

**STREAM**



**Support to Regional Aquatic Resources Management**

# **STREAM Journal**

**Learning and communicating about the livelihoods of fishers and farmers**

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## Note

*Learning and communicating about the lives of fishers and farmers* – reads the line under the cover title of the *STREAM Journal*. This number of the *SJ* is a collection of articles which document 22 colleagues’ efforts to translate that ambition into a practice. STREAM is working towards this with VSO and its SPARK<sup>1</sup> Program through the SPARK-STREAM Learning and Communications Process, consisting of two Livelihoods and Languages Workshops and lots of exciting “conversations” with stakeholders in participants’ country contexts.

The collection has been compiled so that it can be read from beginning to end as a six-part story. The first article sets the context of the SPARK-STREAM process, and the sixth one provides insights into its origin, lessons we have learned and its value. The second, third, fourth and fifth articles are each written by one or more members of the STREAM and SPARK Thailand, Philippines and Indonesia teams. They report on what happened when they tried to use various elements of the process and the tools we developed together. Readers may want to keep their thumbs on the back of the last page of the publication – an illustration of the current version of a diagram of a “process for learning and communicating about livelihoods”.

It may also be interesting to have a look back at previous *STREAM Journal* numbers with articles about livelihoods approaches and analysis, in particular *SJ1(4)*, which featured the “Learning Workshop on Livelihoods Analysis” held in Long An, Vietnam, in November 2002.

We are grateful to FAO<sup>2</sup> for recognizing the importance of considering language issues in carrying out livelihoods work, through its support of the SPARK-STREAM process, and especially to Simon Funge-Smith, FAO Regional Aquaculture Officer, for his enthusiasm and guidance.

Happy reading!

Graham Haylor, STREAM Director  
William Savage, *STREAM Journal* Editor

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1 Voluntary Service Overseas, Sharing and Promotion of Awareness and Regional Knowledge  
2 Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations



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# Livelihoods and Languages – A SPARK-STREAM Learning and Communications Process

*Kath Copley and William Savage*

## **A Process, Two Workshops and Many Understandings**

In April 2003, SPARK<sup>3</sup> and STREAM<sup>4</sup> colleagues got together to explore relationships between language and livelihoods approaches and analysis, and to examine the ways in which the language(s) we use and the ways we communicate with others can make a difference in the lives of people with whom we work.

The SPARK-STREAM Learning and Communications Process on Livelihoods and Languages involved two three-day workshops<sup>5</sup> at the beginning and end of a two-month period<sup>6</sup>. The aims of the process were to build understandings of participatory livelihoods concepts and approaches and their meanings, and to generate awareness of issues related to language, participation and power. As a result of the process, we initially thought we were going to produce a “guide to livelihoods and languages” in fourteen languages of regional countries<sup>7</sup>.

The idea for the process and its two workshops originated from perceived problems of miscommunication that we were experiencing in our work, and the recognition that there are differences in the ways that individuals and groups communicate with each other (see Haylor and Santos, page 11). In a participatory livelihoods analysis, there can be found many instances of miscommunication, even though much time is spent listening and talking. One workshop participant described an example:

*At one meeting, everyone was talking about livelihoods analysis, but there was a problem. Meeting participants were using concepts and terms (in English) related to participatory livelihoods analysis, but not everyone had the same understandings of them. The issue was that people were speaking the same language, but not understanding what others meant. We were not “on the same page”. The language used and people’s different understandings are a real problem.*

It cannot be assumed that people have shared understandings of the meanings of words, nor that they communicate in similar ways. We need to become more aware of what the differences are, and how they are related to language use, how people have opportunities to build relationships, and the effect of power statuses.

## **What Was This “Guide”?**

When we started thinking about a “guide for livelihoods and languages”, we were not sure what it would be like. Some participants had produced glossaries to help explain terms which were important but difficult to understand, or which had many meanings. Although participants felt that a glossary was useful, they also decided that it would not be enough. The processes that we engaged in to come to shared understandings of concepts and terms were what seemed important.

In other words, we could collect definitions, but it might be more valuable to discuss and understand differences and similarities in meanings. In any conversation we have with our partners, we need to

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3 Sharing and Promotion of Awareness and Regional Knowledge

4 Support to Regional Aquatic Resources Management

5The Second SPARK-STREAM Workshop on Livelihoods and Languages was supported through a Technical Cooperation Program of FAO, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations.

6 Reports of the First and Second SPARK-STREAM Workshops on Livelihoods and Languages can be accessed at <http://www.streaminitiative.org/Library/Livelihoods/livelihoods.html>

7 The fourteen languages are Bahasa Indonesia, Bangla, Cebuano (Philippines), Chotanagpuri (a tribal language of eastern India), English, Hindi, Ilonggo (Philippines), Khmer, Nepali, Oriya (the language of Orissa state in India), Tagalog (Philippines), Thai, Vietnamese and Waray (Philippines).

learn whether the people with whom we work understand what we mean, and what our own understandings of concepts and terms are – we need to discover whether we are “on the same page”. As one workshop participant said, “It’s not just a list, it’s a process.”

### **Questions and Answers (Understandings)**

In the First SPARK-STREAM Workshop on Livelihoods and Languages in April 2003, we started to ask questions about the work we do in participatory livelihoods analysis.

- When we conduct a livelihoods analysis, are we only collecting and organizing information, or are we also doing something else, like learning?
- How do we learn from and about others?
- In learning about people’s lives, how do we need to change the way we listen and talk?
- How do we communicate with people?
- How can our language use help us to be more inclusive of all partners?
- What are the principles which should guide our work?
- How does our language and behavior reflect these principles?
- How does the language we use reflect and affect power relationships?
- Do we understand community perceptions of why we are “studying” their lives?
- How can language be used to ensure the best possible outcomes for all?

Through our discussions, we decided that a participatory approach to livelihoods analysis is not just about going in, taking information, and then leaving. It is much more than that. It should be a “conversation” about how people experience their lives, a conversation which builds trusting relationships that offer communities opportunities to improve their livelihoods.

By listening to and talking with each other, we began to understand more clearly about what would help us in our work. We did not want another manual on livelihoods analysis or a document that would explain concepts and terms. We wanted something more dynamic, more communicative and more people-oriented. We needed a process for establishing trusting relationships, which in turn, would allow us to work together to plan and implement activities which could improve the lives of communities. We needed a “guide for learning and communicating about livelihoods” to help us use language more inclusively and reflectively.

### **Outputs and Outcomes**

One of the outputs from the Second SPARK-STREAM Workshop on Livelihoods and Languages in June 2003 was a matrix called “Communication Issues”. As a tool, it allows users to explore issues of languages, relationships and power in participatory livelihoods analysis. Through discussions with “conversation partners”, the matrix can be filled in with languages to be considered, how people have opportunities to build relationships, and what the effect of power statuses may be. [The final article in this collection highlights all four tools developed by the SPARK-STREAM process participants.]

We left the second workshop with a better understanding of relationships between language and livelihoods approaches and analysis, or in the words of one of the participants:

*After participating in the workshop, I came to know the importance of language in livelihoods analysis, and also how language plays an important role in communicating with vulnerable groups of people.*

As a reflection of the outcomes of the process, the following stories are about some ways in which our SPARK and STREAM colleagues are trying to use a first draft of the “Guide for Learning and Communicating about Livelihoods”.

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## Towards Broader Contextual Understandings of Livelihoods

*Elizabeth M Gonzales, Nguyen Song Ha, Rubu Mukherjee, Nilkanth Pokhrel and Sem Viryak*

### **What STREAM Communications Hub Managers Did Between (and Before) Workshops**

Taking with us the experiences gained during the First Livelihoods and Languages Workshop, we went home to our respective countries to continue learning about how people, communities and service providers understand livelihoods concepts and terms associated with them. Each of our stories tells what we did between (and before) the workshops to more fully understand livelihoods approaches and analysis, as we work with SPARK colleagues to develop our “Guide for Learning and Communicating about Livelihoods”.

#### **Cambodia**

In the between-workshops period, I had discussions about the Livelihoods and Languages Workshop with colleagues who had experiences conducting livelihood analyses using PRA<sup>8</sup> methods. Most recognized the language difficulties while explaining the meanings of livelihoods-related terms to local people and some provincial officers. Initially, we agreed to develop a glossary, explaining terms such as *livelihood*, *sustainable livelihoods*, *livelihoods framework*, *vulnerability* and *approach*. Later on, however, we thought that it would be more interesting to develop an interview guide and test it in the field. We also noted that the meanings of terms we use depend on the way we talk to people, the characteristics of the speaker (his or her behavior), and the context of where we are talking.

When working in the field, we usually explain terms and if possible ask people what equivalent words they use in their area. It is quite interesting to see how people use the terms and their interpretations of them, often related to their lives and the nature around them.

#### **India**

During the between-workshops period, I conducted discussions on livelihoods-related terms with farmers. I realized from the conversations that, for poor people, “livelihood” means some kind of stable income, for which they employ diverse means to earn it. Language also plays a vital role in their livelihoods. The government implements many schemes for the betterment of poor farmers, but because of language constraints, poor farmers are at times unable to get the benefits from them. This is best exemplified by a story about applying for a bank loan.

*One day, a poor farmer went to the local bank to enquire about some loan schemes for the development of his farm. The bank employee told him that to get the loan he needs to mortgage his property. The poor farmer did not understand the advice because the new concept of “mortgage” was alien to him and quite complicated to explain in his local language. As a consequence, he was forced to take the customary loan from the local moneylender at a much higher interest rate.*

#### **Nepal**

Returning to my country after the first workshop, I tried to collect livelihoods-related information and materials in Nepali to gain a better understanding of the concept in the Nepal context. I found some booklets and leaflets published by DFID<sup>9</sup> and the Department of Forestry of Nepal. From those materials, I jotted down several Nepali words I encountered that denoted “livelihood”. Having done so, I went to the District Agriculture Development Office in Kavare, 40 km from the capital city where I work. I had some “livelihoods discussions” with officers who are working directly with tribal communities who speak different local languages. At the beginning of the conversation they said livelihoods is just an economic issue. But after more than an hour of discussion about people’s livelihoods in rural and urban areas, they realized that it is not just an economic issue. It has a broader sense of available natural resources, access to resources, capacity to utilize available resources,

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8 Participatory Rural Appraisal

9 Department for International Development, UK

government and international trade policies, technological innovation, and cultural and social dimensions of society.

On my part, I realized that to get people to understand fully about “livelihoods”, it is necessary that descriptions about its meanings should be prepared with appropriate country-specific examples. Thus, I drafted a short paper containing topics related to the concept of “livelihoods”, including strategies, factors, analysis, knowledge and its application in development activities. I distributed this paper to my colleagues for comments. They told me that it offered a way for understanding the “livelihoods” concept and suggested that more examples and stories should be added for quick and better understanding.

### **Philippines**

Back in the Country Office, I shared my workshop experience and learnings with our partners. I also read several resource books to get some general ideas for the content and format of the “guide”. The one apparent commonality among them was the inclusion of a descriptive glossary. That observation prompted me to consider focusing first on building a glossary, starting with the nine terms which our SPARK Philippines colleagues suggested in the first workshop: *livelihoods, participation, stakeholders, assets, outcomes, strategies, community, vulnerability and influences*.

To get a wider range of meanings for these terms – and some relevant stories and descriptive illustrations of livelihoods concepts and approaches – I talked with several people who have experiences or knew of livelihoods analysis initiatives. These included representatives from relevant national agencies, NGOs, management councils, fisherfolk, office of the provincial or municipal agriculturist, and the church. The common observation from these conversations was that people tend to describe “livelihoods” as ways of earning a living, or they associate it with “livelihoods projects” in poor communities whose purpose is to increase income (called *palangitan-an* in Ilongo).

However, upon engaging people in longer conversations, I could sense a broader understanding there. They would start describing their experiences with livelihoods-related projects: the objectives, approaches and processes involved, and their perceptions of why they needed to be done. This brought me to a realization that “livelihoods” can be described in diverse ways (through definitions, stories, diagrams or illustrations), and understandings are built through having conversations, being a keen listener and establishing rapport and trust in the process.

### **Vietnam**

A between-workshops result was the first version of a glossary of commonly-used terms in English and Vietnamese, which has been completed and disseminated. With cooperation from other partners, we came up with a list of more than 700 terms including ones about “livelihoods”. We did this through e-mail consultation together with DANIDA, IMA, IUCN, OXFAM and WWF<sup>10</sup>. Some people who got copies of the glossary commented that, “The work was helpful for Vietnamese staff involved in translating materials related to aquatic resources management.”

I will close by telling a story of an experience before the two workshops. Last year, communities in Long An, a province in southern Vietnam, asked about the meaning of “livelihoods” when we used it in an official letter to the People’s Committee about planning a workshop on this issue<sup>11</sup>. Some participants hesitated to take part in the workshop because they were not clear about its title. When informed by the STREAM Country Office of the incident, the Ministry of Fisheries decided to help us by explaining the term in a correspondence to the province. The definition was then widely accepted and the workshop was staged as planned. In this way, the term was institutionalized, more of an outcome than we had imagined.

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10 Danish International Development Agency, International Marinelife Alliance, International Union for Conservation of Nature, OXFAM, World Wildlife Fund

11 See SJ1(4) with articles based on presentations given at the “Learning Workshop on Livelihoods Analysis” held in Long An, Vietnam, in November 2002.

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## Using Tools to Build Shared Understandings, Using a Sustainable Livelihoods Framework to Learn

Nuchjaree Langkulsane<sup>12</sup>

### Trying Out Three Tools

As a part of its monitoring and evaluation process, SPARK Thailand organized field visits to the north of the country in July 2003. The objectives were to evaluate the learning activities of SPARK-supported partners and to help placements<sup>13</sup> and OSLO awardees<sup>14</sup> to document “significant changes” in the lives of target groups, and changes in the behavior and practices of those who provide natural resources management (NRM) services to them. The team tried out three tools from the Second Livelihoods and Languages Workshop to build shared understandings, develop a communication process and analyze communication among SPARK and its partners. The tools were 1) Conversation Partners, 2) Relationships and 3) Communication Issues.



*In the middle of a conversation with NGOs in Chiang Mai, pulling out the concentric-circle illustration to explain “outputs, outcomes and impacts”, to get us “unstuck” in our discussion*

The first and second tools were primarily used before the visits to design and plan our communication process. We used the first tool to define the conversation partners with whom we should we talk, who they represented and the conversation’s purpose and issues. The second tool – illustrated with concentric circles for “outputs, outcomes and impacts” – was used to clarify relationships. We were able to define our conversation partners as two NGOs – Northern Development Foundation (NDF) in Chiang Mai, and Phayao Project for Development (PDP) in Phayao – and their stakeholders. NDF and PDP, the main partners supported by SPARK for placement and OSLO activities, provide NRM-related services to their stakeholders: community leaders, the Tambon Administration Office (TAO) and local NGOs. Then, we set objectives for the conversation and designed

a structured process which started with our partners, then community leaders, the TAO and NGOs. We wanted to explore the kinds of NRM services NDF and PDP provided to their stakeholders and what they had learned through implementation. It seemed that the combination of the two tools helped us map our ideas and plan the process.

### Achievements and Relationship of SPARK Stakeholders

The second tool was used again during the actual visit to capture and analyze “significant changes” in people’s lives, and in the behaviors and practices of service-providers. During the conversation, we tried to understand partners’ achievements and lessons learned, who had benefited from the changes and how they were related to SPARK’s contribution. The partners became confused when we asked about the contribution of SPARK, because they received support from different sources, and it was difficult for them to assess what SPARK had contributed.

We found that the concentric-circle illustration helped explain how different stakeholders had benefited, whether it was the community (end-users), NGOs or government service-providers. In the case of NDF’s implementation, the most significant changes happened with the community, where

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<sup>12</sup> Panpilai Kitsudsang, Decha Phasuk and Duangkamol Sirisook were also on the SPARK Thailand team.

<sup>13</sup> Organizations in which SPARK volunteers work

<sup>14</sup> OSLO is Other Shared Learning Opportunities and includes regional activities such as research, study tours, secondments and scholarships. “OSLO awardees” are people selected and supported by SPARK.

people's organizations in Northern Thailand had been strengthened. They gained more confidence and could represent their interests in policy discussions. For example, some people are members of the National Advisory Committee for Economic and Social Development. We were also able to document SPARK's support for capacity-building with NDF staff who are service-providers. Similarly, for PDP the most significant change concerned involvement of the community in natural resources management, while SPARK's activities strengthened NGO staff capacity in terms of community-based work and wider perspectives on NRM.

In using the second tool, we also found that the facilitation to build shared understandings needed to be made explicit. We clarified with partners that our conversation should not focus on the results of our inputs, but rather changes that really happened and the role of different groups in their achievement, whether or not SPARK had contributed. Then, we could explore further how SPARK should support them in the future. In this way, communication would be two-way, where SPARK and its partners were sharing and learning together, and not a one-way situation in which the "recipient" reports on "benefits" from the "giver".



*In conversation with community leaders. The map was drawn by the community and used to convince the government that they have been in their place (to be declared a national park) for a long time, and have established systems that do not harm forests and biodiversity*

### **Power Relationships and Trust**

The third tool was beneficial for analyzing power relationships and the validity of information. In its role, SPARK has a distant relationship with the community since we do not work directly with them, and we only communicated with them face-to-face for a short time. Therefore, it was difficult to build a bridge for a trusting relationship. This would have an effect on the validity of the information we got from the community. How could we know if they felt secure and trusted us enough to provide complete and accurate information? Furthermore, as an external funder, SPARK has an influential role with partners, and it is possible for partners to provide "pleasant" information to the "donor". Thus, it is necessary to validate information through various means, understand our role and make clear with partners our sincerity in evaluating the real situation so that there will be future improvements.

### **Learning through a Sustainable Livelihoods Framework**

During the conversation with partners, a sustainable livelihoods (SL) framework guided our learning about and understanding the lives of people in communities. It helped us see an overall picture of how communities make a living, their livelihoods outcomes, and issues related to resources, capacity and how government policies affect them. Through the SL framework – which we kept in the "backs of our heads" – we figured out how to raise questions. We learned that communities had diverse livelihoods which could be classified as farming-based, forest-based, fishery-based and labor-based.

### **Communicating and Learning**

Using the three tools and the SL framework, the communication process among SPARK and stakeholders was structured and everyone involved had opportunities for sharing and understanding each other. The "significant changes" we captured were evidence of the learning of SPARK, its partners and communities, and will lead to improvements in the collaboration.

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## Learning about Rattan as a Livelihood

*Mariel de Jesus and Christine Bantug<sup>15</sup>*

### **Rattan as a Natural Resource**

Many people have perhaps seen finished rattan products such as chairs, tables and other decorative pieces. Those of us from the Philippines know that the majority of rattan items are produced in Cebu. But not many people are aware of the process behind the making of these products, and are certainly not aware that in some cases the story begins some distance away in Agusan del Sur.

At the request of the Provincial Governor, Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) Philippines and its SPARK Hub Organization partner, Environmental Science for Social Change (ESSC), conducted an assessment in Agusan del Sur towards providing assistance in implementing the province's natural resources management (NRM) program. VSOP and ESSC designed a workshop that would help to describe the NRM-related service provision system in the province and to identify "end-users" (i.e., "beneficiaries" of development efforts). By learning about any "choke-points" in the system which could prevent end-users from improving their livelihoods, VSO would be better prepared to design an appropriate development intervention for the province.

### **Building Shared Understandings**

During the Livelihoods and Languages Workshops, one of the main lessons was to ensure that we are all "on the same page", that people build shared understandings of the work they do together and the language associated with it. Some workshop participants had the experience of implementing projects only to find out during the evaluation that there was actually limited understanding of what the project was supposed to achieve. The project development phase is important because this is when all stakeholders have the chance to understand the project objectives and to take part in shaping activities.

The Agusan assessment workshop provided an opportunity to build shared understandings from the beginning. For example, it was important for the local government, VSO and ESSC to be clear on who the end-users are for NRM services, and who is responsible for delivering them. An illustration with three concentric circles helped workshop participants identify end-users and service providers, and also clarified the role of VSO in the process.



*Josefa Martinez (left) in her rattan processing plant*

### **Back to Rattan – Learning from a Trader**

So, why rattan? Agusan del Sur is a major source of raw or semi-processed rattan. Indigenous communities residing in the uplands are dependent on the gathering of this non-timber forest product for their livelihood. Although they are an important part of the process of harvesting and supplying rattan, the gatherers are often overlooked in the system for providing rattan processing permits. This was what we learned during a visit with Josefa Martinez.

Josefa is a rattan permit holder and a member of the Agusan Highlanders Incorporated cooperative. She buys

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<sup>15</sup> Ernesto Montes and Malou Salcedo were also on the SPARK Philippines team.

rattan from gatherers and stores it in her stockyards in La Paz and Loreto. She also does some semi-processing of the raw rattan and oversees its export to Cebu. Josefa said that the communities sell her the rattan, or exchange it for other goods. She maintains that the province should encourage more investments that would lead to the development of the rattan industry in Agusan del Sur. If the province was able to establish a processing plant, or if it could begin producing finished items instead of exporting to Cebu, Agusan would be able to gain greater benefits. This, she said, would help relieve poverty in the rattan-dependent community. The visit with Ms Martinez revealed the largely invisible community of rattan gatherers and the inadequacy of mechanisms to address their needs. For although Josefa is recognized as an end-user, being the permit holder, there is another layer of end-users – the rattan gatherers – that remains hidden.

### Behind the Rattan System

The rattan gatherers, especially those living and working in their ancestral areas, are constrained by their lack of tenure. This is currently being addressed through the issuance of Certificate of Ancestral Domains Claims (CADC), the recognition of which would be an important step in securing the livelihoods of the rattan gatherers. However, this is only one part of a complex system. The rattan-dependent community, including traders like Josefa Martinez, face numerous challenges. They are at the mercy of the market and are unable to negotiate for better prices. The rattan must travel a long route marked by many roadblocks and checkpoints – passing through these often means shelling out some extra cash, Ms Martinez related to the workshop participants.

The gatherers also need support in improving their rattan extraction practices, to make harvesting more efficient and to ensure the sustainability of the resource. Rattan gathering involves much hard labor, not only in the cutting but in the carrying of rattan to stockyards. Josefa said that the rattan gatherers have a difficult life and, because of their remote location, access to basic social services is minimal. All of these factors contribute to their situation of poverty.

### Putting Rattan into a Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

Using a sustainable livelihoods (SL) framework, workshop participants realized that, to assist rattan gatherers, there needs to be a focus on building their capacity by providing them with appropriate technologies for sustainable rattan harvesting and management. In the process, the province can perhaps expand its rattan industry, from being merely a source of raw rattan to an exporter of quality, finished products.

The use of an SL framework, along with participatory methods like focus group discussions and interviews, helped to uncover the community behind the rattan products that we see in markets. Although the rattan gathering system is complex, the Agusan del Sur assessment workshop helped to facilitate a better understanding of what needs to be done. With the learning gained from the workshop, VSO, ESSC and the provincial government now have a better basis for designing an appropriate development intervention that will respond to the real needs of end-users.



*A rattan processor – near the forest, as opposed to furniture factory workers in Cebu City*

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## Meanings of “Community-Managed Area”

Arif Aliadi<sup>16</sup>

### Forest Management, Allocation and Conflict

Forest management in Indonesia does not provide fair conditions for communities, especially those living inside or near forest areas. None of the 143 million hectares of Indonesian forest area is allocated to communities. LATIN<sup>17</sup> has estimated that 60-80 million people (or one-third of Indonesians) depend on the forest. “Production forest” areas (45% of allocations) are managed by either private parties or Perhutani, a state-owned company. “Protected” (21%) and “conservation” (13%) areas are government-managed through *Balai Konservasi Sumberdaya Alam* (Natural Resource Conservation Board) and *Balai Taman Nasional* (National Park Board). Meanwhile, “conversion forests” (21%) are allocated for such purposes as dam development, transmigration and large plantations.

This forest allocation situation has caused unsettled conflicts (Muhammad et al., 2000). About 20,000 cases relate to the exploitation of these natural resources for industrial and teak forests, land, conservation areas and plantations. The conflicts are a consequence of the dominant development model applied in the era of Soeharto, Indonesia’s second president, which focused on land availability and large-scale exploitation.

### Concept, Meanings and a Workshop

LATIN is working with forest inhabitants so that they can gain greater access to and control over land, forests and natural resources, and the process of decision-making itself – towards a concept of “community-managed area”. We have spent much time discussing this concept and have been trying to apply it since 2000. However, we have experienced many problems in practicing the concept in the field because it is understood to have various meanings by ourselves and our partners: other NGOs, society, entrepreneurs and government.

We were thus encouraged to discuss the concept and meanings of “community-managed area” during a one-day workshop in June 2003 at LATIN, following the Second SPARK-STREAM Workshop on Livelihoods and Languages. The objective of the LATIN workshop was to clarify understandings of the meanings of “community-managed area”, with participants sharing their opinions based on their own interpretations.

### Workshop Process

We used adapted versions of tools from the Livelihoods and Languages Workshop to determine the “conversation partners”, clarify participants’ expectations and the workshop’s objective, and share meanings.

#### *Determine “Conversation Partners”*

The workshop “conversation partners” were LATIN field officers who work in four regencies, and our partners: KANOPI from Kuningan, West Java; KAIL from Jember, East Java and YP2MD from Dompus, West Nusa Tenggara. All participants were NGO activists, each with more than five years’ experience of working with people whose lives depend on the forest. We used our common language, Bahasa Indonesia, during the workshop; the “conversation partners” were also speakers of Dompus, Javanese and Sundanese.

#### *Clarify Expectations and Workshop Objective*

We first clarified participants’ expectations of the workshop. This led to explaining and discussing the workshop objective, so that we could agree and then focus on what could be achieved. Participants also talked about their experiences with handling questions, comments and different views about “community-managed area”.

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<sup>16</sup> Priyo Asmoro, Latipah “Smith” Hendarti and Tabitha Yulita were also on the SPARK Indonesia team.

<sup>17</sup> Lembaga Alam Tropika Indonesia (Indonesian Tropical Institute)

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### *Share Meanings of "Community-Managed Area" and Come to a Conclusion*

Participants wrote meanings of "community-managed area" on cards, which were then stuck on a whiteboard. People explained the meaning written on their card, which others responded to. Through this process, "approximate" meanings of "community-managed area" were obtained and some conclusions reached.

#### **Some Meanings of "Community-Managed Area"**

*Local society has its own authority over the resources they have to build a future based on their own goals. Local capacity needs to be enhanced by improving the economy based on local resources, having education that is tailored to local life and developing cooperation among people. Management roles, rights and responsibilities are shared clearly among people who have an interest in the area.*

Local people have *access to ownership, increased forest management and policy*. Not all people living around the forest agree about the "right to manage". Some people want to have the "right to own", especially when this has been denied. A "community-managed area" should accommodate demands for the return of land previously taken and used by private and government enterprises. Local people must be able to take part in forest management, from planning through monitoring and evaluating. They must also be involved in decision-making processes.

Local society has *access in space and time* to natural resources. In addition to space in the form of physical area, there must also be a guarantee of obtaining long-term benefit, not just in one or two years, but through the future generations. The area *cannot be sold or bought*, although its products can as long as the benefits are not reduced.

#### **Some Conclusions about "Community-Managed Area"**

Workshop participants expressed a variety of interpretations of the meanings of "community-managed area". We were then able to come to these conclusions:

- A "community-managed area" can be defined according to bio-physical, political and time characteristics. It can include production forests, national parks and plantations managed by government or private enterprises. It can be a "dialogue place" for discussions among stakeholders who have an interest in the area. Their roles can be understood by clarifying rights, responsibilities, benefits and relationships. A "community-managed area" also has a time dimension which can guarantee long-term benefits from it.
- According to Pimbert (2003), the highest level of participation is self-mobilization, when society itself takes an initiative to change "the system". To reach such a level, there are several participatory processes to go through, including bargaining among interested parties. These processes should encourage government officials to change their roles from "project leaders" to "facilitators of society". Local people would have active roles in situation analysis, solution formulation, planning, implementing, monitoring and evaluating. This would certainly be a change in organizational cultures, and would require new knowledge and skills for communicating with society, in addition to technical skills such as how to plant trees in forest areas.

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# Lessons Learnt about Processes for Learning and Communicating

Graham Haylor and Ronet Santos

## Sharing Meanings

In February 2003, the two of us and our colleague, Shaun Vincent, were discussing the complexities of explaining why we are interested in learning and understanding about local situations, and being involved in the lives of communities. We talked about “understanding the livelihoods” of the people with whom we work, as members of the management teams of three regional development organizations: STREAM, SPARK and VSO respectively.

Although two of us are native English speakers and the third fluent in the language, we had difficulty agreeing on meanings of words like *assets*, *poverty*, *vulnerability*, and even *livelihood*. Sharing meanings, we agreed, was a key to participatory livelihoods analysis. The complexities involved with doing this were further highlighted when we realized that SPARK and STREAM collectively work in 14 different languages across South and Southeast Asia. There were also personal insights, as anecdotes were exchanged about the perils of livelihoods “experts” ignoring issues of language, the unfortunate consequences for hastily-arranged translators or interpreters, and the extent to which shared understandings are possible.

It was agreed that issues surrounding the sharing of meanings and understandings begin to emerge when people meet for the first time, and then continue, as we try to learn and communicate with different groups, from different contexts and languages, even within one country. Although these issues are challenging, even daunting, there is comfort to be gained from acknowledging the complexity, understanding the important role of multi-lingual facilitation and drawing on the energy and enthusiasm of members of SPARK and STREAM to address the issues, as described in this number of the *STREAM Journal*.

## Seeking Guidance

An awareness that we were in need of guidance was the driving force behind suggesting that we come together through a SPARK-STREAM Learning and Communications Process and hold two shared Workshops on Livelihoods and Languages. The intended output would be a “guide to livelihoods and languages”. SPARK hosted the first workshop in Bangkok in April 2003, and STREAM the second in Tagaytay City, Philippines, in June 2003. The latter workshop was supported by FAO<sup>18</sup>, a STREAM partner which has acknowledged the importance of considering language issues in livelihoods work.

Our sharing of experiences during and between the workshops led us to understand more about the nature of the guidance we required. There was an affirmation that learning and communication among different organizations – and between organizations and communities – would benefit from a “process for establishing trusting relationships, which in turn, would allow us to work together to plan and implement activities which could improve the lives of communities” (see Copley and Savage, page 1).

Our intended “guide to livelihoods and languages” thus became a “Guide for Learning and Communicating about Livelihoods”. In its current stage of development, the “Guide” describes a process to be carried out with the help of a “tool box”. The three-phase process (see the diagram on the last page) involves:

1. Defining the Conversation Group – using tools called Conversation Partners, Relationships, Communication Issues, and Languages and Dialects
2. Sharing Meanings, through an agreed strategy, with examples, stories and glossaries, and
3. Sharing Understandings, with reference to livelihoods methods, explanations and resources such as existing livelihoods analysis documents.

We think that this process will benefit the building of trusting relationships by helping us to:

- Define our conversation partners
- Make explicit our relationships with them and other stakeholders
- Raise awareness of communication issues that could possibly emerge, and
- Identify the languages and dialects through which we all work.

### **Emerging Value**

The process and tool box are works-in-progress, with all participants of the Livelihoods and Languages Workshops trying them out “at home”, and reporting back their experiences as the “Guide for Learning and Communicating about Livelihoods” takes shape. It is already proving to be of some value, for example:

- STREAM countries (see Gonzales et al., page 3) are developing a broader understanding of livelihoods concepts (more than just “economic”) through stories, conversations and glossaries in India, Nepal and the Philippines. In Cambodia, the development of an “interview guide” for use in the field (rather than a glossary of livelihoods terms) is being considered. And in Vietnam, a large glossary of terms is being developed to help promote better understanding of terms used in livelihoods analysis, in the context of that country’s governance structures.
- Tool 1 (Conversation Partners) helped SPARK Thailand as they captured and analyzed “significant changes” in people’s lives and in the behaviors and practices of service-providers. Tool 2 (Relationships) allowed the “conversation group” to focus their discussions on changes that really happened and the roles of different stakeholders in their achievement, rather than on the results of inputs. This facilitated two-way communication where SPARK and its partners were sharing and learning together. Tool 3 (Communication Issues) helped to analyze power relationships and the validity of information gathered. A sustainable livelihoods framework helped to understand the diversity of people’s livelihoods and how government policies affect them (see Langkulsane, page 5).
- Adaptations of Tools 1 (Conversation Partners) and 2 (Relationships), along with a sustainable livelihoods framework, were used by participants in an assessment workshop in the Philippines. This was prompted by a request from a provincial governor for assistance in implementing the province’s natural resources management program. The workshop led to a better understanding of what needs to be done, and provided a basis for designing appropriate development interventions (see de Jesus and Bantug, page 7).
- Tool 1 (Conversation Partners) and an agreed strategy for sharing meanings (Phase 2) were used to clarify understandings of the concept of “community-managed area” (Phase 3) within the Indonesian forestry sector, with conversation partners exchanging opinions based on their own interpretations (see Aliadi, page 9).

It would seem that when organizations openly share their difficulties, appreciate the complexity of livelihoods work, and search together for guidance, they can not only come together to develop and test processes and tools, but can build strong, enduring and trusting relationships which facilitate all to work more effectively with their community and government partners.

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## About the STREAM Journal

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### Purpose

The *STREAM Journal* is published quarterly to promote participation, communication and policies that support the livelihoods of poor aquatic resources users in Asia-Pacific, and to build links within the aquatic resources management and other sectors across the region. The *STREAM Journal* covers issues related to people whose livelihoods involve aquatic resources management, especially people with limited resources, and government, non-governmental and international practitioners who work with them in communities. Such issues include learning, conflict management, information and communication technologies, aquatic resources management, legislation, livelihoods, gender, participation, stakeholders, policy and communications.

Another equally important purpose of the *STREAM Journal* is to provide an opportunity for seldom-raised voices to be heard and represented in a professional publication that is practical yet somewhat academic. The contents of the *STREAM Journal* should not be taken as reflecting the views of any particular organization or agency, but as statements by individuals based on their own experience. While authors are responsible for the contents of their articles, STREAM recognizes and takes responsibility for any editorial bias and oversights.

### Distribution

The *STREAM Journal* is available in three formats:

- An electronic PDF version which is printed and distributed by the STREAM Communications Hubs in each country
- A version which can be accessed and downloaded in PDF format from the Virtual Library on the STREAM Website at [www.streaminitiative.org](http://www.streaminitiative.org), and
- A printed version which is distributed by the NACA Secretariat.

### Contribution

The *STREAM Journal* encourages the contribution of articles of interest to aquatic resources users and people who work with them. The *STREAM Journal* also supports community-level colleagues to document their own experiences in these pages.

Articles should be written in plain English and no more than 1,000 words long (about two A4 pages of single-spaced text).

Contributions can be made to William Savage, *STREAM Journal* Editor, at <[savage@loxinfo.co.th](mailto:savage@loxinfo.co.th)>. For more information, contact Graham Haylor, STREAM Director, at <[ghaylor@loxinfo.co.th](mailto:ghaylor@loxinfo.co.th)>.

## About STREAM

Support to Regional Aquatic Resources Management (STREAM) is an Initiative designed within the five-year Work Program cycle of the Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific (NACA). It aims to support agencies and institutions to:

- Utilize existing and emerging information more effectively
- Better understand poor people's livelihoods, and
- Enable poor people to exert greater influence over policies and processes that impact on their lives.

STREAM will do this by supporting the development of policies and processes of mediating institutions, and building capacity to:

- Identify aquatic resources management issues impacting on the livelihoods of poor people
- Monitor and evaluate different management approaches
- Extend information, and
- Network within and between sectors and countries.

The STREAM Initiative is based around partnerships, involving at the outset a coalition of founding partners (AusAID, DFID, FAO and VSO) supporting NACA. It has adopted an inclusive approach, reaching out to link stakeholders engaged in aquatic resources management and supporting them to influence the Initiative's design, implementation and management.

The partnerships' work is coordinated in each Country Office through a National Coordinator (a senior national colleague agreed with the government) and a Communications Hub Manager (a full-time national colleague supported in the first two years by STREAM), and linking a range of national stakeholders. The Communications Hub is provided with hardware, software, training, information-technology support, and networking and human resources support, and links national stakeholders through an Internet-based virtual regional network.

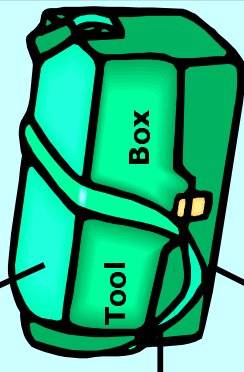
National coordination is guided by an annually-reviewed Country Strategy Paper (CSP) drawn up by the Coordinator and Hub Manager in consultation with stakeholders with whom they regularly network. A CSP identifies key issues, highlights regional linkages, proposes and prioritizes key actions, and seeks funding for these from STREAM and elsewhere (with STREAM support).

The STREAM Regional Office (at the NACA Secretariat in Bangkok) directs the Initiative, provides a regional coordination function, and funds and manages cross-cutting activities dealing with livelihoods, institutions, policy development and communications, the four outcomes-based STREAM themes.

STREAM implementation is an iterative process, initially operating in Cambodia, India, Nepal, Philippines and Vietnam, and expanding within Asia-Pacific where opportunities exist to tackle poverty and promote good governance, as experience is gained, lessons are learned, impact is demonstrated and additional funding is secured. STREAM's communications strategy aims to increase impact by ensuring that existing knowledge and expertise inform ongoing change processes around the region, and that the lessons learned are disseminated throughout Asia-Pacific. The *STREAM Journal* and the STREAM website are components of this strategy.

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Tool 1 <i>Conversation Partners</i>
Tool 2 <i>Relationships</i>
Tool 3 <i>Communication Issues</i>
Tool 4 <i>Languages and Dialects</i>

Examples
Stories
Glossaries

Methods
Explanations
Resources

### Phase 1: Defining the Conversation Group

- START with the questions:**
  - Who will the Conversation Group be?
  - What is the purpose of the conversation?
- Define the Conversation Group and the purpose of the conversation

Working with Conversation Group

### Phase 2: Sharing Meanings

- START with inputs from Phase 1:**
  - Clearly defined Conversation Group
  - Purpose of the conversation
- Bring the Conversation Group together
- Discuss and agree a strategy to share meanings

### Phase 3: Sharing Understandings

- START with inputs from Phase 2:**
  - Agreed strategy to share meanings
- Come to shared understandings, and/or be more aware of each other's contexts and understandings
- Discuss and agree next steps