

THE WETLANDS ALLIANCE

BUILDING LOCAL CAPACITY FOR SUSTAINABLE WETLANDS MANAGEMENT

Wetlands Alliance - Alternative livelihoods, enhanced productivity and income generation for the poor

The Wetlands Alliance is an alliance of development partners committed to a process of regional collaboration to strengthen local level capacity for sustainable poverty-focused wetlands management.

A basic premise of the Alliance is that poverty alleviation initiatives work best when they are locally led and actively engage formal government structures. Time and again, poverty alleviation and livelihoods initiatives have failed because they have not succeeded in engaging local government or the beneficiaries. Over the past two and half years the Alliance has laid a solid foundation for more effective poverty alleviation interventions.

Crab production in coastal Cambodia

Regional partner: CORIN

Local partners: Ministry of Agriculture, National Fisheries Administration, Provincial and District Fisheries Administration, Community Fisheries Groups in Kampot province

Poverty alleviation: Kampot province is famous for its crabs. During the consultation phase in 2006, Alliance partners were informed by the Director General of the National Fisheries Administration that increasing crab production offered tremendous potential for improving incomes among poor farmer/fishers in the province, but local authorities lacked the capacity to scale up production. CORIN is building the capacity of local authorities to deliver more effective extension. Students from the Royal University of Agriculture are being encouraged to use the project as a focus for thesis research. Two theses have been completed to date. Four Community Fisheries Groups with over 400 members in two



districts in Kampot are involved in scaling-up crab production through crab banks and crab fattening. Crab banks are simply cages where fishers keep egg bearing female crabs until they spawn. This practice helps increase yields and sustains the crab fishery. Crab fattening means keeping caught crabs in an enclosed area and feeding them trash fish until they increase in size, thereby fetching higher prices in the market. Farmer/fishers who were previously selling crabs at 20 to the kilogram are now selling 10 to the kilogram, at a higher price per kilogram. Following a recent site visit from the Minister of Agriculture and the Director General of the National Fisheries Administration, the effort has been officially endorsed and other Fishery Administration officers will be encouraged to adopt similar practices.

Mushroom Culture in Nam Dinh, Vietnam

Regional partner: CORIN

Local partners: Xuan Thuy National Park Administration, Provincial Department of Natural Resources and Environment, People's Committee of Giao Thien

Poverty alleviation: Traditional livestock-raising is incompatible with new rules and regulations governing the recently established Xuan Thuy National Park, a Ramsar site. It is imperative that local authorities help ensure that poor people living next to the Park stop this practice



and develop alternative livelihood options. One of the options identified by local partners is mushroom culture. Neighboring provinces have experience and there is a secure market in nearby Hanoi. Skills and techniques were needed and CORIN provided the necessary start up support. Buffalo grazers in the national park are gradually taking up this practice and there are now over 60 members involved in 15 mushroom stations within the buffer zone. It involves men, women, the elderly and the youth, and has provides additional income of VND 3 million (about \$ 170) per growing cycle for the households involved.

Goat raising in Southern Laos

Regional partners: AIT and CORIN

Local partners: Provincial and district government officers in Southern Laos

Poverty alleviation: “Goats are the poor man’s cow” is well known in livestock development.



Through consultations the Alliance identified a strong interest by farmers and government authorities in Southern Laos to expand goat raising. Oxfam had previously attempted to introduce goat raising in the area, but the work ended when project stopped. The Alliance discovered that local authorities are very aware of the potential goat raising has for poverty alleviation and were eager to ‘do something’ but lacked the capacity for effective extension. Working with local authorities, the Alliance brought together experts Thailand and AIT for a ‘farmer field school’ in Southern Laos. With local farmers participating, the field training workshop helped to identify locally appropriate husbandry techniques that will directly contribute to food security and income generation. The process has been documented by AIT’s Media Center and can now be disseminated in the local language. This initial training session involved only 20 farmers, but because government officers and farmers have a high degree of ownership in the process, the chances of expanding and sustaining this intervention are much higher than in the past.

Use of traditional medicinal plants in Northeastern Cambodia

Regional partners: WWF and WorldFish

Local partners: CEPA

Poverty alleviation: Through support to Salaphoum research in the construction and communication of local knowledge of medicinal plants, people in small communities have been able to respond to the lack of health service provision and reduce the cost of treatment. Wetlands Alliance is expanding its activities in these areas and supporting peoples’ efforts to reduce household vulnerability.