

Complex interactions between central and local: community-based research in Thailand

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Summary

- Brazil/India: Central supplies public participation opportunities, then needs to create demand for it
- Community-based research (CBR): generating new solutions for local issues, including water management.
- Central – local:
 - Central supports local: supporting community-based research
 - Central resists local: engineers resist locally generated design.
- Why central resistance? Challenges include: different perspectives and cultures; professional responsibility and pride; uncertainty
- Joint fact-finding as solution?

Thailand: promoting CBR

- Thailand Research Fund supporting CBR for water management and other projects
 - Money for CBR, but not implementation
 - Communities supported by Node Coordinators
 - Royal Irrigation Department (RID) starting to do the same
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TRF & Prak Nam Daeng

- Water flow and quality changed by new upstream dams and industries (1980's)
 - RID builds dam to help,
 - but causes 20 year conflict instead!
- 2000: Local leader learns about CBR, gets TRF help
 - Initial community scepticism
 - Innovative consultation and consensus building,
 - develops new dam design

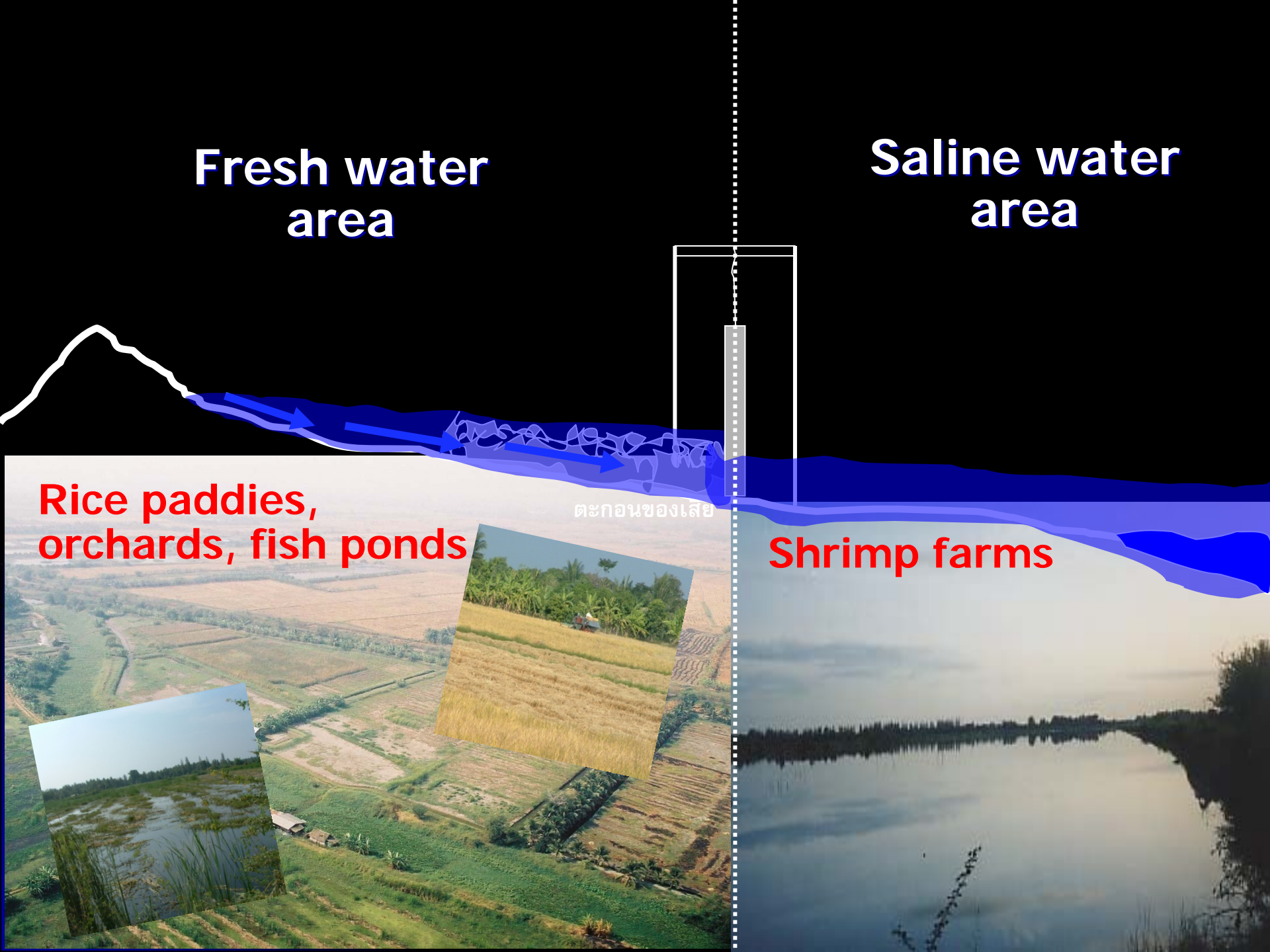
**Fresh water
area**

**Saline water
area**

**Rice paddies,
orchards, fish ponds**

ตะกอนของเสีย

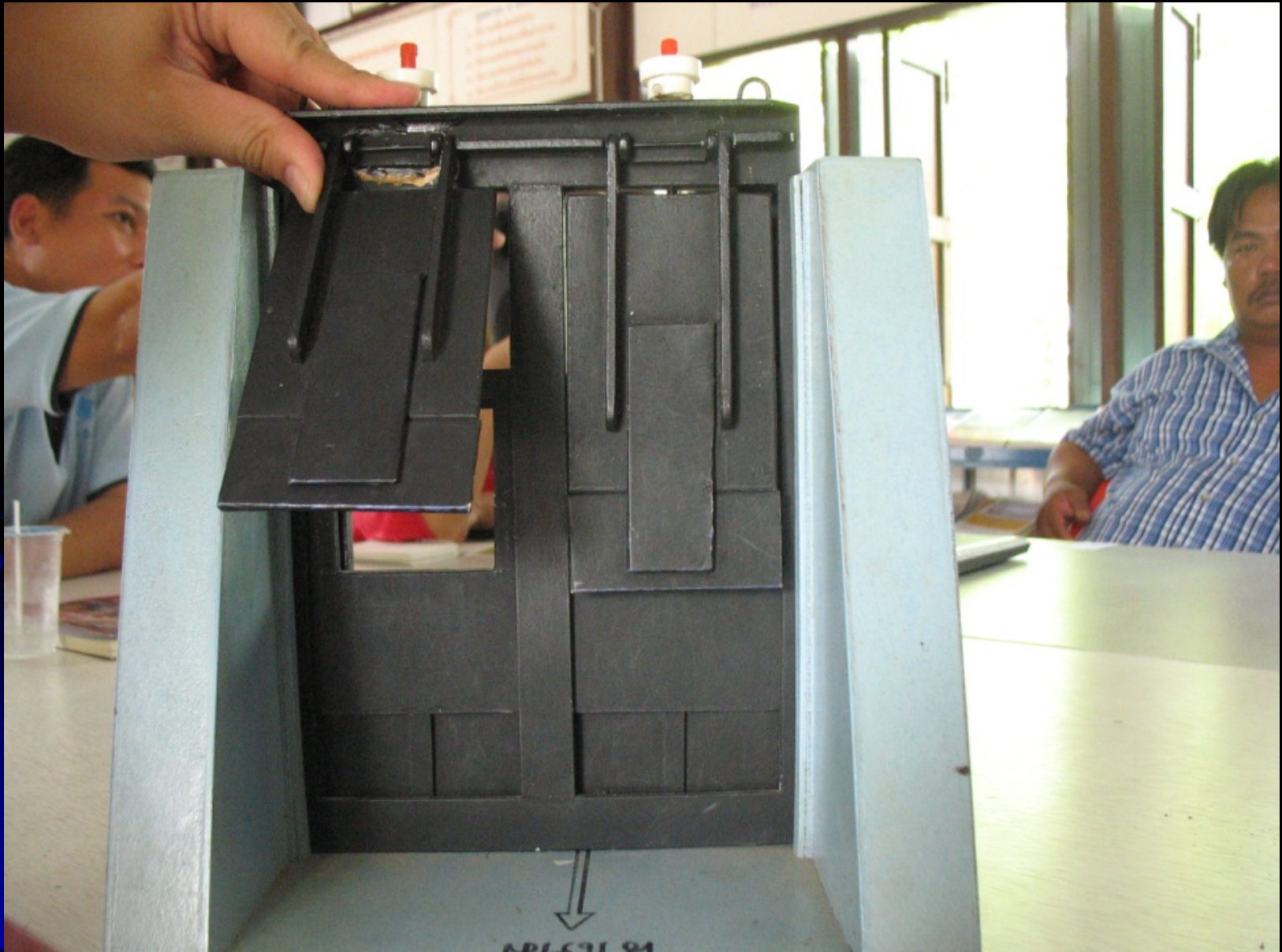
Shrimp farms



Community-Based Research



New dam design



Central helps local

- TRF provides:
 - Funds for community-based research
 - Technical assistance and capacity building, including direct support of Node Coordinators
- Community prepares proposal for CBR
 - Prak Nam Daeng took 2 years to develop proposal

Central resists local

- Experts at District and National level resist new design
 - Royal Irrigation Dept (RID) pushed politically to listen
 - Listen, then modify design → problems
 - Finally (3rd try), get the dam right.
- Community still feels that RID not listening
 - Parties arguing over copyright to dam design.

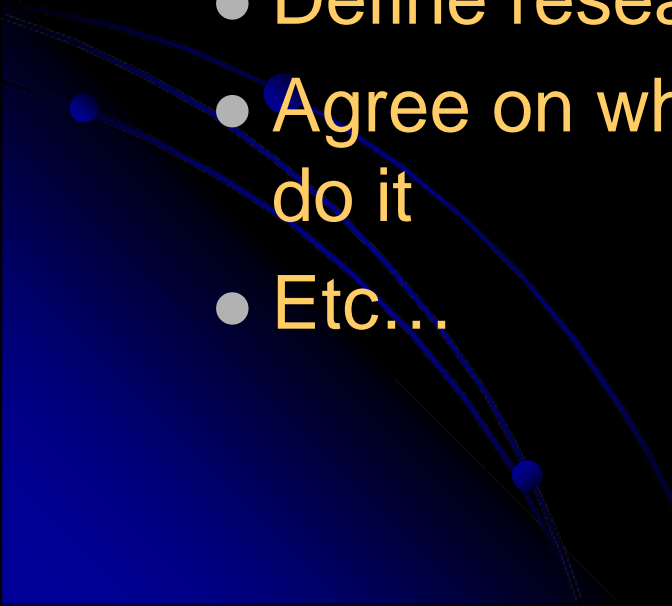
Why resist?

- Different perspectives and cultures
 - Experts: “general” places – e.g. river valley → dam
 - Local: “local” places, with less regional view
- Professional responsibility and pride
- Uncertainty:
 - What do we do when locals lead?



RID: engineers
alter design and
build

Solutions?

- Expand community-based research into joint fact-finding (JFF)
 - JFF = Stakeholders (government and non-government) seek knowledge together
 - Define research questions
 - Agree on who will do study and how they will do it
 - Etc...
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Summary

- Community-based research as reform
- Central-local interactions:
 - Central supporting local problem solving
 - Central resisting local problem solving
- Central resistance? Challenges include:
 - Different perspectives and cultures
 - Professional responsibility and pride
 - Uncertainty
- Possible solution: joint fact-finding?