

A LESSON IN THE VALUE OF 'PROCESS'

A four-year project in Cambodia has demonstrated that getting the process right is vital to the success of agricultural research

BY CHRIS GREENWOOD

Dr Kep Coughlan knows about agricultural research. As team leader of the AusAID-funded Cambodian Agricultural Research and Development Institute Assistance Project (CARDI-AP) for nearly three years, he understands that getting the process right

“When CARDI-AP began in 2002, the CARDI research program was shifting from an exclusive focus on rice production to a more diversified crops-research agenda,” Dr Coughlan says. “It had a great team of researchers, but little experience in managing a modern research organisation with a diversified agenda.

been improved and a marketing program guides the preparation of targeted research proposals. This enhances its capacity to attract research funds from regional donors.

Gains in extension have also been improved when the process is managed as a project between research and extension staff. “We have got our researchers and

extension people talking together, which will improve the potential application of research technologies on the ground,” Dr Coughlan says. “We’ve also developed a series of technology implementation procedures (TIPs) to communicate research results and develop extension programs.”

Another success has been the Cambodian Agricultural Research Fund (CARF), which is a sub-component of the CARDI-AP program and managed by ACIAR.

“This project has allowed smaller Cambodian research groups to secure research funds. It has

been a capacity builder as well as facilitating grassroots extension activity. It has also helped build linkages between research and extension and NGOs.”

The difficulty of implementing a research business model in a developing country such as Cambodia has not gone unrecognised. In August this year, Dr Coughlan and two of his CARDI-AP colleagues, Grahame Hunter and Mike Clarke, were presented with Cambodian Achievement Medals. ◀



A team delivering results: Dr Kep Coughlan and Cambodian colleagues.

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has been vital to developing the technical aspects of the research itself.

With the completion of the four-year project in August 2006, Dr Coughlan and his Australian and Cambodian team look back on achievements that have helped CARDI become an organisation that is delivering research results to extension staff and farmers, is responsive to national research needs and is proactive in seeking donor funds.

“In the second phase of the project, we introduced five key projects: research planning, research extension, information management, business and marketing and on-farm testing of CARDI technologies.”

Dr Coughlan points to successes in all project areas. For example, a comprehensive package of business and management tools has been implemented to help research planning and strategy.

The IT infrastructure at CARDI has