

Asia link curriculum development workshop

Jimmy Turnbull, Trevor Telfer and David Little were all involved in a workshop in July (9-21st) with Asian partners that have, or are developing, postgraduate-level courses in aquaculture. Funded under the European Commission Asia Link programme the project is being coordinated by the Asian Institute Of Technology, near Bangkok. The Institute of Aquaculture and University of Aveiro in Portugal are the European partners. The project aims to improve local capacity in Asia to support development of aquaculture in Vietnam, Cambodia and Nepal. These countries represent a large range in current development of aquaculture and importance of aquatic products in the diet and the broader economy.

Whereas people in Cambodia are highly dependent on aquatic resources, aquaculture is still relatively undeveloped in comparison with its neighbours. The Royal University of Agriculture has a major challenge to train sufficient manpower to support aquatic farming and has chosen to integrate a postgraduate aquaculture programme within a broader agricultural programme. The project partner in Nepal, Institute of Agricultural and Animal Science (IAAS), Rampur, Chitwan, is similarly located within an institution charged with agricultural development. In contrast to Cambodia, official statistics suggest fish is currently a very minor commodity in Nepal, but there are many indicators of its potential importance, especially among some of the poorest groups. In Vietnam, the project has partners in both North and South; Research Institute for Aquaculture (RIA) No. 1, Hanoi and University of Agriculture & Forestry (UAF), Ho Chi Minh

City respectively. This reflects the very different types of aquaculture and capacity building needs in different parts of the country where aquaculture is both well established and important to diets and overall livelihoods.

The involvement of the Institute in the project acknowledges the important role it can play in sharing experience of postgraduate education in a region where aquaculture dominates global production and training needs are huge. The design of the project allows for exchange of experiences between Asian partners and has allowed us to reflect on how we at Stirling design and implement postgraduate courses that are in a state of dynamic change to meet new opportunities and challenges. We expect our involvement will also lead to other mutually beneficial collaboration in research and other activities.

Women in aquaculture project in Nepal

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About 85% of people in Nepal live in rural areas, relying on subsistence agriculture and often suffering from food shortages for 4-6 months each year. Almost 90% of children suffer from some form of malnutrition e.g. stunting, night blindness, resulting in one quarter dying before reaching 40 yrs of age. Animal protein is scarce and expensive for most Nepalese, contributing to the lack of certain nutrients in the diet.

To address this need, a pilot project was launched in 2000 in Chitwan district, central Terai of Nepal jointly by the AIT and IAAS to

produce and supply animal protein for the families and help generate income.

The project, funded by an NGO called WDP-German Committee, initially supported a group of 26 women farmers in Chitwan to dig a pond each. Out of 26 farmers, five were supported initially as fry/fingerling producers to supply the other farmers of the project.

Although the recommended size of ponds was 200 m², they were allowed to dig any size of pond depending on availability of land near their houses.

Half of the construction cost was covered by the project and most of the farmers used their family labour. The farmers selected belong to an indigenous community called "Tharu" who used to catch fish from the rivers, streams and swamps. Fish used to be one of the main items of their regular diet and considered a precious item to offer to the guests. But they were experiencing difficulties in finding

fish to catch. Among the selected farmers, about half of them had less than 0.5 ha land. Only 4 farmers had more than 1.5 ha while the national average is approx. 2 ha. The size of the family ranged from 4 – 17 with an average of 7. Most of the Tharus are illiterate, poor and largely dependent on subsistence agriculture.



The project provided basic technical support to the women's group including procuring the fish seed and training on fish farming. Frequent field visits were made by project staff as well as IAAS students. Farmers were