

Fisheries & adaptive learning

December 2003

Brief # 2

Highlights on progress:

Welcome to the second adaptive learning brief. Since the last brief (May-03) a number of activities have been undertaken:

- A meeting was held in Kolkata, India attended by all collaborating organisations. The resource systems at the study sites were discussed and key elements of the communications strategy were agreed on.
- A communications strategy for the project was developed (see overleaf). This identified the communications requirements of important stakeholders and will be used to guide awareness raising and information sharing activities.
- In line with the communications strategy, the adaptive learning approach and existing guidelines have been promoted to a range of organisations and also made available through a number of web-based information gateways including ELDIS and MekongInfo.
- Also part of the communications strategy, reports (guideline pre-testing, quarterlies) have been circulated to collaborators at each of the study sites and project briefs disseminated.
- The task of reviewing the existing adaptive learning guidelines has begun (see below). This process will improve the content, usefulness, readability and appearance of these guidelines.
- While the pilot study in reservoirs in Karnataka will no longer go ahead, plans have been made at a series of meetings for the implementation of elements of the approach in each of the remaining study sites.
- Meetings have been held as opportunities have arisen with stakeholders in the region to discuss the approach and the development of the guidelines.

What will the project do?

1. Develop a communications network as a means of communicating with relevant people in a way they find useful and accessible.
2. Develop the existing adaptive learning guidelines to improve both usefulness and readability
3. A key activity will be the implementation of the adaptive learning approach in new settings: rice-fish systems in India and reservoirs in the Mekong Basin.

Pre-testing the existing adaptive learning guidelines

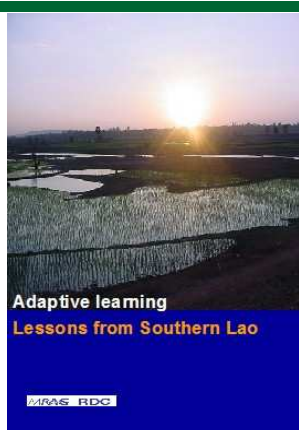
The existing adaptive learning guidelines were written as one of the main outputs of a pilot study in southern Lao PDR. These guidelines are now being pre-tested, a process designed to highlight areas that can be improved.

The guidelines have been designed as a non-technical guide aimed at organisations and development practitioners involved in natural resources management. As such, the guidelines introduce the principles of the adaptive learning approach and present a framework for implementing such an adaptive co-management approach. The guidelines also illustrate how the principles of adaptive learning were executed in a real field setting to ensure learning by all involved.

Pre-testing of the existing guidelines was undertaken using a standardised questionnaire that was completed by various target stakeholders and through focused discussions with a number of these. A review of guidelines content has also been undertaken by the original authors and key stakeholders.

This testing has provided initial feedback on the legibility, readability, level of comprehension and appearance of the guidelines. Improvements will be made on the basis of this and the improved product subject to further testing.

If you have any comments on the existing guidelines we would like to hear from you (see contact details at the end of this brief).



The current adaptive learning guidelines (pictured above) are available from the FMSP website as a PDF document (<http://dialspace.dial.pipex.com/town/green/gov67/FTRs/r7335a.htm>).

What the project will Deliver:

The project will draw from the experiences of other practitioners generated through the communications network, and from implementing the approach. The learning will be synthesised, enabling us to improve the existing guidelines. We will then promote the lessons learned in suitable and accessible media.

THE COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY

One of the key activities that has been undertaken in the period since the last brief was the development of a communications strategy for the project. This strategy will inform and frame the development of a communications network and ensure that project outputs are available to key stakeholders in a relevant and accessible form.

Development of a communications strategy was undertaken with all collaborators. As a first step, a stakeholder analysis was conducted using an importance/influence matrix. Discussions were also held about the applicability of different media and about communications strategies already existing within organisations, and how these could inform the strategy for this project.

Initial findings indicate that written materials, e-mail contact, websites and face-to-face discussions are the preferred media. It was also concluded that to be most effective, the guidelines should be made available as both written materials and electronically via a website.

Participation in communications activities by collaborators varies in both the amount of communication, the media used and the type of stakeholder targeted. However the majority of communication is presently geared toward delivering a message or presenting results as opposed to creating a dialogue.

The communication strategy that has been developed will aim to develop a learning network and increase dialogue between stakeholders and the

project and ensure that this network is monitored, evaluated and adapted as necessary

As a part of the strategy and the building of the network, we have identified you and your organisation as having an interest in the project subject area. We are very interested in sharing our ideas and experiences with you and hearing your views. We hope that you will choose to be involved and would like you to feel that you can contact us by email at the addresses provided below.

If you know of any other people that might be interested in this work, please forward this brief. We would be more than happy to add to the circulation list.

Implementing the approach at the study sites...

Plans have already been made and activities will begin in January 2004 to identify learning strategies at the study sites in West Bengal and the Mekong Basin.

The target beneficiaries have already

been identified and have begun to be engaged. The next step is to identify, together with the beneficiaries, what information it would be useful and possible to share, and to generate this through passive and/or active experimentation. This will provide an

opportunity to identify effective ways of sharing information and communicating with the target beneficiaries at each of the sites. We anticipate sending a brief soon after the field site visits with early results so watch this space!

CONTACT DETAILS

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

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