



The Process of Establishing and Functioning of Farmer Water User Committee (FWUC) of SCIRIP

SOVATNA PHON

*Royal University of Agriculture, Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Email: ruasovatna@yahoo.com*

KROESNA KANG

Royal University of Agriculture, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

SENG SUON

Royal University of Agriculture, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

BUNNETH BENG

Royal University of Agriculture, Phnom Penh, Cambodia

Received 20 December 2011 Accepted 25 January 2011

Abstract The Stung Chinit Irrigation and Rural Infrastructure Project (SCIRIP) aimed to improve living standard of the local farmers through increasing the size of farmlands and at least 2 times per year in rice farming. However, the total targeted area of 7,000 ha in the wet season and 30% in the dry season reached only 2,960ha and 20-30% respectively (mostly vegetation) and the yield was still low. The FWUC was established, but the project was still a problem for the farmers. The study aimed to: assess the process of the FWUC's formation and its roles and responsibilities in providing services to its members, assess the functioning of the FWUC and its performance compared with the defined roles and responsibilities, and analyse constraints and potentials of FWUC encouraged participation from its members. The researchers selected 10 different villages from 3 communes including 100 households of members and 50 households of non-members, 2 persons from FWUC, 10 village heads and 1WUG in each village, and 1 representative from each PDoA, CEDAC, AFD, GRET and PDOWRAM to be interviewed. The results showed that the project was designed with insufficient study of the location. There was too deep of a drain, too small of a watercourse of tertiary and quaternary canals, unequal land uniformity and poor quality of soil (basalt, young and old alluvium). The formation of the FWUC and its regulation did not involve participation from all its members. Moreover, only 50-60% of the regulations were implemented and these focused a lot on fishing activities, management of cattle and buffaloes, and the use of roads and ox-cart tracks, but less on management, water distribution, irrigation and canal protection. The participation from farmers was poor for the small plots of land they owned, traditional habit of rice field protection, multiple jobs, poor commitment and cooperation amongst farmers in system protection. In addition, pest booklets caused problems. The problem resulted from internal factors; poor project design, poor FWUC's implementation, poor participation from farmers and external factors; pest booklets and poor soil conditions.

Keywords farmer water user committee, participatory, cooperation

INTRODUCTION

The irrigation scheme plays a very significant role in irrigating the fields. It has been a public policy issues and development discourses in Cambodia for long time. Many irrigation schemes in Cambodia were constructed during the Pol Pot regime. However, most of them were deteriorated after the regime was collapsed (Try, 2008). The importance of the scheme is to eliminate poverty through increasing production, the agricultural sector was targeted by the Royal Government of

Cambodia (RGC) to accelerate the development of the irrigation project: ‘Development of Water Resources Management and Irrigation Infrastructure are to Increase of Agricultural Productivity’. Moreover, MOWRAM remarkably focused on agricultural sector, one of the four priority sectors in term of assurance of food security and improving living standard (Philippe & Sebastien, 2009).

One of the most biggest irrigation schemes is the Stung Chinit, the fifth largest schemes in Cambodia, felt into a state of disrepair in the late eighties and it was not well operated (FACT, 2004). Up to 1997, the preliminary assessment was considered on the possibility of rehabilitation. In 1999, the RGC proposed to Asian Development Bank (ADB) and Agencies France Development (AFD) to support the existing infrastructure in order to provide supplementary irrigation and reach the target of 7,000 ha in the wet season and 30% in the dry season (Philippe & Sebastien, 2009).

The major difference in SCIRIP was that the output could not reach to 7,000 ha and most of the farmers practiced farming only one time a year during the wet season (ADB, 2009). Moreover, the theory was well applied in the wet season (May to December) varying between 3 to 6 months and less in the dry season mostly vegetation. The productivity was very low (ADB, 2006).

The study proposed to find out what was the issue taken place between the FWUC and the Farmers and explained the process of FWUC’s formation and its roles and responsibilities in providing services to its members, the functioning of FWUC and its performance compared with the defined R&R, and the constraints and potentials of FWUC to encourage participation from its members.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted in 3 communes; Kampong Thar, Beong Lvea, and Prasat, Santuk District, Kampong Thom Province are the command areas of the SCIRIP and it covered 25 villages, including Banteay Yumreach village that participated after the project was completely finished in 2008.

The selection was including 100 households of members and 50 households of non-members, 2 persons from FWUC, 10 village heads and 1 Water User Groups (WUG) in each village, and 1 representative from each PDoA, CEDAC, AFD, GRET and PDOWRAM was interviewed.

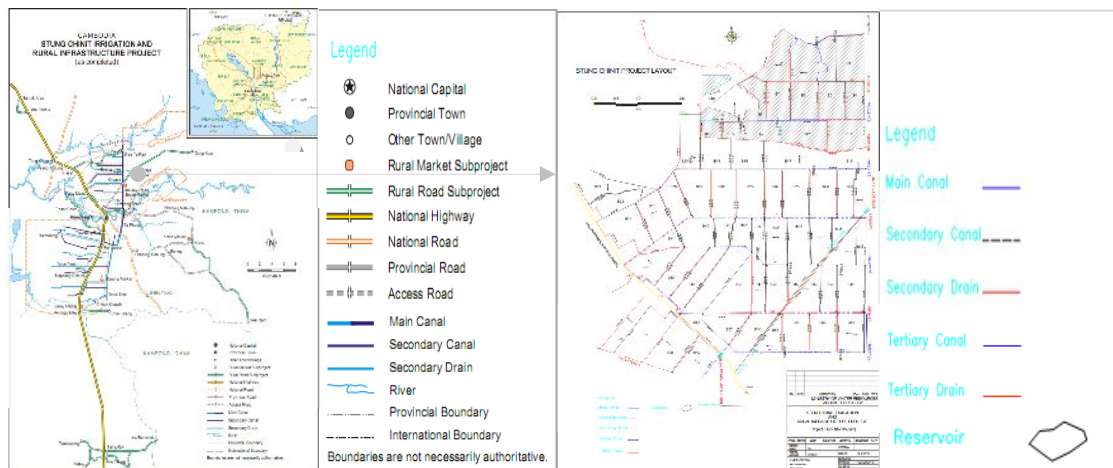


Fig. 1 Map of research zone (ADB, 2009)

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The project was implemented in 2001-2008. The target area decreased by over half (from 7,000 ha to 2,960 ha) due to the change of scope caused by insufficient study, over-lower estimation on the project cost from \$26 million to \$23.8 million, improper designing and constructing of

infrastructures (ADB, 2009). However, the project was still running in providing services to the farmers.

First, the meeting was held within stakeholders on the project objectives and benefits then the results were disseminated to the local farmers. Second, the training was held on the functions, roles and responsibilities, organization, rules and regulations of the FWUC as well as the work plan. After that, the election of the FWUC and WUGs was attended by the local farmers around 60-70% in each election. The last election was held on November 18, 2010. Then the FWUC planning was prepared and proceeded. The irrigation was planned to start in August 2004; however, due to the change of scope it was postponed until July 2006. To minimize the impact of delays, the block pilot of 50ha by pumping was implemented. Next, they proposed study tours to Siem Reap province led by GRET and CEDAC in 2002, then to Kampong Puoy, Prey Nub and O Treng to gain experiences as well as to learn the way to manage the scheme from those locations.

Table 1 FWUC’ formation and supervision milestones

Milestone no.	9	10	11	12	13	14
OUTPUT SCHEDULE	Project and FWUC concept Orientation	FWUC Election	FWUC Planning	FWUC Management	FWUC Study Tour	Supervision During Defect Liability

The liability of the whole system was supervised by the FWUC in September 2008, but it still needed to be supported from CEDAC and GRET as well as to keep improving the work proceeding for the poor management of the FWUC to the whole system.

FWUC roles, responsibilities and meetings

The FWUC had been led by the 5 committees. The chairman was in charge of general supervision, first vice-chairman was in charge of maintenance and repairing plan, second vice-chairman was in charge of water supply distribution, the treasurers were in charge of finance while all WUGs and members were in charge of report farmers’ demand. The executive director was in charge of general management and administration affair.

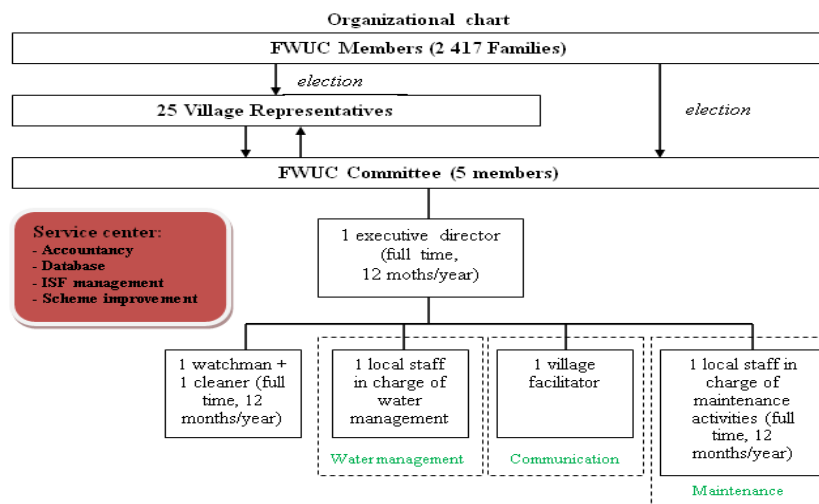


Fig. 2 FWUC’s structure (Philippe & Sebastien, 2009)

There were two kinds of meeting; the general assembly meeting held once a year between FWUC, WUGs and block rangers. General meeting is being held two times a year (in the early and the end of the wet season) including with the local farmers however only members could join to the meetings.