Outcome Harvesting process, which could have provided deeper insights into outcome-level achievements and other key concerns. Improving its usability would have facilitated more efficient monitoring and a better allocation of resources.

4. **Resource Allocation and Administrative Burden**: The MEL process required significant resources, which some stakeholders felt diverted attention away from direct project activities. This administrative burden may have reduced the project's ability to deliver tangible benefits to stakeholders.

2.4.3. Partnership

Partnerships were a cornerstone of the project, with the initiative implemented through a consortium of diverse stakeholders (see Annex 5). This collaborative approach effectively leveraged a range of expertise:

- **Partner A**: Supported the enhancement of trainers' understanding of FoRB principles, contributing to the development of high-quality training interventions. This partner brought experience from delivering FoRB-related training in similar contexts.

- **Partner B**: Provided basic FoRB training to its network of beneficiaries, particularly among indigenous groups. Played a role in contextualising project activities to the local environment, fostering interfaith engagement, and conducting advocacy at national and regional levels.

- **Partner C**: Delivered basic FoRB training to its network of beneficiaries and facilitated a committee of senior and top leaders from a specific faith group. Engaged with various religious groups to create platforms for theological reflections and fostered collaboration between religious groups and authorities.

- **Partner D**: Focused on delivering FoRB training to its network of beneficiaries while leading efforts to ensure inclusivity in the project, particularly regarding GESI considerations. This partner also carried out public awareness-raising activities, including producing a documentary and hosting a public forum.

A significant milestone in strengthening the partnership was the visit of the partner organisations to Denmark, where they presented the TFC project and its results to a broad Danish audience, including the Ministry of Foreign Affairs' FoRB unit and several civil society organisations working on FoRB. This opportunity not only enhanced the visibility for the project but also fostered deeper connections and mutual understanding among the partners, contributing to the overall success and cohesion of the consortium. The visit had a positive impact on the collaboration, reinforcing the partners' shared commitment to advancing FoRB in Cambodia.

2.5. Impact

The assessment of the project's impact evaluates how well it achieved its intended goals and examines any unintended positive and negative effects. It also considers the integration of risk assessment and mitigation strategies within the project design and assesses the effectiveness of the MEL system in tracking both expected and unexpected outcomes.

2.5.1. Achievement of Intended Impact

The project's impact statement is as follows: "FoRB violations are reduced and more respectful and inclusive behaviour towards religious others is promoted." This reflects the broader goal of enhancing peace and social cohesion through structured dialogue and rights-based initiatives aimed at fostering mutual understanding and respect among diverse religious communities.

The activities implemented (see Sections 2.3 and 2.4) were widely viewed as a success by various stakeholders. A central theme in the feedback from respondents was the project's success in affirming the human rights of marginalized religious communities, particularly those who may not have previously fully understood their rights. One respondent in the OH process summarised the project's key impact:

> **"The highlights are [...] the affirmation of the human rights of the community, which reassures [marginalised religious communities] that they are entitled to these rights – rights they may never have fully understood before. Therefore, they need to work together as a community and voice their concerns to relevant actors in the community [...] The level of cooperation among people from different religious backgrounds, including animism, Buddhism, Christianity and Islam, has improved. We see religious leaders coming together in a process of reconciliation. I call this 'head reconciliation' – the government at the national level is also promoting interfaith dialogue and reconciliation and this project has helped reinforce that at the community level."**

This statement encapsulates the successes of the project, with similar sentiments echoed by other respondents. They highlighted the significant progress in the FoRB environment in Cambodia, which was achieved by promoting both interfaith dialogue and human rights education. This approach helped to build trust among communities and laid the foundation for peaceful coexistence. Framing this dialogue within a rights-based context was crucial in bridging divides and fostering mutual respect.

It is also important to note that these efforts specifically addressed the challenges faced by ethno-religious minorities, providing them with a deeper understanding of their rights and empowering them to express their religious beliefs more confidently and assertively. As one respondent stated:

> **"A positive outcome is that communities have been able to revisit some old traditions or belief systems they had almost given up. They now have the opportunity to sit and reflect on which aspects of their traditions they want to bring back for future generations. As a result, some of these traditions, like old dances and rituals, have been resurrected – things they wouldn't have done without this project." (KII 1)**

Overall, the project successfully contributed to both immediate and long-term changes in how religious and ethno-religious communities engage with their rights, traditions and each other. It enhanced their understanding of FoRB, facilitated interfaith dialogue and empowered marginalized groups to assert their cultural and religious identities, thereby promoting a more inclusive and peaceful society.

2.5.2. Unintended Impacts & Risks Monitoring

While the project achieved several positive outcomes, a few unintended risks and impacts emerged, providing valuable opportunities to refine risk management and mitigation strategies for future initiatives.

One notable challenge was the increased attention directed towards the religious minority communities involved in the project. Respondents reported that the focus on promoting human rights, particularly FoRB, coupled with visits from non-local Danmission staff, risked attracting heightened scrutiny from authorities. Although no direct actions were taken, the increased surveillance fostered a sense of caution among participants, which somewhat affected their engagement and, to an extent, reduced the initiative's overall effectiveness. As a result, the communities involved became more cautious, limiting the project's potential impact.

Furthermore, the integration of environmental protection efforts within the project's broader goals could have been articulated more clearly. While the project incorporated advocacy and capacity-building around environmental issues, the link between these activities and FoRB was not sufficiently highlighted in the monitoring and evaluation reports. This created some difficulty in assessing how these efforts contributed to the promotion of religious freedom and inclusion. In this regard, the strong spiritual connection of ethnic tribes to forest areas should have been more clearly reflected in the activities and reporting. The project could have benefited from more explicit articulation of the intersection between environmental issues and FoRB, as well as addressing public misconceptions about animist beliefs. A stronger focus on these areas would have reinforced broader efforts to promote acceptance of religious diversity.

To maximise the impact of future projects, it will be beneficial to develop more proactive and comprehensive risk management strategies to mitigate potential threats to participants. Ensuring that all activities are more closely aligned with the central objectives – particularly FoRB – and fostering clearer connections between environmental protection and religious freedom will strengthen the overall effectiveness of the initiative and encourage more meaningful community engagement.

2.6. Sustainability

The sustainability evaluation aimed to assess how the project's results could endure beyond its designated timeframe and identify potential pathways for future actions by Danmission and its partners. By considering key factors such as local ownership, institutional capacity and community engagement, the evaluation provided a detailed review of the project's performance, offering valuable insights that can guide future initiatives and enhance sustainable development practices.

2.6.1. Sustainability Results

The project fostered positive attitudes towards FoRB and strengthened relationships among community members, leaders and religious figures. These efforts fostered developments towards inclusive dialogue, mutual respect and improved cooperation especially within communities. The integration of FoRB principles into local practices further supports the sustainability of these relationships by embedding human rights education in community norms.

As indicated in the impact assessment (Section 2.5.1), the project's focus on marginalised religious communities and ethno-religious minorities has created a lasting impact by empowering these groups to assert their rights and engage more actively in the public expression of their religious and cultural identities. This empowerment is likely to have long-term effects as these groups continue to build confidence in their rights and claim their space within broader societal structures.

However, several limitations restricted the sustainability of these outcomes (Please also refer to 2.3.2 and 2.5.2). The project's two-year duration, while sufficient to catalyse initial positive changes, was not enough to drive deeper, systemic transformation. Additionally, the absence of a fully executed national strategy for FoRB further threatens the long-term sustainability of the project's outcomes. Overall, the limited timeframe meant that although the initial impacts were promising, sustained support from a wide range of stakeholders is needed to build long-term success.

The project also resulted in internal capacity-building of the project implementors. This is relevant, particularly for project partners. Internal-focused capacity-building like MEL training provided to project partners proved to be well considered to improve the delivery and the assessment of project results. Meanwhile, the project also succeeded in mainstreaming rights-based education in existing activities of local partners, which, before this project, had been focused on community- and peacebuilding. This shift towards a rights-based framework within local activities not only enhances the partners' effectiveness but also ensures that these practices continue to promote respect for religious freedoms in the long term. These capacity-building efforts are likely to be made apparent in future projects, especially as local partners build on this foundation to expand their reach and impact.

2.6.2. Future Cooperation Potential

The project has successfully laid a strong foundation for future cooperation and expansion, with significant potential for continued impact at both the community and national levels. Consultations with project partners and end beneficiaries highlighted several areas for future collaboration.

One of the key strengths identified was the robust relationships established within local communities. These relationships have proven to be durable and effective in fostering inclusivity and interfaith dialogue. This success has been recognised by the project partners and discussions are already underway about continuing the TFC project's goals, either through direct cooperation with Danmission or with third-party partners. With continued resources and support, these relationships can be maintained and further strengthened to solidify in-community cooperation. Additionally, they have the potential to serve as models for other

communities, encouraging the spread of peacebuilding efforts, rights promotion and interfaith cooperation across different regions. Some end beneficiaries also noted that they have already been engaged by partners to participate in similar projects in the future, demonstrating not only strong momentum in FoRB initiatives in Cambodia but also that various stakeholders have actively seized the opportunity to build on these successes.

An area that has received less attention thus far, but holds significant potential, is the opportunity to scale the project's community-level successes to the national stage. Consultants highlighted the importance of strengthening communication channels and strategies to build trust with national stakeholders, such as the Ministry of Culture and Religion (MoCR) and national religious institutions, well before the launch of future projects. Establishing these relationships early on would help create an enabling environment for cooperation, ensuring a smoother transition from local to national-level engagement and enhancing the project's overall impact.

3. Recommendations

In Cambodia, diverse ethnoreligious minority groups coexist alongside the Buddhist majority. Despite relatively high levels of religious freedom compared to other countries in the region, challenges persist, particularly in ensuring that minority groups can freely practise their faith and that their religious rights are widely understood and respected. The TFC project has positively contributed to strengthening FoRB in this context. To build on these achievements and further advance religious rights, this section offers recommendations for project holders, partners and end-beneficiaries across the six areas analysed in this evaluation.

To strengthen their *relevance*, future projects should:

- Systematically document and analyse consultations with beneficiary groups and partners during the project formulation phase to provide a clear record of how input from these stakeholders informed project priorities, ensuring transparency and accountability.

- Streamline the links between the project objectives and Danmission's national and international strategic priorities to ensure a clear rationale for how the project fits into the organisation's broader mission overarching goals.

- Provide a framework that connects the project's outcomes to the Danmission's long-term vision and strategic objectives, facilitating continuous learning and strategy refinement.

To strengthen their *coherence*, future projects should:

- Increase their emphasis on the pre-project needs analysis and streamline the stakeholders' needs and expectations to refine the intervention logic and align the project's goals accordingly.

- Regularly review and challenge the assumptions made at the start of the project, particularly regarding stakeholder engagement and the expected alignment of outcomes with the intervention logic to remain flexible and responsive to unforeseen circumstances that may arise during the implementation process.

- Continue to build on the positive momentum of existing local, national and regional collaboration to facilitate ongoing dialogue, knowledge exchange and joint advocacy for FoRB.

- Establish more specific and measurable indicators for GESI, integrating them into the project's Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning framework to ensure consistent tracking and reporting of gender-specific and social inclusion outcomes.

- Place greater emphasis on national-level goals such as CSDGs that could facilitate better and stronger engagement with authorities.

To strengthen their *effectiveness*, future projects should:

- Develop tailored strategies to ensure active and sustained participation from national religious leaders in inter- and intra-faith committees. This includes addressing barriers to engagement and building trust through regular dialogues and consultations.

- Define and formalise the role of government entities, such as the MoCR and establish clear communication channels and consistent engagement plans for the MoCR and other relevant government agencies that can mitigate scepticism and foster collaboration.

- Design a specific contingency plan to address potential limited engagements with some key actors.

To strengthen their *efficiency*, future projects should:

- Foster more active involvement of project partners in budgeting processes by engaging them early and regularly to ensure collaborative resource allocation that reflects local needs and priorities.

- Ensure all training materials are fully translated and contextualised with culturally relevant examples and reviewed by local trainers to enhance their accessibility and effectiveness.

- Diversify MEL tools by reducing overreliance on tools that track quantifiable outputs and refining Outcome Harvesting methodologies to generate deeper insights into outcomes, impacts and adaptive strategies.

To strengthen their *impact*, future projects should:

- Strengthen the involvement of community members and stakeholders in identifying potential risks and unintended impacts throughout the project with regular consultations, surveys or participatory risk assessments to anticipate challenges and adapt its activities to mitigate risks more effectively.

- Strengthen the risk management and mitigation strategies by including strategies for managing increased surveillance, maintaining the safety of participants and ensuring that community engagement remains unaffected by heightened scrutiny.

- Strengthen monitoring and evaluation processes to better capture unintended impacts and risks, particularly those affecting participants' safety or engagement by creating a more detailed risk assessment framework, regular feedback mechanisms and real-time tracking of participant sentiment.

To strengthen their *sustainability*, future projects should:

- Aim at creating a detailed action plan for future activities and projects before the conclusion of each project to strengthen the sustainability of the achievements and allow for deeper, systemic change.

- Develop a strategy that focuses on securing long-term support from national authorities and religious leaders. This encompasses regular engagement and a proactive approach to securing their commitment to protecting minority beliefs and supporting FoRB at the national level.

- Prioritise maintaining the relationships built at the community level by continued support for networks and initiatives that promote FoRB after the project has concluded.

- Establish long-term mechanisms for the continued participation and empowerment of marginalised groups beyond the project's conclusion, including local support structures, networks and advocacy platforms that allow these groups to continue their engagement with FoRB issues.

4. Conclusion

Freedom of Religion or Belief (FoRB) is fundamental in Cambodia, underpinning social cohesion, respect for diversity and the protection of individuals' rights in a multi-religious society. In a context marked by discrimination against minority beliefs and religious misunderstandings, strengthening FoRB not only fosters inclusive communities but also contributes to broader goals of peace, justice and sustainable development. This aligns with Cambodia's constitutional guarantees of FoRB, ensuring that religious freedom is integral to the country's long-term vision for growth and harmony.

The "Towards More Freedom of Religion or Belief in Cambodia" (TFC) project, implemented by Danmission in Cambodia, has played a critical role as a first step in advancing FoRB by fostering inclusive dialogue, building local capacities and promoting mutual respect among diverse religious communities. By engaging religious leaders, community members and local authorities, the project strengthened relationships and encouraged collaborative approaches to addressing these issues.

Activities such as interfaith and intrafaith dialogues enhanced understanding and reduced biases, laying the groundwork for greater societal acceptance of religious diversity. Furthermore, the project empowered marginalised groups by integrating them into FoRB advocacy efforts, fostering a sense of belonging and inclusion. These initiatives not only contributed to protecting religious freedoms but also supported broader social cohesion and peace-building efforts in Cambodia.

Upon completion of the project, two critical considerations to maximise the opportunities from future FoRB initiatives arise. First, flexibility and adaptability are vital in designing and implementing FoRB projects. Given the sensitivity of religious freedom in Cambodia, obstacles are likely to arise during implementation. While not all challenges can be foreseen, recognising and addressing them promptly as they develop is essential. Second, a robust contingency plan is crucial, not only to maintain project continuity but also to turn challenges into opportunities. This adaptive approach can generate new insights and collectively enhance FoRB-related knowledge, ultimately strengthening religious freedom in Cambodia.

By recognising these factors, future initiatives can build on the project's successes while effectively addressing the changing nature of the FoRB environment. This forward-looking approach will ensure that efforts to promote FoRB remain both relevant and impactful, fostering an environment where individuals' opportunities to practise their faith of choice are fully realised and protected.
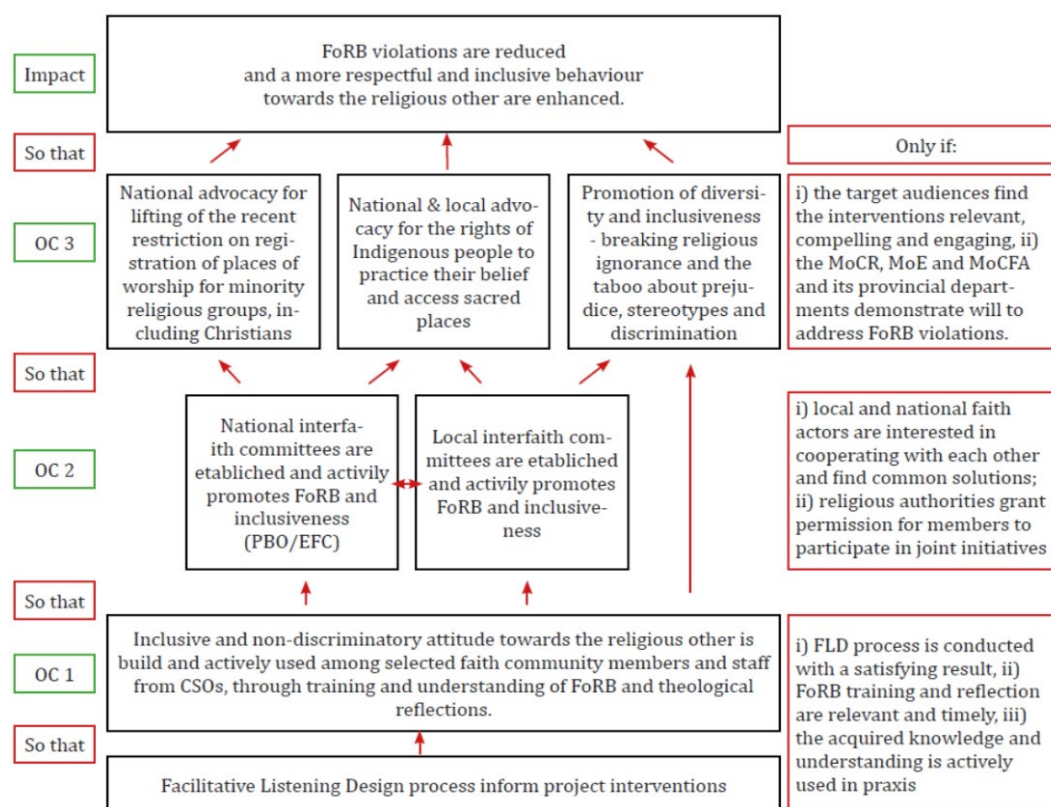
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Annexe 1: List of Repondents

Code	Background	Interview Date
KII 1	Project Partner	11 November 2024
KII 2	Project Holder	21 November 2024
KII 3	Project Partner	25 November 2024
KII 4	End Beneficiary	26 November 2024
KII 5	End Beneficiary	26 November 2024
KII 6	End Beneficiary	26 November 2024
KII 7	Project Holder	26 November 2024
KII 8	End Beneficiary	27 November 2024
KII 9	Project Partner	28 November 2024

Annexe 2: Intervention Logic

Impact	FoRB violations are reduced and a more respectful and inclusive behaviour towards the religious other are enhanced.

So that → Only if:

OC 3	National advocacy for lifting of the recent restriction on registration of places of worship for minority religious groups, including Christians	National & local advocacy for the rights of Indigenous people to practice their belief and access sacred places	Promotion of diversity and inclusiveness - breaking religious ignorance and the taboo about prejudice, stereotypes and discrimination

i) the target audiences find the interventions relevant, compelling and engaging, ii) the MoCR, MoE and MoCFA and its provincial departments demonstrate will to address FoRB violations.

So that

OC 2	National interfaith committees are etablished and activily promotes FoRB and inclusiveness (PBO/EFC)	Local interfaith committees are etablished and activily promotes FoRB and inclusiveness

i) local and national faith actors are interested in cooperating with each other and find common solutions; ii) religious authorities grant permission for members to participate in joint initiatives

So that

OC 1	Inclusive and non-discriminatory attitude towards the religious other is build and actively used among selected faith community members and staff from CSOs, through training and understanding of FoRB and theological reflections.

So that

Facilitative Listening Design process inform project interventions

i) FLD process is conducted with a satisfying result, ii) FoRB training and reflection are relevant and timely, iii) the acquired knowledge and understanding is actively used in praxis

Annexe 3: Project Outputs and Outcomes

	Outcome		Output
OC 1	"By 2024, an inclusive and non-discriminatory attitude toward the religious other is built and actively used among a minimum of 200 faith community members and staff from CSOs."	OP 1.1	"The participatory research reports and FoRB training manual materials are produced."
		OP 1.2	"Faith community members and staff from CSOs acquire knowledge and understanding of FoRB."
		OP 1.3	"Church leaders and members reflect theologically on FoRB."
OC 2	"By 2024, a minimum of 38 faith actors have organised themselves into active local, national and international committees and networks committed to promoting diversity and inclusiveness and actively advocating for freedom of religion or belief."	OP 2.1	"Faith actors are organised in local and national committees and are participating in an international FoRB network."
OC 3	"By 2024, a minimum of 24 celebration events and advocacy initiatives initiated by committees (national and local) and partner organisations have contributed to increased promotion and celebration of religious, cultural and ethnic diversity."	OP 3.1	"Faith community members and the general public celebrate diversity, inclusiveness and FoRB."
		OP 3.2	"Local and national committees advocate for lifting the restriction on minority religious groups and access to sacred places for indigenous groups."

Annexe 4: Indicators Not Reached

Output & Outcome Code	Indicator
OP 1.3	"Number of theological reflection groups on FoRB for church leaders and members, including women, created."
OC 2	"Number of MoUs / Agreements / TORs outlining the role and responsibilities of each of the committees."
	"Number of faith actors participating in local, national and international committees and network meetings."
OP 2.1	"Number of national committees that are established and are operating effectively."
OC 3	"Number of reported positive changes by the national Christian committee in terms of registration of places of worship."