



BILL & MELINDA  
GATES *foundation*

# Participatory Impact Assessment & Learning Approach (PIALA)

Key findings and outcomes from the impact  
evaluation of DBRP in Viet Nam

(June 2014)

# Objectives of the Initiative

- Design and pilot in 2 IFAD-financed projects a cost-effective Participatory Impact Assessment and Learning Approach (PIALA) that:
  - generates ***rigorous, contested & debated*** evidence of project contributions to and explanations of rural poverty impact
  - facilitates ***meaningful*** and ***equal participation*** of project stakeholders in collecting and analysing the evidence;
  - presents a potentially ***scalable model*** for strengthening IFAD's self-evaluation system
- Facilitate reflections with stakeholders at field, country and global levels on the quality of the PIALA in terms of:
  - ***Rigour***: thoroughness, consistency, reliability of methods, processes & evidence
  - ***Utility***: accessibility, credibility and value of methods to generate useful insights to influence decisions, processes and relations
  - ***Feasibility***: replicability, manageability and cost-effectiveness of methods and processes

# **Evaluation approach & design**

# Impact Evaluation Approach

- **Assessment & explanation of impact (not performance):**  
to generate solid conversation about critical issues related to “*What works how, for whom, under which conditions and why?*”
- **Systemic perspective:**  
indicators of *rural poverty* (nutrition, food & income, assets) and *enablers* (capitals, institutions, relations/processes)  
incl. WEIA & SLA
- **Theory-Based Impact Evaluation (TBIE):**  
*contribution analysis* of complex multi-causal interactions, using *mixed-methods, recall, cross-validation & triangulation*
- **Participatory processes:**  
*facilitation* of group-based causal change mapping and analysis and cross-validation debates

# The design in Viet Nam

- **HH survey** on food & income, community orgs membership, credit sources/use and training (*gender-disaggregated*)
  - in 720 HHs (540+180) in 24 villages (18+6)  
sufficient for comparison with RIMS baseline (900 HHs)
- **Participatory causal change mapping** of livelihoods and institutional relationships (*gender-specific*), and wealth & wellbeing (*gender-mixed*)
  - with ± 550 participants (390+130) in 8 villages (6+2)  
sufficient for causal explanation
- **KIIs and FGDs** on institutional capacity at communes, districts & province
  - with ± 80 leaders & officials in 8 villages/communes (6+2), ± 15-20 officials in 3 districts,  
and ± 20 provincial and national officials
- **Multi-stage cluster sampling**
  - From 2008 project population (26 communes/villages)
  - From *salt, brackish* and *fresh water* agro-ecological zones (3 districts)
  - Stratification according to distance (2km) to inter-communal road
  - Random selection of 18 'focus' and 6 'non-focus' villages,  
and 30 HHs per village

# Methodological Strengths

- Extensively cross-validated evidence through **sensemaking processes** involving ca. 300 people
- Validity of findings ensured by **methodological consistency** based on a robust sampling strategy and systematic use of methods/processes
- Analytical clarity created by a clear framing of impact and the use of a **ToC approach** for recalling and comparing presumed with observed impacts
- Relatively **low cost (\$90K)** for a rigorous mixed-methods TBIE including participatory sensemaking directly feeding into learning and advocacy
- PIALA components fitted with IFAD's results-oriented measurement & management approach
  - Production of a substantial amount of material (guidance, models, templates, critical notes) allowing **standardization and integration** with IFAD's self-evaluation system
- Innovative **data collation and reporting structure** that reveals the cascading changes and causes following the ToC *backwards* from 'rural poverty impact' to 'enabling institutions'

# Methodological Limitations

## Methodological:

- focus and rigor in causal explanation using the ToC
- critical valuation of project contributions with stakeholders
- collation of mixed-data and identification of data gaps and quantification/qualification needs during fieldwork
- Possible sample biases (#38-39)
  - high heterogeneity
  - insufficient matching

## Capacity:

- resources to address the tension btw depth-scope
- competencies to properly deal with tensions btw data-process, truth-multiplicity and independence-ownership
- competencies to collect, collate/present and analyze mixed-data to ensure sufficient and accurate quant-qual integration and gender differentiation
- documentation and translation of raw and interim data

# Adaptations & support for next Ghana pilot

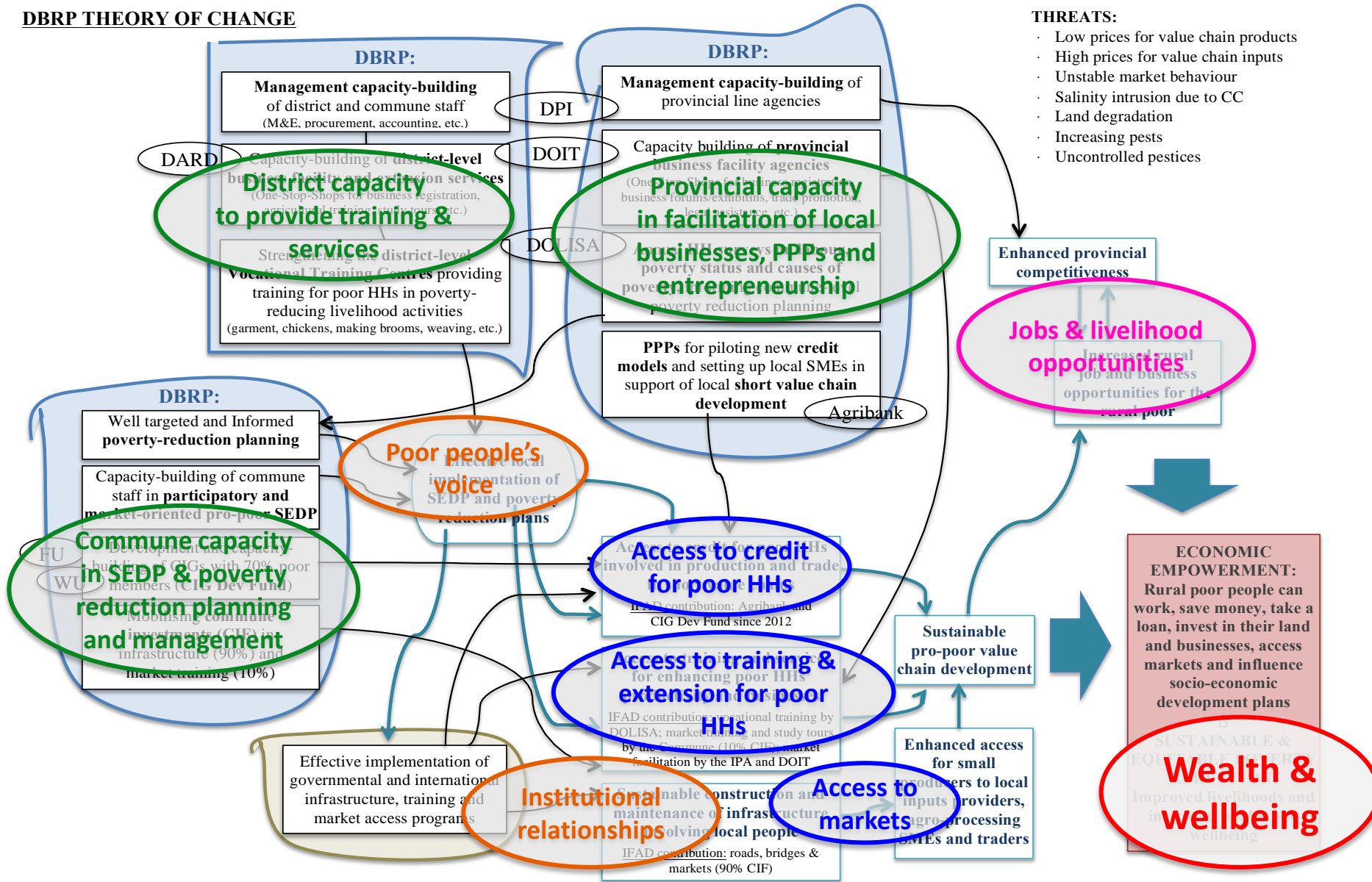
- Ensure sufficient research capacity for mixed methods TBIE
- Determine sampling structure and criteria based on a thorough ToC reconstruction process
- Increase sample of participatory research to enhance **quant-qual integration** of causal inference
- Improve methods sequence to enable interim data processing
- Interim control of quant & qual data processing before final reporting
- Require interim reports on crucial triangulation, cross-validation and reflection processes
- Consider budget in relation to expected quality and use



**Key  
evaluation  
findings**

# Systemic & theory-based analysis

## DBRP THEORY OF CHANGE



# Assumptions of DBRP's theory of “making markets work for the rural poor”

- *With participatory & market-oriented SEDP and sufficient capacity for services and business/PPP facilitation, local economies will grow and poor & vulnerable groups will equally participate and benefit.*
- *Poor & vulnerable groups can best be indirectly targeted through ClGs and PPPs that enable poor people to share risks with and learn from more successful people.*
- *Strengthening mass organisations will create greater and equal access to training & services for poor HHs and vulnerable groups.*
- *Local & home-based income-generating activities for women will increase their wealth and wellbeing.*

# Main DBRP mechanisms

- participatory and market-oriented **SEDP** focused on short VC development;
- **CIF** that is 90% for infrastructure and 10% market training and study tours for small producers and traders,
- **CIG dev fund** to provide training and credit to CIGs with min. 70% poor and 50% women involved in short VCs
- **PPP models** to provide local SMEs, business HHs and producers involved in short VCs with credit and technical support
- **capacity-building** of provincial, district and commune line agencies to create businesses environment and access to credit, training and services.

# Linking evidence of causes & changes

## ACCESS TO TRAINING, SERVICES & CREDIT:

- Increased access to individual credit
- Loans from more diverse sources\*
- **Limited uptake of CIG credit**
- **Increased access to extension and training for poor O+ & O->**
- Better organized SMGs and CIGs

## ACCESS TO MARKETS:

- More local trade due to improved infrastructure
- Improved access to *inadequate* market information
- **Limited uptake of market information**

## VOICE & RELATIONSHIPS:

- Better participatory SEDP\*\*\*
- Improved relationships btw villagers and local officials (incl. WU & FA)\*\*\*
- Shift in governance

## JOBS & LIVELIHOODS:

- More livelihood diversification\*\*
- Cultivation and livestock shifts
- **Job increase for landless HHs**
- Outmigration of youth

## INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY:

- Increased **commune** capacity
- Improved **district** capacity
- Enhanced role & capacity of **WU** \*\*\*
- Improved services provided by **FA** \*\*\*

**DBRP**

## WEALTH & WELLBEING:

- General poverty decrease & income increase
- High food security
- **More income decrease for poorer HHs\***

\*In focus more than in non-focus villages

\*\*No differences btw focus & non-focus villages

\*\*\*Varying quality & results

# Wealth & wellbeing

## Changes:

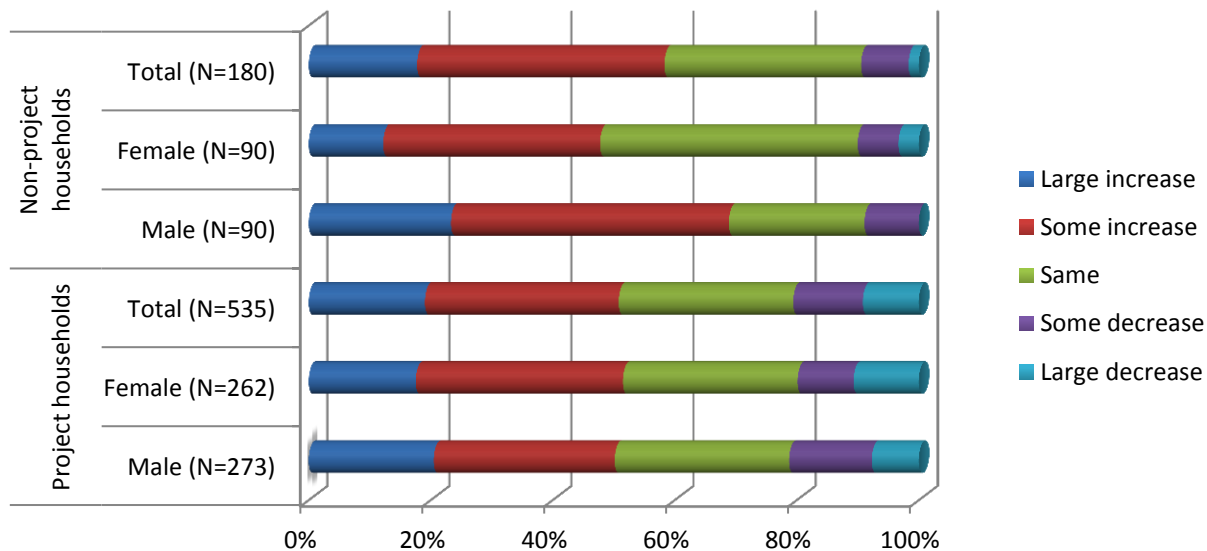
- Fewer HHs with food shortages in (2.5%) compared to 2009 baseline (8%)
- HHs generally moved up from *poor* to *near-poor* to *well-off* with overall trend of income increase
  - 51% in focus (compared to 58% in non-focus) villages increased income
  - average annual income of \$2198 in focus (compared to \$1992 in non-focus) villages
  - no statistical difference between women & men in focus and non-focus villages
- **Poorer HHs reported greater incidence income *decrease*;**  
non-poor HHs reported greater incidence of income ***increase*\***

## Causes:

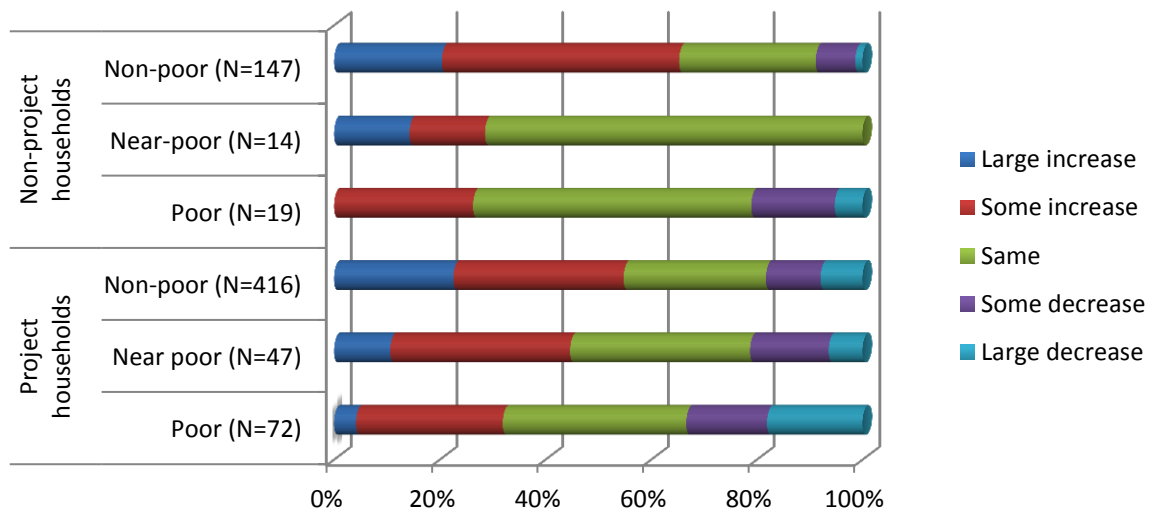
- Evidence of mixed causes (incl. more responsive institutions, improved governance, poverty-reduction programs, shifts in livelihoods, diverse sources of credit, more traders in local markets offering better prices...)
- Reasonable DBRP contribution to generally improved incomes
- **Strong indications of risks & threats (e.g. market instability, salinity intrusion and pests) impacting on poor HHs' income & resilience**

\* Statistical significance: Chi coefficient < 0.05.  
In focus even more so than in non-focus villages.

**Chart 2. Distribution per sex of respondent of changes in household income (2007-2012)**



**Chart 3. Distribution of reported income changes across poverty groups**



# Jobs & Livelihoods

## Changes:

- General increase of livelihood diversification\*
  - sharp increase of % of males and females in most livelihoods
  - 61% HHs in focus (compared to 74% in non-focus) villages reported new or intensified economic activity in past 5 years (*gender differences #141*)
- Important cultivation shifts, + in FW but – in BW & SW areas
  - more ornamental plants and fruit (+) in FW-areas
  - more coconut production & processing in BW-areas
  - **more rice cultivation and shrimp farming (-) in BW & SW areas**
- Livestock changes:
  - increased cattle production
  - fewer but larger pig herds
- Increase of jobs for landless HHs due to livelihood shifts
- Increase of landless or smallholder HHs involved in businesses
- Increase of youth outmigration\*

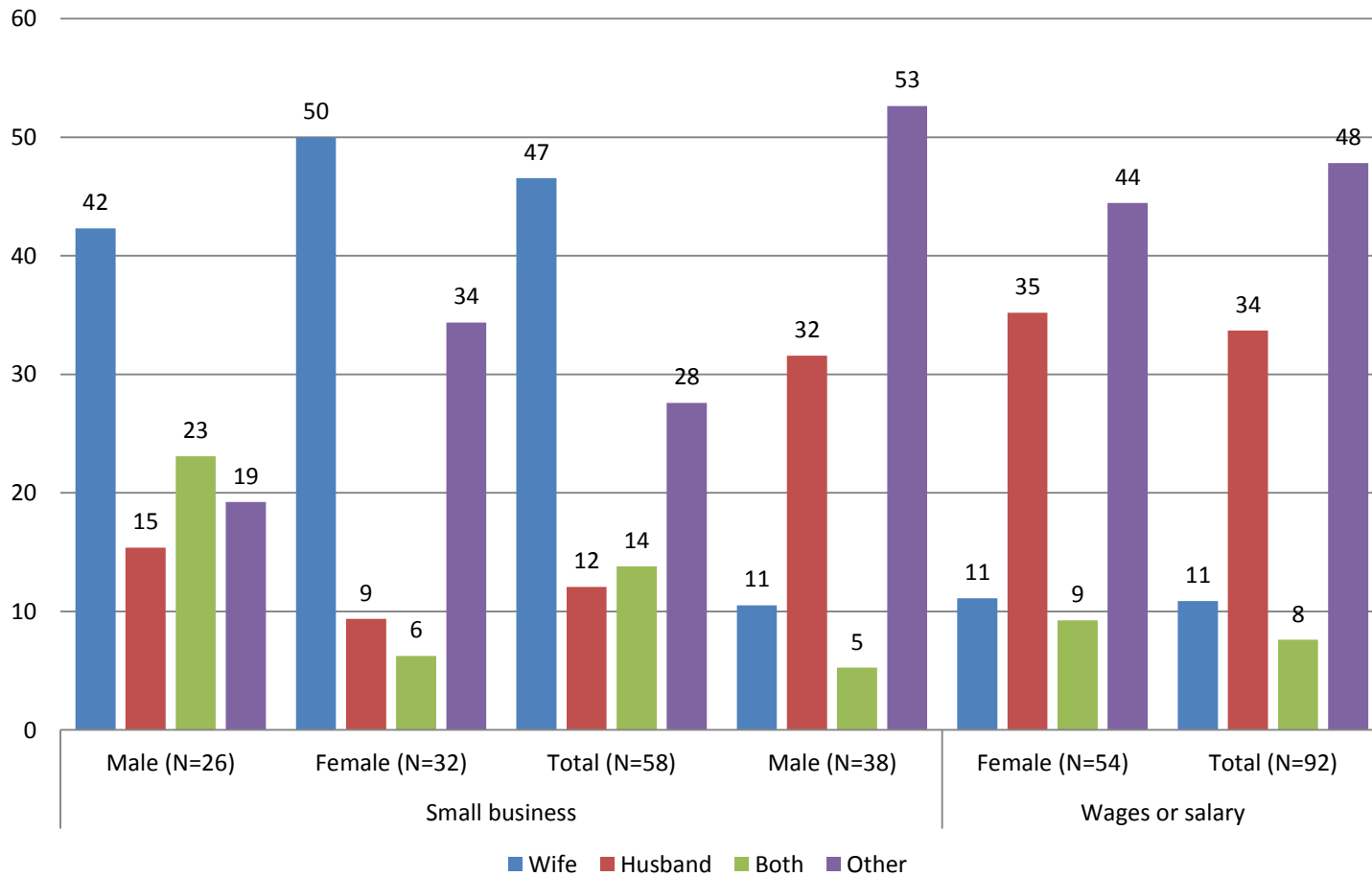
## Causes:

- DBRP-supported credit, training & extension, infrastructure, SEDP\*\*
- Market price fluctuations, increased salinity intrusion & pests

\*No differences btw focus & non-focus villages \*\*Similar activities in non-focus villages



**Chart 5. Who contributes most to the new or increased household economic activities by sex of respondents (project villages)? (%)**



# Access to Credit, Training & Services

## Changes:

- Increased credit from Social Policy Bank and VBARD
- Loans obtained from more diverse sources\*
- Self-managed groups and CIGs are found better organized and more effective
- Limited uptake of credit from CIG Dev Fund
- Increased access to training and extension for poor people and CIG members (both O+ & O-> reported improved skills)
- Inconsistent evidence about effects from training on livelihood opportunities for (near-)poor HHs

## Causes:

- More favourable and simple lending procedures (incl. unsecured terms and low interest rates)

\* More in focus than in non-focus villages

# Access to markets

## Changes:

- More local trade as a result of infrastructure improvement (roads, markets and bridges)
- Noticeable improvement in availability of market information
- Type of market information still found inadequate and uptake by villagers remains limited

## Causes:

- DBRP-supported CIF → commune investments planned through participatory SEDP

# Voice & relationships

## Changes:

- More participatory and market-oriented SEDP --varying quality & results\*
- Improved relationships between villagers and local officials, incl. WU & FA --varying quality & results
- Fundamental shift in governance that may become a lynchpin for “making markets work for the rural poor”

## Causes:

- Enhanced capacity of village, commune and district level officials in participatory and market-oriented SEDP
- Motivation and support of commune leaders (incl. WU & FA), which in some locations is high and in others rather low
- Most (near-)poor HHs reported not to use WU's and/or FA's services, leaving questions of reach and direct targeting

\* Only in one of the six villages where in-depth research was conducted, SEDP was considered successful

# Institutional capacity

## Changes:

- Significant increase in capacity of village/commune/district officials in participatory and market-oriented SEDP
- Improved capacities of commune staff in management and CIF, bidding & procurement, survey, M&E, accounting
- Improved coordination and capacity of district officials in management, extension, training and business facilitation
- Enhanced role of the WU in community development and poverty reduction -- varying results\*
- Increased technical support of the FA to crop cultivation, livestock breeding and contracted farm labour --varying results\*

## Causes:

- Involvement of commune officials in management of infrastructure works
- Support from DBRP, the National Target Programme for NRD, and Decision 1956 on vocational training for rural workers

\* No clear difference between focus and non-focus villages/communes.

# Emerging issues

- Risks & sustainability threats of new market and livelihood options
  - dropping prices and low returns (e.g. coconut, rice, handicraft)
  - environmental instability (e.g. salinity, pests & plagues)
  - health issues (e.g. in shrimp farming, contract labor)
  - job insecurity (e.g. contract labor)
- Inadequate reach of poor HHs and vulnerable groups in short VCs
- Untested assumptions
  - poor people's ability to use services and participate in markets
  - job opportunities for improving women's wealth & wellbeing
  - building capacities will make markets work inclusively

# *Recommendations*

- Further investigate:
  - an apparent widening opportunity and income gap
  - risks & sustainability threats of new livelihood and market options in pro-poor VCs
  - gender inequalities in out-house employment opportunities and consequences in terms of empowerment
  - youth needs for safe, secure and sustained employment in the region;
  - necessary policy changes and incentives for PSE to effectively reach and include poor HHs and vulnerable groups in short VCs
- Develop and pilot-test:
  - direct poverty, gender & youth targeting mechanisms
  - risk monitoring & mitigation mechanisms
  - broadening & deepening SEDP participation mechanisms