STREAM

Support to Regional Aquatic Resources Management

STREAM Journal

Learning and communicating about the livelihoods of fishers and farmers

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Note

This first number of the third annual volume of the *STREAM Journal* is another mix of articles reflecting a variety of work in which the STREAM Initiative and others engage with partners across Asia-Pacific. *SJ3*(1) in particular ended up with Southeast Asian flavors from Lao PDR, Cambodia and Vietnam.

Robert Arthur and Caroline Garaway write in the first article about how they worked with district-level staff in Lao PDR. From Cambodia, Pen Rotha and Brendan Boucher recall the emergence of a local NGO and describe its current activities, and then Philip Townsley and Sem Viryak report on an assessment of the impact of policy reform in the fisheries sector. Moving to Vietnam, Ngo Minh Khoi contributes what might be the *SJ*'s first article with a spiritual dimension, and Nguyen Viet Vinh describes efforts toward the farming of coral in a marine reserve. The sixth and final article places some of STREAM's current work on market chains and livelihoods into a global perspective, as seen through the lens of one of its own activities, the Media Monitoring Reports.

With another year's worth of *STREAM Journals* on the way, not only do we get to choose a new color for the cover, but we are also responding to reader feedback and increasing the font size for easier readability.

Happy reading!

Graham Haylor, STREAM Director
William Savage, *STREAM Journal* Editor

Creating Understanding and Ownership of Collaborative Research Results through 'Learning By Doing'

Robert Arthur and Caroline Garaway

The generation of potentially useful information that subsequently fails to be communicated and shared with those who could best use it, is a common problem in development research. This article describes one approach to sharing knowledge, generated through adaptive co-management, within and between a wide range of stakeholder groups. It was developed as part of the DFID-funded Adaptive Learning Project conducted in southern Lao PDR from 1999 to 2002 by the Marine Resources Assessment Group Ltd (MRAG), the Regional Development Center (RDC) and the Department of Livestock and Fisheries. The project developed a learning process that involved 38 villages who were collectively managing small culture-based fisheries, together with provincial and district-level government staff and external analysts. These groups collaborated in locally relevant experimental research about fisheries management through a coordinated comparative experiment that involved stocking either carps or tilapia or both to assess performance and investigate the costs and benefits of different management systems being used by villages.

Bringing together the various experiences, expertise and perspectives of the different groups increased the quality and scope of what was learnt and its relevance to those who were expected to benefit from it. However, it is acknowledged that this process is not always easy and developing trust and mutual respect – including of different knowledge types – is essential. To be effective – and to ensure that people could see the benefits of involvement – a great deal of commitment to transparency, skills development, empowerment and explanation is required. Addressing these issues was a challenge and, while we did not feel we were always successful, when we were, we were convinced the effort was worthwhile. To illustrate how some principles of the adaptive learning approach were put into action, this article focuses on some activities designed to increase the understanding and ownership of one of the key stakeholder groups.

Early on, district staff were identified as a key stakeholder group, providing a vital link between the provincial staff and external analysts on the one hand and villages on the other. Ensuring that this group understood the results of the experiment was crucial, as they would play an essential role in explaining results to villagers and discussing implications for fisheries management. However, capacity at this level was low, and innovative methods were required to increase the likelihood of effective information sharing.

District staff analyse data using spreadsheets

Results Workshops with District Staff

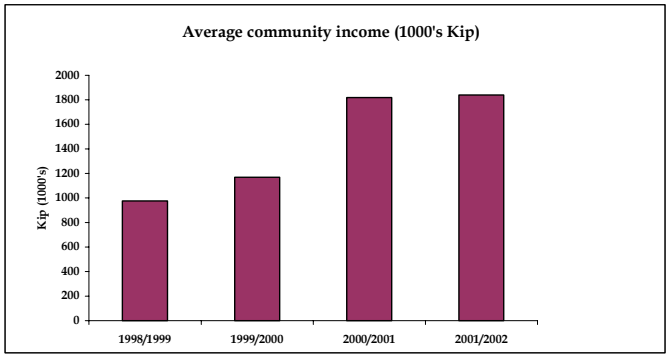
Results workshops were designed to enable district staff to analyse project data, produce graphs and explain results to each other. This 'learning by doing' approach – more usually associated with 'skills' training but here used as a workshop methodology – was possibly one of the most innovative that the project developed. It was time- and energy-consuming but proved successful in disseminating experimental results. Not only did district staff understand results better, they also increased their analytical capacity, and gained ownership of the information, which in turn led to more motivation and interest in project activities.

Our basic principle guiding communications activities was that information has to be generated and shared in an appropriate and timely fashion, allowing people to develop their own understanding and knowledge. Being aware of how information can best be shared between

people – based on their knowledge, skills and experience – is as important as the information itself. We examined what was already practised and started from there. In our experience, participants often felt more comfortable in familiar learning environments, such as workshops with presentations, speeches and statements. While perhaps not ideal for sharing and discussing experiences, these methods were familiar. They were therefore kept but additional methods were used in workshops and gradually new and more dynamic learning methods – including role-plays and games – were introduced.

Workshop Format

To achieve 'learning by doing', district staff – working in small groups and assisted by provincial staff – were provided with worksheets containing data they had collected themselves relating to the community fisheries, together with instructions on how to analyse the data. Each worksheet required the production of a simple graph to illustrate the point being made. Graphs were produced using computers, a rare and appreciated opportunity for participants. The district staff then presented and discussed the finished graphs with their colleagues. These, together with the interpretation of the results, were incorporated into short booklets that each district staff member took away at the end of the workshop. At workshops with village representatives, district staff worked to facilitate their understanding of the results and their implications. This ensured that ideas were explained by those best equipped to understand the requirements of learners.



Graph created by district staff showing community fishery income trends

District staff interpret graphs they have produced in light of their own experiences

Having district staff involved in the process from start to finish - from data collection, to analysis, to interpretation - was unusual for those who either supply data to provincial staff or provide advice.

Participant workshop evaluations suggested that all had successfully learnt and that the methods were effective and valued.

Communicating and enabling people from groups with different perspectives to develop their own understanding, knowledge and ownership requires experienced facilitation. Through the 'learning by doing' approach that the project developed, we were able to ensure that those who needed to learn were the ones doing so. This is important, since when stakeholders understand results, can see their relevance and are committed to the process, the results are more likely to be utilised.

Graphs are presented and discussed as a group

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About the *STREAM Journal*

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Purpose

The *STREAM Journal* is published quarterly to promote participation, communication and policies that support the livelihoods of poor aquatic resources users in Asia-Pacific, and to build links within the aquatic resources management and other sectors across the region. The *STREAM Journal* covers issues related to people whose livelihoods involve aquatic resources management, especially people with limited resources, and government, non-governmental and international practitioners who work with them in communities. Such issues include learning, conflict management, information and communications technologies, aquatic resources management, legislation, livelihoods, gender, participation, stakeholders, policy and communications.

Another equally important purpose of the *STREAM Journal* is to provide an opportunity for seldom-raised voices to be heard and represented in a professional publication that is practical yet somewhat academic. The contents of the *STREAM Journal* should not be taken as reflecting the views of any particular organization or agency, but as statements by individuals based on their own experience. While authors are responsible for the contents of their articles, STREAM recognizes and takes responsibility for any editorial bias and oversights.

Distribution

The *STREAM Journal* is available in three formats:

- An electronic PDF version which is printed and distributed by the STREAM Communications Hubs in each country
- A version which can be accessed and downloaded in PDF format from the Virtual Library on the STREAM Website at www.streaminitiative.org, and
- A printed version which is distributed by the NACA Secretariat.

Contribution

The *STREAM Journal* encourages the contribution of articles of interest to aquatic resources users and people who work with them. The *STREAM Journal* also supports community-level colleagues to document their own experiences in these pages.

Articles should be written in plain English and no more than 1,000 words long (about two A4 pages of single-spaced text).

Contributions can be made to William Savage, *STREAM Journal* Editor, at <savage@loxinfo.co.th>. For more information, contact Graham Haylor, STREAM Director, at <ghaylor@loxinfo.co.th>.

About STREAM

Support to Regional Aquatic Resources Management (STREAM) is an Initiative designed within the five-year Work Program cycle of the Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific (NACA). It aims to support agencies and institutions to:

- Utilize existing and emerging information more effectively
- Better understand poor people's livelihoods, and
- Enable poor people to exert greater influence over policies and processes that impact on their lives.

STREAM will do this by supporting the development of policies and processes of mediating institutions, and building capacity to:

- Identify aquatic resources management issues impacting on the livelihoods of poor people
- Monitor and evaluate different management approaches
- Extend information, and
- Network within and between sectors and countries.

The STREAM Initiative is based around partnerships, involving at the outset a coalition of founding partners (AusAID, DFID, FAO and VSO) supporting NACA. It has adopted an inclusive approach, reaching out to link stakeholders engaged in aquatic resources management and supporting them to influence the Initiative's design, implementation and management.

The partnerships' work is coordinated in each Country Office through a National Coordinator (a senior national colleague agreed with the government) and a Communications Hub Manager (a full-time national colleague supported in the first two years by STREAM), and linking a range of national stakeholders. The Communications Hub is provided with hardware, software, training, information-technology support, and networking and human resources support, and links national stakeholders through an internet-based virtual regional network.

National coordination is guided by an annually-reviewed Country Strategy Paper (CSP) drawn up by the Coordinator and Hub Manager in consultation with stakeholders with whom they regularly network. A CSP identifies key issues, highlights regional linkages, proposes and prioritizes key actions, and seeks funding for these from STREAM and elsewhere (with STREAM support).

The STREAM Regional Office (at the NACA Secretariat in Bangkok) directs the Initiative, provides a regional coordination function, and funds and manages cross-cutting activities dealing with livelihoods, institutions, policy development and communications, the four outcomes-based STREAM themes.

STREAM implementation is an iterative process, initially operating in Cambodia, India, Indonesia, Lao PDR, Myanmar, Nepal, Philippines, Vietnam and Yunnan, China, and expanding within Asia-Pacific where opportunities exist to tackle poverty and promote good governance, as experience is gained, lessons are learned, impact is demonstrated and additional funding is secured. STREAM's communications strategy aims to increase impact by ensuring that existing knowledge and expertise inform ongoing change processes around the region, and that the lessons learned are disseminated throughout Asia-Pacific. The *STREAM Journal* and the STREAM website are components of this strategy.

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