

DeSIRA-LIFT WEBINAR – 13 April 2023

Setting up and managing multistakeholder innovation facilities in project mode: bias, pitfalls and opportunities

Lessons learnt from the
Agroecology and Safe Food System Transitions (ASSET)
project in South East Asia

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1. The Project at a glance



Budget: ~15 M€ (AFD: 5 M€, EU-Desira: 7 M€, FFEM: 2,9 M€)

Period: 2020 – 2025



Overall objective: to transform food and agricultural systems in Southeast Asia into more sustainable, safer and inclusive systems, through harnessing the potential of Agroecology



- Strengthening of the Agroecology Learning Alliance in South East Asia (ALiSEA)
- Capacity building and improved knowledge sharing
- Produce contextualised knowledge on the performance and impacts of AE practices to feed policy dialogue at multiple levels

Consortium of 24 partners

Coordination: GRET & CIRAD + National partners from Cambodia (2), Vietnam (3) and Laos (4) + European (8), International partners (3) and United nations (2)

Great Mekong Delta sub
region & ASEAN



2. Project Multi-stakeholder Innovation Facilities (MIFs)

- MIF1: Agroecology Learning Alliance in South East Asia (ALiSEA)
 - Inherited from a previous project: ACTAE (Supporting the Agroecology Transition in South East Asia), 2014 – 2018, AFD
- MIF2: Flagship programs
 - Flagship site = Pilot site with concentrated efforts & resources to support and document AE and safe food transitions
 - 1 flagship site per country
- One common approach: Theory of Change (ToC)
 - Visioning: developing a shared vision of a future deemed desirable by involved stakeholders, and of the different steps that would make this vision happen
 - Drivers: understanding the different drivers enabling or hindering the desired changes
 - Nested: from the local to the regional level



MFI1: Agroecology Learning Alliance in South East Asia



Initial consultation & diagnosis = many initiatives, need for unifying concept for a wide dissemination, interest for bridging and synergizing actors

ALiSEA Regional Network

- Open coalition of multi-stakeholders promoting a broad understanding of Agroecology
- **National Board Members Committee** representing the diversity of members & coordinated at regional level
- **Goal** = (1) answer need for knowledge exchange and experiences sharing (2) foster interactions and create safe space for stakeholders (3) to increase visibility of agroecology of local initiatives
- **Vision** : ALiSEA will become a autonomous member-managed network

Development of ALiSEA network action plans

- National Foresight and Theory of Change to build a common and desired vision on Agroecology and to guide interventions
- Results shared at the National General Assembly to include all members and defined action plans
- Identify areas where ALiSEA is the most suitable and where it should focus its efforts

MFI2: Flagship programs

Flagship sites selection process

- Scoping studies, multi-stakeholder consultation workshops and selection committee
- Commitment and endorsement by the various stakeholders

Development of flagship action plans

- ToC defined for each flagship site: Partners ToC > local stakeholder ToC > Restitution with local partners
- A shared common vision for the AE and safe food systems transition in the site
- Launch of action research activities, annual review of flagship action plans
- Strategy and planned activities defined, recognized and adapted to the objectives of the various stakeholders
- Distribution of activities to be carried out and identification of new stakeholders to be involved (joint activities)



3. Managerial implications (1/3)



Project logic *versus* donors logic

- Nested Theory of change (ToC) from local to national to define ambitions, strategies and expected project activities
- ASSET logframe defined before the start of the project
- Negotiation of a "minimum" logframe (in terms of quantitative objectives)

ToC logic (*what should be done*) **versus Institutional logic** (*what we are used to do*)

- Project partners chosen to cover as much as possible the diversity of possible interventions (technical, organisational, institutional)
- A pool of HR and operational costs that can be mobilised according to project needs

ToC: a new approach in the region and for the partners

- Costly approach: transaction costs to define common objectives, which requires specific skills (facilitation, synthesis)
- Provision for ad hoc HR and training of partners (facilitation, ToC process)
- Adjusts the timetable of project activities

3. Managerial implications (2/3)



Towards adaptive project management or How to foster agility in participatory and multi-stakeholder projects?

- Cumbersome coordination and administrative management : need for systematic approval by the donors of new activities and/or partners involved: supporting notes, ToR and budgets, PPM revisions...
- Not anticipated : Depends on interpretation of procedures. No adapted donors procedures manual, No ad hoc procedures manual allowing for agility and adaptability of the project.

Difficulty in engaging partners in the definition of joint and co-financed activities

- Partners used to working in silos with their own budgets
- Partners not used to being transparent in the use of budgets
- Not anticipated: slow implementation of activities, high transaction costs to coordinate.

Difficult to develop local coordination and leadership

- Coordination of multi-stakeholder activities often very energy-intensive and need for coordination under-dimensioned
- Specific funding in each country but insufficient
- Additional funding for local coordinators

3. Managerial implications (3/3)



Engage actors in multi-stakeholders consultations to define a common framework for action and interventions

- Opportunity to foster knowledge of different actors (interface between government, researchers, CSOs) and concrete collaboration by establishing one facilitators team per country in charge of local and national ToC process

Switch from project driven to members-driven network

- Long-term strategy to achieve an established, sustainable, autonomous and appropriate network by the stakeholders of the region:
 - a) *Emergence phase (enabling conditions, create a community around shared values and vision, sense of belonging),*
 - b) *Maturation phase (empowerment)*
 - c) *Grown-up phase (diversified services, project portfolio, members subscriptions)*
- Develop different scenario for sustainability : from the minimum to keep the network alive (e.i between 2 funding periods) to more ambitious interventions

4. Beyond project



Objectives

- Objective of **supporting ALiSEA structuration and autonomy beyond project** : *build ownership and internal culture, define governance modalities, broaden partnerships and develop financial plan*
- Beyond the project, **the flagship sites ToC are used to guide future interventions in the selected provinces** (by the local authorities, extension staff, stakeholders in the VC..)

Main lessons learnt

- Multi-stakeholder innovation facilities are important to define and implement collectively agreed objectives, strategies, and actions
- Co-creation and exchanges of experience are crucial in the process to promote AE innovations, as it depends on context-specificity and holistic approach
- Need to make these objectives, strategies and actions visible, coherent and appealing (synthesis and communication efforts) otherwise ToCs are little used
- Local leadership is key to make these platforms work (e.g. Cambodia vs Laos/Vietnam)
- These facilities have a cost: need to discuss and define with members the strategies to sustain them in the long term (economic model)

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Thank you for your attention!

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