

Field Notes of Field Study on **CEDAC Irrigation Working Group: its now back on track**

By Mr. Try Thuon and Dr. Yang Saing Koma

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CEDAC irrigation working group is now on track after being inactive for almost half a year. During this month, two significant events took place. The first was the meeting held on July 05, 2008. This was the follow up meeting in order to allow team members to update the irrigation status from the provinces where they work and to restructure the format of irrigation inventory and selected provinces. The discussion on formation of FWUC federation in the country was also discussed. The second event was the field visit and interviews regarding water and irrigation issues in provinces which took place from July 09-11, 2008 aiming to identify the current status of irrigation work and institutional constraints of the involved parties.

The selected provinces

It is the third time that the proposed provinces for irrigation inventory have been changed. This final selection focused on (i) all provinces surrounding the Tonle Sap Lake: Kampong Chhnang, Pursat, Battambang, Banteay Meanchey, Siem Reap, Kampong Thom, Kampong Cham, (ii) Lower Mekong provinces: Kandal, Prey Veng, Svay Rieng and (iii) Tonle Basac floodplain, Prek Thnot flood plain (Cardamom tributary) and coastal provinces including Takeo, Kampot and Kampong Speu.

Some reasons for choosing these provinces are: (i) potential for economic transformation, more irrigation schemes to be renovated as well as the current FWUC to be formed into federation, (ii) center for rice and other agricultural crop development, industrialization and urbanization including high population growth and diversity of trading. They serve as the backbone and heart of the country including the center for political transformation and contestation.

Technical Service Center for Farmer Water User Community

CEDAC/GRET has recently established the Service Center for Farmer Water User Community with funded support from AFD of EURO 400,000 for three year period. The project will launch its program in August 2008. The vision of this center is to create a pool of professionals, with a practical experience of irrigation management issues, providing affordable, quality services to farmer water user community (FWUC) and objectives to provide FWUC services which are: of good quality, professional, adapted to their particular needs, affordable, and sustainable.

Currently, there are 370 FWUCs established, but only 114 received legal reorganization from the Ministry of Water Resource and Meteorology (MOWRAM). Even though, FWUC'S capacity to manage the scheme in all provinces is still poor and mostly did not work in terms of ISF and O&M. The project will work with FWUC throughout the country and will use the experience from Stung Chinit as the foundation background for training and mobilizing farmers and networking the FWUC. It is expected that by the year 2010, we will have 20 to 30 FWUCs formed as federation/ or network coordinated by CEDAC.

The field visits

From July 09-11, 2008 field visits were took place to Kampot, Takeo and Kampong Thom provinces. The purpose was to collect information regarding current irrigation scheme and its current status, institutional constrain and scheme visits.

In Kampot, there are 21 irrigation schemes/reservoirs which have been renovated from 2001-2008, mostly built during the Pol Pot Regime. The total irrigated areas were 11,181 ha in wet season and 20,840 ha in dry season. There was no FWUC formation in this province to take care of the scheme in term of ISF, O&M and the potential use of the scheme.

In Takeo, there are 36 irrigation schemes with formation of the FWUCs, but we are not sure how many schemes already exist. Currently, the provincial department receives US\$10,000 from provincial rural development committee to develop the GIS map of irrigation schemes within the entire provinces. Among 36 FWUC, only a few are still working, mostly with support from the politicians.

In Kampong Thom, there are more than 80 private reservoirs built along the tributaries and Tonle Sap Lake flood plains (Stung Sen and Kampong Svay districts) to irrigate recession rice cultivation of dry season (18,000 ha). Rice yield within these irrigated areas range from 3t to 7t/ha and. It was reported that 100,000 tones were exported to Phnom Penh and Vietnam in 2008. The total number of schemes in the province is not clear. The PDWRAM is still working on the detail irrigation inventory by collecting information from commune council. Scheme renovation is still a major hope. There is a promise from AUAID to renovate 5 schemes per year for a period of three years and also from the ADB.

In general, the irrigation scheme inventory is still an on going process. The potential use of reservoirs, irrigation schemes and the functioning of FWUC are still weak in the three provinces visited. The relationships between the provincial department of agriculture and water resource and meteorology are not well-integrated in terms of interest and responsibilities. The two institutions play important roles in terms of software and hardware development: one is responsible for scheme and reservoir construction and formation of FWUC, while the other is responsible for crop cultivation and agricultural extension. These need to be harmonized for effective use, otherwise the scheme will never achieve what has been planned and designed.

