1. Introduction

This document accompanies the narrative report of the MDFSRDI-CBNRM evaluation study. It provides more details about the various tools that we designed, used and tested for carrying out the field work in Can Tho (for an overview of the methodology in relation to the evaluation questions, see section 2 of the narrative report). It also includes some preliminary reflections on the use and effectiveness of these tools for assessing individual and organizational capacity development efforts (to be drafted following the review workshop). We have grouped the tools under five categories: participatory assessment tools, key informant interviews, questionnaires, secondary data collection, and a case within a case study. The following sections deal with these five categories. We reiterate that, in order to give meaning to the action nature of the study, designing new and experimenting with a variety of (participatory) tools, was one of our objectives.

2. Participatory assessment tools

We designed a number of (new) participatory exercises or tools adapted (we hoped) to the study topic and evaluation questions, the experiences, skills and interests of study participants, the time and other resources available, and the wider setting or context in which we carried out the evaluation. We present these exercises/tools by workshop to retain their interconnectedness in time and space.

MDFSRDI Self-assessment workshop (February 2001)

The group of participants was divided in 4 smaller groups. Each of the groups addressed the 6 questions in a round-table discussion. Results were presented in plenary and synthesized. Use was made of cards and posters. Tuyen and Duong facilitated.

Exercise 1: How do you understand (define) capacity development for research, training and extension?
**Exercise 2:** How would you classify, in terms of importance, the knowledge, attitudes, skills and practice required to plan, practice and evaluate research, training and extension? (use the table presented below)

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<th>Task</th>
<th>Capacity</th>
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Note: column and row comparison: 1=very important, 2=important, 3= relatively important, 4=less important

**Exercise 3:** How does the MDFSRDI achieve its mission? Does it require any new capacity?

**Exercise 4:** What is the relationship between the capacity development (efforts) and the achievements of the Institute?

**Exercise 5:** What are the strengths and gaps in the capacity development efforts of the MDFSR&D Institute? What are the factors that influence the efforts of the MDFSR&D Institute?

**Exercise 6:** What are the limitations (shortcomings) in the qualification standards used to assess the performance of MDFSRDI's staff members in order to develop the capacity of the Institute? What is your suggestion to improve these standards?

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**MDFSRDI-SIAS workshop (February 2001)**

**Exercise 1:** Brainstorming about the meaning of capacity development (plenary, 1 hour, using cards/one concept per card, facilitated by study team)

What does capacity development mean for you?
What are the key words that come to mind?
Exercise 2a: SIAS, its vision and mission (2 small, self-directed groups, 1 ½ hours, using poster paper and cards)

Guiding questions:
- What are the most important capacities that the SIAS should have or should develop to be able to do good work (to accomplish its mission)?
- What should the various SIAS staff (directors, administration, researchers) do to make sure that it is able to achieve its mission?

Exercise 2b: MDFSRDI, its mission and achievement (2 small, self-directed groups, 1 ½ hours, using poster paper and cards)

Guiding questions:
- How does the MDFSRDI achieve its mission?
- What are the results of its activities, in the short run, in the long run?
- Do the various donor-funded projects contribute to the achievement of its mission? If they do, how exactly?
- If possible, illustrate the answers to these questions graphically.

Exercise 3: SIAS and its organizational structure and activities (2 small, self-directed groups, 1 hour, using poster paper)

Guiding question:
- How has SIAS developed or is developing the key capacities of its staff and of the organization? Give at least 2 concrete examples.

Exercise 4: SIAS, MDFSRDI and the FRS and NAREM research networks (4 small, mixed staff, self-directed groups, 1 hour, using poster paper and cards)

Guiding questions:
- What have the FRS and NAREM Networks contributed to the capacity development efforts of the SIAS and the MDFSRDI?
- How has this been done?
Give at least 2 concrete examples.

Exercise 5a: Analyzing the strengths, weaknesses, gaps and opportunities of the capacity development efforts by the SIAS (small, self-directed group, 1 ½ hours, using cards)

Guiding questions:
- What are the strengths and gaps in the capacity development efforts of SIAS?
- What are the factors that influence the efforts of SIAS in capacity development, both positively and negatively?
Exercise 5b: Analyzing the challenges and constraints of the capacity development efforts by the MDFSDRI (small, self-directed group, 1 ½ hours, using cards)

Guiding question:
- What are the factors that influence MDFSRDI’s efforts in capacity development, both negatively and positively?

Exercise 6: Looking at the role of evaluation (plenary, facilitated by study team, 1 hour)

Guiding questions:
- What suggestions do you have to evaluate the capacity development efforts by SIAS and the MDFSDRI?
- Are you doing evaluations right now?
  If not, do you think that evaluation could contribute to improving capacity development efforts? If so, how?

Multi-stakeholder feedback workshop (May 2001)

Exercise 1: Making a synthesis of the findings

We have gathered a lot of information about the capacity development efforts of the MDFSRDI, about SIAS and the work done with government staff and farmers. We would like to ask you to help us with making a synthesis of the results. We propose to plant a big tree together to do this (in plenary, 1 ½ hours, facilitated by study team, using cards and giant tree drawn on poster paper).

The parts of the trees represent the following:
- the roots: the key capacities (we will focus here on the MDFSRDI)
- the ground: the gaps or weaknesses
- the trunk: the strengths
- the leaves: the results of the work done (here we also include SIAS, the farmers, and government staff)
- the fruits: the wider impact of the work done (including again SIAS, farmers, government staff)
- the weather or the sky: the external forces that influence the efforts (positive or negative)

Guiding questions:
- Let’s have a look at the tree, and see if we can identify the most important linkages among the parts of the tree. What are the critical issues that emerge?
- Do you have suggestions to deal with these critical issues? This will be part of our discussion about follow up to our study.
Exercise 2: In previous workshops the staff of the Institute has identified key organizational capacities. We can divide these in contributing capacities (the abilities that allow to produce valuable results) and supporting or enabling capacities (the abilities that allow the results produced to be delivered to clients) (with selected MDFSRDI staff, self-directed, 1 hour)

Guiding questions:
- For each of the four periods of the institute, indicate how much effort went into the development of these capacities, on a scale from relatively minor (M) to relatively large (L).
- Looking at the future, which of these capacities deserve special attention in order for the Institute to continue doing its work efficiently and effectively? Indicate these in the last column.
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**Exercise 3:** SIAS and the MDFSRDI are members of the Farming Systems Research Network and the Natural Resource Management Network. Both organizations have worked together and are also collaborating with government staff, with extension staff and with farmers. Important results have been achieved (in small, mixed participants, self-directed group, 1 hour, using poster paper).

Guiding questions:
- How could we know for sure that good collaboration between all the different people takes place? What things do we need to look at? Please define the characteristics of good collaboration between: farmers and researchers/extension staff; between government staff and researchers/extension staff; and between government staff and farmers.
- Since IDRC’s interaction is most directly with the researchers, we would like to know what specific tasks or activities you think the researchers should carry out to contribute to successful collaboration among farmers, government staff and the researchers/extension workers?

**Exercise 4:** One of the objectives of our study is to assess the contribution made by IDRC to the development of the Institute’s organizational capacity. Please consider carefully each of the following research for development program delivery characteristics (selected MDFSRDI staff, self-directed, 1 hour)

Guiding questions:
- Do these characteristics describe IDRC’s way of operations or do they not (Yes / No)? Please compare globally the period of the Farming Systems Research Network project (1992-1995) with the period of the NAREMNET project (1997-2001).
- Compared to other donors with whom the Institute has cooperated or is cooperating right now, assess the quality of each of the relevant delivery characteristics, on a scale from “among the lowest” (scores 0 to 4), “among the average” (score 5), to “among the highest” (scores 6 to 10) for the most recent period (since 1997).
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<tr>
<th>Donor delivery characteristics</th>
<th>FSR Network</th>
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<th>NAREM Network</th>
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<td>intense professional commitment to projects and organizations</td>
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<td>providing expert conceptual and methodological support including providing literature and Web-based resources</td>
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<td>respectful attitude toward other cultures and languages</td>
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<td>knowledgeable about organizational capacity development</td>
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<td>supporting recognition and uptake of research results (among researchers, policy makers)</td>
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<td>supportive and regular monitoring and evaluation</td>
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### 3. Key informant interviews

We identified 3 key informants: Vo Tong Xuan, the director of the MDFSRDI (and since last year also rector of the new university in neighbouring An Giang) and project leader of the FRSEnetwork and NAREMnetwork projects; John Graham, IDRC (CBNRM) regional program officer based in Singapore and responsible for the two network projects; and Stephen Tyler, IDRC (CBNRM) program officer and team leader, based in Victoria, B.C., Canada (previously based in Singapore) and responsible for a number of other CBNRM projects in Viet Nam.
We “interviewed” them by e-mail correspondence (this was coordinated by Ronnie Vernooy based in Ottawa, Canada).

**Questions for Vo Tong Xuan:**

During the workshop in February, your team identified 5 key capacities at the organizational level: human resources development, methodology development, being responsive to demands, fund raising, and building linkages/networks. The 1st evaluation question of our study is: What key organizational capacities has the MDFSRD Institute developed?

1. Do you agree or disagree with the analysis that the 5 key capacities identified by your team are the most important organizational development capacities that the MDFSRDI should have?
2. Are there other organizational capacities that you think are important?
3. How would you rate, at this moment in time, each of these 5 capacities in terms of the requirements of a good performing MDFSRDI? (you could use the categories: needs strengthening/more or less satisfactory/satisfactory)
4. Has IDRC/CBNRM contributed to the development of any of these capacities? To which ones in particular? and To what extent? (you could use minor or major as categories)

During the workshop in February, you and your team identified a number of forces that influence the performance of the Institute, both internal and external. Among the external forces you listed: the bureaucratic system, unfavourable agricultural policies, globalization of trade, and development strategy.

5. Could you describe in more detail how the external environment in Viet Nam and globally has influenced the performance of the Institute, by comparing the early 1990s with the present day situation?
6. On the other hand, has the Institute or have you personally been able to influence the wider political and economic context in which the Institute operates?

**Questions for John Graham (1-4 first round, 5-9 second round)**

1. What has been, in your view, the contribution of IDRC-CBNRM to the individual and organizational capacity development efforts of the MDFSRDI Institute between 1990 and 2000? What key capacities have been strengthened that support the Institute to develop itself as a R&D organization?
2. What has the IDRC-CBNRM support done for the researchers involved in the two network projects? i.e., What individual capacities have been strengthened?
3. What has this meant for the MDFSRDI Institute and other network members? What organizational capacities have been strengthened as a result?

4. How have we made these contributions?

5. You stated that things have changed dramatically in Viet Nam between 1990 and 2000. Could you give some examples? Are there concrete examples of how our early support has impacted on decisions made by the Vietnamese government (national or local) or by one or more of the organizations that were/are part of the two networks?

6. You mention that training has been important. Could you describe in more detail what they have learned in terms of "CBNRM"? (In the literature they talk about changes in Attitudes, Knowledge, Skills, and Behaviour or Practice.)

7. Have the networks helped to strengthen the Institute in terms of getting better access to funds/getting more funds? in terms of attracting more students or researchers interested in CBNRM? in terms of leadership, prestige and academic recognition in Viet Nam and abroad?

8. We have mapped how the Institute sees what it does, and in the workshop in February with SIAS, we will ask SIAS to also map how they see this. Now we would like you to map this theory of action as well, i.e., your "IDRC way of thinking." (Note, we do not say "our:" we actually think there will be various types of action theories around the Centre.) Please give this a try as it is an important part of our study.

9. What have you learned from working with the Can Tho group?

**Questions for Stephen Tyler**

1. What has been, in your view, the contribution of IDRC-CBNRM to the individual and organizational capacity development efforts of the organizations in Viet Nam that have received IDRC support between 1990 and 2000?

2. What key capacities have been strengthened that support these organizations to develop themselves as a R&D organization?

3. How have we made these contributions? i.e., How does the chain of actions that underlie "IDRC’s supporting research for development" looks like in practice?

4. Viet Nam has experienced some major changes between 1990 and 2000. Could you describe how the political and economic situation in Viet Nam has influenced research (and research performance) of the organizations supported by IDRC, by comparing the early 1990s with the present day situation.

5. Are there concrete examples of how our support has impacted on decisions made by the VN government (at national or local levels)?

6. What have you learned from working with organizations in Viet Nam?
4. Questionnaires

We used an existing CBNRM monitoring and evaluation questionnaire (originally, there were two CBNRM questionnaires, one for project level questions and one for question about individual capacity development, but we “folded them up” in one). We also designed two new, connected questionnaires to obtain more detailed insights into MDFSRDI staff’s career paths and experiences.

**CBNRM project monitoring and evaluation questionnaire**

Questions:
1) Measures of success related to some interventions that have been tested, adopted or adapted by the communities directly involved in the project.
2) Measures of stronger support and wider acceptance of CBNRM concepts, processes and methods.
3) Measures of enhanced human resource capacity related to formal and informal training and other activities including capacity building of local communities, local government, researchers and others.
4) Networking and dissemination activities, outputs and impacts: How has your group interacted or exchanged ideas with others?
5) Measures of policy impacts at the community, local, district, provincial or national level. Indicate changes that have resulted to policies or programs.
6) Measures related to enhanced, more effective and better governance.
7) Evidence and measures relating to wider replication of CBNRM methods or successes by communities, local government and others who were not directly involved in the project.
8) Major research activities and outputs.
9) Training activities: formal and informal
10) Networking, dissemination and extension activities and outputs.
11) Formal and informal reports and publications.

**Work stories (2 connected tools)**

1) Guiding questions for work-stories interview

About your work
1. Please describe briefly the work you are doing right now.
2. When did you start working for the Institute? What was the work that you did when you started?
3. What has changed between the time that you started working at the Institute and today’s work that you are doing?
About the institute
4. If we now look at the role and activities of the Institute, have there been changes over time? What has changed?
5. In order for the Institute to be able to continue doing its work, what do you see as the most important tasks that need to be carried out?
6. Has the Institute the capacity right now to carry out these tasks? If not, what needs to be done to obtain this capacity?

About IDRC and the FSR and NAREM network projects
7. Have you been involved in the IDRC funded projects? If so, in what way?
8. What did you learn from this involvement?
9. What do you think has been the impact of these projects on the Institute?

2) Questionnaire (ratings from 0-10: none-significant)
1. What are your individual contributions in terms of research, training, extension, and collaboration?
2. What have been the changes in your assignments over the time? (open question)
3. What are your individual capacities in term of knowledge, attitude, skills and practice?
4. What are your individual capacities in monitoring?
5. What are your individual capacities in evaluation?
6. How do the individual capacities influence the organisational capacity development of the institute?
7. How do the collaborative research programs and projects influence the capacity development of individuals?
8. How do the collaborative research programs and projects influence the organisational capacity development?

5. Secondary data collection

All documents related to the MDFSRDI activities were reviewed: mission and mandate, annual technical and financial reports, project and program reports. Additional data were a number of Vietnam studies, to obtain relevant quantitative data, and to learn about changes in the country (policy, economy, science and technology) and their influence in research and development. Moreover, a number of previous IDRC evaluation studies were also reviewed.

6. Case within a case study

The Southern Institute for Agricultural Science (SIAS) in Ho Chi Minh City has been one among the members of FSRENET and then NAREMNET. In relation to
its OCD, SIAS conducted a sub-case study on CD, bringing together SIAS research staff, district and village officials and farmers from several local communities. The process that was followed included:

- A review of reports (monitoring and evaluation documents related to the project)
- Development of key questions for the case study:

  - What have farmers and government staff learned from the project and from collaboration with SIAS?
  - Has the project contributed to capacity building efforts at the local level?
  - How could the collaboration among researchers, farmers and government staff be strengthened?
  - How do government staff and farmers and their associations themselves build capacity?
  - What are the capacities they need to do a good job?

Based on these questions, detailed focus groups questions were developed for both the local officials and the farmers groups in a partner meeting at An Ninh Dong village (Duc Hoa district, Long An province).

1) Did the legal context limit the activities of local organisations, the WUA and local community to participate in the project?
2) What are the strongest points of local organisations concerning the project activities?
3) What are the weak points of the local organisations concerning the project activities?
4) What are the financial resources for local organisations that participated in the project?
5) What is SIAS’s support?
6) Which institutions and resources did SIAS and local authority support in the local community?
7) What are local community’s expectations and assessment of the project activities?
8) Did external factors influence the activities of WUAs and seed multiplication groups?
9) Did the project influence (other) local community activities? What are the advantages and disadvantages of farmer groups participating in the project?
10) What are the strong points of the site working group (SWG)?
11) What are the weak points of the SWG?
12) How was the relationship among local groups improved?
13) How was capacity development of the community improved?
14) What are the most important capacities for local organisations to be able to implement their duties?