

## Study on Small Scale Agricultural and Rural Development Program Along the Mekong River, Laos

(Period of the study: 15 months from November, 1998 Our assignment: Farmer's Supporting System)

### Background of the Study

In Laos, food security, export promotion, control of shifting cultivation, rural development, infrastructure upgrading and capacity building are the priority targets. Increase in food production and food self-sufficiency are also the main themes in "Agricultural Development Vision for 2020". Irrigation projects including pumping schemes are thus promoted after floods in 1995/1996. Under such circumstances, the master plan for the agriculture and rural development along with the feasibility study for the priority areas were formulated. The objective was to stabilize the rice production by improving the traditional farming and introducing irrigated agriculture in the dry season under the organization of farmers group and development of irrigation facilities that can be installed by the farmers' financing system in the area along the Mekong River.

### Outline of Study

Rivers in the target area are the tributaries of Mekong and both level and volume of water fluctuate a lot within a year. Consequently, unstable agricultural production under the influence of floods, delay of infrastructure development, limited financial and technical supports to farmers were considered as limiting factors for the development. Thereupon, the localized development plan was formulated based on the participatory approach and cross-sectoral supporting system. Practically, the idea of task-force team was introduced that can be functioned as a contact point with farmers and support services, an antenna for the administration and facilitator for farmers' organization. In addition to the methods of capacity building of both farmers and administrations by cross-sectoral team action, the other practical methods such as fund raising and infrastructures development were also proposed.

### Our assignments

- Collection and analysis of information about local farming, farmers' supporting system, farmers' organization, irrigation and water control,
- Survey on the present situation of farmers' supporting system including extension and research and analysis of ability for implementation,
- Survey on the present situation of marketing and the formulation of improvement plan, and
- Formulation of land use and farming plan according to the appropriate technologies locally available which might be the foundation of sustainable agriculture.

