



THEORY OF CHANGE WORKSHOPS UNDER ASSET PROJECT

SYNTHESIS NOTE

Date: September 2023

TAKE-HOME MESSAGES:

- Achieving the transition to agroecology requires a shared vision for the transition to sustainable food system at national level;
- The Theory of Change methodology facilitates the emergence of a collective diagnosis of a situation, a shared vision for the future, and identifies practical solutions for the transition.
- 130 agroecology stakeholders worked together to develop pathways for transition to agroecology for Vietnam, Lao PDR and Cambodia, and committed to join efforts to achieve sustainable food systems by 2040.

FACILITATING THE CO-CONSTRUCTION OF AGROECOLOGICAL TRANSITION PATHWAYS AT NATIONAL LEVEL – THE EXPERIENCE OF THE ASSET PROJECT

This note valorizes the results of the **National Foresight and Theory of Change workshops** led at national level in Lao PDR, Cambodia and Vietnam in October 2022, under the ASSET project. The workshops were facilitated by the ALiSEA network and the ASSET Project team and Government Partners. It was open to all stakeholders engaged in Agroecology, including ALiSEA members and non-members. They aimed at the co-construction of a shared vision of a desirable agroecology future amongst agroecology stakeholders for their country, and at drawing clear intervention pathways.



I. CO-CONSTRUCTION OF AGROECOLOGY TRANSITION PATHWAYS FOR THE MEKONG REGION

Achieving the **transition toward agroecology** in South East Asia requires a shared vision amongst its intervention system actors on the desired scenario for the future of the agricultural sector. However, civil society organizations, private sector and the public and research sector **have limited opportunities to discuss, confront their visions** and agree on collective objectives for agroecology future. The co-construction of a shared vision and the definition of pathways for its achievement will guide the actions of the actors in favour of the emergence of sustainable food systems.

The ALiSEA Network and the **Government Partners**, with support of ASSET project, had the objective to **facilitate the co-construction of agroecological transition pathways** for Lao PDR, Vietnam and Cambodia. These pathways were drawn using the **Theory of Change methodology**. They identify clear objectives in terms of agroecology, map obstacles to the transition, and prioritize solutions.

This synthesis note will present the National Theory of Change process with a highlight on the **National ToC Workshops** – a key step of the co-construction process.

The Theory of Change Workshops in a few data:

- 🌿 **3 ToC national workshops:**
12 -13 October 2022 in Vietnam
18 - 19 October 2022 in Laos & Cambodia
- 🌿 **Facilitators from 25 organisations:**
ASSET partners and ALiSEA Board of Members
- 🌿 **130 participants**, including 64 women from more than 80 organisations
- 🌿 **9 keynote presentations** on food sector megatrends and stakeholders' narratives
- 🌿 **3 national transition pathways** to Agroecology future toward 2040 or 2045 co-constructed and endorsed.

DEFINITION OF THEORY OF CHANGE

The Theory of Change (ToC) is an explicit theory or model of how an intervention, e.g. a project, programme or strategy, contributes to a chain of results or event, making explicit both the expected change process, the actions to generate it, and the assumptions that explain why these actions would generate that desired changes. It facilitates the emergence of a collective diagnostic of a situation, a shared vision for the future, and identifies practical solutions for the transition.

II. WHY VALUING A MULTI-STAKEHOLDERS APPROACH?

The ToC workshops were implemented through a **participatory approach**, with group work and extensive discussions among a high diversity of actors.

The ToC workshops gathered indeed a **unique diversity of stakeholders**, CSOs, NGOs, Farmer organizations, Research & Academia, Private Sector, Government, and covered a broad geographical focus (Greater Mekong Sub-Region). Such diversity allowed to host rich exchanges and integrate various perspectives on agroecology.

The composition of the **facilitators teams** aimed at representing this diversity of actors. They played a key role in facilitating the debate during group works, identifying key ideas and summarizing them. The following organizations led the facilitation process:

CAMBODIA:

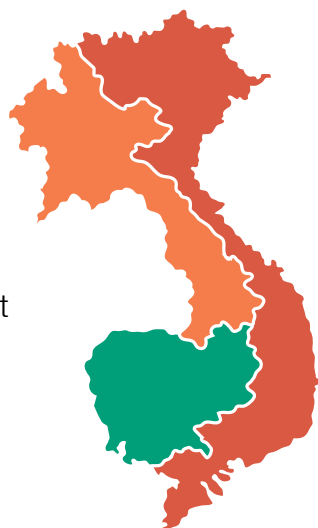
CIRAD, GRET, GDA, Swisscontact, SEI, DCA, Ecoland, Action Aid

LAOS:

CIRAD, IRD, GRET, NUoL, DALaM, NAFRI, DoPC, MHP, Independent Consultant

VIETNAM:

CIRAD, IRD, GRET, FAVRI, IPSARD, CASRAD, NOMAFSI, CISDOMA, CARES



Through group work and mixed national facilitators, the workshops also actively contributed in strengthening the relationship between ALiSEA and the government partners. This will facilitate the cooperation between civil society actors and governance bodies over the long term.

III. BEHIND THE TOC WORKSHOPS: THE NEED TO BUILD CLEAR PATHWAY FOR SUSTAINABILITY

A diversity of national stakeholders is getting mobilized to engage collectively in the support to the agroecology transition. However, their efforts for the transition bump into obstacles, including a diversity of perspective of the definition of agroecology, **lack of a shared vision on a desired future** and limited opportunities and space for collective planning. Building a shared vision of agroecology and co-constructing transition pathways appear as a crucial step to the transition to agroecology.

In such context, the ToC workshops **bring the right questions on the table**: What impacts do we aim to contribute to? What are the changes needed to generate these impacts? Who needs to change and why? When will these changes (outcomes) and their consequences (impacts) likely happen? How are we going to make these changes happen? Why and in which context are these strategies/actions supposed to work (assumptions)?

IV. THE THEORY OF CHANGE PROCESS: PRELIMINARY STEPS TO SHAPE A SHARED VISION

The ToC approach used under the ASSET project was built on a methodological approach rooted in the ImpresS ex ante framework (*Blundo Canto and De Romemont, 2020; <https://impress-impact-recherche.cirad.fr>*). This methodology was adapted to the goals and configurations set for this ToC development, under ASSET project and ALiSEA network.

This approach mobilizes a group of key intervention actors to study and reply to the questions listed above. The ToC starts from defining **a vision of the desired future situation**, then questions **why that vision is not realised today**, and **who are the actors** involved in the issues holding the vision from happening.

A key step of the process was the **ToC workshops gathering agroecology stakeholders** around a Foresight exercise. These workshops were however preceded by a series of steps:

- 🌿 **Guidance Notes** for a shared vision of the ToC;
- 🌿 **Knowledge review** at local, national and regional levels;
- 🌿 **Consultation on Agroecology Key Principles at national level** to ensure a common understanding of the definition among stakeholders;
- 🌿 **Preliminary national ToC**;
- 🌿 **Training of national workshops facilitators.**

OUTCOMES OF THE PROCESS:

As a result of this process, **clear national pathways** to scale-up agroecology by 2040 or 2045 were set-up for each of the 3 countries. Priority obstacles, transition pathways and vision were articulated in coherent manner to **draw the line of the transition.**



V. THEORY OF CHANGE WORKSHOPS: A TIME FOR DISCUSSION AND COLLECTIVE PLANNING

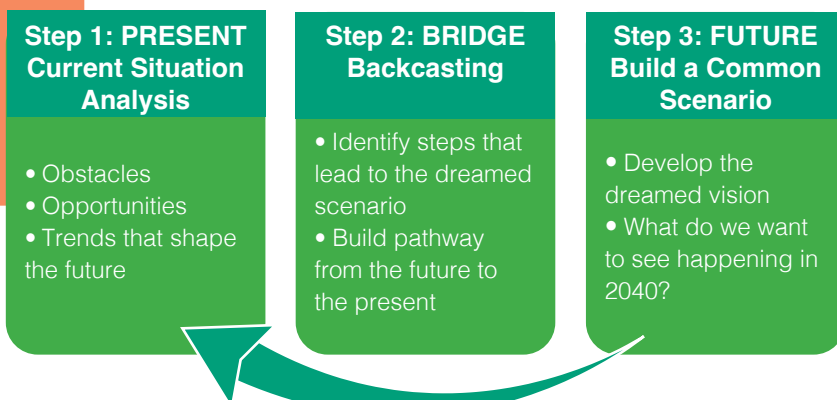
The ToC workshops were held at national level over 2 days, gathering each about 43 key agroecology stakeholders.

The sessions started with **keynote presentations** aiming at presenting mega trends on agriculture and food systems, introducing key narratives and stakeholder groups of agriculture and food systems.

A collective **Foresight Exercise** then took place for the co-construction of vision and pathways toward agroecology. It started with a preliminary question: by which date should the transition happen? Participants from Cambodia and Laos selected **2040 as a horizon for change**, whereas Vietnam selected **2045**.

The participants then split into 3 groups, and facilitators played a key role to capture the main ideas from the participants on a desired future, and validated them through discussions.

The Foresight Exercise in group work was implemented in 3 steps:



VI. STRENGTHS AND LIMITATIONS OF THE NATIONAL FORESIGHT AND THEORY OF CHANGE WORKSHOP

STRENGTH

Direct exchanges between CSOs and government partners on AE issues
Collective identification of obstacles to the transition
Identification of practical solutions accessible to the actors of the transition
 Agreement on a **shared vision and collective efforts** to be done
 Building of **coherency and coordination** amongst the AE movement

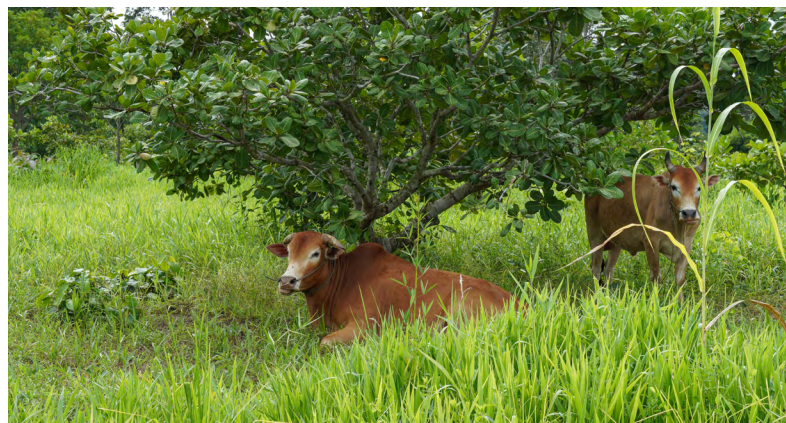
LIMITATION

Discussion and workshop process **driven by experts** and facilitators due to the high-level of expertise required
Limited initial understanding on the ToC methodology due to its complexity
Limited time available for the process & for relating it to field evidences
Ownership and use of the results of the process to be fostered

VII. NEXT STEPS AND USE OF THE SHARED VISION

The National Transition Pathways that emerged from the ToC workshops will guide the actions and strategies of the Agroecology stakeholders, including ALiSEA members and ASSET Partners:

- 🔥 Guide the design of the **ALiSEA national action plan**,
- 🔥 Guide a **roadmap for the ASSET project at national level**
- 🔥 **Feed the policy dialogue processes**
- 🔥 **Inspire agroecology actors own strategies**, activities design and the development of programmes and proposals.



To know more about participatory Theory of Change (in French):
 Castella, Jean-Christophe & Blundo Canto, Genowefa. (2023). *La théorie du changement participative au service de la transition agroécologique*.
https://www.researchgate.net/publication/371139492_La_theorie_du_changement_participative_au_service_de_la_transition_agroecologique



Source: Blundo Canto et al 2021. ASSET SC 22. *Nested Theory of Change in the ASSET project. Guidance document. V4 12/05/2021*

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Sub-Component 2.2: Methodological Framework

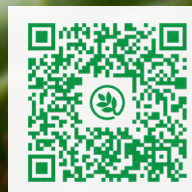
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GROW SUSTAINABLY, EAT HEALTHY,
ADOPT AGROECOLOGY

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