Macroeconomic Study of Implications of Small Scale Farmers’ Investment in the four Lower Mekong River Basin countries (Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam)

Background

“Sustaining and Enhancing the Momentum for Innovation and Learning around the System of Rice Intensification in the Lower Mekong river Basin countries (SEMIL-SRI-LMB) is a sixty-month European Union funded project led by the Asian Institute of Technology along with its partners including Oxfam and the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO). The project associates are the SRI-Rice Centre of the Cornell International Institute for Food, Agriculture and Development (CIFAD) in the US, and the University of Queensland in Australia. The project is implemented in Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam. It seeks to contribute to maintaining food security, generating income and enhancing resilience of rain-fed smallholder farmers of the Lower Mekong Region (LMB) confronting climate change. The project’s primary beneficiaries include male and female smallholder farmers, landless laborers and national policy makers. Landless laborers who generate their income and livelihood by working in rice cultivation will have opportunities to take part in a wide range of farmer centered activities to obtain new knowledge and skills for diversification of livelihood generation options.

Real growth in Southeast Asia should recover from slowing during 2011-12 and achieve a robust pace over 2013-17, according to the results of the OECD Development Center’s MPF-2013. Growth of the Southeast Asian region is projected to average 5.5% over 2013-17. The projected growth for ASEAN countries highlights the fact that some are at an earlier stage of development, while others are at the stage where further rapid gain in productivity become more difficult to achieve. Growth in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Myanmar and Vietnam is projected to be quite rapid over the medium term from over 6% for Cambodia and Myanmar and more than 7% in Loa PDR. Despite the growth in the SEA region, many countries in the LMB have witnessed economic growth in recent years. This has been accompanied by massive land acquisition for economic purposes¹ and land accumulation has been happening in many ways over the past decades.

Private consumption and investment will be the main drivers of growth – Private consumption is likely to be especially robust over the medium term and the main contributor to overall growth in many countries of Emerging Asian. A combination of cyclical factors, government policies and longer term shifts in economic structure that have supported consumption growth over the past several years are likely to continue. In many Emerging Asian Countries, investment growth should be as or more rapid over the next five years compared to the five years leading up to the global financial crisis. Government infrastructure spending is slated to be an importance contributor to overall investment growth in the number of Southeast Asian countries. Another importance factor is recent movement in the environment for private investment in the region.

To ensure country’s capacity many Southeast Asian countries are searching for new growth and development strategies which are more focused on domestic demand and better adapted to the changing international market conditions. Policy makers in the region recognize the need to adapt their development strategies and indeed have included several new elements that reflect a shift towards a new growth model in their medium-term development plans. These elements include human capital development, social and labour market policies, policies to promote greener economies and policies to address economic and social disparities. The policy challenges facing each country depend to a large extent on their level of development. For instance, Cambodia faces the challenge of building and upgrading its infrastructure to bring its agriculture sector into the commercial mainstream. Milled rice export could become and engine of growth and thereby help to reduce poverty. The productivities in agriculture and as well as other sectors in Cambodia is still the major concern on how the countries could push to their vision of new strategy development, as Cambodia’s education and technical, vocational education and training systems need to be reformed. The result is a mismatch with economic need and a large unskilled labor force².

¹ “for economic purposes” is a common argument of the Governments of the LMB countries for land acquisition activities taken places.

²
With this background the SEMIL-SRI-LMB project seeks to commission regional research on how the macroeconomic growth has significant implication to smallholder farmers, women farmers and landless producer (and women in particular) in Lower Mekong Basin countries and looking at what key macroeconomic policy development with has impact and support them to have equal benefit from country growth as well as regional growth. The research will look at the current situation of each LMB countries different macro-economic strategy development and implementation which smallholder economy is not well understood. At the same time this research will look at the opportunity cost associated with investing in smallholder agriculture of otherwise, is not well understood in the region.

Key findings, robust statistics and powerful case studies, as well as policy implications identified by the research, will be communicated constructively (via different channels, such as: seminars, workshop presentations, policy dialogues and debates) to relevant policy makers, development partners and development communities in Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam. They are expected to contribute to the formulation of relevant economic development policies and strategies to enable the benefit of the land poor, landless and smallholder male and female farmers in these countries’ economic growth.

**Objective and Scope of Research:**

The objective of the research is to identify the characteristics and implications of economic growth in LMB countries that evidently help us understand and further investigate the underlying issues of growth and its distribution in Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam.

The research also aims to analyze the growth’s socio-economic and environmental impacts on sustainable livelihoods, choices and fair sharing of/ equity benefits with the landless, land poor and smallholder farmers, particularly women.

**Deliverables:**

1) An analytical framework that will provide a basis for understanding key/common issues of smallholder farmers, women farmers and landless producers in the four LMB countries.

2) A research report combining of desk review and case studies in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Vietnam and Thailand (+25,000 words excluding any annexes) – with an executive summary - that synthesizes and reviews policies and practices pertaining to how smallholder farmers, landless and women farmers in the four LMB countries could access to fair sharing of benefit in the current economic growth context. The report shall provide clear practical policy recommendations to relevant stakeholders to improve quality and fair sharing of benefit to achieve inclusive economic growth in LMB countries at national and regional levels within the framework of the SEMIL-SRI-LMB project.

3) Four (4) policy discussion papers (each of +/- 4,000 words) with a specific country focus for policy advocacy activities of the SEMIL-SRI-LMB project;

4) A database that includes both secondary and primary data, transcripts, and pictures;

5) PowerPoint presentations of analytical framework, the key research findings and main policy recommendations/implications;

**Research groups and research questions**

Smallholder farmers (male and female), land-poor and landless whose livelihood is dependent on land and rice cultivation will be primary research focus. Since land-poor and landless laborers are among the project’s beneficiaries, it is important to understand how and to what extent the economic growth can shift toward a more sustainable and inclusive growth which led to rising productivity, innovation and choice among smallholder farmers, land-poor, landless and especially women farmers in LMB countries.

The research seeks to answer the following key questions:
1) What is the situation and current practice of economic growth that pertain the rural land-poor, landless and smallholder male/female farmers in the LMB region and 4 countries in particular?

2) What are key problems/challenges to ensure inclusive economic growth which bring more benefit to above research groups in terms of existing investment, policies and their implementation?

3) How and to what extent do the identified challenges/problems affect the decisions and choices of the research groups in attaining food security, sustainable livelihoods and wellbeing? Besides socio-economic impact, is there also environmental impact?

4) How pro-poor and gender sensitive are the economic development strategy and policy?

5) How to minimize (the potential) negative impact of current policies and practices on food security, sustainable livelihood and wellbeing of land-poor, landless and smallholder male/female farmers?

6) What can be done in terms of pro-poor policy formulation and implementation to assure food security, sustainable livelihood and choices for attaining wellbeing of the research groups?

**Suggested research methods**

The research is primarily (but not is limited to) a desk review of existing papers, such as: research documents, consultancy reports, policy papers, academic papers, government policies, strategic papers, etc. Relevant issues in 4 LMB countries should be identified and these will informed field–based case studies collection that will be conducted in Cambodia, Laos PDR and Vietnam to illustrate the dynamism and changes on food security, sustainable livelihood, choices and wellbeing of landless, land-poor and smallholder farmers in current and future economic growth in particular countries. Powerful inclusive growth stories and case studies should be gathered during field research. Consultations with key actors/informants in each LMB country are encouraged.

The selected consultant/team of consultants is expected to provide an analytical framework that: i) provides a basis for understanding of critical areas of economic growth in Southeast Asian region and critical implications of this growth to landless, land-poor, and smallholder male and female farmers that the research team is going to study; ii) describes the research methodology; and iii) provides a detailed plan for data/stories/case studies collection.

In addition, the selected researchers/team will work closely with the project’s policy advocacy advisor and Oxfam US, and consult the project’s key implementing partners e.g. the AIT, FAO, IDS, the project coordination unit (PCU), based at Asian Institute of Technology, and project management units (PMUs) located in the 4 countries, Cambodia, Laos, Vietnam and Thailand. The PCU and PMU will review the report drafts and suggest changes as per the overall objective of the project, in consultation with local partners, and provide additional information when necessary. For the field work in Cambodia, the research team will work in close consultation with the project PMU in Cambodia and their assigned staff in terms of identification and selection of research areas, research groups as well as implementation of the research in the field.

**Specific tasks assigned with associated outputs:**

Selected researcher(s) will have the opportunity to provide feedback on the TOR, key deliverables, and timelines. In overall, main tasks and required outputs are listed in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Task Assigned</th>
<th>Required Output</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Compile a list of appropriate existing research documents/studies/policies of high relevance and importance to the assignment.</td>
<td>Inception list of key studies and documents for the assignment. <strong>Output 1</strong></td>
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<td>2.</td>
<td>Develop, in consultation with PCU, and PMU where appropriate, research tools and an analysis framework that: i) defines critical the situation and current practice of economic growth that pertaining the rural land-poor, landless and smallholder male/female farmers perspective that the research team is going to look at; ii) describes</td>
<td>An analytical framework to guide the desk review and field work of the research with a proposal of key elements of the desk review and research report. This analytical framework will be shared for comments and is subjected for final approval by Oxfam US. <strong>Output 2</strong></td>
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<td>No.</td>
<td>Task Assigned</td>
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<td>1.</td>
<td>the research methodology; and iii) provides a detailed plan and criteria for case/stories gathering. This analysis framework should explain precisely how the research team is planning to address the research key questions and will be able to deliver the expected outputs. Initial outline of key desk review and research report elements should be included. Research tools should be tailor-made to fit with different research groups and the identified research methods.</td>
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<td>3.</td>
<td>Brief the analytical framework, research tool and stories gathering plan to Oxfam and key SRI-LMB group member for commenting and feedback.</td>
<td>A Power Point presentation. <strong>Output 3</strong></td>
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<td>4.</td>
<td>Upon approval of the analysis framework carry out desk research.</td>
<td>The draft desk based report(^2) will be circulated to AIT, FAO, the project coordination unit and project management units for discussion, comments and feedback. <strong>Output 4</strong></td>
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<td>5.</td>
<td>Conduct field research in Cambodia, Lao PDR, Vietnam and Thailand and Thailand analyze field data and compile into first draft report</td>
<td>A draft research report combining of desk review and case studies in Cambodia (+/-25,000 words excluding any annexes) – with an executive summary - that synthesizes and reviews policies and practices pertaining to macroeconomics in the 4 LMB countries, addressing both the national and regional level. The report should provide clear recommendations of policies and practices to relevant stakeholders to improve equity/equality benefit sharing of the current economic growth .This draft report will be circulate to AIT, FAO, the project coordination unit and project management units for discussion, comments and feedback. <strong>Output 5</strong></td>
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<td>6.</td>
<td>Present key findings and policy recommendations of research reports to a technical meeting with relevant stakeholders to validate the research findings and recommendations. Relevant stakeholders include: PCU, PMUs, OA EARO and Oxfam’ the global GROW team (via webinar or Skype conference).</td>
<td>A Power Point presentation of the key research findings and main policy recommendations. <strong>Output 6</strong></td>
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<td>7.</td>
<td>Finalization of research report and share with PCU, PMUs, SRI-LBM group for final comments and feedback; Submission of the final reports and other deliverables revised for OUS’s EARO/AIT’s sign off</td>
<td>1) Analytical framework; 2) Final research report with case studies; 3) 4 policy discussion papers targeting Cambodia, Laos, Thailand and Vietnam; 4) Power Point presentations of analytical framework; and key research findings and main policy implication; 5) Database that includes secondary and primary data, transcripts, and pictures; <strong>Output 7</strong></td>
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**Quality assurance**

\(^2\) The draft report will be shared for comments and feedbacks and it anticipates a basis of 2 rounds of comments and feedback until the final report will be submitted for approval
All outputs must be produced in English. Oxfam US’s East Asian Regional Office (OUS’s EARO) will evaluate the output’s quality. All payments will be linked to successful delivery of the above mentioned outputs, completion and approval of the milestones identified below. The selected researchers will work under the direction and guidance of the project’s Regional Policy Advisor (RPA) and will report directly to the RPA on all technical and administrative matters. The RPA, under the direction of the OUS’s EARO Deputy Regional Director, will act as liaison between the selected researchers and other project’s key stakeholders.

Duration of consultancy, indicative timeline and key milestones

The expert should allocate his/her time over the period from Middle of November 2015 to End of February.2016 to complete all activities and outputs for this research. An indicative timeline for the delivery of key milestones is detailed in the table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key Milestones that lead to approval of payment</th>
<th>Delivery Date</th>
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<tr>
<td>Milestone 1: Submission and getting approval of analytical framework</td>
<td>25/11/2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>Milestone 2: Submission of first draft desk review report to share for comments and feedbacks and plan for field work</td>
<td>28/02/2015</td>
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<tr>
<td>Milestone 3: Successful submission of/get approval of final reports and other deliverables</td>
<td>15/03/2016</td>
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Budget Schedule

The following outline should be completed. The table may be amended but with explanation attached. Total budget may not exceed USD 19,600 inclusive all associated consultancy costs, required travels and field research expenditures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Descriptions</th>
<th>Units</th>
<th>Unit cost</th>
<th>No. Units</th>
<th>Total cost</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>USD</td>
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<td>EURO @ 1.3USD</td>
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Key required documents, Selection process and expected qualification of researcher(s)

The individual researcher(s)/team of researcher(s) will be shortlisted on a competitive basis according to their qualifications. Interested researcher(s)/team of researcher(s) should submit their CV demonstrating relevant capacity, expression of interest, 2 writing samples relevant to the research topic, a concise technical proposal of maximum 3 pages or 1,500 words describing the research focus, the critical areas where the consultant (team) is going to look at and how the research should be approached; a work plan for conducting the assignment and an indicative cost estimation. Shortlisted consultants/teams of consultants will be invited for an oral discussion of their proposals.

The researcher(s)/team of researchers (or each member of the team) will be expected to demonstrate clearly her/his competence and experience in regard to the following requirements for the research consultancy:

- Advanced University Degree in public policy, or Development Economics, or related field with 15 years or more demonstrable research experience in the areas of sustainable development, agricultural and rural development, land management, land use planning;
- High familiarity with research for development;
- Knowledge of approaches, concepts and innovations relevant to the land sector and challenges/risks therein;
- Strong understanding of contemporary approaches, global trends and international conventions on land issues;
• Ability in conducting independent analysis, identifying issues, formulating options and making conclusions and recommendations that embrace local cultural and social values;

• Having the ability to articulate ideas in a clear and accurate manner including the ability to prepare policy briefs for policy advocacy purposes;

• Comprehensive understanding of economic, political, institutional and technical issues related to sustainable development and its association to food security, sustainable livelihood of smallholder farmers, agriculture laborers and landless people in LMB countries;

• Demonstrated experience of gender analysis and construction of gender based indicators;

• Demonstrated recent publication record on issues of agricultural issue in the context of macroeconomic growth in the region;

• Prior experience of working with either of the following actors: the Asian Institute of Technology, Oxfam US, European Commission, World Bank, United Nations Development Agency and government agencies responsible for agriculture and rural development in one of the 4 LMB countries;

• Ability to work under pressure and to deliver high quality research within an agreed timeframe;

• Ability to work in English, including excellent English report writing skills.

//ENDS//