



# Guidelines for Fisheries Co-management

January 2009





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# Forward

The fisheries sector of Lao PDR includes both capture fisheries and aquaculture. Together the activities of raising and catching fish and other aquatic animals are an important component of food security and household economy for majority of Lao people. Fisheries products are used by Lao people for both consumption and commerce, providing people with an important animal protein and cash income, accounting for a significant contribution to national economy. As the country of Lao PDR is located in the Mekong River Basin it also provides habitat for the incredible aquatic biodiversity that the region is famous for.

The development for the fisheries sector, by improving the safety and production of the aquaculture sector combined with the management and conservation of wild fish stock, will be an important step towards national development goals for poverty reduction, social development and environmental protection. Sustainable development for aquaculture and the management of capture fisheries must be improved in a coordinated way to ensure there are safe and reliable sources of fish for Lao consumers in a growing market.

These guidelines for fisheries co-management are important steps towards building the technical capacity to manage capture fisheries and conserve aquatic biodiversity in Lao PDR. The guidelines are the result of collaboration between Department of Livestock and Fisheries and the WWF. The steps outlined in this book are based upon the field experience of these partners in the development and extension of fisheries co-management in Lao PDR. The guidelines will also be an important tool in the implementation of the Fisheries Law currently being drafted by Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry.

I believe these guidelines will be an important resource for fisheries staff at the district, provincial and national levels. The guidelines will be also useful to academics and students who are researching aquatic management in Lao PDR. Successful collaboration to manage capture fisheries will be an important element of the mandate of the DLF, and these guidelines will provide technical staff and communities with a strong foundation to continue the development of capture fisheries management in Lao PDR.



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# The Participatory Approach to Management

Participatory management applies a bottom-up approach that incorporates the experience and understanding of local communities in planning for the management of aquatic resources. It is a process that relies on the knowledge and participation of the aquatic resource users in the design, implementation and monitoring of management systems.

In participatory aquatic resources management, the responsibility for management is shared between the community and local government authorities. Regulations are defined, enforced and monitored through a process that is sensitive and adaptive to local conditions. Therefore, each participatory management agreement is unique and reflects the actual conditions and needs as perceived by local communities and government to meet the policy of the government.





## Guidelines for Developing Fisheries Co-management

The following guidelines have been developed and tested through the collaboration of the Department of Livestock and Fisheries and WWF. These steps are intended to guide the process of establishing participatory management arrangements for living aquatic resources. Rather than being a rigid tool for implementation, the information provided in these guidelines may be adapted to the needs and understanding of the resource users within the community. The steps outlined below are intended to highlight some important issues to consider while monitoring the progress towards establishing management arrangements for living aquatic resources.

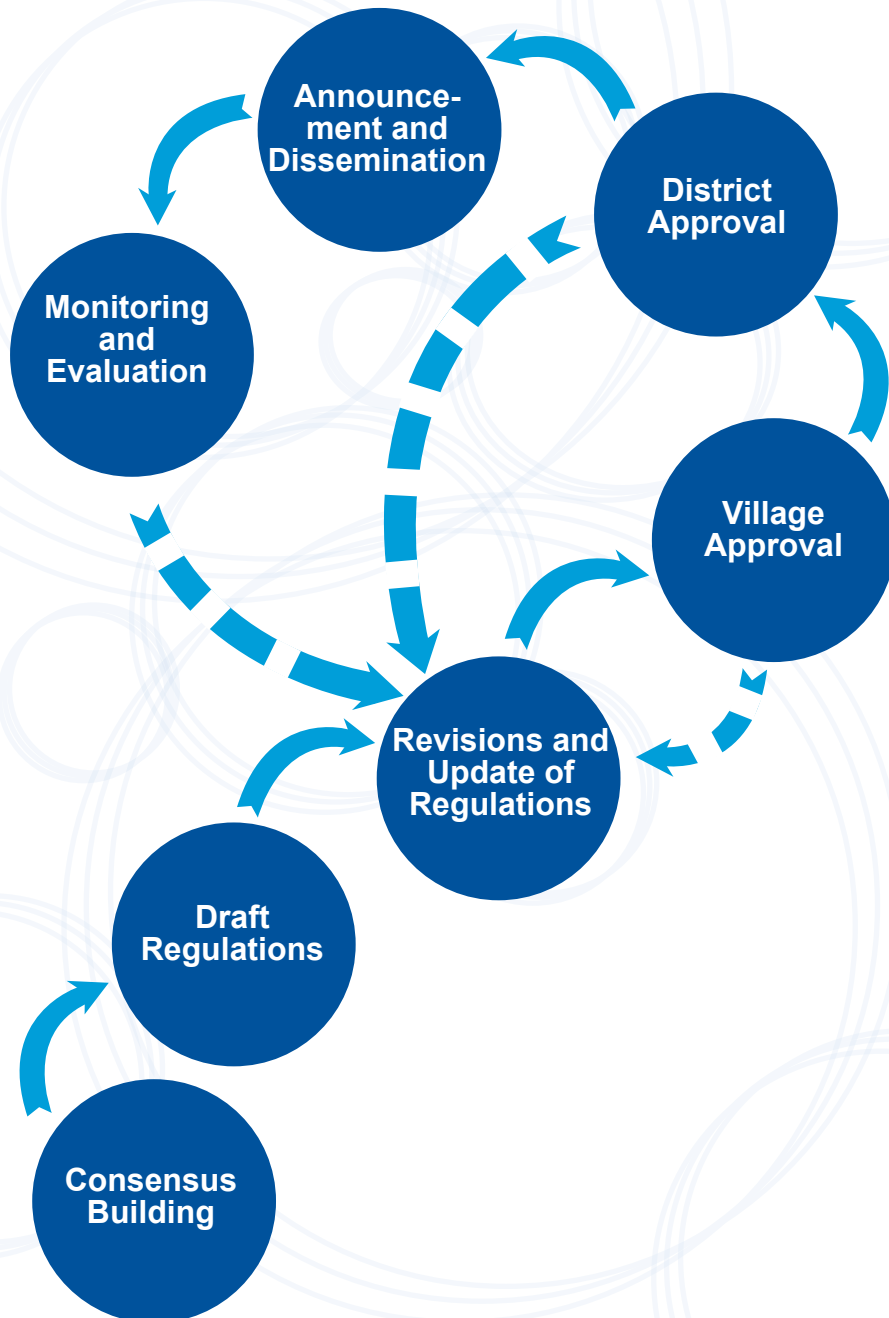
These guidelines are intended for implementation with village and local authorities for the management of common property aquatic resources. They do not ONLY apply to villages who wish to establish fish conservation zones in deep pools of mainstream river channels. Although deep pools are indeed important, other critical habitat such as rapids, streams, ponds, or other types of wetlands may also be in need of management. Therefore, these guidelines may be applied with any community or group of communities that have identified a need for managing common-property aquatic resources, regardless of the type of water body.



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# Key Steps in developing regulations for Participatory Aquatic Resources Management



# Key Steps in developing regulations for Participatory Aquatic Resources Management

## STEP 1: Consensus Building

Achieving consensus within and between villages is essential for the successful implementation of regulations for aquatic resource management. Organizing village meetings will help to build consensus through open discussion to identify the issues that management will seek to solve. To achieve consensus it is important to have a high degree of participation from as many people as possible. The people should feel that their ideas and concerns are included in the process to develop village regulations for aquatic resource management.

### Action

- Village meeting to discuss the importance of fisheries, use of aquatic biodiversity and sustainable management of aquatic resources;
- Site selection for village fisheries management area using habitat mapping exercises to identify critical habitat and demarcate the boundaries;
- Situation analysis to understand the use and importance of fisheries;
- Problem analysis to determine problems and opportunities;
- Define the village objectives for management.





Activities	Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Village meetings;</li> <li>• Interview fishermen, women and children;</li> <li>• Gather information on capture fisheries management;</li> <li>• Habitat mapping to determine critical fisheries habitat;</li> <li>• Collect data on fishing gear, fish species, migratory information.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consensus and understanding of the objectives for management regulations;</li> <li>• Understanding of issues and problems that management seek to solve;</li> <li>• Generate information on fisheries that can be used to improve management.</li> </ul>



## **Important Issues**

- Are villagers interested in participating in the management of aquatic resources?
- What do the villagers see as the benefits of managing aquatic resources?
- Are there any fishing conflicts in the area? (ie; outsiders, illegal gear, etc)
- What are the current regulations? Was there a management system in the past?
- Where do the people fish? What types of habitat are there? (ex; deep pools, rapids, wetlands, seasonally flooded forests, streams, etc) How do people fish? How much fish do they catch?
- Who has access to these habitat types? (ex; women, children, men, people from another village or ethnic group)
- What types of fishing gear are used in each habitat? Are there seasonal changes in fishing gear? What fish species are caught with each gear type? Are there seasonal changes in fish species caught?
- It is important to look at the seasonal aspects of the fishery. During peak fishing seasons people from neighbouring villages may be allowed to fish certain habitat. The access rights and historical use of certain habitat must be well understood in order to solicit input and participation from everyone who uses the fishery.

Assisting villages to develop regulations for aquatic resource management is a complex task that requires time and consideration to identify all of the stakeholders and understand the issues. A process that excludes legitimate users of the fishery could lead to ineffective enforcement of regulations, and conflicts within and between villages. Similarly the lack of interest or social harmony within a community can jeopardize the effectiveness of the process.







It must first be determined if the community understands and agrees that their fisheries are worth managing, and then determine if there is sufficient support from the users of these aquatic resources to develop effective management regulations.

## STEP 2: Drafting Regulations

The drafting of regulations for aquatic resource management should be done by a group of villagers with assistance from District of Agriculture and Forestry Office (DAFO), Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office (PAFO). The group responsible to make the first draft can be a large or small group of village representatives. The details of the draft regulations should reflect the agreements made by the broader village during the previous step of consensus building.

### **Action**

- Explain the steps to be taken to formally establish the village regulations on aquatic resource management;
- Define the roles and responsibilities of the agencies involved in implementing the regulations (DAFO, PAFO, village agencies);
- Present the content of the draft regulations to the community for feedback, clarification and revision.

### **The content of the village regulations should include the following:**

- Objective of the village regulations for aquatic resource management;
- Description of aquatic resources within the village area;
- Aquatic resource use and management in the village;
- A detailed description of regulations;
- Penalties and fines for each regulation;
- Details of village agencies responsible for implementation of the regulations;



Activities	Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Village meetings to discuss fisheries management and to draft regulations.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Draft regulations (single village or multi-village regulations) that describe the village objectives, history and use of aquatic biodiversity, restricted activities and areas, penalties and fines, and enforcement authority.</li></ul>



### **Important Issues:**

- Who is included in developing the village regulations? Who is excluded from this process? Are there any fishermen that are not participating in drafting the regulations?
- As much as possible, the needs of women, poorer households, and minorities should be given specific consideration.
- If agreement cannot be reached the development of fisheries regulations should be postponed.

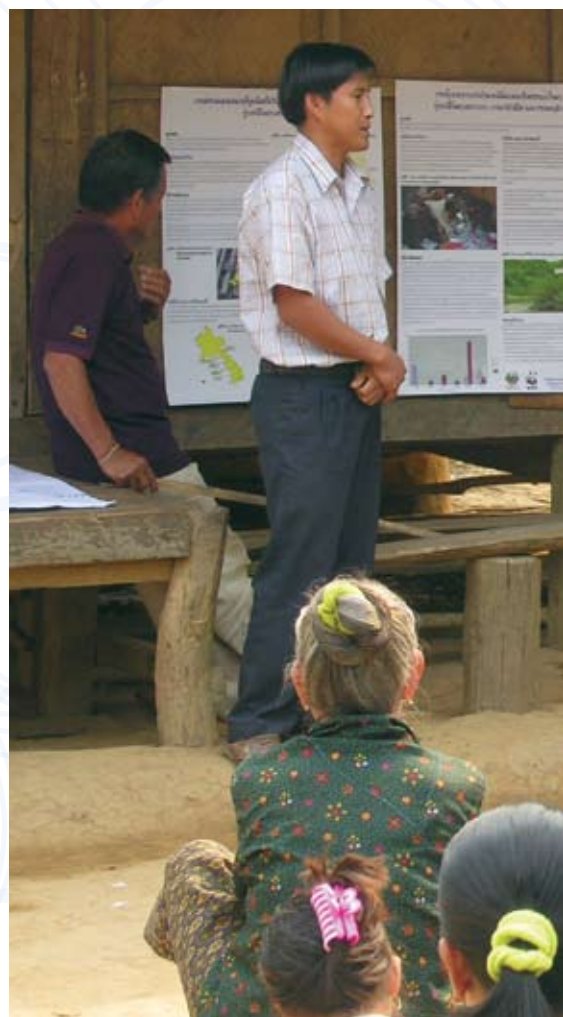


## STEP 3: Revision of Draft Regulations

The draft regulations must be reviewed and revised by the community to ensure that the document accurately reflects the intent of the villagers during the consensus building activities. The review process should be organized by the village authorities who are responsible for presenting the draft regulations in detail to the community for discussion and feedback. A revised draft of the regulations will be developed based on the feedback provided. Documentation of this revised draft can be facilitated by DAFO and PAFO technical staff.

### **Action**

- Convene a village meeting where village chief presents each section of the draft regulations for comment and review;
- Revise the draft regulations based upon villager feedback.



Activities	Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Village meeting to explain how regulations will be developed and who should participate;</li> <li>• Discussion of the draft regulations with people in the villages, expert fishers, neighbouring villages;</li> <li>• Record the feedback from the different groups of people and revise the draft regulations.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft regulations for aquatic resources management (reviewed and revised based upon village feedback).</li> </ul>



### **Important Issues**

- Who is involved in offering feedback on the regulations?
- Who is not involved?
- Will the regulations cause conflicts with certain groups?



## STEP 4: Agreement on Revised Draft Regulations by Local-level Stakeholders

A meeting should be held to present the revised draft regulations to a broader group of stakeholder at the local level. Continued discussion and feedback from this wide range of local-level stakeholders will help to increase awareness of the village regulations and strengthen the implementation and enforcement of the regulations. The discussion should seek to include stakeholders from outside of the target village, including neighbouring villages, District agencies, such as the agriculture office, administrative office, military and police. The draft regulations should be presented in detail to clarify each item and achieve consensus and approval. Further revision of draft regulations may be necessary based upon feedback from the various stakeholders. Written comments and agreement with the revised draft regulations should be recorded during this meeting.

### **Action**

- Convene a meeting to present the revised draft regulations to a wider range of stakeholders for feedback and acknowledgement.



Activities	Who is involved?	Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Village meeting to present the draft regulations in detail;</li><li>• Revise draft regulations based on feedback.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Community members;</li><li>• Village authorities;</li><li>• DAFO;</li><li>• District Governors Office;</li><li>• District Police;</li><li>• District Army;</li><li>• District Judiciary;</li><li>• Representatives of surrounding villages;</li><li>• PAFO.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Understanding and approval of regulations by neighbouring villages, District agencies, such as the agriculture office, administrative office, military and police.</li></ul>



### **Important Issues**

- Good presentation of the community is important at this meeting to build ownership of the draft regulations.
- Ideally, all potential local stakeholders should be included in this meeting.

## STEP 5: District Approval of Aquatic Resources Management Regulations

When the Regulations have been finalized, documented and printed, they are issued by the Village Head and submitted to the District Agriculture and Forestry Office (DAFO). DAFO will issue a letter endorsing the Regulations, and submit them to the District Governor approval. A letter of agreement approving the Regulations will be issued and signed by the District Governor.

### **Action**

- Prepare hard copies for signature by the village authorities and District Governor Office;
- The final document should signatures the village authorities, District Agriculture Office and District Governor's Office;
- Prepare a signboard to erect in the village to announce the fishing regulations.



Activities	Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Regulations are signed by the Village authorities and presented to DAFO;</li><li>• DAFO signs and endorses the regulations and presents them to the District Governor;</li><li>• District Governor signs the regulations and issues an agreement to allow the village to implement the proposed regulations.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Approval of the village regulations by District Governors Office.</li></ul>





### **Important Issues**

- Formal endorsement is extremely important, but may vary slightly from District to District. For example in some districts they have required the signature of the Village Party Secretary as well as the Village Head. Other Districts may not require the DAFO office to sign, and regulations are endorsed and approved by the District Governor's Office.

## STEP 6: Public Announcement of the Establishment of Village Regulations for Aquatic Resources Management

Public knowledge of the new village regulations for aquatic resources management is an important step to ensure effective implementation of the regulations, and to avoid potential conflicts that may arise from uncertainty of the regulations. Public announcement of the regulations offers the community the opportunity to take pride in their communal effort to towards the responsible use of aquatic resources and protection of aquatic biodiversity. It also is an opportunity to share information between villages on best practice in the management of aquatic resources and encourage other villages to initiate the process to establish village regulations in other areas and critical habitats. Public announcement of the regulations should be disseminated as broadly as possible, and can be in the form of village ceremonies and meetings, distribution of signed copies of the regulations, village sign boards, television and radio news programs, and press releases in local media outlets.

### **Action**

- The final public approval and launch of the regulations;
- Prepare signs demarcating management areas;
- Distribute copies of the approved regulations to all local stakeholders;
- Distribute original copies of the approved regulations to the village authorities, DAFO, District Governor's Office, and PAFO.







Activities	Who is involved?	Outputs
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide copies of the approved regulations to all local stakeholder representatives;</li> <li>• File original copies of the regulations in agreed locations;</li> <li>• Inform the general public of the management regulations via local news media;</li> <li>• Conduct opening ceremony (optional) and erect village signboard.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community members;</li> <li>• Village authorities;</li> <li>• DAFO;</li> <li>• PAFO;</li> <li>• District Authorities;</li> <li>• Neighboring villages.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Village sign board to publicly announce the details of the regulations;</li> <li>• Distribution of signed copies of the regulations to neighbouring villages, DAFO, Governors Office, Military and Police;</li> <li>• Press release, radio and television broadcast in local news media;</li> <li>• Awareness of the regulations amongst the general public.</li> </ul>

### **Important Issues**

- Many potential conflicts can be avoided by ensuring that all stakeholders (including neighbouring villages) are properly informed about the management regulations.



## Conclusions and follow-up

The steps for establishing participatory aquatic resources management outlined in this document describe how to organize and establish an official agreement on the local-level management of aquatic resources. Rather than offer strict guidelines, they should be seen as steps in a flexible process that encourages full participation of stakeholders, promotes local ownership, and meets the requirements for formal recognition of participatory aquatic resources management and authorization of the power to enforce village regulations.

It is important to remember that the results of this process will be a set of rules intended to meet specific objectives and address problems identified by local stakeholders. Naturally it will be important to review these regulations on a regular basis (at least once every 3 years) to assess progress towards meeting the set objectives, as well as to identify new problems or challenges that may have emerged concerning the management and use of aquatic resources. These local management arrangements therefore, may need to be periodically revised based upon the results of regular review of current status and threats to the aquatic resources.

As the objectives are defined and agreed upon by the local community, it is important that the community members are involved in periodically reviewing the effectiveness of regulations in meeting these objectives. This approach is often called “Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PM&E)” and includes the ideas and knowledge of the community in defining the parameters to measure the effectiveness of their management effort. Such regular review of village regulations and management plans should be first conducted within the community, and then followed up through consultation with other stakeholders, such as neighboring villages. Any changes or amendments should be endorsed by the DAFO, approved by the District Governor and announced to the public.

By developing participatory approaches for the management and use of local aquatic resources, and continuing to review and revise them to address emerging needs, the local communities and Government agencies can collaborate towards effective management strategies and continue to benefit from the rich aquatic resources of the Lao PDR.



## More information

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