

Field Trip Report

project

Next generation agricultural extension: social relations for practice change

project number

SSS-2019-138

period of report

02/2023

date

9 March 2022

prepared by

Caitlin Finlayson, Brian Cook and Van Touch

Summary

A 10-day field trip to Battambang and Pailin, Cambodia, took place between February 11-20, 2023. 3 research team members from Australia joined the trip, including the Project Lead and 2 Activity Leads, alongside the In-Country Project Manager. All partners took part in the field trip.

The **outcomes** of the field trip were:

1. Held meetings with all 4 in-country project partners (National University of Battambang (NUBB), Partners for Rural Development (PRD), French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD) and Provincial Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (PDAFF))
2. Held meetings with and an additional 4 other stakeholders
3. Established further collaboration between University of Melbourne and Macquarie University
4. Facilitated a participatory workshop and photo diary presentation with 8 research assistants from PRD
5. Conducted a participatory network mapping workshop with a farmer group in Pailin, in collaboration with PDAFF
6. Delivered course content for NUBB on Social Network Analysis with undergraduate and postgraduate students, and research assistants from PRD
7. Attended a theatre production from Project 1 (ASEM-2013-003) and incorporated data collection for this project
8. Assessed the capacity and research skills of the 8 research assistants from PRD to employ assets based community development methods

The full list of participants were:

Visiting	In-Country Partners	Other stakeholders
A/Prof Brian Cook (University of Melbourne, Project Lead, Activity 6 Lead)	Sophanara Phan (PDAFF)	Dr Stephanie Montgomery (NZ Plant and Food, ASEM-2013-003 project partner)
Dr Caitlin Finlayson (University of Melbourne, Project Manager & Activity 1 Lead)	Sokunthea Nuon (PRD)	Colm Byrne (See Beyond Borders, local NGO)
Dr Andrew McGregor (Macquarie University, Activity 5 Lead)	Manika Yim (PRD)	Bonny Coombe and ChanPhireak Chhit (Lakhon Komnit, ASEM-2013-003 project partner)
Dr Van Touch (University of Melbourne, In-Country Project Manager & Activity 3 Lead)	Bunnarath Som (PRD)	James Fortune (Live & Learn Cambodia, local NGO)
	Chariya Korn (PRD)	
	Lita Mom (PRD)	
	Saroeut Yong (PRD)	
	Sao Chen (PRD)	
	Sophea Yous (PRD)	
	Pherom Song (PRD)	
	Sinuon Chhun (PRD)	
	Myriam Adams (CIRAD)	
	Dr Pao Srean (NUBB)	
	Samrith Leang (NUBB)	

The itinerary was as follows:

Date	Location	Activities	Participants
Feb 10-11	Siem Reap	Arrival	A/Prof Brian Cook, Dr Caitlin Finlayson, Dr Andrew McGregor, Dr Van Touch
Feb 12	Battambang	Travel to Battambang Other stakeholder meeting 6PM	A/Prof Brian Cook, Dr Caitlin Finlayson, Dr Van Touch, Dr Stephanie Montgomery
Feb 13	Battambang	Other stakeholder meeting 8AM Partner meeting 12PM Other stakeholder meeting 5PM Project team dinner 6PM	Live & Learn Cambodia, Dr Pao Srean and Samrith Leang (NUBB), Bonny Coombe and ChanPhireak Chhit (Lakhon Komnit), all PRD staff, Sophanara Phan (PDAFF), A/Prof Brian Cook, Dr Caitlin Finlayson, Dr Andrew McGregor, Dr Van Touch
Feb 14	Battambang	Workshop with research assistants 9-2PM	All PRD staff, Sophanara Phan (PDAFF), A/Prof Brian Cook, Dr Caitlin Finlayson, Dr Andrew McGregor, Dr Van Touch
Feb 15	Pailin	Partner meeting 9AM Travel to Pailin Theatre Production 5PM	Myriam Adams (CIRAD), A/Prof Brian Cook, Dr Caitlin Finlayson, Dr Andrew McGregor, Dr Van Touch, Lakhon Komnit, PRD research assistants, Sophanara Phan (PDAFF)
Feb 16	Pailin	Farmer Workshop 8-9.30AM Travel to Battambang	Sophanara Phan (PDAFF), A/Prof Brian Cook, Dr Caitlin Finlayson, Dr Andrew McGregor, Dr Van Touch, 17 Pailin farmers
Feb 17	Battambang	NUBB SNA Lecture Preparation Activity 3-4 Preparation	A/Prof Brian Cook, Dr Andrew McGregor, Dr Van Touch
Feb 18	Battambang	NUBB SNA Lecture Travel to Siem Reap	A/Prof Brian Cook, Dr Andrew McGregor, Dr Van Touch, PRD research assistants, Dr Nicholas Harrigan (remote), Dr Pao Srean and Samrith Leang (NUBB)
Feb 19-20	Siem Reap	Other stakeholder meeting 2PM Departure	Colm Byrne (See Beyond Borders), A/Prof Brian Cook, Dr Andrew McGregor, Dr Van Touch

1 Reflection on Project Design

1.1 Project research strategy

The field trip confirmed that the research issue being addressed is still relevant with farmers being socially, spatially and economically disconnected from each other, from centres of power, and from commodity chains. Both workshops undertaken during the field trip highlighted these disconnections.

Our approach to focus on agricultural extension as a major component of rural development was confirmed with the ruling Cambodian People's Party announcement in January 2023 of a policy to shift the country from agriculture to agribusiness, emphasising the role of agricultural experts, officers and students.

The overall project timeline is on track. Data from Activity 1 is being analysed. Activity 2 data collection was completed a week prior to the field trip. Activity 3, piloted and further designed during this field trip, will commence in March/April 2023. Activities 3-7 were further designed based on the activities undertaken during this field trip (see table in Section 2 below).

1.2 Reflection on gender strategy

The activities undertaken during the field trip confirmed the importance of a gender focus and strategy. Both workshops held with research assistants and farmers reflected participation from women. Women were identified as successful farmers in the case study area and key stakeholders who shape both household and village practices.

1.3 Reflection on capacity building strategy

The breadth and depth of relations with project partners from different sectors - government and agricultural research (PDAFF and CIRAD), non-governmental sector (PRD) and education (NUBB) - was evident, confirming the strategic partnership approach. These project partners bring grounded and diverse viewpoints on farmer livelihoods and hold strong relations with farmers, both essential for the remaining activities to be implemented (Activities 3-7).

1.4 Recommended adaptations to the research strategy

The overall research strategy was not altered as a result of the field trip.

2 Activities and outputs discussed

Table 1: Project activity table (as relevant to the field trip)

No.	Activity	Outputs/ milestones	Completion date
Activity 1			
1.3	Elicit from world leading extensionists their views on the individuals 'missing' or 'behind the scenes' from classic extension research and practice	Empirical article and Project Brief that explore 'missing extensionists', with emphasis on the social relations that have not tended to be published but which are hypothesised to be central to successful extension efforts	Yr1 Q4
Comments from the field trip	<p>Activity 1: What is Ag-Ext?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - purpose: determine Ag-Ext as practiced globally (Cambodia); strengths, weaknesses, assumptions, practices, reasons to where what can change? IQ - who is missing from accounts/analyses? EQ - what needs to change? Semi-Structured Interviews of experts Expert Perception Data F₁ - normal selection F₂ - farmer values/needs F₃ - no-estate farmers - what is Ag-Ext according to experts? - spread vs critique - Expert perceptions of why/what's missing from contemporary Ag-Ext (what is absent) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > global vs. Cambodian - " " - what needs to change in " " (in the field and) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> > explanations of why it's not change (gov change, but...) 		
Activity 2			
2.2	Village mapping and household census across selected study sites in six communes of Cheu Teal, Kampong Priem, Ta Sanh, Ou Tavao, and Stueng Kach in Battambang and Pailin provinces	Baseline census data of all households in study sites to be used as a sampling frame and/or selection of participants for Activity 3- 7	Yr2 Q4
Comments from the field trip	<p>Activity 2: Who is the farmer?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - purpose: to document the lives of smallholder farmers in NW Cambodia to establish baseline for project work ROs - who are these farmers?/farmers? REs - what are their assets?/farmers? RDs - what livelihoods? RIEs - what they need? REs - what they need? Quantitative Survey of 3000 farmers households by rice, banana, maize Quant data F₁ - - Baseline summary report - Making a 'good life' in NW Cambodia 		
Activity 3			
3.1	Survey large areas of cassava, maize and rice to determine what farmers have done and what farmers are doing on their lands	Survey three large areas of lowland and highland crop production and management practices over a two-year period	Yr2 Q4

<p>Comments from the field trip</p>			
--------------------------------------------	--	--	--

Activity 4

<p>4.1</p>	<p>Participatory workshops to establish an overview of the diverse livelihood practices that sustain households and communities, (including paid and unpaid work on farm and off farm, and in the household), and offer analysis of how these differ for women and men</p>	<p>Empirical article and Project Brief that explore household livelihood practices, past changes in village lives and livelihoods pertaining to agricultural practices, with attention to differentiating the experiences of women and men, and different sectors of the community</p>	<p>Yr2 Q4</p>
------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------

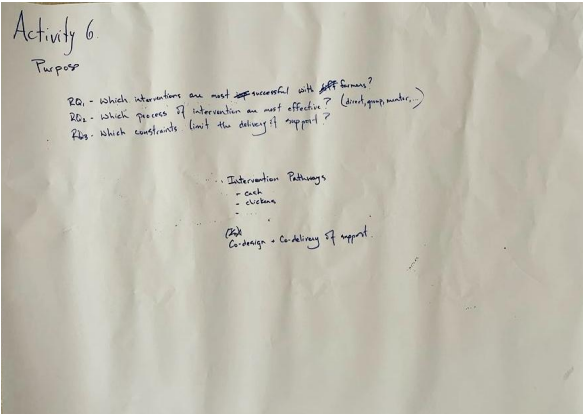
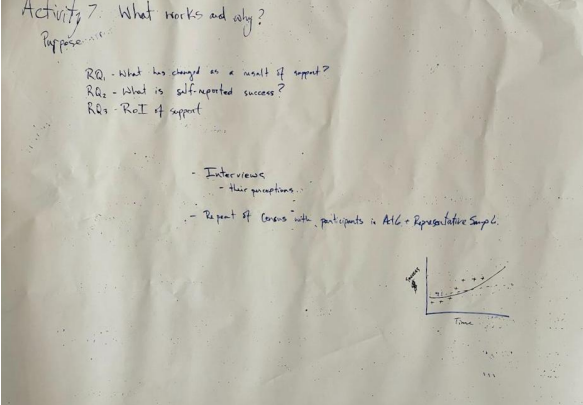
<p>Comments from the field trip</p>			
--------------------------------------------	--	--	--

Activity 5

<p>5.1</p>	<p>A range of qualitative methods oriented at providing an in-depth understanding of what contributes to agricultural success in the case study villages</p>	<p>Baseline report and Project Brief documenting how local communities perceive success, the multiple dimensions of success and the types of households most commonly associated with success.</p>	<p>Yr3 Q4</p>
------------	--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	---------------

<p>Comments from the field trip</p>			
--------------------------------------------	--	--	--

Activity 6

6.1	Collaborate directly with farmers, creating opportunities for willing farmers to expand their relations with enabling individuals or organisations	Empirical article and Project Brief that explore the initiatives, innovations, lessons learned, and challenges of improving social relations through social research projects (i.e., what we did, what worked, what did not work)	Yr4 Q4
Comments from the field trip			
Activity 7			
7.1	Household interviews and concluding household survey to re-analyse the social relations of farmers in order to account for any (dis)connections that occurred since the baseline interactions	Empirical article and Project Brief that analyse and compare social relations and on-farm practices before/after project interventions	Yr5 Q2
Comments from the field trip			

2.1 Gender outcomes

The participation of female farmers in the participatory mapping workshop with a group of farmers in Pailin demonstrated a gender outcome from this field trip. This workshop, held on February 16, was facilitated by A/Prof Brian Cook, Dr Van Touch and Sophanara Phan (PDFAFF) with support from Dr Andrew McGregor and Dr Caitlin Finlayson. The village chief and key farmer (female) was an active participant in the discussion.



Workshop with farmers - Pailin

Image 1: Various photos from the workshop, village chief and key farmer (bottom left), the participatory map, group photo with all participants and facilitators

2.2 Capacity building outcomes

A standout outcome from this field trip were the skills and capacity of the 8 research assistants employed through project partner PRD. These research assistants have now been working on the project for 9 months. The workshop held on February 14 demonstrated this capacity through presentations by the research assistants on two topics - successful farmers and diverse farmer livelihoods.

Further, the research assistants took part in a participatory analysis exercise where they were asked to map and rate the relations of a farmer (Exercise 1) and list the factors which make a farmer successful (Exercise 2). The research assistants showed in-depth knowledge of the spatial and relational context and farmers' livelihoods, and an ability to analyse and discuss the farmers, farms and farming practices. This knowledge was based on the data they had collected through Activity 2.



Workshop with RAs

Image 2: Workshop with research assistants from PRD and Sophanara Phan (PDAFF) facilitated by A/Prof Brian Cook and Dr Van Touch with support from Dr Andrew McGregor and Dr Caitlin Finlayson

The photo diary sessions, occurring on a fortnightly basis since July 2022, have clearly influenced and developed their skills and capacity. This outcome confirms the capacity building strategy to position and develop the research assistants as contributors to the research, rather than seen as only tools to collect data for the research. Further it contributes to developing the capacity for rigorous social science in NorthWest Cambodia in the agricultural sector.

This field trip demonstrated the strong relations that PRD has with Lakhon Komnit, with the theatre productions from ASEM/003/2013 having commenced in February 2023. 4 research assistants from SSS/2019/138 have interviewed 66 farmers (sample drawn from the audience attendees across the 13 shows) to evaluate the learnings from the thinking theatre performance. A/Prof Brian Cook is in the process of recruiting a social scientist from NUBB to analyse this data set.



Image 3: Thinking theatre performance from Lakhon Komnit, Theatre flyer, interview with a farmer from the audience and concluding remarks from Sophanara Phan (PDAFF)

The meeting with CIRAD during the field trip on February 15 confirmed the project strategy to build on their pre-existing relationships with farmers as there are geographic location crossovers with the project.

It was also identified that the project will be the basis for a lecture for the University of Melbourne Undergraduate Level 3 Course 'Sustainable Development', planned for April 2023, and to be delivered by Dr Van Touch and Dr Caitlin Finlayson. This subject is coordinated by A/Prof Brian Cook.

The field trip also provided another opportunity to deliver social science research methodology course content at NUBB. The topic for this session was Social Network Analysis. The contribution to the curriculum benefited students (undergraduate and postgraduate), staff and faculty, and research assistants from PRD who were also able to attend the session.

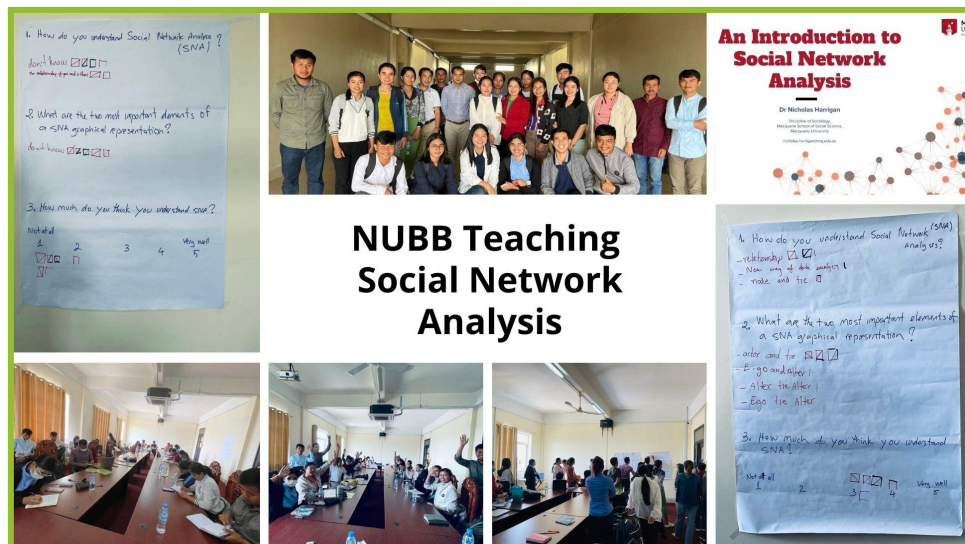


Image 4: Evaluation sheets, lecture material and photos from the teaching session on Social Network Analysis at NUBB

2.3 Key Findings/Knowledge generation

Activity 1 data is currently being coded and analysed. Activity 2 was completed one week prior to this field trip. The data is yet to be cleaned and analysed. There are therefore no key findings to share from this field trip.

3 Partnerships

Working relationships

The field trip was a key event in the project timeline to establish stronger working relationships amongst the research team. Both between the Cambodian and Australian research team members, as well as amongst the Australian research team members. The time spent in-person generated in-depth discussion, creative ideas and input. The field trip provided a rich contextualisation for Australian research team members visiting Cambodia for the first time.

It also confirmed the strong relations amongst the Cambodian research team from PRD and PDAFF, and the capacity and potential of the research assistants, led and fostered by Dr Van Touch.

The relevance and strength of all project partners was confirmed as outlined in the capacity building outcome section above.

4 Risk Management

The field trip did not raise any concerns for risks in terms of project implementation.