



Information Series

**Community Based
Fisheries Management
*A Rapid Review of
Five villages
in Attapeu.***

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The review was conducted in five villages in Attapeu Province Lao PDR, as part of a rapid survey of existing community management practices. The review included an assessment of the type, location, status and trends of Community Based Fisheries Management (CBFM) in target villages.

Five broad classes of CBFM systems were described, comprising eighteen different types, see table 1. Some types can be classified as indirect management such as hand dug irrigation channels through flood plain, whilst others, are what can be considered as direct management actions such as community fish conservation zones, see case study below. It has been widely written in the literature that inland fresh water systems have few community management systems. Though this may be the case in some areas, perhaps most likely in areas that have a long history of top down (centralised) fisheries management, it is not what has been found to be true in this rapid assessment.

Perhaps with the exception of fish sanctuaries (commonly called Fish Conservation Zones, FCZs) however, there is a widespread decline in the prevalence of these CBFM systems. It is not the intention to discuss this issue here except perhaps to say that contributing factors include; centralized governance¹, increased migration, new technologies and modern highly efficient and non species specific gears.



¹ and resulting impact on common property resource management fudging it into what is often considered to be a system of open access. A decentralisation decree (2001) has now been put into effect, however it still remains to be seen what effect this might have on the prevalence of local & co-management systems.

Table 1 Summary of community fisheries management systems data:

No.	Type	Location (all villages)	Property regime	User group/ (s)
1	Community fish ponds	Village ponds	Common property	Host villagers Nearby villagers
2	Habitat modification			
	>Trap ponds	Flood plain, rice field	Common & Private	Villagers
	>Stream channel construction	River to flood plain	Common property	Kinship group
	> Stream channel construction	Pond to river	Common property	Kinship group
	> Pond enclosure	Private land	Private/common	Individual actor
	> Stream enclosure	Village area	Common property	Kinship group
	> Wetland/pond drainage	Sml. pond, pond, stream, sml. stream	Private & Common property	Individual actor Village group
	> Weir construction	Private property (RF)	Private	Individual actor
3	Restrictions			
	>Gear restriction	River, pond, stream, rice field,	'Open access', common, private	Concerned villages Kinship group
	>Quantity restrictions	Community pond, FCZ, river	Common property, 'Open access'	Host village
	>Seasonal/spawning restrictions	River, stream, rice field, FCZ	Common property, private	Concerned villages Kinship group
	>Size restriction	River, pond	Common property	Concerned villages
	>Area restrictions: I Deep pool II Migration run III Private property IV Spirit area	River, stream River, stream Ponds, streams, RF River, pond, stream	Common property 'Open access' Private Common & 'open'	Concerned villages Concerned villages Individual actor Concerned villages
4	Fishing days	Community pond, FCZ, stream	Common property	Host & neighbouring villagers
5	Traditional gears >Fence traps eg <i>Ton</i> or <i>Li</i>	River, stream, pond, rf	Traditional access to common property resources/Rental	Kinship groups

Village A = Ban Kasom; B=Sakhe; C=Saisii; D=Haad Oudomxai; E=Phonsaat

NB The property regime can be interpreted somewhat variously and in fact, change, depending upon the season e.g., flooded rice fields which, can be a common property fishing area (often with certain restrictions) when inundated, but might otherwise be private property

Fish Conservation Zones in the Xe Kong: A Case Study

The following is provided as a case study and guide to the process and action points in revitalizing or initiating village fisheries management actions specifically, Fish Conservation Zones²?

Fish conservation zones are a small but important component of fisheries management. They are commonly set up through community based co-management approaches and are intended to benefit both the community and the aquatic ecosystem at large.



The MWBP has been working with local government and communities in Attapeu providing support to the establishment of FCZ in the demonstration site. The following steps are intended to guide further FCZ activities and are understood to be part of a process of reflection and learning, and thus, will be updated periodically. It should be clear that there is no blueprint and the following should be adapted accordingly based on the local context.

A seven step process:

Step 1

Village requests the PAFO office (or project) to provide support to help set up a FCZ

Ideally this will take the form of a formal request which can be either a written statement but can also be a verbal request from the village authority to local government officials.

Step 2

The village conducts a village meeting to discuss issues related to the setting up of a FCZ.

These would be expected to include the objectives for setting up the zone and initial ideas on rules and regulations. Provisional agreement from the villagers is a prerequisite for furthering the process. When conducting this meeting it is important that a range of opinions are expressed and the voices of the poor or less powerful groups are adequately expressed.

Step 3 (Optional but desirable)

Assessment and discussion on impacts of FCZ activities.

These should include social³ as well as environmental participatory assessments. In addition to the above, it is useful to delineate, map and geo-reference the area in question. Mapping should include area, average and maximum depth, substrate and other key habitat characteristics. This will allow a comparison in the medium and long term of the effectiveness of FCZs based on habitat characteristics.



²NB Fish Conservation Zones are usually key habitats (not just deep pools) and rarely exclusion zones.

³ With special focus on the poor, female headed HH, the landless and other disadvantaged groups.

Step 4

A second meeting to discuss community management rules and regulations

Other discussion points might include the terms and levels of use of the FCZ, the management committee structure (making use of existing committees where appropriate), roles and responsibilities and function of the FCZ within the broader resource landscape. This meeting may also involve representatives of the surrounding communities.

Step 5

Conduct a meeting with neighbouring villages and GoL staff.

The purpose of this meeting is to openly discuss the plans, objectives and rules and regulations of the proposed FCZ. Neighbouring communities are given the opportunity to comment at the meeting and discuss and reflect on the proposed plan in their own villages.



Government and project (if involved), should be included as observers and advisers only. It is very important that the FCZ is a community initiative both for sustainability and ownership but also as an opportunity to seed broader community based fisheries management schemes.

Step 6

Receive comments from all stakeholders and hold a meeting to finalise the plans.

Through a final meeting agree and endorse the FCZ plans. Assign roles and responsibilities as discussed and draft a letter for the district and provincial authorities to seek official endorsement and support. If there is project involvement this is an area where the project can provide a facilitating role.

Step 7

Sign post or mark the area.

Village sign boards should be clearly placed at the site. They should indicate that a village community management scheme is in operation. Information provided should be clear and concise and refer interested parties who require more detail on the rules and regulations to the village authorities.



FCZ in Ban Kasom: Co-Management in action!

After several awareness raising and study tour activities carried out by the project office, the village head (*nai ban*) of Ban Kasom, appeared in the MWBP office one day waving a piece of paper. He said it was the product of village discussions towards improving an existing fish conservation zone within the village boundary. He asked if the project could help him type up the notes on rules and regulations and if we had any comments.

A week or so later, the *nai ban* asked if the MWBP could support the cost of gathering surrounding village representatives and pay for lunch for a village meeting. Ninety people were invited by the village for that meeting! These included nine women and men from each of the villages in the sub-district. Also invited (but only as observers) were GoL and project staff including village heads from other target villages.

The *Nai ban* of Ban Kasom chaired the meeting with other village representatives presenting the objectives and main ideas. An open discussion was held to debate the rules and regulations being proposed. The discussions were animated and all agreed with the idea in principle but wanted to discuss it with their own communities before endorsing them. Another meeting was scheduled.

Some innovations of the FCZ in Ban Kasom

- ✓ Selected fishing days at times throughout the year
- ✓ Moneys generated from the FCZ to be used to support aquatic resource management activities such as restocking local species
- ✓ An FCZ 'Bank' to be set up
- ✓ No specific FCZ committee but rather a water resources management committee
- ✓ Participatory M&E to be conducted periodically
- ✓ Village indicators set. These are visible and practical such as numbers of fish coming to the surface (frequency & quantity of ripples) and visible sightings using a mask in the dry season.
- ✓ Allow individuals to fish if they have family problems such as sickness or death in the family
- ✓ Special consideration for the poorest groups

FCZ in Ban Kasom: Lessons learned

- ✓ High level of community ownership seems to be the best approach. If there is project involvement, an advisory role only is appropriate
- ✓ Active village administration is a valuable asset
- ✓ Far reaching community dialogue useful for seeding FCZ approaches elsewhere
- ✓ Don't rush. Sometimes several meetings need to be held and a number of revisions made to the plans
- ✓ Minimal or no financial support necessary
- ✓ Steps to be used as a guide not a blueprint. Community needs and situations differ, steps need to be revised accordingly.

Steps based upon:

Baird, I.G. Lessons in Sustainable Co-Mngt of Fisheries at the Mekong River.