



Project latest:

This is the fifth of our project briefs, designed to inform you of progress in the adaptive learning project. Please contact us at the addresses overleaf if there is anything in the brief that catches your eye. We are always keen to share our experiences and to hear about what you have been doing.

- The experiments conducted as part of the learning strategy in India have been ongoing. Harvesting of the rice and fish at the 11 sites has now been completed (see previous briefs and overleaf). Fish and rice yields have been monitored and the data collected will now be analysed by the researchers and extension staff and the results presented to the participating farmers for discussion. Opportunities will also be sought to enable farmers and extension workers from the different sites to share their experiences with their peers.
- Work has been completed on revising the adaptive learning guidelines. The guidelines have been updated and

reformatted following a period of testing. These will be distributed shortly. The guidelines are currently also being translated into a number of languages including Khmer, Lao and Vietnamese.

- We have been promoting some of the lessons learned from our experiences with adaptive learning. Caroline Garaway presented 'a social science perspective on enhancement outcomes: lessons learned from inland fisheries in southern Lao PDR' at the recent Asian Fisheries Forum (submitted to Fisheries Research). Robert Arthur presented the paper 'adaptive learning: some lessons from implementing adaptive fisheries co-management in Lao PDR and India' at the GTZ sponsored Symposium on Participatory Approaches in Reservoir Fisheries Management (submitted to the Sri Lanka Journal of Aquatic Science). This provided excellent opportunities to share experiences with a number of practitioners in the region.

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Brief # 5

What is the project doing?

1. Developing the existing adaptive learning guidelines to improve both usefulness and readability
2. Communicating with relevant people in a way they find useful and accessible.
3. Implementing the adaptive learning approach in rice-fish systems in India and reservoirs in the Mekong Basin to learn more about the process.

MEKONG BASIN: Learning about marketing arrangements as an essential link in reservoir fisheries co-management in Lao PDR.

Regular management at Nam Houm and Nam Souang reservoirs has been through the Reservoir Fisheries Management Committees (RFMCs). These are user organisations comprised of fishers and local people dependent upon the resources. The RFMCs make suggestions about management and fishing regulations that are negotiated with the government.

There are currently about 70-90 fishermen fishing on each of the reservoirs. Yields on these reservoirs have increased threefold since 2001 when the reservoirs began to be regularly managed by the RFMCs. Current marketing arrangements at the reservoirs are that fishers can keep about 2kg of their fish for their own consumption but the remainder has to be sold through sub-contractors (usually local women) to a Fish Marketing Concessionaire who sells the fish on to retailers. The concession is allocated by the District Government through an annual public tender with income used to create funds for the

District Government.

The problem with the current arrangement is that there is no mechanism through which sufficient funds would be created to cover the actual management costs, and to channel these funds to the RFMCs and their members, who in fact manage the reservoir fisheries.

Besides, as the existing arrangement provides little incentive, a substantial part of the catch is marketed illegally by fishers. The sub-contractors and concessionaire are also unhappy as they receive little fish and sometimes find it difficult to make the concession payments. So, despite the increased yields, all are losing out; fishers, RFMC, marketers and District Government.

To address this, a proposal is being developed whereby the RFMC, and users represented by them, will become partners in the concession with the aim of ensuring benefit

equity from the fishery and improved management.

The RFMC will issue shares so that fishers collectively own participation in marketing and the RFMC recoups the costs of involvement. Participating fishers will receive 'dividends' on the income from the concession share, thus providing an incentive to market fish through the joint arrangement. The RFMC and concessionaire will also benefit as more fish will be available for sale, increasing their funds and income.



Members of the RFMC discuss fish marketing arrangements and equity issues in Lao PDR (Source: MRC).

INDIA: Monitoring the experiments as part of the learning strategy

Farmers at the eleven project sites across West Bengal have been involved in experiments designed as part of a focussed learning strategy. The learning strategy was developed collaboratively by researchers, extension workers and farmers to provide information primarily relevant to the needs of those who rely on the resource systems for their livelihoods.

The information generated will allow farmers to meet their own future needs more effectively and also enable researchers and extension workers to provide more relevant advice and assistance.



Planting out the experimental rice plots in Midnapore, West Bengal (Source: CIFRI).



Monitoring fish growth in the rice-fish systems: a collaborative effort between scientists and villagers, West Bengal (Source: CIFRI).

The experiments include wider trialling of a paddy rice variety with good pest resistance that was developed by the farmers themselves in one of the study sites. If it proves successful, use of this rice variety could allow farmers to reduce the amount of pesticide they use.

Trials are also being conducted to examine the performance of different combinations of fish seed stocked in the systems and the relative benefits of each will be assessed. To support the trials, action plans were developed

at each site. These established roles and responsibilities for researchers, extension staff in the experiments, including support to be provided and the role of each in monitoring, data collection, analysis and the sharing of the results of the experiments.

Data from the experimental fish stocking and rice planting has been collected at all the project sites by the farmers and extension staff. The next step is to analyse the data and present it in an accessible manner and discuss the results with all who have been involved. We will keep you informed of the results...



Harvesting the fish from the rice-fish systems in West Bengal (Source: CIFRI).

CONTACT DETAILS

The project is implemented through a partnership between MRAG Ltd, the Mekong River Commission, WorldFish Center and the Departments of Agriculture and Fisheries of West Bengal, India.

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