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Dear Friends,

This month I'm writing from Khulna in southern Bangladesh where I've spent the past few days visiting AAS activities in the polder zone.

It doesn't take long here to see why Bengalis say "mach, bhat, Bengali" or fish, rice, (makes us) Bengali. The polder landscape is a complex mosaic of aquatic farming systems, ranging from the Ghers (dyked enclosures), where rice, vegetables, fish, shrimp and prawns are all grown at different times of the year, to homestead fish ponds and adjacent vegetable gardens managed by women. Thirty million people work in these farming systems, exploiting multiple livelihood opportunities in a complex web of value chains forming the fabric of the agricultural economy here.

This year the polder zone experienced the highest May temperatures in 70 years and the Spring rains failed completely. These climate events highlight the vulnerability of the world's aquatic agricultural systems to climate variability and change. This in turn underlines the importance of channeling AAS research investments in ways that foster greater capacity to innovate and adapt in the systems and communities where we work. How to do this most effectively, and achieve development outcomes at scale, and how we measure progress along our impact pathways, are key dimensions of our research agenda.

Our work in the polder zone builds on the best of earlier research by CGIAR and partners, now combining this with the AAS Research in Development approach. With the strong presence of several other CRPs in Bangladesh we are also working to foster effective connections between CRPs, and so leverage the synergies that are one of the key institutional goals of the CGIAR reform.

For example, technology research being pursued under the Livestock and Fish CRP is contributing improved fish seed as one component of innovative homestead management approaches designed to improve productivity and increase income and nutrition for AAS communities. Similarly, we are now working in partnership with the Agriculture for Nutrition and Health CRP to further strengthen the nutrition focus of our work and develop the polder zone as an example of a nutrition sensitive landscape.

The coherence of this approach, the overall quality of our research and the effectiveness of our partnerships are among the key issues for the forthcoming AAS external evaluation. This will be conducted in the second half of 2014, and we are looking forward to drawing upon this to guide future implementation in 2015 onwards. We'll provide further information on the review in future issues of this newsletter. In the meantime if you have any question on the review or any other issues raised in this issue

please write to aas@cgiar.org

 Patrick's signature

Best regards

Patrick Dugan

Program Director

Milestones

- Extension proposal submitted to the Consortium Office
- Namibia Nature Fund, Department of Fisheries and AAS stakeholders hosted a two-day meeting to boost community involvement in managing fisheries of Upper Zambezi and Kavango Flood Plain and establish a comprehensive co-management plan of work and partnerships
- A seminar series co-hosted by AAS, HarvestPlus, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, IITA and University of Zambia initiated as part of a national innovation platform
- Research and Technical Support System for participatory action research established in Bangladesh
- AAS program endorsed by the Regional Development Council of Central Visaya, Philippines



Latest Publications

- [Community-based marine resource management in Solomon Islands: A facilitators guide](#)
 - [Assessment of agrobiodiversity resources in the Barotse flood plain, Zambia](#)
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AAS in the News

- [Innovative program to boost African fish trade and improve livelihoods](#)
 - [WorldFish leads study in Philippines to improve livelihood of fishermen](#)
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Upcoming in June

- Analysis Development Issues Centre, an AAS partner, will document PAR process in Cambodia
- Capacity building training in PAR and Theory of Change in Cambodia
- Community actions plans for Barotse Hub to be completed
- Zambia social gender analysis report to be completed
- High level seminar in Zambia with Ministry of Agriculture for feedback and input to the new National Agricultural Policy and the National Agricultural Investment Policy (including the Nutrition Road Map)
- PAR on summer horticulture to commence in Bangladesh

- Aquaculture training for AAS program officers in Bangladesh
- Scenario building and Initiative planning in the Philippines



HUB ROUND-UP

Bangladesh

Participatory Action Research around winter horticulture was completed in pilot communities. A workshop in Khulna, '*Changing Landscapes: Prospects for Climate Changes*', highlighted climate change related challenges, opportunities and adaptation strategies emerging in three key farming systems in Southwest Bangladesh (Sorjan, freshwater and saline Gher systems). Capacity building workshops on outcome harvesting and applied theory of change were also completed.

Farmer researchers from pilot communities were trained in Geographic Information System (GIS) mapping, and participatory GIS based village profile and resource mapping was completed. Farmers also participated in a preparatory workshop for completing their own assessments and mapping of the communication channels and flow of information around the aquatic agricultural activities of their community.

Cambodia

The first level of participatory action research was completed in 12 AAS communities in Cambodia. During the process, communities completed reflection activities to review and update their original action plans. Ahead of the PAR work, community facilitators and AAS partners completed a full day of training in the community engagement process. Pilot work began with young people in three villages testing participatory video to document PAR and community action plans.

Philippines

The Regional Development Council (RDC) in Central Visayas endorsed AAS as a "convergence program for various government agencies in the region", and at community level a range of participatory research initiatives are underway. In Mancilang, Cebu, fishers are helping to put together baseline data to be used for fish catch monitoring. In Pinamgo, Bohol, mango farmers began spraying trees for flower induction to boost fruit yield. In Sogod, Southern Leyte, researchers shared the results of the "Rapid Analysis of the Suitability of Abaca Production in Sogod" with abaca farmers of three communities. The farmers are now working with scientists to develop a program to manage the 'abaca bunchy top disease' and restore abaca production to Sogod.

Solomon Islands

In Malaita Province, focal communities continued implementing action plans, and PAR on marine resource management, pond aquaculture and fixed vegetable gardening methods was strengthened. Trainers from the local Baetolau Farmers Association ran community training on organic farming methods and

established demonstration plots. A *'Look and Learn'* visit to the WorldFish research station at Gizo Western Province gave North Malaita community members a chance to learn how best to support their marine resource management action plans.

In Western Province, diagnosis work continued with stakeholders and community leaders with a focus on community-based resource management (CBRM). Workshop reflections helped plan a way forward for CBRM in Western Province and design scaling strategies for these.

Zambia

Fish traders, processors, private and public sector actors in Zambia jointly developed fish value chain visions, impact pathways and a rollout plan for PAR in communities in the Barotse hub. Savings and loan groups were formed in 10 communities and a social and gender analysis study was completed. Work has also been initiated with John Hopkins University on a strategy for social-gender change in the Barotse floodplain. A nutrition scoping study was completed in the Hub to understand needs and develop a joint plan of work with the Ministry of Health.

Data for flood mapping in the Barotse hub have been collected and the program is now working with key partners to assess ways to jointly implement flood risk management activities. Similarly strategies for implementing fisheries co-management work were developed, a Theory of Change workshop completed, and Hub partners came together to review plans and prioritize activities for 2014. Lusaka and Mongu-based staff came together for a team-planning workshop to coordinate work between the two offices.

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