



# TOWARDS A REGIONAL INITIATIVE TO DEVELOP E-LEARNING RESOURCES IN AGROECOLOGY

Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 11<sup>th</sup> of October 2017

Cambodiana Hotel



ALiSEA  
Agroecology Learning Alliance in South East Asia



ACTAE  
Towards an agroecological transition in South East Asia



## **Brief – Towards a regional initiative to develop E-learning resources in Agroecology - Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 11th of October 2017**

Based on on-going activities in the field of training and higher education implemented by a range of partners within ACTAE project and beyond (see program of the event) a regional workshop was organized in Phnom Penh on October 11 2017 bringing together different partners involved in training, awareness raising and higher education. This workshop was organized on the continuity of a 1<sup>st</sup> event organized by ALISEA in Vientiane in June 2017. A diversity of participants attend the event with representatives from several universities in the region (Thailand, Lao PDR, Cambodia, Myanmar), research institutions, representatives from Ministry of Agriculture, departments of Agricultural Land Resources Management, and NGOs.

The first focus of the event was on e-learning as an integrated tool between different actors and beneficiaries. Discussions were conducted prior the event one between ITC, SupAgro, RUA, Queensland University, GDA/DALRM, GRET and CIRAD to identify common expectations for this event and outputs.

### ***Discussion at the Cyber University of ITC***

The 1<sup>st</sup> discussion was done at the Cyber University of ITC with Mr Samboeun HEAN and his colleagues. Stéphane de Tourdonnet and Sarah Clerquin presented the current dynamic around the MOOC Agroecology for which two versions have been developed (French and English). They emphasized that running out a MOOC takes a lot of time that the vast majority of lecturers and researchers do not have. Thus, the MOOC is currently conducted by students, with support from lectures/researchers, and this activity is recognized as part of the credit units/systems for the students. The 2<sup>nd</sup> version of the MOOC was developed in English directly by French lecturers and researchers. It has to be noted that the success of this 2<sup>nd</sup> version is much less than the previous one. This is mainly due to the lack of partners to contextualize the MOOC. A 3<sup>rd</sup> version of the MOOC will be developed with Spanish partners from Argentina in the coming months using introductory module and introducing specific case studies to enrich the content and to fit with contexts in Southern America and Argentina particularly. A similar approach could be initiated in the region. Gunnar Kirchoff from Queensland University emphasized that he submitted a proposal to ACIAR to develop e-learning courses on Conservation Agriculture. The project was not funded and main questions were related to the economic model where it seems better to charge to have a better involvement and quality of graduation. The main advantages of a MOOC are related to the involvement of a large number of students and beside that to a large diversity of actors. The audience of the MOOC Agroecology from SupAgro illustrates this characteristic with only 7% of the audience which is of student type and more than 50% which corresponds to a public of the type operators of development. During this exchange with Mr. Samboeun HEAN and his colleagues it was highlighted that a consortium of partners is much more efficient to bring a common vision and higher visibility to the actions; the role of each partners has to be clearly defined at the beginning of the process. ITC and the Cyber University proposed annual training for national universities. They also promote an E-forum that was organized on October 31<sup>st</sup> 2017 to make the link with others universities addressing different topics such as policy, technology and practices sharing among partners. An Innovation Challenge is also implemented with competition between students, to raise entrepreneurship. A co-working place will be established at ITC to connect students and young entrepreneurs with business and industries players.

### ***Discussion CIRAD, GRET, SupAgro***

Different beneficiaries are targeted with smallholder farmers, consumers, higher education, development operators and policy-makers. Each beneficiary has specific expectations, and also uses and has access to different technology and communication tools. The 'starting' point per beneficiary should be on the uses and accessibility of training/education and communication tools by different beneficiaries. Smallholder farmers have more and more access to Smartphone applications that are used as a way to share knowledge from farmers to farmers, from

development operators to farmers ... On another hand, development operators and higher education systems constitute a continuum with beneficiaries who can share common training and education resources; in this case e-learning tool can be promoted as an integrating support making the bridge between these two groups. Consumers and policy-makers look for different kind of information and are mainly connected through social media. Three different groups have been identified with (i) policy-makers and consumers, (ii) development operators and higher education, and (iii) smallholder farmers. Those groups will be targeted through different initiatives (ALISEA, ACTAE/CANSEA) to raise awareness on Agroecological transition and practices among a community of policy makers and consumers, to integrate Agroecological approach into higher education curriculum, and to offer to smallholder farmers access to a wider range of technical support through Smartphone application for example. Three main dimensions have been identified to work with the different working groups with (i) a common vision, (ii) role of the partners/actors and (iii) time & means.

### ***Presentations during the event***

The event was organized on two main sessions with in the morning presentations from different partners in the region and in the afternoon working groups on beneficiaries identified. Dr. Bunthan NGO (RUA), Dr. OM Rommy (ITC), Dr. Chan Phaloeun (GDA) and Dr. Philippe Girad (CIRAD) did introductory speeches. During his speech, Dr. OM Rommy emphasized 3 main points with: the quality of the resources that are developed, the maintenance of an e-learning platform that requires high technical support, and to start first through a pilot action.

Presentations of the workshop are accessible through the following link and give an overview of on-going activities in the field of e-learning (ITC, Sripatum University, RUA), MOOC on Agroecology by SupAgro Montpellier, ALISEA dynamic sharing knowledge and promoting awareness raising in Agroecology for a range of stakeholders, role of universities for farmer extension services in Lao PDR, establishment of an on-line knowledge sharing platform on agrobiodiversity (NAFRI, Lao PDR), organic dynamic within the Maejo University of Thailand.

Three working groups were organized referring to the main beneficiaries with the objective to develop and promote educational resources. Three main questions have been addressed with: (i) defining a common vision, (ii) identifying partners and role of each ones, (iii) identifying means and time. A summary of the working groups is provided herein.

### **Working group 1: Smallholder farmers**

The group was composed of Mrs. Pham Thi Sen, Mrs. Sarah Clerquin, Mrs. Rica Joy Flor, Mr. Gerald Hitzler, Mr. Patrick D'Aquino, Mr. Philippe Cao Van, Mrs. Than Da Min, Mr. Syden Reach, Mr Manoluck Bounsihalath, Mr. Nivong Sipaseuth, Mr. Koy Ra, Mr. Khin Sophary, Mr. Tong Socheath.

#### ***Common vision***

- Help increase income
- Enable sustainable, climate friendly, agro-ecological practices
- Access information through e-learning (that has to be considered for this beneficiary as a diversity of tools rather than referring to the classic e-learning)

#### ***How to drive this vision?***

The group highlighted the need to use existing platforms and tools accessible for farmers.

Considering:

- How they can use it (question of access and ability)
- To be inclusive and support not only for literate (using on a large extend videos)
- How to attract and raise awareness of smallholders
- Conventional vs. new knowledge

- Need to build content with farmers

Support mechanisms:

- Emphasis on groups, not on individuals
- Mechanisms to help implement and facilitate discussion
- Select intermediaries (extension, NGO, cooperative)
- Facilitators need training
- Media

### ***Which contents and tools to be used?***

The impacts of research should be used but the focus should be on technical package and has to be adapted to local conditions.

A support tool can be designed but the technology should be flexible to give an access to a large audience.

The training has to be flexible including: (i) basic content and awareness raising and (ii) adapted locally with suitable content.

### ***Implementation***

Co-designing the training support like video (activities implemented by ALISEA with the use of SmartPhone App.) is keys to give a better access to farmer and to attract them. A pilot operation should be implemented first targeting smallholder and younger generation.

### ***Partners and role***

The list is exhaustive including all partners that have a role in the design and development of training materials. There is a need to be specific and to identify first pilot actions that can be implemented.

- Experts: program designing, know how
- Researchers: bring new ideas and adapt to local conditions
- Media (radio broadcasters): elaborated contents and broadcast to farmers
- Extension workers: facilitate and support farmers for e-learning accessibility and technological adaptation
- Policy-makers: Develop national policy on e-learning and allocate budget for ITC development and AE
- Private sector: provide support to value-chain development in agricultural production
- Farmers: active learning on AE and adopting practices

### **Working group 2: Development operators and Higher Education**

#### ***Common vision***

The group was composed of Mrs. Malavanh CHITTAVONG, Ms. Marie Grovel, Mr. Pham Van Hoi, Mr. Gunnar Kirchof, Mr. Stéphane de Tourdonnet, Mrs. Malyne Neang, Mr. Dork Chanpheakdey, Mr. Dyna Theng, Mr. Florent Tivet.

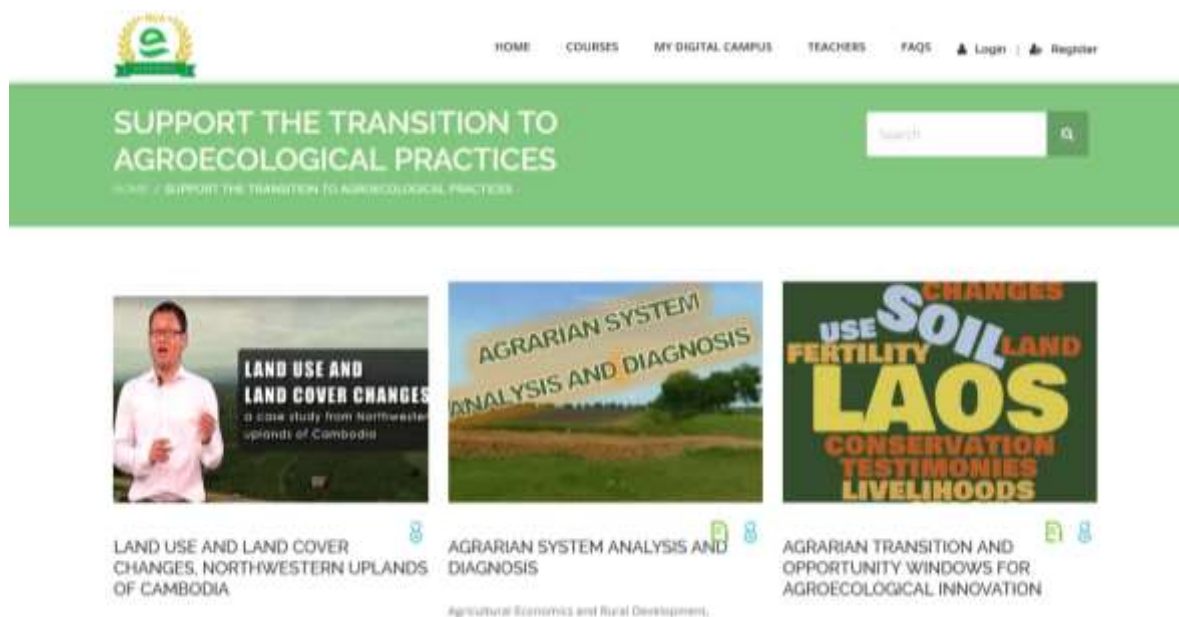
- It has been discussed a diversity of practices in the field of Agroecology and the group agrees that whatever practices and systems they should refer to the same ecological principles (re-investing in biodiversity, maximizing biomass production, recycling processes...).
- Connection should be sought between sectors & between groups meaning students and development operators.
- The learning process should be flexible with a high adaptability.

#### ***Partners and role***

Beside the identification of partners and roles, it was discussed the need of a networking and coordination process at the regional level to share knowledge and case studies on AE between partners, share the challenges to teach AE and how to make the link with the grass-root level.

Assessing and enriching the MOOC Agroecology from SupAgro to:

- Assess the relevance based on the SEA context
  - Gunnar Kirchoff (QU) and Malyne Neang (RUA) will do this assessment with their students providing credits to this work.
- Identify case studies that match to country situation. Three case studies have been developed by RUA, GDA/DALRM and CIRAD (IPERCA project, funded by Agropolis Foundation) and are available through the following links: <http://e-learning.rua.edu.kh/support-the-transition-to-agroecological-practices/>. They refer to Agrarian diagnosis, Land use and land cover changes in North-Western Cambodia and Agroecological transition in Laos.



- Develop additional courses that are related to AE. Gunnar Kirchoff proposed to open specific contents for and by country and by practices, starting with the foundation of AE that is presented in the MOOC and contributing with specific contents. Stéphane de Tourdonnet emphasized that the MOOC is open and that we can easily open a new section referring to the region.
- Make it adaptable to country situation. Dr. Pham Van Hoi emphasized that this is difficult to attract students on theory content (referring to the 1<sup>st</sup> of the MOOC on Agroecology). He suggested that the contents have to be specific and providing innovative practices to attract students.

Create working group between universities to share knowledge, challenges, provide feedback on training/educational resources.

Divide into dimensions: socio-economic, ecology ...

**Means and time**

The action focuses on assessing the MOOC Agroecology during the 1<sup>st</sup> semester of 2018 engaging students and lecturers from different universities in this process. Students will receive “credit” for this work and will have to provide feedback on each dimension of the MOOC (Introduction and what about AE, different dimensions, relevance to context) to identify contents to be adjusted and case studies to be translated into e-learning resources.

### **Working group 3: Consumers and policy makers**

The group was composed of Mr. Vorasuang, Mr. Surat Nuglor, Mrs. Morgane Cournaire, Mr. Philippe Girard, Mr. Pierre Ferrand, Mr. Soth Sereyboth, Mr. Mao Manel, Mr. Souksakkone Savath. The presentation is available on <https://sites.google.com/spu.ac.th/spu-e-learning-11oct2017/home>

#### ***Common vision***

Two main challenges need to be addressed with (i) expectations of consumers for food quality and (ii) the 'abundance' of policies related to food quality.

- For the expectations of consumers in terms of food quality there is a need to raise awareness and to establish trust between farmers and consumers.
- To address the expectations of policy-makers, the focus has to be on promoting the benefits of Agroecology but also to convince consumers to push for appropriate policies.

#### ***Partners and role***

A large diversity of partners can be involved with farmers, consumers associations, journalists, policy-makers.

#### ***Means and time***

Through two main dimensions:

- Education: e-learning and others tools to raise awareness
- Promotion: use of social media, celebrity to advocate

Pierre Ferrand emphasized the need to organized side events around coming events to raise awareness, gives higher visibility and push for appropriate policies.