

Regional workshop on translating knowledge from ecohealth research to policy



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Abbreviations

CB	Capacity Building
CENPHER	Center for Public Health and Ecosystem Research
CU	Coordinating Unit
FBLI	Field Building Leadership Initiative
FL	Future Leader
HSPH	Hanoi School of Public Heal
IDRC	International Development Research Centre
KMU	Kunming Medical University
KT	Knowledge Translation
MU	Mahidol University
RCG	Regional Core Group
SARS	Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome
SEA	Southeast Asia
TL	True Leaders
UI	University of Indonesia
VPHA	Vietnam Public Health Association
VWB	Veterinarians Without Borders

Executive summary

This report summarizes the two-day regional knowledge translation workshop organized by the FBLL- Coordinating Unit (please see Annex 1 for workshop agenda).

Agricultural intensification - as demonstrated by FBLL work - continues to be a key challenge and presents serious risks to human, animal and environmental health. Organizing a FBLL regional KT workshop is part of a continuous effort of the program to gather policy makers and researchers together to develop policy briefs based on research findings and lessons drawn from research, capacity building and knowledge translation activities undertaken in China, Thailand, Indonesia and Vietnam.

The FBLL Regional KT Workshop was held in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam, during 23-24 May 2016. The objectives of the workshop were: (i) to share and consolidate policy-relevant findings and key messages from ecohealth research and capacity building conducted in four FBLL countries; (ii) to synthesize the major results and lessons learned from KT, capacity building, and M&E activities, highlighting those that have regional importance and implications and (iii) to develop a format for producing one FBLL regional policy brief and three country briefs.

The workshop was opened by Prof. Dr. Le Vu Anh, President of the Vietnam Public Health Association (VPHA), which hosts the FBLL Coordinating Unit, and Dr. Nguyen Viet Hung, FBLL Coordinator. The workshop was facilitated by Dr. Chun Lai, knowledge translation consultant, who was involved in the FBLL proposal development process in 2012.

Eighteen individuals from three countries (Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam) participated in the workshop. These included researchers (16) and policymakers (2) from diverse professional and academic backgrounds. Due to administration constraints, none of Chinese team members could come. A detailed list of the participants is displayed in Annex 2.

Organization of the workshop

The format of the workshop was designed and planned by the KT consultant in collaboration with the FBLL-CU and RCG members aiming at enhancing effective and lively discussion during the workshop.

One month in advance, the CU sent guidelines and a template for the country policy brief to country team leaders, who were kindly requested to produce four-page draft briefs for presentation and peer review at the workshop.

Workshop highlights included the following:

The group work used discussions of country policy briefs and regional policy brief as a vehicle for exchanging ideas and comments about how to improve pre-prepared policy brief by distilling research results and key messages that have regional relevance for ecohealth policy makers.

Day 1: Three country policy briefs were presented and participants provided feedback and suggestions for improvement. Two working groups (mixed countries, gender and background) were formed to extract key research results and policy messages of high relevance at the regional level – based on country policy briefs and participants’ own experiences. Outputs of the working groups were then shared in a plenary session.

Day 2: Country-based groups worked to refine and improve their country policy briefs based on the previous day’s feedback. A first draft of key findings/lessons learned and policy implications/recommendations for the regional policy brief was synthesized by Chun Lai and Hung and presented to the participants. The participants provided useful comments and suggestions to improve these key messages and generally agreed on the key research results, lessons learned and policy implications. The group also highlighted the need to better consolidate research evidence from the four FBLLI countries, as well as to conduct a systematic literature review on topics relevant to agricultural intensification and health in Asia. The participants also expressed some concerns about the FBLLI research results, which are based on work at pilot sites and may not be representative of other communities and localities. However, all agreed that it is important to share the FBLLI experiences and lessons learned.

It was also agreed that after the workshop, the workshop facilitator would produce and circulate the regional policy brief for further review and comments, then finalize the brief based on comments received. Likewise, the country teams will finalize their briefs based on the guidelines as well as comments received from the workshop participants.

Main outcomes from the workshop

- Participants have enriched their knowledge on how to formulate a good policy brief based on research findings and lesson learned during the FBLLI program implementation.
- Specific suggestions for the further revision of country policy briefs were provided.
- Key messages for the regional policy brief were formulated.

Conclusions

The FBLLI Regional KT Workshop ensured that participants gained a better understanding of how to develop policy briefs based on research evidences and lessons learned from FBLLI ecohealth research, knowledge translation and capacity building activities. The workshop provided an opportunity for researchers to synthesize their key findings and articulate policy implications and recommendations, which will be used to communicating key messages to policy audiences.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background

The Field Building Leadership Initiative (FBLI) – a regional ecohealth program supported by IDRC and implemented by partner institutions in Southeast Asia and China – will be completed by September 2016. FBLI work comprises research, capacity building, knowledge translation (KT), and monitoring & evaluation.

The knowledge translation component aims to disseminate the FBLI research findings to appropriate audiences, and to inform policy decisions surrounding agricultural intensification, health, and ecosystems. Good progress has been made on KT work in China, Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam, including the formation of policy alliance groups to facilitate dissemination and uptake of research findings at the country level.

As confirmed at the FBLI regional core group meeting held during February in Bangkok, a final regional KT meeting and the production of a FBLI regional policy brief are among the priority activities to be accomplished during the remaining period of the current program.

The FBLI Regional KT Workshop was held at the Bong Sen hotel, Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam during 23-24 May 2016. The objectives of the workshop were: (i) to share and consolidate policy-relevant findings and key messages from ecohealth research and capacity building conducted in four FBLI countries; (ii) to synthesize the major results and lessons learned from KT, capacity building, and M&E activities, highlighting those that have regional importance and implications and (iii) to develop a format for producing one FBLI regional policy brief and three country briefs.

Eighteen individuals from three countries (Indonesia, Thailand and Vietnam) participated in the workshop. However, due to administrative constraints, no participants from China could attend. These included researchers (16) and policymakers (2) from diverse professional and academic backgrounds (see the list of participants at the end of the report).

The workshop was opened by short statements by Prof. Dr. Le Vu Anh, President of the Vietnam Public Health Association (VPHA) and Dr. Nguyen Viet Hung, Coordinator of FBLI.

1.2. Organization of the workshop

The format of the workshop was designed and planned by the KT consultant in collaboration with the FBLI-CU and RCG members aiming at enhancing effective and lively discussion during the workshop.

One month in advance, the CU sent guidelines and a template for the country policy brief to country team leaders, who were kindly requested to produce four-page draft briefs for presentation and peer review at the workshop.

Workshop highlights included the following:

The group work used discussions of country policy briefs and regional policy brief as a vehicle for exchanging ideas and comments about how to improve pre-prepared policy brief by distilling research results and key messages that have regional relevance for ecohealth policy makers.

Day 1: Three country policy briefs were presented and participants provided feedback and suggestions for improvement. Two working groups (mixed countries, gender and background) were formed to extract key research results and policy messages of high relevance at the regional level – based on country policy briefs and participants' own experiences. Outputs of the working groups were then shared in a plenary session.

Day 2: Country-based groups worked to refine and improve their country policy briefs based on the previous day's feedback. A first draft of key findings/lessons learned and policy implications/recommendations for the regional policy brief was synthesized by Chun Lai and Hung and presented to the participants. The participants provided useful comments and suggestions to improve these key messages and generally agreed on the key research results, lessons learned and policy implications. The group also highlighted the need to better consolidate research evidence from the four FBLLI countries, as well as to conduct a systematic literature review on topics relevant to agricultural intensification and health in Asia. The participants also expressed some concerns about the FBLLI research results, which are based on work at pilot sites and may not be representative of other communities and localities. However, all agreed that it is important to share the FBLLI experiences and lessons learned.

It was also agreed that after the workshop, the workshop facilitator would produce and circulate the regional policy brief for further review and comments by 14 June, then finalize the brief based on comments received. Likewise, the country teams will finalize their briefs based on the guidelines as well as comments received from the workshop participants by 15 July.

2. Proceedings

Day 1

“What is important? Transferring research to policy. Uptake of the research knowledge, and application in practice, are indicators of success for the project” – Le Vu Anh

Introduction to workshop

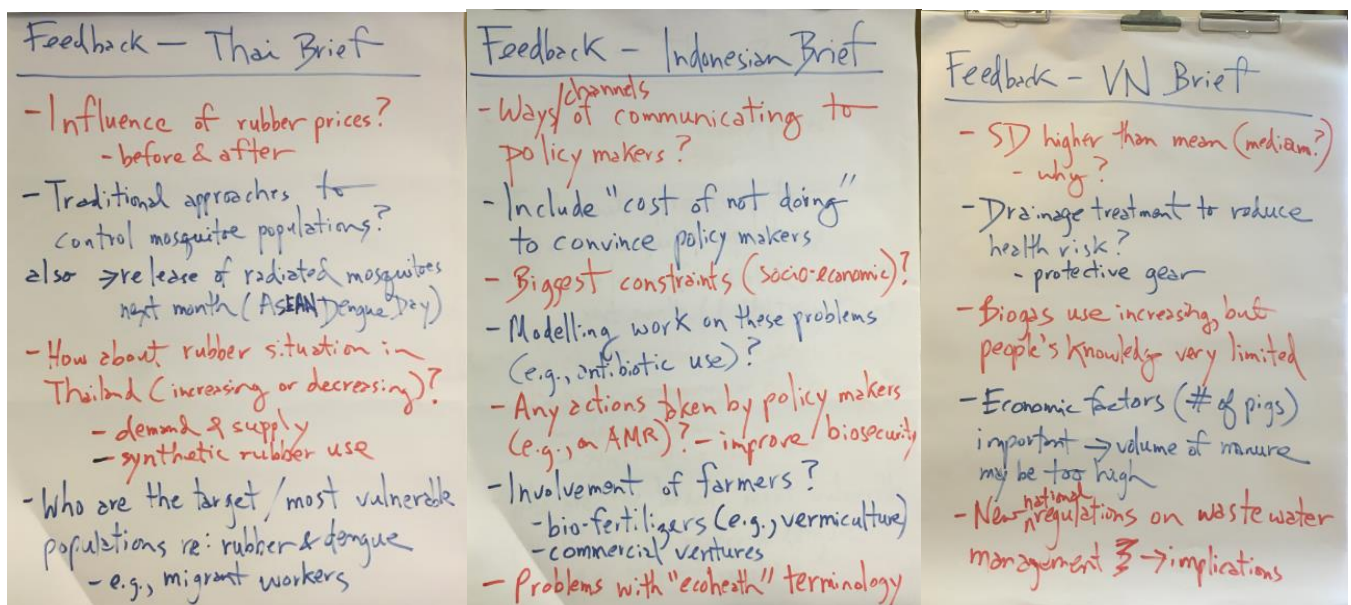
The workshop facilitator, Chun Lai, provided an overview of the workshop objectives, agenda and participants.

Comments/expectations from participants

- Researchers tend to think about a specific community, whereas policymakers think about the general population in the country
 - Consider feasibility and enabling factors of recommendations
 - Often at the end of projects, we focus on policy influence for sustainability
- What is the best way to communicate key messages to policymakers?
 - Stress the consequence of not supporting the proposed interventions – the cost of doing nothing

Presentation of country briefs by country teams

The three draft country briefs were presented in plenary, followed by feedback and questions as follows:



Working groups

Participants were divided into two groups (Lotus and Dragon fruit), diversified by country and gender, to define key policy messages based on country policy briefs and own experiences:

Lotus group

- 1) Ecohealth is an appropriate approach to address agriculture intensification and health in SEA
- 2) Improving KAP of farmers and other stakeholders by involving them throughout the project
- 3) Agricultural intensification leads to EIDs burden (QMRA, Epi)
- 4) Biogas and Ecohealth products help improve health and environmental status and provide alternative solutions to reduction of fertilizers and antimicrobial use. VBDs interventions reduced the transmission.
- 5) Disseminate research results to industry that will cross-produce new solutions – business incubation
- 6) Educate next generation to use/apply Ecohealth

Dragon fruit group

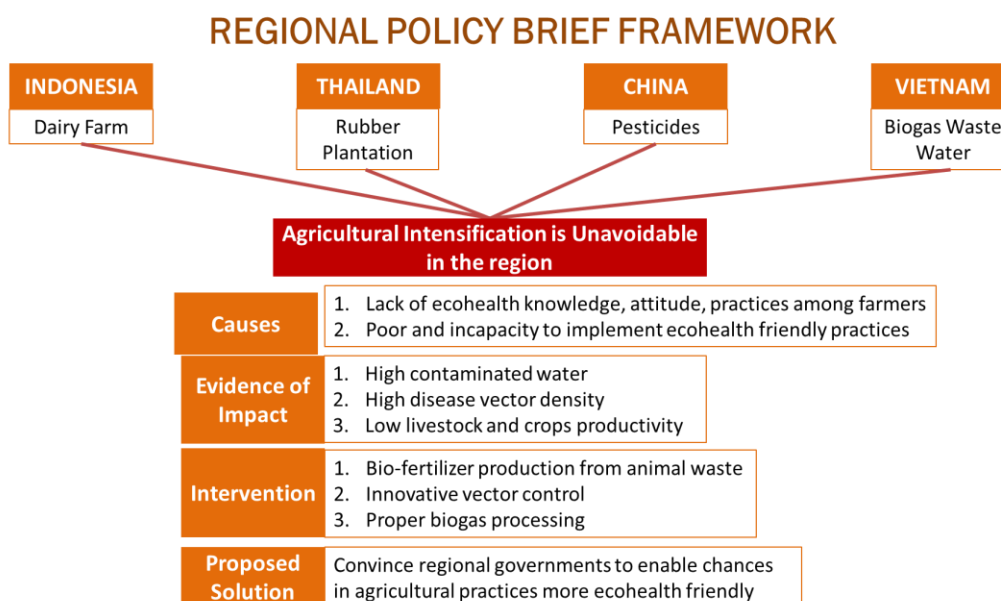
- 1) Livestock and crop intensification leads to adverse human, animal, and environmental health outcomes
- 2) Improving leadership capacity in Ecohealth across levels and sectors (community to leaders) have potential to improve agricultural practices
- 3) Ecohealth visibility can be enhanced through research, capacity building, and knowledge translation
 - During the discussion in plenary, some questions and concerns were raised, including:
 - How general/specific do messages need to be? Shall we stick with our original data to formulate recommendations?
 - Key messages of findings vs. key policy messages? Findings vs. recommendations?
 - Concerns on FBI research results, lack of (strong) evidence and confidence in data
 - lack of generalizability and representativeness for all communities
 - a means, not an ends?
 - all studies are descriptive, cannot imply causation, should wait for evidence
 - we need to refer to secondary data at national level to back up our claims
 - While evidence may not strong, we did learn from our experiences, and it is important to share our experiences, and we can share again once evidence is stronger

Systematic literature review

- Currently a systematic review on health risks of agricultural intensification in SEA is being conducted, which will substantiate the research evidence (to be finalized in August);
- Consider identifying country-specific and regional agricultural intensification policies;
- Consider looking at ASEAN policies, SDGs;
- How does our research contribute to policies/frameworks?

Regional policy brief

(Framework developed by Wiku and Nurul)



- Suggest first describing regional agenda (e.g., Global Health Security Agenda (GHSAs)), then country specific agenda, followed by key messages and findings
- Considering how this fits the ASEAN context (secretariat has agriculture, health, food security sector), as well as FAO, WHO OIE regional office
- End with next steps, perhaps along lines of “an Ecohealth group could help support the GHSAs”
- What is the target of policy brief, and communication strategy?
 - ASEAN, strong name, not strong power
 - target GHSAs, International health organizations, global health actions, USAID, FAO, WHO
 - these organizations will use this evidence to encourage governments to use similar approaches
- We have a window of opportunity, as GHSAs has three years left, we can help by using Ecohealth

Day 2

Short film presentation by Nguyen Mai Huong, FBI Vietnam researcher, on human and animal waste management and health risks, based on the field work in Hanam Province.

Comments on the film:

- Copyright of opening image?
- Add title of Khuong and Tuan
- Add details of human exposure to biogas waste

Country teams refine country policy briefs

Thailand

- Clarified target group, rubber workers, whom are mainly immigrants;
- Explained that rubber prices are decreasing and slows down expansion leading to some farmers switching to other crops, research needed on impact of crop change;
- Modified contributors section (missing some researchers)

Indonesia

- Indonesia leader in zoonosis and antimicrobial resistance (AMR);
- Recommended establishment of veterinary authority;
- Regarding “cost of doing nothing,” still need to elaborate on this.

Vietnam

- Used active verbs/sentences, show policy makers real situation
- Made the table clearer

Key policy messages

Based on the key messages developed by the two groups on day 1, the key findings/lessons learned and policy implications/recommendations for the regional policy brief were further revised as follows:

Key Findings/Lessons Learned from FBI	Policy Implications/Recommendations
1. Preliminary evidence suggests agricultural intensification increases risks to human, animal and environmental health. Application of Ecohealth approach has been shown to address some issues of agricultural intensification.	1. More research is warranted to show impacts of agricultural intensification to health. Ecohealth can be an appropriate approach to address agriculture intensification and health in SEA.
2. Capacity building activities improve the leadership of current and future Ecohealth practitioners.	2. Need to continue training and education of next generation to use/apply Ecohealth.
3. Increasing the capacity and involvement of farmers and other relevant stakeholders contributes to improved agricultural practices and health.	3. Need to improve the knowledge, attitudes and practices of farmers and other stakeholders, and involve them throughout the project cycle.
4. Building up the Ecohealth field in the region requires research, capacity building and knowledge translation.	4. Need to institutionalize the Ecohealth field and scale-up practices throughout the region.

Comments

- Why training for next generation only, and who are the next generation? For example, VPHA has a program to involve elderly people in some provinces to help with health communications. This is very promising as retired people can volunteer their time and share their experiences. Ensure that solutions are based on key findings;
- Ensure that we have evidence to support key findings;
- Suggest modifying subheading to: key findings/lessons learned

3. Wrap up and next steps

Dr. Nguyen Viet Hung, who expressed his warm thanks to all participants as well as the FBI CU team, closed the workshop. He also reiterated the purpose of the workshop, and asked the country teams to continue to work to improve and finalize their country policy briefs.

Regional level:

It was agreed that after the workshop, the workshop facilitator will work with CU to produce and circulate the regional policy brief for further review and comments, then finalize the brief based on comments received. This draft regional policy brief will be based on the key policy messages that we formulated in HCM city. The regional brief will follow the 4-page format used for the country briefs, and be shared with all of you as well as colleagues in China for review and comment.

Key milestones: 14 June 2016 – draft regional policy brief circulated for comments

Country level:

It was also agreed that the country team members will finalize the country policy briefs based on the guidelines as well as the valuable comments from the workshop participants.

Key milestones: 15 July 2016 – draft national policy brief circulated for comments.

Workshop agenda

Silver Lotus Room, 11th Floor, Bong Sen Hotel, HCMC, Vietnam, 23-24 May 2016

Day 1, 23 May 2016		
Time	Activity	In charge persons
08.00 - 08.30	Registration	Giang Pham
08.30 - 09.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Opening and welcome remarks ✓ Introduction of workshop and participants 	Prof. Le Vu Anh Dr. Dang Van Chinh Dr. Nguyen Viet Hung Chun Lai (Facilitator) and all participants
09.00 - 11.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Presentation and critique of the country policy briefs (30 min/country) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Indonesia ○ Thailand ○ Vietnam 	Each country team leader to make 15-min presentation, followed by 15-min feedback/critique
11.00 - 11.15	Short break	
11.15 - 12.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Divide participants in 2 groups (mix countries) to distil key policy-relevant research findings and messages of regional importance, based on country policy briefs and participants' own experiences 	Chun Lai to provide guidelines, all participants
12.00 - 13.30	Lunch at hotel	
13.30 - 15.15	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Continue group work 	All participants
15.15 - 15.30	Short break	
15.30 - 16.30	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Report-back and discussion on the results of the group work (15 min/group) 	Group rapporteurs
16.30 - 17.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Discussion and wrap-up of day 1 	Chun Lai
19.00	Welcome dinner	Giang, all participants and guests

Day 2, 24 May 2016		
Time	Activity	In charge persons
09.00 - 12.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Mini-writeshop: work in groups (based on 3 countries) to refine and improve the country policy briefs based on previous day's feedback ✓ Feedback from the 3 groups 	Chun Lai to provide guidelines, all participants
12.00 - 13.30	Lunch	All participants
13.30 - 17.00 (includes short break)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Film presentation: Human and animal waste management and health risks ✓ Discussion and agreement on the key research results and messages to highlight in regional policy brief ✓ Next steps and workshop closure 	Nguyen Mai Huong – Researcher, FBFI Vietnam Chun Lai, all participants Nguyen Viet Hung

List of participants

#	Name	Country	Position	Affiliation	Email
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4	Worachart Sirawaraporn	Thailand		Center of Excellence for Vectors and Vector-Borne Diseases, Faculty of Science, Mahidol University	worachart.sir@mahidol.ac.th
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8	Aji Barbora Niasono	Indonesia		Ministry of Agriculture, Indonesia	
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