

Applying Food Security Tool for Wetlands Management

Implementation of government projects to support government policy does not always benefit the less privileged and the vulnerable groups. A case example at hand is the conversion of rice farms into oil palm and pine tree plantation, which threatens food security and marginalize the vulnerable groups in Karaket sub-district, Nakhon Sri Thammarat, Thailand. The sub-district is located in the Pak Phanang River Basin, an important source of wetlands products in the southern part of the country.

The main livelihood of the people in Karaket revolves around agriculture especially rice farming. The existing and most pressing problems encountered in this area are about water availability and its quality, water management, degradation of soil quality, invasion of plant pests and increasing costs of production.

The above existing problems are the primary indicators of vulnerability of the sub-district. These are related to its ability to secure food in three components, i.e., food availability, food access and food utilization especially concerning the use of water and other natural resources in the area.

CORIN-Asia, with its field presence in Pak Phanang, has utilized the Social Impact Monitoring and Vulnerability Assessment (SIM-VA) as a tool to identify vulnerable groups and their location in Karaket. SIM-VA is a practical tool that allows us to determine how people in the area have managed to adapt to changes in the environment especially those whose livelihood depends heavily on water resources. The tool is undertaken through field survey, focus group discussions, interview, and plotting the location of communities and their resources using Geographic Information System (GIS). The survey has established social impact indicators that reflect current socio-economic conditions and the extent of people's dependence on water resources. The relationship between these two determines people's vulnerability to changes in water resources.



Vulnerability assessment is used to provide information on how social vulnerability, particularly flood and livelihood vulnerability, relates to people's dependence on water resources, including river goods and services. SIM, on the other hand, is used to monitor how changes in water resources might have impact on social vulnerability over time.

Through this activity, the survey results and GIS maps have led to identification of vulnerable groups, where they are located and how they are vulnerable. This way, the information is expected to lead to the formulation and implementation of appropriate projects that would ensure proper utilization of resources and livelihood strategies which could benefit the most vulnerable people in the area.

One remarkable result of the SIM-VA as a tool is the Food Security Model that was developed. Results of the SIM-VA was also utilized by the Provincial Administrative Organization (PAO) in Nakhon Sri Thammarat as basis for developing targeted interventions and activities as well as enabling them to assess socio-economic impacts of government policies in the area. The approach could serve as input for planning and management of local governments, national agencies, international organizations and other institutions in providing appropriate programs and projects for vulnerable communities. Results of the SIM-VA could be used as a model for possible replication to address conflicts in the changes of water use in other sub-districts around the Pak Phanang river basin.

Thus, continuing documentation and monitoring of changes and the continuous capacity-building of local partners and communities to cope with the changes in the area is expected to achieve sustainable management of resources and contribute to poverty reduction. The Food Security Model developed based on the case study in Karaket, Nakhon Si Thammarat, Thailand can be shared to the region.

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