“Recovering and valuing wetland agro-ecological systems and local knowledge for water security and community resilience in the Mekong region” (RECOVER)

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http://www.csds-chula.org/recover/

Background

- The Mekong Region contains a great diversity of wetland agro-ecological systems that provide a wide range of functions and support important social, economic and cultural values. Economic and social transformations have affected the extent and quality of wetland agro-ecological systems across the Mekong Region, including due to water infrastructure development and agriculture intensification.
- Through three case studies, this project has adopted a “co-production of knowledge” methodology, where local community, government and NGO stakeholders determine the goal of the research project, and are the researchers themselves.
- This innovative method is intended to build trust and partnership through collaborative research

Floating Rice, An Giang Province, Vietnam

- In the Mekong Delta, Vietnam, rice intensification is the key livelihood approach for households and communities with the support of dikes compartment.
- Traditional agro-ecological farming systems, organized around floating rice systems and vegetable production still exist in small pockets.
- This research worked with 126 households in four communes in An Giang and Dong Thap provinces who cultivate floating rice. It organized participatory action research around the benefits and challenges of floating rice agro-ecological systems, including resilience during drought years
- The research found that economic values of floating rice– based farming systems generated more financial returns to farmers per hectare unit compared with famers who cultivated three crops of rice in one year time

Rasi Salai Dam, Sisakhet Province, Thailand

- In Sisakhet Province, the Rasi Salai project on the Mun River, built in 1993, led to two decades of at times intense contestation between affected local communities and government agencies
- Since the late 2000s, however, the conflict has gradually thawed as negotiations on livelihood recovery were initiated.
- The Mekong Sub-Region Social Research Center (MSSRC) worked together with community leaders and affected villagers, local authorities, and government officers to organize a series of meetings and research activities focused on two activities: planning wetland zoning of contested areas, and creating an “educational tourism” program.
- As a result of the project, regular “educational tourism trips are now organized to the area, whilst the groundwork has been laid for a longer-term wetland zoning based on a collaborative research approach

Organic rice, Savannakhet Province, Laos

- Savannakhet province is the most important province for rice production in Laos. In recent decades, chemical use has grown in rice production. Recent Government of Laos policy, however, has encouraged “Good Agricultural Practices” (GAP) for organic rice production.
- The Northern Agriculture and Forestry College initiated a collaboration between 37 farming households from Phonethan and Dong Yang villages and the District Agriculture and Forestry Office (DAFO), Xayabouri District. Through a deliberative process, it was agreed to build a partnership for transition to organic rice production.
- As a result of the project, organic rice has been successfully grown by the families with satisfactory yields over two rainy and two dry seasons. Qualitatively, farmers expressed their satisfaction with their GAP farming production, because: less inputs were required during production, which were available locally; more healthy food for producers and consumers; and better soil quality.