

Stakeholder Forum of the Sub-sector Working Group on Irrigation (SSWG-IR): Insights from the Lao PDR Irrigation Sub-sector Review in 2018/2019

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Executive summary

This report documents a summary of the Stakeholder Forum of the Sub-sector Working Group on Irrigation (SSWG-IR) organized on 20 March 2024, in Vientiane Capital, Lao PDR. It was hosted by the Department of Irrigation (DOI), Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF), with support from Asian Development Bank through the International Water Management Institute (IWMI), with 50 participants representing from relevant government agencies, development partners and farmer organizations.

The Stakeholder Forum was to enhance coordination between SSWG-IR and relevant stakeholders for more effective resource utilization and harness synergies in irrigation planning and implementation on a semi-annual consultation basis. Specific objectives of the first forum of the year 2024 were:

- To present main results from the irrigation sub-sector review (ISSR) conducted in 2018/2019.
- To reflect key recommendations from the review as ways forward and priorities to the Irrigation Development Plan from 2024-2025 and Vision to 2030 of DOI.

Key sessions of the event included a) a presentation session of DOI's irrigation policy and the irrigation development plan from 2024-2025 and Vision to 2030 and the ISSR's results and b) a discussion session. Key discussion outcomes on the Review's results and ways forward were as follows:

- **Overall feedback on ISSR's results:** it was agreed that the ISSR's results were good and still valid to the current situation. A few suggestions for further improvements were about adding more comprehensive factors affecting efficiency in irrigation utilization and further details on operational and know-how approaches in some recommendations, i.e. more specific roles of relevant sectors to facilitate effective cross-sectoral cooperation.
- **Reflecting ISSR's results:** it was a dynamic reflection on both key challenges affecting the irrigation development and recommendations from the Review and further participant contributions to support the Irrigation Development Strategy 2024-2025 and Vision to 2030 in Lao PDR.
 - On the challenges, the efficiency in irrigation utilization was the main point of the discussion, which was associated with other emerging factors, i.e. high production of irrigated agriculture, farmer choice on non-farm employment, and a lack of financial access for irrigation maintenances.
 - On the recommendations and ways forward, many participants suggested that groundwater irrigation with solar technologies should be an investment focus to help address high energy cost, enhance climate resilience, and facilitate agricultural commercialization and crop diversification, for instance. Cross-sectoral cooperation among relevant sectors within MAF and other ministries was another recommendation that many participants expressed their interest and willingness to support through existing institutional systems and institutional mandates. Capacity building needs for public agencies at the local level and farmer organizations was also suggested as a priority in the irrigation development.
- **Ways forward/Follow-up actions:** DOI was proposed to undertake some key follow-up actions, as the recommended ways forward from the stakeholders and secretariat perspective, as follows:
 - Disseminate the Review's results with relevant sectors within MAF and across the ministries such as the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MORE), Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM) and Faculty of Water Resources Management of the National University of Lao PDR (NUOL), as well as other stakeholders through different platforms and means.
 - Develop technical/policy briefs with abstracting some key findings of the Review and the insights from the Stakeholder Forum because some of the suggestions may require additional

studies (document reviews, stakeholder consultation and interviews) to institutionally uptake the Review's findings into irrigation development.

- Encourage and facilitate the stakeholders who may be interested in adopting the recommendations from the Review and the briefs.
- Host the next stakeholder forum with support from ADB through IWMI. Key topics of the discussion in the next event would be the irrigation sector mapping exercise, cross-sectoral cooperation initiative, and piloting farmer-led groundwater irrigation with solar technologies, for example.

1. Introduction

This report documents a summary of the Stakeholder Forum of the Sub-sector Working Group on Irrigation (SSWG-IR) organized on 20 March 2024 from 8.00-12.00 am, in Vientiane Capital, Lao PDR. The Stakeholder Forum was co-chaired by Dr Khamphachanh Vongsana, the Director General of the Department of Irrigation (DOI) and Mr Omer Zafar, Principal Natural Resources and Agriculture Specialist of the Asian Development Bank (ADB), with 50 participants with 19 women, representing from relevant government agencies, development partners and farmer organizations. The list of the participants was available in Annex 1.

The Stakeholder Forum was organized as an integrated coordination platform for SSWG-IR, the Sectoral Working Group on Agriculture and Rural Development (SWG-ARD) and other SSWGs (i.e. Agroecology) of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) and key stakeholders. This platform was organized on a semi-annual basis to enhance coordination among relevant sectors for more effective resource utilization and harness synergies in irrigation planning and implementation through their semi-annual consultation.

To facilitate comprehensive consultation, at least one research paper of demanded topics and issues influencing the advancement of irrigation development, will be brought into discussions and reflections in each forum. The first forum of the year 2024 featured the review of the ISSR conducted in 2018/2019. Key objectives of the day's event were to:

- Present and reflect main outcomes from the ISSR.
- Consult ways forward and priorities of the irrigation development in Lao PDR in aligning with the review's outcomes and the irrigation development plans from 2021-2025 and Vision to 2030 of DOI.

2. Meeting process

The event had two key sessions in addition to the opening and closing remarks by the chairperson. These included a) presentations on the irrigation policy and the irrigation development plan from 2024-2025 and the ISSR's results and b) following discussions about the presented findings of the Review and priorities/ways forward for continued irrigation development. The agenda was attached in Annex 2. Key messages/information of these sessions were summarized as follows:

2.1. Presentation on irrigation policy and irrigation development plans:

The presentation was delivered by Dr Vongsackda Vongxay, the Director of the Planning and Cooperation Division of DOI, as shown in Photo 1 below. Key features of his presentation included:

- **Overview of the irrigation sector** – As of 2023, there were 19,474 irrigation points, comprising 333 reservoirs, 1,764 pumps, 504 water gates, 4,972 weirs, and 11,901 traditional weirs. These provided the total supply of 317,408 hectares of irrigated areas. By 2025, MAF targets 454,800 hectares including 170,000 hectares for dry seasonal supply and 284,800 hectares for rainy seasonal supply.

- **Irrigation Development Plan from 2024-2025 and Vision to 2030** - The goal of the National Irrigation Development Plan 2024-2025 and the Vision to 2030 are to develop irrigation for food security and agriculture commodity production as well as effective contributions to economic growth and poverty alleviation of the country. Specifically, the irrigation development in the lowland and floodplains areas is to support the agricultural commodity production in the 10 provinces along the Mekong River to enable production value chains for the regional and the global market. While the development of upland irrigation schemes is to support livelihood and nutritional status of smallholder farmers through improving rice production yields and crop diversification as part of climate change adaptation integration.



Photo 1: Dr Vongsada delivered his presentation, photo credit: IWMI Laos

- **Action plans** – Four actions are planned to underpin the implementation of the Irrigation Development Plan from 2024-2025 and Vision to 2030. These were a) irrigation development and improvement, b) irrigation technology and public services, c) flood and drought preventions and mitigations, and d) training and technical education in irrigated agriculture.

2.2. Presentation on outcomes of the ISSR’s Review:

The presentation was delivered by Dr Mark Dubois, the International Water Management Institute (IWMI)’s Country Representative in Lao PDR and Regional Representative in the Southeast Asia, as shown in Photo 2. Key contents of his presentation included:

- **Background of the review** – The review was conducted in 2018/2019 by IWMI and WorldFish in cooperation with DOI, with funding from ADB. The Review was to assess opportunities and constraints of irrigated agriculture in Lao PDR and identify intervention areas or options for sustainable improvements of irrigation services, i.e. modernization of irrigated irrigation and integrated ecosystem services and fisheries in the design and operation and management system.
- **Methodology** – The Review was made through analyzing more than 18,000 irrigation schemes from 2015/2016 database of DOI and 2017/2018 irrigated mapping, in addition to document reviews and stakeholder consultations at the national, the provincial and the district level.
- **Findings on challenges influencing the irrigation development in Lao PDR** – The Review conceptualized challenges into three categories in relation to physical, socio-economic and capacity constraint and highlighted underlying interlinked challenges such as deterioration of irrigation schemes, degradation of upstream watersheds, and insufficiencies of water governance and data collection and management.
- **Recommendations** – The Review outlined overall recommendations of both upland and lowland schemes and their specific recommendations.
 - The overall recommendations were about:
 - Economic improvements of farmers using irrigation for agriculture and fisheries.
 - Strengthening planning and management through improving monitoring, data collection and analysis.

- Enhancing irrigation integration into broader water resources management framework to enhance resilience to floods and droughts.
- Enhancing climate resilience and environmental management and seeking opportunities for safeguarding fisheries and aquaculture. Under this climate and environmental aspect, the groundwater irrigation with solar pumping system and floodplains irrigation embankment models are those promoting measures under the irrigation development plan.
- Enhancing irrigation operation research.
- The Review listed one main specific recommendation for upland schemes on reducing dry seasonal constraints and some specific recommendations for lowland schemes as follows:
 - Increasing flexibility of water supply to enhance productivity and high value crop production.
 - Reducing the cost of water pumping.
 - Improving the operations and management of irrigation systems.
 - Strengthening water user groups (WUGs) to enhance farmer ownership and scheme management.
- As part of these recommendations, partnership expansion was another crucial element in addition to the technical and operational aspects. These included:
 - Cooperation with the National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI) and the Faculty of Water Resources Management of the National University of Laos for relevant research.
 - Cooperation with the Department of Agricultural Land Management (DALaM) on understanding environmental impacts and mitigation plans.
 - Cooperation with the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment (MONRE) and the Ministry of Energy and Mines (MEM) to expand irrigation expansion to broader water resources management frameworks.
 - Cooperation with MONRE and DALaM on watershed protection.



Photo 2: The presentation by Dr Dubois, photo credit: IWMI Laos.

2.3. Discussions and reflections:

The discussion session was facilitated by Dr Dubois, following his presentation. During the session, all participants were asked to share their thoughts on key challenges and recommendations from the

Review and their experiences, which are still influencing irrigation development and modernization. Key topics of the discussion were outlined in the next section – Summary of the discussion.

2.4. Introduction of stakeholder mapping:

A brief introduction on the objectives and plan to have a simple survey on existing/active irrigation projects of the stakeholders was announced by Dr Dubois, after the discussion section. The survey is to have comprehensive information on key actors implementing irrigation projects in different provinces and districts in Lao PDR, types of irrigations, purposes of utilizations and outcomes.

3. Summary of the discussion

The Forum received good contributions from the participants in terms of sharing their thoughts, experience, lessons learned and suggestions to reflect the Review's results in sustainable improvements in irrigation development. Their key topics raised during discussion were conceptualized as follows:

3.1. Overall feedback on the Review's results:

It was acknowledged by the participants that the Review's results were still valid to date from its initial release in 2019 and good for dissemination to all relevant sectors and stakeholders. For example:

- **Ms Anna Mutta, SNV** found the findings of the Review remained relevant to the current situation. She also proposed other participants to share the Review's results with other stakeholders within MAF and other ministries who were not attending the day's event.

However, there were also some suggestions for further improvements to the Review's results. These included:

- **Mr Takuya UO, Embassy of Japan:**
 - He found that the presented Review's results were not comprehensive regarding the causes of efficiency of the irrigation. He learned that there were many irrigation canals in Lao PDR were made in soil – not properly made in concrete, which affected the efficiency of water supply. He suggested that the Review should have this reflected.
- **Mr Soulivanh Pattivong, International Fund of Agricultural Development (IFAD)** also observed other points in the Review's results that need to be improved as follows:
 - No clear approaches for extension of using new technologies, integrating the government mechanism, using knowledge of the community and involvement of the private sector.
 - No clear roles and responsibilities of relevant sectors recommended for cross-sectoral cooperation.
- **Dr Phanxay Inxay, Department of Extension and Cooperatives (DEAC)** also raised that the Review was not well reflected some other factors influencing the efficiency of irrigation utilization, such as farmer's choice to cultivate only one season per year and opted for non-farm employment or due to a high cost of electricity cost for pumping water during dry seasons.

3.2. Ways forward - reflecting irrigation challenges and recommendations:

The Forum discussed some key topics in relation to both challenges and recommendations as ways forward for the irrigation development and modernization as follows:

Efficiency of the irrigation utilization

Efficiency in utilization of the irrigation schemes, in particular, those water-pump irrigation schemes seemed to be a highlighted challenge of irrigation development, for the discussion. Many influenced factors were raised during the discussion, in addition to those factors identified in the Review, as follows:

- **Mr Takuya UO, Embassy of Japan** who pointed out that the efficiency of the irrigation was also associated with the irrigation design. He learned that many irrigation canals in Lao PDR were soil-based canals which had less efficiency in water supply than concrete canals.
 - **Dr Chanthakhone Boualaphanh, NAFRI**, who also supported that soil canals were not often efficient in water supply due to high water loss – so that she suggested that construction/design of irrigation should be one of the considerations.
- **Dr Phanxay Inxay, Department of Extension and Cooperatives (DEAC)** also raised other factors influencing the efficiency of irrigation utilization, such as:
 - In some areas, farmers chose to cultivate only one season per year because the yield of the seasonal cultivation was sufficient for their household consumption, even though water supply was available for year-round cultivation.
 - In the other case, many young farmers in the provinces along the Mekong River often chose not to do rice farming in the dry season and migrated to Thailand to do off-farm employment instead. This also caused a lack of labor forces for agricultural production and insufficiency in the use of irrigation schemes.
 - He also learned that some farmers stopped their rice cultivation due to the high cost of electricity.
 - In response to the challenges and increase efficiency in irrigation utilization, he expressed his support to the recommendation to promote diverse use of irrigation for other crops apart from rice. He also raised a successful case in Savannakhet where farmers used irrigation to grow other high value crops.

Groundwater irrigation

Many participants share their positive thoughts on groundwater irrigation as a potential way forward. These included:

- **Dr Thatheva Saphangthon, DALaM** shared his thoughts that irrigation development may need to step back to utilize groundwater and groundwater management for responding to droughts and floods. He found that a project in Pakxan on groundwater with water gates to control water supply was a good example to minimize the electricity cost for water pumping and enhance joint efforts among different sectors.
- **Dr Sathathap Thammachack, Lao-Korean Irrigation Development and Cooperation Center** expressed his support for the Review's recommendation on promoting groundwater irrigation, because groundwater was often considered clean, so that it was suitable for clean agriculture production, as part of the development strategies of MAF.
- **Dr Chanthakhone Boualaphanh, NAFRI** shared her suggestion that a key point to consider for the groundwater irrigation were about identifying suitable areas and cooperating among relevant sectors to promote groundwater use.
- **Mr Saykham Sithavong, Faculty of Water Resources, NUOL** also supported that relevant projects should consider the fact that groundwater was insufficient in many areas in Lao PDR.

- He also supported the Review's recommendation on re-charging groundwater through digging ponds and wells.

Capacity building

The discussion covered capacity building for public agencies and farmer strengthening. Details of the areas for the capacity building were as follows:

- **Mr Takuya UO, Embassy of Japan** urged for the needs of capacity building for local partners to maintain irrigation facilities, i.e. operation and maintenance of pumps.
- **Mr Saykham Sithavong, Faculty of Water Resources, NUOL** also raised that human resources are still a crucial issue, recalling many existing irrigation projects while a lack of the technical officers who had irrigation profession at the local level. He added that there are only one or two technical officers with irrigation professions in some districts, led to deployment of non-irrigational technical officers to work in irrigation projects, which was often challenging.
 - He also expressed his support to the recommendation on capacity building for farmers, in particular, the capacity on water management and utilization. He observed that farmers in some areas seemed to have a lack of ownership in the management of irrigation water, as they often did not take the initiative to fix irrigation schemes, i.e. broken water pipes to prevent water loss and broken canals.
- **Mr Soulivanh Pattivong, IFAD** raised a point of farmer strengthening as another way forward, recalling the fact that farmers in Lao PDR were often considered smallholders and this characteristic would cause a high cost of their production. He elaborated that these smallholder farmers should be strengthened through formulation of farmer organizations with formal registration and scale-size of at least 100 or 1,000 members, not as small as 20-30 members.
- **Dr Sathathep Thammachack, Lao-Korean Irrigation Development and Cooperation Center** suggested that, with the importance of water management being emphasized, there should have supporting projects to build capacity on water management at the field level to help farmers increase their water management capacity and reduce the cost of the water use.

Cross-sectoral cooperation

Cross-sectoral cooperation was another recommendation of the Review that received good feedback from many participants, even though this may not be a new initiative for irrigation interventions. Key discussions and suggestions were about institutional-based cooperation on integrated water resources management and water management to increase efficiency in irrigation utilization, as follows:

- **Ms Anna Mutta, SNV** shared her thoughts on the way forward to facilitate cross-sectoral cooperation that there was a need to bring in all relevant sectors within MAF and other ministries into dialogues about the Review's findings, in particular, the cooperation to increase efficiency of water use and demand across the sectors, recalling the fact that many sectors are competing for water resources.
- **Dr Thatheva Saphangthon, DALaM** expressed his support for the cross-sectoral cooperation around irrigation strategies and applications and emphasized that the focus should be on a systemic approach, i.e. watershed management which was already outlined in the development policy of the Lao Government.
 - He recommended that the watershed management system should accommodate mitigation of those species as there are sources of food, nutrition and livelihoods of the surrounding community. According to his survey in 2020, in Namnguem Basin, many

fish species from small catchments and rivers were main sources for food, nutrition and livelihoods of the people.

- **Dr Chanthakhone Boualaphan, NAFRI** also expressed her support for the cross-sectoral cooperation and willingness to take part of the initiative in any coming irrigation projects, for instance, NAFRI could take lead on introducing new seed varieties together with others who may work on soil improvement, organic fertilizer production and market promotion. She added that these would help farmers to cope with expensive production inputs, enhance market access and extensive production and irrigation use.
- **Dr Sathathep Thammachack, Lao-Korean Irrigation Development and Cooperation Center** also proposed to development partners to consider pooling their development projects into common zones to enable agricultural development communities which could support fee collection to pay the investments and produce agricultural products for commercialization and export.
 - He also shared his thoughts on development of water sources around flood-prone areas that this would be better to continue the development with an aim to support agricultural commercialization, recalling the fact that the national food security has been achieved.
- **Mr Soulivanh Pattivong, IFAD** also found the need to have cross-sectoral partnership to support the irrigation interventions. However, he suggested that this should start with determining clear responsibilities of each sector including MONRE, not only MAF.
 - As part of the initiative, he emphasized the need to also involve the private sector because they have the networks in production, technical support and market.
 - He appreciated the recommendation on the research and development (R&D) cooperation among relevant sectors to provide evidence-based research for policy makers, through existing mechanisms.
- **Dr Phanxay Inxay, DEAC** shared his thoughts to expand capacity support to different types of farmer groups such as vegetable production groups, livestock groups and other cooperatives who may require water for their productions, as to increase efficiency in irrigation utilization.
- **Mr Koh Myung Seong, EDCF** also expressed his support for the cooperation initiative on rural transformation framework, to support farmers to make an easy transition from subsistent farming to market-oriented production. He elaborated that rural communities were often on subsistent farming and had different challenges to enhance their livelihoods, although they may have more resources for agricultural production across the year. He added that the challenges around a lack of labor forces and low-income from farming often forced them to migrate to cities to find better job opportunities.

Financial access, investment rate and incentives

These topics were discussed as food-for-thoughts to ensure efficiency in irrigation utilization and operation and management. Key contributors to the discussion were as follows:

- **Mr Takuya UO, Embassy of Japan** shared his thoughts on the need to have sufficient access to financial sources by the relevant agencies from either the Government or international organizations to ensure irrigation operation and efficiency, for regular irrigation maintenance. He elaborated that irrigation facilities would require maintenance after a couple of years because they often would be broken, while the relevant public agencies cannot manage to maintain due to the financial constraint. He added that there were still few accesses sources of finance for the government for irrigation maintenance purpose.

- **Mr Soulivanh Pattivong, IFAD** observed that financial access was commonly raised as another important factor to facilitate the groups to optimize their investments through commercial banks and other financial institutes. However, the matter of a suitable interest rate for loans has not yet been discussed.
- **Dr Sathathep Thammachack, Lao-Korean Irrigation Development and Cooperation Center** also suggested the need to establish irrigation funds which can be sourced for the maintenance.
 - In addition, he shared his thoughts on the need to re-assess the investment rate of irrigation. He added that the current investment rate of \$5,000/hectare for irrigation system development may not be sufficient for a good irrigation system with concrete canals with water gates and on-farm systems to enhance water management capacity.
- **Mr Khammouan Phaymany, Lao Farmer Network (LFN)** expressed his concern for the high cost of electricity for water pump for rice cultivation during the dry season and proposed to the higher authorities to consider how to support farmers to cope with the energy costs who learned from his network farmers that the high cost of electricity was a very significant factor causing farmers to stop.
 - He added that the current electricity rate of LAK 700,000 – LAK 900,000 per Rai (0.16 hectare) was high and would cause a loss for rice farmers as they often did not generate income from their subsistent farming.
- **Dr Latsamy Phounvisouk, NAFRI** shared her lessons learned from Vietnam as food for thought that the exemption of fees for agricultural land and irrigation use maybe factors influencing their sustainable agricultural production and market access.
- **Mr Saykham Sithavong, Faculty of Water Resources, NUOL** also shared his lesson learned from India that the electricity cost for farmers was subsidized by the Government.
 - He raised the need of irrigation demarcation as another important measure to ensure that watershed and other forest areas are zoned to support irrigation interventions and prevent forest exploitation by local villagers.

Other topics

There were also interesting topics raised during the Forum, in response to other recommendations of the Review. These includes:

- **Technology application:** Dr Sathathep Thammachack, Lao-Korean Irrigation Development and Cooperation Center shared his positive thoughts on the Review's recommendation to apply technologies to enhance its efficiency and to response to the phenomenon of labor shortage, however, an underlying challenge would be about means to maintain performance of the IT system.
- **Reduction of irrigated areas:** Dr Phanxay Inxay, DEAC learned that an emerging issue in the irrigation development was a reduction in the irrigated areas due to different factors – one of those was an expansion of urban areas led to a conversion of rice fields into construction land, for instance. This is often found in large cities, like in Vientiane Capital.
- **Low forest coverage:** Mr Inpone Senekhamtry, EU shared his thoughts that low forest coverage in the upstream areas would be the major issue for the reduction of water for irrigation for the current and the future.

4. Summary

The Stakeholder Forum successfully achieved its key objectives to receive constructive feedback from key stakeholders for the ISSR Review's results and to the results as ways forward to the implementation of the irrigation development plan. Key outcomes of the Forum were summarized as follows:

Overall feedback on ISSR's results:

- It was agreed that the overall results of the Review conducted in 2018/2019 prior to the outbreak of COVID-19, are still valid to now and good for further dissemination to all relevant sectors and stakeholders.
- However, there were a few suggested improvements such as adding more factors affecting efficiency in irrigation utilization, i.e. type of irrigation canals which should be in concrete because soil canals often had higher loss of water supply; specifying clear approaches for extension services on technology applications and utilization of local knowledge; and determining specific roles and responsibilities of different sectors to facilitate effective cross-sectoral cooperation.

Specific feedback on ISSR's results:

The Forum also shared their thoughts on key challenges and recommendations from the Review's results, as influencing factors and ways forward in support to the Irrigation Development Strategy 2024-2025 and Vision to 2030 in Lao PDR. Key topics of the discussion were as follows:

- The efficiency in irrigation utilization was the main challenge that many participants found the need to address it, in addition capacity of public agencies and farmer organizations on operation and management of irrigation schemes, for instance.
 - Key causes affecting the irrigation efficiency raised in addition to those identified in the review were a) type/design of irrigation canals which were not suitable for ensuring efficiency in water supply and water management on the farm-level, for example, b) a farmer's choice to cultivate only one season per year and left un-used irrigation schemes in dry seasons for off-farm employments and c) cost of electricity for pumping irrigation.
- The participants also expressed their strong support on some key recommendations of the review to enhance the efficiency and other challenges as follows:
 - Cross-sectoral cooperation among relevant sectors within MAF and other ministries was one of the recommendations that many participants expressed their interest and willingness to support through existing institutional systems and institutional mandates. Some also believed that this cross-sectoral cooperation should be expanded to involvement of the private sector and different groups of agricultural farmers, i.e. animal production groups.
 - In similar to the recommendation on capacity building that some participants proposed that farmer group strengthening should be part of the plan. Key capacity needed for the farmers were water management skills and group performance to enhance their collective advantages.
 - Increasing financial access was also considered crucial means for the public agencies to maintain irrigation schemes and contribute to its efficiency.

- Groundwater irrigation seemed to be a promoting solution to both the participants and DOI, as its potential to address the cost issue of pumping irrigation, agricultural productions for both food security and commercialization for farmers in the areas with lack access of pumping irrigation.
- Some food-for-thoughts were also raised during the discussion. These were:
 - Government incentive/subsidy to enable farmers to handle the high cost of electricity for pumping water.
 - Advocating for joint demarcation of areas for irrigated agriculture to support the irrigation development and also enhance efficiency in irrigation utilization.
 - Reassessing the estimate investment rate of irrigation to enhance capacity of irrigation facilities in water management and water supply sufficiency – the current rate of US\$5,000/hectare was not feasible for modernized irrigation schemes.

Follow-up actions:

DOI was proposed to undertake some key follow-up actions, as part of the ways forward based on the suggestions from the stakeholders and secretariat perspective, as follows:

- Disseminate the Review’s results with relevant sectors within MAF and across the ministries as well as other stakeholders through different platforms and means, for example:
 - Set up/seek opportunities to have follow-up meetings with the sectors outlined in the Review’s recommendations to discuss cooperation, i.e. integrated water resources management, irrigation operation and management research, and environmental impact adaptation and mitigation.
- Develop technical/policy briefs with abstracting some key findings of the Review and the insights from the Stakeholder Forum because some of the suggestions may require additional studies (document reviews, stakeholder consultation and interviews) to institutionally uptake the Review’s findings into irrigation development.
 - This shall be implemented in cooperation with IWMI as the secretariat of the Stakeholder Forum, other relevant public agencies and development partners, to strengthen collaborative development community.
 - The briefs should be available for the presentation in the next Stakeholder Forum in the next six months’ time.
- Encourage and facilitate the stakeholders who may be interested in adopting the recommendations from the Review and the briefs.
- Provide coordination and facilitation support to IWMI to conduct the stakeholder survey among key stakeholders to map their irrigation interventions.
- Host the next stakeholder forum with support from ADB through IWMI. Key topics of the discussion in the next event would be the irrigation sector mapping exercise, cross-sectoral cooperation initiative, and piloting farmer-led groundwater irrigation with solar technologies, for example.

Annex 1: The list of participants

No	Name	Institute	Contact
Part I - Government			
1	Dr Khamphachanh Vongsana	Department of Irrigation (DOI)	98888851
2	Ms Bounthien Vongkaisone	DOI	29892365
3	Dr Vongsakda Vongxay	DOI	58455585
4	Ms Thippaphone Phiengvilayvanh	DOI	99921191
5	Ms Bounmy Boualavong	DOI	54415244
6	Ms Kingkham	DOI	52985585
7	Dr. khamhou Phanthavong	DOI	58277855
8	Dr. Sathathep Thammachak	Lao-Korean Irrigation Development and Cooperation Center	22228868
9	Mr Souphalavanh	DOI	59789256
10	Mr Khamphone	DOI	52163158
11	Ms Phonemalee	DOI	96496914
12	Ms Phaethong	DOI	52004466
13	Mr Santy	DOI	59679797
14	Ms ThienthongChandalasan	DOI	55662334
15	Dr Soulackphone Bounphaphet	DRD	22957958
16	Mr Alounxay Onta	Department of Planning and Cooperation (DOPC)	22333131
17	Dr Thatheva Saphangthong	Department of Agricultural Land Management (DA-LaM)	99599241
18	Mr Khamkeng Chanthavongsa	Faculty of Water Resources/NUOL	55222495
19	Dr Saykham	Faculty of Water Resources/NUOL	96639155
20	Mr Lohamxou	Faculty of Water Resources/NUOL	76824011
21	Dr Chanthakhone	National Agriculture and Forestry Research Institute (NAFRI)	22420023
22	Dr Latsamy Phounvisouk	NAFRI	58225749
23	Mr Manoluck	NAFRI	22475757
24	Ms Phonesanith	NAFRI	23362224
25	Mr Bounpheng	NAFRI/Horticulture Research Center	55818640
26	Mr Phanxay	Department of Extension and Agricultural Cooperative (DEAC)	55356945
Part II – Farmer associations			
1	Mr Khammoun Saymany	Lao Farmer Network (LFN)	55114809
2	Ms Maykham Sayasan	LFA	96613066
3	Ms Syamphay Sayalath	PSO	59022423

4	Mr Sonephet Souliphone	PSO	99538696
Part III – Development partners			
1	Mr Omer Zafar	ADB	ozafar@adb.org
2	Ms Souphalavanh Phonmany	ADB	sphonmany@adb.org
3	Mr Ramkrishna Choukhan	Embassy of India	55529179
4	Mr Inpone Senekhamty	EU	55682178
5	Ms Lisa Mengual	AFD	28585243
6	Ms Thipphaphou Douangsila	AFD/ASSET Project	55629095
7	Mr Thome Xaisongkham	UNDP	22234436
8	Dr Sinxay Vongphavanh	MRC	56161935
9	Mr Khampheng	ACIAR	22235794
10	Mr Koh	Economic Development and Cooperation Fund (EDCF)	koh@koreaecim.go.kr
11	Ms Anna Mutta	SNV	55556564
12	Mr Khamsing Namsavanh	Caritas	22224178
13	Mr Takuya Uo	Embassy of Japan	57852315
14	Mr Takamitsu Matsuo	JICA/DOPC	52139040
15	Mr Viengsavanh	JICA	58516866
16	Mr Soulivanh	IFAD	56635358
17	Dr Mark Dubois	IWMI	22225336
18	Ms Phonethip Banouvong	IWMI	22225338
19	Mr Latsamee Kinglattana	IWMI (Intern)	29899974
20	Ms Phaylin Bouakeo	IWMI (Intern)	28923692
21	Mr Souphalack Inphonephong	IWMI	93499744

Annex 2: Tentative agenda

Time	Activity	Facilitator	Expected outputs
8.00-8.55	Registration	All	
8.55-9.00	Greeting and welcoming participants	Dr. Vongsakda Vongxay, DOI	
9.00-9.20	Opening remarks by the chair and the co-chair	Dr. Khamphachanh Vongsana Director General of DOI Mr. Omer Zafar, Principal Natural Resources and Agriculture Specialist, ADB	
9.20-9.30	Presentation on Irrigation sub-sector's development progress and development plan till 2025	Dr Vongsakda Vongxay, DOI.	Participants learned about progress and development plan of Irrigation sub-sector.
9.30-10.00	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation ISSR and • Reflecting the outcomes 	Dr. Mark Dubois, IWMI	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participants learned about the ISSR's outcomes (efforts/ progress, challenges and recommendations).

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These outputs were discussed/reflected with the participants, in response to the development plan by DOI and ADB.
10.00-10.20	Group photo and coffee break	All	
10.20-11.20	Open discussion	All	Key challenges to be addressed are voted and recommendations are prioritized
11.20-11.50	Introduction and testing stakeholder mapping exercise via Monkey survey	All	Stakeholder database on their existing interventions and locations are collected.
11.50-12.00	Summary of key points and a closing remark	Dr. Khamphachanh Vongsana General director of DOI	
12.00-13.00	Networking lunch	All	

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Cover photo:

The group photo on the Stakeholder Forum on 20 March 2024, in Vientiane Capital (photo credit: Souphalack Inphonephong, IWMI)

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