



Nurture Project

Lessons from Cambodia on water governance and climate resilient agriculture

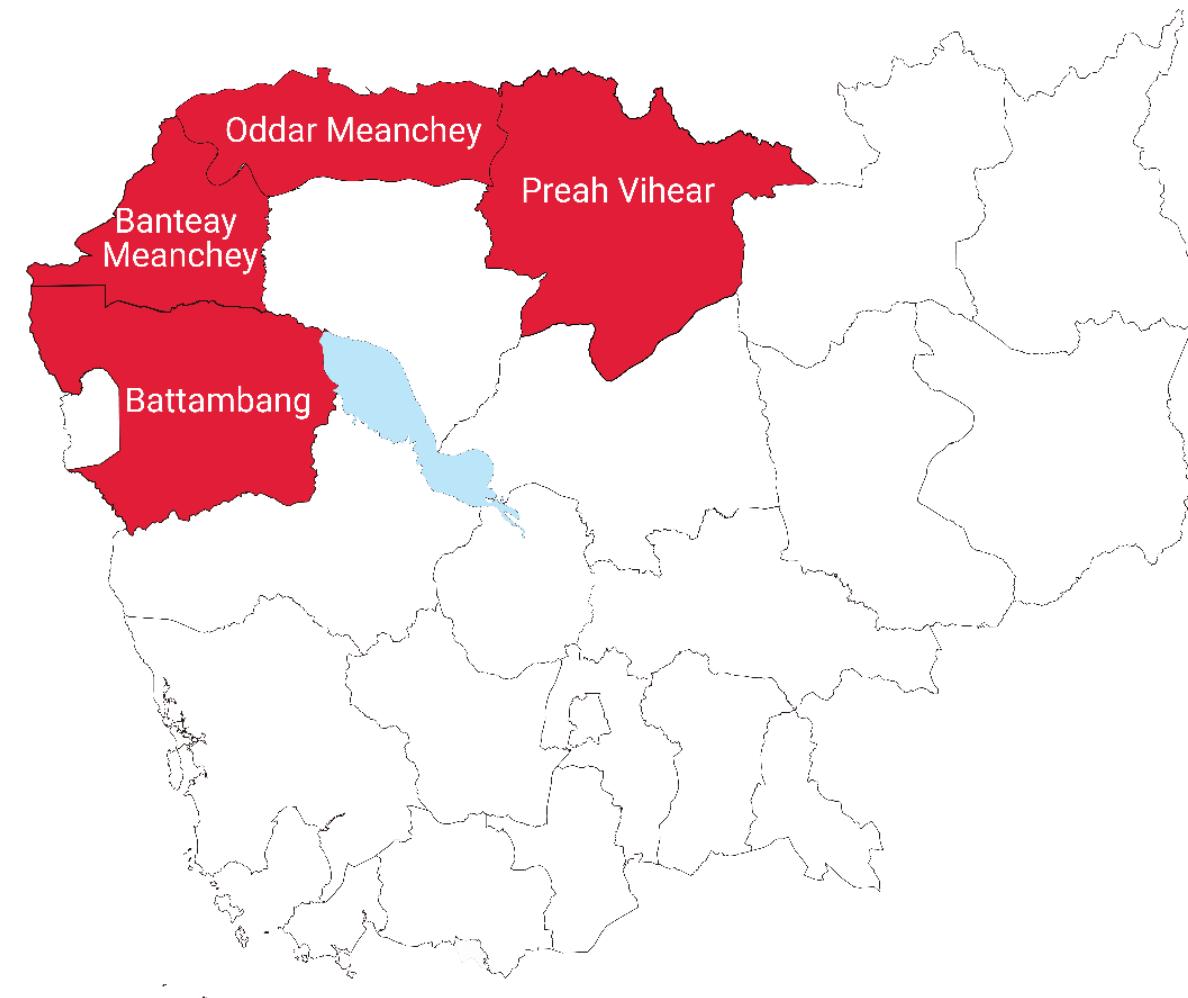
Date: 17. December 2025

Presented by: Malte Reshöft, Head Thematic
Advisory Service, HEKS/EPER.

The Nurture Project (2022-2026)

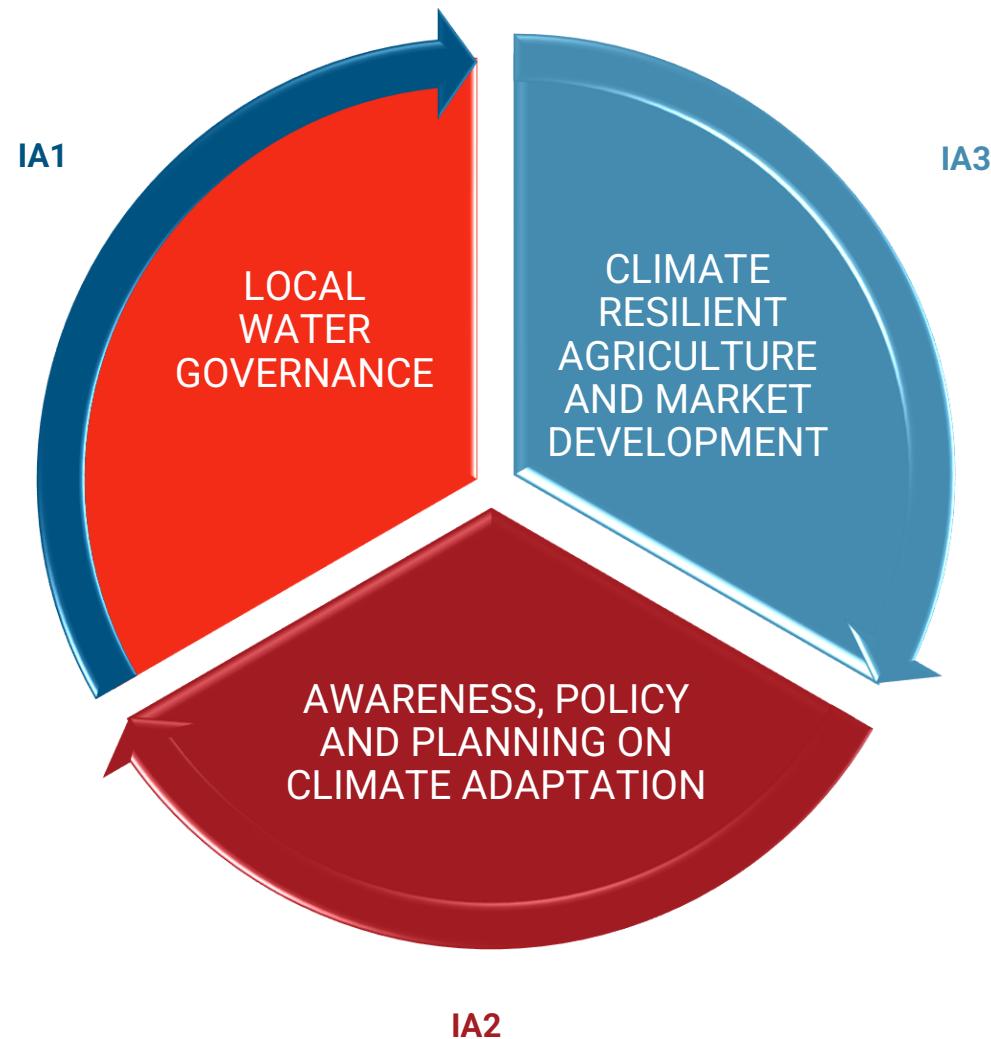
Strengthening the climate resilience of vulnerable smallholder farming communities

- Co-implemented by **HEKS/EPER** and **Caritas Switzerland**
- Benefiting **15,000** smallholder farmers households (more than 70,000 people)
- **Key Themes:** water governance, climate adaptation and agrifood systems



Nurture overall goals

Vulnerable smallholder farming households become more resilient to climate change and increase their incomes.



- Increased agriculture productivity
- Diversification of agriculture production and adoption of CRA
- Improved access to water
- Responsive policies, greater accountability and DRR measures



Intervention Area 1 – Local Water Governance

- Strengthening capacity of **Farmer Water User Communities (FWUCs)** Committees
- Establishment of **sustainable financing mechanisms** for irrigation systems management
- Support **participatory planning** and decision-making on water, agriculture, and climate within sub-national governance mechanisms



IA 1: *Integrity Management Toolbox (IM – Toolbox)*

3,301 smallholder farmers, members of FWUCs that experienced strengthened management of their water systems

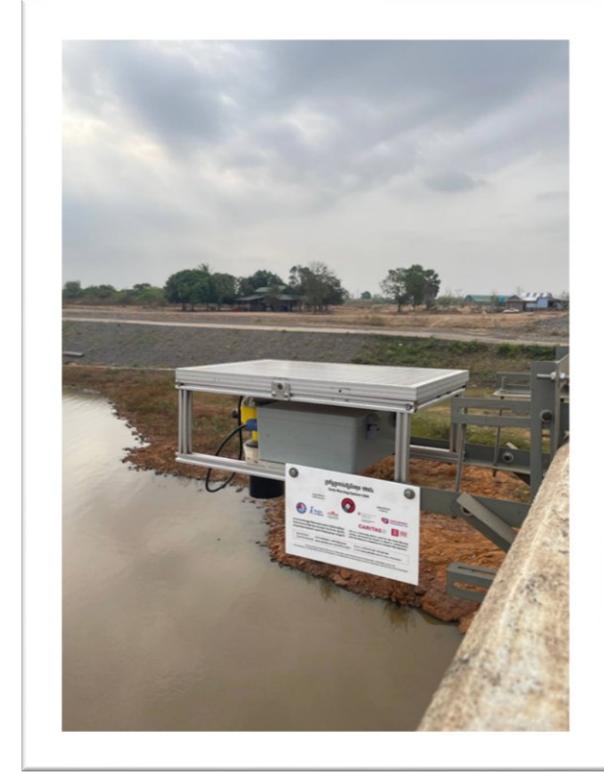


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Intervention Area 2 – climate adaptation, governance and accountability

- Deployment of **early warning systems** for floods response.
- Piloting of models for **improved public service delivery** in Cambodia
- Support **policy development** and **coordination** platforms.



IA 2: Deployment of Early Warning Systems

32,971 people in at-risk locations (where sensors have been installed) have improved their access to the multi-hazard early warning system



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Intervention Area 3 – Climate Resilient agriculture

- **Enhancing access** to inputs, technologies and extension services.
- **Improving coordination** and access to markets across four different sub-sectors.
- **Incubation and acceleration program** for startups and key market actors in the climate resilient agri-space.



IA 3: Private Sector led seeds system production

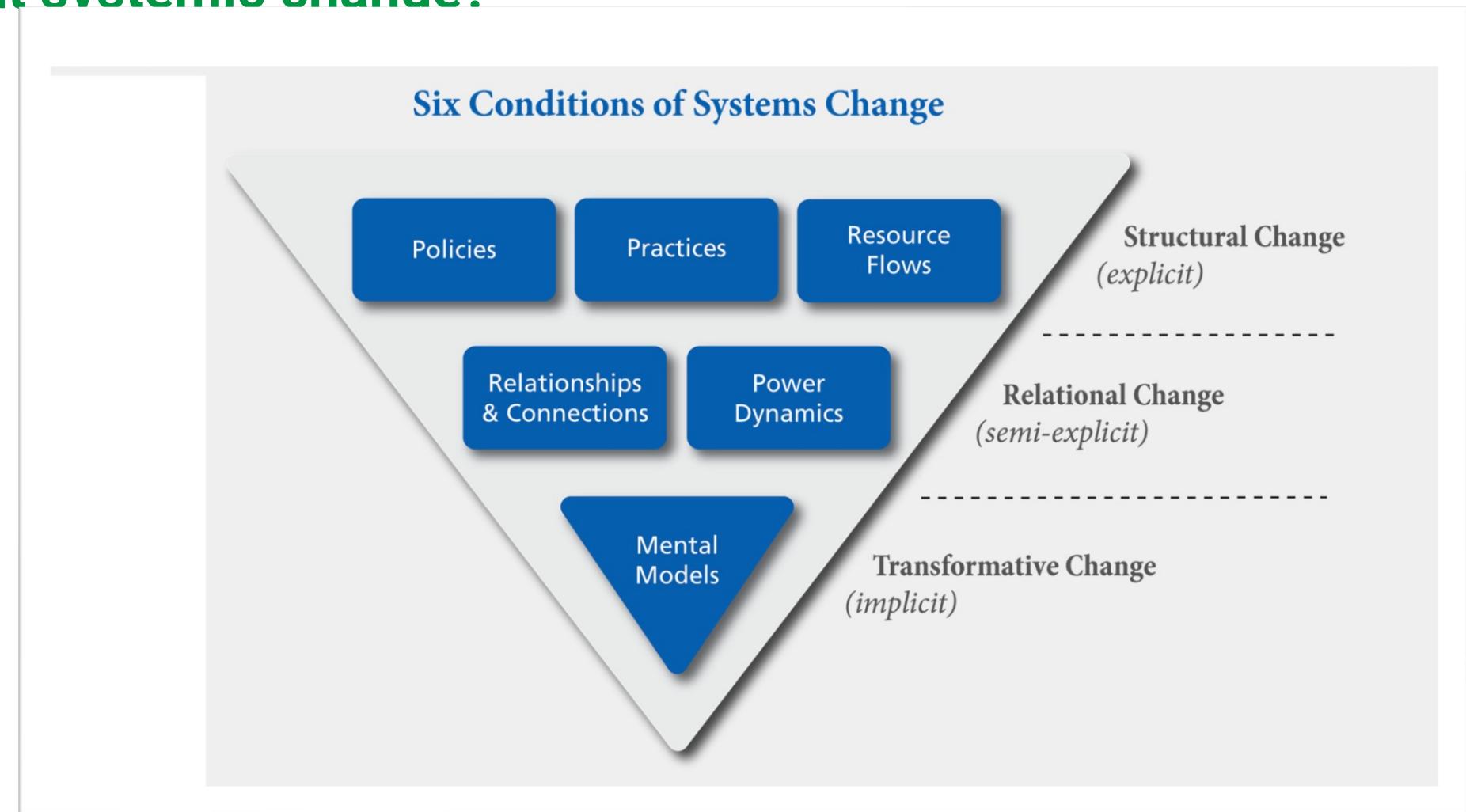
Vegetable Seeds Producer development of production site and establishment of extension services for farmers



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What brought systemic change?



The 3 levels of systems change

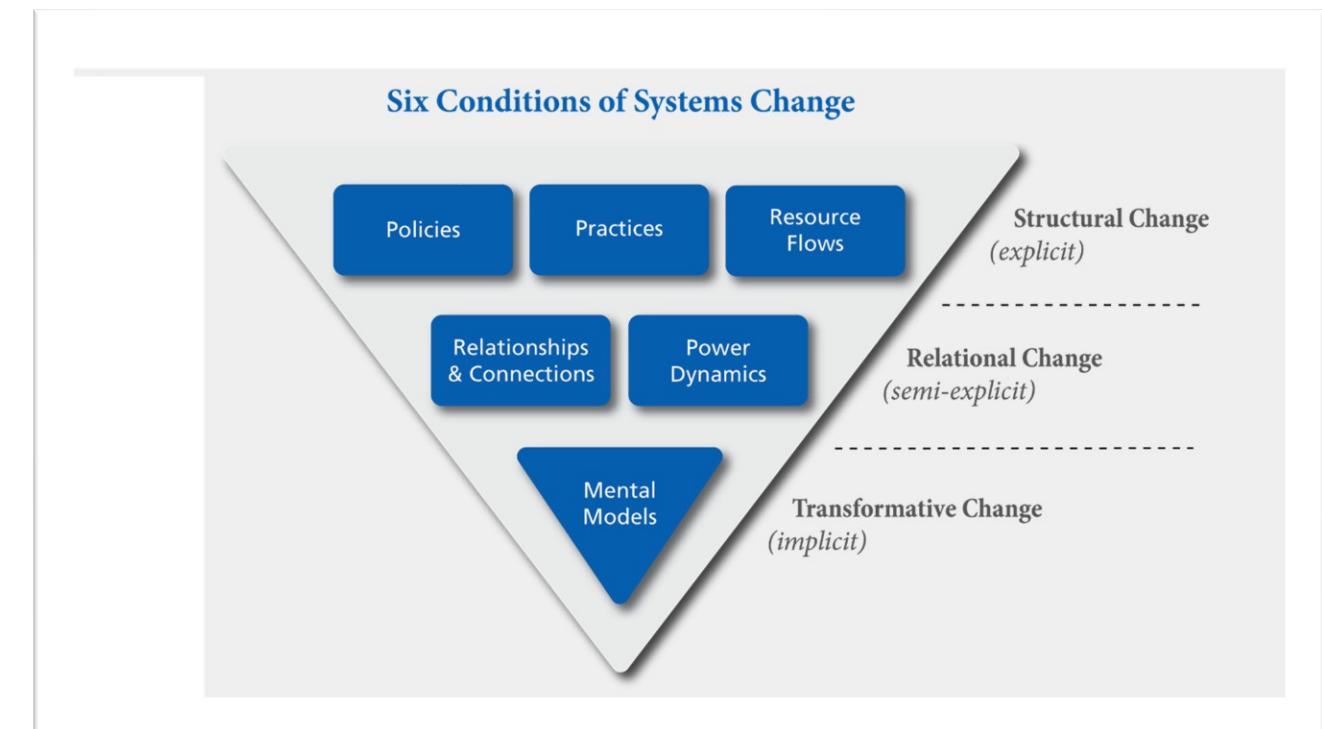


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What 5 factors made this case take off really well?

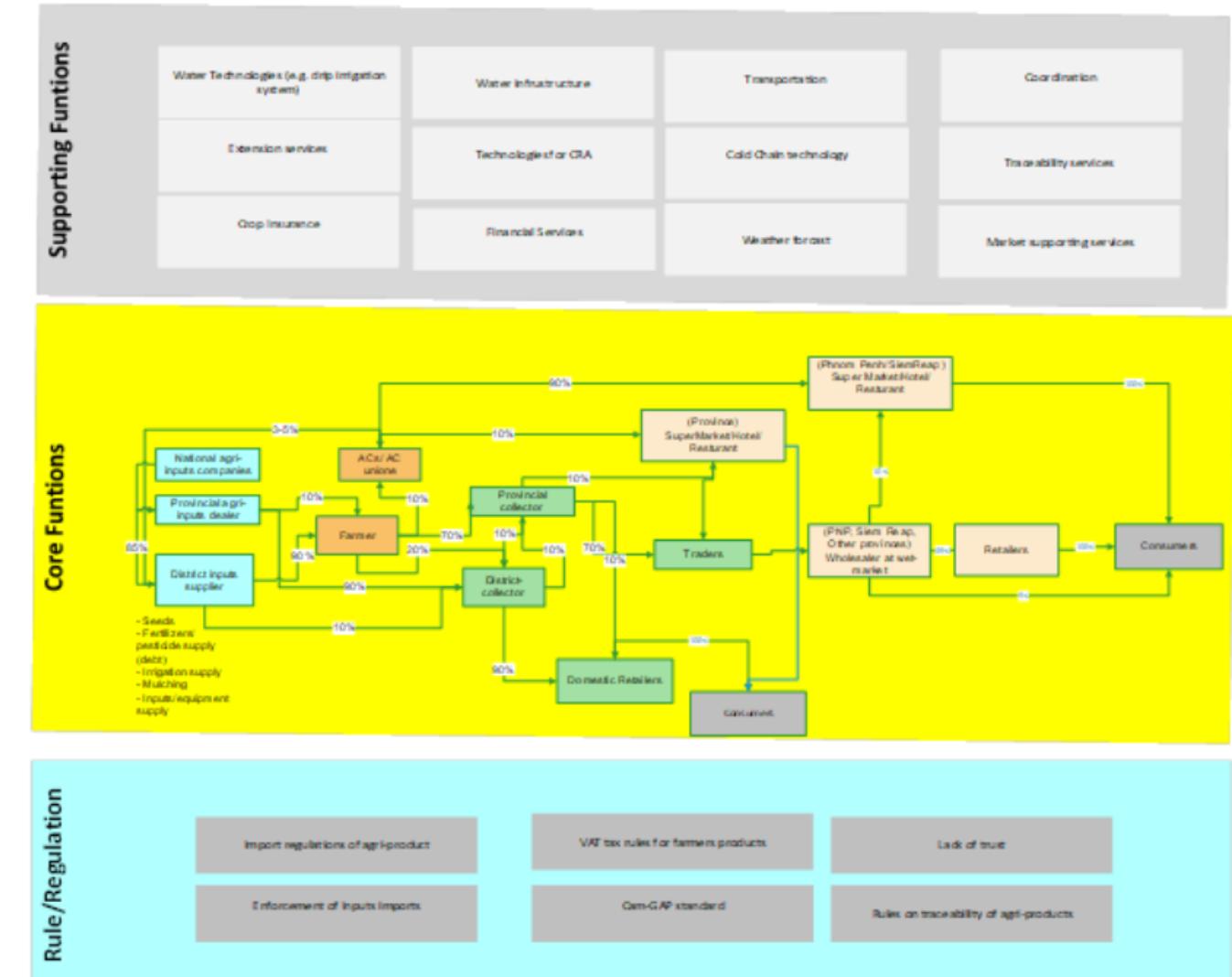
- 1. Systemic Approach & Power Awareness**
- 2. Structured Pathway from Research to Action**
- 3. Inclusive Multi-Stakeholder Engagement**
- 4. Market Facilitation & Innovation**
- 5. Adaptive & Reflective Management**



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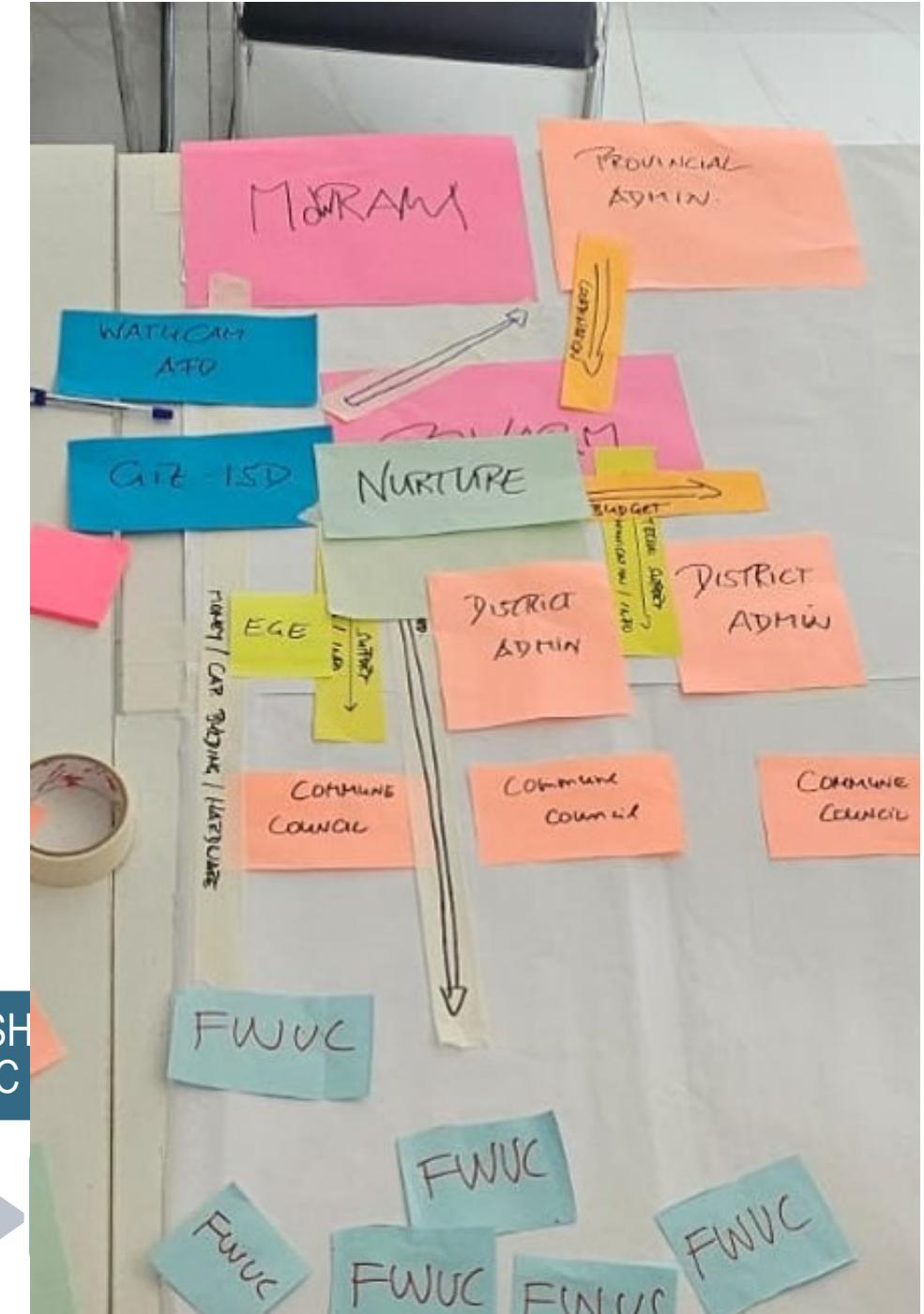
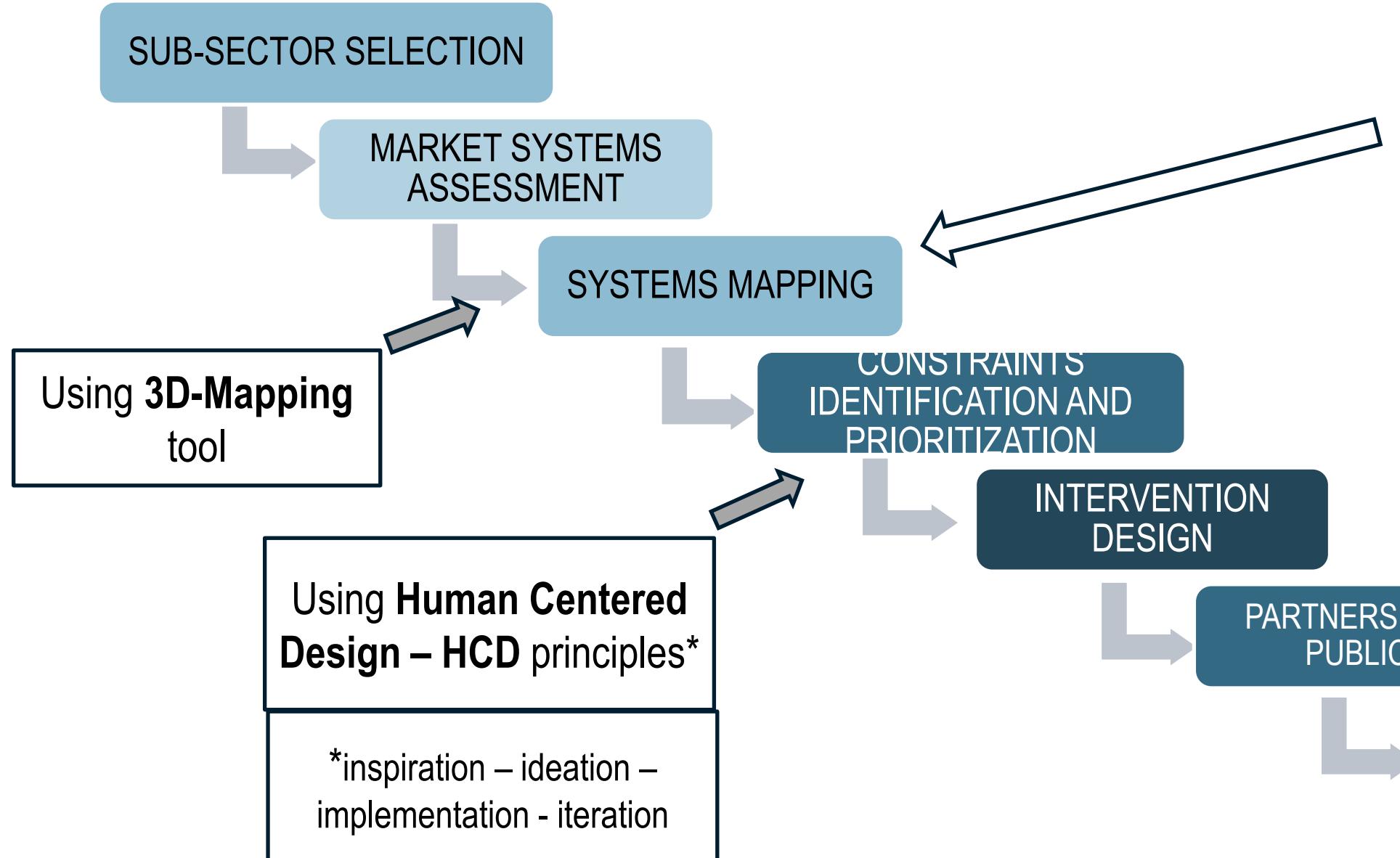
1. Systemic Approach & Power Awareness

- **Systems mapping**, including NURTURE itself as an important actor
- **Relationship building** and enhancing connectivity
- Addressing (unfair and historically conditioned) **power imbalances** in a **culturally appropriate way**



What brought systemic change?

2. Structured Pathway from Research to Action



What 5 factors made this case take off really well?

3. Inclusive Multi-Stakeholder Engagement

- Creating **Multi-stakeholder Platforms** on local level:
 - Leveraging consumers interest in locally grown vegetable products
- **Incentives** for diverse actors
 - Improved functioning of (some) FWUCs
 - Vegetable intervention from pilot to scale (from production to access to markets and inputs)
- **Resource mobilization**
 - 250K+ raised through Ministry of Economy and Finance for incubator/accelerator
 - 600K+ private sector investment raised



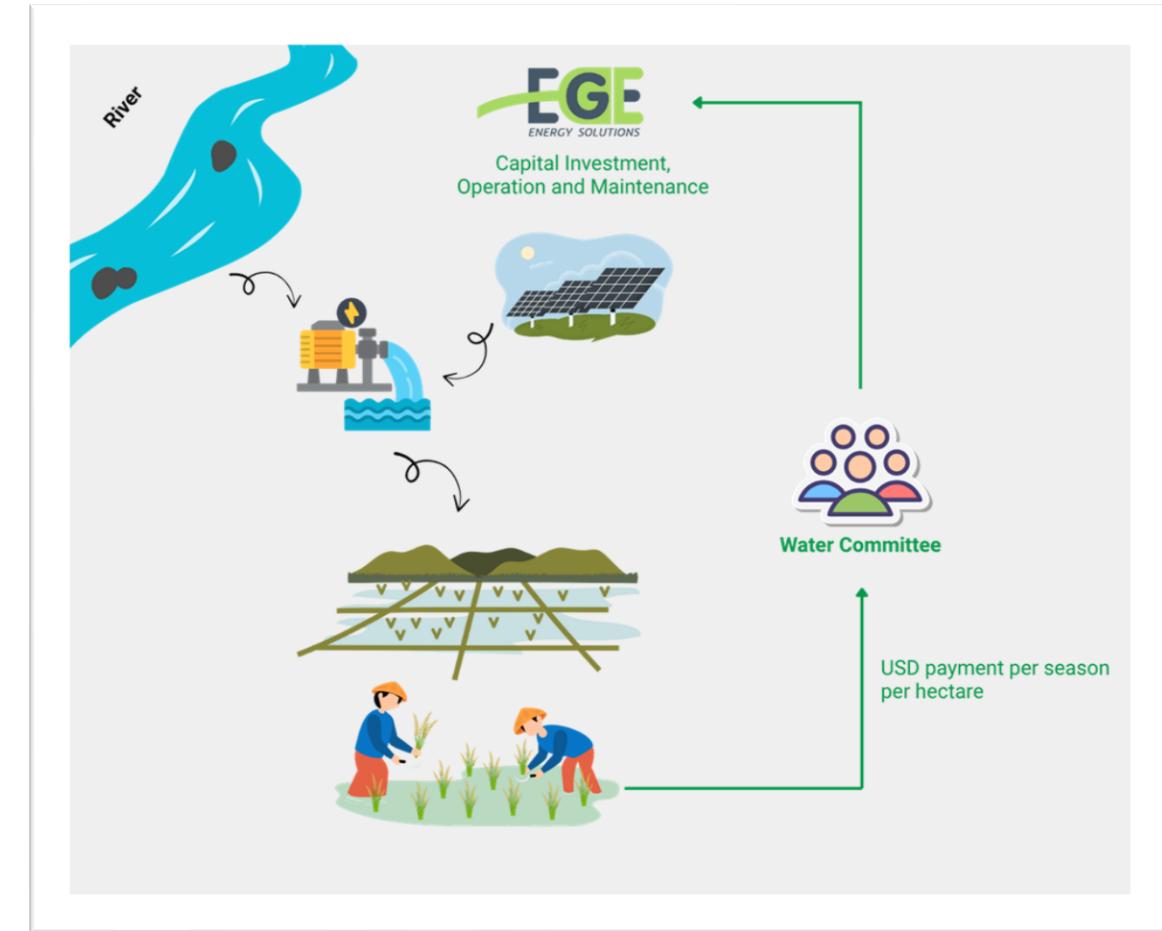
Relationship building



What 5 factors made this case take off really well?

4. Market Facilitation & Innovation

- **Private sector led**
 - Incubator / Accelerator programme for startups and especially local agricultural cooperatives
- **Support innovative business models**
 - EGE solar powered system and irrigation as a service
- **Climate smart technologies**
 - Climate resilient technology promotion – rice direct seeding machine



NURTURE facilitating the outreach of a solar company



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EPER

Bread for all.

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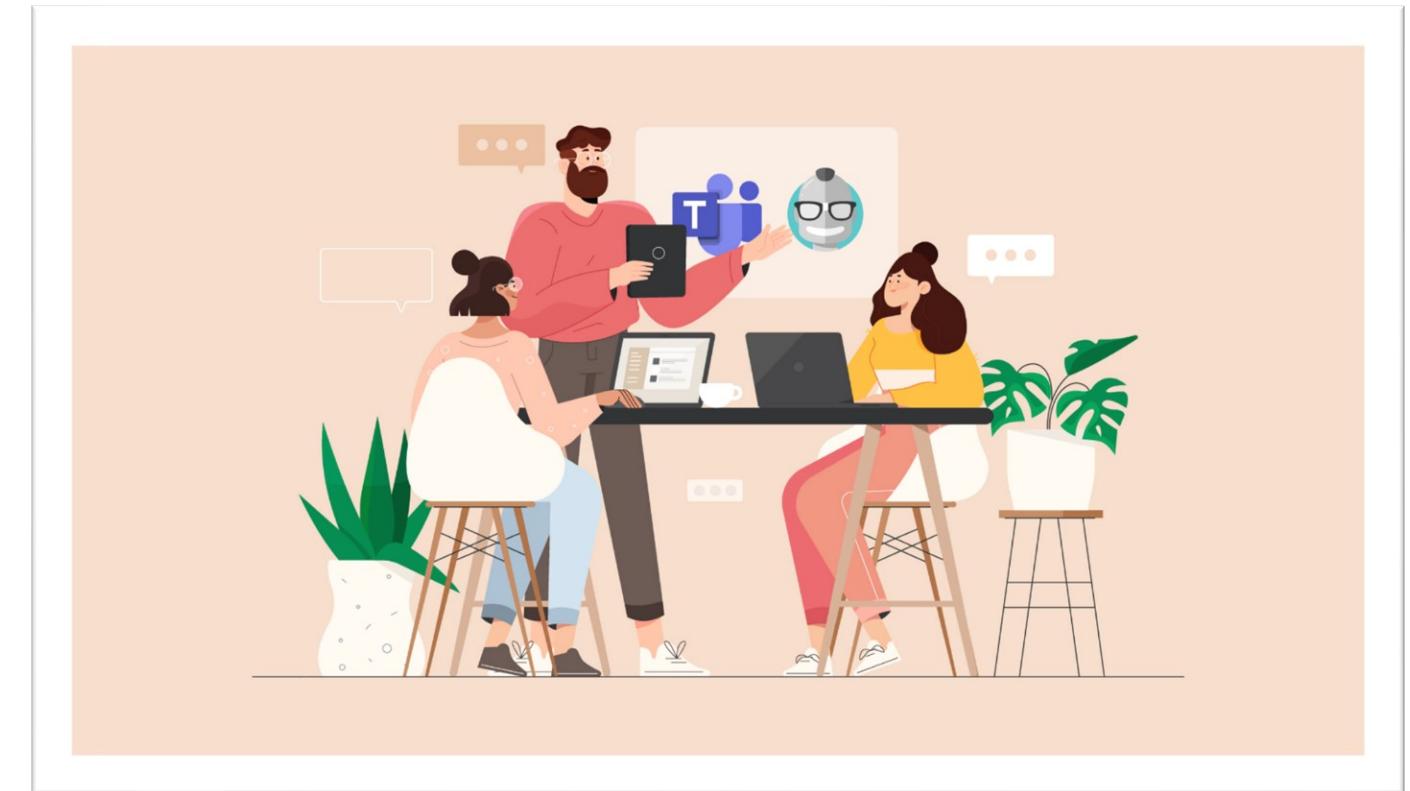
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What 5 factors made this case take off really well?

5. Adaptive & Reflective Management

- **Continuous learning**
 - Regular reflection meetings with non-team member
- **Responsive adjustments**
 - Adjustment or even termination of cooperation if goals are not achieved
- **Bias Detection**
 - Reflection on blind spots



(Self) Reflection as way for deeper transformation



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16-Jan-26



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The Nurture Project in a nutshell



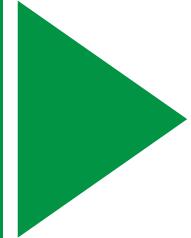
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Lessons Learnt - from producing enough food and managing water resources sustainably

Integrated Water Governance



Water management should adopt a systemic, landscape-level approach, engaging actors across all levels of governance.

Incentivizing Water Management

Beyond the Business Case



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Lessons Learnt - from producing enough food and managing water resources sustainably

Integrated Water Governance

Water management should adopt a systemic, landscape-level approach, engaging actors across all levels of governance.

Incentivizing Water Management

Incentive mechanisms for water user committees are key to ensuring long-term sustainability.

Beyond the Business Case



Lessons Learnt - from producing enough food and managing water resources sustainably

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Beyond the Business Case

Demonstrating the business case for sustainable food production is important—but often insufficient without addressing behavioral and systemic barriers.



Thank you for your attention



Nurture Project

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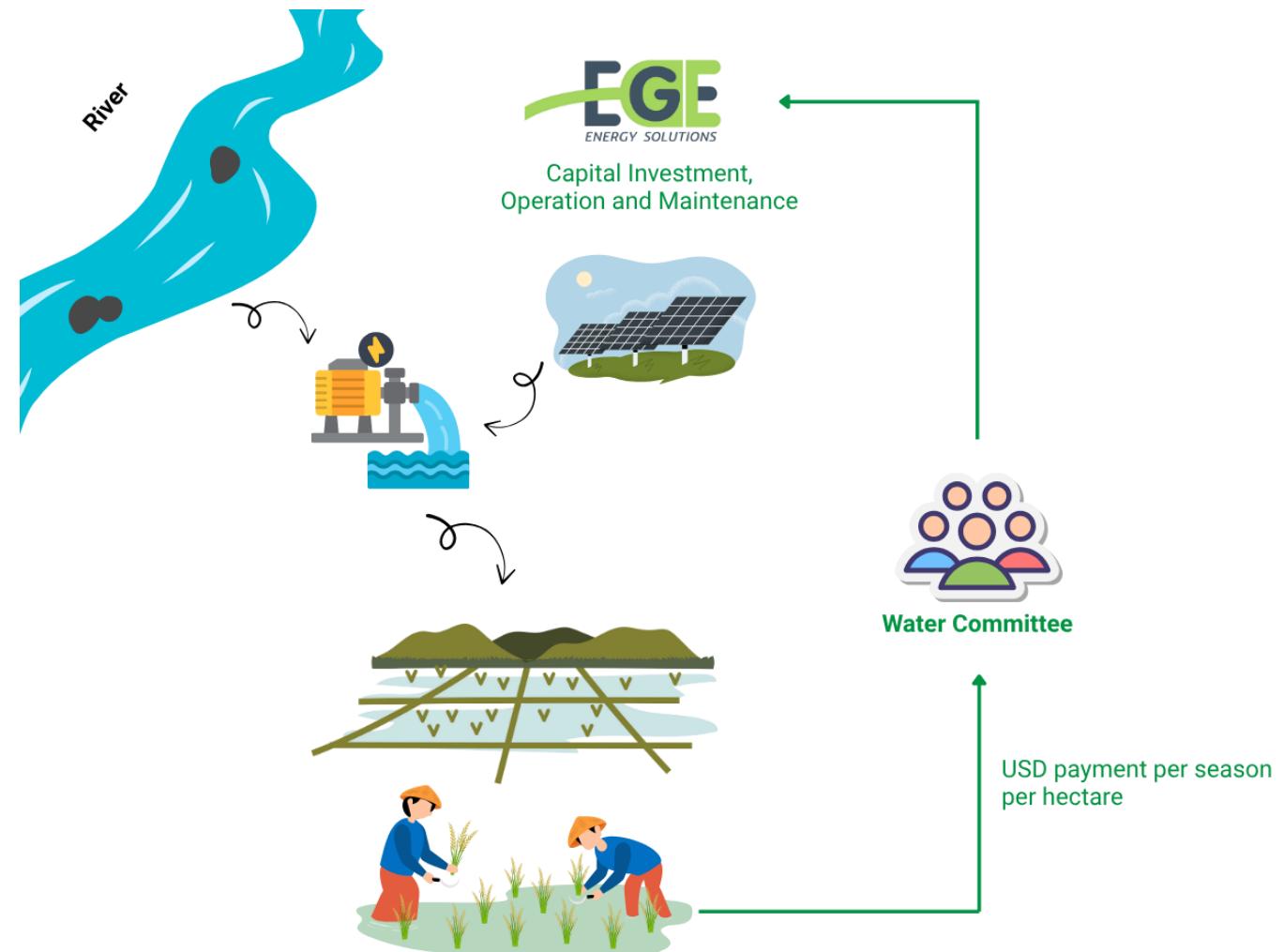
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Irrigation as a Service (IaaS) business model for improving access to water



Business Model

Rice farmers pay for water seasonally and per hectare

Water committee collects fees

140K investment of which 60% from private company

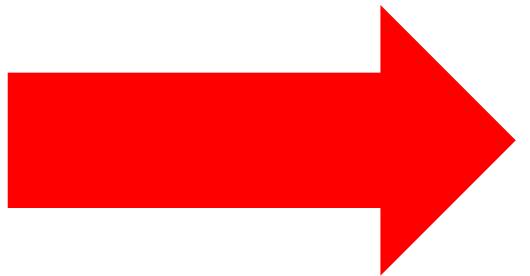
ROI = 5 years

250 hectares covered and 134 farming households



Key Benefits from IaaS – Solar Pump

**Cost reduction
for water
pumping**



30% reduction in costs

BEFORE: 155.88 USD
(average expenditure / hectare)

AFTER: 109.67 USD (average expenditure / hectare)

**Increase in
yields and
income**

Some farmers shifted
from 1 cycle to 2
cycles
Average income
increased by 32,46%
by 544USD

