PME in PMMR

March 2003
Cambodia

Background

The Learning and Research Network (LeaRN) is a regional project which aims to develop and enhance a learning community of CBCRM researchers, practitioners and advocates in the Philippines, Cambodia, Vietnam, and Indonesia to further evolve and promote the theory and practice of a sustainable livelihoods approach to CBCRM. LeaRN tries to expand the modalities for regional partners to learn and share experiences on coastal community resource management. The project is supported by the International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the Rockefeller Brothers Fund (RBF), and the Open Society Institute (OSI).

A workshop on Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PME) was requested by the Participatory Management of Mangrove Resources (PMMR), a project under the Ministry of Environment (MoE) of Cambodia, with funding support also from IDRC. Started in December 1997, the project was implemented in the Peam Krasaop Wildlife Sanctuary (PKWS) in Koh Kong Province to facilitate a participatory research process that ensures community participation in establishing resource management options and livelihood security. The project is ending in June 2003.

PMMR wanted to build the capacity of both the team and the local communities in PME, with the team taking a learning-by-doing approach. It was agreed that a pre-training orientation will be conducted for selected team members in Phnom Penh who will later on be the main facilitators in the village level training.

Building a Learning Team

LeaRN organized a team in the Philippines to design and eventually facilitate the workshop. Fellows from the Resource Pool were tapped to help. Jun Manalo (CO Cluster) and Jovy Cleofe (Gender Cluster) were recruited and, together with Elmer Ferrer, Tata de la Cruz, and Mike Reynaldo, developed the workshop design through a series of meetings. A package of reference materials was also compiled.

LeaRN partners were requested to review the design: Becky Guieb, Gary Newkirk, and Toby Carson provided timely feedback. The idea to involve other partners also emerged and it was suggested that people from DoF, CBNRM Initiative, DANIDA, as well as Truong van Tuyen from Hue University be made part of the training team.

Due to prior commitments and the length of time needed to stay in Cambodia, Jun Manalo (a lecturer at the University of the Philippines) and Elmer Ferrer decided not to go. Tuyen also had to beg off eventually due to conflict in schedules. Jovy Cleofe (Executive Director of CERD, a Philippine NGO working with coastal communities) and Mike Reynaldo were assigned to facilitate the workshop. Becky Guieb (a Fellow of the Law & Governance Cluster) who was in Cambodia at the time, was requested to co-facilitate. Visual aids were emailed to PMMR ahead of time for translation into Khmer.

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Schedule of Activities

March 11   Mike and Jovy arrive in Phnom Penh
March 12   Meeting with Nong, prepare training materials
March 13-14   Pre-training Orientation for PMMR Team and others
March 15   Travel to Koh Kong
March 16-18   PME Workshop in Koh Kong
March 19   Travel back to Phnom Penh, then Saigon
March 20   Travel back to Manila

Part I: Pre-training Orientation

To enable the PMMR team to conduct a PME workshop at the village level, a pre-training orientation was conducted on March 13-14, 2003 at the PMMR office in Phnom Penh. The two-day session was primarily aimed at introducing PME concepts and practices to the team. Aside from PMMR (Kim Nong, Nin Vanntha, Khy An), the other participants included Thay Somony (CFDO), So Sreymom (CBNRM Initiative), Chhea (DoF), and Ouk Ly Khim (DANIDA). Melissa Marschke was also present.

Leveling of Expectations and Workshop Orientation

Jovy Cleofe and Becky Guieb started the day's activity with an introduction of the participants and their expectations on the training. In general, the individual expectations can be classified in terms of content, how to's, application, and reflection. Many of them shared they did not have prior experience in doing PME and would like to be clarified on what exactly is PME, how it can be applied, how to assess progress, what is the process of doing it, and how it can be used to reflect on past activities. This last expectation changed the planned flow of the workshop especially in connection with the village level training. In as much as the project is nearing its end, they would like to use the opportunity to reflect on their work in the past six years.

Overview of PMMR

To put the workshop in context, Kim Nong presented a brief background of the project starting from Phase I (December 1997-June 2000) up to the present (Phase II from July 2000-June 2003). The project began by trying to understand the project areas and the different stakeholders. The interdepartmental team conducted institutional analysis and looked at management plans. Later on, they worked on establishing sustainable livelihood interventions and spent considerable time building the capacity of the team, the local government, and the communities within PKWS. Towards the end of the first phase, they conducted an integration workshop which paved the way for setting up a strategy for community organizing. In Phase II, they started their organizing work in the more problematic areas (Koh Sralao and Koh Kang) and later on expanded to Koh Kapic and Chrouy Pros which is already outside PKWS.

The team prepared six-month workplans to guide their work. These were further broken down into three-month and monthly workplans. They also formulated success indicators but did not consciously refer back to it for review in the succeeding months. Periodic review was done primarily to assess accomplishments vis-à-vis targets.

To date, the project was able to completely stop illegal mangrove cutting. Illegal fishing was also reduced. More people are now involved in patrolling, mangrove reforestation, sustainable livelihood activities (e.g. crab fattening, small-scale aquaculture, home gardening), and has encouraged the local government to be more supportive of the community organizing efforts. Four Village Management Committees (VMCs) have been organized, with planned expansion to villages outside the protected area.

Sharing on Current M&E Practices

Jovy and Becky facilitated the next activity/workshop to identify the current M&E practices of PMMR using the following matrix:

| What do we monitor?	Why do we monitor?	How do we monitor?	When do we monitor?	Who are the users of the M&E report?	Problems Encountered in doing M&E	Lessons and Insights Gained

INSERT: Summary of workshop results

PMMR recognized that they will have problems evaluating the project because they have no baseline information. They chose not to do it in the beginning due to budget constraints and lack of manpower and skills.

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PME Concepts

Taking off from the previous discussion, Mike Reynaldo introduced the concepts by locating M&E within the project cycle or spiral:
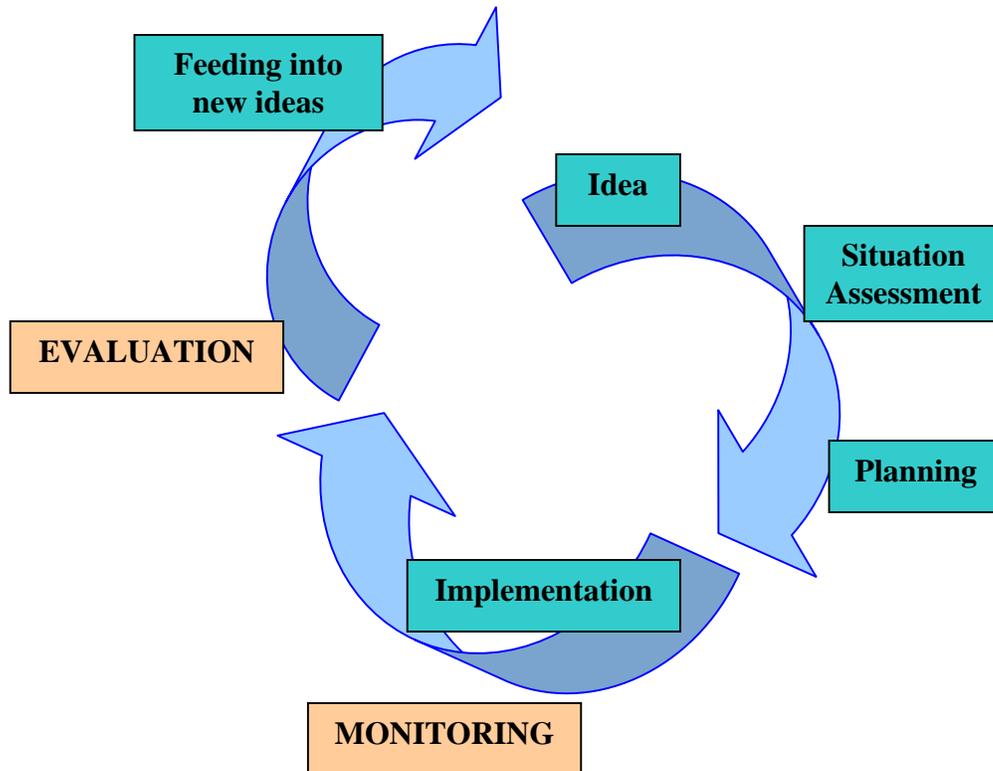
Monitoring is a continuous and methodical process of data collection to track progress against plans so that adjustments can be made while the work is going on. **Evaluation**, on the other hand, is an assessment of what has taken place in order to improve future work. It determines how far objectives have been achieved and makes judgments about the effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the work.

Its **Participatory** character is manifested in the process whereby those with legitimate interests in a project influence decisions that affect them, and not simply involvement in the implementation or benefits of an activity.

This is further highlighted in the following differentiation between conventional and participatory M&E:

	Conventional M&E	Participatory M&E
Who plans and manages the process	Senior managers, or external experts	Local people, project staff, managers, and other stakeholders, often helped by a facilitator
Role of primary stakeholders (the intended beneficiaries)	Provide information only	Design and adapt the methodology, collect and analyze data, share findings and link them to action

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	Conventional M&E	Participatory M&E
How success is measured	Externally-defined, mainly quantitative indicators	Internally-defined indicators, including more qualitative judgments
Approach	Predetermined	Adaptive

It was stressed that in practice, however, the differences between these two approaches are not as clear. Participatory approaches often engage outside experts, but in different roles and relationships. Sometimes they use pre-determined indicators of success. Qualitative research methods may be used in both approaches.

Principles of PME

The four broad principles of Participation, Learning, Negotiation, and Flexibility serve as guideposts in the practice of PME.

Participation. PME recognizes that there are multiple stakeholders who are and should be participants in the process, especially the community members who are directly involved in the project.

Learning. PME is likewise an experiential learning cycle where the participants learn together from their own experiences and gain the abilities to evaluate their own needs, analyze their own priorities and objectives, and undertake action-oriented planning.

Negotiation. The inclusiveness of PME requires negotiation to reach agreement about what will be monitored or evaluated, how and when data will be collected and analyzed, what the data actually means, and how findings will be shared and action taken.

Flexibility. There is no prescribed set of approaches to carrying out PME; it is constantly evolving and adapting according to situations and needs.
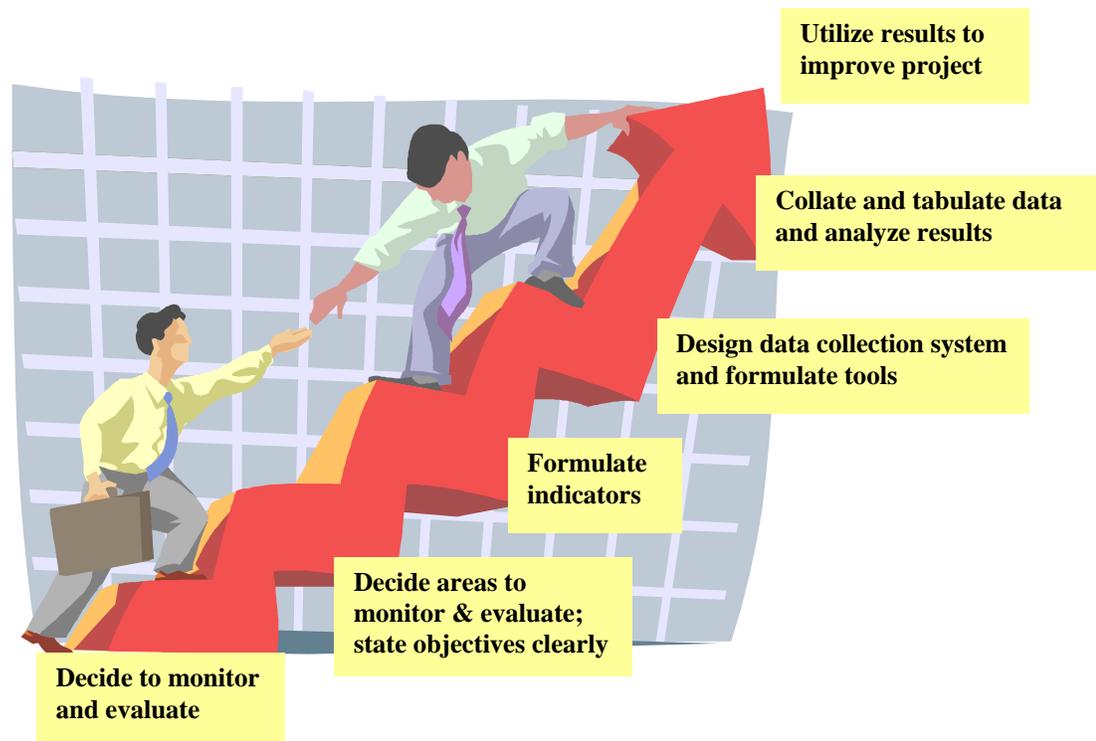
Purposes of PME

Becky Guieb discussed how PME can be used as a management tool and as a learning process.

PME as a Management Tool. There are many ways organizations can use PME for project management. It can be used for needs assessment/context analysis, status monitoring, planning and program development, making adjustments and improvements, allocating resources, identifying strengths and weaknesses, measuring outputs/effects/impact, and advocacy.

PME as a Learning Process. PME can be used in summing up and synthesizing experiences, identifying growth points, developing knowledge and skills, fostering shared accountability, and taking back success stories as source of strength and anchorage.

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Steps in PME

- Utilize results to improve project
- Collate and tabulate data and analyze results
- Design data collection system and formulate tools
- Formulate indicators
- Decide areas to monitor & evaluate; state objectives clearly
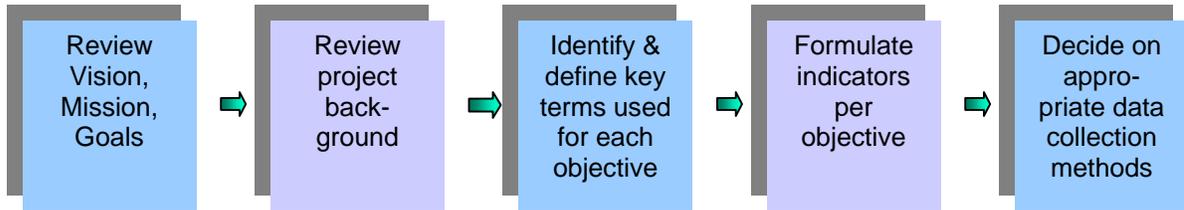- Decide to monitor and evaluate

Tools and Techniques in PME

There are now a wide variety of tools and techniques for PME discussed in the literature and described in a number of key manuals and guidebooks. While the tools for PME have generally been applied for data collection purposes, these techniques are also used for planning, analysis, documentation, and reporting. They are categorized as follows:

PRA Tools	Audio-visual Techniques	Quantitative Techniques	Tools from "Anthropological" Tradition
• Visualized analysis • Interviewing and sampling • Group and team dynamics	• Video • Storytelling • Theater • Songs • Photolanguage	• Community survey • Ecological assessments	• Participant observation • Oral testimonies

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Steps in Formulating Indicators

An indicator is a marker. It is something against which to measure changes or results brought about by an activity. For this session, Jovy and Becky worked with the participants in coming up with clear indicators. The steps followed were:

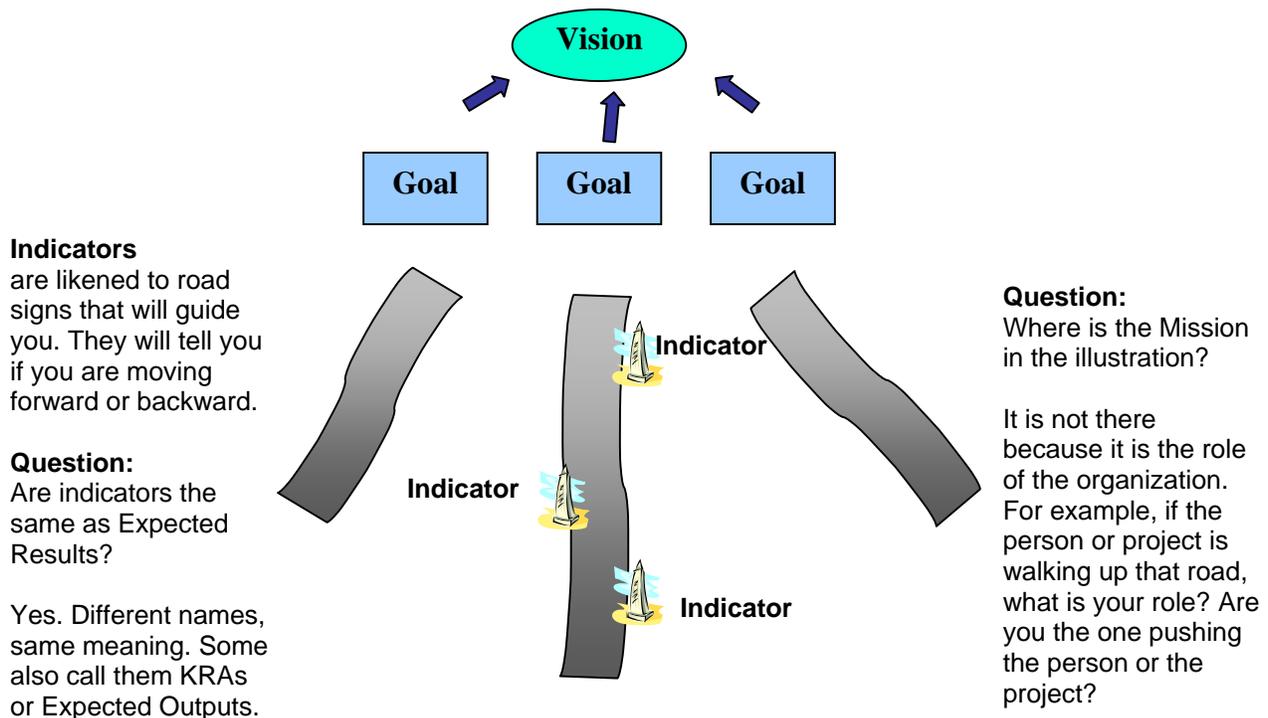| Review Vision, Mission, Goals	⇨	Review project back-ground	⇨	Identify & define key terms used for each objective	⇨	Formulate indicators per objective	⇨	Decide on appro-priate data collection methods

There was some confusion among the participants in the beginning about the differences between Vision, Mission, Goals, and Objectives.

As defined, the **Vision** is the ideal society of community one hopes to realize. It is the **dream**. It provides the organization the direction and inspiration for its existence.

The **Mission**, on the other hand, defines the organization's **role** to pursue the vision. It defines the area of responsibility and accountability.

Goals are definitive directions that ascertain the thrusts and priorities of the organization. These are translated into strategies and components.

These are further broken down into **Objectives** which are more specific statements of targets to achieve the goals.

Indicators
are likened to road signs that will guide you. They will tell you if you are moving forward or backward.

Question:
Are indicators the same as Expected Results?

Yes. Different names, same meaning. Some also call them KRAs or Expected Outputs.

Question:
Where is the Mission in the illustration?

It is not there because it is the role of the organization. For example, if the person or project is walking up that road, what is your role? Are you the one pushing the person or the project?

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Indicators can be Quantitative, Qualitative, or Behavioral. It can also be in three levels: Output, Effect, and Impact.

When formulating indicators, the following should be specified:

| Target Group (for whom) | Quantity (how many) | Quality (how well) | Time (when) | Location (where) |

As an exercise, the group tried to formulate indicators based on the objectives of PMMR. To make it easier, a **"formula"** was devised to help them write it better. All they need to do is fill in the blanks.

Indicator = **Time** + **Quantity** + **Target Group** + **Quality** + **Location**

For example, one of the objectives of the project was: "To build the capacity of the project research team to understand CBCRM better.

Before formulating the actual indicator, the group filled up the blanks first, specifying the target group, quantity, quality, time and location:

Target Group: PMMR Research Team
Quantity: 10
Quality: Knowledge and skills to facilitate the establishment of VMCs
Time: One year
Location: Koh Kong

Following the formula, they then formulated the indicator, thus:

   **"Within one year, 10 PMMR staff will have knowledge and
   skills to facilitate the establishment of VMCs in Koh Kong."**

They also practiced formulating an **Effect Indicator**.

First, they tried answering the question "What are the possible effects as a result of the outputs?"
They came up with the following:

- Reduced illegal activities
- Cooperation between local community and local authority strengthened
- Empower local people to manage the resources
- Condition of the mangrove has improved
- livelihood of the people getting better

Again, following the formula, they came up with the following indicators for the first two effects:

   **"Within three years, illegal fishing and mangrove cutting will be reduced by at least 50%
   inside PKWS and nearby areas."**

   **"Within three years, the local authority in the four communes join in patrolling and
   provide assistance to the communities in Koh Kong."**

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Planning for the Village-level Workshop in Koh Kong

As a result of the expectations raised on the first day (i.e. they would prefer that the activity in Koh Kong be more of a community reflection on what they have accomplished so far), the workshop had to be redesigned. It was also agreed that the inputs and methodologies will be simplified further.

Following is the redesigned flow of activities:

Day 1	Day 2	Day 3
Welcome and Intro of Participants Orientation on the Activity **Sharing by VMCs on what they have done** Note to Facilitator: Watch out for what they feel, what they think about what they are doing.	**VMC/Community Reflection** • **Mapping/Modeling** > Before > After > What are the Changes • **Storytelling** > Involvement in the organization > Changes/benefits received	**Presentation of Workshop Outputs to Commune Officials** **Discussion of VMC vis-à-vis Village Development Council** Closing
Structured Learning Exercise (SLE) on Participation (Paper Race) **Introduction to PME** • What is PME; focus on evaluation; link to sharing in the morning and the learning cycle SLE on Participation and Communication (Message Relay) • Why is Participation important; what are the roles of the community	• **Workshop** > Strengths and weaknesses > Recommendations to improve future work	

Except for the Intro to PME which will still be handled by Mike, all the other topics/activities will be facilitated by the PMMR team. Becky will no longer be around for the workshop (she's flying back to Manila). Backstopping for the local training team will be provided by Mike, Jovy, and Melissa.

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Part II: PME Workshop in Koh Kong

The workshop was held outdoors in the village of Koh Sralao. Leaders from the four VMCs (Koh Sralao, Koh Kang, Koh Kapic, and Chrouy Pros) were the main participants.

Welcome and Workshop Orientation

Kim Nong officially opened the workshop by discussing the background and objectives of the three-day activity. The participants introduced themselves through an activity called "Animal Sounds". They were each asked to pick a piece of paper on which was written the name of an animal. They were instructed to find the other members of the group using only the sound of the particular animal they picked. Once the four groups were convened, they introduced themselves to the others by saying their name, where they came from and what their expectations are from the workshop.

Structured Learning Exercise (SLE) on Cooperation: "The Longest Line"

The participants were divided into four groups with equal number of members. A starting point was designated. The objective of the game is to make the longest line using only things found on each member's body (e.g. belt, shoes, shirt, pants, etc.). The group who makes the longest line wins.

After the SLE, the facilitator gathered all the participants together and asked the winning group what they did to make the longest line. She also asked the rest of the groups on the strategies they employed.

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The responses were then discussed in relation to cooperation, sharing of available resources, selflessness, and that a group will succeed if the members give their full commitment, not just material contribution.

Sharing by VMCs on What They Have Done

Representatives from each VMC were asked to share with the group what they have done and accomplished since they were organized:

Koh Kang

Before the group was formed, mangrove cutting and illegal catching of birds, reptiles and other wildlife were rampant in their area. Illegal fishing practices like the use of dynamite, cyanide, and push nets were prevalent. In response, the VMC was organized with the following objectives:

- To participate in the government's efforts to implement the laws on natural resource management
- To strengthen local people's livelihoods
- To reduce illegal activities

In the process of community organizing, they collaborated with PMMR in terms of capacity building (training, workshops). The knowledge gained from these learning activities was then shared with the other community members, especially on the importance of mangrove resources for their livelihood. They elected a set of officers and formulated community regulations. Meetings were held to plan for their activities, especially on patrolling and setting regular schedules. They also established checkpoints, disseminated the regulations with the other communities, and explained them to those who were caught doing illegal activities. If the cases could not be solved within the community, the illegal activities were brought to the attention of the concerned authorities. The VMC likewise implemented clean up drives, waste management, mangrove replanting, making signs, crab fattening, and home gardening. Potable water was a big problem and a project was implemented to address it.

The issue of the coastal bag nets still being used in Koh Kang was raised by the other VMCs as this can be a problem for people traveling especially at night. There is a need for a zoning plan that can be developed in cooperation with government offices and the VMCs.

Koh Sralao

The VMC was formed in April 2001 and has a membership of 93 families. In the same year of founding, they elected their group leaders and prepared the draft community regulation. By October 2001, they made their plans for patrolling and these were disseminated to the community.

Since then, they were able to implement the following activities: mangrove replanting, construction of checkpoint for patrolling, home gardening, delineating boundaries for seagrass area, and the preparation of warning signs in the mangrove reforestation and seagrass areas. They also formulated internal regulations like painting of crab traps, stopping coastal bag net and illegal fishing. They participated in several training programs, in and outside the province, and even provided support in the construction of the school building. 20 families later on joined the VMC and implemented crab fattening as a pilot project. They also monitored the cutting of mangroves and conducted monthly meetings.

Their future plans include brush pack fishing (i.e. grouper), waste management, raising of chicken and crabs, and the construction of a potable water system and public toilet. They will also prohibit people from constructing houses on the river to minimize pollution.

Chrouy Pros

After the VMC election in 2001, they created nine patrol groups and disseminated the community regulation to the other communities, including the commune police and the navy. They cooperated with the local authority/police for patrols and conducted education sessions to stop illegal fishers. They took photos of illegal fishing boats operating in the open sea and prepared reports to the PMMR team to help solve the problems. They also conducted awareness raising activities regarding sustainable fishing. Monthly meetings were held.

There is a need, though, to educate the people using drag nets not to destroy the seagrasses. Also, they were not able to completely stop illegal fishing due to limited capacity.

There was a remark from the other VMCs that Chrouy Pros tends to catch only the outsiders and does not deal with the local illegal fishers. They clarified that they try to catch all illegals but are not always successful. The one who asked the question believes otherwise.

Koh Kapic

The VMC has been in existence for just a short time. So far, they have replanted some 16,900 mangrove propagules over a 1.6-hectare area. They have also attended three training programs and shared what they learned to the other members of the community. They conducted a meeting to elect the group leaders and prepared a draft community regulation. The VMC also cooperates with the commune chief in asking people to join local activities.

In the future, they plan to continue protecting the mangrove, fishery and wildlife resources and help with poverty alleviation. They would also like to develop more activities for the community. In protecting their resources, they will not allow illegal practices in the area.

SLE on Monitoring: "Paper Race"

The participants were divided into four groups with equal number of members. A starting point was designated. Four volunteers were asked to stand a few meters away in front of each line to serve as guideposts. The objective of the game is for all the members of the group to go around the guideposts and back to the starting line by stepping only on the two sheets of paper provided. They should not step outside the paper; if any member did, then they will have to go back to the starting line. The group is free to strategize how to go about it. The first group to reach the finish line wins.

After the SLE, the facilitator gathered all the participants together and asked process questions like:

1. What is the strategy that you used?
2. How did the group arrive at the strategy?
3. Did you change your strategy along the way? Why? Why not?

The discussion was later on connected to the next topic on PME.

Introducing PME

The following visual aid was used to introduce the topic of PME. The individual strips were posted on the board in sequence, following the flow of the discussion.
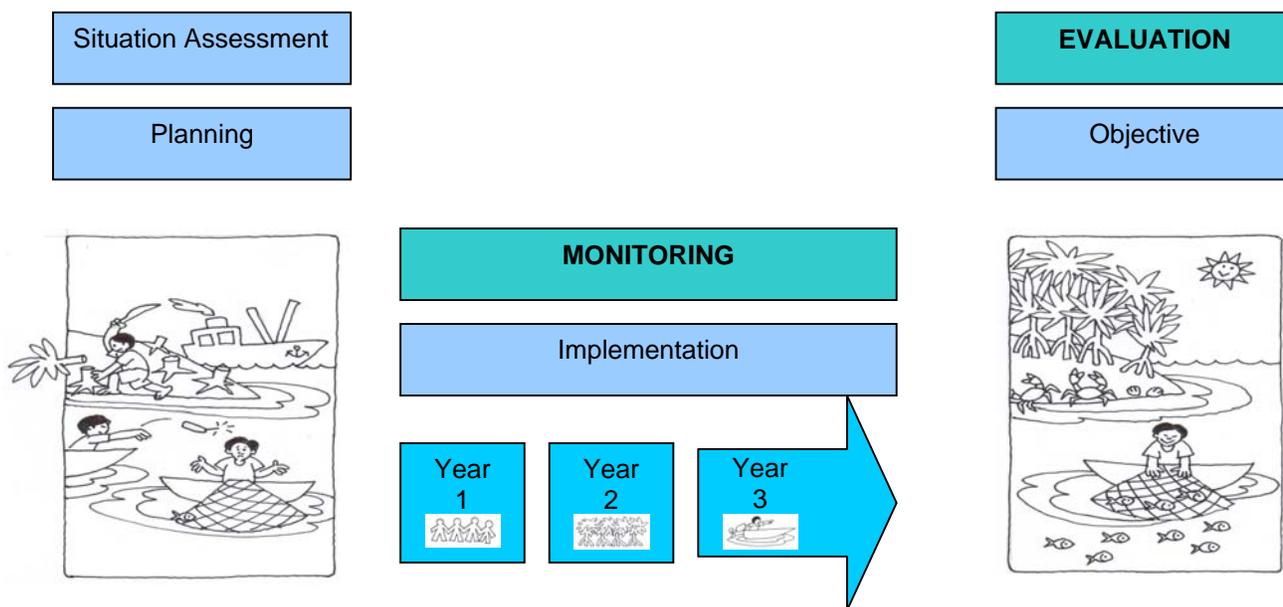
1. *Situation Assessment*. In any development project, you start with an assessment of the current situation. Problems are identified. In Koh Kong, for example, the problems of illegal fishing and cutting of mangroves are serious threats to the sustainability of people's livelihoods. *(Post the illustration depicting the problems.)*

2. *Objectives*. Once you understand the situation, you define what you want to happen in the future, maybe in three years' time. *(Post the illustration depicting the desired situation.)*

3. Planning. When you are clear on what you want to happen, you design the appropriate interventions and the steps you will undertake to realize your objectives. *(Post the arrows per year.)* In Year 1, for example, perhaps you would like to see the VMC organized. For Year 2, maybe you would like to do mangrove reforestation. In Year 3, you may plan to have the patrols in place and operational.

4. Implementation. Once you have made the plans and secured the necessary resources, you start implementing the project.

5. Monitoring. In the course of project implementation, you would want to know if you are accomplishing the targets that you set. For example, if you said that the VMC would have been organized in Year 1, was it accomplished? If you planned to replant 20,000 mangrove propagules in Year 2, how many did you actually plant? What were the problems encountered? The information gathered will enable you to make adjustments to improve succeeding activities.

6. Evaluation. At the end of the three years, you would like to find out if you were able to achieve the objectives that you set in the beginning. Evaluation looks at the relevance, effectiveness and impact of the project and helps people to learn from experience.

Eventually, evaluation results can be used to improve the project or influence future policies, programs and projects.

All the above processes should encourage the participation of the stakeholders. People should be involved not only in the implementation and benefits of an activity but, more importantly, they should be part of the decision-making process.

! To check whether the participants understood what was discussed, a volunteer was asked to go in front and repeat the lecture (major points) in Khmer based on his own understanding.

SLE on Participation and Communication: "Message Relay"

The participants were divided into four groups with equal number of members and were asked to form a line each. The first person on each of the four lines was asked to read a message written on a piece of paper. The message (in Khmer) was:

"Chea is on his way home from fishing. Along the way, he saw Rathna preparing to throw a dynamite into the water. Chea asked Rathna not to do it as it will destroy the corals. Rathna ignored Chea and threatened to hit him. A moment later, Vanntha came along. Chea asked him for help to stop Rathna but Vanntha said: 'It is not my problem.'"

The first person is then instructed to pass the message to the one next in line. The "receiver" of the message is not allowed to ask questions. The receiver will then pass the message to the next person, and so on until it reached the last person at the back. The last ones to receive the message will then write on the board what he/she heard.

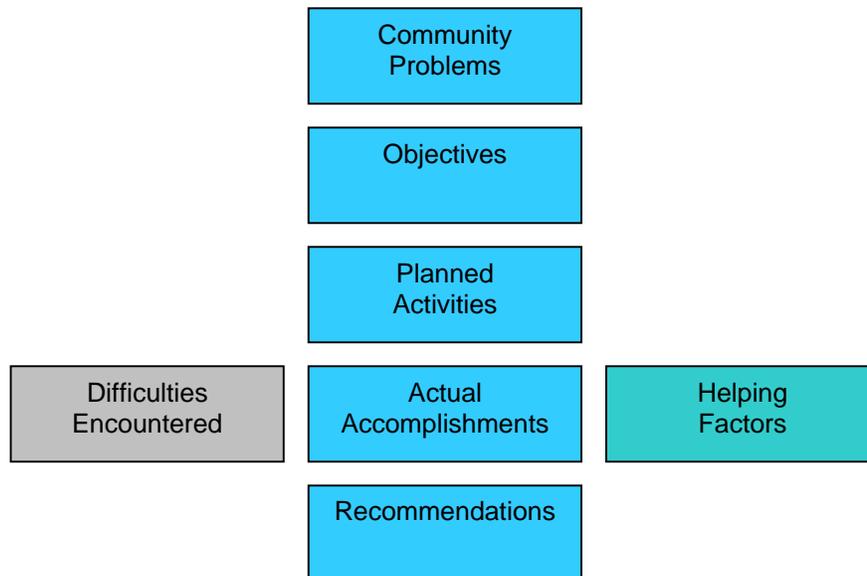After the activity, the facilitator gathered the participants and asked process questions like:

1. What did you feel about the activity?
2. Was it difficult? Why? Why not?
3. How did it feel not being able to ask questions?

Community Reflection

A simple framework was introduced to help the VMCs reflect on their work and partnership with PMMR. Basically, it revolved around a review of what was planned, what was accomplished, the facilitating and hindering factors, and their recommendations to improve future work.

Through a combination of exercises and workshops, the VMCs were guided in reflecting on the following factors:

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                        ┌─────────────────────┐
                        │     Community       │
                        │     Problems        │
                        └─────────────────────┘

                        ┌─────────────────────┐
                        │     Objectives      │
                        └─────────────────────┘

                        ┌─────────────────────┐
                        │     Planned         │
                        │     Activities      │
                        └─────────────────────┘

┌──────────────────┐    ┌─────────────────────┐    ┌──────────────────┐
│   Difficulties   │    │      Actual         │    │     Helping      │
│   Encountered    │    │   Accomplishments   │    │     Factors      │
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                        ┌─────────────────────┐
                        │   Recommendations   │
                        └─────────────────────┘
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The methodologies used for the VMC reflection included mapping/modeling, storytelling, and workshop.

Mapping/Modeling

Each of the four VMCs were provided with materials (flour, food colors, white paper, markers) to make a model/representation of what they perceive is the situation in their respective areas **before** and **after** the project. The outputs were then presented to the big group for discussion.

Chrouy Pros

In their presentation, the group explained that before they were organized, there were a lot of illegal fishing activities going on. Some of the destructive gears used were push nets, drag nets, and trawlers. Now, there is a noticeable decrease in illegal fishing and the local fishers are catching more fish and crabs. There is also some increase in their livelihood activities.

However, they still have problems with some people who continue to use push nets. Also, around ten trawlers are still operating.

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Koh Kapic

Since they started, the VMC observed natural regeneration in their area. They used abandoned fishponds to raise mud crabs. They also fish less often in the open sea due to border disputes with Thailand. This is a problem that they feel is beyond the capacity of the local government to solve and needs the intervention of the national government. As a result, the fishers moved to Chrouy Pros areas, causing conflict between the two villages. They also cannot change their gears to make them similar to those being used in Chrouy Pros because the style of the boats and engines are different.

Koh Sralao

In 1987, people only used traps in the mangrove areas. They had small fishing gears but the catch was plentiful. Crab traps were made of bamboo then, not iron. Soon, more and more people came into the area and the degradation of coastal resources began. Mangroves were cut to produce charcoal. The local authorities tried to stop the practice for a time but enforcement was inconsistent and the cutting continued. Fish catch declined.

When PMMR came, the project tried to educate the local people on resource management and made them think about rehabilitating the mangrove areas. They started replanting mangrove propagules every year and ensured their protection. The fishers also changed their gear from bamboo to iron. Before, mussels and snails were no longer found in the area but now they can get them. The houses are also much better now and the school has been improved. Charcoal production was completely stopped. More local people are also interested to join in the protection activities.

PMMR was instrumental in convincing people to get involved through study tours, workshops, and facilitating sharing of knowledge. Community organizing helped them get going. They have regulations now and are implementing them, continuously educating the people because that is how they will change. There are still some people in the community who do not support the work; they think that the VMCs are only cooperating with IDRC because they give "presents". Also, some people are not participating because they are migrants who leave once the resources are used up. People generally join the organization because they think they will benefit from it.

Storytelling

To complement the VMC reflection, selected members and officers were asked to share personal stories and their own reflections on the CO process. The guide questions were:

1. What and how were you involved in organizational activities?
2. What changes/benefits did you get?

Koh Kapic Fisher

"I started to get involved when the project connected with us. I helped draft the community regulation. We met with the community and conducted a workshop to identify issues. I only got involved in mangrove replanting. Not much has changed so far. The living condition remains the same. When I get more involved with the community, I lose time in helping my family. The community regulations disallowed the use of engine push nets, but hand push nets are okay. Now I am not sure if I can still follow the regulation because during the rainy season, I usually use engine push nets.

I want to continue with this work because things are changing for the better. More benefits for the community, like in the mangrove replanting. By planting together and protecting the mangrove forest, we will all benefit from it."

Koh Sralao Fisher/Middleman

"I think the VMC can protect the natural resources. I will get more benefit when people catch more fish and sell to me. When I see problems, I want to get involved, share my ideas, and work with others to solve them. Fish production hasn't increased so much but this is an open access area so it is difficult to do so. I am happy that we can protect the resources in our village; there will be indirect benefit for the community. I am happy that the mangroves are regrowing because this will be good for my children. At present some species have decreased, like the hermit crabs, but some others are increasing. Sometimes I lose time when we have to go to town to attend a workshop."

Chrouy Pros Female Seller

"I am involved in the VMC because I am concerned with the coastal resources. Seeing illegal activities and decreasing resources motivate me to be involved in resource management. When I am involved with the VMC, however, I lose time for work in the household but will benefit the entire community. I also gain more knowledge by working with the VMC. My husband supports my work but some people ask questions and gives comments. I am a seller, not a fisher. I sell wine and small goods. People drink expensive beer when they have money so I also benefit when resources are increasing."

Koh Kang Fisher

I am a member of the VMC and I am involved in meetings, workshops, and mangrove replanting. I spend a lot of time for meetings and patrolling. I also learned how to improve crab fattening.

Reactions/Additional Sharing

A general question was asked to the rest of the participants: "Why do you continue participating?"

Koh Kang. "We are not yet benefiting. The villagers criticize this work because they don't like regulations. They also lose time when they are involved. But they gain in terms of capacity building. In community organizing, good relationships are built between villages and communes."

Koh Sralao. "I think CO and participation are really important in protecting that natural resources, for everyone living in the area."

Chrouy Pros. "For myself, the problem with participation in the VMC is that I lose time for fishing. And it's all voluntary time given. I also get criticized by others. Before, it was easy to fish. Now, fish production has decreased so I spend time to be involved because I know we need to protect the natural resources. In general, most people still ignore our work. As a fisher, I want to protect the fishery for myself and others in Chrouy Pros. I need to help with community work and I need to take the time to do it."

Koh Kapic. "Actually, I didn't want to be involved but the local people elected me. Now I feel the people need me to help the community."

Koh Kang. "It is a good chance to have the IDRC project help us. I am a poor fisher so I need to work hard to help local people who are all poor like me. We need to protect our area together, especially against large-scale illegal fishers."

Koh Sralao. "I want to work with VMC but I lose a lot of time. However, the community wants me to do this. Our work benefits everyone in the community, including the long-term use of our natural resources. It is also easier now to contact government agencies and other institutions. The leadership is good and we want to show the young people a good model."

Chrouy Pros. "We need the VMC to protect our natural resources. Now, many NGOs come, like IDRC. If the local people did not join, it would have been a missed opportunity. This is a good chance."

Workshop: Strengths, Weaknesses and Recommendations

The last part of the community reflection was a workshop designed to surface the strengths and weaknesses in the work of the VMCs and what their recommendations are to improve future work.

The following matrix was used:

Accomplishments/ Results	Strengths/ What Helped	Weaknesses/ Difficulties	Recommendations

In addition, the groups were also asked to reflect on the following process questions:

1. What is the biggest problem that you face in working together?
2. How do you plan to improve it?
3. For your future work, what support do you need?

Koh Sralao

Accomplishments/ Results	Strengths/ What Helped	Weaknesses/ Difficulties	Recommendations
Draft of community regulations	Support from local authority	Limited experience; need help from outsiders	
Election of VMC and group leaders	Participation from the project, local authority and community members; more people ran for election	Participation from local community is still limited	
Dissemination of regulations to nearby communities	Support from PMMR and local authority	Limited dissemination; some ignored	Ask local authorities to help
Patrolling	Support from PMMR and local authority	Don't do so much yet; there are still illegal activities	
Mangrove replanting	Make signs in the replanted areas; PMMR support; participation from local authority/people	Some people are not so interested	Need to educate more
Home gardening	Support from PMMR	Lack of techniques and experience	Need more technical support
Internal regulation	Local authority supports	Some people still don't follow	Explain and educate more
Waste management	Participation of local people	The others are not interested	Explain and educate more
Crab fattening	Technical and financial support	Pilot project failed	Need more technical support

Reflections on the Process Questions

VMC members have different jobs and times when they are available so they have difficulty working together. They have different livelihoods. Some are rich, others middle, most are poor. Some persons cannot participate more as they have to look for money for the family. But the middle class families can give up some time to join the work.

Knowledge is low and very general and this is a problem especially when working with foreigners; they are not sure if the translation from English to Khmer is right. They are also not sure if they understood correctly.

There is a need for capacity building for the community members, both for general and technical knowledge. This will help them to participate more and share in the work of the VMC. In this regard, there is a need to have good relationships with PMMR for support.

Chrouy Pros

Accomplishments/ Results	Strengths/ What Helped	Weaknesses/ Difficulties	Recommendations
Community regulations	Support from technical department and local authority; participation from local people	Lack of understanding by the people of the purpose of the VMC, the need for resource management, and the benefits they can derive from it; the officers also lack enough experience to explain the regulations	Need to disseminate the regulations to the local authority and the local people; there is a need to have more support from the commune chief in disseminating and enforcing the regulations
Patrolling	Presence of community regulations that are supported by the provincial authority and PMMR; equipment provided by PMMR	Weak implementation of regulations; people do not follow the regulations due to lack of understanding; cooperation between VMC and commune/ police is not strong; people have low income so it is difficult to get them involved; community members don't cooperate because they think it is difficult to get benefit in the short term; people feel they would lose time to fish if they participated; the community still cannot work without PMMR support; those in power support illegal activities; lack of support from DoF;	Need PMMR support, in terms of organizing a meeting/workshop of all stakeholders to explain the regulations; the commune leader should have the power to stop illegal acts through community regulations; based on decentralization policy, the government should empower the local authority and community to solve illegal fishing by themselves; more education on illegal activities
Participation in training and workshops	Gained knowledge on the importance of natural resources for the common use of all people	Was not able to share the knowledge gained to other people due to lack of time	Should share knowledge to others

Reflections on the Process Questions

Their biggest problem concerns the local authority and police who are not active in community work. Fisheries officials do not act on fishery conflicts. They only join once or twice; afterwards, they leave them to do the work by themselves. But the VMC cannot solve the conflict because they don't have the power.

There is also low participation from the community members. There is a need to disseminate the regulations to others and improve the relationships among them. More workshops and training in natural resource management is also needed, with support from PMMR and other projects. They cannot do these by themselves; they need outside support.

Koh Kang

Accomplish-ments/Results	Strengths/What Helped	Weaknesses/Difficulties	Recommendations
Patrolling	Support from PMMR, like: - boats, equipment - community post VMC members cooperate; good cooperation with local authority	Limited patrolling materials and equipment, like boats; especially when there are more illegal boats than patrols; the radio is not always operational; some community members do not understand the importance of community management so they do not participate	PMMR to conduct workshop on CBNRM for villagers so that everyone understands
Sanitation	Many people understand the benefits of having a clean village	No place for garbage disposal	Distribute bags to households to keep the waste; identify suitable garbage dump; technical assistance on proper waste disposal
Income generation	Mangrove replanting Crab fattening Home gardening	Not enough people takes care of replanted area Technical support is weak Not enough water for watering the plants	Need more techniques on crab fattening, mangrove maintenance, and home gardening;
Potable water system	Potable water tanks provided by DANIDA thru PMMR; water is being sold at a cost less than that of middlemen	Not enough water; they tried drilling before but at 18 meters they stopped due to rock surface	Develop potable water system; need for technical assistance on where to dig a well for domestic use; *how can this be sustained should PMMR provide the materials?*
Dissemination of by-laws and regulations	By-laws/regulations were disseminated to nearby villages	Dissemination is not extended to more villages	Continue dissemination
Election of VMC	Many people went to vote	Many don't understand what they voted for	More workshops to disseminate the importance of CBNRM

Reflections on the Process Questions

Some community members do not join in the activities. Some VMC members also do not understand each other and do not allocate enough time for VMC work. It is difficult to call people for a meeting to disseminate information.

There is a need to find more livelihood opportunities for the VMC, like crab fattening. They will be doing the dissemination so they should be trained first. If the VMC is so poor, they will not have time to lead community activities.

Coordination between the VMC and community members also needs to be strengthened. More education and training is needed for community members and VMCs should be established in nearby villages.

Koh Kapic

The VMC was established only recently. Commercial fishers encroach into their fishing grounds, forcing them to gravitate towards Chrouy Pros.

Accomplishments/ Results	Strengths/ What Helped	Weaknesses/ Difficulties	Recommendations
Mangrove replanting (1.6 has.)	Support from PMMR; some community members attended the meetings	Most of the community members do not participate in the activities; they also have insufficient knowledge on techniques in mangrove replanting	More knowledge and techniques
Meetings and workshops	Some VMC and community members attended	Knowledge gained was not replicated/disseminated; the sessions were not conducted in the village so there is poor communication and sharing of experiences among other villages	Training to be conducted in the village itself
Community regulation	Draft prepared at the village level	Not approved at the district and provincial level	Continue to push for approval
Elected seven VMC members	Process of election was fair	Some community members did not participate in the election; there is one female member in the VMC but she went to Phnom Penh	Disseminate earlier before election

Reflections on the Process Questions

Their main difficulty lies with some VMC members who are not active. The by-laws also affected the people's livelihoods, especially those using illegal gears.

They plan to encourage the other VMC members to be more active by inviting them to attend workshops. Regular meetings with the community are also needed. It would be good if they can hold meetings with the other VMCs to share experiences. Relationships with the local authority and other agencies have to be strengthened as well.

Discussion with Commune Officials

Kim Nong facilitated a dialogue with commune officials who attended the last day of the workshop.

A commune official from Chrouy Pros shared that the VMC was established for just a year. Some activities were done but not everything went smoothly. In behalf of the authority, he participated in all the activities. He suggested that there should be close cooperation between the VMC and the technical departments but so far, this is not happening. The DoF and the police do not join in patrolling. This is crucial as the commune officials do not have the specific skills to help. The DoF should support community work. Establishing checkpoints is necessary in reducing illegal activities. The community cannot stop all illegal activities but it can decrease them or at least make the offenders think twice about committing such. Support from PMMR is still needed, especially in facilitating support from technical departments.

The official from Koh Kapic stressed the need for commune officials and community members to really work together to see the benefit of community-based natural resource management. There is a need for more workshops and meetings in the village. He believes the people do illegal activities because they are poor and have no options. They do not fully understand the importance of CBNRM and its long-term effects. There is also a need for a working space for the VMC, a place where they can meet, hold meetings, and discuss together. They can't do it at the commune office because they do not have enough space.

They also raised the need for more operating materials to improve patrolling activities. Illegal activities can be lessened if the people understand. They may try to decrease the number of gears and illegal practices, because if these are continued and the resources are being depleted, people will ultimately get poorer and poorer.

Nong shared that the PMMR team can help facilitate meetings, with the community inviting people to attend. The activities mentioned can be done by the VMCs and commune leaders and not only by PMMR.

Later on, Nong discussed how the VMC fits with the official government structure at the local level. He traced the committee levels from the national, provincial, district, commune, down to the village. There was some discussion on the difference between the Village Head and the VMC. The initial thinking is that the village head is responsible for the people while the VMC is for resource management. The role of the village head is usually to solve conflicts between households, disseminate government policies and laws, and provide statistics in terms of migration – who goes in and out of the village. The village head is not involved in resource management. It has been observed, though, that some villagers do not know who the village head is, and some village heads also do not know their role.

In the end they realized there is no big difference between a village head and the VMC and that it may be possible that the VMCs will later on be adopted as the Village Development Council headed by a village head.

This documentation was based on the notes of:

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Khy An, Khim, Vanntha, and Nong served as interpreters.