

**Expanding the Horizon:
An evaluation of the Mekong Delta Farming Systems Research
and Development Institute's Capacity Development Efforts**

Ronnie Vernooy, Nguyen Quang Tuyen, and Le Thanh Duong

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Summary

The Mekong Delta Farming Systems Research and Development Institute (MDFSRDI), belonging to the University of Can Tho, is one of the leading research and development organisations in Viet Nam. Since 1990 the MDFSRDI has been the nucleus body of two research networks in the country: the Farming Systems Research and Extension Network (FSRENET) and the Natural Resources Management Network (NAREMNET). Both these networks have been supported by the International Development Research Centre, Canada. This study aimed to improve, through action research, the understanding of individual and organisational capacity development efforts and the tools for monitoring and evaluating these efforts and their results.

Five evaluation questions were addressed: 1) What key organisational capacities has the MDFSRDI developed? 2) How have the organisational capacities of the Institute changed over time (since its creation)? 3) How and to what extent has the individual staff at the Institute contributed to the development of the organisational capacities? 4) What are the future challenges for the Institute in terms of organisational capacity development? and 5) What has been the contribution of IDRC-CBNRM to the individual and organisational capacity development efforts of the Institute? The study focussed on the period between 1990 and 2000. The research methodology included the review of program and project documents and of relevant studies, key informant interviews, questionnaires, and a number of participatory tools (adapted to the main theme of the study). A variety of stakeholders took part in the study including researchers, government officials and farmers.

The main insights are:

- Capacity development efforts of the MDFSRDI are made through active participation from various stakeholders; and the MDFSRDI staff play a central role to mobilize and harmonize these efforts for OCD.
- The core elements of the MDFSRDI's capacity development efforts are strong strategic leadership, the use and dissemination of an innovative research approach and

- methodologies, good management of human resources, money, infrastructure, programs and projects, and dynamic national and international networking.
- Capacity development efforts of MDFSRDI are made possible through useful support from various donor organisations of which IDRC is one of the most important. In providing support to and through collaboration with the MDFSRDI, IDRC staff has learned valuable things about doing research and research networking in Viet Nam.
 - The MDFSRDI has made an important contribution to sustainable agricultural development in the country. Weaknesses in the MDFSRDI's OCD and organisational performance are largely due to motivation factors and several constraining forces in the external environment. The "controversial" status of the MDFSRDI, the complicated bureaucracy and the recent centralisation of the Institute's budget management are major constraints in the CD efforts of the Institute.

1. Introduction

Background

The Mekong Delta Farming Systems Research and Development Institute has been the nucleus body of the Viet Nam Farming Systems Research and Extension Network (FSRENET) since 1990. The network developed capacities through networking, exchange of experiences, training, workshops, and conferences. The FSRENET, which in 1996 evolved into the Natural Resources Management Network or NAREMNET tried to bring together as many other organisations as possible to do research and extension on farming systems development and natural resource management (MDFSRDI 1995). A lesson learned from the 1st FSRENET phase (1990-95) concerned the important role of local administrators and the actions of cooperative farmer groups to implement the results of a farming systems approach to a large(r) area. Building on this insight, the NAREMNET interdisciplinary research teams, local administrators and community organisations worked together to apply scientific and technological innovations more efficiently in direct response to community priorities and aimed at reinforcing the sustainability of agro-ecosystem productivity. Both the FSRENET and the NAREMNET were funded by IDRC, the latter through the Community-Based Natural Resource Management Program for Asia (CBNRM). Nearing the end of the NAREMNET project, the directorate of the Institute considered it a good time to evaluate the efforts in CBNRM-oriented capacity development carried out by the Institute as well as by all the NAREMNET network members in Viet Nam.¹

The IDRC CBNRM Program involvement and interest in the evaluation of capacity development are based on its desire to find answers to the following Program evaluation questions: 1) Has the Program advanced the identification of key CBNRM issues to be researched and the methodologies to do so? and 2) Has the Program improved the capacity of the researchers to do better research, including the capacity

¹ The staff of the Institute also embarked on a review of the performance appraisal process and form used by Can Tho University (as mandated by the government). This activity became (a minor but important) part of the study.

for participatory monitoring and evaluation? (CBNRM 2000) Of particular interest is to better understand the *dynamics* of successful capacity building for CBNRM-oriented project development. The MDFSRDI is a key CBNRM partner in the Southeast Asian region given its coordinating role in the Farming Systems Research and Extension, and Natural Resources Management networks in Viet Nam.

The novel feature of this study that particularly interests CBNRM is to look at these evaluation questions at the *organisational* level, which has not extensively been done in the past. Indeed, evaluations carried out or commissioned by IDRC focussed mostly on the (capacity building of the) individual researcher. "Much of IDRC's support to research capacity, has been implicit rather than explicit -based on learning by doing through a number of small projects, rather than explicit strategies to strengthen the capacity of particular institutions or national research systems." (Dotridge 1993: 36) Thus, a crucial issue becomes to deal with the following: "IDRC's experience suggest that unless a specific intent and framework is in place for *institutional* capacity building, it does not occur." (Smutylo 1999: 4, emphasis added)

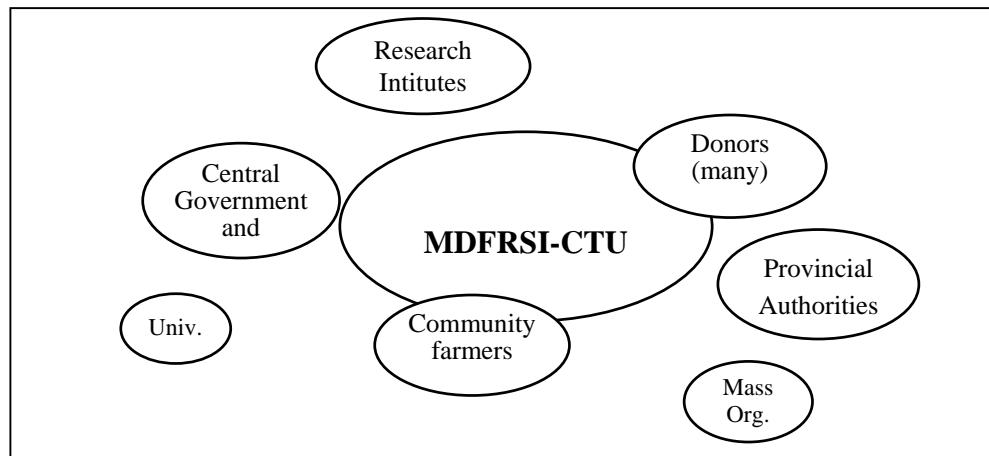
The MDFSRDI mission

The Mekong Delta Farming Systems Research & Development Institute (MDFSRDI) was established in 1988 to enhance the sustainable agriculture and rural development (SARD) in Viet Nam through its research, training, and extension activities inside and outside the Mekong delta region. Its mandate covers: 1) to carry out rice- and non rice-based farming systems research; 2) to offer various training courses, both long-term and short-term, for undergraduate and graduate students, research staff, extension workers, local authority staff, and farmers; and 3) to participate in various development projects at the country, provincial, and district levels. As a matter of policy, around 90% of its annual budget comes from collaborative research and development projects. Its fruitful activities have greatly contributed to Vietnam's SARD, improving farm household living standards, and strengthening the knowledge, attitude, skills and practice of rural people. The Institute, as an employer, has also assured a basic income for its staff.

The Institute has its roots in the Rice Research Department (1978-1981) and the Rice Research Centre (1981-1988) of Can Tho University. Broadening the interests, in 1988 the latter was reorganised into the Farming Systems Research and Development Centre to become the MDFSRDI in 1995. Currently the Institute, characterised by its multi-disciplinarity and its focus on combined research-training-extension efforts, has 66 staff who are housed in two buildings at the campus. However, only 21 staff members are paid from university (national) funds, all others through international cooperation projects. The amount of national funding the University receives for research is very limited, not exceeding US \$ 20,000 a year. There is no other comparable group or unit at the University and as such the Institute occupies a special place. This has placed the Institute in a particular dynamics with the wider organisational and political context and has come with both advantages and disadvantages. Currently, centralisation efforts by

Can Tho University are likely to have a constraining impact on the operations of the Institute (e.g., leading to less operational flexibility), while at the same time agricultural and rural development related policy resolutions recently adopted during the 9th Communist Party congress are likely to strengthen the role of the Institute (Vo Tong Xuan, personal communication; the Saigon Times May 5, 2001: 8). The following figure represents the Institute socially (drawing made by Le Thanh Duong and Nguyen Quan Tuyen):

Figure 1: Situating the MDFSRD Institute



Looking at science and technology in the country at large, according to Bezanson et al. (1999) some 30,000 people are involved in this sector nation-wide (including support staff). In their review of science and technology in Viet Nam, they observe that the sector is facing several major problems; a fiscal crisis (there is simply very little money available for salaries and equipment and even less so for doing research), a lack of communication among institutes, poor integration of research and economic sectors (public and private) and a still dominant "Soviet-style" approach to research with no place or voice for users (*ibid*: 46-47, 50). The sector is also hampered by an inadequate educational system in the rural areas, mono-disciplinary oriented scientists, and heavy gender imbalances in terms of low numbers of women occupying positions and being recruited (*ibid*: 79-80).

They also observe (*ibid*: 87) that a major effort is urgently need to apply science and technology to agriculture if this sector is to remain prosperous and contribute to the economic surplus required for the further modernisation of the country. They express concern that the government's most recent science and technology policy (as reflected in the 1998 Science and Technology White Paper) seems to neglect the potential that agriculture, forestry and fisheries have to develop the other sectors in the country. The new Science and Technology policy emphasizes information technologies, biotechnology, new materials and automation, but has little to say about policy instruments for the key aspects of sustainable rural development, such as, crops and

livestock improvement, the provision of farm supplies, the provision of credit, crop insurance, post-harvest facilities, pricing, and marketing and exports (*ibid*: 89-90, 108).

In the same study, Bezanson et al. comment on the University of Can Tho (1999: 112): "Can Tho has a major agricultural faculty, with an aggressive teaching and research program in agricultural sciences that is pioneering in the development of direct contact with local cultivators. This Mission believes that this academic and outreach institution should have greater interaction with the region's research institutes of the central-government ministries, through formal linkages, including personnel sharing. Such linkages would be likely to generate a strong synergy among all the region's research, administrative, and educational personnel."

Looking at the role of science and technology in relation to agriculture and hence of direct relevance to our study, Pham Xuan Nam, Be Viet Dang and Hainsworth (2000: 46-47) recommend:

- 1) to intensify the collaboration between policy makers and scholars
- 2) to promote methods of joint study with peasants (participatory action research approach)
- 3) to translate the results of studies in demonstration cases and pilot projects.

We will refer to the wider context and these issues/recommendations in more detail in subsequent sections.

The IDRC/CBNRM program

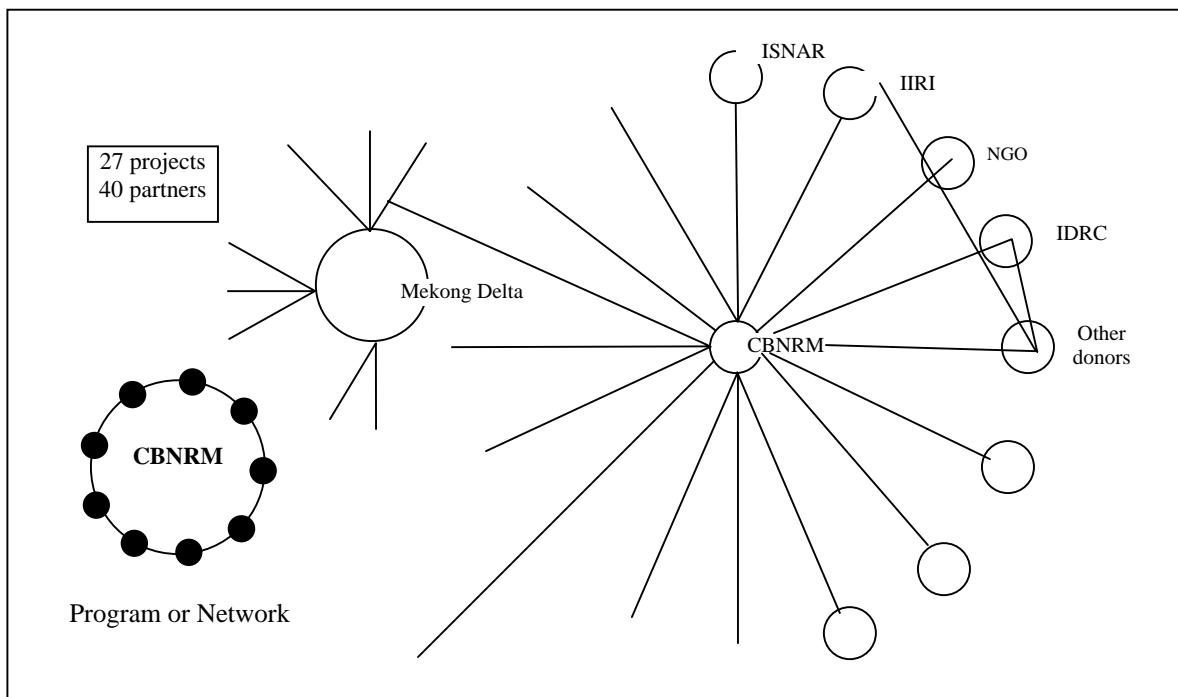
Established in 1970, IDRC is a crown corporation funded by the parliament of Canada. Its head office is located in Ottawa; smaller, regional offices are located in Asia, Africa and Latin America. The Centre's purpose is to initiate, encourage, support and conduct research into the problems of the developing world and into the means for applying and adapting scientific, technical and other knowledge to the economic and social advancement of those regions. Through project grants and professional support to applied, development-oriented research projects, the Centre aims to provide the means to people to:

- research their own situation, problems, constraints and potential
- gather, analyse and disseminate relevant data concerning their life worlds
- propose and implement actions that solve identified problems and improve their livelihoods, efficiently and effectively
- assess the outcomes of the (action) research process and learn from successes and failures for the benefit of others and for the design of future projects and programs

IDRC's mandate and objectives emphasize capacity building through a learning by doing approach and it is therefore not surprising that from the early days of the Centre, it has supported projects that use or explore a participatory (action) research

methodology (Found 1995, Vernooy 1996). IDRC supports research in three broad program areas: social and economic equity, information and communication technologies, and environment and natural resource management (ENRM). CBNRM is one of the six ENRM programs, with a yearly budget of around CAD \$ 2 million (US \$ 1,3 million). The program (or mini-network) is run by a core team of 5 program officers, a research assistant and support staff, based in Singapore, New Delhi, Victoria and Ottawa, Canada. Currently, the program support 25 major projects in South and South East Asia. The program could be represented by the following figure (drawing made by Ronnie Vernooy):

Figure 2: Situating the CBNRM program



Community-Based Natural Resource Management in Asia

The CBNRM program in Asia started in 1997 and builds on previous research supported by IDRC in the fields of agriculture, forestry, fisheries and nutrition. The following is a summary description of the program outlining the problems, context, objectives, approach and challenges (for more details see CBNRM 2000; also accessible at <http://www.idrc.ca/cbnrm>).

Despite rapid industrialisation and a well-established historical network of large cities, most people in Asia remain directly dependent on a productive natural resource base for their livelihoods. Unfortunately, pressures on this resource base are increasing. Urban-biased industrial development and non-locally managed international investments in export-oriented resource development are leading to resource

degradation. Resettlement due to displacement, voluntary migration and historical conflicts exacerbate these resource pressures. Rural populations have increased rapidly with the improvement of basic health and living conditions. This leads to an expansion of cultivated land, even into areas that are ecologically fragile or inappropriate for permanent cultivation. Within communities, power and gender relations often marginalize specific social groups. Systems of resource tenure and access are complex, with traditional, culturally-specific systems modified by colonial and state regulations which may be changing rapidly with national economic policy reforms.

Problems related to the sustainable management of natural resources are most critical in the uplands and coastal areas, where natural resource degradation can lead to irreversible loss of food productivity and the breakdown of ecosystems with loss of habitat. A widespread process in Asia is the privatisation of natural resources such as forests and coastal areas that were previously collectively managed. Privatisation may lead to productivity increases in the short term, but frequently it also increases poverty because poor people who previously had access to these resources are now excluded.

While circumstances differ in different countries, there is a striking convergence of interest in questions of local resource management. Structural adjustment in some countries is leading to reductions in the technical and enforcement capability of the State. In others, major policy transitions are affecting all aspects of government interventions in the economy. External pressures due to expanding trade and investment, and large-scale development projects in parts of the region previously isolated from international markets, are also having a dramatic effect on local resources. Local governments and grassroots organisations are at the same time becoming more assertive and articulate in their identification of resource questions -including the expression of *their* views and interests.

Traditional policies and research have often discounted the role of local people in designing and implementing measures, projects and programs. Proposing an alternative approach, the CBNRM program works with the local men and women most directly involved with natural resource management. Often they are the poorest of the rural poor or belong to ethnic minorities which are politically and economically isolated. The CBNRM program recognises that these men and women may have intimate knowledge of the local resource base, that they may have (countervailing) views on resource use and management and are motivated to improve productivity if they can be assured of reaping the benefits.

A central feature of the research approach adopted in this program is that it focuses on the systematic integration of expertise in the natural sciences with social science perspectives on the interplay of community decision-making processes and supra-local institutional forces and contexts. Given that Asia is a very large and heterogeneous region, the program focuses its resources on the poorest countries in the region, and on some of the poorer regions of larger countries. In the transition economies of Vietnam, China, Laos and Cambodia, institutional capabilities and academic skills in social

sciences are particularly limited. As a result, capacity-building is a continuing priority of the program.

It is useful to keep in mind that, as part of IDRC's modus operandi, program delivery ideally has four basic characteristics:

- The Centre responds to a Southern-defined research agenda and supports applied research that can contribute to social and economic development.
- IDRC funding is not tied to Canadian goods, services, or partners and control for the research project rests with scientists and institutions in developing countries.
- Program staff from Ottawa and the Regional Offices support the research by providing technical input and promoting networking and professional linkages.
- Program Officers try to maintain close and regular contact with the research team throughout the duration of the project (adapted from Smutylo 1999: 1).

The typical program delivery mechanism is a project or a project support activity (e.g., attending a conference, organisation of a workshop, or preparation of a publication), i.e., a single focus, time-bound activity with specific objectives linked closely to the inputs proposed for it. However, frequently project teams (recipients of grants) are involved in more than one IDRC project through other, so-called support activities such as building up information systems, organising (regional or international) conferences, exchange and networking (face to face or increasingly through electronic means), training events, and/or dissemination events. Since the implementation of more decentralised and semi-autonomously operating Program Initiatives (such as CBNRM) in 1997, this multi-stranded involvement of research teams has been increasing, or at least, attempts are made to do so. Projects are seen as inputs that enable individuals and organisations to move more effectively toward their own development goals (Bernard and Sander, quoted in Sander 1998: 6).

The FSRE and NAREM networks

In 1990, the FSRE network (FSREN) brought together ten Vietnamese organisations (seven universities and colleges, and three research institutes) representing six agro-ecological zones of Vietnam. Its general objectives are : 1) To develop human resource capabilities in farming systems research and extension methods; 2) To improve and further develop appropriate agricultural systems that are both economically and environmentally more sustainable and simultaneously will improve farm and rural family incomes, nutrition and welfare. The specific objectives included : 1) To develop a national research and extension capacity in FSRE methods and to train local administrators, district technicians, farmers' leaders and policy persons in FSR methods; 2) To develop income enhancing and/or diversified sustainable agricultural production systems for the six major agro-ecological zones of Viet Nam; 3) To develop integrated aquaculture-rice based farming systems in selected production areas; 4) To develop improved production systems for pigs and large ruminants in selected sites in the six regions based on more efficient uses of crop residues and forages; and 5) To

monitor and evaluate socio-economic changes associated with improvements introduced above.

The FSRE project was approved and funded by IDRC for the period of 1991-95. One of the most prominent results was that for the first time in Viet Nam a nation-wide network in farming systems research and extension was established gathering a number of multidisciplinary scientists from different research institutions and universities who practised research and extension through a uniformed methodology, the farming systems approach. Several other research results were applied and contributed greatly to sustainable agriculture and rural development (SARD) in Viet Nam during 1990-1995 and beyond.

The Natural Resources Management Network project (approved in 1996) coordinated by the MDFSRDI, brings together six Vietnamese organisations and has as general objective to develop human resource capabilities in Vietnam in CBNRM building on past farming systems research approaches and methods. Specific objectives include: To build and strengthen human resources in CBNRM methods; and to train faculty members, researchers, extension workers, local administrators, policy makers and farmer leaders in concepts, awareness and practices of CBNRM; and to form a national network of practitioners of CBNRM among the members of the Vietnam Farming Systems Research Network.

Expected project outputs included (MDFSRDI 1995):

- ✓ increased knowledge and management capability of natural resources by scientists, teachers, extension workers, farmer leaders and local community organisations (use of interdisciplinary approach, systems perspective, insights into NRM issues beyond the crop/animal/tree level, understanding the importance of local organisation)
- ✓ support to local administrators and policy makers for CBNRM planning
- ✓ linkages built with other CBNRM practitioners
- ✓ formally trained Network members

Purpose, evaluation questions, scope

The above leads us to the formulation of the following purpose of our study: to improve, through action research, our understanding of individual and organisational capacity development efforts and the tools for monitoring and evaluating these efforts and their results. Five evaluation questions were addressed: 1) What key organisational capacities has the MDFSRDI developed? 2) Have the organisational capacities of the Institute changed over time (since its creation)? If so, how have they changed? 3) How and to what extent has the individual staff at the Institute contributed to the development of the organisational capacities above mentioned? 4) What are the future challenges for the Institute in terms of organisational capacity development? and 5) What has been the contribution of IDRC-CBNRM to the individual and organisational capacity development

efforts of the Institute? A broad spectrum of efforts was analysed with particular attention paid to the building of relationships (networking) and the study focussed on the period between 1990 and 2000.

Content of this report

Following this introduction, the report is divided in four major sections. In the second section we describe the conceptual framework, approach and methodology used. In the third section we present the main findings of the study, followed by a discussion in section four, and lessons learned/next steps in section five. Details about research tools used are presented in a second, accompanying document ("Methodology guide," Vernooy et al. 2001).

2. Conceptual framework, and methodology

Working definitions of capacity development

We started the study with a working definition of the MDFSRDI's organisational capacity building, encompassing the following elements: the planning, executing and evaluation (i.e., the management) of research, training, extension and outreach, developing linkages (i.e., networking), human resource development, and infrastructure development. The Institute's core activities are research, training and extension.

The CBNRM perspective is very similar to the above and encompasses:

1. The design, planning, execution, monitoring and evaluation of research programs and projects including the capacity to innovate in terms of introducing and using new concepts and methodology, as a means to solve rural development problems and address the needs of natural resource users and/or policy makers.
2. The planning and undertaking of communication and dissemination activities, including the use of electronic means.
3. The planning and undertaking of cooperation and networking, nationally and internationally.
4. The management of people and resources including the enhancement of professional skills, the provision of space and time for learning, and the creation of an organisational knowledge culture.
5. Partially embedded in the previous four elements: Creating and maintaining an enabling environment including the building of both legitimacy and the capacity to respond to and exercise influence on the national research policy process and international donor policies, and to create or strengthen linkages between research, policy and development.

It is our view that it is difficult to separate individual capacity building from organisational capacity building given that the people in an organisation in the end "make or break" the

performance of the organisation. Analysing individual capacity building became therefore part of the study.

In addition to these working definitions of capacity building –which were further refined during the course of the field study- we made use of the organisational performance model developed by Lusthaus et al. (1999, see also Lusthaus et al. 1995) (see figure below), and the concept of theory of action (see Patton 1997: 215-238). We designed a preliminary theory of action for our case study in September 2000 (during the preparatory project phase) and used it to formulate the specific research questions and to design the methodology. At the end of the study, we integrated our findings into a slightly adapted version of the Lusthaus et al. model and into a new version of our theory of action (see figures below).

Figure 3: The Lusthaus et al. model for assessing organisational performance



Figure 4: The Duong et al. organizational performance model

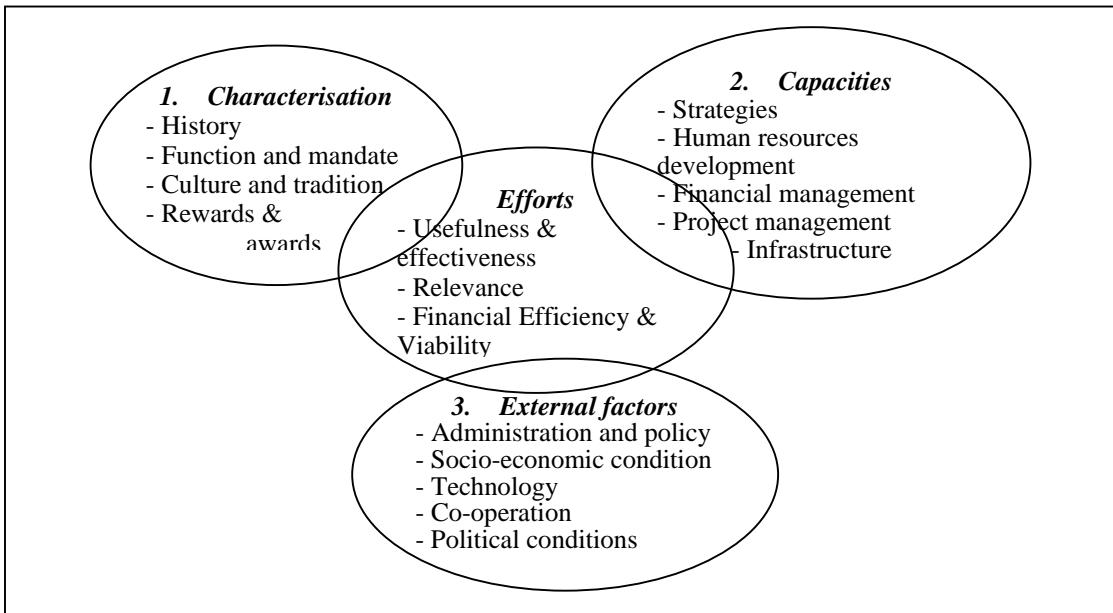
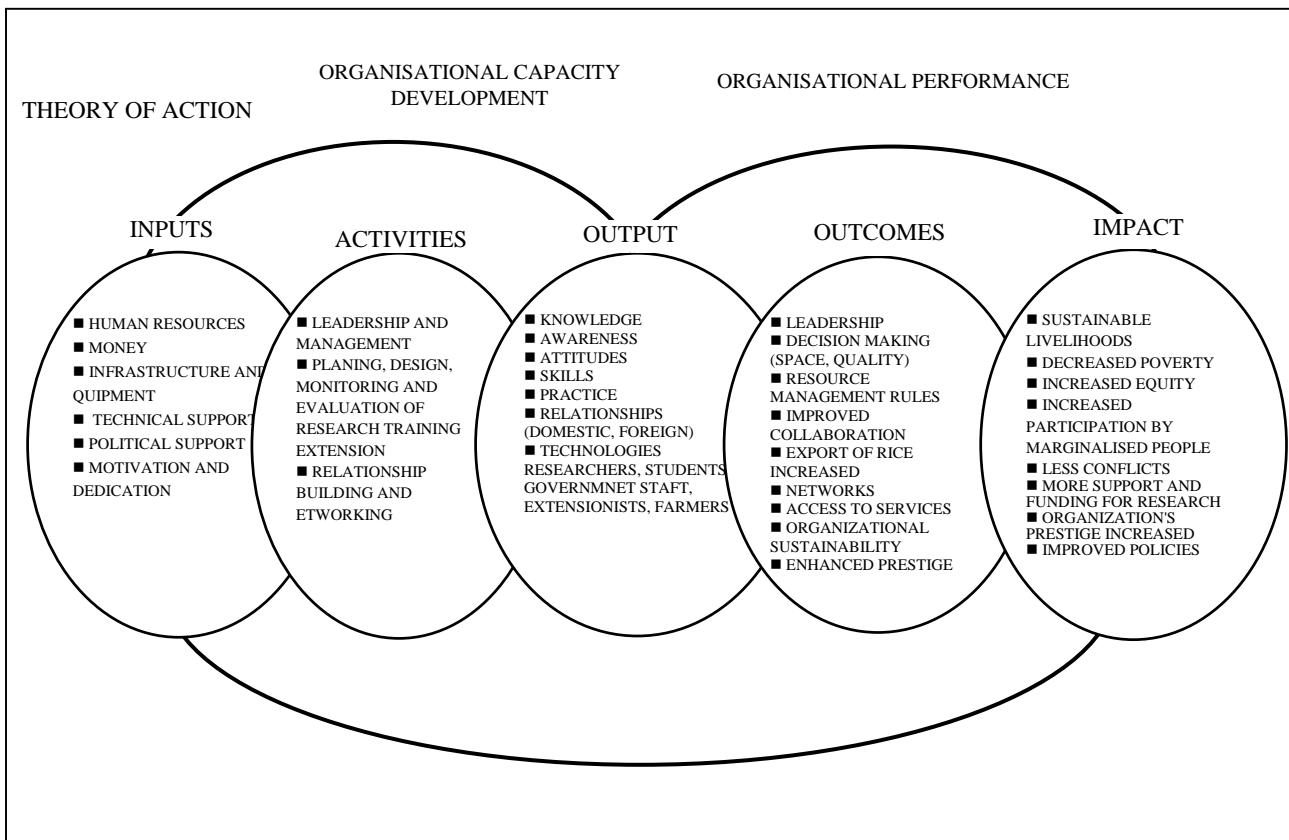


Figure 5: The Duong et al. theory of action



Research methodology and tools

Building on previous organisational assessment studies (Horton et al. 2000) and capacity building methods (Gubbels and Koss 2000), we used an action-oriented approach using primarily a set of qualitative and participatory monitoring and evaluation tools –adapted to the specific theme and evaluation questions of the study. Already existing tools (e.g., the CBNRM project monitoring and evaluation questionnaire, and the CBNRM capacity development assessment questionnaire) were used and reviewed as well. We looked at the research questions in more detail through a small (sub)case study within the broader MDFSRI-CBNRM case study by focussing on the concrete dynamics of the network partnership between the MDFSRDI and one of the Farming Systems Research Network and NAREMNET members, the Institute of Agricultural Science of South Viet Nam (SIAS) in Ho Cho Minh City. Available institutional and project documents produced by both the Institute and IDRC and relevant studies published in the form of books about recent political and economic developments in Vietnam were reviewed as well. In addition, we carried out selected interviews with key individuals such as the director of the Institute and the IDRC program officer responsible for the support to the Institute. The research was done by a single team of MDFSRDI-(Le Thanh Duong and Nguyen Quang Tuyen, with support from Vo Tong Xuan) and CBNRM staff (Ronnie Vernooy). Fred Carden from IDRC's Evaluation Unit provided regular feedback throughout the fieldwork, analysis and (report) writing process.

Tools

In the following table we present how the selected tools address/relate to the five evaluation questions:

Evaluation questions	Tools
What key organisational capacities has the MDFSRDI developed?	MDFSRDI self assessment workshop Work-assessment stories Key informant interviews MDFSRDI-SIAS sub-case study CBNRM monitoring and evaluation questionnaire Archives and documents analysis
Have the organisational capacities of the Institute changed over time (since its creation)? If so, how have they changed?	MDFSRDI self assessment workshop MDFSRDI-SIAS sub-case study Feedback meeting Work-assessment stories Key informant interviews Archives and documents analysis
How and to what extent has the individual staff at the Institute contributed to the development of the organisational capacities above mentioned?	MDFSRDI self assessment workshop CBNRM CD questionnaires Work-assessment stories
What are the challenges concerning future organisational capacity development?	MDFSRDI self-assessment workshop MDFSRDI-SIAS sub-case study Feedback meeting
What has been the contribution of IDRC-CBNRM to the individual and organisational capacity development efforts of the Institute between 1990 and 2000? What key capacities have been strengthened that support the Institute to develop itself as a R&D organisation?	MDFSRDI-SIAS sub-case study Feedback meeting Document analysis CBNRM CD questionnaires Key informant interviews

We started the study with a two day **self-assessment** workshop carried out by the MDFSRDI staff (34 participants, 9 women and 25 men) February 2-3, 2001, facilitated by Duong and Tuyen. The goals of the workshop were to present the ISNAR project proposal and the case study, and to receive feedback on key questions concerning capacity development :

- How do you see CD for Research, Training, Extension?
- What capacities are important in terms of Knowledge, Attitudes, Skills and - Practice?
- What has changed over time ? Are new capacities required for your work?
- What factors do constrain our OCD?

- How can we improve OCD at the Institute?
- What are the gaps in CD, at the individual and organisational level?
- How does OCD relate to performance?
- What are your suggestions to improve the evaluation form for individual staff ? - What capacities should be included in the form?
- What are the gaps in the current evaluation of staff to contribute to the institutional capacity ?

The main results of the workshop were a shared understanding about the evaluation study, *strong commitment* from staff to cooperate and preliminary insights about the evaluation questions (including a *positive* indication about the kind of questions we were asking) (see workshop report, MDFSRDI 2001a).

Eight **work assessment questionnaires/stories** of staff of the Institute (managers, lecturers, researchers, technicians, administration staff; 5 men, 3 women) were carried out in early 2001. These stories explored how staff perceived their contribution to the Institute's core activities, if and how their work has changed over time, if and how their own capacities have evolved and how these capacities relate to the OCD efforts of the Institute. Questions concerning the influence of external support, including the role played by IDRC-CBNRM were also be asked (see the Methodology guide for questions). The stories offer a more personal and detailed account of what individual and organisational CD means, how it has changed over time, and what the key issues are.

A participatory workshop with SIAS and MDFSRDI staff was organised in February 2001 with the aim to present the project proposal and explore the collaboration between the two organisations. Through a series of participatory exercises the 23 workshop participants (8 from SIAS, 14 from the MDFSRDI, plus Ronnie Vernooy; 4 women and 19 men) addressed questions such as: What are the most important individual and organisational capacities for the research and development work of SIAS? How have these capacities been developed? Are there gaps? Which are the gaps? What have you learned from the involvement in the networks (FSR and NRM) coordinated by the MDFSRDI? What has changed in your organisation because of the networks? What individual and organisational capacities need to be strengthened to improve research and networking? What are the factors that influence the research and development efforts of SIAS? Facilitation was in hands of Tuyen, Duong and Ronnie (see the Methodology guide for exercises) (see workshop report, MDFSRDI 2001b).

SIAS organised a one day focus groups meeting in March 2001 with their research partners including farmers and government staff working at the local level with the goal to obtain more detailed answers on the study questions from a variety of stakeholders involved in the research and development work. The meeting took place in An Ninh Dong, Duc Hoa district. 11 farmers and 14 government staff participated (all men). Coordination was in the hands of Mr. H.T. Quoc of SIAS. The main discussion topics or questions were: 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 between 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? (see report, SIAS 2001)

A final feedback meeting took place early May 2001 in Can Tho to present (preliminary) results to all involved parties and obtain their interpretations; a few information gaps were also filled. 45 people participated (staff from the MDFSRDI and SIAS, farmers, officials, and Ronnie Vernooy; 11 women and 34 men). The meeting was facilitated by Duong, Tuyen and Ronnie (see report, MDFSRDI 2001c, and Methodology guide).

Key informant interviews were done with Vo Tong Xuan, the director of the MDFSRDI, John Graham, the “principal” IDRC program officer responsible for the FRS and NAREMNET projects, and with Stephen Tyler, the CBNRM program team-leader (and program officer with a long standing involvement with Viet Nam). Questions dealt with their views on IDRC’s contribution to capacity development efforts at the Institute and other organisations in the country, results of research supported by IDRC, the changes occurring in Viet Nam and their impact on research and development, lessons learned and challenges ahead (see the Methodology guide for questions).

Project and program documents were reviewed in Can Tho and in Ottawa and a number of **Viet Nam studies** consulted, to obtain relevant quantitative data, and to learn about changes in the country (policy, economy, science and technology) and their influence on research and development. In addition, a number of previous IDRC evaluation studies were reviewed, and relevant evaluation literature consulted (see References and Resources for details).

Analysis and synthesis of findings, reporting to date

Analysis was done by grouping and comparing data sources by evaluation question. For each question, two or more data sources were available including previously produced written materials (project reports, evaluation reports and questionnaires, studies), and reports and questionnaires produced during the fieldwork period (see Annex 1). During the fieldwork period, for the two workshops, the SIAS focus groups, and the feedback meeting, reports were produced that document the main findings. Data were discussed face to face by the research team, and feedback was provided by Fred Carden. The feedback meeting allowed us to present the preliminary findings and to receive comments from the people involved in the study. In addition, we worked on a synthesis of the main findings together with participants –we present this synthesis in section 5.

3. Evaluation findings

(Question 1) The development of organisational capacities

We addressed this question in various ways. First, we were interested to learn how the staff of the Institute defined capacity development and how this definition compared to our working definition (see section 2). We also inquired about organisational performance in relation to capacity development. In addition, we ventured into strengths and weaknesses –these will be addressed under evaluation question 5.

At the February self-assessment workshop MDFSRDI staff answered the question **How do you understand capacity development for research, training and extension?** as follows :

- 1) Capacity is the real ability of the Institute to achieve its goals.
 - 2) Capacity development is to increase significantly the ability of individuals/groups/the Institute to achieve the following objectives :
- Improve all research activities, including the definition of objectives, implementation and evaluation
 - Create solutions
 - Improve teaching, training, and extension
 - Manage and perform well the tasks
 - Transfer concepts and methods
 - Enhance good relations/co-operation with other researches/farmers
 - Manage financial sources and other supporting resources
 - Improve human resources
 - Improve infrastructure
 - Improve administration

At the February MDFSRDI-SIAS workshop participants did some additional brainstorming about the meaning of capacity development. They answered the question **What does capacity development mean for you? What are the key words that come to mind?** as follows, looking at both the individual and organisational levels.

Individual development	Organisational development
Training/new capacity training	Management
Skills improvement	Planning
Knowledge improvement	Organisation
Specialisation	Implementation of activities
Research methodology	Development of human power
Extension skills	Money (finances)
Evaluation skills	Infrastructure (development)
Attitudes	Attracting funding
(being) Dynamic	(Building) linkages
Practise/practising	

The staff identified the following indicators for these capacities:

- (Knowledge related): number of staff trained officially and regularly, number of projects and research proposals approved, access to documentation, laboratory and internet service, short term training courses taken, participation in workshops and field trips;
- (Attitude related): clear and fair organisational rules and regulations (about staff co-operation, assignment of concrete tasks, and responsibilities and benefits)
- (Skills related): specialisation, project planning skills, updated and improved management, sensibility with real situation and demand, ability in communication and establishment of relationship, co-operation with local authority and foreign organisations
- (Practice related): solving problems in good ways, conducting research and planning, analyzing, evaluating and sharing experiences

During the MDFSRDI-SIAS workshop, MDFSRDI staff also identified their **strongest organisational capacities**. They highlighted the development of man-power both in terms of increased quantity and quality (i.e., mastering of subject matter, management), a good approach to research and extension, good collaboration with international organisations to get funding and with national organisations for implementation of activities, improved infrastructure, and the honour/pride of staff.

About performance

During the self-assessment workshop it became clear that the staff of the Institute perceived a close link between capacity development and performance. They answered the question **What is the relation between capacity development and achievements of the Institute?** as follows :

There is a very close relation between institutional capacity development and achievement of tasks and activities. Capacity development leads to :

- Improved research effectiveness
- Highly enhanced training quality
- Increased (farmer) production
- Impact on policy planning by authorities
- Raising prestige of the Institute, leading to more domestic and foreign co-operation.

The MDFSRDI-SIAS workshop allowed us to further inquire about performance. We asked the staff: 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. Answers were presented in two tables.

Research	Training	Extension
<p>1. Human resource development - before 1988: 1 PhD, 0 MSc, 10 BSc - 1989-2000: 3 PhD., 10 MSc, 29 BSc</p> <p>2. Demand driven - rice -> FS - individual farmers -> community</p> <p>3. Linkages - regional, national - international</p> <p>4. Fund raising - Research activities - Facilities, equipment</p>	<p>1. Human resource development - domestic/overseas training - short/long term courses - access to specialists</p> <p>2. Teaching methodology improvement - lecturing -> learning together - problem- based learning - training aids development - curriculum development</p>	<p>1. Demand driven</p> <p>2. Linkages</p> <p>3. Appropriate methodology - Transfer of Technology - use of Mass-media - interactions</p> <p>4. Human capacity improvement - Training - Learning by doing</p>

Examples:

Staff : In-house training by internal experts or expatriate experts (Mr. Bob Wieber, Canadian Broadcasting Corp.); participation in in-country training (IPGRI training in Hanoi, CBNRM Network training in Cantho and Dalat); working by the side of expatriate colleagues (e.g., with Belgian colleague Nico Vronmant, Japanese professor H. Momma).

Organisation: Seeking support from development agencies (IDRC, SAREC, MHO) or research institutions (IRRI, IPGRI, KUL); collaborating with NGOs (SEARICE, Oxfam America, Oxfam UK, MCC, Bdfw); requesting assistance from embassies (e.g., British and Danish ambassadors).

Mission	Short run	Long run
1. RESEARCH		
1.1 Rice		
- Variety improvement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - quality seed production - 2 national varieties - 5 local varieties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of suitable rice varieties for different agro ecosystems and demands
- Management practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - LCC for nitrogen management - N, P, K application - seeding rates - planting densities - tolerant to water levels - flood-prone rice ecosystems - exporting rice development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Appropriate technologies for different agro-ecosystems, farming systems and seasons - Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD)
- Networking		
1.2 FSR&D		
- Household socio-economics		
- Environmental economics		
- Networking		
- Resource Management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rice-fish (fresh + brackish water) - Rice-shrimp (fresh + brackish water) - VAC, VACR, VACRB - PRA survey in various eco-zones - National FS network - Naremnet - Wetland ecology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sustainable Agriculture and Rural Development (SARD)
1.3 Biodiversity conservation and Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 1 catalogue - 1552 local cultivars identified - >3000 improved varieties - 549 upland rice - 36 sweet potatoes - 47 yam - 70 taro - 20 cassava 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Conservation, evaluation, utilization of rice and root crops - Documentation and improvement - Community based PGR, conservation and development
2.. TRAINING		
2.1 Rice		
2.2 Farming Systems/Extension		
2.3 Biometrics		
2.4 Economic Management		
2.5 Project development and management		
2.6 Training skills		
2.7 Seed selection skills		
2.8 PPB/PVS (breeding)		
2.9 PRA (participatory research)		
3. EXTENSION		
3.1. Variety release	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Rice - LCC - Women credit scheme - Community development (UNDP, SIDA, CECI, IDRC, IPGRI, CBDC....) - Rice-fish, rice-shrimp systems - VACRB systems 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Sustainable agriculture development in Mekong Delta
3.2. Cultivation		
3.3. Rural development		
3.4. Sustainable farming system		

(Question 2) Changes in organisational capacities over time

To answer the question about changes over time, staff reviewed the history of the Institute and divided its trajectory in various periods (see table below). For each of these periods we collected both quantitative and qualitative data.

Some numbers first

Currently, the Institute employs 66 people; in 1990 the number was 35, hence in ten years time staff numbers almost doubled. Of these 66 :

- Level of education: 3 PhD's (1 in 1990), 10 MSc's (none in 1990), 29 BSc's (21 in 1990), 9 technicians and 2 college graduates (was 10 in 1990), 4 Junior and 8 Senior (was 2 in 1990).
- Divisions: 11 staff in Administration, 21 at the Sustainable Resource Management department, 13 at the Rice Research Department, 7 at the Experimental Farm in Can Tho and 5 at the Experimental Farm in Hoa An and 9 at the Department of Biodiversity Development and Conservation..
- 17 women and 49 men (no change in percentages since 1990).
- Average age is now 37 years (was 30 years in 1990).

During the 1999-2000 school year, the Institute gave lectures to 210 students; the number in 1992-1993 was 96; hence, this number was more than doubled. The number of classes went up from 3 to 4 during the same period.

During 1988-2000, the MDFSRDI managed a total of 57 internationally funded research and development projects, excluding 2 national projects (KX08 and La Bang Chua), some ministerial (at ministry level) projects (e.g., Rice varietal testing), and some others at the provincial level. Through international collaboration, foreign donors shared around 90% of the total budget of MDFSRDI during 1988-2000 (VND 22,245,686,000 totally). This is crucial in the evolution of the Institute, according to Vo Tong Xuan (personal communication), because collaboration significantly allowed MDFSRDI to implement research and extension activities in an effective way.

A more qualitative picture

During the self-assessment workshop we asked MDFSRDI staff to describe which capacities were developed through the questions **How does the MDFSRDI achieve its mission? Does it require any new capacity?** The staff summarized their answer as follows.

Year/period	Staff	Capacities
1978-1981 Rice Research Department	1 PhD, 1 MSc 4 Engineers 1 Technician	- teaching mainly about rice - research was limited because restriction of finance and human power - extension was not improved - limited specialisation
1981-1988 Rice Research Center	1 PhD 1 MSc 10 Engineers 1 Technician	- teaching mainly about rice - research was expanded and improved - extension was conducted based on cultivating requirements → research objectives combined with extension → practical command of knowledge increased → domestic and foreign information was internalised → using computer
1988-1995 Farming System Research and Development Center		- transformation from mono-culture to multi-culture, diversification and more linkages - expansion of international relations → improved and increased of foreign language skills → increased specialised skills
1995 –2001 Mekong Delta Farming System Research and Development Institute	5 PhD 15 MSc 27 Engineers 12 Technicians	→ improved infrastructure → improved multi-media services - extension activities improved and enlarged drastically based on systems methodology. → attracted experts and research advisers → utilisation of technologies contributing to: social development, agricultural diversification, community based natural management (clubs, co-operatives, state enterprise, ...) → improvement of training → foreign relations improved → modern and up-dated methods of media communication → diversification of network linkages - establishment of network: broadcasting and feedback of information - better monitoring; - attracting many national and international projects → improvement of capacity of planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluation of projects → research ability of staff members increased in quality and quantity → institutional prestige increased - diversification and extension of research

We cross-checked this table at the MDFSRDI-SIAS workshop and got answers consistent with the above. More details of results can be found in the various FSREnet and NAREMnet project annual and final reports (NAREMnet 1997-1998, 1998-1999, 1997-2000, see also the external evaluation report of the FSREnet project by Benchapan Shinawatra 1995, and Vo Tong Xuan 1997).

In one of the work assessment interviews that we did one additional change emerged: working with women (farmers) is now much more commonplace than in the earlier periods of the Institute. In several of the ongoing research projects staff is working directly with (farmer) women and around issues/problems that concern women, such as healthcare and credit.

In order to further systematise the evolution of the identified capacities over time we designed another exercise for the feedback meeting in May. For this exercise we used Peter Morgan's (2000) contributing/supporting capacities classification scheme. This exercise was done by a large group of staff (among whom several with a good and long memory), as follows.

(Exercise) : In previous workshops the staff of the Institute has identified key organisational 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).

- Question : For each of the four periods of the institute, indicate the relative weight of these capacities, on a scale from relatively minor (**L**) to medium (**M**) to large (**L**).

	Rice Research Department 1978-1981	Rice Research Centre 1981-1988	Farming Systems R&D Centre 1988-1995	Mekong Delta F.S. R&D Institute 1995-currently
Contributing capacities				
management of research	High	High	High	High
management of training	Low	High	High	High
management of extension/technology transfer	High	High	High	High
fund raising and donor relationship building	Low	Medium	High	High
advocacy and relationship building with policy-makers	High	High	High	High
Networking (research)	Medium	High	High	High
Supporting capacities				
human resource management	Low	Medium	High	High
staff training	Low	Low	Medium	Medium/High
internal regulations and decision-making	Low	Low	Low/Medium	Medium
administration and financial management	Low	Low	High	High
management of infrastructure and equipment	Low	Low	Medium/High	Medium/High
Leadership	High	High	High	High

Note: double scores represent different opinions among the group that did this exercise.

IDRC staff also commented on changes that have occurred.

John Graham :

The most important change is that you now find institutes with resources and people and they can get the work done. Before there were people but very few resources. People did not have enough money to get into the field or even make Xerox copies of articles. We had to help them with all of this and it has made a big, big difference at the start in terms of getting some work done. Likewise most researchers did not know what Farming Systems work was, but now more and more have an understanding of this."

Stephen Tyler on changes in Viet Nam at large :

"One of the most obvious differences in undertaking our projects now, compared with 10 years ago, is that it is harder today to find committed and competent staff to work with, because the opportunities for them to work with other international organisations have greatly expanded. The numbers of skilled and competent research staff, and their foreign language skills, have also grown dramatically, but not enough to keep up with the expansion of opportunities. So today, it is hard for our research projects to compete with other consultancy opportunities to attract the attention and commitment of key research staff. Research has become more like a business, than an academic or service-oriented career. Leading organisations and individuals have become very busy, and it is difficult to compete for their attention even to complete ongoing projects. This is not necessarily 'bad': in some ways it reflects our success in building capacity as described above so is a measure of accomplishment!"

In order to better understand these changes, it is necessary to look at the wider context, in particular concerning political and economic changes occurring in Viet Nam. In the following section we look at these changes in more detail.

Viet Nam : doi moi ("renovation") and beyond

Viet Nam's government has decided to join the forces of globalisation (i.e., trade liberalisation, deregulation and opening up to foreign direct investment), most concretely through desired memberships of the WTO and the Asian Free Trade Area (the latter planned for 2006), and through a ambitious reform process now underway for more than a decade. There is no doubt that this reform process has resulted in profound changes in Vietnamese society (and some argue that changes in society were a major force contributing to policy changes, e.g., Rigg 1997: 14-22), but in recent years its future direction has become less clear. It seems that the government wishes to continue the market reforms while at the same time it continues to strongly adhere to both its central planning habits and the institutions for implementing its policies. This is creating increasingly inconsistencies, in terms of policy design, leading in turn to frequent policy changes. Poor, fragmented and unclear implementation is another feature of the current situation (Bezanson et al. 1999: 36), and uneven/unequal impacts another (e.g., affecting women in particular, see Tran Thi Van Anh and le Ngoc Hung 2000).

"Although influential voices, from the party general secretary, Do Muoi, to such respected academics as Professor Vo Tong Xuan of Can Tho University, are now making the case for growth in the rural and urban areas to be balanced, there are still doubts about the depth of the commitment to rural development." (Country Report Viet Nam, 1st Quarter 1995: 17)

The process of "doi moi" (or renovation) now underway for more than 10 years has produced a mixed set of results. It has resulted in economic growth during most of the 1990s which has benefited most people (real GDP growth has been impressive ranging from 4.8% in 1999 up to 9.5% in 1995, Country Report Viet Nam, 4th Quarter 1996: 5, October 2000: 11, January 2001: 5, 11). However, economic conditions remain tough for those people lacking good health, local job opportunities and access to capital, productive land and/or adequate housing (Boothroyd and Pham Xuan Nam 2000: xiii). The renovation process and the series of policies designed by the Vietnamese government to support it have also not been able to deal adequately with the continuing rapid population growth (over 2% a year), still high underemployment levels in rural areas, and ongoing or worsening over-exploitation of the natural resource base and related problems such as soil erosion and (ground) water pollution.

"There is a growing concern, voiced publicly by the prime-minister, Vo Van Kiet, and by the former prime minister, Pham Van Dong, that the benefits of rapid economic growth have not spread from the cities to the countryside." (Country Report Viet Nam, 1st Quarter 1996: 15)

"If you run too fast, you fall over." The sound bite offered by the secretary-general of the Communist Party, Do Muoi, sums up the prevailing theme of the Eight Party Congress which took place in Hanoi from June 28 to July 1 and was attended by 1,198 delegates. The cautious approach was evident in the stance taken on policy where the emphasis of the chief document, the political report, was on the combination of economic reform and political stability that has been the Party's main objective since the late 1980s." (Country Report Viet Nam, 3rd Quarter 1996: 7)

Achievements in agriculture and the rural sector have been impressive. The total and average per capita food outputs have increased significantly, the country has become an important rice exporter, total agriculture-forestry-aquaculture exports have also increased, and schooling, housing and healthcare have improved considerably (Pham Xuan Nam, Be Viet Dang, Hainsworth 2000: 18). Following the historical Party Politburo's Resolution 10 (known as Contract 10) "Renovation of management of agricultural economy" in April 1988, the government elaborated and approved a series of other policies aimed at stimulating agricultural production, including the new Land Law in 1993 and Labour Law in 1994. Overall, these policies have had positive effects, but in comparison with other countries in the region Viet Nam is still behind in terms of key rural development indicators such as apparent daily calorie intake, ratio of people with access to safe water, infant mortality rates, literacy rates and per-capita GDP (ibid: 18). The main constraints that are hampering further improvement are: lack of access to capital, limited skills and knowledge to diversify the still mainly rice-

based production, weak rural infrastructure including post-harvest facilities and communication systems, narrow access to markets combined with exploitative marketing relationships, and an underpaid and under-trained extension service (*ibid*: 26; see also, Bezanson et al. 1999: 116).

"The government has established a National Commission for Food Security, chaired by the minister of agriculture and rural development, Le Huy Ngo. Although Viet Nam is a major food exporter, almost one-fifth of the population cannot afford to buy 2,100 calories of food daily, the level widely considered the minimum necessary to avoid malnutrition. About 40% of children aged under five are stunted because of inadequate food." (Country Report Viet Nam, 4th Quarter 1998: 26)

(Question 3) Contributions of individuals

Answers to the question about the contributions of individuals were given mostly indirectly through a number of exercises. In addition, we designed a work-assessment questionnaire to ask individuals from "across" the Institute (support staff, research staff, management) about their contributions.

As we have seen already, during the self-assessment workshop the MDFSRDI staff identified the following key individual capacities that they developed:

Individual capacity development
Training/new capacity training
Skills improvement
Knowledge improvement
Specialisation
Research methodology
Extension skills
Evaluation skills
Attitudes
(being) Dynamic
Practise/practising

We also have seen that they perceive a close link between the development of individual and organisational capacities and performance, asserting contributions made to a number of crucial outputs, outcomes and impacts (see the section of performance).

John Graham's views coincide with this view: "With support one can do research, one can learn from that work, one can participate in trainings, they have also provided trainings, they have learnt networking etc. The work has also meant that they need to be working with farmers and learning from them also in many ways. Our project people have been supported also by other donors and thus the horizon of their work has been expanded. ... An organisation is the sum of its parts and if you build individuals you build the group and the institute."

Vo Tong Xuan's, the Centre/Institute's director, leadership has played an important role here, both internally (in terms of developing a vision, planning, management, mentoring and monitoring) and externally (linking with donors, other researchers and policy makers). John Graham noted that: "Vo Tong Xuan himself was an elected official of the National Assembly and he headed many important agriculture committees and debates on this. He has argued for a diversified and balanced agriculture and that message has been important in terms of the work of our research teams and I think even at the local level our work has encouraged this balance."

In the book "*In person: profiles of researchers in Africa, Asia and the Americas*," published by IDRC in 1995, the Canadian journalist Eileen Conway started her portrait Vo Tong Xuan as follows (1995: 83):

"Dr. Vo-Tong Xuan is living proof that one person can make a substantial difference in the world. Born in 1940 to a poor family in An Giang in southern Viet Nam, Dr Xuan is now Vice-Rector of the University of Can Tho and a member of the Vietnamese National Assembly. Perhaps most impressive of all, Dr Xuan is credited with leading the transformation of post-war Viet Nam from a rice importer to the third-largest rice exporter in the world, all within one decade."

IDRC's contribution

IDRC has supported the MDTSRDI in various ways. It provided major funds for the 2 network projects (FSREnet and NAREMnet), and minor funds for a number of so-called research support activities including the participation of Vo Tong Xuan in the two international CBNRM workshops (1997 and 2000), and the participation of other staff in training activities (e.g., multi-media training workshop May 2001). Program staff and the regional controller staff made regular visits to Can Tho and to (network) partner organisations. In order to find out about how the Vietnamese researchers experienced these contributions, we designed several exercises. We also reviewed project reports including the report of an external evaluation of the FSREnet (Shinawatra 1995), and of course, we interviewed the key IDRC program staff about their experiences concerning IDRC's financial and "technical" contributions.

During the MDTSRDI-SIAS workshop, we asked staff of both organisations to describe what the FSRE and NAREM research networks contributed to the capacity development efforts of the SIAS and the MDTSRDI. This exercise was done by three small groups that included staff from both organisations. Group 1 introduced the concepts of hardware and software to describe the contributions as shown below.

(group 1): Contributions of the FSRE Network

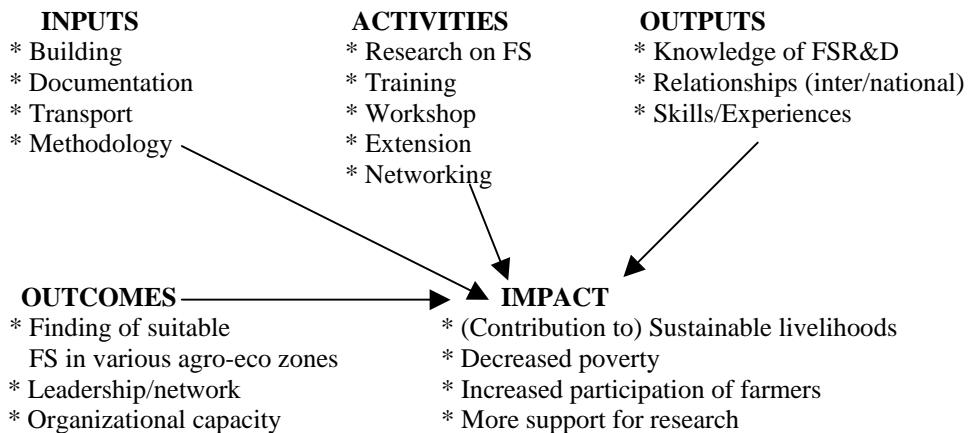
To MDFSI	To SIAS
Hardware	Hardware
* Building	* Motorbike
* Motorbike	* Documentation
* Documentation	* Computer
* Computer	
Software	Software
* Workshops (4-5)/exchange with experts	* Workshop/exchange with experts
* Research methodology	* Research methodology
* On the job training (2 courses)	* On the job training (2 courses)

Contributions of the NAREMNET

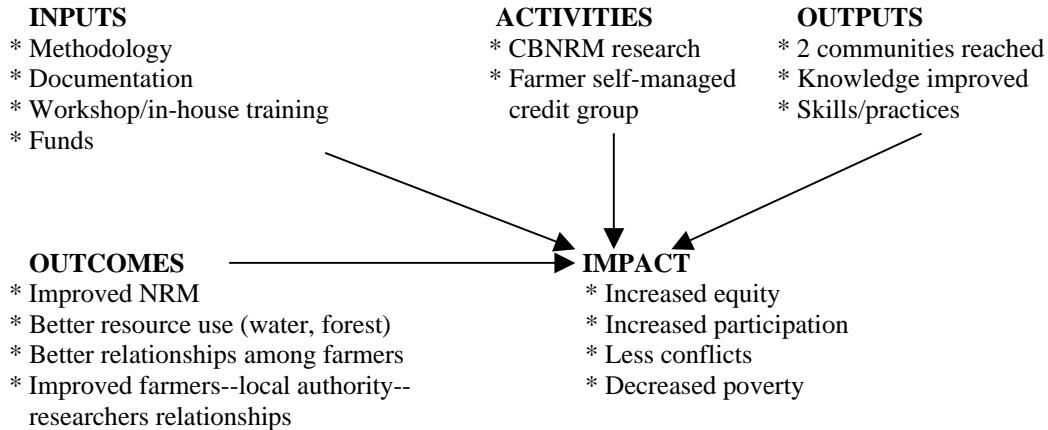
To both MDFSI & SIAS
• Community-based (natural resource management) research methodology
• Documentation
• Workshops/in-house training
• Funds

The group then went on to design a theory of action for both network projects:

The FSRE Network in action

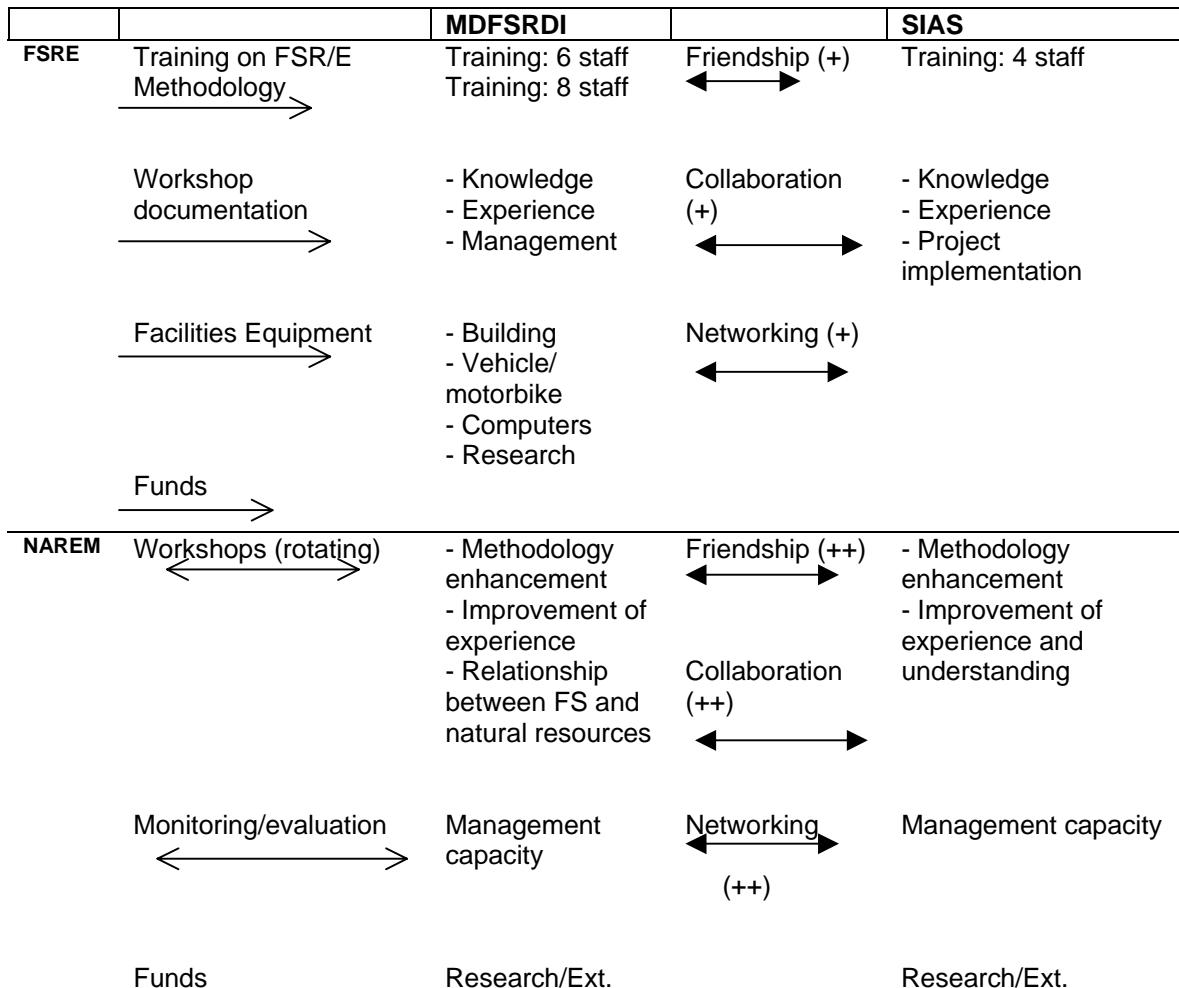


The NAREM network in action



Group 2 also looked at the relationship between the two organisations and identified friendship, collaboration and networking as results.

(group 2): Contributions to MDFSRDI and SIAS



(group 3): The FSRE's contribution

Items	Inputs	Activities	Outcomes	Impacts
Human resources	MDFSI: 10 staff SIAS: 7 staff Local technical staff: 12 Farmers: 25	Training: Methods and techniques Workshops Participatory research	Improved: Knowledge Skills Linkages	Farming skills improved Increased farmers' income Good FSRE experts
Finance	To MDFSRI (coordination) To SIAS (small grant)	Research activities Facilities/equipment Management	Research results Accounting skills	Sustainable FS Policy makers applying FSR approach
Technical support	(visiting) Experts Documentation	Training Exchanging experiences	Improved: Knowledge Research capacity Management capacity	Strengthening research capacity Networking
Political support	Participation of local Government Money Equipment	Research activities Motivation	Understanding about FS Improved decision making	Good influence on NAREMnet

NAREMnet's contribution

Items	Inputs	Activities	Outcomes	Impacts
Human resources	MDFSI: 16 staff SIAS: 10 staff Local Technical staff: 12 Farmers: 40	Training: Methods and techniques (CBNRM) Workshops	Same as FSREnet Farmers research assistants	Experts Increased income
Finance	MDFSI (coordination) SIAS (small grant)	Research activities Management	Same as FSREnet	Equity increased
Technical support	Experts Documentation (CBNRM and other topics)	Monitoring	Improved: Knowledge Management	Awareness about CBNRM
Political support	Personnel Money Motivation	Participatory management	Understanding about role of NAREMnet Improved making decision	

In order to answer the question **how did the contribution take place?** more precisely, we designed another exercise based on previous IDRC evaluation studies about the Centre's program delivery modalities (Earl and Smutylo 1998; see also Eade 1997 on relationships between Northern donor organisations and partners in the South). This exercise was done during the feedback meeting in May by a small group of MDFSRDI staff who has been involved with IDRC support and staff during the 1990s.

Exercise (May 2001): One of the objectives of our study is to assess the contribution made by IDRC to the development of the Institute's organisational capacity. Please consider carefully each of the following research for development program delivery characteristics.

- Question 1: 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).
- Question 2: *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).

Donor delivery characteristics	FSRE Network	score	NAREM Network	Score
Flexible and responsive funding	Yes	8	Yes	6
Motivating for research quality	Yes	8	Yes	7
Collegial relationship	Yes	9	Yes	9
Linking research to local development priorities	Yes	8	Yes *	5 *
Facilitating national and international networking	Yes	9	Yes	9
Promoting linkages with other donors for financial support or collaboration	Yes	8	Yes	9
Providing access to relevant professional expertise abroad	Yes	7	Yes	7
Supportive of capacity building for individuals and organisations	Yes	9	Yes	8
Intense professional commitment to projects and organisations	Yes	7	Yes	7
Providing expert conceptual and methodological support including providing literature and Web-based resources	Yes	9	Yes	9
Respectful attitude toward other cultures and languages	Yes	10	Yes	10
Knowledgeable about organisational capacity development	Yes	10	Yes	10
Supporting recognition and uptake of research results (among researchers, policy makers)	Yes	8	Yes	6
Supportive and regular monitoring and evaluation	Yes	9	Yes	9

* Comments made by the group: Of the current 6 network members, one does not perceive CBNRM-oriented research as relevant to the local circumstances. Also note that 3 of the 9 FSR network members did not join the NAREM network. This explains the low score on this characteristic.

IDRC staff has the following to say about the Centre's and their own contribution:

John Graham (interview January 2001, see also the September 2000 trip report by John Graham):

"IDRC supported the Farming Systems Network project with Can Tho and then the CBNRM Network (NAREMNET) project. This allowed our teams at the 9 institutes to learn about the concepts and methods and it allowed each to undertake some small research projects. The first FS project came at a time when Vietnamese institutions had nothing (no money at all for anything, except salaries) and so this provided some support and funds for their work. It also introduced training and allowed both formal and shorter term training efforts. Between 1990 and now there has been an enormous change in the conditions in VN for its scholars and researchers but our early support was critical and allowed a base which other agencies and donors have built on. The Can Tho

group trained others in the networks, they provided support in different ways and they led the networking efforts, annual meetings, etc. I think the projects have built their capacity in many different ways. ...

We support on-the-job research and learning and working and encourage training in many forms because that allows our local partners to understand issues and solve problems that are important and hence economic and social development follows. This process looks as follows: start with understanding a locally felt problem →get local government involved in analysing this problem →learn together →propose a solution or solutions →implement and test a co-management scheme or CBNRM-oriented rules and regulations. This is a continuous process and it never stops. Even for all us very old folk."

Stephen Tyler reflects on the contribution "at large" to organisations and researchers in the country (interview May 2001):

"One of the main contributions of IDRC has been to connect Vietnamese research organisations and individuals to the broader regional and international activity in their fields. This was particularly important in the early and mid-1990's when their main contacts were only with the disintegrated soviet bloc countries. We facilitated exchanges of researchers, participation in regional and international conferences, provided access to (mainly English) literature and engaged our partners in exercises of intellectual "stretching" mainly through the preparation and review of proposals. In addition, we spent quite a bit of time ourselves, and through Canadian collaborators we supported, providing training and guidance on basic research issues: concepts of empiricism applied to social sciences, connecting technical research to local farmer needs (Can Tho has been a leader here but other Vietnamese research organisations are not so enlightened!), research planning and management, research proposals and budgeting, dealing with international partners, reporting. You also should remember that most of this activity "pre-dated" the CBNRM program (i.e., prior to 1997) as a cohesive program framework so it was much more scattered in different fields. I believe IDRC support was in many cases also crucial to building Vietnamese experience with interdisciplinary team research, and with multi-institution collaboration in projects and in networks. There were few opportunities in the national system for these kinds of research approaches."

He also outlines how the contribution takes place in practice:

"Initial contact →conceptual discussions →institutional assessment by program officer (ad hoc mostly) →proposal drafting →review, comment, further meetings and discussions →proposal revisions →approval →implementation.

So, much of the learning and capacity-building has occurred through direct or indirect interaction between IDRC program staff and Vietnamese researchers. Once the projects are approved, the process continues in a more formalised and stylized fashion, perhaps more effectively - certainly with more resources:

Training →practice (methods, concepts) →monitoring by IDRC program officer →project reporting →review and commentary →further training, adaptation, refinement →more interaction of research team →reporting →more feedback, etc.

Similarly, on the research organisation, management and financial management side, the capacity-building has occurred both through direct interaction with IDRC professional staff and through internal interaction among the Vietnamese research teams and institutions. Some of the internal discussions have been quite strong, as IDRC has pushed for new processes, more accountability, more collaboration etc. and our partners have struggled to meet our requests." (ibid)

The SIAS Case study on capacity development assessment of the local community in water resource management at An Ninh Dong village, Duc Hoa district, Long An province

Since 1996, IAS have continued to carry out the project "**Study on irrigation system management model and use of the grey soils for peanut and rice production based on participation of the local community**" financed by IDRC and the local government. The project was conducted to support the local community in setting up effective and sustainable irrigation management model and use irrigated grey soils. During the three years of implementation, the project's major impacts are as follows (Huynh Tran Quoc et al. 2000):

- Strengthening the awareness of the local community in water resource management and hydraulic works.
- Decreasing the conflicts among water users of the local community.
- Enhancing irrigated grey soils productivity for rice and peanut.

However, the Site-Working Group (SWG, a coordinating body involving the different stakeholders, i.e., farmers, government and researchers) did not assess the impact of the project on the human resource and development capacity of the local community. Therefore, in the year 2001, as part of the OCD project and through the co-operation of the MDFSRDI/CTU, the Department of Farming Systems Research/SIAS conducted an assessment of the impact of project on capacity development of the local community.

The study was guided by the following questions: (1) What have local communities learned from the project and from working with SIAS staff? (2) Has it contributed to capacity building efforts of local communities? (3) How could the collaboration between researchers, local government staff and farmers be further strengthened? (4) How do government staff and farmers in their water users association build their capacity? What capacities do they need to do a good job? Documents were reviewed and a one day focus groups discussion was organized involving local officials from the Water and Hydraulic Works Management station, the Office of Agriculture and Rural Development, the People's Committee of An Ninh Dong village, and farmers from the Farmers Association and the members of the Water users Association of An Ninh Dong, An Dinh, Hiep Hoa villages and Rice seed multiplication groups of the An Hung

and An Thuan hamlets (see the Methodology guide for focus groups guiding questions). In the following section we summarize the main findings.

What have local communities learned from the project and from working with SIAS staff?

- The Institution has had a positive influence on development activities of the local community.
- Receiving awareness and knowledge of participatory natural resource management.
- Applying knowledge and skills of participatory method in implementing the development and research project.
- The need to linking various organisational activities related to the project to reach objectives.
- Strengthening knowledge and organisation skills as well as management of community's activities for local officials.
- Pointing to the importance of community participation in natural resource management.
- Participatory community method in development and transfer of agricultural practices.
- Technology of production and multiplication of seeds of rice and peanut.

Has it contributed to capacity building efforts of local communities?

- Local organizations attained their objectives and duties.
- Be more aware of local community's role in performance of organisations.
- Improved and increased the linkages of activities between government community and farmers.
- Decreased the conflicts in community, and strengthened performance of local organisations.
- Increased influence of community on decisions of local authority. Village and district organisations paid more attention to farmers' role in the management of water resource and irrigation systems.
- Established Associations and Groups with enough capacity to serve the common interest effectively and sustainably.

How could the collaboration between researchers, local government staff and farmers be further strengthened?

- Forming projects based on community-developed issues, so that the community participates in all the phases of the project.
- Establishing system of communications between local community and researchers.
- Enhancing important role of local organisations in searching project fund as well as in implementation capacity through the consultation of IAS and CTU.

- Local staff needs to have knowledge and skills when they work with local community and for creating good relationship with research institutions.
- Raising awareness and participatory role of farmers in the projects.

How do government staff and farmers in their water users association build their capacity? What capacities do they need to do a good job?

- Raising participatory awareness and operation of local staff and farmers.
- Strengthening the ability to approach management, science and technology, and society knowledge for local officials and farmers.
- Establishing regulations for the activities of the organisations and the community (related to their duties, interests in management of water resource and irrigation systems). Determining necessary linkages between local government organisations and community.
- Forming human resources in management and technology for local communities and organisations.

Results of the focus groups discussions showed that the opinions of local government staff and farmers were very similar concerning capacity development of the local organisations. The most basic point of the project is its impact on awareness of the potential role of the community in water resource management, through the formation of farmer community organisations (i.e., Water Users Associations and seed multiplication groups). Members of the local organisations also improved their knowledge of management, project implementation (updated knowledge and applying participatory method in management and development activities of local community). Local leadership sympathizes with the activities and results of the project. However, the most important gaps are:

- Linkages of organisations having the same duties (agricultural development). The collaboration between the local organisations faced lots of obstacles because staff and budget problems.
 - Human resources are still limited. Staff haven't been assigned responsibilities clearly yet. Therefore, the regulations concerning rewards and punishments in comparison with their duties performances and responsibilities haven't had the concrete stipulations.
 - Lack of local regulations in division of irrigation system management duties (legal environment).
 - The management of the local associations requires further improvement.
-

(Question 4) Challenges

Reflecting on past and current capacities and the links with performance of the Institute, we did not only identify strengths, but also discovered (not surprisingly) weaknesses, gaps and challenges. The first time these were identified was at the

self-assessment workshop. During the MDFSRDI-SIAS workshop and the feedback staff reflected further on these. Gaps identified are :

Man-power :

- Limited national financial resources
- Limitation of training programs (domestic)
- Under-standardized: lack of high quality knowledge and skills, and technologies to cope with challenges
- Weak planning
- Fewer opportunities for training, particularly degree training
- Reduced budget for providing training to extension agents and farmers' leaders.

Research :

- Weak policies on the use of funds
- Limitations due to status of the Institute
- Lack of long-term planning
- Co-operation is not equal
- Lack of funds for technology transfer

Institution :

- Recruitment policy
- (Part of) Vietnamese bureaucratic system
- Financial use
- Non-synchronized operations of the Science Committee
- Limited collaboration among divisions and staff

Teaching :

- Few lecturers having teaching skills
- Under-standardized/not up-to-date curriculum
- Lack of active monitoring due to too much dependence on Agricultural Faculty of Can Tho University

Facilities :

- Lack of laboratory and equipment

Factors that influence the efforts of the Institute are:**External**

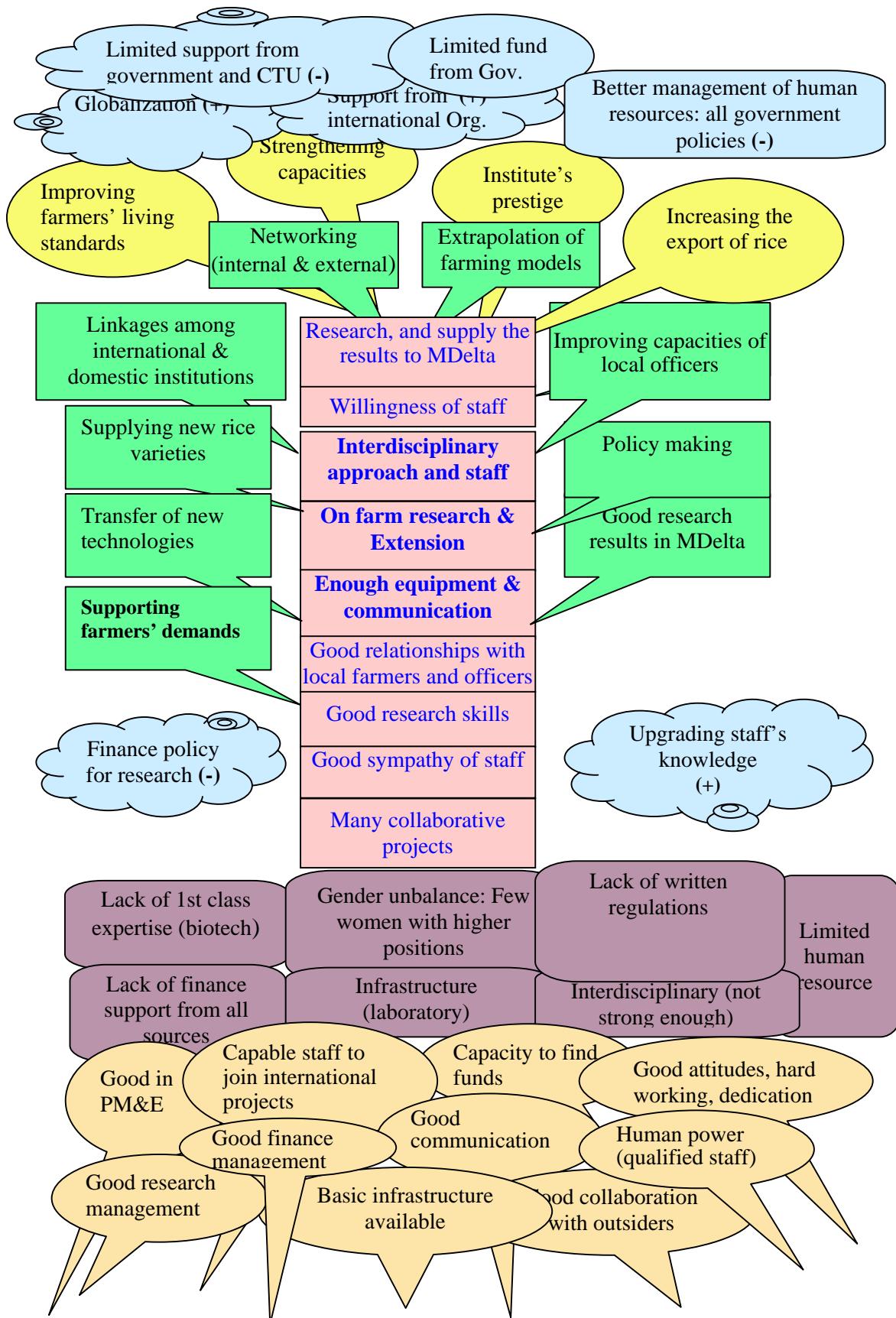
- Globalisation (of trade) compelling Vietnamese agriculture to be more competitive
- Viet Nam's development policy
- Unfavourable agricultural/rural development policies
- Farmer must be in cooperatives
- Large clientele
- Large scale production
- Centralised bureaucratic system (Can Tho University/ Ministry of Education)
- Short-term benefits tendency

Internal

- Human resources
- Individual and organisational capacities
- Infrastructure
- Access to information
- Collaboration
- Number of projects
- Leadership
- Funds

4. Interpretation and discussion

Figure 6: synthesis with a tree diagram



Legend of the tree diagram :

■	Roots	=	Capacities
■	Trunk	=	Strengths
■	Ground	=	Internal weaknesses
■	Leaves	=	Results
■	Fruits	=	Impacts
■	Sky/weather	=	External forces: positive (+) or negative (-)

Expanding the horizon

The findings -summarized by the participants at the feedback meeting in the form of a tree- show that the MDFSRDI has developed a set of key organisational capacities that allow to function as a major research and development organisation in the country. These capacities are :

- Setting a research agenda and management of the research process at large
- Management of training (of staff and for clients)
- Management of extension/technology transfer
- Relationship building and networking for R, T, E/TT
- Relationship building with donors and fundraising
- Relationship building with policy-makers
- Human resource management and development
- Infrastructure development and management
- Internal regulations, decision-making, division of labour
- Administration and finance
- Leadership

Over time, the Institute has experienced some major changes in terms of quantity and quality, and in terms of its “hardware and software.” It has been a rapidly growing organisation, with many achievements in the fields of research, training and extension, and has come to play a certain leadership role in the country in terms of scientific and policy innovations. Important changes include :

- The development of a more holistic approach to rural development research, training and extension (multi-disciplinary, participatory approach, CBNRM).
- Increased quantity and quality of relationship building with other researchers, and clients.
- The development of common approach and agenda with other national research organisations (i.e., standardization) through the networking efforts (FSREnet and NAREMnet).
- More effective fundraising and use of funds.
- Improved coordination and cooperation with donors.
- Increased and improved human resource management (knowledge, attitudes, skills, practice).

- Expanded and more complex infrastructure management.

Driving forces behind these changes/evolution –the expansion of the horizon– have been: staff motivation and pride/honour to improve individually and organisationally, the strong leadership and vision of Vo Tong Xuan, the cumulative effect of the results achieved and recognition gained from consequently applying a “learning by doing” approach, and an external context generally open enough to allow the Institute to experiment, innovate and “go its way.”

We identified both organisational strengths and weaknesses. The latter gave us the incentive to add the fifth evaluation question about challenges. The challenges that the staff identified are very clearly at the intersection of external context (recent policy changes) and internal factors. At this very moment, the staff is worried about the viability and sustainability of the Institute due to new policy directives, i.e., very powerful forces that operate beyond the boundaries of the organisation. The staff also identified a number of (supporting) capacities that require further strengthening. These are potential entry points for follow up to the study and include: further training of staff, improvement of rules and regulations. Vo Tong Xuan’s priorities also include the building of new partnerships.

We assessed organisational performance over time in terms of outputs, outcomes and impact. This allowed us to develop a more complete theory of action (section 2). We found the Lusthaus et al. model very useful, but became aware that, in a case such as the MDFSRDI, there is a need to look at the *changing* interplay of organisational development domains. We discovered that (good) performance in turn has had an impact on the organisation: it has lead to growing organisational prestige that has attracted many more donors. This has led to further growth and related consequences for management and the development of the key capacities.

Staff has grown in numbers and in terms of educational levels. Most if not all have acquired new knowledge and skills (e.g., concepts and methodologies); specialisation has taken place (through training of various sorts and through practice), and attitudes have changed (e.g., stronger client-focussed research). Staff has acquired multi-faceted management experience through project coordination and execution (learning by doing approach, e.g., through the IDRC projects). Staff has also acquired experience as researchers, trainers, advisors, consultants and advocacy players. But of course, as the work assessment stories indicate, different contributions have been made by staff depending on position and thus opportunities. Teamwork has been key, but of importance has been the leadership of Vo Tong Xuan (cf. Graham interview, Conway profile).

Networking synergies and complexities

As part of networking, we looked at the Institute's partner organisation, SIAS as well, guided by the same evaluation questions. This also brought us to the local level and we listened to farmers and government staff and discovered the many faces of capacity development efforts. Farmers and government staff reported important achievements, but also noted the need to strengthen ties and collaborative efforts, with the involvement and support from the researchers (SIAS, MDFSRDI).

MDFSRDI and SIAS staff identified that the two network projects supported by IDRC have contributed "hardware and software" of various kinds. Other contributions highlighted by Vo Tong Xuan are the chance for (selected) staff to get to know Viet Nam and the "standardization" of a research approach evolving from a FSRE approach to a CBNRM approach (cf. Tyler interview as well). The contributions include :

- Staff trained (in new concepts and methods).
- Access to documentation (in English).
- Equipment (computers, e-mail), infrastructure.
- Improved planning and communication skills (individuals).
- Field experiences.
- Specific research outputs, outcomes and impact.
- Sharing of knowledge and experience (individuals and organisations), nationally and internationally.
- Networking: sharing and collaboration.

Giving and receiving : donor program delivery revisited

IDRC staff has provided technical support through (field) visits, meetings, workshops and conferences. Highlighted by Graham and Tyler, IDRC support was critical in the early 1990's for introducing a new, radically different approach to research for development. Adopting and adapting this new approach, the Institute became a leader in the country and the cumulative project experiences (by the nine and currently six organisations that take part in the network, and by others doing CBNRM work) became a base for other activities and other donor support. This has been another way of widening the horizon. We also asked what IDRC has learned from working with the Institute and other organisations in VN and got some interesting answers.

John Graham:

"Some people in Ottawa may think that they learn by sitting in their offices and pushing paper, but as far as I am concerned one only learns when you are out in the field working with colleagues and then we all learn together. I have learnt a great deal by working with the Can Tho folk and from other Viet Nam network members and had I just sat in my office I think I would really know nothing about Viet Nam and some of the

problems that farmers, communities and researchers face in their country." (interview January 2001)

Stephen Tyler:

"The most important thing I have learned from working with organisations in Viet Nam is that they have found the CBNRM approach to be well-suited to the changed context of rural development in Viet Nam. They have learned a lot themselves, and have been able to apply much of their learning in other projects after IDRC. I have also learned a great deal about Viet Nam by working with organisations there. My Vietnamese partners often impress me with their motivation and learning (new languages, new concepts, new relationships, new tools). One of the things I have learned from Vietnamese organisations is that while a great many things can be learned, and new practices introduced, the effort required to maintain relationships between organisations seems not to decrease with time. Networking and multi-institutional projects have had some rewards, but have required a continuing and surprisingly high effort and overhead (which has sometimes detracted from the research and learning). Another thing which I am coming to realize is that there are real limits to how effective we can be in training natural scientists in social science research tools. There is a need for more rigorous interdisciplinary graduate training for well-qualified natural AND social scientists to be better able to pursue rigorous applied research work." (interview May 2001)

Hence, we suggest that another guiding question for the ECD project at large could be *What has been the impact on the external agency of its collaboration with the local research and development organisation in the capacity development process?*

5. Our learning

"Consider the new jogger. At the beginning, runners are likely to use as a basis for comparison their previously sedentary lifestyle. By that standard, the initial half-mile run appears pretty good. Then the runner discovers that there are a lot of other people running, many of them covering 3 miles, 4 miles, 5 or 10 miles a week. Compared to seasoned joggers, the runner's half-mile doesn't look so good. On days when runners want to feel particularly good, they may compare themselves to all the people who don't run at all. On days when they need some incentive to push harder, they may compare themselves to people who run twice as far as they do." (Patton 1997: 315)

About key capacities needed

The key capacities an organisation requires depend first of all on its mission. In the case of the MDFSRDI, the core elements of its mission have to do with: combined research-training and extension; focus on rural development; needs-based/client-oriented; and its main partners are farmers, government staff, and students. We consider all the twelve capacities identified in our study as important; if to select one very important, this is human resource management and development. We also note that a good balance between contributing and supporting capacities is important.

About processes leading to organisational development

- Learning by doing or an action-oriented approach, including trial and error and an emphasis on (self) monitoring and evaluation
- A systems approach and thinking;
- Relationship building with clients, and being responsive;
- Motivation and participation of staff;
- Strong overall management.

About the contributions of external agencies

At the national level, supportive policies and funding are crucial (human resource development policy, science and technology policy, agriculture and rural development policy) as these affect directly the organisational viability and sustainability. At the international level, the 14 donor delivery characteristics are all important; if to set priorities, we consider flexible funding, motivating for research quality, facilitating networking, promoting linkages with other donors, providing access to expertise, providing expert support, respect toward other language and culture, and supportive monitoring and evaluation as the most important features.

About how to evaluate and who should evaluate

We consider a participatory approach with a strong self-assessment focus appropriate. Such an evaluation can be done by staff together with partners/clients. The evaluation needs to consider both individual and organisational capacity development. A case study approach such as used in the ECD project seems adequate as this represents a comprehensive approach that makes selective use of theory, and combines various (participatory) tools. The evaluation should be fun to do as well otherwise people drop out very quickly!

About contributing to effectiveness

The key element is to learn about the strengths and weaknesses as a means of identifying gaps and opportunities for action to improve planning, management, policies, practices and also to increase financial viability.

Next steps

The MDFSRDI's organizational action plan

The results from this research can be disseminated to various individuals and organisations inside and outside Cantho University. For the MDFSRDI, it is a very good opportunity to do its self-assessment to understand clearly its strengths and weaknesses, opportunities and challenges. Several actions will be discussed among department heads and staff to validate the theory of action that was introduced during the final feedback meeting in May 2001.

Dissemination of results related to improvement of capacity development of individuals and the Institute can be as follows:

- + Appropriate strategies and planning for training for administrative staff, lecturers, researchers and technicians for better performance of all the Institute staff.
- + Development of internal management regulations.
- + Linkage with the existing extension network and training for local officials.
- + Improving the activities of the Institute Science Committee.
- + Strengthening linkages and long-term research collaboration among the departments of the Institute and with other organisations.
- + Looking for more funds from national and international sources for research.
- + Improving the living standards of the Institute staff.
- + Developing and improving better infrastructure for research.
- + Also after the mid-term review workshop, MDFSRDI staff can sit together to practice the approach and methods from the project to identify lessons for improving CD efforts in the future, whether at the project or organisation level.

Results and learnings will also be shared and discussed at IDRC (CBNRM staff and beyond). Continued collaboration with the Institute on its action plan is a possibility that we plan to discuss in the coming months.

A final note about the staff performance evaluations

Evaluation on individual capacity development

The details in the current performance evaluation form for individuals are not so adequate nor interesting. Scoring is still general, and the average scores were not useful for an accurate evaluation on individual capacities, in which the work load and activity results are scored as same as other less important criteria. The gap could be ameliorated by an improvement of the evaluation form, and the process of evaluation.

The **evaluation process** could be in hierarchy, as follows:

- Self assessment
- Assessment of all the department staff by secret voting, and then by the head of department
- Assessment of the board of directors by secret voting
- The result will be informed to every individual
- Individuals could be evaluated in four different groups: 1) members of the directorate; 2) heads and deputy heads of the departments; 3) faculty members, researchers and associates; and 4) technicians and workers.

The **evaluation form** could be improved, as follows:

- The evaluation indicators could be split in several sub-indicators which can be scored with different coefficients according to the importance of the sub-indicators
- More details (indicators) could be added in the form based on the mission and assignment for each staff, e.g., the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation abilities, the capacity in coordination with other colleagues, the work load and results (effectiveness, efficiency, relevance and financial viability)

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Annex: Data analysis table

Evaluation questions	Data sources	Analysis	Comments and questions
1. What key organizational capacities has the Institute developed?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Questions 1, 2, 4, 5, 6 selfassessment workshop February 2001. -Exercises 1, 2b, 5b February 2001 workshop. -Shinawatra report 1995. -Xuan paper 1997. -Graham 2001 interview. -Tyler 2001 interview. -Xuan 2001 interview (pending) -NAREMNET final report 2001. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Setting of a research agenda and management of the research process at large -Management of training (of staff and for clients) -Management of extension -Management of technology transfer -Relationship building and networking for R, T, E, and TT -Relationship building with donors and fundraising -Relationship building with policy-makers -Human resource management and development -Infrastructure development and management -Internal regulations, decision-making, division of labour -Administration and finance 	<p>Current strengths and weaknesses identified; so we added question 2.</p> <p>Performance assessed in terms of outputs, outcomes and impact; so we developed more complete theory of action.</p> <p>As part of networking, we looked at the Institute's partner organization SIAS as well, guided by the same evaluation questions. This also brought us to the local level and we listened to farmers and government staff (the many faces of capacity development efforts).</p>
2. (New question) What are the main challenges concerning future organizational capacity development efforts by the Institute?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Question 5 Selfassessment workshop. -Exercises 2b and 5b February 2001 workshop. -Exercises 3 and 4 May 2001 feedback meeting. -Graham interview. -Tyler interview. -Xuan interview (pending). <p>-See also NAREMNET annual report 1997-1998 on future challenges.</p>	<p>Clearly at the intersection of external context (policy changes) and internal factors.</p>	<p>Entry point for follow up to the study: further training of staff and building new partnerships (Xuan).</p>

<p>3. Have the organizational capacities changed over time? How have they changed?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Questions 3 and 4 Selfassessment workshop. -Exercise 2b February workshop. -Exercise 3 May 2001 feedback meeting. -Statistics. -Xuan paper 1997. About the changing context and linkages with the Institute and R&D more widely: -Xuan 2001 interview (pending). -Studies about changes in VN. -Tyler interview. -Graham interview. 	<p>Quite dramatic changes in terms of quantity and quality (see the table).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -More holistic approach to rural development research, training and extension (multi-disciplinarity, participatory approach, CBNRM). -Increased quantity and quality of relationship building. -Development of common approach and agenda with other national research organizations (standardization) through networking. -More effective fundraising and use of funds. -Coordination and cooperation with donors improved. -Increased and improved human resource management (knowledge, attitudes, skills, practice). -Expanded and more complex infrastructure management. 	<p>We found Lusthaus et al. model useful, but need to look at changing interplay of organizational development domains.</p> <p>Driving forces: motivation, leadership and vision (Xuan), cumulative effect of learning by doing (see Tyler), external context (policies, economic situation).</p> <p>Performance in turn has had an impact on the organization: growing prestige, other donors have been attracted, which has led to growth and related consequences (see Patton).</p>
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<p>4. What have been the contributions of individual staff to the organizational capacity development efforts?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Questions 4 and 6 Selfassessment workshop. -Exercises 1 and 4 February workshop. -8 Work assessment stories. -Graham interview. -Xuan profile by Conway (1995) 	<p>See also question 3.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Staff have acquired new knowledge and skills (concepts and methodologies); specialization has taken place (training of various sorts), and attitudes have changed (client-focussed research). -Staff have acquired multi-faceted management experience through project coordination and execution (learning by doing approach, eg., IDRC projects). -Staff have acquired experience as researchers, trainers, advisors, consultants and advocacy players. <p>But clearly different contributions made by staff depending on position and thus opportunities.</p>	<p>Important: leadership of Xuan (Graham interview, Conway profile).</p>
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<p>5. What has been the contribution of IDRC to the individual and organizational capacity development efforts?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Exercise 4 February 2001 workshop. -Assessment stories. -Shinawatra report 1995. -CBNRM 2000 questionnaire. -NAREMNET final report 2001. -SIAS workshop report 2001. -Graham and Tyler interviews. -Exercise 2 May 2001 feedback meeting. -IDRC mission statement and CBNRM program prospectus. -IDRC evaluation studies (eg., Dotridge, Smutylo). 	<p>The 2 network projects have contributed hardware and software of various kinds. Other contributions highlighted by Xuan: getting to know our country and standardization of approach (see question 3).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Staff trained (concepts and methods). -Access to documentation (in English). -Equipment, infrastructure. -Improved planning and communication skills (individuals). -Field experiences. -Specific research outputs, outcomes and impact. -Sharing of knowledge and experience (individuals and organizations), nationally and internationally. -Networking: sharing and collaboration. <p>IDRC staff has provided technical support through (field)visits, meetings, workshops, conferences.</p> <p>IDRC support critical in the early 90's for introducing a new, radically different approach (FRS): the Institute became leader and project experience at large (9 organizations) became a base for other activities and other donor support -thus widening the horizon (Graham, Tyler).</p>	<p>IDRC's technical support: John's and Stephen's slightly different theories of action.</p> <p>We put the IDRC program delivery characteristics to test (Earl and Smutylo 1998; see also Eade 1997).</p> <p>We also asked what IDRC has learned from working with the Institute and other organizations in VN. Hence, another guiding question to be asked?</p>
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