

Water Interventions for Improving Smallholder Farming and Rural Livelihoods in Asia

From 24-27 January, 2012, Mr. Khim Sophanna, CEDAC's Senior Program Advisor, with an invitation from the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) Regional Office participated in a Regional Consultation Workshop, which was held in Windsor Suites Hotel, Bangkok, Thailand. The objectives of the gathering were:

1. To obtain guidance in the conduct of a regional study on the role of water interventions to improve rural livelihoods in the East-, South- and Southeast Asia.
2. To discuss with the national consultants/partners on the methodology, data requirement and availability, structure of the report and timeframe of the national study.
3. To officially "kick-off" the regional study on the above mentioned topic.



More than 30 participants joined the workshop and were regional experts, national consultants/partners including experts from FAO, Asian Institute of Technology (AIT) and regional and international organizations from countries in the region and Europe. The national study will be conducted in Bangladesh (Northeast Region), Cambodia, China (Hunan province), India (Jharkhand State) and Sri Lanka.

CEDAC was invited to conduct the national study in Cambodia with Mr. Khim Sophanna as the Team Leader. The activities which will be implemented by our team are as follows:

- Contextualize the study methodology to be applicable to the Cambodian context
- Literature review, data collection and analysis on water, rural poverty and livelihoods issues
- Implementation of national consultation workshop
- Report on water and its intervention on rural smallholder farmers' livelihoods in Cambodia

During the workshop, Mr. Khim Sophanna made two brief presentations addressing the country setting, the water related issues, factors affecting smallholder farmers, the government's plan on irrigation, potential water interventions on rural livelihoods, and methodological framework for the country level study. It was a workshop where 60% of the time was spent in group work, discussions and sharing of knowledge, expertise and experiences. It is important to note that among Cambodia's population of about 14 million, 80 % of Cambodians are subsistence farmers, 88 % of the poor are living in rural areas, 25% of the households are headed by women, 26 % of the population live under the national poverty line (US \$ 1/day), around 70% are under 30 years old, and there are approximately 150,000-250,000 new entrants joining the labor force each year.

The outcome of this regional study will be a publication on water interventions for improving smallholder farming and rural livelihoods which will especially address the linkage between water and rural poverty in Asia, which could be used as a tool by policy makers and/or decision makers, researchers and all other stakeholders for the benefits of poverty alleviation in countries across the region. The study is funded by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD).