

LESSONS LEARNED: FROM PILOTING FISH CONSERVATION ZONES
Stung Treng Ramsar Site in Cambodia – Integrating Fisheries Management and
Wetlands Conservation (Phase II)
April 2015-July 2016
Implemented by WorldFish

1. Introduction

1.1 Developing situation

Stung Treng Ramsar site is known to contribute significantly to ecological, social, and economic development of Cambodia. The rich aquatic biodiversity and highly diverse ecosystems and habitats combined low human population have been widely reported for the stretch of the Mekong in Stung Treng Ramsar site. The significance of the area had been reemphasized with its designation of a national Ramsar site status in 1999.

There are about 12,000 inhabitants within 21 communities in area. Across these communities there is widespread poverty and endemic food insecurity, as reported in the last few decades where livelihoods depends on the extent of their access to rice resources, aquatic resources in particular, mostly for their subsistence livelihood with their engagement ranging from seasonal and full time fishing. Distant villagers had also been reported to benefit from fishing for certain time of the year in the area to generate supplemental income and also to secure food stock for consumption during their farming season.

Recent development in the area has seen drastic changes to the area including increased physical access by road, clearing lands for agriculture, and an improved access to market including labor market. This, however, does not translate into equal opportunity for every individual and every community. Regardless of certain changes to their livelihood practices and opportunities to access various income generation activities, poverty remains rampant as witnessed in few communities within project area such as Veun Sean and Koh Hip.

Against the backdrop of constant but slow increase in demand for subsistence fishing, substantial change has been noticed in all the communities within the area as a result of an increased market demand and improved access to market, however environments where they fish do not seem to be as productive as before. This translates into change in fishing patterns, such increasing fishing effort, alteration of fishing gears and practices, how fishing is organized, and where and how fish catch is sold. The small and traditional fishing gears and practices as witnessed for generations have been transformed to a larger and more complex and sometimes destructive. On land, more land has been cleared opening up for an increased land farming which also sees a change in local livelihood mix and inherently how their times are spent in different livelihood activities, particularly between fishing and other income generating activities including in land farming and in various labor markets outside of their communities.

Communities are better aware of the need of fisheries resource protection, particularly through securing some areas as safe refuge from fishing at least for certain time of the year and when the resources are gone they will suffer most as they live next to and possibly depend more on the resources. However, this knowledge does not necessary translate to the same level of engagement in the joint effort for resource protection. There appears to be a lag in involvement of communities related to level of their poverty, limited support from relevant stakeholders, and the general poor enforcement of the rule of law governing the broader resource use issue beyond small-scale fishing.

1.2 Current management arrangements

Since the designation of the area as a national Ramsar site there has been limited improvement in policy and planning and active management to meet the designation requirements. Management of the area falls practically under two sectorial jurisdictions: Environment and Fisheries. While an updated management plan for the Ramsar site has been made and has been submitted to the provincial council for approval since 2015, there has been no further progress. The Ramsar site has been place under the direct supervision of Stung Treng provincial Department of Environment with a team of 15 locally recruited environmental rangers in place since 2006. Communities, however, are concerned about how the new management plan will impact them when implemented and what this plan would mean to them, and what, if any, potential losses or benefits will be seen for the communities.

The Fisheries Administration through its provincial cantonment and with support from NGOs has established and formally registered CFi groups to cover the whole section of the river in the Ramsar site. The FiA and its cantonment with NGO support has a different locally recruited team to monitor and protect irrawady dolphins along the Mekong section covering Stung Treng and a neighboring province – Kratie.

With CEPF funding for 2011-2014 (Phase I) WorldFish has facilitated for successful piloting community led management of three fisheries areas within the Ramsar site. Set of communities involve in different arrangements for their joint management of Preah Sakhorn; Anlong Kambor; and Anlong Kol 46. With additional funding from CEPF 2014-2016 (Phase II) and co-funding from FE (2014-2017) good and successful practice from management of 3 pilot areas under CEPF Phase I is expanded to 5 areas to cover 2 more sites for joint management: Anlong Koh Kei; and Anlong Koh Yeay Chim.

Table 1. Combination of community arrangement for fisheries conservation management

Name of conservation area	Village where community is hosted	Commune involved	Name of conservation area	Village where community is hosted	Commune involved
1. Preah Sakhorn	O'Svay	O'Svay	3. Anlong Kol 46	Kamphann	Samaki
	O'Run	O'Svay		Khe	Samaki
	Veun Sean	O'Svay	4. Anlong Koh Kei	Koh Kei	Koh Sneng

	Kralapeas	Preah Rumkel		Chaom Thum	Koh Sneng
	Koh Chheuteal Toch	Preah Rumkel		Koh Sneng	Koh Sneng
2. Anlong Kambor	Koh Hip	O'Svay		Koh Sralao	Koh Sneng
	Kambor/Chaom Thum	Koh Sneng	5. Anlong Koh Yeaychim	Koh Khordin	Samaki
				Thmei	Samaki

The project has secured collaboration and engagement with various stakeholder groups in addressing economic, social, and environmental issues, particularly in the field where environment patrol groups work as a team with the community patrol group/Community Fisheries Committee to patrol and deter illegal fishing. Such patrols also joined by other stakeholder members but to a lesser extent including by village chief and commune councilors, fisheries officers and occasionally by local police officers.

Recently the community patrol arrangement has seen the nature of illegal fishing activities transformed from illegal fishing mostly involving a single fishing boat to a largely large group of up to 10 or more boats at in one illegal fishing event. This has prompted the communities and their collaborators to join together in a larger team and to patrol across the five areas together, in addition to their responsibility to patrol their respective conservation area.

1.3 Future challenges

Current social and economic development will stimulate further changes to the environment in the Ramsar site and the use of resources. In response the way resources are management and protected will have to be dynamic. As NGO projects have seen a decline in their support from local communities, while simultaneously local communities are becoming aware of the direct threats to their livelihood as resource and environmental degradation becomes evident. Community involvement in more diverse livelihood activities are moving toward land farming and selling labor, rather than focused on fisheries, there will likely be a shift in how communities value involvement in resource management. While development of Don Sahong hydro-dam just upstream of the Ramsar site will pose immediate threats for it will cause significant and abrupt change to the hydrological and associated systems, the area will also see a more chronic climate change impacts.

1.4 How the lessons are documented

The following are sources for development and compilation of the lessons from the project implementation:

- Iterative process of direct communication with community members and stakeholders;
- Monthly meeting with the community patrol groups and rangers;
- Result from semi-annual update of safeguards for which KII and FGD methods were used;

- Regular meetings, reflections and learning events conducted with communities, local authorities and key stakeholders at the field and also at the provincial workshops;
- Data collection for project M&E
- Independent project mid-term evaluation findings.

2. Lessons learned

a. Scaling-up of project: Designation of 2 new sites for fisheries conservation

Key learnings from CEPF supported Phase I project was that site selection needed to be flexible and a number of important criteria should be developed and agreed with the local communities when new sites were identified for conservation designation.

This was still valid when communities decided together on selection of additional sites for fisheries conservation to add to the existing 3 fisheries conservation pilot network as they made reference to the same set of criteria but with stronger emphasis on ensuring participation of active/committed and knowledgeable CFI.

Having successfully piloted community based fisheries conservation at 3 areas - Preah Sakhorn, Anlong Kambor and Anlong Kol 46, in Stung Treng Ramsar site where communities in more than one village are facilitated to engage in joint protection of each area, the project had secured additional funding to strengthen and expand the existing community conservation network and with it two more areas were planned to add to the current network. As communities learned how the 3 areas have been managed and some of them also involved in the discussions for selection of the areas in the first place, with the news on more areas to be selected they came forward to the project for consideration on their areas.

In selecting the sites for designation as fisheries conservation areas participants had joint deliberations and came up with sets of criteria that sites to be selected should meet all of the following:

- presence of endangered and unique species,
- accessible,
- provision of fish spawning and feeding grounds,
- intact flooded forests,
- complementarity among sites,
- presence of active CFI,
- appropriate in size, and
- significance to local livelihood

Having the knowledge of the potential sites from the last assessment with the communities a short list of potential sites was readily available to the project; the communities were advised on preparing themselves to present their respective case in a joint deliberation for site selection.

On advice from the project some communities had prepared for their internal community meetings and agreement sought on proposing their site to the project. This was in contrast to the last selection when consultation meetings with smaller groups were held and pre-selection was made before negotiation was made with the whole community for their endorsement on site selection. In the deliberation for selection of two more sites communities presented their cases against the criteria used in the last selection and answered to questions from other communities. This presents a community led

participatory process where community representatives appreciated and acknowledged that their sites should or should not be selected.

Lessons learned

- A successful community based process designates sites that balances the needs of conservation priorities and community's ability to manage the conservation areas;
- Strong and committed CFI leadership makes stronger case in site selection discussions;
- Community can and is able to mobilize internal support to take initiative forward in profiling their site and influencing decision for their site selection.

b. Maintaining interest and solving local concerns with local authority lead actions

Communities had participated and agreed to designate a site next to their village for conservation. Later in the process a small group of fishers had seen that they tend to lose out, as traditional access to the site by communities who are mostly poor has now been restricted which reduces their access. Moreover, because the community patrol remains weak, so outsiders and illegal fishers are not deterred fishing in the area. The group talked about their dissatisfaction with other local residents who are sometimes involved in illegal fishing, and thus clashed with their community patrol team that guard the site. Regardless of the attempts made by the local patrol team to settle this dispute internally the group had never showed up for face to face talk, despite having their gears confiscated and destroyed the community patrol team.

The issue was brought to the project team who tried a few times without success to hold a meeting with all local residents to address the issue together. Only few of residents turned in every time meeting was convened and as a result no solution had ever reached except the demand from the small group to return the site to fishing as before.

To ensure a high representation of local residents in solving the conflict so that solution would not only satisfy a small group of fishers but incorporating inputs from the whole community, additionally not wanting to abandon the effort made over 3 years, the commune chief was consulted to determine the path forward. At the commune chief's initiative a meeting was convened at Koh Hep where about 70 residents from total 99 households in the village participated in the presence of commune chief, CFI communities from the village and from neighboring villages, staff of fisheries cantonment, and provincial department of environment.

Having heard the concerns voiced by selected local residents, the commune chief facilitated a discussion on the progress made so far in conservation and the potential adverse impact from abandoning it and returning to the fishing regime before project. Project staff reviewed what was agreed in the first place and different management scenarios including continuing current rules on restriction, going back to before project, and potential changes to the current access restriction. Vast majority of the participants then agreed that the current conservation should continue but some changes should be made to the details of access restriction. This provided the basis for a detailed discussion of how revision should be made to the agreement they had for over last 3 years. The result was that a 50 meter allocation for

access to fishing as agreed in the first place had been extended to 100 meters. Although a fisherman insisted on extending further the community overwhelmingly agreed that no further compromise should be made for it can undermine the value of the community effort for conservation as the area of the river is not very large.

Having seen that their access has been compromised by the conservation initiative they initially agreed to for over a year, a group of fishers complained that the past fishing practices its community participated in was for sustenance and income generation has now been significantly compromised. In an effort to restore their full access, the group of fishers convinced other fishers and local residents to join their lobby to the commune chief to repeal the conservation area. Through monthly meetings with patrol groups a commune councilor was invited to discuss the complaint made by local villagers. Discussion was made on who mostly fish there and what gears have been mostly used. It was apparent that only a small group of large scale fishers who mostly fish using large drift gill nets are most impacted and initiated the complaint. They have been fishing not only for subsistence but also to sell their catch through middlemen to Lao border. This was confirmed in a learning workshop at the provincial level attended by communities from the area and beyond including other stakeholder group. The small scale fishers are not reported impacted from the restriction and remains strongly supportive of the site designation unlike the larger fishers as the latter need longer time to set their net before the gear drifts out of the pocket of fishing ground.

Lessons learned

- Local authority should be engaged to initiate the process to negotiate for changes to current agreement in resource access restriction;
- Having all relevant stakeholders, including large representation of community members and local authority in particular involved in the first place in site selection provides strong basis for solving conflicts or concerns in regard to designation of site for conservation later during implementation;
- Monitoring and addressing community's concerns as soon as they emerge if community is to stay engaged;
- In addressing local concern in the on-going conservation effort, there is need to explore who most impacted from such a conservation designation and have them all understood and weigh between positive and negative impacts including the need to protect interest of the poor and vulnerable when trying to address the local complaints.

c. Joint patrol and collaboration within and across sites and with different stakeholder groups

One of the key aspects of the project is collaboration in a number of ways including several community groups working together to patrol and protect individual site and together across all sites, most often with government rangers for the Ramsar site. The community patrol team is sometimes also joined by commune councilors, village chiefs and/or vice chiefs, fishery cantonment officials, and even local police officers. For the community patrol team having a joint patrol with different group provides opportunity

to interact and learn from and with them. Having several community groups to patrol a site together offers a range of advantages.

Recently, as illegal fishing transforms from individual to grouped fishing offenses, there is a need for counteraction by a larger team of community members who are invested in conservation success. This is necessary not only to be effective in containing and challenging the offenders but also to ensure their own team safety. Doing the work in a larger group requires task allocation and clearer approach to respond to offenses as well as to provide back up as and when needed. The community team also talks about the need for internal rule on how and when each member should engage or disengage in their actions while pursuing illegal fishers. When other different stakeholder groups also join with them they may have different opinions in how to conduct patrol and to respond to offenses, however they must discuss and reach a conclusion or they may not be able to achieve the task. There is also a need for stakeholders to communicate even after each patrol and also to share lesson from a patrol session and even sometime plan together for the next patrol. They also learned that when their patrol is joined by a specific stakeholder group they never report illegal fishing, which has created doubt if these stakeholders are tipping off on the patrol operation to illegal fishers. Community patrol team when doing patrol across different communities have opportunities to interact with other community fisheries members they would never meet if it had to work only within its own site. This makes others aware that there are more people watching the fishing ground and can also reduce the chance that community patrol will violate the rules of the management plan.

Lessons learned

- A larger patrol team would not only stronger in challenging illegal fishing but secures the safety of the patrol team;
- A joint patrol with different stakeholder groups offers learning how to coordinate effort and also make compromise;
- Joint patrol also provides community with authority as it also has a higher chance to partner with government competent agency;
- It enhances transparency across the board and enable community to select the right partners in their long term actions;
- Joint patrolling requires more resource and effort thus appropriate planning and working as a team is highly required if it is to be successful.

d. Collaboration with government stakeholder offers solutions to sustainable community actions

The organic law 2008 recommends delegation of roles to local councils to manage natural resources, including fisheries. As a result of the project management plans for fisheries conservation in the pilot sites are already integrated in the commune investment program (CIP), although no systematic support is provided by commune authority, two of the three communes have provided ad-hoc support to the CFI groups for patrol, which goes beyond what can be supported by project. Engagement of some commune councilors and village chief/vice chief are also seen in some communities which has provided

incentives for community members to perform their tasks and feel more secure when they have them in their team.

With jurisdiction to protect the Ramsar site the Department of Environment has encouraged its rangers from among local residents to join with the community patrol team. Because the rangers are under direct supervision of DoE and have now received relevant training they are closer to the government and are able to receive direct order and support from DoE management while trying to enforce the law including confiscation of gears used in illegal fishing. The Department of Environment has also at its discretion to review and request for authorization from its higher line of authority for CFI groups to use boats confiscated from illegal fishing in patrolling the fisheries. This provides not only material inputs to facilitate community and rangers for more effective patrolling but also a moral support the community needs most.

Lessons learned

- In the event that community does not have authority to enforce the law, partnering with relevant government entities who have authority over the area mutually re-enforce the outcomes by both;
- Working and building ownership within local government structure has long term positive impacts
- Creating a communication network across conservation areas will allow for more collaboration and sharing of information about illegal fishing activities

e. Stakeholder and community knowledge and awareness

A part of approach to securing compliance by fishers with the rules set at each conservation area and cooperation by various stakeholders is to increase their knowledge and awareness of the need for protection and conservation of the area. Workshops are held at the provincial level where representatives for different stakeholder groups, from both within and outside of the Ramsar site, meet and share their lessons and experiences. However, meetings at commune and village levels, frequently convened and facilitated by community patrol teams in addition to those by project staff including face to face meeting with fishers while on patrol, have been instrumental to inform about the importance of the resource conservation in sustaining local livelihoods. Building rapport by community patrol teams with the fishers while at their fishing camps have been very useful to informing about the protected sites and the rule agreed to by the community in addition to sign mark and flags. Commune chiefs and councilors also helped spreading the message and urged for more collaboration by lower echelons of government structure as the protection of resources have been seen a part of their tasks. Cases of apprehensions and illegal activities in the conservation areas that have been brought to the commune for action at the provincial level have informed most of the fishers around the provinces including the neighboring provinces.

Lessons learned

- Knowledge and awareness of resources and how they should be protected should be built through a multi-platform initiative using integrated approach;

- Involving local authority and stakeholders in awareness raising provides for a nested approach to enhanced compliance with rules set and agreed locally;
- Giving authority to patrol members through mission letters issued by commune councils or including police or other authorities legitimizes the patrol activities
- Maintaining conservation area boundary markers, such as flags and signs, as well as informing migrant/seasonal fishers about conservation areas, are efforts that must be continued and consistent

f. Securing local stakeholders' motivation and commitments with knowledge, on-going engagement and immediate outcomes

Local authorities and communities have been seen to be instrumental and more effective in local resource management in relation to other stakeholder groups; for example, participation of provincial fisheries cantonment depends on whether or not enough resources and authorities are given to them. It is not feasible to achieve a successful resource protection and conservation at the Ramsar Site without them, and they are the main stakeholders that can act as guardians of the fishing area every hour, day and night. High commitments are seen as community understood and felt the positive outcome of their initiatives. In the interviews as part of the project Mid-term Review (MTR) the CFI committee revealed that communities will want to continue their conservation activities even after project ends, although patrolling activities may have to be reduced to reflect diminished resources to support CFI activities. The sense of ownership felt by the community can be reflected in the involvement of core/patrol groups with only limited financial support from the project. The support provided by project focuses more on institutional arrangements and operation than hard structure with all costs are shared with the participating communities, either in cash or in kind. For example, participants in the community effort use their own boats to do the patrolling activities because the boats provided by the donor are no longer serviceable; they share their labor to build guard posts and to install boundary signs and flags. Overall, the committee members and patrol groups are doing voluntary works for their conservation activities. The communities see the recovery of resources, in many instances through better catch with same or less effort as outcome of their efforts.

Lessons learned

- Long term commitment by community is more likely sustained with community's knowledge and awareness of the intricate links between resource integrity and local livelihood, the continued engagement and inputs for the entire period of project but not only at the project end;
- Conversely, capacity building constitutes local motivation to maintain long term engagement.
- Quick positive outcomes, although small, contributes significantly to maintaining commitments and motivation;

g. Benefits to community are not necessarily direct in the form of income or improved livelihood as motivator for community engagement / Motivation and capacity building is a key factor to maintain community engagement?

What has kept some CFI committee and patrol group members active and remained engaged in the project are not necessarily improved income, nor expectations of payment. Aside from their expectation that the effort would secure at least some resource for their children, many see what they learned including about conservation management, natural resources management, development of management plans, and of their action plan, laws and policies, and implementation of the laws as something that motivated their engagement. They said that they have to be familiar about the law in apprehending illegal fishers otherwise they will be sued by the offenders. They also learned administrative works such as facilitating meetings and reporting on their activities and experiences to relevant authorities and project facilitators. Monitoring and evaluation is another important part of the learning of the communities especially those who are collecting data on fish catch. Some members praised their opportunity for learning and sharing with distant communities outside the region, without their involvement in this kind of work they would be unlikely to experience. Some community responses were that their efforts and achievements recognized by relevant government institutions are essentially motivate. They appreciate being invited to consultations by provincial government, provincial sectoral agencies, donors and other agencies. As reported in the project MTR, the committee and patrol group are very happy from the trust and recognition of the village chief, commune chief, commune council and district officers of their efforts and achievements. They said that every time they were praised in apprehending illegal fishers and for their volunteerism, they felt like a winner and proud of their initiatives and sacrifices.

The committee, patrol groups and local authorities acknowledge that facilitation in learning and development provides an effective incentive. When all stakeholders are informed about the project and a space is provided for stakeholders to share their issues and concerns about the plan of protection and conservation they are motivated. Community members are kept engaged through iterative planning process and are assisted in implementing their activities with monitoring and facilitating feedbacks shared with the participating communities. The continual monitoring of affected communities of the restriction through safeguard mechanism provides timely solutions to their concern. For example, regular assessment if the agreed buffer zone of the conservation areas works for the most impacted and vulnerable who traditionally use these areas. Gathering good practices and lessons learned from the community through a participatory process adds more learning to participants.

Lessons learned

- For some situations non-tangible benefits such as capacity built and awareness earned offer sources that motivate local engagement;
- Community members also want to learn new things from outside of the community, engaging them in learning and sharing outside of their region provides not only knowledge they can use but also motivating them for continued engagement;
- Engaging community members in sharing lessons provides opportunity for more learning.

h. Engaging local community support groups

In an effort to ensure sustainability of the conservation effort, different local interest groups including savings and other livelihood groups have been negotiated for their contribution to cover cost of fisheries patrol by local community. Some of the local groups have made their contribution to local development from interest generated from loans to their community members but frequently the contribution had not been set aside for fisheries conservation purpose. In the dialogue with the presence of commune authority many savings groups pledged their contribution from their limited income sources, but required that a proper reporting on what their contribution is used for. They agreed that members of community fisheries group should attend monthly meeting of savings group when report can be shared on how much monthly income is generated so that calculation can be made on contribution to the fisheries conservation purpose and in exchange the community fisheries group should also report on their expenses. The groups agreed that although the contribution is small and would not cover the whole cost for patrol and other expense for fisheries conservation the demand for more transparent process and spending is not too much but to reflect the level of appreciation by both sides.

Lessons learned

- Engaging different interest groups in support of resource management is feasible although the scope remains limited now it offers dual benefits - the much needed financial contribution and a more transparent management arrangement.
- Local contribution is present; however, it is about what and how it will be used that is the trigger.
- Sustainable funding and investment in CFIs is imperative to long-term success of patrolling and maintaining CFI network

i. Social safeguards and livelihood security

For a project to be successful in safeguarding the livelihood of a participating community, the most effective way to implement programs ensures that interventions are under the same project framework. Lessons show that when designing conservation site, insights from local communities, such as community self-identity most vulnerable community members and allocating areas within the designated conservation site for a continued access with certain gear restrictions. Although by no means this would address the complete spectrum of community needs and its help ensure that an acceptable level of access is maintained for most vulnerable and most impacted members.

In contrast although effort has been made to coordinate with other projects, particularly livelihood projects, support to most impacted members and those who involved more actively in conservation project activities suffer a number of constraints. Other projects have different timelines with different objectives, criteria, and priorities. Communities do not necessarily feel direct benefits right away that are mostly met through alternative support. The other projects intend to support the poorest and vulnerable overall, however these are not necessarily households affected by conservation project. They also have different procedure to select project participants or beneficiaries, and even when selected the

support from those projects are seen as different or additional support that may not necessary seen as a link to secure livelihood of those affected by conservation projects.

It is also less successful when project has to initiate and provide support to sustain livelihood of those affected by conservation activities. Rather, it is more sustainable and effective when the participants affected by the management engage actively in conservation projects can identify and engage in alternative livelihood by themselves using opportunity created by conservation effort such as fishing near conservation areas, provide boat services and guide to tourists, or engaging in fish processing.

Lessons learned

- Support to be provided to safeguard livelihood of project's affected community members should be more effective if built directly within the project rather than through another project;
- It is more successful for community livelihood to be safeguarded if the alternative/supplemental livelihood is a part of practices of the affected community members.

j. Information Sharing Network:

An information gap exists between administrative levels. Often communication flows from the provincial level down to the commune and lower levels, however there are communication and information breakdowns from the bottom up. Stakeholder and community consultations revealed that a functioning information channel needs to be built to allow a smooth flow of information in both directions, upwards and downwards. WorldFish, in collaboration with the Ramsar Unit within DoE and FiAC, therefore, work on piloting a communication network establishment in the Ramsar site with the main objectives to: 1) build capacity of the network participants, 2) collect and document the local challenges, concerns, experiences and lessons learned, and 3) expand this approach to communities outside of the Ramsar site. The Community network action plan is developed in a participatory process involving local communities and other key actors, and the structure of communication was designed and is formed building on the existing mechanism in place.

From the bottom and up, the community members representing local institutions gather information, including issues of fishery management, local concerns, challenges and local security, and report to commune authority in the monthly commune meeting. The information is then sent to district unified task force before it channels to provincial task unified force (PUTF) who has decision making authority. Specific information related environment, community fishery and deep pool management is channeled to DoE and FiAC through environmental rangers and FiAC staff. Then information is sent to PUTF as well. Similarly, the information from PUTF is communicated to communities through the same channel.

Recently the other NGOs working in Stung Treng is interested in the mechanism; for instance CEPA is currently collaborating with WorldFish to engage their target communities, both inside and outside Ramsar, with the recently established communicate network.

Lessons learned

- To provide for effective information flow, a network needs clear objectives and agenda. Communication of lessons and experiences should be done in good faith with information presented in the forms that can be understood and in format that can be shared widely at the commune level.
- Once this groundwork has been created, information can be condensed and communicated at district and provincial levels and having a clear reporting structure will allow for effective communication between levels of government and community.
- To ensure sustainability, the network should benefit participants or offer additional value to participants' livelihood and prioritize community's interests. Effective communication between communities and NGO facilitators designed so that there is not an unnecessary burden on community participants.

Conclusions and Recommendations

These lessons have been mainly identified by participating community members in their deliberations in the course of project implementation and also through involvements and direct observation and discussions by project staff with relevant stakeholders. Direct involvement and regular interactions with local communities had resulted in their identification. Regardless of the plentiful lessons community members had learned from their directly involvement in the project it is difficult for them to identify by themselves and this were made possible through regular interactions and communications. Acknowledgement is thus made to all the community members and relevant stakeholders who had contributed to identifying the lessons.