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## Streamlining community fisheries plans into commune plans, Cambodia

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### ABSTRACT

There are several steps and activities in the process of Community Fisheries establishment and development. Community Fisheries plan is an important guidance for Community Fisheries management and development in order to achieve the goal of natural fisheries resources conservation and management in a sustainable way. Once, the CFs in MRRF target areas were completely established, and then the next step is the planning step.

The CF plan is the action plan for a year implementation and it is made by CF committee members in consultation with all relevant stakeholders in the areas, especially local authorities. The CF plan is reviewed every year and updated for next year. It is important that CF plan is submitted to Commune Council, so that it could be streamlined into Commune plan and it is recognized at the district and provincial level in Siela program and especially the share responsibility of Commune Council in decentralization approach to be good governance in fisheries conservation and management.

KEY WORDS: Community Fisheries; Cambodia

### INTRODUCTION

Most of CFs, in MRRF target areas, have been arranged and established since 2001, immediately after the Cambodia Government had reformed the fisheries management policy using a decentralization approach through having fisheries co-management with sharing responsibilities of local resource users. Presently there are more than 400 CFs in Cambodia, and most of them did not have CF action plan and CF fishing ground 's management plan.

The CF plan is the action plan for a year implementation and it is set up by CF committee members in consultation with all relevant stakeholders in the areas, including local authorities. This was done with the help of fisheries technical facilitators from Department of Fisheries, who are the counterparts of MRRF project who work in close collaboration with Community Fisheries Development Office (CFDO) of DoF. In the process of Community Fisheries establishment and development, there are several steps and activities. Community Fisheries plan is one of those steps and it is important guidance for yearly Community Fisheries management and development in order to achieve the goal of natural fisheries resources conservation and management in a sustainable way. While commune plan is the annual action plan of each commune, which combines all village plans within a commune and is submitted to district level and presented at the District Integration Workshop.

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CF action plan or CF annual plan was initiated by CFs in MRRF target areas with help and support by MRRF-Cambodia sub-component. The main idea of having CF action plan is to solve the problems of fisheries resources faced by Community Fisheries, which have been addressed by CF members during the process of Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) in CF village.

In order to be recognized by the commune and district levels, the needs at village levels have to put in the annual commune plan. Therefore, CF action plans of MRRF target areas were introduced and submitted by CF committee members to commune council and put together in the annual commune plan as one of the priority activities in the commune.

It is important to write up the lessons learned and experiences of streamlining Community Fisheries Plan into Commune Plan based on MRRF practices in Cambodia. The paper will present the ideas and concepts of why and how the Plans of Community Fisheries streamline into the commune plan, and what are the benefits are from that, based on local perceptions and practices.

#### *Why streamlining CF plan into commune plan?*

After the first year of implementation of CF action plans in MRRF-target areas, and based on its evaluation, results by CF committee members with help by MRRF counterparts, one of the main recommendations was on CF action plan streamline into commune plan for the next year. This idea was strongly addressed by most of CF committee members, some other active CF members and other related stakeholders in the CF areas, during the participatory evaluation process on the effectiveness of CF action plan implementation. The main reasons of its streaming are illustrated as follows:

- CF annual plan is the action plan for fisheries management and development purpose at the village level. While commune plan has to combine all village plans within a commune with all sectors of villagers' needs as well as commune as a whole. Fisheries sector is one of those priority sectors in CF villages. So, it is important to streamline CF activities which has been addressed in CF action plan together with commune activities or commune annual plan. This could help the commune council to see and understand deeply on the importance of fisheries natural resources management for people livelihoods in their communes. Usually, the main activities presented in the annual commune plan, are emphasis on rural infrastructure and rice farm activities, where CF villages are not located fully at fishing ground or fishing village. Fisheries management and development activities are sometime ignored or bias during the process of villages planning. It is probably because of missed or low participation of fishermen during villages planning due to they were busy with fishing activities;
- Once the CF action plan has been placed in the commune plan, the CF activities are clearly presented at commune and district level as well as national level. This provides for a wider recognition by stakeholders at all levels on the importance of participatory

fisheries resources management through Community Fisheries, which is sharing responsibilities by local users and the government;

- Meanwhile, the CF action plan, which is already in the commune action plan is automatically and officially authorized and approved by local government who are the commune council and district. Then their responsibilities and close collaboration are made with CFs and fisheries technical agencies for the purpose of fisheries resources management and development in a sustainable manner. It means that the recognition, authorization and sharing responsibilities of all relevant stakeholders at all levels and are importance, in order to achieve the goal of sustainable fisheries resources uses and management.
- It is necessary to clearly present the CF supported activities by MRRF component to local authorities/commune council. While other CF activities in CF action plan which could not supported by the component, funding can be sought from other sources and donors from the assistance of commune council and during District Integration Workshop for those NGOs or other related agencies, who are interested to support CF activities.
- Moreover in the Article 8 Prakas on commune/Sangkat development planning, MOI and MOP, No 098 PRK, stated that every civil society organization may participate in the commune/sangkat development plan and investment programme preparation, and shall be responsible for:
  - Representing the interests of localized communities and specific stakeholders groups like women, youth, the poor and ethnic groups, as well as Community Fisheries;
  - Contributing knowledge and ideas to the preparation of the commune/sangkat development plan.

The above illustrations of the reasons for streamlining CF action plan into commune plan, by local users, CF members and other stakeholders in CF areas, have contributed to the implementation of the Cambodian decentralization approach. Therefore, it is importance for CFs to have their annual action plans beside CF fishing ground management plan, and streamline into commune annual plan. The CF development and management could become more efficient and sustainable, if they knew what the problems were facing related to the fisheries sector and what needs to be prioritized and especially wider recognition and sharing responsibilities and support.

*How to streamline CF plan into commune plan?*

**Preparation of CF Annual Action Plan**

According to the sub-decree of CF management in the article 7 (June 2005), every CF shall have a CF guideline, CF by-laws & internal regulations, management plan of CF fishing areas/ground and agreements recognized by the competent authorities. The CF annual action plan is different from the management plan of CF fishing areas\* and it could contribute to the implementation of a longer plan (such as management plan of CF fishing areas).

The CF action plan was initially prepared by CF committee members, after completion of CF establishment, by using PRA results or problem identification. Usually CFs in MRRF target areas, the priority areas have been identified through Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) during the earlier steps of CF establishment to see the fisheries situation and problems in the areas.

In the first year, the preparation of CF action plan is based on PRA results, prioritized activities, resources/inputs and means to solve problems (see the format of the CF action plan in Annex 1). The above have been identified by CF committee and members, and other related stakeholders in the CF areas, with the help and support from/by MRRF component. Once the CF annual action plan has been completely finalized, then it is often launched with the participation of CF members, local authorities and other stakeholder in CF areas. Usually, a CF action plan is for a CF federation in one fishing ground, where several CF villages are located.



Figure 1. Participants in the preparation of a Commune Development Plan

The preparation of CF annual action plan for the following year is usually based on the results of the first year of implementation. The CF action plan implementation is evaluated by CF committee members, key CF informants and local authorities, every year, through participatory evaluation approach. The next year of CF action plan is changed accordingly based on the previous experiences and lesson learned. Some activities could not be implemented in the previous year due

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\* CF Management Plan of Fishing Ground is a longer plan for at least three year to five year plan

to some reasons and then moved to next year. Meanwhile, some new activities have been identified and put in the next year of CF action plan.

The CF annual action plan is submitted to commune council by CF committee members, in order to place it in the commune annual plan. The annual action plan of Community Fisheries should be prepared before the commune plan, which usually takes place at least before October in the every year.

#### *Preparation of Commune Development Plan*

The purpose of preparing a commune/sangkat development plan is to help the commune/sangkat council to mobilize resources – both internal and external – and decide on their use to solve local problems and to serve the general interest of the commune/sangkat residents. (Article 1 of Prakas on commune/Sangkat development planning, MOI and MOP, No 098 PRK).

The commune/sangkat development plan is a five year plan and is reviewed every year to update the three-year rolling commune/Sangkat investment programme (Article 3 of Prakas on commune/Sangkat development planning, MOI and MOP, No 098 PRK). As stated in the article 20 of Prakas: “each year the commune/sangkat council must review its development plan, and formulate commune/sangkat investment programme, and complete this process not later than August 31. This review and formulation shall follow the phases and steps outlined in art.12 to 17 of the prakas. This review shall be taken into account to update and form the basis of amendment to the development plan and the investment programme. Amendments of the development plan and investment programme must be approved by the absolute majority of the commune/sangkat council”. Therefore, it is good opportunity for CFs to submit their CF annual action plan to commune council every year.

The communes conduct their development planning following the Inter-Ministerial Prakas on Commune Development Planning, and the Guideline on Commune/Sangkat Development Planning Process (April 2002). The commune development planning process has five phases that consists of 11 steps (see Guideline on Commune/Sangkat Development Planning Process, 2002). While the first, second and third steps are in the first phase of analysis (Annex 2) that is similar to the CF action plan preparation process and addressed the issues/problems and needs of local people at village levels through participatory approach. In this phase, the activities from the CF action plan need to be integrated and streamlined and presented during the District Integration Workshop (in the step 8).

#### *Streamlining of CF Annual Action Plan into Commune Plan*

As illustrated above, the CF annual action plan is submitted to commune council for approval and streamline into commune plan by commune council in the third step, where priority activities

been selected, shorted and combined into related sector, such as fisheries or natural resources management sector etc.

At the end of step 7 in the commune planning process, each commune has a list of priority projects and activities to be discussed at the District Integration Workshop.

In step 8, the commune plan is prepared and presented during the annual district integration workshop by commune chief or/and other commune council members, where the selected activities of CF annual action plan are also represented. The annual district/khan integration workshops is organized by the concerned provincial/municipal Department of Planning to bring together the commune/sangkat councils of the district/khan, the provincial/municipal departments, the non governmental organizations and other national and international agencies, for the purpose of:

- Determining and agreeing on the potential financial and technical support of the above agencies to the formulation and implementation of the commune/Sangkat development plan; and
- Aligning the commune/sangkat council and the provincial/municipal development plans and programmes.

District Integration Workshop is important as it is the key opportunity for the commune representatives to win support from provincial technical agencies and NGO's/IO's for development activities which the communes themselves consider their development priorities for the following year. Meanwhile, a representative from MRRF component was also invited to participate in the District Integration Workshop at our MRRF target districts. Through dialogue and negotiation, the communes, the line departments and the NGO's/IO's seek alliances with each other to obtain more resources for local development, or to increase the potential impact of the resources which each of them allocates to various development activities, by linking them up with the activities of others.

Immediately, after dialogues and negotiations during this District Integration Workshop, the temporary agreement is made for each supported agency who has agreed on the interest and related activities which could be supported by their agencies. Meanwhile, MRRF also could agree on some related activities (related with the prioritized activities in CF action plan) which could be supported and sign the temporary agreement (Annex 3). The rest of CF activities that could not be supported by MRRF, they could be interested and supported by other agencies. The process of streamlining CF action plan into commune plan is illustrated in Figure 2.

Therefore, it is important for CFs to streamline their action plan into commune plan, so that the needs and priority activities for CF management and development could be widely understood, given recognition and provided with transparency at higher levels.

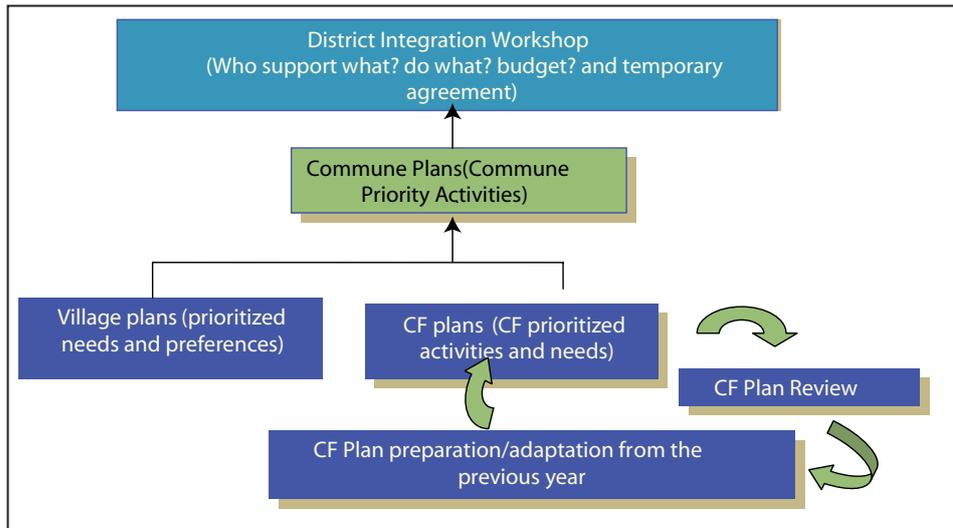


Figure 2. Process of Streamlining CF Plan into Commune Plan

#### ADVANTAGES OF CF PLAN STREAMLINING INTO COMMUNE PLAN

The CF annual action plan as well as CF's fishing ground management plan streamlining into commune plan is necessary and important, not only for CFs themselves but also for local authorities (communes), for provincial technical line departments, and for all those who take part in it.

- **Community Fisheries:** It is important for CFs as it is the key opportunity for CFs to present their voices and needs at higher levels and to show the importance of having CFs in their villages where fishing grounds are present. Greater understanding, recognition and interest on Community Fisheries management and development could be made in wider and larger circles from grass roots to national levels. All relevant agencies could share their roles and responsibilities in supporting CFs for both technical and financial supports. Moreover, it is necessary incentive and encouragement for Community Fisheries themselves from getting this recognition and official approval, so that other CF members and CF non members who usually have participated less and did not; could understand more and see how important all stakeholders are in participating in CF activities. This could make them have self-confidence and empowerment, in order to participate higher, active and share their responsibilities in a more effective way, especially in complying with CF by-law and regulation. From those advantages, the achievement of CF action plan implementation as well as the implementation of management plan of CF fishing ground could be made.
- **Communes:** It is an important key opportunity for the commune to see and understand their groups of interested people such CFs in their commune come up with their prioritized needs and problems, so that Communes could help make the correct decisions for their people. Commune council could not become good governors unless they could understand

clearly what are the problems of their people facing all aspects and people needs and come up with all priority activities (such including CF priority activities from CF action plan) in all aspects in their commune plan. In this respect, the communes could share their responsibilities and support much better the Community Fisheries and be confident on how they could help and support CFs by not ignoring CF activities in the commune plan for the following year.

- **Provincial Technical Line Departments:** They have similar advantages to the communes as well. Moreover it is important for two reasons. First, it helps the line departments, especially provincial fisheries technical agencies to see and understand what and how they could help CFs in their provinces. Also to identify where to implement local development activities with development funds they have already secured (e.g. from centrally funded sectoral development programs, or from donor projects administered nationally). Secondly, it allows the line departments to compete for extra resources made available through the Provincial Investment Fund (PIF) facility. The PIF enables line departments to respond to local development priority requests from the communes, including CF priority activities, and to link these with sectoral priorities, or to seek acceptance and endorsement of the activities that they themselves propose for PIF funding.
- **NGO's/IO's:** It is an opportunity to better integrate their program activities with the proposals that come from the communes and in order to avoid the overlap activities with other projects and programs, especially deal with CFs. It also could show what, and how much each NGO/IO could help and support local communities, including CFs activities in the following year.

#### THE PROBLEMS BEING FACED

Even though, there are lots of advantages of CF plan streamlining into commune plan, however, based on previous year experiences, there are some problems facing during process of streamlining. The main problem occurring is on the timing of CF plan preparation. Some CFs have prepared their action plan too late. This could lead to the problem that commune could not put CF priority activities in proper way in the commune plan. However, even though it was a bit late, CF committee members have tried their best to give main points of CF needs, to be done in the following year. Once CF plan has been completely made and then the revision could be made by commune council before District Integration Workshop.

The other main problem is on the limitation of donors supporting CF activities in most of MRRF target areas. Even though, CF priority activities have been presented together with commune priority activities and all representatives of donors and line departments have participated in process of District Integration Workshop and see the needs of CFs in the commune priority activities. However, most of them do not work and deal with the field of natural resources management and

environment, including CF development activities. On the other hand, some other agencies do not take the first priority to CFs, due to it is not in the main purpose of their project and program. This made difficulty for CFs to get more/extra funding from other donors to implement their CF action plan completely and successfully. Mostly CFs in MRRF target areas could receive only support from MRRF. Some priority activities in CF action plan could be done successfully by receiving MRRF support, and some are not due to funds not being available from MRRF and from other donors too.

## CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Community Fisheries annual action plan as well as CF management plan of fishing ground is an important guide for Community Fisheries management and development in order to achieve the goal of natural fisheries resources conservation and management in a sustainable way. Moreover, the streamlining of those plans into a commune plan is much needed to provided key opportunities and advantages for not only CFs themselves, but also crucial important for local authorities (especially commune council), technical line departments and NGOs/Ios. In addition, to see and understand the real needs and problems of the grass roots groups/local communities. CFs, could help keep on the correct track for both technical and financial supports to CFs in more sufficient and effective way. This led to the achievement of the implementation of government decentralization approach, in terms of good governance, especially for the commune council.

Therefore, every CF in Cambodia should have a yearly plan or CF annual action plan and it is necessary to streamline it into commune plan for the successful implementation of management plan of CF fishing ground, for wider recognition, approval and authorization, transparency of donor supported activities and interest, empowerment of CF and higher participation of all stakeholders at all levels. These issues contribute to success of fisheries conservation and management in a sustainable way, as well as sustainable Community Fisheries management in the long run and future.

CF plan has to be prepared before the commune plan, so that the streaming process could be carried out in the proper way. The implementation of CF plans, both annual and longer plan, should be monitored and evaluated, so that it could give the lesson learned and experiences to be improved in the follow year and plans.

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*Annex 1: Format of CF Annual Action Plan*

Problem	Causes	Proposed solutions or	Specific task	Resources needed		Person in charge	Target date
				Internal	External		

Annex 2: Format tables for the analysis phase of Commune Development Process

**Form 1 (in step 2):** Identified and prioritized village needs and problems

Activities	Description	Output	Materials needed	Participants

Form 2 (in step 2): Village identified prioritized issues and preference in [village name] in 200...

Village issues/ preferences	Priority by number	Proposed solution and available resources

Form 3 (in Step 3): Lists of commune/sangkat prioritized problems or needs

Activities	Description	Output	Materials needed	Participants	Facilitators

**Form 4 (in step 3):** Commune/Sangkat wide prioritized problems/preference in [name of C/S] in [year]

Problems/Preference	From village priority list					C/S Wide*	Priority
	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....		
Economic							
<b>Agriculture</b>							
<i>Credit</i>							
<i>Infrastructure</i>							
<b>Others</b>							
Social							
<b>Health</b>							
<b>Education</b>							
<b>Watsan</b>							
<i>Others</i>							
<b>Natural Resources and Environment</b>							
.....							
.....							
<i>Others</i>							
<b>Administration and security</b>							
.....							
<i>Others</i>							
Gender							
.....							
<i>Others</i>							

\* If  $\geq 50\%$  of villages identify a problem/preference, it will be considered a C/S wide priority.

Annex 3: Temporary Agreements form

**Kingdom of Cambodia  
Nation Religion King**

Province [.....]

..... Date: .....200...

**Temporary Agreement**

At district integration workshop in 200... held at ..... district on [ insert date.....], commune council of [ insert commune name] with (1) ..... (2) ..... and (3) ..... [insert name of agencies] has entered into provisional agreement to cooperate in the implementation of commune projects as follows:

No	C/S Projects	Size	Location	Agency		Local Contribution
				Sector	NGOs	

C/S Chief

[signature]

Agency representatives

1. [name agency] ..... [signature] [name]

2. [name agency] ..... [signature] [name]

3. [name agency] ..... [signature] [name]

Witnessed by District Chief      Witnessed by PDoP  
[signature]                              [signature]

