

**KINGDOM OF CAMBODIA
NATION RELIGION KING**



**Community Fisheries
Strategic Plan
2025 - 2029**

2025

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2025

Rick Gregory, Supin Wongbusarakum and Lieng Sopha

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Document prepared by:

Rick Gregory, Supin Wongbusarakum, & Lieng Sopha

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Contact: Fisheries Administration #186, Preah Norodom Blvd., Phnom Penh, Cambodia

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Acronyms

ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
ASDP	Agriculture Sector Strategic Development Plan
CAPFISH	Cambodia Programme for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth in the Fisheries
CBD	Convention on Biological Diversity
CCAP	Climate Change Action Plan
CCRF	Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries
CFDD	Community Fisheries Development Department
CF	Community Forestry
CFi	Community Fisheries
CFiAMP	Community Fishing Area Management Plan
CFiC	Community Fisheries Committee
CFR	Community Fish Refuge
CITES	Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of wild Fauna & Flora
CPA	Community Protected Area
D&D	Decentralisation & Deconcentration
DAD	Department of Aquaculture Development
DFC	Department of Fisheries Conservation
DP	Development Partner
EAFm	Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries management
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FiA	Fisheries Administration
FiAC	Fisheries Administration Cantonment
FMA	Fisheries Management Area
IFFPMP	Inland Flooded Forest Fire Prevention and Management Plan
IFMP	Inland Fisheries Management Plan
IFReDI	Inland Fisheries Research and Development Institute
IPCI	Inland Plan for Control and Inspections
IUU	Illegal, Unregulated and Unreported (fishing)
LANGO	Law on Associations and Non-government organisations
MAC	Modern Agricultural Communities / Cooperatives
MAFF	Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
MaFReDI	Marine Fisheries Research and Development Institute
MEF	Ministry of Economics and Finance
MCS	Monitoring Control and Surveillance
MFMP	Marine Fisheries Management Plan
MoE	Ministry of Environment
MoWRaM	Ministry of Water Resources and Meteorology
MRC	Mekong River Commission

NGO	Non Government Organisation
PASDP	Provincial Agriculture Sector Development Plan
PDAFF	Provincial Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries
PDWR	Provincial Department of Water Resources
PLNIA	Prek Leap National Institute of Agriculture
PS	Private Sector
RGC	Royal Government of Cambodia
RUA	Royal University of Agriculture
SD	Sub Decree
SDG	Sustainable Development Goals
SEAFDEC	Southeast Asia Fisheries Development Centre
SNA	Sub-National Administration
SPF	Strategic Planning Framework for Fisheries
TWGFi	Technical Working Group for Fisheries
VGGT	Voluntary Guidelines on Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries & Forests
VGSSF	Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries

Preface

The Community Fisheries Strategic Plan (2025-2029) aims to guide support to the continued development of fisheries communities that are cooperating with Government in the co-management of inland and marine fisheries. The document sets out a roadmap for Community Fisheries (CFi) development in Cambodia for the period 2025-2029 for the coordinated and harmonised institutional support to CFi development, so that the full potential of CFi and their contribution to conservation, livelihoods and rural development can be realised.

Community fisheries have been the main strategy for fisheries management for more than 20 years in Cambodia. In 2001, acknowledging the importance of fisheries in terms of livelihoods, food security and nutrition, the Royal Government of Cambodia began a reform of the fisheries sector which led to the redistribution of fishing rights from commercial fishing lots to local fishing communities. Over the next several years, the Cambodian government steadily reduced the number of fishing lots that were privately leased and by 2012 all private leasing arrangements had been cancelled.

The original objectives for the establishment of CFi were to: manage fisheries resources in a sustainable manner and ensure the equitable sharing of benefits from fisheries resources to local communities; increased local community understanding and recognition of the benefits and importance of fisheries resources through their direct participation in management; use and protection of fisheries resources, (the suppression and prevention of illegal fishing becoming the shared responsibility of the Government and CFi.) and improvements in the standard of living of fisheries communities and poverty reduction. To a greater or lesser extent these objectives have been achieved, and this strategic plan sets out approaches, guidelines and actions to build on the successes and pave the way for the further development of CFi in Cambodia. As the Country continues to modernize, new opportunities are emerging for fishers and CFi support by Government and development partners must continue to ensure that all Community Fisheries members are able to continue to contribute positively to local economies and benefit from more productive and sustainable livelihoods.

Phnom Penh, 12 Aug. 2025

Delegate of the Royal Government

Director General of Fisheries Administration



POUM SOTHA

Introduction to the CFi Strategic Plan (2025-2029)

The Strategic Plan for Community Fisheries (2025-2029) aims to guide support to the continued development of communities that are cooperating with Government in the co-management of their fisheries. As Cambodia continues to modernize, as expressed in the 2023 Pentagonal Strategy, it is essential that people living in fishing communities are not left behind and that they are able to continue to contribute positively to local economies, benefit from productive and sustainable livelihoods and participate in the protection of natural resources.

Support to CFi over the past 30 years has been provided extensively by both Government and development partners. However, with 447 CFi registered by 2024, their limited self-sustaining capacity and economic development, against a backdrop of a degrading natural resource base and intensifying climate-related stresses such as prolonged droughts and erratic floods, threatens their future stability and sustainability. This strategic plan attempts to address the challenges facing CFi, so that an effective and coordinated approach to their development can be applied by Government and development partners alike. The CFi Strategic Plan is divided into eight chapters; i) Background to CFi in Cambodia; ii) the Legal and Policy framework; iii) Supporting Institutions & Organisations; iv) CFi Today; v) A Vision for CFi in Cambodia; vi) Improving the performance of CFi; and vii) M & E of the Plan.

The Plan has been prepared by Mr. Rick Gregory & Dr. Supin Wongbusarakum from the FAO CAPFish Capture Project, and Dr Lieng Sopha, FiA, supported by TWGFi members, for discussion and consideration by Fisheries Administration and the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF). It does not represent the official views of FAO nor the EU. Comments and discussion on the document should be directed to Dr. Lieng Sopha, Head of CFDD, FiA, (liengsopha@gmail.com) and the co-authors of the strategy: Dr. Supin Wongbusarakum (Supin.Wongbusarakum@fao.org) and Mr. Rick Gregory (Rickgregory1@gmail.com)



CHAPTER 1- Background to Community Fisheries in Cambodia

1.1 A short history of Community Fisheries in Cambodia

Cambodia has a long history of inland fisheries resource management including the Fishing Lot system introduced in the mid- 19th century (Chandler 1996, Marschke 2005). At that time, Cambodia's rich aquatic resources, especially in the Tonle Sap were a significant revenue sources for Cambodian royalty, the French Protectorate and high-level officials. At that time there was a tradition of fundraising through issuing fisheries concession leases from which King Norodom (1859-1897) was entitled to arbitrary dues on fishing (Petillot 1911 in Marschke 2005). In addition, the French colonizers (1863-1953) created a taxation system modelled on Cambodia's traditional practices and the French Protectorate formalized concession arrangements to generate revenue for the colonial administration (Marschke 2005). Under this system there may have been some endorsement of local resource practices by governmental officials, whereby villagers could manage their resources as they saw fit, provided they sold their products to a centrally appointed governmental official (Martine 1997 in Marschke 2005).

Fishing lots were introduced to Cambodia in 1863 by the French Protectorate to be acquired by individuals through public auction organised by Government institutions. Most Lots were large stake net enclosures in substantial flooded forest and open water areas where fish were impounded and harvested live during the appropriate season, producing high-quality market products. By the early 1990's, a significant amount of trade (50,000 tons per year of fresh fish and processed products) was taking place, (Marschke 2005). The conditions of the leased fishery were specified in a contract which stipulated the location and boundaries of the fishing lot; the timing and kind of fishery activities allowed; and additional conditions for the lessee. (Kurian 2017). Typically, a fishing lot was leased for two years and was exclusively in freshwater areas. By leasing the fishing lots, the Department of Fisheries (DoF) was able to control large parts of Cambodia's inland fisheries domain area. The DoF also encouraged fishing lot 'owners' to set up their own security and to use force to control access to the fishery and regulate all fishing activities taking place inside the lot. By 2000 there were 239 fishing lots in the country, 139 of which were situated in the Tonle Sap system.

Since the introduction of the Lots there were frequent cases of conflict between fishing lot owners and local people wishing to access the fishery. This was particularly acute in the most productive areas of Tonle Sap. The basis of the conflict could be attributed largely to the clash between the objectives of the few fishing lot owners who wished to maximize their fish catches and profits, and the numerous fishers from the surrounding areas who were fishing for food or small-scale income generation. The primary impetus for the national implementation of co-management for fisheries was a period of sometimes violent conflict over fishing rights, and the growing use of illegal gear that occurred in and around privatized fishing lots on the Tonle Sap and surrounding wetlands in the 1990s. Until 2000, the onus was on the DoF of that time to enforce the law against illegal fishing.

In 1995, the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO) introduced the co-management concept to Cambodia through the Participatory Natural Resource Management Programme in Siem Reap Province. Three years later, Oxfam Community Aid Abroad established the first CFI in Pursat Province. In 2001, acknowledging the importance of fisheries in terms of livelihoods, food security and nutrition, the Royal Cambodian Government began a reform of the fisheries sector, which led to the redistribution of fishing rights from commercial fishing lots to local communities. Through these deep reforms, the Cambodian government gradually reduced the number of fishing lots that were privately leased and had cancelled all private leasing arrangements by 2012. (Freed & Kosal 2021). Initially focusing on inland fishing communities, the establishment of CFI in coastal areas was also promoted.

The original objectives for the establishment of Community Fisheries were:

- To manage fisheries resources in a sustainable manner and ensure an equitable sharing of benefits from fisheries resources to local communities;
- To increase local community understanding and recognition of the benefits and importance of fisheries resources through direct participation in fisheries co-management;
- To sustainably use and protect fisheries resources;
- To improve the standard of living of local communities and poverty reduction.

Under these reforms, the prevention of illegal fishing thereby became the shared responsibility of the Government and members of CFI. In implementing this policy, two far-reaching decisions were made by the RGC; 1) to only allow small-scale fishing gear to be used in CFI areas, and 2) to allow non-member fishers to have access to CFI fishing areas under the management of the local CFI committees provided they follow the bylaws. These were eventually to threaten the viability of many CFI.

The Royal Government of Cambodia fisheries sector reforms in 2001 marked the start of community fisheries co-management in the Country^[1]. Community Fisheries were enshrined in the Fishery Law of 2006 with the corresponding Community Fisheries Sub-decree, stating that: “All Cambodian citizens have the rights to form Community Fisheries in their own local area on a voluntary basis, to take part in the sustainable management, conservation, development, and use of fisheries resources”. The CFI sub-decree sets out the necessary details to ensure that community level co-management of fisheries contributes to equitable economic and social development and poverty alleviation in fisheries communities nationwide.

^[1] FiA is also responsible for Community Fish Refuges, the first of which were established in the mid 90’s through several aquaculture development projects. In 2024 there have been over 900 established CFRs and overseen by FiA’s Department of Aquaculture Development, (DAD).

Nine steps are involved in setting up a Community Fisheries organization which are envisaged as “a jointly managed initiative giving a group of people who form a democratic organization, the unambiguous right of access and management over a common pool of natural resources — particularly fish — in a defined area, for a limited period of time”. As of 2023, 516 CFi (475 inland and 41 coastal) had been established, with 447 officially registered. These CFi had a total membership of 332,168 of which 35% were female, and 4,497 elected CFi Committee members of which 16% were female.

Over the 20 years following the deep fisheries reforms, much has been learned about how to organise communities to co-manage their fisheries resources but many challenges remain. Roles and responsibilities of institutions involved in fisheries co-management have evolved and continue to evolve to support this policy. Since their inception, development partner support for CFi in Cambodia has been generous and consistent. Many of these organisations have viewed CFi as socially progressive and a potential mechanism to manage the complex issue of strengthening communities and balancing natural resources exploitation and conservation.

1.2. Other Community co-management initiatives Cambodia

The co-management of fisheries through CFi is consistent with two other RGC policies for natural resources co-management; Community Forestry (CF), and Community Protected Areas, (CPA). It is useful to include a few details on governance of these natural resources, to gain a deeper understanding of the community and institutional issues also faced by CFi. (More details can be found in Annex 1).

The Forest Law of 2002 provides a legal basis for rural communities to use and help manage forests through community forestry, (CF). The 2003 Sub-decree on Community Forest Management sets out rules for the establishment, management and use of community forests in Cambodia. Community members are permitted to collect timber, and animal & plant-based forest products including medicines, foods, and construction materials seasonally. The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) has general jurisdiction over the management of community forests.

The Ministry of Environment (MoE) is the authority in charge of establishing and overseeing Community Protected Areas, (CPA). Currently, there are 182 established CPAs, which usually contain one to three villages and range from 500 to 8,000 ha in size. Commonalities with CFi co management include tenure insecurity; establishment complexity; male domination of decision-making; capacity to implement management plans; and dependency on external support^[2].

^[2] Client Earth (2022). Community Protected Areas in Cambodia Analysis of Legal Framework, Practice and Recommendations

Lessons learned from these initiatives show many similarities in their establishment processes and the challenges and constraints that they face, suggesting that a common approach might be applied to community co-management initiatives for the co-management of state-owned resources Cambodia.



CHAPTER 2- The Legal Frameworks and Policies supporting CFi co-management in Cambodia.

This section summarises key national and international laws, legislation, policies supporting CFi development in Cambodia.

2.1. National and sub-national laws and policies

2.1.1. Fisheries Law (2006)

The Fisheries Law of 2006 defines CFi as “a group of Cambodian citizens who depend on fisheries for their livelihoods, and who reside in villages in the Kingdom of Cambodia, and who voluntarily agree to organise themselves into legal entities for the protection of their rights and interests, in order to participate in the co-management, conservation and sustainable development of fisheries resources”. The 2006 Fishery law does not grant the right of CFi members to generate incomes from commercial fisheries activities and CFi members must fish using small-scale fishing gears for subsistence living only. The current law does not allow CFi members exclusive access to their fishing areas and there is no legal basis for them to exclude outsiders from fishing or charge them rent to do so.

2.1.2. CFi Sub-decree

According to the current CFi sub-decree, a CFi is ‘a legal entity of Khmer nationality with members living in or nearby a fishing ground and voluntarily organizing themselves to participate in management, utilization and sharing of fisheries resources in an equitable manner to promote their livelihood and reduce poverty and thereby contribute to socio-economic development’. Under this model, fisheries management is decentralized to community committees who have rights and responsibilities to implement co- management within a designated area and incorporate a small no-take conservation zone.

Several modifications have been proposed during consultation workshops with stakeholders in 2023, to update the CFi sub-decree. These include: incorporating community fishing area management plans into commune / Sangkat development plans and investment programs; requesting permission from MAFF through the specialized unit in charge of fisheries, for fishing or conducting aquaculture at any CFi location other than the fisheries conservation area in accordance with the bylaws, regulations and management plan for the community fishing venue, to generate income to support the operation of the fishing community; Fishing communities to be given the right to apply for fishing permits for medium-scale fishing or aquaculture in accordance with the relevant fisheries laws and regulations; coordinating the issuance of Social Security Fund (CSS) to the Community Fisheries Committee; and additional legal financial sources of the fishing communities, including CFi incomes such as ecotourism, medium-sized fisheries and aquaculture; and achieving equal representation of women and men in CFi management, and empowering women in leadership roles within CFi.

2.1.3. CFi Prakas

The current CFi Prakas sets out procedures and processes for organizing community fishing, including legal and illegal fishing gears and fisher rights. The current Fishery Law allows fishers from outside of CFi communities, to access and harvest fish from CFi fishing grounds, provided they comply with local rules. Transgressions by ‘outsiders’ is considered by many, to be one of the major pressures on fisheries resources and threatens the viability of many CFi. Modifications have been proposed in consultation workshops with stakeholders in 2023. These include a budget plan and income plan to support and develop the fishing community and a summary of the budget expenditure according to the expenditure in each activity and must specify the income of the fishing community to have a clear basis for finding support budget from various sources. It was also recommended that strategies in the Community fishing Area Management Plan include establishing activities to generate income from the existing potential in the community (planting seedlings, handicrafts, services) to support the implementation of community fishing area management plans; promoting gender equality and women's participation in community fisheries management; and strengthening the capacity, resilience and adaptation of fishing communities to respond to climate change.

Two Prakas relevant for community fisheries and endorsed by the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training have been developed to ensure child safety and protection. Prakas No. 305 prohibits children under 15 from fishing on boats but allows those aged 15-17 to fish on boats but excludes them from underwater activities. Prakas No. 241 establishes guidelines for child labour in inland fisheries, which includes limits on working hours, safety measures, and prohibited activities, including night fishing, solo fishing in deep areas, and lifting heavy equipment.

2.1.4. The Strategic Planning Framework for Fisheries (SPF): 2015-2024 “Fishing for the Future”

The current Strategic Planning Framework (SPF) states that CFi are at the centre of the Government’s Deep Reforms, transferring management of fishing lot areas to communities, thereby enhancing the governance of the sector and contributing to the employment and food security of rural people. FiA, with support from the NGO sector, focuses on supporting communities to build viable and operational CFi through practical and legal establishment, election of CFi committees and through the training of CFi members. Pillar 1 indicator 1.2 states that whilst there are many CFi in existence, their level of effectiveness in the delivery of management and other community benefits varies considerably. The SPF states that assessments of the effectiveness of CFi will be determined through a series of criteria: i. Participation of the community in fisheries resource management; ii. The legal Framework of CFi; iii. The Role and Function of the CFi committee members; iv. Implementation of CFi plans; v. The operational network of the CFi; vi. The use of financial resources; vii. The wider livelihood quality of the associated community; viii. The effectiveness of conservation under the CFi. Improving these effectiveness criteria has been used to provide the framework for this Strategic Plan. These criteria are explored further in this Strategic Plan. The SPF also recognises climate change as a key challenge, emphasizing its impact on fisheries through altered flood patterns and fish migration cycles. It promotes adaptive, community-based responses, resilient livelihoods, and ecosystem conservation

2.1.5. The Agriculture Sector Strategic Development Plan (ASDP) 2019-2023

The RGC's Rectangular Strategy Phase IV included: the promotion of agricultural and rural development; and strengthening sustainable management of natural and cultural resources. In response to this, MAFF developed the Agriculture Sector Strategic Plan 2019-2023 (ASDP) to be consistent with the Rectangular Strategy Phase IV, the National Strategic Plan 2019-2023 (NSDP), and other relevant policy documents. Under Program 3; Fishery Resource Management and Aquaculture Development, the ASDP describes 11 fisheries sub-programmes, with sub-programme no. 1 stated as "Strengthening of Community Fisheries management and development". Targets under this sub-program are restricted to; an increase in the number of CFi registered, (420-510- achieved since 2019) and an increase in the number of CFi rated as effective (100-300)- achieved since 2023.

2.1.6. FiA Gender Equality Promotion and Child Labor Elimination Policy and Strategic Framework for the Fisheries Sector 2024 – 2030

Gender equality and women's and girls' empowerment are crucial for achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as ensuring fisheries are socially and environmentally sustainable. Over the past 20 years, the Cambodia developed a robust policy and institutional framework to promote and support gender equality in agriculture and fisheries, acknowledging that women's greater participation in and benefits from interventions and decision-making are key to sustainable and inclusive development. The framework aims for the effective integration of gender equality and child protection into institutional policies and frameworks; promoting equal representation and participation of women and men in decision-making for fisheries management; improving equitable access to economic and natural resources, information, and technology, while ensuring child protection from labour in the fisheries sector; and strengthening accountability and implementation through targeted data collection and research on gender equality and child labour protection.

2.1.7. Sub- Decree on Functions and structure of District Administrations (No.184 ANK.BK)

Whilst not specific to fisheries, the RGC's D&D policy has implications for the delivery of government services to the fisheries sector, including CFi. Essentially, D&D aims to move key Government operational and administration functions from the central administration to provincial and district levels. Well-organized fisheries communities participating in co-management with Government are seen as consistent with the decentralization and de-concentration policies of the Government. In some ways, CFi can be seen as an ultimate implementation of the RGC's D & D policy with decision making and planning made at the grass roots level. The sub-decree empowers sub-national administrations, especially at the district and provincial level to provide technical support and guidance to CFi whilst financial resources and budgeting should be allocated to the local level (Communes) to support CFi projects incorporated into annual Commune Investment Programs. In addition, the Provincial Treasurer or MEF shall simplify the procedure that allows commune councils to allocate budget to support CFi.

2.1.8. Pentagonal Strategy Phase 1 for growth, employment, equity and sustainability, building the foundation towards realising the Cambodia Vision 2050.

In August 2023, The RGC passed the successor to the Rectangular Strategy, laying out the national development priorities for the next 15 years. The Five strategic objectives are: i. Ensuring crisis-resilient economic growth of 7% per annum; ii. Creating more jobs; iii. Achieving the poverty reduction targeting of below 10%; iv. Continuing to strengthen capacity, governance, and improving the quality of public institutions, both national and subnational; and v. Ensuring sustainable socio-economic development and building resilience to climate change through optimization of demographic dividends and strengthening demographic resilience; promoting gender equality; sustainably managing natural resources; increasing sustainable and green financing.

The core of the Pentagonal Strategy focuses on governance and the modernization of state institutions making them modern, competent, strong, smart and clean. More specifically the Pentagonal Strategy focuses on “improving the management of fisheries resources by promoting the implementation of the Strategic Planning Framework for Fisheries; promoting aquaculture; strengthening the management and development of the fishing communities; promoting the development of capacity and technologies to improve fisheries quality; developing fisheries value chains and export promotion; and strengthening the enforcement of the Law on Fisheries in the fight against illegal fishing”. Also of direct relevance to some CFi are proposals including: Promoting the development of community livelihoods in natural protected areas by linking with tourism through the transformation of natural protected areas into tourist attractions, capacity building for forest communities, communities in protected areas and the adjacent areas; and equitable benefit-sharing; and managing cultural resources through the approach that maintains a balance between development and conservation.



2.2. International Guidance Instruments

Cambodia is party to several international instruments that are relevant to CFi communities. These are outlined below

2.2.1. Code of Conduct for Responsible Fisheries (CCRF)

The CCRF developed by FAO does not explicitly promote community fisheries or co-management but does make the point that: (7.1.20) Within areas under national jurisdiction, States should seek to identify relevant domestic parties having a legitimate interest in the use and management of fisheries resources and establish arrangements for consulting them to gain their collaboration in achieving responsible fisheries. Although the CCRF does not mention climate change explicitly, (as it was not a major concern in fisheries governance when it was adopted in 1995), it does establish core principles that support climate-resilient fisheries management, including the promotion of the precautionary and ecosystem approaches.

2.2.2. Voluntary Guidelines for Small Scale Fisheries (VGSSF)

Cambodia's SPF recognises FAO's Voluntary Guidelines for Small Scale Fisheries (VGSSF) in the statement that, 'CFi will complement Cambodia's commitment to the implementation of FAO's VGSSF'. Securing and strengthening rights for small-scale fishers can be balanced by delegating responsibility to communities to use local fisheries resources sustainably. At the core of the fisheries reforms in Cambodia has been increasing the rights and responsibilities for the co-management and development of community fisheries. This looks to remain central to the way Cambodia's fisheries will develop in future. Strengthening the partnership between the State and communities is essential to deliver the strategic approach promoted in this document.

Gender equality also features prominently in the voluntary guidelines, calling for the equal participation of women and men in community organizations and in decision-making processes. One of the goals of the VGSSF is to transform the institutional arrangements that make up a society, to eventually root out gender inequality in policies and legislation, and ensure that both women and men have access to appropriate technologies and services to carry out their work.

The VGSSF recognises climate change as a significant threat to small-scale fisheries and integrates related principles throughout the guidelines, calling for the application of the precautionary and ecosystem approaches, encouraging the integration of climate change adaptation and disaster risk management into fisheries planning, and promoting policy coherence across sectors. The guidelines emphasize that addressing climate risks is essential for the long-term sustainability and well-being of small-scale fishing communities.

2.2.3. The Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the Context of National Food Security (VGGT)

The Voluntary Guidelines on the Responsible Governance of Tenure of Land, Fisheries and Forests in the context of National food security. (VGGT) promote secure tenure rights and equitable access to land, fisheries and forests, as a means of eradicating hunger and poverty, supporting sustainable development and enhancing the environment. The VGGT promote responsible governance of tenure of land, fisheries and forests, with respect to all forms of tenure: public, private, communal, indigenous, customary, and informal. The overarching goals are to achieve food security for all and support the progressive realization of the right to adequate food in the context of national food security. While supporting efforts towards the eradication of hunger and poverty, the Guidelines are also intended to contribute to achieving sustainable livelihoods, social stability, housing security, rural development, environmental protection, and sustainable social and economic development. The Guidelines are intended to benefit all people in all countries, although there is an emphasis on the most vulnerable and marginalized people. Implementation of these guidelines requires considerable political will “across the board” and, the case of Cambodia’s fisheries, concerted actions beyond the respective realms of FiA, FIAC, and DPs.

2.2.4.vThe Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries management (EAFm)

The Convention on Biodiversity (CBD 2000) recognised the Ecosystem Approach (EA) as “a strategy for the integrated management of land, water and living resources that promotes conservation and sustainable use in an equitable way.” The Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries management, (EAFm) applies these principles to the fisheries sector and sets out a framework to balance human well-being (e.g. employment, incomes & sustainable livelihoods) with ecological well-being (e.g. healthy fish resources and a healthy environment) through good governance tools (e.g. laws, policies, and community level rules). The EAFm explicitly incorporates climate change as a key consideration, promoting adaptive, ecosystem-based, and participatory management. It supports risk and vulnerability assessments, encourages coordination across sectors, and promotes resilience building of fishing communities.



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CHAPTER 3- Institutions and Organisations supporting CFi co-management in Cambodia.

To move CFi in Cambodia forward, there is an urgent need to clarify the roles and responsibilities of government and non-government agencies involved, in order to reduce duplication and contradiction in work with CFi and to seize opportunities for collaboration and cooperation. The future roles and responsibilities relating to CFi, of national, sub-national and local organisations are especially important under the RGC's decentralisation and de-concentration policies.

3.1. National Level institutions

Historically, the FiA under the MAFF of the RGC, has held broad responsibility for the fisheries sector. The Community Fisheries Development Department (CFDD) of the FiAs mission is to support and strengthen CFi capacity to manage and sustain their fisheries resources, to address poverty and the availability of fish and other aquatic animals for the people of Cambodia. CFDD's role in this objective is changing slowly with more hands-on responsibilities being devolved to provincial and district levels of Government. Subsidiary legislation is clear that ministries and institutions of the RGC are responsible for formulating policies, strategic plans, technical standards and service standards to guide provincial and district administrations in functional performance of each sector.

3.1.1. Community Fisheries Development Department (CFDD)

The Community Fisheries Development Department (CFDD) of the FiA under the MAFF of the Royal Government of Cambodia, has a mission to support and strengthen Community Fisheries development to co-manage and sustain their fisheries resources to address poverty and availability of fish and other aquatic animals for the population of Cambodia. CFDD's current responsibilities are:

- The development of legal frameworks and policies for CFi;
- Procedures for CFi establishment and operation;
- National and regional CFi coordination mechanisms;
- CFi research;
- CFi information management and dissemination;
- Technical support to other agencies working with CFi.

The table below developed at the November 2023 CFi Strategic Plan workshops, provides a summary of views on CFDD's current and possible future roles with regards to CFi. While several of the current roles remain, others are seen to be necessary to facilitate greater participation from provincial, district and commune level authorities.

Table 1. CFDD current and future roles and responsibilities

Current Role/ function of CFDD	Possible Future role/ function of CFDD
1. Development of legal frameworks and policies for CFi	Unchanged but with increased consultation with other stakeholders
2. Develop strategic guidelines to strengthen and sustain CFi development;	Updating of CFi Strategic Plan at 10-year intervals
3. CFi coordination	New: Establishment and facilitation of national and provincial CFi networks
4. Securing of government and DP funds for CFi development	Unchanged but with more emphasis on supporting the allocation of funds for CFi, through commune administrations
5. CFi grant management training and fund dissemination	New: Technical support to Provincial or District grant dissemination
CFi assessment and research	New: Increased collaboration with IFREDI/ MAFREDI on CFi research
6. CFi database management and data portal established, information management and dissemination	New: Compilation of provincial summaries of CFi related information.
Data on CFi updated regularly, for users of CFi information	New: Annual reports produced on the status of CFi in Cambodia
7. Collaborative and long-term M&E of CFi effectiveness;	Unchanged
8. Development of technical guidelines on CFi development	Unchanged
9. Technical and capacity building support to FiAC and CFi	Increased technical support to FiAC and districts
10. CFi training workshops for FiAC and DPs	More participatory sessions aiming to draw lessons from local experience- incorporation of EAFm perspectives into training.
11. Representation of CFi sub sector at FiA / donor meetings	Unchanged
12. Organisation of National CFi fora, conventions & workshops	Unchanged
13. Printing and publication of CFi documentation	Unchanged

3.1.2. IFREDI & MAFREDI

The Inland Fisheries Research and Development Institute (IFReDI) was established in October 2002 as a Cambodia national research and development institute under the supervision of the Fisheries Administration of MAFF. Its stated mission is to provide scientific information and technical support for the sustainable development and management of inland living aquatic resources in Cambodia, based on biological and socioeconomic research. IFREDI's responsibilities, most relevant to CFi are to:

- Monitor status and trends of fisheries and aquatic resources, and identify aquatic fauna and flora for supporting conservation, management and development of fisheries;
- Conduct socio-economic, research;
- Publish and disseminate data and information on the socioeconomics of inland fisheries.

The Marine Fisheries Research and Development Institute (MaFReDI) aims to create an enabling research space for sustainable growth among marine fisheries actors. It facilitates and collects reliable fisheries data to inform policy choices to improve livelihoods. Data-driven social responses aim to build a resiliency that better responds to environmental shocks, adheres to international quality standards, and empowers community leaders to make informed decisions. Responsibilities in relation to CFi include:

- Improving data and information with a focus on supporting decision-making and monitoring the implementation of fisheries management plans;
- Facilitating coordination between agencies to better integrate fisheries conservation efforts;
- Continuing the focus on the eradication of illegal fishing.

The research expertise of IFREDI & MAFREDI appears to not be being fully utilized in support of CFi development. This may be partly due to budget complications or be a more deeply rooted problem. Efforts to involve IFREDI & MAFREDI in research on CFi should be stepped up and would likely be covered by their respective socioeconomic divisions. Much support is needed in particular to analyze CFi data collected by CFDD and for the reporting of key results.

3.1.3. Universities and Colleges

Over the past several decades, many university and college students in Cambodia have carried out studies on topics related to CFi development in Cambodia. These have included the Royal University of Agriculture, (RUA), and Prek Leap National Institute of Agriculture (PLNAI). On-going efforts by the CAPFish Project are aiming to find mechanisms to formally integrate the findings from such studies into Government policy and planning for the fisheries sector. Cambodia is regarded internationally as a leader in community co-management of fisheries and the publication of academic articles on issues related to CFi is of considerable international interest. Scope also exists for the establishment of University 'Think Tanks' to discuss and prepare policy briefs on CFi related matters.

3.2. Sub-National Administrations

Cambodia's Decentralisation & Deconcentration (D&D) policy is placing increasing responsibility for CFi co-management on Provincial and District administrations. However, the current capacity to fulfil these new roles is limited and requires central government and DP support through the D & D transition period.

3.2.1. Provincial Departments

Currently, Provincial administrations are responsible for providing technical support, interventions and capacity development to district administrations, as required. Provincial level support for fisheries development is the responsibility of the Fisheries Administration Cantonments, who are supervised and report to the Provincial Department of Fisheries and Forestry, (PDAFF). Five-year and annual workplans are developed under the Provincial Agriculture Sector Development Plans (PASDP) many of which encourage planning for CFi development. The provincial administrations do not usually provide direct technical support to CFi. However, as the Provincial or District Governor is usually the Chair of the Provincial/District Technical Facilitation Committee (sub-decree 217/218) he/she can coordinate and provide oversight to PDAFF or FiAC to ensure efficient and effective support to CFi. The lack of budgets to support implementation of CFi Area Management Plans is seen as a hurdle to improving the performance of CFi. Budget allocation for CFi could be allocated to district and commune levels; however, the policy enabling environment to enable district or commune administration to use their budgets to support Cfi is currently limited. FiAC are responsible for reporting progress on CFi under their jurisdiction, to CFDD. Of the 25 provinces that developed 2019-2023 PASDP plans that included fisheries, 21 of them included activities that were specific to CFi. Grouping of these activities are found in the table below.



Table 2: CFI development activities in PASDP Plans (2019-2023)

CFi support activity	Number of PASDPs
Increasing revenue for CFI	18
Strengthening capacities for CFI Committees/CFi	16
Facilitating re-elections of CFI/CFi committees	5
Organizing exchange learning visits to share experience on CFI	5
Disseminating Fishery Law and by laws	5
Supporting the development of CFI Agreements and CFI Area Managements	4
Conducting annual workshop on results of management of CFI	3
Supporting conservation in CFI areas	3
Supporting CFI demarcation (3)	3
Conducting CFI surveys	2
Promoting ecotourism in CFI communities	2
Holding Regular meetings with CFI	2
Supporting physical infrastructure for CFI	1
Protecting flooded forests	1
Supporting CFI registration	1
Supporting CFI patrolling	1

Regional CFI Workshops in Oct 2023 found that Provincial support to CFI could be strengthened through:

- Dedicated CFI specialists working at Provincial and District administration levels;
- Improved indicators developed for CFI in the PASDP process;
- Provincial and inter-provincial CFI networks established for improving communication and information exchange between CFI;
- Technical support and training provided by CFDD and DPs to CFI committees relating to CFI organization and CFI fisheries area co-management;
- Increased levels of participation in CFI assessment surveys;
- Improved collaboration with PD AFF, PDWR and other sub-national departments;
- Closer work with CFI Committees to develop CFI Fishing area agreements and CFI Area management plans, and other important CFI docs.

3.2.2. District administrations

Under the Sub-Decree on functions and structure of District Administrations (No.184 ANK.BK), Districts are being encouraged to take a more active role in operational and administration functions relating to community fisheries. To date, this has not happened widely but can be expected to strengthen over the next several years. District level objectives related to fisheries could include the following: protect, control, and crackdown on fisheries offenses; educate and raise awareness to citizens on the importance of sustainable management, conservation; protect children from child labour and promote gender equality, and development of fisheries resources; and establish, support, and manage community fisheries.

The Regional CFi Workshops in October 2023 found that District level support to CFI could be strengthened through:

- The hiring of dedicated CFi specialists;
- Increased levels of participation in CFi assessment surveys;
- Improved collaboration with other district level departments;
- Closer work with CFi committees to develop improved CFi Fishing area agreements and CFi area management plans, and other important CFi documents;
- Participation with communities in IUU patrolling of CFi areas.



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3.3. Development partners

In support of CFI development, the international donor community and international organisations have been generous and consistent over the past 30 years, and CFI co-management is still seen as progressive and essential for securing the sustainability of Cambodia's inland and coastal fisheries. CFI are also recognized internationally as democratic institutions providing a framework for equitable access to and use of aquatic natural resources. Since the birth of CFI in Cambodia, NGOs have offered and provided support to what they regard as a socially and environmentally sound policy. Technical and financial support from NGOs has often been focused on capacity building of CFI communities relating to CFI establishment, elections, organization and fisheries co-management. The provision of micro-finance for CFI community and training in alternative and supplementary livelihoods have been organised in many CFI. Several NGOs have organised local CFI networks at a range of scales, which can act as pilots for wider networking ambitions. The Government's TWGFI and other fora have been used effectively to harmonise donor and NGO support to CFI.

Support from international development partners and NGOs have included: Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), European Union, (EU) Mekong River Commission (MRC), Danish International Development Assistance (DANIDA), Swedish International Development Assistance (SIDA), UK Department of International Development (DFID), Worldfish, Japanese Aid (JICA), ForumSys, Aide et Action (AEA), Action Aid (AAC), Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), Wild Earth Allies (WEA), Southeast Asia Fisheries Development Center (SEAFDEC), International Union for Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources (IUCN), Global Environmental Facility (GEF), Asian Development Bank (ADB), and Conservation International (CI). Local DPs have also been active, including Fisheries Action Coalition Team (FACT) and Greening of Prey Lang (GPL).

Given the continuing importance of fisheries in Cambodia and the development needs of many fishing communities, CFI will likely continue to attract support from Cambodia's development partners. However, this support has also created a climate of dependency on external funding support for many CFI. Whilst new DP Projects continue to focus on CFI development, after 30 years of support, some donors appear to be growing weary of supporting CFI initiatives, which have promised so much and yet some now see as having fallen short of what they hoped in terms of community development and sustainable resource use. There is a need to reignite donor interest in supporting CFI further development through implementing the proposals laid out in this strategic plan.

Consultations with stakeholders suggests that support to CFI by DPs and NGOs could be strengthened through:

- Closer coordination of planning and activities with local Government;
- Technical support to co-management mechanisms, include re-elections of CFI committee and updating Community Fishing Area Management Plans (CFiAMP);

- Collaboration on the formation of a provincial and national networks of CFI in Cambodia;
- Exchange of best practices and lessons learnt and dissemination of information critical for CFI development;
- Regular reporting of projects and progress to CFDD;
- Support to conserving and restoring fisheries habitats;
- Support to combatting illegal fishing;

Promoting viable alternative and supplementary livelihood options;

- Strengthening women's participation and equality;
- Supporting sustainable financing mechanisms, i.e. community saving funds and micro credits;
- Support to improving basic lifelines, including clean water and food safety.



3.4. Private Sector

The transition from fishing lots to CFI co-management in the early 2000s, officially marked the end of commercial inland fishing. Many private fishing businesses that were so influential during the fishing lot era, disappeared during the fishery reforms, although large scale fishing is still taking place in some areas, e.g. the Arrow Trap fishery in the flooded forests of Battambang. Allowing CFI members to participate in medium-scale fishing could open opportunities for public / private partnerships, as encouraged in the Pentagonal Strategy.

MAFF policy suggests that CFI are to be encouraged to become modern, communities with abilities to self-sustain and generate their own incomes to support CFI activities, the support and involvement of the private sector are becoming more critical. Stakeholder discussions at several CFI-related workshops in 2023 and 2024 suggested that private sector support to CFI could be strengthened through:

- Support to CFI operation of medium-scale fisheries from which catches could be sold to private wholesalers if the new CFI legal frameworks grant the relevant rights;
- Establishing cooperative businesses by CFI;
- Building non-fisheries related enterprises for supplementary and alternative incomes;
- Providing marketing infrastructure and know-how and better access to markets;
- Closer marketing cooperation between CFI and CFI members;
- Improving women-led post-production processes and value chains to increase the value of processed products.
- Promoting public-private sector partnerships in aquaculture through CFI.



CHAPTER 4- Community Fisheries (CFi) in Cambodia today

CFDD reports that, as of 2024:

- 516 CFi have been established in 20 provinces in Cambodia; 475 are inland CFi and 41 are coastal;
- 457 CFi have been registered with MAFF: 417 CFi are in inland areas and 40 CFi are in coastal areas;
- CFi fishing areas total 979,685 ha: 836,496 ha in inland areas and 143,188 ha in coastal areas;
- The total number of CFi conservation areas is 577;
- The total number of CFi committee members is 4,450 of which 689 are female.

The SPF 2019-2024, states that assessments of the effectiveness of CFi should be determined through eight criteria^[3]. The status of CFi according to these criteria is now well understood through multiple FiA led assessments, including CFi effectiveness assessments conducted with CFi community members in 2017/18 (292 registered CFi in 17 provinces) and 2021/22 (202 registered CFi in 17 provinces), the CFi status assessment in 2018, and a CFi rapid status assessment conducted with provincial officers (FiAC and PDAFF) in 20 provinces in early 2023. This section will summarise the main findings from the assessments.

4.1. Overall effectiveness

The results between the 2018 and 2022 CFi effectiveness assessments found the following:

- Half of CFi were classified as moderately effective (52% in 2018, 51% in 2022 and 50% in 2024);
- A significant reduction in weak CFi from 39% in 2018 to 9% in 2022 and 11% in 2024;
- Strong CFi increased from 10% in 2018 to 39% in 2022 and 2024;
- Pair-wise comparison of 163 CFi found 43% of moderate CFi had strengthened whilst 7% had weakened.
- Results of a rapid CFi status assessment with FIAC and PDAFF officers were in line with these findings.

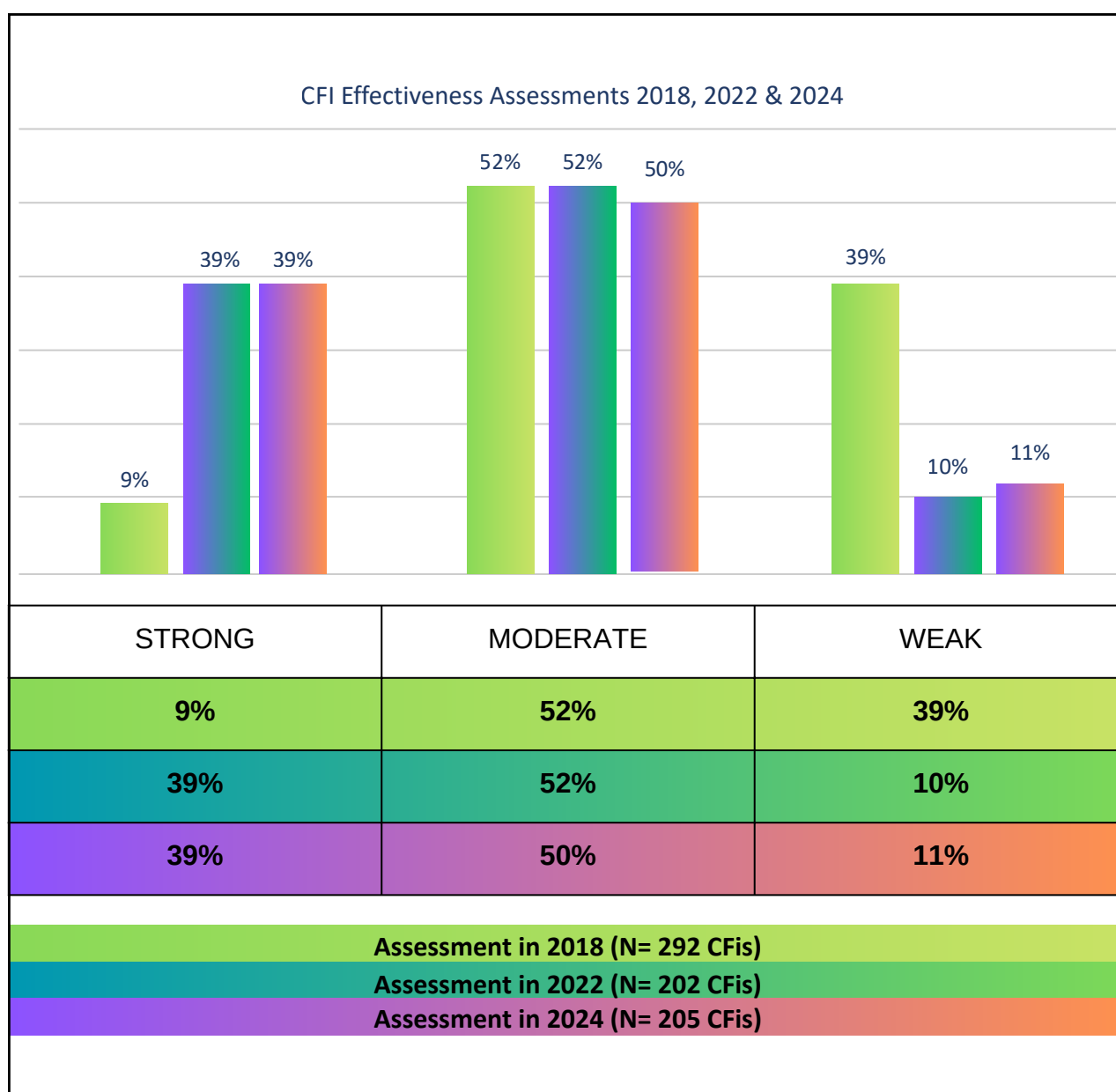
^[3] Participation of the community in fisheries resource management; The legal Framework of CFi; The roles and functions of the CFi committee members; Implementation of CFi plans; The operational network of the CFi; The use of financial resources; The wider livelihood quality of the associated community; and The effectiveness of conservation measures under CFi.

Factors that correlated strongly with strong CFi were:

- Member's perceived impacts/benefits of CFi;
- Regular patrolling;
- Confidence of CFi members participating in community fisheries activities;
- Their knowledge of CFi by-laws.

It is clear from these assessments that most CFi would be unable to sustain their activities without regular support from government or development partners. Where this support is lacking, CFi tend to stagnate and in some cases cease to function.

Figure 1. Results of CFi Effectiveness Assessments 2018, 2022 & 2024



4.2. Characteristics of strong & weak CFi

The 2022 CFi effectiveness survey identified the following characteristics for strong and weak CFi

Table 3: Strong and Weak characteristics of CFi in Cambodia

Characteristics of Strong CFi	Characteristics of weak CFi
● Strong leadership ● Transparency and accountability of CFiC to members ● Clear roles and responsibilities of CFiC ● High % of CFi members and participation & support ● Perceived benefits equally shared among members ● Frequent patrolling ● Regular CFiC re-elections ● Updating, safeguarding, and implementing the CFiAMP ● Diversified funding sources, more self-reliance and confident in sustaining the CFi without outside funding sources. ● Self-financing & sustainable fiscal mechanisms for activities; ● Knowledge of CFi mechanisms (by-laws/internal rules); ● Capacity of the CFiC to adopt EAFm ● Effective conservation, protection, and restoration of flooded forests and other fisheries habitats. ● High representation of women in CFiC roles and as CFi members. ● Support from government (FiA, FIAC, Commune, NGOs & private sector). ● Is a member of a local CFi network, for exchanging	● Poor Leadership ● Irregular re-election of CFCs, ● CFiC too long in place and have become inactive ● Lack of capacity & resources ● Not having or not implementing CFiAMP, ● no support to develop CFiAMP, ● no capacity to implement CFiAMP. ● Passive participation of CFi members ● Poor/no support from NGOs, ● Seasonal nature of some CFi ● Located in a high land-speculation area.

4.3. Summary of SPF Effectiveness Criteria status.

The table below summarizes the current status of CFi, under the 8 SPF effectiveness criteria. The summary is based on different assessments and stakeholder inputs, with the level of prioritisation categorised as: “Limited”, “Adequate” and “Needs immediate action” if CFi are to become stronger and more sustainable.

Table 4: CFi Effectiveness Criteria status

SPF effectiveness criteria of CFi	Related EAFm component	Level of prioritisation	Challenges & Opportunities
1. Community participation in resource management	Governance	Limited	The percentage of Community members registered as CFi members averaged 13% nationally. Few benefits are perceived for CFi members over non-members as all can fish the same way and in the same area. The lack of CFi area tenure creates a lack of incentive to become members and engage in protecting and managing resources. CFi lack and require knowledge on climate-resilient fisheries management to respond to changing season patterns and extreme weather events
2. CFi legal framework	Governance	Limited-Adequate	CFi-sub-decrees and prakas have been in place since 2007 but promotion of CFi self-reliance is still limited and the institutional focus tends to be on establishing CFi rather than strengthening and sustaining them. Community & CFi members need better understanding of fisheries laws. The new Fisheries Law may give opportunities for CFi to become more self-reliant financially.
3. Roles and functions of CFi members	Governance	Limited - Adequate	CFi committee members need clear briefing after election/re-election to understand their roles and responsibilities, as well as capacity building for the range of skills required. CFi members need clear and periodic briefings on CFiAMP implementation. Women are under-represented in most CFiC. CFiC operating in mandate and having an up-to-date CFiAMP are both fundamental for a strong and sustainable CFi. However, the majority of CFi have not held recent re-elections nor updated their CFiAMP due to the lack of capacity and resources. Procedures should be simplified to enable the CFi to be able to plan and implement these processes without having to rely on outside support. Policies will need to be updated to focus on how to better safeguard, strengthen and sustainable existing CFi. Local-level decision-making needs to be strengthened to ensure feasible and sustainable solutions are found. Precautionary planning for climate change adaptation is now critical as dams outside Cambodia and water diversion within the Country come under operation, impacting water levels in CFi fishing areas and increasing competition for water from other sectors.

SPF effectiveness criteria of CFI	Related EAFm component	Level of prioritisation	Challenges & Opportunities
4. Implementation of CFI Area management plan (CFiAMP)	Governance	Needs immediate actions	322 CFI or over 60% are in need of new or updated CFiAMP. Particularly in the Chaktamuk region (86%), followed by Tonle Sap region (76%). Nearly 87% of studied CFI reported that they need technical support for updating their CFiAMP, which reflects the difficulty among the CFI to follow the current CFiAMP template. The majority of CFI are unable to implement proposed activities in their plan due to the lack of resources. Future CFiAMP will need implementable sub-plans for income generating activities and sources of sustainable financing. Climate change impacts are increasing with the real potential to exceed worse case predicted scenarios, making it critical for CFI to have plans of actions and no-regret strategies to address issues such as severe drought (e.g. water storage, drought refugia during dry season, and seasonal planning), and negative impacts on fisheries habitats requiring nature-based solutions for protection and restoration. As frequencies and magnitudes of extreme climate events are increasing, reliable weather forecasting, early warning systems, and disaster preparedness, become more critical than ever to reduce risks. Most CFI require strengthened capacity for planning emergency responses.
5. Operation network of CFI	Governance	Needs immediate actions	13 of 20 provinces with CFI have CFI networks established but these need to be formalized. Collaborative support between the Governmental Departments and NGOs is critical to strengthen and formalize CFI networks at all levels. Establishing and strengthening CFI networks will support CFI transformation from isolated communities to organisations linked at provincial, regional and nationally levels.
6. Use of financial resources	Governance	Limited-needs immediate action	Most financial resources for CFI are from NGOs, DPs, and governmental grants. The uses of governmental funds are mainly for conservation and combatting illegal fishing whilst NGO funds often focus on re-election and livelihoods. CFI need to develop their own means of sustainable funding or have more secure, long-term sources of finance. e.g. through government funds allocated through the Commune. There is also a need to mobilize climate adaptation financing which has become a growing international funding source.

SPF effectiveness criteria of CFi	Related EAFm component	Level of prioritisation	Challenges & Opportunities
7. Wider livelihood quality of associated community	Human	Needs immediate action	Declining fisheries resources and increasing challenges through climate change impacts are undermining fishing-based livelihoods. There is a need to promote livelihood diversification to reduce the number of CFi members reliant on fishing and increase value addition through post-production along fisheries value chains. Training and skills building are required for the adoption of more sustainable and resilient livelihoods.
8. Effectiveness of conservation measures under CFi	Ecological	Limited-immediate action	Most CFi have a conservation area but the CFi 2018 status assessment found that on average only 1.3% of the CFi area was allocated for conservation purposes i.e. the protection of broodstock of important species and critical habitats, such as flooded forests, mangroves, coral reefs and seagrasses. CFi were originally established with a main objective of combating illegal fishing. However to date, the resources and capacity needed for effective patrolling have been inadequate. The lack of CFi tenure and exclusive fishing area for CFi members pose challenges for CFiC as they are unable to prevent overfishing and overexploitation of fisheries resources. Best practices, including the use of selective fishing gear and the protection of conservation areas, should be adopted. Habitat protection and restoration efforts should be strengthened to build ecological resilience against climate change impacts.



4.4. Status of the 8 SPF Effectiveness Criteria

4.4.1. Participation of the community in fisheries resource management

The percentage of households that are members of their local CFI varies widely across fishing communities and it is not uncommon for CFI members to be a minority in their fishing communities. The status assessments have highlighted the co-management challenges resulting from the fact that CFI areas are not only fished by members of the local CFI. In 2018, 203,578 fishers were estimated to fish in the 259 CFI studied, of which around 36% were CFI members; 43% were non-CFI members living in CFI communities and 21% were from outside respective CFI communities. The number of outsiders fishing in CFI areas is therefore significant, particularly in the Tonle Sap and Mekong Inspectorates. This can trigger conflict between CFI members, non-members and outsiders. The fact that outsiders and non-CFI members can fish inside CFI fishing areas has undermined member interest in CFI participation and discourages CFI members from implementing their CFiAMP effectively and protecting their fisheries resources. Passive participation by some CFI members is common and CFI member knowledge of by-laws and internal rules can be low.

The 2018 CFI status assessment found that women constituted 40% of CFI membership and participated in all CFI activities with the primary motivation of supporting CFI to improve fisheries management for income and food, as well as to conserve fisheries resources for future generations (FiA and CBNRMLI 2008). However, their representation in the CFiC remains low, at only 14% (Table 3), even though women possess many of the key skills needed by the CFiC, including financial record keeping, drafting organizational documents, and communicating the value of CFI activities to non-members. These activities have been identified as important in other assessments for improving the transparency and accountability of CFI Committees in relation to other CFI members and local communities. It has been reported that when women join CFI patrol teams, they are effective in persuading fishers to give up their illegal fishing gear and sign a pledge not to repeat the offense, thereby deterring further confrontation.

Table 5. CFI committee membership in 2018

Fisheries Inspectorates	No. of studied CFI	No. of CFC members	Total no. of female CFCs members	% of female CFC members
TSL	164	1,455	226	16
ChaFI	37	337	28	8
MeFI	33	293	30	10
CoFI	25	217	34	16
Total	259	2,302	318	14

Given the high proportions of CFi experiencing climate related threats (67% drought, 62% dried up aquatic resources, and 55% flood damage) (CFi Status Assessment 2023), building capacity of the CFi members to participate in fisheries resource management, such as community-led enforcement and monitoring of resource status, habitat protection, and adaptive planning will build ecological and social resilience to climate change not only within CFi but the wider fisheries sector.

4.4.2. The legal Framework of CFi

The CFi Prakas outlines nine steps required for establishing CFi^[4]. The 2018 CFi status assessments found that except for the last step on CFiAMP drafting, (which 75% of the studied CFi had completed), all of the studied CFi had completed the required establishment steps. Following the establishment of most CFi in the 1990s, more than half of them are currently in need of re-election and updating their CFiAMP. The survey found that many CFi members had an Incomplete understanding of the Fishery Law and thought that the procedures for CFi establishment, CFi Committee re-elections and for the drafting of CFiAMP were overly complicated and bureaucratic.

4.4.3. The Role and Function of the CFi committee members

Regional CFi Workshops held in October 2023 identified the wide range of skills required for CFiC members to be effective. These are summarised in the table below:

Table 6: CFi Committee skills required

Skills required	Qualities required
Leadership	Vision; motivation; inspiration; problem solving; taking action; accountability; cooperation with others
Fisheries management (planning and implementation)	Ability to develop, update and safeguard CFiAMP; understanding of aquatic ecology; conservation (e.g. aquatic species, deep pools, flooded forests, mangrove forest); ability to patrol and combat illegal
Financial and grant management	Budgeting; accounting; record keeping; financial reporting
Reporting & Numeracy	Preparation of documents; proposals; reports; record keeping
Sustainable financing and fund raising	Understanding of financial mechanisms and ability to develop them; contacts in organisations; presentation skills; proposal writing, ability to attract and mobilize funds
Livelihood development/diversification	Marketing/business, connection to private sector
Community management and development	Community organization; ability to inspire, lead and manage collection actions
Legal frameworks	Ability to organize re-election; awareness and enforcement of by laws and regulations; meeting organization; inclusiveness; by laws & internal rules
Communication and information technology	Effective communication, knowledge and ability to use Telegram, facebook, blogs, posts

^[4] (i) establishing a group of founders; (ii) assessing the CFi sites; (iii) registering the CFi members; (iv) preparing the CFi vision statement, by-laws, and internal rules; (v) electing the Community Fishery Committee; (vi) mapping community fishing areas; (vii) preparing a Community Fishing Area Agreement (CFAA); (viii) registering the Community Fishery and (ix) preparing a Community Fishing Area Management Plan (CFiAMP).

At present many CFI Committee members are lacking these skills, and cannot carry out many of the required functions e.g. hold re-elections, without external support.

4.4.4. Implementation of CFI Area Management Plans

Many CFI were found to have delivered no more than 10% of their CFI Area Management Plan. The 2023 CFI survey with FiAC also found that at least 322 CFI needed to update their CFIAMP. Key questions relating to this poor performance are found below.

1. Which parts of the model could be simplified so that the CFI themselves could develop or update their CFIAMP with as little outside assistance as possible? Currently, about 40% of the questions in the beginning part of the CFIAMP template are related to the CFI situation and background, suggesting that the current process to develop plans may be driven by outside agencies. Could these data be collected as a part of a CFI status assessment (instead of CFIAMP development) and allow the database to be accessible when needed for planning?
2. How can the plan be made as practical and feasible for meeting CFI member needs so that members feel more ownership of the plan? Could the questions in the template be reduced to only those that are clearly essential for planning co-management of the community fishing area?
3. How can the Ecosystem Approach to Fisheries Management framework be used in CFIAMP development to ensure an appropriate balance of ecological health and human well-being for sustainable development in fisher communities?
4. When a CFI needs assistance in updating their CFIAMP, what is the process for applying for help and receiving it in a timely manner? Could this be a collaborative effort by several agencies, and who would be in charge? Should there be provincial or district -level training and/or backstopping of the CFI?
5. Can new CFIAMP review and approval be done at provincial or district level or must it always require national level endorsement?
6. Who can coordinate and follow-up on the endorsement process by different authorities once a CFIAMP is submitted by a CFI?
7. How can the endorsement process for an updated CFIAMP be made more efficient and less time consuming? Could the necessary signatures be completed in a shorter time period so that an endorsed plan can be returned to the CFI without delay?

8. How might the loss of the CFIAMP copy by the CFC be prevented? Can a physical safekeeping place be arranged at the local level, and if so, where should it be?

9. Should there be paper and/or digital backup copies, and where should these be safely kept (e.g. ODC, FiAC, FiA). Could digital copies, (on mobile phones) be considered as legal and would CFI members be free to share such digital copies through social media apps (e.g. Telegram).

10. CFI participation in updating and adjusting their CFIAMP in response to climate impacts will help ensure that management measures remain relevant and become more effective. How can local knowledge of natural resource patterns and trends be used to draft effective CFIAMP.

4.4.5. The operational network of the CFI

Out of 20 provinces with CFI, 13 are found to have CFI networks (Table 6) with 60% of CFI in these provinces being network members. Most of the networks have been established and supported by NGOs and the benefits of networking are appreciated by CFI members and DPs. These networks should be encouraged to expand as they allow CFI to work together to share responsibilities and operate more effectively with their limited resources. Network membership could be particularly important to support CFI that have been assessed as weak. 'Joining up' these small networks would go some way to the formation of a national CFI body.

Table 7: Provincial CFI Networks

	Provinces	# of CFI in network	Total CFI in the province
1	Banteay Meanchey	7	19
2	Kampong Thom	7	42
3	Siem Reap	7	22
4	Kratie	64	71
5	Stung Treng	14	53
6	Rattanakiri	13	14
7	Prey Veng	28	28
8	Takeo	18	19
9	Pursat	11	35
10	Kampong Cham	22	20
11	Kep	5	5
12	Kampot	8	7
13	Koh Kong	4	14
	TOTAL	208	349



Regional and national peer-to-peer conventions of the CFI or CFI networks should be arranged bi-annually or annually, to allow for the exchange of lessons learned and good practices. Establishing networks of CFI women can play a vital role in strengthening gender equality and support sustainable development in CFI. These networks would not only address the specific needs of women but also enhance the overall effectiveness of CFI. By engaging in collective initiatives such as ecotourism or forming post-harvest processing groups, women can generate incomes and add value to fishery products, benefiting both the community and the wider fisheries sector. Development partners and NGOs who have worked with communities could help identify and facilitate the sharing of successful case studies—e.g., successful socio-economic models for improving livelihood opportunities in CFI, for fisheries resource and habitat protection, and for improved participation of women in decision-making processes.

4.4.6. The use of financial resources

Multiple assessments recognize that funding is necessary to support CFI activities such as patrolling, conservation and awareness raising on legal frameworks. Members of CFI can benefit from joining CFIC organised activities, such as saving groups. The improved management of funds would therefore benefit CFI members in the long run. The 2022 Cfi status assessment identifies 14 sources of funding for CFI. Among them, six sources of funding constitute a major proportion of funding to CFI, including: (1) Development Partners and NGOs; (2) saving groups; (3) Eco-tourism, (4) Charity/support/ in kind contributions; (5) income from fish processing; and (6) Funding generated from allowing outsiders to fish in CFI. NGOs and DPs contributed 40-90% of the total funds made available to CFI between 2014 and 2018. Saving groups rank as the second largest contribution to CFI, accounting for 15-33%, followed by ecotourism at 6-7%. Charitable contributions ranked 4th, constituting 5-6%,

followed by funds generated from allowing outsiders to fish in the CFI fishing grounds, (accounting for 3-8%). While the CFI Prakas list membership fee collection as an important income source, few CFI have been able to collect them thus far. A small number of CFI in Prey Veng received permission from FiA and the Provincial Government to operate barrages (small bagnet fisheries) for commercial exploitation thereby generating more significant funds for CFI operation. The lack of funds and irregular funding to support CFI activities have become a major threat for the sustainability of many CFI.

To assist CFI to face the challenge of the lack of financial resources for their operation, a budget support program benefitting CFI began in 2020. The program funded by the European Union is called the Cambodia Programme for Sustainable and Inclusive Growth in the Fisheries Sector (CAPFISH-Capture) with complementary technical assistance provided through FAO. Under this program, the Community Fisheries Development Department (CFDD) and the Department of Aquaculture Development (DAD) provided small grants to 250 communities in 2021, including 150 CFI in 15 target provinces and 100 CFRs in 11 target provinces, and continued to do so during 2022, 2023, and 2024. The grants currently reach about 34% of the registered CFI and roughly 11% of all CFRs. A guideline was developed with extensive involvements and input from FiA's management and technical staff on the transfer and management of grants to support the operation of CFI/CFR in Cambodia to facilitate the effective and transparent management of these grants. The document was approved by the MEF and by the MAFF in 2021. A series of 20 training-of-trainers workshops were conducted across 20 provinces, followed by field coaching directly with the CFI committee members in charge of the grant administration. The budget support, (typically 1,000 USD per CFI/CFR), has been used primarily on combatting illegal fishing and fisheries resource conservation, like patrolling, fingerling production, and erecting signboards promoting conservation in CFI areas. The grant assessment in 2022 found that 71% of the CFIC Chairs and cashiers of studied CFI and CFRs perceived the grant amount to be inadequate for their planned activities. Recognizing this and the fact that the grant has been limited to a proportion of the CFI and CFRs will help funders and the government understand the necessity to extend the grants to more communities and to consider increasing the funding level. This situation also highlights the need to explore, locate and strengthen avenues for self-funding and sustainable financing solutions.

CFI could also tap into international climate-related funds by aligning their activities with climate adaptation and resilience objectives. By integrating climate-smart fisheries management, ecosystem restoration, and resilient livelihoods into their CFiAMP, CFI could position themselves as locally grounded implementers of climate adaptation. With the support by the government or NGOs, they could access funding through mechanisms such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF), Global Environment Facility (GEF), or the Adaptation Fund—often via accredited entities like FAO, UNDP, or local government partners. Demonstrating clear climate benefits, community participation, and alignment with national climate strategies (e.g., CCAP) strengthens eligibility and appeal to donors.

4.4.7. The wider livelihood quality of the associated community

The 2018 status assessment found that fishing and farming were the main sources of people's livelihoods in the studied CFi. About 52% of households were engaged in farming, 39% in fishing, 13% in fruit gardening, 5% in the petty trading, and 3% in government service. In addition, about 4% of the total households in the CFi areas were engaged in fish processing and 2% in aquaculture. The remote locations of many fishing communities and the poor supporting infrastructure, constrain many opportunities for livelihood diversification. A lack of new livelihood skills, outside of fishing and farming in these communities, are additional constraints. As a result, many of the younger generations of the fishing families are moving to the cities or abroad to seek wage or salaried income. The 2018-CFi Status Assessment found that in Tonle Sap, 19% of households in the studied CFi could be classified as either ID Poor 1 or ID Poor 2. Under the Mekong Inspectorate this figure was 23%, for Chaktamuk it was 13%, and for the Coastal provinces it was 17%.

4.4.8. The effectiveness of conservation measures under CFi.

Conservation in CFi fishing areas can be classified into six categories: (i) CFi conservation areas, (ii) fish and flooded forest/mangrove forest conservation areas, (iii) flooded forest/mangrove forest conservation areas, (iv) Community Fish Refuges (CFR), (v) Fisheries refugia; and (vi) other types of conservation. The 2018 status assessment found that the extent of conservation areas in each CFi usually only makes up only a small proportion of the total CFi area, with an average of 1.3% of the CFi area being allocated for conservation purposes. At Inspectorate levels, coastal CFi conservation areas constituted 2.1%, of total CFi fishing area, followed by 1.7% in Chaktamuk Inspectorate, 1.0% in Tonle Sap inspectorates, and 0.9% in the Mekong Inspectorate.

Table 8: CFi Conservation areas

Ecosystem	Number	Ha	Activities	Responsibilities
Inland CFi conservation	462	4,777	Mapping Boundary demarcation Protection, including from pollution Zoning Habitat Enhancement	FiA/DFCO FiAC Local authorities CFi DPs/NGOs
Coastal CFi conservation	55	5,658	As above, plus mangrove restoration	FiA/DFCO, FiAC, LG, Cfi, DPs/NGOs

Many CFI dedicate much of their human and financial resources on patrolling to deter illegal fishing in conservation areas as well as the wider fishery, but with only limited success. Some CFI are also involved in Community based forest fire prevention, particularly around the northern part of Tonle Sap. As climate change alters water temperature, flood regimes and aquatic ecosystems, conservation measures under CFI must also aim to enhance ecosystem resilience. Community-led protection of fish sanctuaries, flooded forests, and spawning grounds are becoming critical for buffering climate impacts and supporting fish populations. Strengthening local monitoring of ecological shifts and incorporating climate scenarios into conservation planning in the CFIAMP will help maintain biodiversity and sustain fishery resources in a changing climate.



4.5. Threats to the future of CFi in Cambodia

Since the drafting of the SPF in 2015, a number of other issues impacting on CFi effectiveness have become more apparent. To aid clarity, there have been grouped according to the internationally recognised EAFm framework pillars; ecosystem well-being, human-well being and good governance.

4.5.1. Ecosystem related threats

Diverse publications over the past several decades suggest that Cambodian natural resources systems, especially its water/aquatic resource systems are coming under immense strain from multiple threats and that aquatic resource stocks and their supporting environments including environmental flows are being rapidly degraded, possibly to the point of a not-to-distant ecosystem collapse and food system impacts. (UNDP 2019^[5]) Overfishing, bad fishing practices habitat degradation, water shortages, and climate change are resulting in declining catches and the value of catches, causing some fishers to leave the sector. The ability for CFi to thrive and grow is directly related to the abundance and health of the natural resources that they harvest. Decreased abundance of species or a particular species assemblage may cause CFi members to increase fishing effort, or use non-approved fishing gear or fishing areas to recover the shortfall in production/income.

Ecosystem threats that will directly impact on CFi can be broken down as follows:

Climate Change related threats

Climate change is causing ecological stress in Cambodia's fisheries. Frequent and more prolonged droughts, intensive wet seasons and increased and extreme temperatures, will likely have significant impacts on fisheries and fisheries workers. The increased inland flooding expected from climate change induced precipitation in the Mekong region may be beneficial to capture fisheries as it expands breeding habitats and enhance fish productivity but could harm other supporting agricultural practices when the same floods may damage rice field and infrastructure. More severe and extended droughts are predicted which will likely have negative impacts on dry season stock survival, reducing the size and effectiveness of the CFi conservation areas and CFR, and intensifying fish mortalities. Already the Tonle Sap Lake's natural flood pulse has becoming less predictable; in some areas fish populations have declined sharply due to a combination of drought, delayed rain and other pressures (Ngor et al. 2021). Coastal fisheries will also be impacted through coral reef bleaching leading to collapse and die offs, seagrass will be unable to tolerate warm coastal waters, and mass die-off's can be expected. Higher sea surface temperatures will lead to the decreased survival of aquatic animals such as blue swimming crabs and short tail mackerel. Increased coastal water temperatures will reduce the potential for marine aquaculture and algal blooms stimulated by nutrient run off, will become more problematic.

^[5] UNDP 2019. 'Development and Land Degradation'. How Cambodia is Promoting a Balanced and Sustainable Future Through Conservation

Hydrological change related threats

The Mekong mainstream dams and the thousands of small legal and illegal irrigation and hydropower dams, the diversion of local water ways, compounded by climate driven shifts in rainfall, are resulting in significant changes to the natural hydrological pulse of the Mekong. Early season rain is being retained throughout the Basin for irrigation purposes resulting in the annual flow reversal of the Tonle Sap being delayed in most years. Sand dredging in the Mekong has also altered the flow dynamic of the Mekong resulting in a faster flow rate, retarding and delaying the backflow into the Tonle Sap. These hydrological aspects are having an increasing impact on the productivity of the Tonle Sap system, threatening the thousands of people who depend on the lake's fisheries. Increased dry season river flows, caused by the discharge from Hydro-electric dams are thought to be causing the degradation of some flooded forest species, causing further drops in fish production and biodiversity.

Habitat and Resource degradation related threats

The productivity of the inland fishery is directly linked to the flooding of the vegetative margins of the lake, which is used by many species as breeding and nursery areas. The loss of Cambodia's unique flooded freshwater forests caused by the diminished flood pulse and the conversion of land into agriculture, or for other purposes, means that the flooded forest productive zone around the lake is being reduced, resulting in significant biodiversity loss and detrimental loss of productivity in the inland fishery. The biodiversity loss translates into fewer species available for utilization. In the marine fishery, the degradation of seagrass and coral reef areas from illegal trawling, as well as urban development where infilling has replaced the near shore marine environment, is drastically reducing productivity and biodiversity and directly impacting on the ability of coastal Communities to harvest sufficient fish to thrive. Unless steps are taken to reduce or mitigate this degradation, Cambodia's inland and coastal fisheries will become significantly less productive, reducing the ability of people living in coastal and inland CFi to lead productive livelihoods.

Lost biodiversity related threats

The loss of fisheries biodiversity should be seen in context of the Region's ability to leverage value and revenue from its unique and extraordinary fauna and flora. Biodiversity decline is usually also associated with biomass decline. This decline can have a direct negative impact on CFi through lower catches, or reduced species availability which will impact negatively on the value of fisher catches. In addition to slowing or halting hydrological change and maintaining important migration routes and conserving important aquatic habitats, it is important to ensure that communities can continue to benefit from healthy fisheries resources. It is also important to ensure that the biomass remaining is diverse enough to have enough species with capacity to adapt to climate change and/or habitat changes. With degraded and reduced biodiversity, Cambodia will lose much of its potential to develop eco-tourism in the Tonle Sap, the Mekong and the coastal areas, that could benefit local communities through developing small and micro-enterprises supporting nature-based tourism.

4.5.2. Socio-economic related threats

Overfishing related threats

Whilst Cambodia's inland fisheries appear able to withstand significant fishing pressure and still remain productive in terms of overall production, species diversity and fish size appear to be reducing. Most coastal fisheries require more time to rebound from overfishing than floodplain fisheries. The increasing number of fishers, fishing gears and the expansion of technology is exacerbating this situation. In inland and coastal fisheries, even very small fish have a market value. The preference of eating captured fish in favour of cultured fish is slowly diminishing as aquaculture production accelerates but many fish farmers still depend on the capture fishery for feed or juveniles, adding to the pressure being exerted on many fisheries.

A critical challenge in community based resources management is the fact that the fishery law does not allow CFI exclusive access to their fishing grounds, meaning that at present, CFI cannot limit the number of outsiders or non-members fishing within CFI areas and so cannot then prevent overfishing, or fishing with illegal fishing methods on their fishing grounds, or prevent fishing in refugia, even when they observe it happening. Should this policy change, it is important that CFI are empowered legally to enforce their exclusive access to the resources within their management area and so have an incentive for them to exercise responsible fisheries. Without exclusivity of access, collecting revenue from allowing outsiders to fish CFI is non-viable. Allowing licensed medium-scale fishing could easily collide with the need for sustainable resource use and conservation.

Illegal fishing related threats

Despite the resources directed at reducing illegal fishing in Cambodia over the past few decades, the situation does not seem to have improved greatly. Over time, Illegal fishing tends to become more dynamic, shifting from conventional methods to more sophisticated techniques, worked by groups of fishers. In this way, innovative "modern" fishing gear and new destructive techniques appear quite regularly. Offenders are rarely detained and sent to court. CFI only have surveillance powers and as the compliance system is poorly defined and ineffective, an incident surveilled has low probabilities of arrest and prosecution. Therefore, the penalty of being apprehended and sanctioned is perceived as less than the benefit gained through illegal practices. Most CFI members are aware of the fishery law and know which fishing gears are illegal, but the non-exclusivity of CFI fishing grounds, undermines CFI committee efforts to reduce legal and illegal fishing in their home waters. As incomes and production from fishing decline, CFI fishers are often themselves forced to turn to more efficient gears to maintain the same catch levels. These gears may be illegal or not yet classified, usually referred to in the fishing gear Prakas as "modern fishing gear". Levels of illegal fishing are rated as "extremely high" for active fishing gears with incorrect mesh size (such as trawls), "moderately high" for passive gear for mesh size and modern gear use (electro fishing); "extremely high" for fishing in incorrect areas (fishing in the inshore domain; critical habitats; refugia); and "high" for fishing in the closed season.

Increasing stakeholder competition related threats

In addition to pressures on fish stocks, the natural resources that support Cambodia's fisheries are under threat from a range of other stakeholder interests including, water for irrigation, floodplain trees for timber, forested land conversion for farming, river sand extraction, coastal sand mining, and land reclamation of coastal and inland waters. Coastal CFI are coming under increasing pressure due to the infrastructure development of coastlines and habitats, even when they encroach on CFI areas. Communities have no legal power to enforce their fishing area boundaries. This can result in conflict between the various stakeholder groups, of which CFI may not always come out on top. Integrated and inter-departmental resource planning could help alleviate or reduce these impacts on the environment and thereby help sustain fisheries resources. Strengthening the legal status of CFI would be one step towards enabling them to contest better with other, currently more powerful stakeholder groups.

Declining dependence on fishing related threats

Due to the seasonality of inland fishing and the degradation of aquatic habitats, the decline of stocks, and competition from low priced imported products, it is becoming increasingly difficult for people to rely on fishing as a main livelihood strategy. Increasingly, fishing is seen as a livelihood of the old, and few young people aspire to become full-time fishers. Fishing can still offer people a "livelihood of last resort", when they lose employment or the means to farm in areas where few other options exist. To reverse this trend, CFI and national and provincial management, enforcement and legislation needs to be significantly up scaled. If resources cannot support communities, it is highly likely that many fishers will migrate to cities, creating additional strain on social support structures. Rising pressure on natural fisheries resources can lead to negative social impacts, such as children dropping out of school to help support their families' livelihoods, and an increase in discrimination and violence against women.

Low education levels in Fishing communities

Education levels in remote fishing communities are often low, and people may lack the skills and knowledge to improve and diversify their livelihoods. Improving fisher community education levels is a pre-requisite for their modernisation. The capacity for planning is also constrained by low literacy and numeracy levels, and a low understanding of government processes, resulting in many CFI turning to their development partners for help in drafting plans, by-laws etc. The continuity of this situation may result in fisher communities being left far behind their agriculture cousins.

4.5.3. Governance related threats

Whilst the need to modernise fisheries communities is seen as necessary to ensure that fishing families are not left behind as Cambodia advances, it is not clear exactly how CFI will feature in this modernisation or how future government policy will affect them. Several of these issues are briefly described below and explored in more detail in the following chapter and Addendum.

How to integrate fisheries into the modern agriculture communities/cooperatives model.

Whilst cooperation amongst farmers is being encouraged by new Government policy to increase production, reduce inefficiencies, and save costs, it is less clear whether small-scale fishers and CFI can operate in a similar way. This risks leaving small-scale fishers behind, as their farming cousins move to more cooperative and competitive approaches. However, for CFI members involved in aquaculture there may be opportunities to take a more cooperative approach to their fish production.

The prioritisation of aquaculture

For the past decade or so, RGC policy has recognised aquaculture as the means to maintain Cambodia's aquatic food security and develop export markets. The limited opportunities for increasing capture fisheries production in inland or marine areas are less interesting from an economic growth perspective. With the changing climate, new approaches for adaptive and climate-resilient aquaculture systems are now needed.

Strengthening of CFI under a new Fisheries Law

The new Fisheries Law offers an opportunity to strengthen the legal basis for CFI in Cambodia. It is hoped that the Law will: strengthen CFI as institutions; increase tenure rights that CFI hold over fisheries resources; introduce the concept of exclusive access for CFI members in fishing areas allocated to CFI; and lift restrictions on the use of small-scale fishing gears only in CFI fishing areas. Once promulgated, there will be a significant amount of work to do on developing CFI related subsidiary legislation in the form of sub-decrees and prakas, to implement the new law.



CHAPTER 5- A Vision for Community Fisheries (CFi) in Cambodia

This Chapter sets out a series of questions from which the direction for CFi can be discussed and a new vision statement for CFi development formed. It is important that agencies and organisations promoting further CFi development in Cambodia discuss and consider these questions when developing their future work programs.

5.1. Why should RGC continue promoting CFi in Cambodia?

After 25 years of Community Fisheries co-management in Cambodia, it is useful to review the original reasons for their introduction and assess whether this co-management arrangement should continue to be promoted by the RGC. The original rationale for the deep fishery reforms of 2000 and the introduction of CFi, and the perceived current situation based on the results of the assessment and stakeholder consultations are described in table below.

Table 9: Justification for continuing with CFi

Original Rationale for introduction of CFi	Perception of the Current situation
Reduce conflict between fisheries stakeholders.	Conflicts between fisheries stakeholders appear to be less common or are under-reported.
Improve equity & living standards in fishing communities;- The Fishing Lot system did not support many people's livelihoods.	The abolition of the fishing lot system opened up access to fisheries resources for all. Many people remain dependent on small-scale fishing for their food security and livelihoods Whilst living standards in many fishing communities remain poor, people in many fishing communities now have better access to the fishery and more fish to eat.
Gain broad political support for Government;	CFi remains a popular policy with fishing communities and the public.
Reduce the amount of illegal fishing through local and more effective patrolling.	One of the main roles of CFi is local patrolling. However, illegal fishing remains despite significant investments in patrolling by Government officers and CFi members CFi do not have powers to arrest perpetrators.
Improve the management and the productivity of the fisheries;	CFi co-management of resources does not appear to have increased the productivity of inland or marine fisheries. Large fish species in inland areas and demersal species in coastal fisheries have declined as a proportion of total fish catches.
Improve the conservation of fisheries habitats such as flooded forests	Many CFi have a small conservation areas. However, habitat degradation has continued with the loss of large areas of flooded forests particularly around Tonle Sap and coastal mangroves

In summary, many of the reasons for the deep fisheries reforms of the 2000s remain valid today and the continuance of CFI can be justified. However, a considerable effort is required to move CFI to 'the next level' where their effectiveness as a co-management governance mechanism can be put beyond doubt, and where the number of strong and sustainable CFI can be significantly improved or moved beyond the initial establishment stage. This strategy attempts to provide the framework to do this.

5.2. What are CFI now trying to achieve?

Discussions with different stakeholders in the fisheries sector in Cambodia reveals that CFI means different things to different people. Essentially, there appear to be two disparate views of what CFI are trying to achieve (see fig 2. below).

Fig 2: How do you view CFI?

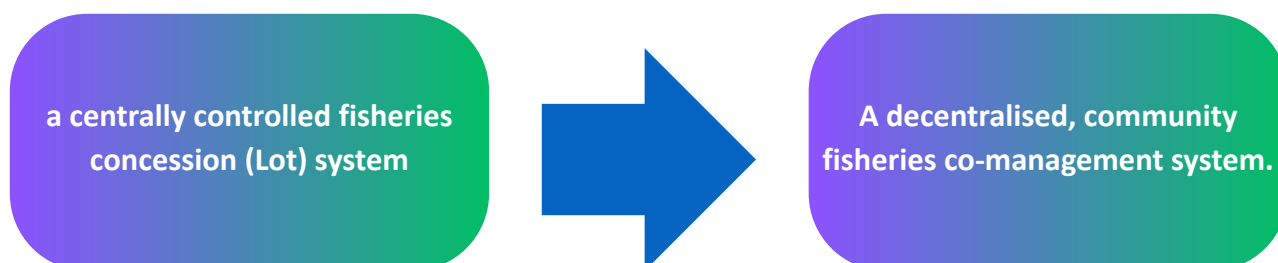


CFI have the potential to provide a means to achieve the objectives of both views. However, it is rare to find people who are equally enthusiastic about the issues in both of the boxes above. Typically, Government officers focus on the right hand box, whilst DPs and NGO agencies focus on the left hand box. A single, harmonised view where both sets of objectives are balanced is needed by policy makers and senior management planners so that RGC and NGO support can help CFI meet their full potential.

5.3. At this moment, where is Cambodia's fisheries co-management?

Over the past 30 years Cambodia's fisheries management policy has transitioned as follows.

Fig 3: Fisheries Governance Transition



CFi in Cambodia, due to their relationship with Government can be classified as co-management and should not be confused with community- based management. Co-management has been recognized globally as a critical approach for successful fisheries management, especially for small-scale fisheries. Co-management differs from Community-based management in several ways.

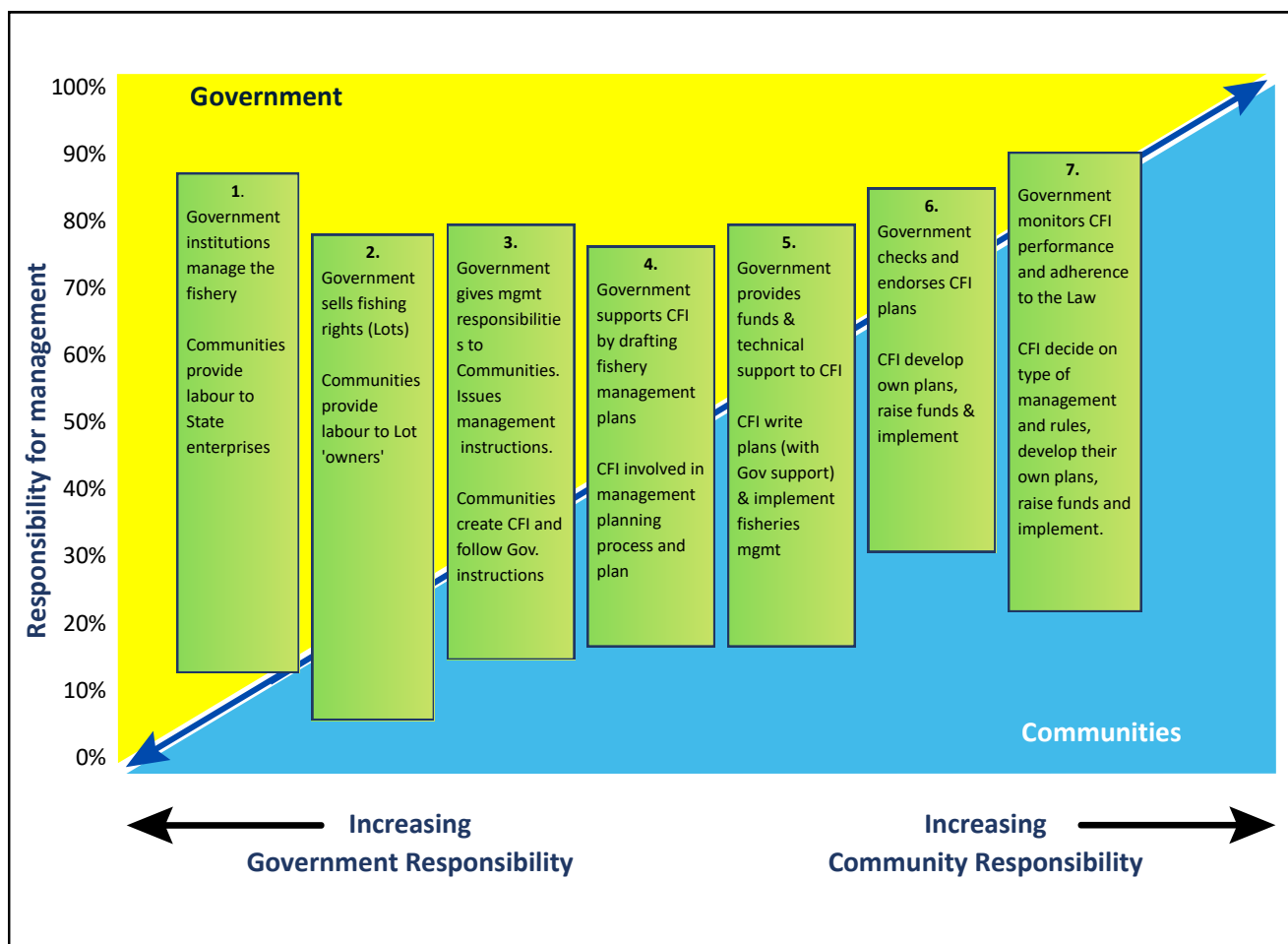
Table 10. Differences between co management and community-based management

	Co-management	Community based management
Definition	a partnership between various entities, including governments, agencies, non-government organizations, and local people.	a community-centred, bottom-up approach where local communities take the ownership and actively involve in decision-making and managing of their resources.
Goals	To strengthen collaborative environmental protection and the rights and responsibilities of local resource-users and involved entities	To empower the communities to address their needs and take active roles in resource governance and stewardship to support community well-being.

Many challenges remain to CFI reaching their full potential and finding their true place in fisheries co-management and social development in Cambodia. The chart below (fig 4) sets out a continuum of theoretical fisheries co-management models that Cambodia can use to view its current co-management governance policies with regards to CFI.

In Fig 4 below, the extreme left of the chart represents a fully State controlled system with no input, (outside of labour) necessary from local people. The extreme right of the chart represents a system where the State adopts a 'hands off' approach and leaves all decision-making, self-organization and fisheries management to communities. **In no way should the extreme right box be considered a target for Cambodia.** Fisheries co-management in Cambodia, like all other countries promoting this policy, sits somewhere between these two extremes. Many countries including Thailand and Laos PDR are moving towards the right (increasing community responsibilities) and each country eventually finds a co-management model that they are most comfortable with at the time and their stage of development.

Fig 4: CFI and the co-management continuum



Policy change can also result in the choice of fisheries co-management model moving from right to left, as has been seen in Myanmar in recent years. The Fishing Lot system is represented in Box 2, from which Cambodia moved on from in 2000. Since then, there has been further decentralisation in decision-making, and the current co-management model being adopted by Cambodian CFI is perceived by many stakeholders as being somewhere between Box 4 and Box 5. Further movement to the right is currently constrained by the decision-making powers of CFI Committees combined with their limits in capacity and available resources. Blomley et al., 2010, state that there were few opportunities for members and committees to participate in or influence higher level decision-making. Accountability is heavily upwards to higher level authorities, rather than a downwards responsibility or accountability to fishers, 'CFI managers/committees' or the local communities. Discussion at the CFI strategic plan workshops in October 2023 broadly agreed that this strategic plan should aim to move CFI further right to Box 5 or possibly even Box 6. This means that the roles of the government should become less as CFI increase their capacity and ability to develop their own plans, raise funds and implement their planned activities.



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5.4. How can the legal status of CFI be strengthened?

Whilst the legal basis for CFI formation and management is well established and supported through the current Fishery Law, with one Prakas and one Sub decree dedicated to CFI, there are shortcomings in the current arrangements that could be resolved with the passing of a new Fishery Law and the development of new subsidiary legislation. For example, at present, CFI can form networks but under the current fishery law cannot form organisations, associations or federations. They have a rather ambiguous status as ‘Community Fisheries’, which leads to confusion as to whether use of the term CFI is referencing the fishery, the people or both. Whilst the term Community fisheries implies fisheries governed or co-managed by community organisations, CFI associations or organisations have yet to be created in Cambodia as domestic associations or non-governmental organizations are required to register with the Ministry of Interior^[6]. CFI, (CF & CPA) would seem to fit the definition of organisations. However, CFI are required to register with local authorities and MAFF as ‘fisheries entities’ and have not been permitted to register in the way that farmer associations and cooperative organisations have been, leaving CFI without the full powers granted to legitimate legal organizations or associations. Constrained by this limitation, CFI members cannot fully represent their members interests or voice their concerns.

An additional complication is the requirement of a registering organization to have a President, rather than an elected body running the ‘organisation’ as is the case with CFI, could be difficult for MOI to process. However, it might be feasible to register CFI networks as organisations or associations with MOI, which could strengthen the voice of CFI considerably more than is possible under their current networked status.

5.5. How can traditional CFI communities benefit from more modern approaches?

In some ways, Cambodia’s fishing communities have not changed their approaches to fishing for generations, although some traditional gears have been replaced by modern materials and techniques; the widespread use of gill nets being one example of this. The establishment of CFI in Cambodia has succeeded in pooling fishing communities under a common framework from which their development can be accelerated and brought up to date.

Since 2024, MAFF policies and strategies must take into consideration the Pentagon Strategy (Phase 1) in which the RGC is fully focused on increasing productivity and export earnings for the benefit of the national economy. For agriculture, this will be achieved partly through the development of modern cooperatives and collectives, using modern techniques to meet specific market demands.

^[6] The 2015 Law on Associations and Non-government organisations (LANGO) defines a domestic association as “a membership organization established under the laws of Cambodia by natural persons or legal entities aiming at representing and protecting the interests of their members without generating or sharing profits”

For fisheries communities, such an approach is more nuanced. At present fishing community members have the rights to use but not “own” their fishing grounds; which remain under state ownership.

The modernisation of CFI communities requires that sustainable, multiple revenue stream financing mechanisms are found but will really only be accomplished if/when CFI are in a legal position to act as registered organisations, associations or companies (perhaps social enterprises). At present, they do not have the legal status to do this. CFI need to be able to enter into formal business contracts with other legitimate businesses. Ultimately, CFI need to be able to legally borrow and lend money to conduct business as any other legal entity would.

Key to the modernisation of CFI is the concept of adding value to fisheries produce so that higher returns can be gained by fishers. However, this poses the question; “How do you add value in an open-access fishery where the fresh products are more expensive in local markets than many processed products, and imported fish are starting to dominate urban consumption. Many fishery products from CFI are considered to be of high value at source and are in great demand in urban areas. However, their availability and supply is often seasonal and not always reliable. The effective and hygienic processing of fish by CFI and the development of “one village- one product’ produce is one way that value can be added to the fish caught and help generate higher incomes from the same raw materials. Interactive links to provincial, regional and national markets are therefore important steps towards modernisation of CFI.

The widespread access to mobile phones and the internet, even in the remotest communities now allows for more modern approaches to stakeholder communication and marketing. This should allow for fishers to more precisely meet market demand and production gaps. The safety of fishers ‘at sea’ is also enhanced significantly through the modern communication devices now widely available. The availability of information-sharing technologies also allows for the more efficient and effective networking of CFI organisations at provincial, regional and national levels. and this should be seen as an important pre-requisite for modernisation of CFI nationwide.

Modern approaches to CFI Area Management Planning requires an urgent review of the current templates used by FiA and the establishment of more market orientated plans that also strengthen the protection of the natural resources upon which fisheries production depends. The stakeholder inclusive EAFm framework looks to be a suitable tool for this purpose and should be rolled out with CFI communities immediately. It should be pointed out that EAFm can encompass more than just capture fisheries and can bring aquaculture and post-harvest operations, as well as community development and community institutional strengthening, under its single planning framework.

5.6. Why is it important to include Gender considerations in CFi development

In 2023, women represented 44% of CFi membership but made up only 16% of the CFi committee members. Gender equality is essential for sustainable community fisheries because it ensures that both women and men have equal opportunities to contribute to and benefit from the sector. This aligns with the strategic goals of the RGC's Pentagon Strategy-Phase I, which emphasizes gender equality as a foundation for economic development and social protection. MAFF and FiA recognize that persistent gender inequalities hinder progress in agriculture and rural development. Addressing these inequalities is therefore key to creating resilient and inclusive fisheries that can support sustainable livelihoods and community well-being.

As noted in the Voluntary Guidelines for Securing Sustainable Small-Scale Fisheries "Small-scale and artisanal fisheries, encompassing all activities along the value chain – preharvest, harvest and post-harvest – undertaken by men and women, play an important role in food security and nutrition, poverty eradication, equitable development and sustainable resource utilization". Despite playing crucial roles in the fisheries value chain, particularly in post-harvest handling and processing, women are often excluded from formal recognition and decision-making. This limits their access to resources such as credit, technology, and training. Promoting gender equality involves not only building women's capacity but also increasing community awareness of their contributions and constraints. Empowering women through organized groups enables them to access savings programs, improve incomes through better techniques, and advocate for their rights to aquatic resources. Ultimately, integrating women fully into the fisheries sector strengthens food security, enhances community resilience, and supports long-term sustainability.

5.7. Why is it important to include climate change considerations in CFi development

Climate projections for Cambodia suggest an increase in average temperatures (1.6-2.0 oC by 2050 and 2-4°C by 2100); heavier and more intense rain during monsoons; prolonged dry seasons with an average number of wet days decreasing by 10 days/year (CCPAP 2030 Agriculture); fluctuations of hydrological patterns with increasing unpredictable and changing timing and intensity of seasonal floods with a predicted decline by 30-40% in the dry season and predicted increase by 10-20% of wet season flows by 2100 (Mekong River Commission 2019). These threats could exacerbate the negative impacts on fisheries from existing factors, including unsustainable extraction of fisheries resources, degraded and loss of fisheries habitats, pollution and poor water quality, upstream hydro-power development, and inadequate local water management. All of which could lead to further reduction in fish stocks, decline of aquaculture productivity, threats to livelihood, food security and economic development and increase costs to mitigate the effects of climate change on its fisheries.

Climate considerations require precautionary approaches and no-regret actions to address needs and to face the changes that are coming with climate change impacts. CFi often lack access to early warning systems and climate-resilient infrastructure and financing, and adaptive technologies and diversifying livelihoods (e.g. aquaculture, agriculture, eco-tourism) or invest in resilient practices to adapt to new conditions.

Climate-responsive planning is crucial, as CFi often lack access to climate-resilient infrastructure, adaptive technologies, reliable weather forecasts, alternative livelihoods and financing. Including climate considerations in the CFi strategic plan can help Cambodian fishing communities become more resilient, protect biodiversity, sustainably manage fisheries resources, and reduce risks in the face of uncertainty. A climate-informed CFi strategy supports precautionary approaches and aligns with its commitments to the Sustainable Development Goals and Nationally Determined Contributions (NDCs) under the Paris Agreement. Strengthening CFi resilience will not only be vital for sustaining fisheries livelihoods but can also contribute to the modernization of agriculture, local and economic development, and global competitiveness.

5.8. What could be the vision statement for CFi going forward?

In summary, the following statements should be taken into consideration in developing a new CFi vision statement.

- Firstly, the original rationale for the introduction of CFi positives still holds true, despite some negative aspects which have surfaced through recent studies;
- A single, harmonised view of what CFi are trying to achieve should be explained to senior policy makers and management planners so that support to CFi can help them meet their full potential;
- CFi co management should continue to move towards increased independence and decision making by communities and reduced hands on management by Government agencies;
- Government policy should continue to strengthen CFi and work to reduce their dependency on outside support for planning and fund raising;
- The ecosystem approach to fisheries management (EAFm) should be used more for CFi planning and monitoring;
- CFi and CFi networks should be permitted to form associations, organisations and federations;
- CFi communities must not be excluded from the RGC's attempts to help rural communities modernise through the promotion of modern technologies and increased cooperation between stakeholders;
- Gender considerations must be incorporated into CFi strategic planning and wider fisheries sector planning;

- The impacts of climate change must be recognised and addressed to ensure that CFI are equipped to withstand droughts, floods, and other climate shocks that threaten fisheries and livelihoods.

Consideration of these issues leads us to define the following statement as a Vision for CFI going forward. The following vision statement is proposed:

“Co-management by technically competent, sustainably-funded, well-networked, legally empowered CFI and CFI networks will lead to a more equitable and prosperous fisheries sector and a harmonious society. This co-management will require broad community participation, the adoption of modern methods and technologies, and governance arrangements that balance natural resource conservation and socio-economic development”.



CHAPTER 6- Improving the Performance of CFi in Cambodia

This Chapter is organized around the 8 criteria for CFi effectiveness as laid out in the Strategic Plan for Fisheries 2019- 2024. (see 4.1.5), and also draws on the findings from the CFi status and effectiveness studies of 2018 & 2022, as well as the extensive literature on CFi in Cambodia. The sections that follow arrange the known challenges facing CFi in Cambodia, alongside these eight criteria and the focus of support actions needed to improve CFi effectiveness, as well as the priority level and the main institutions responsible.



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6.1. Effectiveness Criterion 1: Participation of communities in fisheries resource management

The CFI status assessment (2022) recognizes that CFI as institutions could be strengthened significantly through improving levels of community participation.

6.1.1. Main Issues and Challenges:

- CFI members are a minority in their communities (13% in 2018 and 15% in 2023);
- Limited knowledge of by-laws and internal rules;
- Low participation of women in CFI committees/leadership (16% in 2023);
- Open access of CFI fishing area to all fishers discourages CFI membership;
- Passive participation by some CFI members;
- Undervalued natural resources by fishing communities and CFI members;

6.1.2. Objectives

a) Increase CFI member numbers.

The percentage of households that are membership varies widely in CFI, and in many communities, non-members outnumber CFI members, posing a challenge to effective co management. The fact that fishers from outside the community and non CFI members have the right to fish in CFI areas, (as long as they agree to follow the CFI internal rules), acts as a disincentive to local fishers to join their local CFI. In the 2022 CFI effectiveness study, it was clear that one of the most important factors for a strong CFI is its perceived benefits; the benefits of being a member of a CFI being unclear to many local people. Members of CFI that have been ranked as strong perceive that there are benefits of being a member. However, these benefits tend to be subjective and include reasons such as, social capital and reputation. If the benefits of being a CFI member could be made more tangible, then CFI members would likely be more active participants in the various fisheries management actions proposed by CFI Committees. To achieve this, incentive schemes would need to be introduced or access to CFI fisheries be made exclusive for CFI members.

b) Legalise the collection of fees from outsiders and non-members fishing the CFi areas.

The fact that ‘outsiders’ and non-members in CFi communities can benefit from improved fishery management by the CFi at no cost, undermines CFi integrity. If CFi could be legally empowered to collect fishing fees from non-members and ‘outsiders’, the perceived value of being a member of a CFi would increase and the CFi Committees would have a source of funds that could then be used for fisheries co-management or organizational purposes.

c) Increase CFi member knowledge of CFi by-laws and internal rules

Many CFi members are not fully aware of the by-laws and internal rules of their CFi. Increasing CFi member knowledge of CFi by-laws and internal rules would go some way towards increasing their interest in being involved in the CFi, respecting these agreements, and strengthen their participation.

d) Increase women’s participation in CFi and representation in CFi committees

The low level of women’s participation in CFi committees nationwide is shown in Table 4. They are clearly under-represented in CFiC decision-making which can only lead to male perspectives and priority actions dominating. Where women are represented on CFiC they tend to assume administrative positions such as treasurer or secretary rather than Chief or Vice Chief. Drafting subsidiary legislation requiring equal women representation on each CFiC is not seen as workable. However, the position of women in the CFiC could be improved considerably by the legal requirement that either the Chief or Vice Chief of the CFi Committee be a woman.

e) Increase active participation of CFi members

It is imperative for fishing communities to internalize the significance of their role in ensuring the sustainability of fisheries resources. Without a deep understanding and investment in the value of their resources and clear benefits to CFi members, efforts to strengthen CFi Institutions may be futile. It is essential for individuals within these communities to acknowledge and accept this responsibility, both intellectually and emotionally in order to drive meaningful change.

f) Increase CFi member appreciation of natural resources value and their role in conservation.

It is crucial to emphasize the importance of internalizing the value of fishery resources for the future generations amongst all community members in the village. Without a collective understanding and commitment to the significance of these resources, sustainable change will be difficult to achieve. Investing personal funds or ‘in kind contributions’ (sometimes by expatriots), into the preservation and enhancement of local fishery resources serves as a tangible recognition of roles and responsibility for safeguarding these valuable assets. This financial commitment not only fosters a sense of ownership and accountability but also paves the way for long-term sustainability and prosperity within the community. It is imperative that all individuals within the village actively participate in and support initiatives that promote the conservation and sustainable management of fishery resources for the benefit of present and future generations.

f g) Enhance capacity of CFI members on climate adaptive or climate resilient practices.

To build resilience to climate change impacts on fisheries, it is essential to inform and enhance the capacity of CFI on climate-adaptive practices. This includes equipping members with the knowledge and tools to monitor environmental changes, understand changing seasonal patterns better, and apply adaptive fishing and conservation techniques. Such efforts will strengthen community-led decision-making and improve local responsiveness to ecological shifts and allow CFI members to more effectively participate in fisheries resource co-management.



Table 11. SPF Effectiveness Criterion 1: Participation of communities in fisheries resource management

Objectives	Proposed Actions	Priorty	Responsibility
a) Increase Cfi membership numbers through providing evidence of clear socio-economic benefits to members	· Conduct village meetings to explain about the importance of active participation of Cfi members · Highlight actual and potential benefits of participation	3 3	CFiC CFiC
b) Legalise the collection of fees from outsiders and non-members fishing the Cfi areas	· Sub Decree and Guidelines drafted for CFiC to allow for the collection of funds from non-Cfi members and outside fishers.	1	CFDD
c) Increase knowledge by regular disseminating and awareness building of laws and internal rules in ways that are accessible to communities, including those not able to	· Posting of simple signboards & posters highlighting Cfi by laws & internal rules; · Creation of Cfi web posts that include information on by-laws &	2 2 3	SNA/ NGOs SNA/NGOs SNA/NGOs
d) Raise awareness on Gender Equality for sustainable community management.	· Increased women participation in CFiC shall be a target in FIA's Gender Mainstreaming Strategy/Action plan; · New Cfi sub-decree should include an article stating that either the Chief or the Vice Chief of each Cfi Committee must be female; · Guide gender-aware (re-) elections to increase female candidates &	1 1 2	CFDD CFDD SNA
e) Increase participation through highlighting the clear benefits of participation	· Clarification of clear benefits for members and mechanisms for benefit sharing; · Materials, (including case studies) highlighting the importance of Cfi in the management of Cambodia's natural resources; · Pilot incentive schemes to encourage Cfi participation.	2 2 3	CFDD CFDD SNA/ NGOs
f) Increase Cfi member appreciation of natural resources values and their role in conservation.	· Materials, (including case studies) highlighting the value of Cambodia's natural resources and the role that Cfi play in conserving them.	3	CFDD
g) Enhance capacity of Cfi members on climate-adaptive and climate resilient practices	· Conduct trainings with Cfi members on climate-smart fisheries and aquaculture management	2	CFDD/NGOs

6.2. Effectiveness Criterion 2: Improving the legal Framework for CFi

The current legal framework supporting CFi in Cambodia is in need of revision. The new Fishery Law creates the opportunity for the legal basis of CFi to be strengthened.

6.2.1. Main Issues & Challenges

- The new Fisheries law will affect CFi significantly but awareness of the changes may be slow.
- Complicated CFi establishment steps and processes in the sub-decrees and prakas.

6.2.2. Objectives

a) Raise awareness of the new Fisheries Law's impact on CFi.

Latest drafts of the Law viewed suggest CFi co-management will continue to be the main governance mechanism for inland and coastal fisheries. Articles in drafts of the new Law relating to CFi are similar to the 2006 Law but one notable exception is the right given to CFi members to use medium-scale fishing gear for income generation, upon request. It is important that all CFi members are aware of the new fishery law and the articles most relevant to them. Subsidiary legislation (i.e. CFi sub decree & prakas) should include details that will allow for CFi to take full advantage of all the opportunities entitled to them under the new law. It is also important that fishers throughout the country are made aware of and respect the new law as soon as possible. As many of the CFi members, particularly those who are older, are not comfortable reading, the awareness raising methods may need to be tailored in simple ways that are accessible to all types of audiences.

b) Develop new CFi Prakas and Sub Decree in line with the new Law

The current establishment process for CFi as laid out in the CFi Prakas is complicated and time consuming, deterring many communities (and government officers) from forming new CFi. Although most CFi have managed to complete the nine establishment steps, the process can sometimes take several years and requires strong support from FiAC and other Government agencies. A simplification and streamlining of this process would aid the formation of new CFi. The CFi establishment steps allow for CFi to be formed but post establishment steps should be added to the agreed process, so that CFi can continue to be guided in their development, following establishment. Short-term tenure of fishing grounds for CFi does not encourage long-term actions or investments so it is essential that tenure rights for Community Fisheries (CFi) are clearly expressed in the new law or sub-decree to prevent any ambiguity or confusion. The new legal framework must provide CFi with a solid legal basis to control fishers coming from outside the community. Implementing this clarification across all registered CFi will ensure consistency and strengthen their ability to protect resources. A number of legal and organizational issues need to be tackled in the new subsidiary legislation, to move CFi closer to becoming basic democratic, representative, legitimate, bottom-up village organizations. Lessons learned from other community initiatives (CFR, CPA and CF) are remarkably similar to CFi, sharing many similarities in their establishment process and the

challenges and constraints that they face. Bringing together experts on community co-management and stakeholders could highlight common issues and strengthen inter-departmental/ ministerial approaches. Importantly, the legal status of CFi and CFi networks would be strengthened through their recognition as organisations or associations. Opportunities to achieving this should be discussed with relevant Government agencies including MOI and MAFF, and the situation clarified in the CFi sub decree. To support long-term sustainability of CFi, legal reforms should mandate the inclusion of climate resilience strategies in Community Fishing Area Management Plans (CFiAMP), recognize the rights of CFi to participate in environmental governance, and facilitate access to adaptation funding sources. Finally, it is important that the new CFi Sub decree and Prakas set targets on gender equity and child protection from child labour in the process of formulating sub-decrees and prakas.



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Table 12. SPF Effectiveness Criterion 2: Improving the legal Framework for CFi

Objectives	Proposed Actions	Priority	Responsibility
a) Raise awareness of the new Fisheries Law's impact on CFi	· CFDD staff sensitized on the new Law with regards to CFi · Cantonment and District staff made aware of the new law · Development partners made aware of the new law · Awareness raising with communities on key articles in the new fishery law · Simplified fishery law awareness materials developed that focus on the main issues affecting CFi and changes from the 2007 law. · Copies of the new fishery law, Sub decree and Prakas distributed to all CFi · The new fishery law, Sub decree and Prakas posted online for FiAC and DPs · Case studies of CFi benefitting from the new Fishery Law	1 1 1 1 2 3 1 3	FIA CFDD FIA SNA & DPs CFDD SNA & DPs FIA CFDD
b) Develop new CFi Prakas and Sub Decree in line with the new Law	· Address key factors that allow the CFi to become stronger and more sustainable · Strengthen the legal status of CFi · Explore opportunities for CFi & CFi networks to register as organisations & associations · <u>Simplify CFi Establishment steps and post establishment steps</u> · Extend the tenure that CFi have over their fishing areas · Set targets on gender equity and child protection in CFi communities · Integrate climate adaptation responsibilities in legal reforms	1 1 1 1 2 2 2	CFDD CFDD FiA, MAFF, MOI CFDD CFDD CFDD CFDD

6.3. Effectiveness Criterion 3: Improving the Roles and functions of CFi committee members.

The CFi status assessment (2022) recognizes that CFi need to increase their capacity to draft proposals, administer, and financially manage their operations provided through external support. There is also a need to build capacity for better communication with external actors such as MAFF, FiA, PDAPP, Provincial Governments, other relevant government agencies, NGOs, and donors. At the same time, other stakeholders need to be guided on how to work with CFi.

6.3.1. Main Issues & Challenges

- Limitation and inability to self-organize;
- High level of CFi dependence on RGC supervision and direction;
- Patrolling by CFi uses considerable resources but has not resulted in reductions in illegal fishing;
- Women's representation in CFi committee is low (<20%).

6.3.2. Objectives

a) Develop CFi Committee Skills and capacity

Many CFi Committee members lack skills and resources to operate basic CFi functions without outside support, including for re-elections, CFiAMP planning and implementation. The capacity of CFi committee members influences the success or otherwise of each CFi. The array of skills required to manage CFi Committees have been covered earlier in this document (Table 5). Much work has been carried out in the past to develop CFiC capacity and must continue so that new, more dynamic CFi leaders can develop the skills they need.

One of the problems in empowering communities is the fact that the government is unable to fund community members to travel to workshops or training courses from which they could benefit. To facilitate CFi member participation, Government often has to turn to NGOs for support.

b) Enable CFiC to organize re-elections on time

The CFiC re-election process, despite the relatively small budget required, receives limited support, and results in the mandate of many CFiC expiring before new committee members can be voted in. CFCs in mandate are particularly important for CFi that are facing challenges including land conflicts (e.g., several CFi in Kandal, Takeo, Prey Veng, Kampong Chhnang, and Pursat), lacking NGO-supported livelihood programs; experiencing high rates of out-migration; weak or non-functioning CFiCs, and with CFiC members appointed by Commune Councils. In 2023, a survey was conducted through the CAPFISH-Capture Provincial Fisheries Support Specialists (PFSS) with FiAC and found that among the 414 CFi in 20 provinces (out of total 533) where re-elections were applicable, 293 CFi (55%) were in need of re-election, with the highest percentages in the Chaktamuk region (79%) and the Tonle Sap region (71%). In addition to requiring a budget for conducting re-elections,

CFi identified other key needs including the capacity to plan and organize a CFiC congress to re-elect the new committee, and to oversee and document the re-election process and results. Many require assistance for requesting re-election support from local authorities (Village Chief, Commune Council, District Council), Sangkat Fisheries, Fisheries Division, FiAC, and partner organizations.

c) Improve efficiency and effectiveness of patrolling by CFi

Given Cambodia's extensive and remote fishing areas, the RGC uses CFi as a means to control illegal fishing in inland and coastal waters. CFi are encouraged to carry out regular patrols of fishing grounds and this has been an important activity since the deep fisheries reforms. Despite a huge effort, illegal fishing and other natural resource infractions continue to plague fisheries management in many areas. The CFi status assessment (2022) recognizes that strong CFi had a higher frequency of patrolling than less strong or weak CFi. Despite this effort, patrolling in its current form represents a large drain on CFi resources (time and money). CFi participation in modern techniques of fisheries surveillance (such as SMART patrolling), should be promoted.

d) Raise awareness on impacts of harmful practices for child development, and gender inequalities

Some fishing and post-harvest practices associated with fisheries in Cambodia have the potential to be harmful to child development, through the unsafe and unsanitary conditions. It is also common for children to be taken out of school to support their families' fishing and livelihood activities. CFiC should be encouraged to raise awareness of these issues with their members. There is often a lack of appreciation of the important role that women play in the fisheries sector, especially with regards to post harvest and marketing.

e) Equip CFiC with climate resilience leadership skills

Effective climate resilience at the community level requires that CFi Committee members are equipped with leadership skills specific to climate risk management. This includes training in early warning systems, emergency preparedness, disaster management, and coordination of responses to environmental stressors. Building this capacity ensures that CFi Committees will be able to guide their communities through climate-related challenges with confidence and effectiveness.



Table 13. SPF Effectiveness Criterion 3: Improving the Roles and functions of CFI committee members.

Objectives	Proposed Actions	Priority	Responsibility
a) Develop CFI Committee Skills and capacity	· Strengthen capacity of CFI, on sustainable fishing practices and fisheries resource management so that they will become more self-reliant and sustaining; · Build CFI Committee skills and capacity; · Produce standardised CFI capacity building materials for FiAC and DPs; · CFI status assessments to score CFIC on agreed criteria, identifying training and technical assistance needs · Skills developed for video blogging, and other use of other media outlets by CFIC; · Training in participatory tools for monitoring annual workplans and progress at the activity/output level	2 3 3 3 2 2	CFDD SNA & NGOs CFDD SNA & NGOs SNA & NGOs SNA & NGOs
b) Enable CFiC to organize re-elections on time	· Draft new CFI sub decree to allow CFiC to stay in place until a new CFI committee has been formed; · By-laws to include guidelines of what to do when the re-election mandate lapses or when CFC members are not performing their duties or leave before the completion of the terms · Provincial level Coordination between FiAC, Districts and DPs on support to CFiC elections; · Allocate commune funds to support regular CFiC re-elections; · Simplify re-election process and gain support of authorities to allow CFI activities to continue uninterrupted; · Gender awareness in CFIC re-election process to increase female participation in CFIC; · Build capacity and confidence for CFiCs to hold re-elections without an official being present	1 1 1 3 1 2 1	CFDD SNA SNA SNA CFDD SNA & NGOs SNA & NGOs

Objectives	Proposed Actions	Priority	Responsibility
c) Improve efficiency and effectiveness of patrolling by CFi	· Training for the incorporation of CFi patrolling into the SMART protocols practised by FiAC; · Legal empowerment to grant CFiC members the powers to remove and confiscate illegal fishing gears being used or planned for use in CFi areas, without the need for an official to be present; · Identify training and equipment/material needs for patrol team	3 3 3	CFDD CFDD SNA & NGOs
d) Raise awareness on impacts of harmful practices on children, and gender inequality	· Develop and implement behavioural change workshops, promoting gender equality and co-responsible care-work at community level, as well as child protection and prevention from child labour.	3	CFDD
e) Equip CFiC with climate resilience leadership skills	· Train CFiC in climate risk assessment, emergency planning, and disaster response coordination	3	FiAC & NGOs

6.4. Effectiveness Criterion 4: Improving the drafting and implementation of CFI plans

The CFI status assessment (2022) recognizes that CFiC need to develop the capacity to draft annual and 3-year CFI area management plans and to successfully implement them. 71% of CFi need to develop CFiAMP and 56% of CFi need to improve CFiAMP management. All too often the plans developed are too complex, do not identify funding sources and are never implemented nor monitored. They tend to be seen by CFi members as a step required for registration rather than an expression of the fisheries management aspirations of the community

6.4.1. Main Issues & Challenges

- The current CFiAMP template is rigid, long and difficult to follow by CFiC. The template does not encourage CFi members to express their management ideas freely;
- M&E is rarely implemented to track progress of the plan and adapt co-management practices;
- Inability to carry out activities proposed in the plan due to technical, organisational or financial constraints.

6.4.2. Objectives

a) Add flexibility by applying EAFm & VGSSF principles to CFiAMP

The emphasis of CFi activities expressed in most CFiAMP is disproportionately focused on conservation measures, particularly, patrolling without sufficiently linking efforts to economic benefits for the communities involved. The EAFm framework aims to provide the framework for stakeholders to achieve a balance between ecological well – being, and social well-being, through good governance- CFi, as local governing bodies have to balance conservation needs with the livelihood needs of their members. EAFm provides a set of invaluable tools that can be easily adapted for CFiC to improve their CFI area management plans. Key principles from the FAO Voluntary Guidelines for Small Scale Fisheries, of which Cambodia is a signatory nation, can also be used to improve CFiAMP development.

b) Use data from experience and CFi status assessments for CFiAMP development

The current template for CFiAMP development requires the collection of information, almost all of which has already been collected in CFi status assessments conducted in 2018 and 2023. To improve efficiency and reduce the burden on both the community and the officials involved in data collection, the CFDD CFi database and FiAC records should be used to fill in many of the fields in the CFiAMP template, negating the need to repeat the questions with interviewees during the process of the CFiAMP updating/developing and focusing primarily on the planning of CFi co-management activities. Only when the data are out-dated, should the data collection be repeated/validated.

c) Improve capacity of CFiC to draft, implement and update CFiAMP

To date, the development of CFiAMP has depended heavily on FiA staff and DPs who lead and dominate the process. Many CFiAMP have been developed by consultants and there were instances where CFiAMP were copied and pasted, with only the name of the CFi changed. In 2023, a FiAC survey found that, across 414 CFi in 20 provinces, (out of a total of 533 CFi where CFiAMP were applicable), 322 CFi (60%) were in need of a new CFiAMP or had CFiAMP that were outdated, with the highest percentage being in the Chaktamuk region (86%), followed by 76% in Tonle Sap region. Nearly 87% of studied CFi reported that they needed technical support for reviewing and updating their CFiAMP, the process of which was not something they thought they could implement on their own as the current template was too complex for the communities themselves to use. While the CFi Prakas mentions the CFiAMP monitoring process, the template itself has no simple participatory tool for the CFiC to follow and monitor the progress of implementing the planned activities.

Ideally, CFiC would be able to draft their own CFiAMP unassisted, to be discussed with local government (representing a shift to the right in Fig 4) . Whilst this may not be possible for many CFi at present, it would represent a major shift to the right in the co-management continuum, (Fig 4). To achieve this CFiC capacity needs to be built. The CFiAMP should also have sub-plans that address the key issues of the CFi, e.g. sustainable financing, as well as the important threats, including climate change impacts. The CFiAMP should also include a simple tool for participatory monitoring, which could be used by CFiC to track the progress of each sub-plan, and be able to adjust activities as required.

d) Improve CFiC ownership and value of CFiAMP

Many CFi appear to view CFiAMP as an imposed requirement for their existence, rather than a plan that has been agreed by the community, expressing their vision and plans for fisheries management. The current template provided in the CFi Prakas is inflexible. Half of the template is for the purpose of collecting data which can be obtained through the CFi status assessments. The template also does not allow CFi much space to express their priorities for sub-plans (e.g. sustainable financing) and actions. Nor does the template seek to draw on the extensive knowledge of the fishery that exists in many CFi communities, and rarely includes women's specific needs, challenges and constraints. As a result, the CFiAMP are not valued by CFi communities and many members have never seen the plan in a printed form, nor even know where they can find one. There is a clear need to adopt a more participatory approach to CFiAMP development to produce plans that are recognized, respected and valued by the CFi members. With this will come a deeper sense of ownership and commitment.

e) Improve safe keeping and accessibility of CFiAMP

It is not uncommon to find CFiC who do not know where they can find a copy of their CFiAMP or at what stage their draft update has reached, or who has the latest draft. This suggests that the CFiAMP are perceived by many CFi members as bureaucratic government instruments that must be completed, rather than plans developed by the CFi for the co-management of their fisheries resources. CFiC should ensure that copies of their CFiAMP are available for their members to review; the obvious option being CFiAMP copies being made available online.

f) Mainstream climate risk and seasonal planning into CFiAMP

Mainstreaming climate risks into CFiAMP is critical for aligning local fisheries governance with changing environmental conditions. Many fishers will have ideas on how the fishery has changed over time. Plans should incorporate climate scenarios, seasonal planning, and site-specific adaptation measures, including protection of critical habitats and drought contingency strategies. This enhances the relevance and effectiveness of management interventions.



@FIA/CFDD

Table 14. SPF Effectiveness Criterion 4. The drafting & implementation of CFI Area Management Plans

Objectives	Proposed Actions	Priority	Responsibility
a) Add flexibility by applying EAFm & VGSSF principles to CFiAMP	· Simplified and more flexible CFiAMP template; · Better balance between conservation and livelihood objectives to fit local context; · Pilot a new template for CFiAMP planning based on the EAFm framework; · Develop a manual describing how to promote EAFm thinking in CFI communities · Promote simple participatory monitoring and research related to EAFM (ecological, sociocultural-economic, and governance)	1 3 2 2 2	CFDD CFDD CFDD CFDD CFDD
b) Use data from CFI status assessments for CFiAMP development.	· CFDD CFI database and FiAC records to be used in the updating of CFiAMP · Apply data previously collected from CFI assessments to draft new CFiAMP, (Do not use the template as a data collecting tool.)	3	CFDD & FIAC FiAC
c) Improve capacity of CFiC to draft, implement and update CFiAMP.	· Secure resources to implement proposed CFiAMP activities · Revise the CFiAMP template so that it is easier for the CFI to be able to use and update the plan by themselves with little or no support · Develop and use tools, guides, templates to assist CFI in developing / updating CFiAMP · Make sure that the updated plan includes sub-plans addressing key issues such as sustainable financing and climate impacts · Provide support to CFiAMP updating · Develop and include a simple participatory M&E tool in the CFiAMP template	1 2 1 3 3 2 2	CFDD CFDD FIAC & NGOs FIAC & NGOs FIAC & NGOs SNA & NGOs CFDD

Objectives	Proposed Actions	Priority	Responsibility
d) Improve CFiC ownership and value of CFiAMP	· Training of FiAC and NGO staff in participatory planning with CFi and local authorities · CFi signboards erected to provide details of the current CFiAMP · Regular assessments on implementation and monitoring of CFiAMP · Regular feedback of implementation progress to the CFi members	3 3 3 3	CFDD & DP FiAC & NGOs CFiC CFiC
e) Improve safe keeping and accessibility of CFiAMP	· Improve protocols for safeguarding CFiAMP by CFiC and with FiAC & Commune/District; · Digitalise copies of CFiAMP to be maintained as part of the FiA CFi database and available online.	3 3	FiAC & SNAs FiAC
f) Mainstream climate risk and seasonal planning into CFiAMP	· Develop climate-informed guidelines for CFiAMP, including scenario-based planning and water/heat stress mitigation.	2	CFDD

6.5. Effectiveness Criterion 5: Improving the operational networks of CFi.

The CFi status assessment (2022) recognizes the benefits accruing CFi that are members of a CFi network. Networks offer member CFi the opportunity to share information and experiences related to CFi and fisheries co-management. There is a need to establish and join up CFi network infrastructure across provinces and at CFi network infrastructure at the provincial and national level. A SWOT analysis of CFi networks developed during CFi Strategic Plan consultations, can be found in Annex 2.

6.5.1. Main Issues & Challenges

- Provincial CFi networks are isolated and not joined up
- The weak legal status of CFi networks

6.5.2. Objectives

a) Building national CFi network infrastructure

There are many advantages of establishment of CFi networks. These include; strengthening the voice of CFi in discussions related to fisheries governance; providing focal points for Government and NGOs to communicate broadly with CFi; facilitating the exchange of information and experiences between CFi; strengthening climate coordination, climate data sharing, monitoring and warning systems amongst CFi network members; and registering CFi networks as organisations or associations that can represent their member's interests.

b) Establishment of provincial CFi networks

At present, of 20 provinces with CFi, 13 have some type of CFi networks (Table 6) with 60% of CFi being network members. Most of the networks have been established and supported by NGOs and the benefits of networking are highly appreciated by CFi members. Networks could be particularly important to support those CFi that are assessed as being weak. These networks should be encouraged to expand and link together, as they allow CFi to work together to share responsibilities and become more effective with their limited resources. 'Joining up' these networks would go some way to the formation of a national CFi body.

c) Improve CFi network member's use of social media for communication purposes

In recent years, the use of social media such as Facebook and Telegram, has become widespread in Cambodia, even in remote locations. This allows for individuals to communicate with other stakeholders, cheaply and efficiently on a wide range of subjects, e.g. location sharing; fishing conditions; safety at sea; market information; CFiC meeting minutes; and reporting illegal activities.



Table 15. SPF Effectiveness Criterion 5 The operational networks of CFi

Focus of support actions	Proposed Actions	Priority	Responsibility
a) Building national CFi network infrastructure	· Establish a national CFi network/ association; · Explore possibility of registering CFi networks as organisations or associations with MOI; · Finalise CFi network structures and include guidelines in the CFi Sub decree & Prakas; · Regional and national bi-annual or annual peer-to-peer conventions of CFi or CFi networks arranged to allow for the exchange of lessons learned and good practices; · Create regional CFi platforms to share climate data, early warning alerts, and adaptive management practices.	1 2 1 2 2	CFDD FiA, MAFF & MOI CFDD CFDD CFDD
b) Establishment of provincial CFi networks	· Support from Government and/or DPs to establish CFi networks in all provinces; · Discuss how Provincial CFi network representatives can be (s)lected and draft TOR; · Representation of CFi within provincial networks; · Cooperation between CFi within and across provincial networks	1 2 3 3	CFDD & FIAC CFDD & FIAC FiA & NGOs FiA & NGOs
c) Improve CFi network member’s use of social media for communication purposes	· Basic training materials developed for CFi networking using social media · Facilitation of information flow, and sharing of lessons and good practices;	2 3	CFDD & DPs FiAC & NGOs

6.6. Effectiveness Criterion 6: Improving CFi access to and the use of financial resources;

The CFi status assessment (2022) recognizes that many CFi remain dependent on external support, either from Government or other sources to the point that many would not be able to continue without such support. In summary, 1) communities unable to generate sufficient revenue to fund their CFi activities; 2) their dependence on outside funding is not reliable, restricting them to few activities, and does not empower them to make their own decisions or take things into their own hands; and 3) there is a correlation between the strength of CFi and their level of sustainable financing. In the interests of sustainability, opportunities for CFiC to raise funds for their own use should be explored fully. The status assessment identifies 14 sources of potential funding for CFi, including DPs and NGOs; saving groups; eco-tourism income, charity support/in kind contributions; incomes from fish processing by members; and revenue collected from outside fishers who want to access the CFi fishing grounds. At present, few CFi are able to collect membership fees from their members. A small number of CFi in Prey Veng have received permission from FiA and the Provincial Government to run fishing barrages for commercial exploitation thereby generating funds for their operation. CFDD, supported by the CAPFish Capture Project, has drafted a guiding document on sustainable financing.

6.6.1. Main Issues & Challenges

- CFi depend on external funds and struggle to generate operational funds;
- Access to Government funds is difficult;
- Reduced NGO programs through donor fatigue after 25 years of CFi support;
- Microfinance schemes are rare in CFi communities;
- A small number of CFi are permitted to manage commercial fisheries.

6.6.2. Objectives

a) Strengthen Fund raising in CFi communities

Co-management of fisheries resources in ways that generate regular long-term income would encourage community members to participate more readily in CFi activities and would increase CFi membership. This is regarded as a critical requirement to sustain CFi in the long run. Under the 2006 fishery law this was not possible but in the drafts seen of the new fishery law, it has been proposed that CFi members could request permission to be given the right to operate medium-scale fishing gears and this could generate significantly higher returns from fishing.

b) Attract increased levels of government support

CFi require more support from PDAFF/FiAC rather than FiA/CFDD for their effective operation. However, the current system is centralized, which limits local management and autonomy in CFi co-management. Sub-national administrations (SNA) should commit funding to support local level community organisations (CFi, CFR, CPA, CF, FWUC etc.) to reduce financial dependency on projects. Whilst there may always be room for CFi support for capacity building, stable core or program level funding should come from the RGC and the alliances with the UN/INGO/Multi-level Development Banks supporting National programs which include directly supporting cooperative or other business ventures. In most PASDPs, provincial-level support for CFi is rarely prioritized, resulting in provincial level funds being used for other development purposes.

c) Inspire existing donors and attract new ones.

CFi development continues to attract funding from a number of external sources including NGO's CSOs and from charitable donations, including ex-patriate members of the community living abroad or in urban areas. Some businesses, including those involved in the seafood industry may also be interested in supporting CFi operations in the interests of corporate social responsibility. It is therefore important that CFi can present their current situation and their visions for the future in ways that appeal to a range of potential donors. Amongst supporting NGOs, activities should be complementary, (at the same time or as an extension). There are also opportunities for the DPs and projects supporting C Fi to collaborate better for synergy.

d) Operation of CFi Community micro-finance schemes

NGOs, such as CI, have successfully established micro-credit and saving funds that allow CFi to move towards sustainable financing. Lessons need to be drawn from such experiences.

e) Financial and Technical support to hygienic processing and adding value to fisheries products

In Cambodia, value addition to through post-harvest processes (women often involved in these processes) remains under-developed.. There is a need for financial and technical support to the development of post-harvest practices. CFi offer a the local level, social and organised structure to facilitate development activities on adding value to fishery products.

f) Access climate adaptation finance

Mobilizing climate adaptation finance is essential to support CFi initiatives aimed at building resilience. CFi should be supported to access funding mechanisms such as the Green Climate Fund (GCF) and other adaptation finance opportunities to invest in infrastructure upgrades, restoration projects, and diversification of livelihoods. This would secure financial sustainability for long-term resilience.



Table 16. SPF Effectiveness Criterion 6 The use of financial resources

Objectives	Proposed Actions	Priority	Responsibility
a) Strengthen fund raising in CFi communities	· Training of FIAC, NGO staff, CFIC, local authorities in CFi sustainable finance planning; · Sub decree to state that Incomes from fishing fees collected from outsiders and non-members should also be used to support CFiC operations; · Document lessons on successful fund raising by CFi and share widely among; · Foster the implementation of CFi Sustainable Financing Guideline developed by CFDD/CAPFish.	1 1 3 2	SNA & NGOs CFDD SNA & NGOs CFDD
b) Attract increased levels of government support	· Promote the need for CFi support in ASDP and PASDP processes; · Publication of case studies of CFi small grants that have been used effectively; · Allocate regular and sustainable commune funds for important CFi support such as for re-election, CFIC; training for administration tasks, and conservation of key fisheries habitats.	1 2 1	CFDD & FIAC CFDD SNA
c) Inspire existing donors and attract new ones	· CFi appeal to new and existing donors, e.g. climate-related grants; · Share the CFi strategic Plan to potential donors as a discussion document; · Training for NGOs and FIAC in the preparation of project proposals for CFi; · Successful case studies documented and shared with potential donors; · Collaborate to build and strengthen synergies; · Exchange and learning from successful CFi and lessons from NGO partners; · Encourage CFi to move away from dependency on government support;	1 2 2 3 2 3 2	CFDD & DPs CFDD CFDD & DPs CFDD DP & NGO CFDD & FIAC DPs & NGOs

Objectives	Proposed Actions	Priority	Responsibility
d) Operation of CFi Community micro-finance schemes	· Cooperate with NGOs that are successful in establishing microfinancing in CFi; · Look into present practices of micro-finance in the country and the region (particularly the involvement of women) and establish CFi Community saving groups; · Operation of CFi Community micro-finance schemes; · Application of micro finance lessons from successful CFi that have had NGO support.	2 3 2 2	FiAC & NGO FiAC & NGOs FiAC & NGOs CFDD & DPs
e) Financial and Technical support to hygienic processing and adding value to fisheries products	· Provide capacity building and technical support to CFi · Increase women engagement in post-catch/post production process; · Technical support to processing and adding value to fisheries products; · Encourage private partnerships with CFi; · Development of and build awareness on case studies of CFi that have used funds from commercial operations to supplement CFiC and co-management operations.	2 2 2 2 3	FiAC & NGOs FiAC & NGO FiAC & NGO FiAC & NGO CFDD & NGOs
f) Access climate adaptation finance	· Develop proposals for GCF or other climate funds to support ecosystem restoration, livelihood diversification, and climate smart infrastructure.	2	CFDD & DPs

6.7. Effectiveness Criterion 7: Improving livelihoods in CFi communities

A livelihood is composed of the capabilities, activities and assets that contribute to a means of living. It is influenced by economic development, policies, and institutions; as well as external factors such as climate change impacts, diseases and natural disasters. Many CFi communities are poor and with the decline of fisheries resources and impacts of climate change, (which has already negatively impacted fisheries habitats and fisheries resources, and increased fluctuations in the availability and abundance of fisheries resources), reducing their dependency on fishing as a livelihood through diversification is seen as the only way to increase livelihood resilience at the household level. Livelihoods in many fishing communities are already diverse but the CFi status assessment (2022) found that 44% of studied CFi needed livelihood support, with 45% requiring aquaculture technical support.

6.7.1. Main Issues & Challenges

- CFi communities have relatively high numbers of ID Poor 1 and ID Poor2;
- Limited opportunities for livelihood diversification;
- Lack of skills to develop alternative or supplementary livelihoods;
- Limited value addition of fisheries products at present and low prices for fresh fish.

6.7.2. Objectives

A main expected benefit of CFi is to ensure food security among the people. CFi areas are an important source for subsistence and provide a safety net to help reduce household vulnerability of the poor. CFi should secure tenure rights for the poorest community members to sustain this food source.

a) Promote Alternative & Supplementary livelihoods

Livelihood diversification by promoting alternative and/or supplementary activities, whether by adding value to the fisheries chain or starting activities that are not fishery dependent, can be a strategy towards sustainable livelihoods and, at the same time, reduce fishing pressure in areas where the resources are degraded or declining. However this is more easily said than done as livelihood diversification options in fishing communities may be extremely limited, and people whose other livelihoods may be struggling, often turn to small scale fishing as a 'livelihood of last resort'. Any alternative or supplementary livelihood option should aim to not increase pressure on living aquatic resources and the ecosystem. For example, the promotion of aquaculture can increase fishing effort for juveniles and trash fish. Alternative and supplementary livelihoods should also enhance climate resilience and priorities should be given to options that are less vulnerable to droughts, floods, and changing water levels. Options which draw on non-fishery resources as eco-tourism are widely preferable because they depend on viable ecosystems being maintained. Climate-smart activities should be considered, e.g. introducing and drought-tolerant aquaculture, value-added processing, and renewable energy-based fish preservation.

b) Develop skills for managing activities such as Eco-tourism in CFi communities

In some locations, CFi members are already benefitting from the provision of eco-tourism services and considerable eco-tourism potential exists in many CFi areas, with perhaps the most notable being the flooded forest areas of Prek Toal, the gallery forests in Stung Treng, the Dolphin pools in Kratie, as well as several coastal areas. These ecological rich areas have considerable domestic and international tourism appeal and offer CFi members in the area, the opportunity to earn income from shared nature experiences. Income opportunities include guided boat trips, fishing trips, bird watching, trekking, home stays, restaurants, and retailing.

c) Promote Cooperative processing and marketing of fisheries products

Cooperation can provide additional benefits to fisher households through joint processing and marketing ventures. Links to the private sector need to be established and quality assured at the production end of the chain.



Table 17. SPF Effectiveness Criterion 7 Improving livelihoods in CFI communities

Objectives	Proposed Actions	Priority	Responsibility
a) Promote Alternative & Supplementary livelihoods	· Feasibility study of capacity and resources in the CFI for alternative and supplementary livelihoods; · Develop plan of identified livelihoods and include them as a part of the CFiAMP; · Diversify livelihoods into more sustainable and resilient options; · Support income generating activities that balance economic gains with sustainable aquatic resource use; · Collaboration with NGOs and private sector (PS) partnerships · Support the very poor in CFI to benefit from involvement in CFI · Develop skills for managing eco-tourism and added value product activities in CFI communities · Promote the inclusion of fisheries in poverty reduction strategies in the national policies, recognizing the importance of livelihoods to the poor · Give priorities to climate resilient and climate smart livelihood activities	2 2 2 2 3 2 2 1 2	FIAC & NGOs FIAC & NGOs FIAC & NGOs FIAC & NGOs NGOs & PS FIAC & NGOs FIAC & NGOs CFDD & MAFF FIAC & NGOs
b) Develop skills for managing activities such as Eco-tourism in CFI communities	· Identification of all CFI with eco-tourism potential · Training in providing services for eco-tourism · Facilitate training of CFI members from Prov Dept of Tourism. · Provision of funds to set up small ecotourism businesses	3 2 3 2	SNA SNA & NGOs SNA SNA & NGOs
c) Promote Cooperative processing and marketing of fisheries products	· Pilot training programs on introducing labour-saving and women-friendly modern technologies aimed at enhancing post-harvest handling, value addition and market connectivity · Create producer groups and facilitate forum/business linkage events, along with exchange workshops to empower female traders, producer groups and processors · Established value added to products, including post-harvest processes. · The promotion of cooperative processing and marketing of fisheries products · Establish CFI-private sector partnerships	3 3 2 2 2	FIAC & NGOs NGOs & PS NGOs & OS NGOs & PS CFIC & PS

6.8. Effectiveness Criterion 8: Improving the effectiveness of conservation measures under CFi

Given Cambodia's extensive and isolated fishing grounds, the RGC uses CFi as a means to manage and protect many remote fishery areas and zones. CFi are encouraged to establish conservation areas to protect brood fish, juveniles and aquatic habitats within their fishery, and to carry out regular patrols of these areas to ensure that they perform as intended. CFi conservation areas or fish conservation zones can be in inland and coastal locations within CFi management areas, identified and defined by communities within CFi boundaries that come under CFi management and protection, and are endorsed by national government, as part of the community fishery mandate provided, legally, under the CFi sub-decree. They are designated as no-take zones and include perennial water bodies and deep pools where fish can reside during low water seasons. They are governed by co-management arrangements, with communities collaborating with SNA for patrolling by joint teams and other stakeholders. CFi conservation and management efforts are under the guidance of FiA's Community Fisheries Development Department (CFDD). A target set by the CFDD is to have at least one conservation area in every CFi by 2028 and to eliminate 95 % of destructive fishing and habitat encroachment by intensified patrolling and prosecution of offences.

6.8.1. Main Issues & Challenges

- Small areas dedicated for conservation in CFi;
- Limited effective conservation of community fishing areas and fisheries habitats by CFi members;
- Limited fire prevention and management;
- Limited protection of rare species by CFi.

6.8.2. Objectives

a) Identify high value habitats in or adjacent to CFi areas

Many areas of high ecological importance (such as deep pools, gallery forests, etc.) are found close to or overlap with CFi fishing grounds. These should be mapped in such a way as to show how adjacent CFi might work better to ensure their protection. This might also identify new opportunities for the promotion of eco-tourism.

b) Increase inclusiveness and efficiency of collaborative patrolling by community members and local authorities.

Collaboration between CFi members (and non-members) and local competent authorities is seen as essential to reduce illegal fishing and other harmful activities from taking place on CFi fishing grounds. Engaging CFi members in collaborative patrolling and making this patrolling more efficient through the use of SMART patrolling techniques being promoted by FiA, could help reduce the extent of illegal activities being practiced. Every year a large proportion of the budget

for CFI support is spent on fuel and other patrolling expenses, often leaving few funds for other co-management activities. To date, much of the costs (especially fuel) of patrolling are supported by outside agencies but there is a need to analyse the most cost-effective methods of patrolling. High tech support to patrolling through SMART or the use of drones and satellite images should be taken full advantage of.

c) Increase community participation in fire prevention and management

The flooded forests of the Tonle Sap and Mekong which are crucial for the health of the inland fishery system, are coming under increasing pressure from human activity and climate change, requiring a corresponding increase in effort to protect these resources. The involvement of communities in this endeavour has long been preached resulting in initiatives such as Provincial Flooded Forest Management plans and community level planning on fire prevention and protection supported by NGOs.

d) Identify rare/endangered species presence in CFI fishing grounds

Cambodia is in the process of drafting a Sub-decree for listing Cambodia's endangered species, and the IUCN Red List and its links to CITES include several endemic aquatic species to Cambodia. CFI can play an important role in the protection and conservation of these ecologically invaluable aquatic species, acting as both custodians and monitors of their status.

e) CFI role in culture-based fisheries and restocking programs

In the future Cambodia's inland and to some extent coastal fisheries will likely become increasingly dependent on the release of hatchery produced juveniles to supplement and maintain stocks of some rarer species, such as the Giant Mekong Catfish. CFI can play an important role in the process of producing these juveniles and their release and protection in the fishery.

f) Promote ecosystem restoration for climate resilience

Conservation efforts under CFI must focus on restoring ecological buffers that protect against climate impacts. Reforestation of mangroves, rehabilitation of floodplain habitats, and safeguarding of fish spawning grounds are essential to maintain ecosystem services. Such actions also support biodiversity and improve the adaptive capacity of fisheries.



Table 18. SPF Effectiveness Criterion 8 Improving the effectiveness of conservation measures under CFI

Objectives	Proposed Actions	Priority	Responsibility
a) Identify high value habitats in or adjacent to CFI areas	· Mapping of areas of high ecological importance overlaid with CFI areas; · Prioritize conservation measures and locations; · Planning for habitat enhancement (deepening, substrate re-planting) of high value areas · Identification of high value habitats close to CFI fishing grounds and their long-term protection	1 3 2 2	CFDD & DFC CFDD & DFC CFiC CFDD & DFC
b) Increase inclusiveness and efficiency of collaborative patrolling by community members and local authorities	· Improve law enforcement through joint actions to combat illegal fishing; · Training of CFI members in contributing to SMART patrolling; · Patrolling of no-Fishing zones; · Carry out an assessments of using new technical solutions for patrolling purposes.	1 3 3 3	SNA & CFiC SNA & NGOs FiAC & CFiC CFDD
c) Establish clear demarcation of CFI areas and erect sign boards	· Maps developed showing locations of demarcation poles; · Coordination on demarcation of conservation areas.	3 1	CFDD & DFC DFC & DPs

Objectives	Proposed Actions	Priority	Responsibility
d) Increase community participation in fire prevention and management	· The integration and involvement of CFI fire patrolling into fire management planning initiatives; · The incorporation of CFI fire patrol data into the SMART system; · Fire awareness campaigns through established and emerging CFI networks; · Increased inclusiveness through collaborative patrolling by community members and local authorities using modern MCS systems.	2 3 3 2	CFDD & DFC CFDD & DFA SNA & NGOs SNA & NGOs
e) Identify rare/endangered species presence in CFI fishing grounds	· CFAMP to include section on rare and endangered species caught in fishery; · Notification of rare and endangered species caught, to FIAC. · Protection measures put in place	2 3 2	CFDD & DFC CFiC & FIAC FiAC & CFiC
f) CFI role in culture-based fisheries and restocking programs	· Identification of CFI sites that might benefit from culture-based fisheries or stock enhancement; · Support to pilot projects for CFI to nurse aquatic species juveniles for release in the fishery	1 3	DFC & DAD FiAC & NGOs
g) Promote ecosystem restoration for climate resilience	· Implement mangrove reforestation, floodplain habitat restoration, and identify critical refugia for broodstock protection	1	DFC, FiAC & DPs

Chapter 7 - Monitoring & Evaluation of the CFi Strategic Plan

Monitoring and evaluation of the performance and impacts of CFi on the management of fisheries resources and benefits for the livelihoods are essential to understand not only the impacts of the CFi as a co-management institution, but also the needs, challenges, and required adaptive management and support. While there have been status and effectiveness assessments of CFi, the funding for these activities and capacity for data analyses and report writing depend largely on outside sources.

M&E of CFi should continue to use the effectiveness criteria as outlined in the SPF 2014-2019, i.e.

- Participation of the community in fisheries resource management;
- Legal framework for CFi;
- Roles and functions of the CFi committee members;
- Implementation of CFi plans;
- The operational networks of CFi;
- Use of financial resources;
- Improving livelihood in CFi communities;
- Effectiveness of CFi conservation measures.

It is also suggested that the following criteria be added to CFi status and effectiveness assessments:

- Prevention of IUU fishing and over-fishing;
- The participation of women in CFi and CFiC;
- Climate and hydrological change adaptation/ and resilience.

Monitoring and evaluation of this CFi Strategic Plan should be a responsibility of CFDD and the research entities (IFREDI & MAFREDI) with the full cooperation of the FiAC who will conduct a new CFi status study in 2028. Development partner technical and financial assistance should be directed towards this important activity. FiA and FiAC Departments featuring in this strategic plan are encouraged to include the concepts and proposed activities in their Annual Work Plan and Budgeting (AWPB) and PASDP exercises. Their inclusion in the annual planning cycle can be interpreted as acceptance of aspects of this document, from which conventional monitoring and evaluation can be done.

NGOs and development partners are encouraged to discuss this document with Government agencies and in their plans for donor-based support to CFi development. The TWGFi Governance sub-group, should meet at least once a year to discuss progress on CFi development and should periodically discuss whether CFi co-management in Cambodia as presented in Fig 4 is continuing to move to the right, is stable or is shifting to the left. This should culminate in the preparation of the next CFi strategic planning exercise in 2029.

Upon the passing of the new fisheries law, and the new ASDP, this five-year CFi Strategic Plan should be reviewed to assess how the situation with regards to CFi may have changed, (as discussed in the Addendum to this Plan). This is essential, at the time of preparation of this document, the new fisheries law, the ASDP and FiA restructuring have yet to be finalised and may well change aspects of CFi development, fundamentally.



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1. Other Community Co-management Initiatives in Cambodia

The Forest Law of 2002 provides a legal basis for rural communities to use and help manage forests through community forestry. The 2003 Sub-decree on Community Forest Management sets out rules for the establishment, management and use of community forests in Cambodia. Community members can collect timber and animal and plant-based forest products seasonally, including construction materials and foods. The Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries has general jurisdiction over management of community forests. Community forests are state public property, which means that this land cannot be sold or granted as Economic Land Concessions (ELCs). The Forestry Administration (FA) has the right to identify community forest boundaries. Local communities can submit a request to the FA for a community forest to be recognised. Under the sub-decree, a Community Forestry Community (CFC) is a community that voluntarily initiates to form a group under a Community Forest Agreement to conduct development activities and use community forest resources in a sustainable manner. The ODC dataset for community forests in Cambodia lists 337 different forests. There is a vast range of sizes, with a handful being less than 10 hectares and one over 5000 hectares. By 2018, the Ministry had established 614 forest communities covering on 508,207 hectares of forest land, in which 484 communities were officially acknowledged by the Ministry and their forest area cover on covering on 437,372 hectares, 432 communities – occupied on 364,548 hectares – were offered official agreements, and 85 communities covering on 55,371 hectares obtained official approval on their community forest management. These forest communities have significantly contributed to the protection of forestry resources. However, some forest communities still have low capacity to properly manage their communities and face challenges related to their livelihoods that depend on the collection of forest products.

For community protected areas, the Ministry of Environment is the authority in charge of establishing and overseeing CPAs. Currently, there are 182 established CPAs, which cover 309,463 ha in total. CPAs usually contain one to three villages and range from 500 to 8,000 ha in area. At present, there are 55,446 families that are part of a CPA community. These communities typically take initiative in the formation of CPAs by going through a legal application mechanism outlined in the Prakas - Guidelines on the Procedure and Process of Community Protected Areas. CPA communities are given 15-year agreements granting them the rights to manage the land. These rights do not extend beyond the CPA boundaries. The CPA mechanism aims to significantly improve conservation efforts while increasing community livelihood opportunities.

2. SWOT Analysis of CFi Networks

Strengths	Weaknesses
• Representatives of community network groups attend monthly meetings at the commune, district and provincial administrations • Supported by government institutions and development partners • Structured fishing community network • Have an action plan and budget • Share information, experience, knowledge quickly • Participate in resolving various disputes • Easy to share information and participate in preventing and suppressing fisheries crimes • Have a solidarity and good cooperation with the authorities and stakeholders	• Not yet networked in all provinces • Some community networks are inactive • Lack of motivation • Awareness and use of information technology is still limited • There are no guidelines on how to set up and operate a network. • Support from relevant authorities and local authorities is still limited • Lack of support • Network administrators have difficulty managing network members • Geographical factors (communities far apart, difficult to communicate) • Weak telephone service (in some areas) • Changing network members and phone numbers
Opportunity	Threats
• Recognized by legal framework, fisheries law, sub-decree • Monthly meetings at the commune, district and provincial administrations to bring challenges, find solutions and receive support. • Gain capacity building, knowledge and experience • Communities will receive funding from sub-national, national and international programs • Opportunity to get the latest news	• Internal conflict over interests (factions) • Violation of authority over its members • Some authorities may not recognize the roles and responsibilities of the network • Some networks may be inactive without the support of development partners

Addendum to the CFi Strategic Plan.

Through 2024 and early 2025, as this CFi Strategic Plan was being developed, the drafting of the new Fishery Law, plus the development of new MAFF policies were also taking place, which are expected to result in significant changes to the fisheries sector and the planning for future fisheries community development. Whilst the full documents have not been seen and the implications of some proposed changes are not yet understood, the possible significance of the new law and MAFF policy change is discussed in this Addendum.

1. The new Cambodian Fisheries Law

As with the previous Fishery Law, the new Fisheries Law CFi will recognise Community Fisheries as a category of inland and marine Fishery Management Area (FMA). The new law does not seem to include any references to CFi sub decrees or Cfi Prakas, and the revision of the 2005 CFi sub decree and 2007 CFi Prakas are not listed under the subsidiary legislation scheduled for revision. This would seem to imply that the 2005 sub decree and 2007 Prakas will continue to provide the legal framework for CFi establishment and management procedures for the foreseeable future. That said, there are a number of contradictions and 'grey areas' exist between the current CFi sub-decree and the new Law and these are summarised in the table below.

CFi Sub-Decree	New Fishery Law (Draft)	Comment
Scale of fishing in CFi areas		
Article 13. Fish at family-scale in accordance with the law, other regulations related to fisheries, and the by-laws of the community fisheries;	Article 29: Small and medium-scale fishing in community fishing areas can only be carried out by community members in compliance with technical requirements of each community fishing areas identified by a specialized unit responsible for fisheries.	The implications of allowing medium-scale fishing within CFi areas are still being considered. However, the impact of this policy on small scale fishers and stocks within CFi fishing areas, are unlikely to be positive. The number of medium-scale licenses permitted in each CFi fishing area, and the allocation of medium scale fishing licenses to individuals in CFi fishing areas is likely to be complicated and is potentially divisive.

CFi Sub-Decree	New Fishery Law (Draft)	Comment
Legal Framework for CFI		
Article 29- The Department of Fisheries may require the community fisheries committee to revise the community fishing area management plan, in compliance with other legal instruments related to the fisheries sector, in order to ensure the sustainability of the community fishing area.	Article 66- The Community Fisheries is an agricultural community established and managed in compliance with the law of agricultural cooperatives.	The implications of this change in policy are still unclear but there are significant differences between fishing and farming communities, which will have to be considered if the law on agricultural cooperatives is revised.
Access to the Fishery		
Article 14- Fisheries resource users who are not the members of the community fisheries have the right to enter, leave, and use fisheries resources in the community fishing area, but must comply with the by-laws and internal regulations of the community fisheries, community fishing area management plan, and all other legal instruments related to fisheries.	Article 67 - The specialized unit responsible for fisheries is empowered to issue a letter that confers exclusive access to any Community Fishing Areas to the community, in alignment with the technical requirements for utilizing the Community Fishing Area.	The granting of exclusive access of Community Fishing Areas to “the community” would seem to address this important issue covered in detail in this strategic plan, which cites open access of CFI fishing areas as a major constraint to strengthening CFI co-management of resources and low levels of CFI membership in fishing communities.
CFI Membership requirement		
Article 9. Have residency in one of the villages of the community fisheries.	No mention of CFI membership requirements in the new Law.	With exclusive access granted under the new Law, this now becomes a critical issue.

2. Modern Agriculture Cooperatives (MAC)

MAFF's policy of promoting Modern Agricultural Cooperatives (MAC) represent a significant policy initiative by the Royal Government of Cambodia, building upon the experience of existing Agricultural Cooperatives (AC) and aiming to enhance the economic value addition within the agricultural sector. While the initial focus is on specific crops such as rice, cashew, and pepper, the MAC model's application can be extended (or expected to be) to the fisheries sector, given the government's commitment to diversifying agricultural activities and improving livelihoods across various sectors.

Introducing the MAC policy to Community Fisheries (MAC-Fish), will align with Cambodia's overarching policy frameworks, including the Pentagonal Strategy Phase 1 (PS1), the Agricultural Sector Strategic Development Plan (ASDP), and the forthcoming Strategic Planning Framework for Fisheries (SPF). Whilst the MAC policy would seem to align neatly with aquaculture due to its focus on value chain development; strengthening links between production, processing, and marketing, it is less clear how MAC could complement Capture Fisheries, including Community Fisheries. Given the potential challenges, the careful piloting of MAC Fish will be necessary before widespread implementation. Learning from the implementation of MAC in other crop sectors will be crucial. to ensure that MAC-Fish effectively addresses the specific needs and challenges of the Cambodian fisheries sector and CFi, thereby maximizing its potential for success.

3. The Relocation of CFDD to MAFF

The reclassification of community fisheries as agriculture communities under the Law on Agriculture communities will be institutionalized through the relocation of FiA's CFDD to the MAFF Department of Agriculture Communities Promotion (DACP). This would seem to imply that the administration of CFi will no longer be a responsibility of FiA. The relocation of CFDD to MAFF would also seem to tie in with MAFF's policy of promoting Modern Agriculture Cooperatives (MAC) in agricultural communities, (see 2 above). Once these legal and policy changes come into force, this Strategic Plan will need to be revised significantly, to make it's recommendations consistent with the new legislation.



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