Nonglom Wetlands Management Planning

INITIATIVE ON Agroecology

Context/challenge/ALL vision, what research questions will this innovation aim to answer

The Nonglom wetlands are located in the agricultural landscape of Samakhixay, where resources such as water, land, and fish have been heavily exploited to support local livelihoods. Currently, there are few, if any, management actions in place to regulate resource access and use, let alone efforts to restore or re-establish the wetland ecosystem functions and the goods and services provided by the once natural habitats.

The purpose of the wetlands governance and management innovation is to restore, as much as possible, the wetland ecosystem functions—such as water provision, water purification, and habitats for biodiversity, fish, and other wildlife—along with their associated goods and services. This will be achieved through the application of relevant agroecological principles and the re-establishment of the area's natural habitats. This initiative will also provide a roadmap and springboard for realizing other proposed innovations for agroecological transitions.

The research question for this innovation is: How do agroecological innovations perform in restoring wetland ecosystem functions across the landscape, and how should they be adapted to the local context.

Justification (why is there a need and how has this need been articulated or).

The Nonglom wetlands are crucial for local livelihoods, serving as an important fishing ground, a water source for farming, and providing various other environmental services. However, these wetlands and their surrounding areas face increasing threats from persistent degradation and fragmentation of natural habitats. This is due to the area's long-term conversion to agricultural production, increased water abstraction for dry season crop irrigation, indiscriminate fishing, and the discharge of agricultural tailwaters.

What is your innovation (trial)

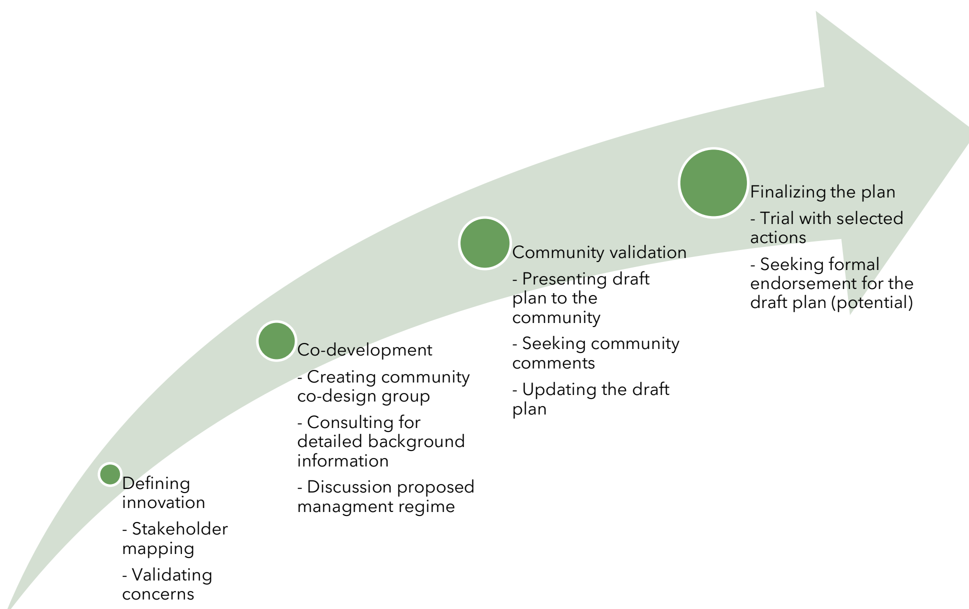
This innovation aims to address the sustainable management and governance of wetland resources by engaging local Food System Actors (FSAs) in designing and implementing actions to regulate resource access and management, and to restore and maintain the ecosystem. The innovation involves relevant FSAs in a co-design process and joint implementation to optimize the livelihood benefits for local people. It seeks to engage local villagers in conducting action research to inform regulations on resource access and to build local ownership in both planning and implementation processes. An evidence-based approach will be applied to document lessons and generate interest among FSAs for their engagement.

How has this been **co-designed** (this will be consolidated across trials into a co-design report

Consultations with relevant Food System Actors (FSAs) are integral to the design and implementation of this innovation. The process began with visits to selected government sectoral departments in the relevant provinces, as well as civil society and private FSAs, to understand current agroecological (AE) practices and scope the potential Agroecological Learning Landscape (ALL). An inter-provincial multi-sector workshop was then held to generate interest in AE concepts and identify the relevant FSAs for the ALL.

Local FSAs, including rice and other crop farmers, fishers, and gatherers of Other Aquatic Animals (OAA), were introduced to the innovation and its potential benefits, as well as the requirements for their commitment to participate in delivering the tasks. They were then consulted along with other stakeholder groups, such as the heads of the participating villages (Hom and Thamaleuy), leaders of specialized village groups like the Lao Women's Union (LWU), the Village Youth Group (VYG), and the Village Land Use Unit (VLUU), as well as the district and provincial Departments of Agriculture and Forestry. Selected participatory tools and processes were used during these consultations.

The outputs from this consultative process were compiled and presented back to the FSAs for validation.



How will this be implemented (approach…e.g., action research, salaphoum, farmer field school also mechanisms such as water user groups, management committees etc.

While the management plan is being drafted through a participatory process involving the innovation team, local FSAs, and representatives from local authorities and the district and provincial Departments of Agriculture and Forestry, the roles in its implementation will vary. A local management/coordination committee will be formed, comprising members from the provincial and district Departments of Agriculture and Forestry, village heads, and representatives from village groups such as the Lao Women's Union (LWU), the Village Youth Group (VYG), and the Village Land Use Unit (VLUU), among others. This committee will guide and coordinate the implementation of the plan.

Initially, at least two interest groups will be organized, consisting of local resource user groups—the water user group and the fisher group. These groups will implement and conduct selected village-led action research to inform the development and compliance of local regulations. They will participate on a voluntary basis in implementing the actions outlined in the plan.

Who or what is the expected benefit and in what ways (this could be expressed as a matrix)

Type of benefit	Who will benefit (advantage)	Risk/cost
Social		
Capacity built on research, leadership, resource governance	PAFO, DAFO, Village Heads, Heads of Village Groups	- Only the top of the management echelon may benefit in this regard but not local villagers
More active community role in wetland management	Village authority, village groups leaders	- Volunteerism and effort from the target beneficiaries will be needed
Wetland management institutional capacity	Local authority and DAFO, PAFO in the locally established management committee	- Sustainability could be a risk after the end of the initiative if not mainstreamed in the existing government structure
Agreed rules and regulation	Local resource users will gain long-term benefits from sustainable use and management of the wetlands	- Higher government endorsement will be needed to ensure effective compliance
Social innovation in place	Community learned and engaged in village action research	- Longer term engagement will be needed to build capacity and ensure sufficient interest
Access to other productive practices, such as home gardening	Women, men, and children	- Only residents next to the Nonglom will benefit in this regard
Environmental		
Wetland ecosystem functions restored when the plan is implemented	Fish and OAA, local fishers and farmers	- No immediate results could be proven
Plant and animal community re-established	Farmers, fishers, and all residents	- May required reintroduction of some aquatic and wetland species from neighboring areas
Improved wetland resources sustainability	Biodiversity of the area	- No immediate results could be proven

How will this be measured (detailed M&E framework including what will be measured, how often, by who etc.?) NB it could be added to the table above, but care needs to be taken to ensure this is clear and well-articulated.

The primary goal is to deliver the management and action plans. Alongside this, the Nonglom Management Committee will be established to coordinate and facilitate the plan's implementation. Consultation and validation meetings with local FSAs will provide key indicators and milestones for the plan development process. The committee's effectiveness, including the frequency of meetings, decisions made, and connections with higher authorities, will be the main indicators of progress.

Transition pathway (maybe here, maybe in the context section?)

The transition from a lack of awareness or initiative for managing Nonglom to having a structured plan and a functioning local management committee is a significant agroecological innovation. This committee will coordinate deliberations, facilitate collective actions, and conduct village-led action research to implement local resource use and management strategies.

Interlinkages between trials and between initiatives

This innovation is closely linked to other initiatives, such as rice-fish farming, underground water solar irrigation, and soil testing. It engages complementary subjects, like establishing a farmer water user group, with overlapping participants including DAFO/PAFO staff members, residents, and local authorities. This shared perspective ensures that objectives and methods across all innovations are synergized. The innovation builds on past and ongoing projects and local practices, such as the UNDP/GEF efforts since 2006 on sustainable use and management of the Lower Mekong Wetlands, to maintain long-term engagement and ownership.

What research outputs / deliverables are expected (technical reports, journal articles, etc.)

The key deliverable is a management plan for the Nonglom wetlands. Additional outputs include the establishment of a local management/coordination committee with defined duties, and the formation of resource user groups, such as a fishery group and a farmer water user group. The process and lessons from their engagement and deliberation will also be documented.

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We would like to thank all funders who support this research through their contributions to the CGIAR Trust Fund: www.cgiar.org/funders.

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