

WorldFish 'Applying KS tools to Impact Monitoring and Project M&E' KSinR Pilot Project

~ Mid-Project Update ~

The WorldFish project, lead by Dr. Natasja Sheriff, is piloting alternative, participatory and qualitative methods of monitoring and evaluation and impact assessment (Outcome Mapping and Most Significant Change) into an adaptive management community fisheries project (CPWF 35). The project intends to evaluate the value and applicability of the tools in the project context, and develop appropriate components that suit the type of project and institute context and needs.

WorldFish Pilot project update, highlights and plans:

*The project responded to a need for alternative methods to M&E that provide a more nuanced approach to understanding impacts and outcomes, which go beyond an evaluation of returns on investment to donors, and which respond to beneficiary perceptions of impacts rather than impacts as defined by researchers.

* The project's **start-up workshop was held in Vietnam 19-22 February 2008**. The workshop involved training of the CP35 team in Vietnam in use of Outcome Mapping and Most Significant Change methodologies, as well actual initiation of the methods with the communities at project sites.

* A **paper** entitled 'Monitoring for Change, Assessing for Impact: the WorldFish Centre Experience' by Natasja Sheriff and Tonya Schuetz was presented by Natasja Sheriff at the 'Rethinking Impact' Conference in Cali, Colombia, 26-29 March 2008.

***Follow-up visit** to the communities in Vietnam is planned for end July/early August to follow-up on the OM methodology implemented and to review and evaluate the progress markers developed during the training process.

*Using lessons learned from the process, the **project will develop a methodology** based on adapted components which can be used in other of the countries in the project. This newly adapted methodology will be tried out in Cambodia later in the year.

Interesting lessons from the Pilot project work so far include:

- The capacity of local partners to apply the full OM methodology and to convey the concept of Outcome Mapping across languages is a major influence on the success of OM in a project context. Misinterpretation and miscommunication of the terminology and concept of 'behavioural change' inherent in OM may lead to unequal distribution of power in favour of stronger stakeholders. Despite these potential risks, critiques of this widely promoted approach to M&E are currently lacking.
- Alternative approaches to M&E need to match the needs of the project and the country context. Many alternative approaches to M&E have arisen in the development field and may be too complex and time consuming to implement within the timeframe and budgets of many research projects. The existing approaches often require strong facilitation skills on the part of implementers.
- The project evaluates the advantages and potential pitfalls of applying OM and MSC in the context of a research project, at the community level.
- There is strong potential to develop a highly effective and user-friendly methodology which combines elements of OM and MSC, leading to:
 - Better understanding of the relationship between action and impact at all levels within a project, from researcher to beneficiary
 - Clearer understanding of stakeholder perceptions and expectations
 - Awareness of, and responsiveness to, unanticipated issues and project impacts
 - Strengthened partnerships amongst all stakeholders
 - Improved dialogue between stakeholders, leading to mutually agreed action and sustainable outcomes

For more information: <http://ks-cgiar.org/>

