

Asian Mega-Deltas-Work Package 4

The Innovation Model for Integrated Decentralized Food System Governance at the District Level

Project Overview

Asian Mega Deltas (AMDs), including the Mekong Delta, are densely populated areas, biodiverse, fertile and productive food baskets, dominated by rice, fisheries, and aquaculture that also support millions beyond the deltas (would be great of reference is here? and after that production may needed). AMDs are the world's most important rice-growing areas. The AMD initiative has five focus areas (work-packages) that are mechanisms to pursue specific but complementary aims: 1. Adapting Deltaic Production Systems, 2. Nutrition Sensitive Deltaic Agri-food Systems, 3. Innovative financing mechanisms to de-risk delta value chains, 4. Joined-up Governance for Gender Equitable and Socially Inclusive Natural Resource Food Systems and 5. Evidence-based delta development planning.

Objectives

The purpose of this piloting is to conduct the research and documentation on improving food system governance to support the food system decentralization processes, build the connectivity between the CFs, the irrigation system, and rice farming as an integrated food production system through improving water governance, promote the collaboration between the CFs and FWUC, community ecotourism and other relevant stakeholders to work together to manage the fishery, water, rice farming, and irrigation management based on collective approaches and interests to produce foods and support the livelihoods of local communities, promote the role district administration and Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment Office and build the capacity of local communities.

Sites

Two districts were selected for implementing the pilot included; Beung Sneh Community Fisheries which is mainly located in Ba Phnom district and covering to other districts including Peam Ro and Svay Antor in Prey Veng province. Beung Ream Community Fish Refuge which located in Kakos commune, Santuk district, Kompong Thom province.



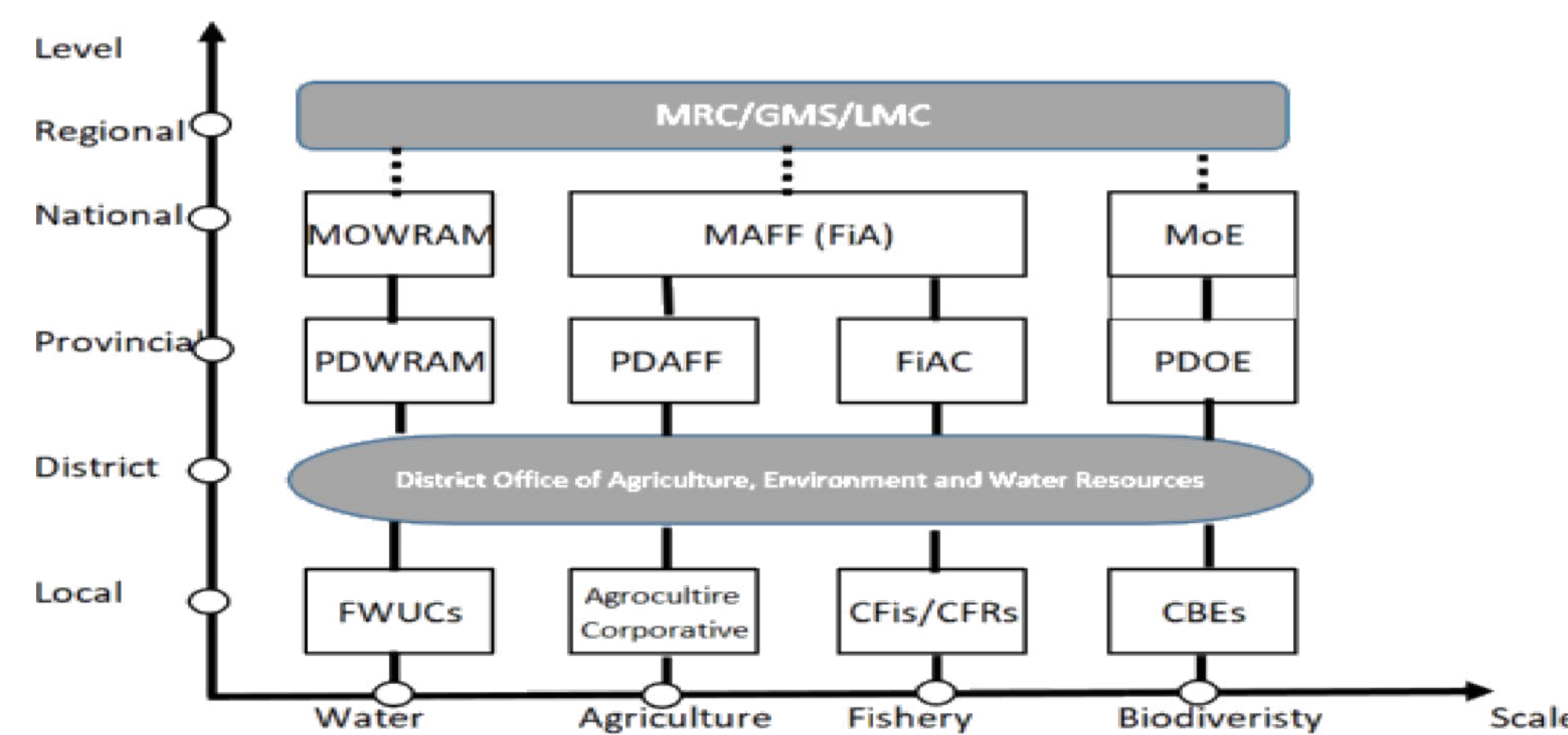
Implementing Methods

The project is worked as partnership with Ba Phnom and Santuk district administration to coordinate with Agriculture, National Resources and Environment Offices to implement this piloting process. The district administrations and Agriculture, National Resources and Environment Offices are responsible to implement the groundwork activities under providing technical supports from WorldFish, International Water Management Institute (IWMI) and Inland Fisheries Research and Development Institute (IFReDI). Furthermore, WF, IWMI and IFReDI are worked on data collection and documenting the process.

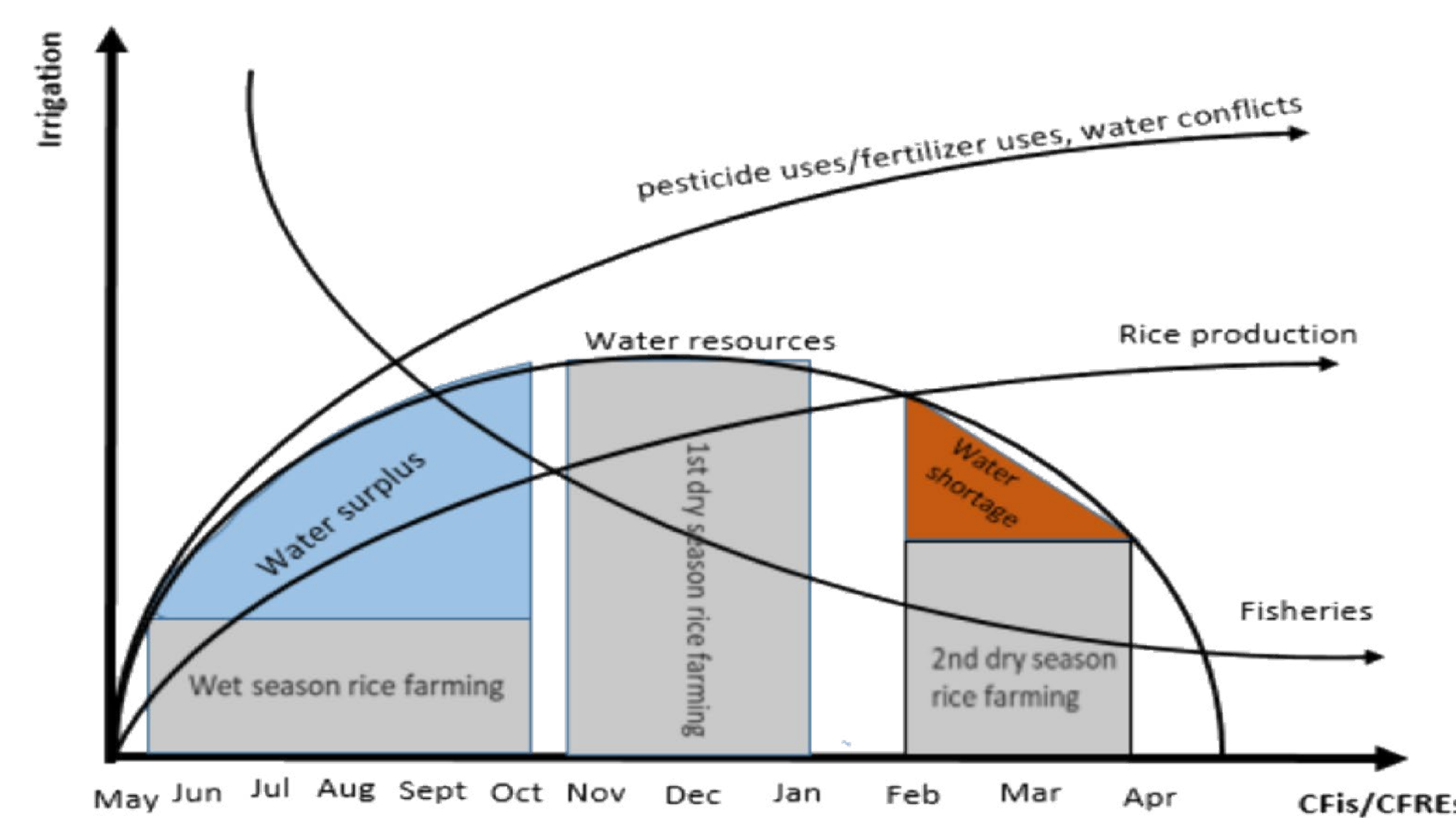
Partners

WorldFish Cambodia and International Water Management Institute (IWMI) are collaborated with Inland Fisheries Research and Development Institute (IFReDI) of Fisheries Administration (FiA) and district administrations to implement the pilot.

Research and Dialogue in 2023



The Cambodian government has decentralized the natural resources governance through Agriculture, Natural Resources and Environment Office to harmonize the integration and effectiveness. This integration is included community Fisheries, community fish refuges, farmer water user communities, community-based ecotourism, agriculture corporations and private water supply. However, these decentralized system governances are still sectoral. There is a government policy on the decentralized governance of agriculture, environment, and natural resources at the District Office, but it is not clear how decentralized governance of agriculture, environment, and natural resources at the District Level will be handled.



Water governance remains sectoral, technical, and centralized, which has affected the productivity of water, fishery, and agriculture, as well as the cost of production, and it also has induced conflicts between sectors and among farmers. Decentralized water governance has been embedded into the policy, planning, and implementation through FWUCs, CFs, and CFRs, but they are still sectoral and centralized to some extent, with limited financial and human resources and a lack of capacity.

The study also found that there is an increased uses of water which is leading to water shortage and conflicts, farming season from three times/year and uses of pesticides and fertilizer. These are leading to degradation of rice field ecosystem & production. Furthermore, the fisheries and their productivity are undermined and affected by agricultural practices, particularly the use of agricultural inputs such as pesticides, fertilizers, and chemical inputs to kill pests and herbs. These agricultural inputs are harmful to fishery and aquatic animals. Thus, even though there is water, there are few fish and aquatic animals in the rice fields.

Next Step: Piloting the Integrated Decentralized Food System Governance at the District Level

The provincial and national multi-stakeholder dialogs where WP4 (with all other WPs) presented evidence from 2023 on disconnects in local water regimes and resulting trade-offs in local food production. There are recognitions and recommendations from the participants that the lack of integrated water resources management would deplete the resources in the lake, and affect local people livelihoods and thus, needs immediate action. The pilot promotes the integrated decentralization of different sectors at the district level to manage agriculture, natural resource and environments.

Why is this important?

The significant investments in irrigated rice production driven partly by national export targets has occurred without considering water as a shared resource across multiple local food production systems that collectively support rural nutrition and health. This disconnect in planning and the resulting impacts on inland fisheries such as Rice Field Fisheries, Community Fisheries and Community Fish Refuges contributes to maintaining Cambodia's malnutrition levels above the global average. Consequently, food production systems remain constrained in diversity and equity given the important role freely caught fish plays in especially low income HH diets.

How will these changes happen from our work?

By bringing district, commune and village level stakeholders responsible for overall development and management of water and other resources (e.g. fisheries, agriculture), the Technical Working Group (TWG) provides a platform for key issues highlighted in last year's stakeholder dialogs to be discussed and solutions and their implementation to be agreed upon. This process also represents 'learning by doing' for the integrated District office who will need to sustain this process beyond 2024.

Activities in 2024

1. Dialogues with the Provincial and District Offices of Agriculture, Environment, and NRs on their willingness to conduct the two pilots.
2. Preparing FWUCs, CFs, CFRs, CBETs and CCs to participate in the pilots: awareness-raising on managing water as a multiple use resource.
3. Establishing the TWGs: nomination of representatives, development of objectives and rules of the TWG operations.
4. Capacity building for TWG on conducting meetings, documenting discussions, and monitoring implementation of agreed actions.
5. Building the capacity of the District Office of Agriculture, Environment, and Natural Resources to chair the TWG.
6. Conducting the assessment for supporting informed integrating planning e.g. data and decision support tools, technical training, human resources, etc.
7. Documenting the pilots and what they reveal about the readiness of decentralized government to give effect to an effective integrated District Office.
8. Presenting results and insights at the Provincial WG on F&N.
9. Presenting results and insights into the 3rd National Strategy on F&N.
10. Presentation of pilot results and insights at the Provincial WG on F&N and dialogues: one in Prey Veng and one in Kompong Thom
11. National Workshop to present the "Innovation Model" of Integrated Decentralized Water Governance at the District Levels to government and stakeholders.
12. Setting the tools and equipment to demarcate the water uses, the fishing conservation, fishing season, and farming season.

Expects Outputs in 2024

1. Functional TWG (multi-stakeholder platform) at district level bridging vertically across villages and Commune Councils and horizontally across water, agriculture (including fisheries) and environment sectors. (meeting minutes, participant diversity, # meetings, # Issues tabled and # resolved, ability to implement agreed actions and participant perceptions).
2. Policy paper documenting the TWG process, preliminary performance and insights into further structural and capacity needs for effectively auctioning policy decision for an integrated divisional office.
3. Journal article on the transition from sectoral to integrated decentralization drawing from the Policy Paper.

Expect Outcomes in 2024

1. Improved WRM, based on collective agreed actions in the TWG to improve cooperation on water sharing between users.
2. Greater accountability and inclusion in water access across diverse water users.
3. Improved water governance for CFRs and CFs through water sharing arrangements with irrigation schemes
4. Increased availability and accessibility of fish in irrigation scheme.
5. Evidence-based roadmap for auctioning the policy on an integrated District office in Cambodia.
6. 3rd National Strategy on F&N informed by Pilot lessons and results inform.