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**Context and Genesis**

The role of technology and extension has been historically crucial in poverty reduction. These two remain as important concerns in sustainable agriculture and natural resources management. The process of stakeholders’ empowerment towards maximizing benefits from technological advances has become vital especially within a devolved extension system. Corollary to this is the need for strong local organizations to respond to these technological advances, a shift in organizational values as well as adapting to relatively new ways of doing things. Managing the socio-political process involved in knowledge transfer and utilization systems figure largely with an equally important role.

Community-based Participatory Extension Management (CBPEM) breeds out from the empowerment framework that is a central concept in development discourse and practice since the early 1990s. Since then empowerment has become a major purpose of social development. The literature on empowerment is ever growing. A range of meaning nevertheless points to a common context where empowerment is a process aimed at rebalancing the structure of power within society by making state action more accountable, as it strengthens the powers of civil society in the management of their own affairs (Friedmann 1992). As a concept, empowerment focuses on collective community, and ultimately class conscientization to critically understand reality and use inherent rights and powers towards transformation of their own communities (Craig and Mayo, 1995). These rights include the right to determine choices in life and to influence the direction of change, through ability to control over crucial material and non-material sources. It seeks to empower including women through the redistribution of power within as well as between societies (Moser 1991). It seeks to create an interactive and sharing approach to development in which people’s skills and knowledge are acknowledged. It has to do with positive change in an individual, community and from an structural dimension, organization and negotiation. Empowerment in its broadest sense is the expansion of freedom of choice and action. It must result to the expansion of assets and capabilities of farmers to participate in, negotiate with, influence, control and hold accountable institutions that affect their lives (World Bank 2002). For empowerment to be successful requires the presence of four key elements: access to information, social inclusion and participation in development, accountability, and local organizational capacity. These elements, which operate in synergy, are

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1 IFAD Supported Case Study
2 Institute of Community Education, College of Public Affairs, University of the Philippines, Los Banos, Philippines
important pre-conditions for social and economic development in the agriculture industry and its sustainability.

CBPEM is the result of long years (1988-present) of participatory action research of the staff of the Institute of Community Education, College of Public Affairs (ICE-CPAf) of the University of the Philippines Los Banos. It evolved as a participatory planning tool experienced in the fields of nutrition, local governance, health, education and finally evolved as an extension management approach not limited to planning function as earlier conceived, but all the way to participatory implementation, monitoring and evaluation, thus addressing the whole dimension of extension management function. This study is the result of a participatory action research funded by the Bureau of Agricultural Research of the Department of Agriculture Republic of the Philippines in collaboration with the ICE-CPAF, selected local government units and state colleges of agriculture in four (4) provinces of the country from 1999-2002. Participatory action research conducted involved important processes in a cycle of planning, action, observing, reflection and re-planning. It essentially involved relevant parties called stakeholders in actively examining together current practices in corn production, which they seemed problematic, and how extension and communication strategy could intervene to change them. The gains from the project are now being institutionalized at the local government units where extension functions were devolved to by virtue of Republic Act 6170 otherwise known as the Local Government Code of 1991.

Historical Antecedent of the CBPEM Approach

Mainstreaming community members through an understanding of the institutional arrangements, social, and political-economic processes governing grain production at the local government level, as well as preparing local actors to assume relatively new roles in participatory development are imperatives. Equipping the stakeholders with the appropriate approach or methodology, and the needed knowledge, skills and attitudes to help themselves could boost their confidence, and consequently increase their efficiency and effectiveness in involving themselves in R&D as well as in other activities that affect their lives.

This paper describes a participatory management extension methodology for stakeholders’ empowerment evolved through action research. It describes the methodology itself and its consequences and potentials in achieving the ultimate aim of the agriculture and fishery modernization in the Philippines as embodied in Republic 8435 known as Agriculture and Fishery Modernization Act (AFMA) such as poverty reduction, through people empowerment, capacity building, stakeholders participation, relevant extension program investments, institutional collaboration/linkages institutionalization of innovative mechanisms and their sustainability.

This extension management approach is focused on enhancing stakeholders’ participation in a devolved but pluralistic extension system being institutionalized and scaled up geographically nationwide in the Philippines. It is called Community-Based Participatory Extension.

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3 These faculty and staff were previously under the Department of Agricultural Education and Rural Studies, College of Agriculture, UP Los Banos until 1998 where a reorganization took place and established the Institute of Community Education under the College of Public Affairs, University of the Philippines Los Banos.

4 Management process involves three major functions: planning, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation.
Management (CBPEM). This is a key approach towards people empowerment, which enhances effectiveness, relevance and efficiency in management of devolved extension services. As an approach, it addresses the four requisites of people empowerment, namely: capacity building for stakeholders at the local government units (provincial, municipal and barangay levels) to undertake devolved extension functions; enhanced access to information; social inclusion and stakeholders’ participation in extension service management, and program ownership; and: governance and local accountability. It provides opportunities for local participation in the different phases of extension management, namely: community-based action planning utilizing participatory tools and techniques (situation and problem analysis, community mobilization and training), implementation of issue/need-based action plans, capacity building, establish institutional support linkages, and participatory monitoring and evaluation.

The Practice

The CBPEM Process
Guided by the principles of relevance, empowerment, peoples’ participation, capacity building, collaboration/networking, the CBPEM approach stands on seven (7) pillars forming its main strategies/processes which are:

- Community mobilization and building local capacity
- Community-based participatory action planning
- Legitimization of action plans
- Participatory implementation
- Participatory monitoring, review and evaluation
- Project Re-planning
- Facilitation

Community Mobilization and Building Local Capacity. The most important resource of any community is its human and social capital. Since most of social interactions take place within the context of a community’s social capital, its quality is of immense importance. Capacity building strategies address this need. Building local competency along the use of participatory tools and techniques ensures greater participation by the people in making decisions, understanding their own situations and crafting their own development strategies, opportunities for their own improvement and relationship building in the community. To prepare stakeholders for this, a training-workshop on community-based participatory planning (CBPP) is a must. This training consists of topics that include: team building (group dynamics), participatory rapid community appraisal (PARCA), livelihood analysis, stakeholders analysis, causal problem diagnosis (building causal models), identification of interventions, identification of development indicators, application of logical framework, and formulation of community action plans, Figure 1. While this training was intended to jumpstart community participation and create deeper awareness of the problems of their community, it also paved the way for closer interactions among farmers, researchers, extension workers, and other LGU representatives and private organizations. This was a pre-requisite to a substantive participatory action planning. Capacity building through exposure to other opportunities and alternative modes of and

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3 Human capital is defined as an individual’s productive skills, talents and knowledge which can be developed and nurtured in a broader organizational context, while social capital refers to the institutions, relationships and norms that shape the quality and quantity of the community’s social interactions.
practice/mechanisms towards enhancing overall agricultural production using other educational techniques were also undertaken on the identified areas where training was needed to beef up local capacity for program implementation.

Unique to this approach as employed in the project is the participation of various stakeholders (farmers, housewives, village officials, village organizations leaders, town officials, extension workers, financial institutions, representatives of government agencies working in the community, non-government organizations, local buyers/traders, processors, etc.). While different stakeholders have different objectives, there are times when these are complementary and at another, conflicting. However, they can have shared common understanding of the objectives and interests which can serve as a foundation towards building more relevant and thus, sustainable activity interventions and working relationships with one another in the community.

Community-Based Participatory Action Planning. A growing body of information indicate that involving various stakeholders into the design and implementation helps not only to produce more appropriate projects but they are better focused to reach those who are in most in need. Participatory planning is a main feature of the CBPEM. This process renders to stakeholders an opportunity to apply knowledge and skills learned from the training on participatory planning tools and techniques. It is a chance for them to facilitate their own discussions and analysis of perceived problems, identify interventions and indicators for success, prioritize activities, translate them into a logical framework, and prepare their own reports and visual aids for
presentation. The process is also an occasion for confidence building among the farmers as well as realization of their ownership of the Project.

**Legitimization of Action Plans.** Projects also require the input of some influential actors. With the assistance of the extension workers, outputs of the participatory planning workshop are translated into proposal for logistical support. Cost-sharing arrangements are emphasized. Only costs that they are not able to produce within their means but necessary for the accomplishments of defined objectives are packaged for funding by institutions outside the village level. Community-initiated proposal is first legitimized at the village level by its local executive and legislative bodies by way of resolution that endorses it for further support by the municipal LGU or other agencies and organizations. The implementation of problem-focused extension interventions, availability of support services including learning materials, training and close supervision of local extension officers remain critical in a sustainable extension system. Hence, the need to source support and integrate these activities into the annual investment plans of the municipality.

**Participatory Implementation.** Farmers, village officials, extension workers, agricultural college/university and other institutional agencies and institutions assume several roles in the implementation of the community actions plans. Among them include: formulating village-level resolutions to secure financial and material support to implement activities, submitting the resolutions and project proposals to funding agencies, defending the proposals when required, and following up with authorities the approval of their resolutions and proposals, participating and representing their sectors in meetings related to agriculture production at the municipal and provincial levels; coordinating the implementation of the projects, generating resources for their projects, and initiating the organization or re-establishment of cooperatives. The extension workers, on the other hand, assist and facilitate the processing of the village resolutions and project proposals and help defending them when necessary. Some of the farmers also served as resource persons to local training programs and to visitors who visited their project. They actively participated in the evaluation of the project implementation processes as well as the accomplishments. Having developed their confidence, it became easy for the farmers to articulate their concerns and what they think would be possible means to help themselves with solutions. In the implementation of the CDP, the linkage structure with the different agencies and institutions is illustrated in Figure 2.

**Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (PME).** PME provides a better understanding of their development and the role of the CBPEM as an approach to extension program management. Continuous monitoring and evaluation from program planning to implementation was undertaken primarily to meet the information needs of the participants and solve concrete problems they confront. Personnel from collaborating agencies such as local government units and state colleges and universities (SCUs) were trained by the Project on how to conduct process monitoring and focus group discussions prior to undertaking this activity. They also worked jointly with the UPLB-based research team in determining monitoring indicators and development of monitoring instruments.

The local people, led by the farmer-leaders and the village officials, were involved in collecting and analyzing information on social and economic conditions, on constraints affecting them,
their organizations and on the community as a whole. They also participated actively in the evaluation of project implementation processes as well as accomplishments led by the LGU extension workers.

Focus group discussions and brainstorming as tools were extensively used in gathering and processing information.

Figure 2. Linkage structure between and among agencies and organizations involved in the CBPEM project.

**Roles of Participating Institutions:**

Level 1: 1. Program leadership and coordination.
2. Training
3. Monitoring and evaluation (incl. process documentation)
Level 2:  
1. Assist UPLB in program coordination. 
2. Assist Level 3 in program planning and implementation 
3. Training 
4. Monitoring and evaluation 

Level 3: 
1. Leads in program planning and implementation. 
2. Decision-makers.

Project Review and Re-planning. One of the uniqueness the CBPEM approach is the year-end review and feedback on the implementation of their action plans. Instead of undergoing another lengthy and costly planning workshops, CBPEM re-planning is made more efficient. This provided iteration on issues, problems and constraints to be further addressed to ensure the success of their plans. This served as an opportunity for the extension workers, farmer-leaders and village officials who were trained on the planning tools and techniques to apply them. Re-planning could also be done more often e.g. quarterly or every six months, depending on the decision of the local leaders.

Group Facilitating. Under this approach, the role of extension workers is focused on facilitating which is aimed at helping stakeholders interact with each other, gain new information and build upon their experiences. They guide the farmers to reach their stated project goals on time by assisting them prepare the necessary documents i.e. feasibility studies, resolutions, etc., and linking them with appropriate agencies and authorities.

CBPEM Project Implementation
The implementation of the CBPEM project involved the following basic phases/steps:

1. Site Selection
   In selecting the project sites, certain criteria were used among which are: a corn-based farming area, one of the poorest communities in the municipality, peace and order situation, accessibility, and receptiveness of the local people. The project sites were selected with the assistance of the local officials, provincial and municipal agriculturists, and extension workers as they are the people most familiar with the profiles of the provinces, municipalities and villages.

2. Identification of Collaborating Institutions
   One of the significant factors contributing to effective and efficient implementation and sustainability of development gains is the involvement of local collaborating institutions that would be responsible in providing continuing support and facilitating assistance to the local people. This should be done at the onset of the project implementation to ensure their participation at all levels of the project cycle. The Office of the Municipal Agriculturist is a must as this is the agency in the LGU responsible for providing agriculture-related extension services. Another identified major institutional collaborator is the state agriculture college/university in the province as they are the ones responsible for providing training and research support to the local government units and responsible for project monitoring and evaluation under the Agriculture and Fishery Modernization Act (AFMA). The other agencies and institutions include those that are providing services and assistance in various forms to the farmers in the project sites involved i.e. financial institutions, national
government agencies, farmers’ cooperatives, local traders, non-government organizations, etc.

3. **Project Orientation with LGU Officials, Extension Workers and Collaborating Institutions**
   Critical to the success of the project is the degree by which the local officials and collaborating institutions have understood the project’s intentions. It will determine their dedication and commitment to support the project as they would play vital roles in various stages of project implementation. Hence, project orientation for the local officials and collaborating institutions is a must.

4. **Entry to the Community**
   Recognizing that the project emanates from outside the community, proper entry to the community which include courtesy calls and establishing rapport is significantly necessary to ensure their the local people’s cooperation and participation in the project implementation. The local officials and community leaders should have a thorough understanding of the project and its intentions. With the assistance of the major collaborating institutions

5. **Baseline Survey**
   This involves designing of the instrument, pre-testing, finalizing the survey instrument, and survey proper. The involvement of the major institutional collaborators and the local leaders in the survey process is part of the capability-building objective of the project to enable them to understand and analyze the local people’s needs and problems and make appropriate decisions later.

6. **Stakeholders’ Training on Community-Based Participatory Planning Using Participatory Tools and Techniques**
   A one-week training-workshop on the use of participatory tools and techniques in community-based program planning was conducted for the various stakeholders (local and institutional). The tools and techniques include: Participatory Rapid Community Appraisal (PARCA), Livelihood Analysis, Stakeholders Analysis, Causal Model Building, Intervention Identification and Prioritization, and Logical Framework Preparation. The local stakeholders (farmer-leaders, village officials, youth leaders, housewives, farmers’ organization officers) and the institutional stakeholders helped one another in gathering, organizing and analyzing the information, needs and problems of the community and coming up with relevant and appropriate interventions.

7. **Community-Based Participatory Action Planning**
   The output of the one-week training on the participatory tools and techniques was a community-based action plan organized into a matrix specifying the key people and institutions responsible for the implementation of specific projects and activities, the sources of funds for each project and activity, the date of implementation, the specific implementation activities, the indicators of success, the monitoring and evaluation techniques to be used, the sources of information and the people or institution in-charge of the monitoring and evaluation.
8. **Legitimization of the Community-Based Action Plan at the Village and Municipal Level**

After the CBAP had been packaged, the plan was presented to the other village officials, other farmer leaders and to the village people for validation and legitimization. This is necessary to ensure that the community people fully understand their situation and the interventions needed to address the identified needs and problems so that they can cooperate, support and participate actively in the implementation of the projects and activities.

9. **Implementation of the Community-Based Action Plan**

The village officials and the farmer-leaders took the lead role in the implementation of the CBAP with the assistance and facilitation of the extension workers assigned in the village.

10. **Continuous Local Capability Building**

Continuing trainings were conducted on the training needs identified during the action planning that would enhance their capability to accelerate the improvement of their farm productivity and well-being as well as ensure its sustainability. Unexpectedly, only four (4) training areas were identified and found common in all project sites. These were: Cooperatives and Cooperatives Management, Integrated Farming Systems, Postharvest Technologies, and Enterprise Development. The on-site trainings were supplemented by visits to successful projects in other parts of the country to further encourage and motivate the farmers and village officials to act vigorously for their own development. Mentoring and technical assistance in various forms were also provided by the extension workers, local college/university staff, and UPLB staff during visits to the project sites.

11. **Linkaging the Local People with Government and Non-Government Institutions**

The local people and organizations can not do so much unless they are linked with other external institutions providing information, funding support and technical assistance and other forms of support. With the assistance and facilitation of the extension workers, the farmers and the village officials were linked with appropriate agencies and institutions. Having developed their confidence to articulate their needs and problems during the initial stages of the project life, the farmers and the village officials took the lead role in presenting their needs to the agencies and institutions concerned and following-up those matters later.

12. **Process Monitoring and Documentation**

Taking the lead in the documentation and monitoring of the processes involved in the implementation of the CBAP was the state college/university in the province with the assistance of the municipal agriculture office and the village officials and farmer-leaders. Focus group discussion was the primary tool used in the documentation and monitoring undertaking. Such tool encouraged the stakeholders, particularly the local leaders, to articulate their ideas freely and participate actively in the brainstorming of the issues and concerns experienced. In the process, confidence, mutual support, trust and commitment were developed.

13. **Action Plan Review and Re-Planning**

Reviewing the action plan once or twice a year keeps the implementation of the projects and activities on tract. The village officials and the farmer-leaders had the opportunity to discuss the status of the project’s implementation and make new plans when the need arises. This
process makes planning more efficient as it could be done in half a day at the least or one day at the most.

Table 1. Community processes, tools and techniques in community-based participatory extension management (CBPEM)

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<th>Community Process</th>
<th>Activity Intervention</th>
<th>Participatory Tools and Techniques</th>
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<tr>
<td>Community Mobilization and Building Local Capacity</td>
<td>Training</td>
<td>Group dynamics, PARCA, Livelihood analysis, stakeholder analysis, Causal Model, identification of interventions, indicators and prioritization, logical framework,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community-based Participatory Action Planning</td>
<td>Participatory planning</td>
<td>Application of above mentioned tools and techniques</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Legitimization</td>
<td>Barangay and municipal resolutions adopting/indicating ownership of the proposals and endorsement of proposals for funding</td>
<td>Confirmation by local legislative body</td>
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<tr>
<td>Participatory Implementation</td>
<td>Meetings, and follow-up</td>
<td>Process Monitoring and Evaluation, focus group discussion, cross project visits, training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
<td>Frequent consultation Site visits Project review and re-planning</td>
<td>Process Documentation, Participatory monitoring and evaluation, FGD,</td>
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Social, Economic and Institutional Context

*Policy Environment of Philippine Extension System*
Agriculture Extension in the country is a decentralized (devolved) system operating along a centralized research system together with multiple stakeholders to include, local government units, national government agencies, state colleges and universities, NGOs and other private sectors. In the Philippines, RA 7160 or the Local Government Code of 1991 and RA 8435 known as the Agriculture and Fishery Modernization Act (AFMA) of 1997 are two major policy instruments that have affected governance in agricultural extension.
The Local Government Code decentralized the management of extension programs of the country, and pushed in effect the devolution of agricultural extension functions to local government units (LGUs). The Code empowered LGUs to plan and administer extension services, undertake on-farm verification trials to ensure appropriateness of technology to local agro-ecological settings, raise revenues, and access resources from the central agencies to the provincial, municipal, and barangay (village) levels in support of all extension-related initiatives. These devolved functions require relatively new set of competency and skills among devolved extension workers. Where and when these skills are wanting, the implementation of extension activities could either be limited if not nil.

AFMA was enacted to pursue national agriculture and fishery modernization objectives, namely: poverty alleviation and social equity; food security; rational use of resources; global competitiveness; sustainable development; people empowerment; and protection from unfair competition. Extension is expected to accelerate the realization of these policy goals of AFMA, through the provision/delivery of the following agriculture and fishery extension services to Filipino farmers and fishers:

1. Training services;
2. Farm or business advisory services;
3. Demonstration services; and
4. Information and communication services through tri-media.

The passage of the AFMA in 1997 further positioned extension in a pivotal role towards accelerating the transformation of Philippine agriculture and fisheries from a resource-based to a technology-based industry. Under Rule 921, the extension functions of the Department of Agriculture (DA) have been delegated to regional field units and the Agricultural Training Institute (ATI) training centers. These design and implement agricultural training programs that are consistent and functionally integrated with the agriculture and fisheries development strategy and program of the region.

The law also delineates the roles of various extension providers. For instance, government agencies such as the DA, together with state colleges and universities (SCUs), shall assist the LGUs’ extension systems by improving their effectiveness and efficiency through capability-building and complementary extension services (Section 9) in the forms of: a) technical assistance; b) training of LGU extension personnel; c) improvement of physical facilities; d) extension cum research; and e) information support services.

Likewise, under the AFMA (Section 90), the SCUs are mandated to “primarily focus on the improvement of the capability of extension service” by providing/undertaking: a) degree and non-degree training programs; b) technical assistance; c) extension cum research activities; d) monitoring and evaluation of LGU extension projects; and e) information support services through tri-media and electronics.

AFMA further emphasizes the role of the private sector by encouraging the participation of farmers and fisherfolk cooperatives and associations in certain extension services like
community organizing, skills training in agribusiness and management, popularization of training materials, promotion of regenerative agricultural technologies, and the use of participatory approaches. A year later, in 1998, the Fisheries Code (RA 8550) was passed to provide for the development, management and conservation of the fisheries and aquatic resources including the creation of Fisheries and Aquatic Resources Management Council (FARMC).

**Problems/Issues that Gave Rise to CBPEM**
Issues related to policy, program thrusts, organizational structure, operation/implementation, human resources and fiscal resources as a consequence of the transition from centralized to decentralized (devolved) system propelled the search for appropriate mechanisms/procedures that met the requirements of the local government code of 1991 and AFMA.

**Main Stakeholders Involved**
The major players include the (a) agricultural research and development institutions, (b) bureaus/attached agencies/institutes/councils of the Dept. of Agriculture (DA), Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR), Department of Land Reform (DLR), Department of Science and Technology (DOST), (c) Local Government Units, (d) State Colleges and Universities, (e) civil society organizations (CSO) (e.g., NGOs, POs, farmers organizations), (e) banks, private agri-business companies and other micro-finance institutions, and (f) local residents.

**Main Activities Undertaken**
The main activities undertaken prior to the institutionalization and scaling up include:

a) Piloting the CBPEM approach in four regions (Regions 10, 4, 2 and 1), 4 provinces (Misamis Oriental, Oriental Mindoro, Ilocos Norte and Ilagan), 8 municipalities and 16 barangays (hamlets)/villages all over the country (Yr: 2000-2003);

b) Local capacity building on the tools to implement CBPEM approach in preparation for scaling up (Yr: 2003-2004);

c) Institutionalization and scaling-up the CBPEM into the national network of DA-ATI, and the League of Provincial and City Agriculturists (LGUs) and the regional R and D consortia of the national agricultural research system (NARS) under the DOST; institutionalizing at a province wide scheme in Ilocos Norte (case project); monitoring and evaluation.

**Objective of Institutionalization:**
For the institutionalization and scaling-up, arrangements were made with the DA-Agriculture Training Institute and the National Corn Network. The aim of institutionalization was to:

a) Influence the management of devolved extension service by strategically training first the local trainers and extension managers,

b) Strengthen the network of stakeholders

**Support Activities to Ensure Sustainability:**

a) Develop a CBPEM field guide/manual for extension managers,

b) National coordination, monitoring and evaluation of the process of downloading the approach to the LGUs (provincial and municipal). This is a continuing activity spearheaded
by the ICE-CPAf basically to document the process of institutionalization with focus on understanding and identifying the constraints related to institutionalization and scaling-up. This could shed light on the issues confronting many unsustainable project gains from once acclaimed innovative approaches or the disappearance of innovations which had been successful during active implementation. The government had spent a lot of resources on training personnel at various levels of the extension hierarchy, but what happens after that huge amounts are invested to institutionalize the CBPEM at the devolved extension system under the local government units.

**Strategy for Institutionalization and Scaling-up.**

The grand plan was:

a) Train a core group of regional trainers on CBPEM who in turn trained core provincial trainers. This was undertaken in October 2004. An output was a re-entry plan on provincial trainers’ training.

b) The Philippine Association of Provincial and City Agriculturists (PAPCA) will spearhead the training of the core group of provincial trainers. An output would be a re-entry plan for municipal core group of trainers.

c) Trained provincial trainers will in turn train a core planning group in every municipality to include a multi-stakeholder group consisting LGU officials.

d) A national process monitoring and evaluation team will be organized to capture constraints, problems and lessons in institutionalization and scaling-up of innovative ideas.

**Modalities of Institutionalization and Scaling-Up**

The issue of institutionalization is significant to the country more than any other time owing to the multiple research and extension providers operating, and where the LGU is at the forefront of extension. With the LGUs having the mandate to directly link with farmers in technology dissemination, it becomes even more relevant especially to understand the phenomenon due to issues on strategies for scaling-up (additive/multiplicative/diffusive), on different types of program expansion (geographical/horizontal/vertical), and on different approaches (scaling-up via working with national or local governments or NGOs/ via operational expansion/ lobbying or advocacy/ by supporting local initiative) especially its desirability, implications and management requirements. As innovative approaches have been evolved through collaborative efforts, adopted and experiences shared, much has been learnt about trade-offs, which are inevitable during organizational growth and the types of structures that can best accommodate expansion. Amidst all changes (e.g. structural, administrative and technical), linkage mechanisms will always play important roles in institutional adaptation. Among these may include structures that are decentralized, task-oriented and transparent, and address critical issues including institutionalizing accountability to beneficiaries, managing relations with other government and nongovernmental institutions and improving internal monitoring and evaluation systems.

Institutionalization and scaling-up was pursued under two modalities from national to the local government units as follows:

a) Nationwide in scope-central to local (provincial to municipal)

b) Local in scope -Provincial to municipal
Model 1: Nationwide in Scope-Central to Local.
This modality is initiated at the national level (DA-ATI) aptly described as following a top-down bureaucratic hierarchical mode of institutionalization. Scaling up was getting the CBPEM institutionalized following the hierarchal, bureaucratic and geographical expansion from the national down to the local government units. Guided by AFMA’s stipulated roles of multiple extension providers/institutions, the process starts with the institutional acceptability of the Approach by these providers coupled by their willingness to institutionalize it as part of their routine extension management scheme by putting resources for the implementation of the Regional/provincial/municipal re-entry plans on training of their personnel. The contents and process of the capacity building phase of the approach followed what is illustrated in Figure 1. It made use of the existing personnel of the hierarchy.

Model 2: Devolved Extension Local-Provincial to Municipal.
A case in point is the Province of Ilocos Norte in Northern Philippines. The province initiated this modality with support from my Team from the University. It started with a capacity building for a core group of trainers at the provincial level. The contents and process of the capacity building phase of the approach also followed what is illustrated in Figure 1. The provincial government committed P3.5M to pursue the institutionalization of the approach specifically training of municipal trainers and the municipal extension re-entry plans of trained staff. The amount covered the salaries of 23 recruited full time extension technicians (one technician from the province to support the existing devolved municipal extension workers). These were assigned specifically to facilitate and monitor the institutionalization of the CBPEM process.
Table 2. Comparison of the Two Modalities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rate of Institutionalization</td>
<td>Slow</td>
<td>Fast; Province had trained technicians from the 23 municipalities; had organized the province according to agro-ecological production zones; determined priority commodity assignment by zone; since this allows production of commodities in larger volumes, market matching is now underway. priority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implementation of re-entry plans</td>
<td>Slow</td>
<td>Fast; Province had trained technicians from the 23 municipalities; had organized the province according to agro-ecological production zones; determined priority commodity assignment by zone; since this allows production of commodities in larger volumes, market matching is now underway. priority</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Source of support</td>
<td>National support is nil; Dependent on Local Gov’t collaboration</td>
<td>Local Gov’t</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Projects implemented</td>
<td>Slow and low</td>
<td>Problem-Focused; Relevant</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems encountered in the institutionalization and scaling –up of CBPEM</td>
<td>Limited government funds. Conflicts in national and regional priorities affecting allocation of resources, hence slow implementation of re-entry plans; Availability of funds from different donor outside government determined what takes priority for implementation in the regions even if that is not perceived priority of program of the region.</td>
<td>Resource commitment of some municipalities especially marginal ones is foreseen as problem; However, to date 50-75% of the local chief executives have already committed some funds. The province will financially assist municipalities hard-up to put up the counterpart funding for local activities.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Resources Required
To insure the sustainability of the approach, resources are required to meet the cost of the following activities:

a) Fulltime staff closely monitoring activities until they become regular or part of the normal routine of the organization such as the LGU.
b) Printed extension materials for awareness raising
c) Training to enhance competency in using planning tools and techniques.
d) Meetings and continuing dialogues
e) Resources to prime initial activities, if ever.

Main Target Groups
The main users of the CBPEM Approach are the devolved extension systems and their local partner institutions. However, the approach has a rather diverse application especially in participatory development projects.
Why was it Considered Successful

The most significant act of institutionalization being undertaken now is the transfer of this technology from UPLB research to the Agricultural Training Institute of the Department of Agriculture which has the national mandate to train extension workers and farmers at the local government units. This is in fulfillment of UPLB’s role as a trailblazer in CBPEM technology. The approach is being adopted by several institutions. Some of them include:

a) Department of Agriculture-Agricultural Training Institute Regional Training Centers,

b) Local Government Units (whole province of 23 municipalities in the province of Ilocos Norte, to be implemented in one municipality in the province of Aklan, selected municipalities in the Cordillera Administrative Region, Barcenaga, Mindoro, ),

c) National Agricultural Research System (NARS) consortia particularly Regions II and V under the TecnoGabay Program, and the

d) Leyte State University. The leadership has already expressed support to implement program using the approach within the Quarter.

The CBPEM has been chosen as one of the focuses of a Regional case study chosen/funded by UNESCO to illustrate project experience and its contribution to rural learning and development in Southeast Asia. It was screened from numerous projects in Southeast Asia that was presented initially in Japan. Others came from Indonesia, Thailand, Malaysia, and China.

Project activities where the CBPEM was used was awarded as 2001 UPLB Outstanding Extension Project. The Program Leader (Dr. Virginia R.Cardenas) was awarded 2002 UPLB Most Outstanding Extension Professional.

Evaluation of Benefits

The evaluation of benefits was coursed through Participatory Action Research using both qualitative and quantitative techniques. The impacts of the CBPEM at the farm, individual farmer, and community levels are presented in Figures 3-5.. The problems encountered are described in Table 1.
Figure 3. Causal chain analysis of benefits at the individual level.
Improved community life

- Farmers’ realization of the importance of organizational effort that led to coop strengthening or revitalization

Improved infrastructure facilities, FMR, bridges, PHF, irrigation

- Increased number of farmers using quality corn seeds & variety

- Community realization for common direction and action

- Enhanced interaction/teamwork of community & institutional stakeholders

- Community realization of the value of empowerment

- Utilization of the CBPEM Approach

Figure 4. Causal chain analysis of benefits and the community level.

Enhanced institutional services delivery system

- Enhanced local extension practitioners’ extension function

- Promotion of positive attitudes of LGUs towards participatory extension planning, implementation & evaluation

- Extension personnel’s services made more effective & efficient: more project achievements & higher performance level

- Enhanced interaction/teamwork between Municipal Agriculture Office & other agencies

- Utilization of the CBPEM Approach

Figure 5. Causal chain analysis of benefits at the institutional level.
Key Driving Forces
The need to respond to the changing objectives of agriculture development beyond increasing production; Responding to the search for a framework or approach to operationalize the concept of people empowerment enshrined or mandated by the local government code of 1991 (Republic Act 7160); the demands towards participatory and sustainable development.

Opportunities for Scaling-Up:
Scaling-up is highly plausible as long as resources and political will are strong. The role of a champion could not be gainsaid.

References


Context and Genesis

The University of the Philippines Los Baños is known as a premier higher educational and research institution in agriculture and natural resources in the country and in the Southeast Asia-Pacific region. It also hosts to two international institutions devoted to research and graduate study: the International Rice Research Institute (IRRI) and the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organization (SEAMEO) Regional Center for Graduate Study and Research in Agriculture (SEARCA).

As an integrated campus, it offers degree and research programs that have extended from the traditional fields of agriculture and forestry to the biological and environmental sciences, engineering, mathematics, computer science, and information technology.

The case study draws heavily on my experience as a woman researcher in farming systems and my observation on women in agricultural science. I tried to explore some of the challenges and prospects involving heightened participation of Filipino women to produce gender sensitive research and development in farming systems.

Locating Women in Agricultural Research and Development

Women as Technology Providers (Researchers)
A number of research projects in the country can be considered under the heading of post-green revolution in agriculture and implemented by research-based institutions or scientists of government institutions and research agencies.

Filipino women directly participate in agricultural R&D as scientists and educators/academics (Researchers) or as users (“Researched”). A study conducted by ISNAR (1995) reflects such categories in focusing women in agricultural science. According to the Report, the country “has one of the highest rates of participation of women in agricultural science and will constitute a growing proportion of professional staff in agricultural research organizations in many developing countries over the next decade” (ISNAR Research Report No. 7, 1995). In the U.P.

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6 IFAD Supported Case Study
7 University of the Philippines, Los Banos, Philippines
Agricultural research for the past two decades, focused on improving technology to increase productivity or on enhancing the productivity of farmers from on-station centers to farmers’ fields. Emerging now on the research agenda is agricultural biotechnology. Biotechnology researches have covered the areas of plant biotechnology (26%), biological control (16%), foods and beverages (13%) and bio-fertilizers (11%). Specific researches include technology breakthroughs in agricultural engineering, plant and animal breeding, horticulture, agronomy and veterinary medicine. In these various fields, the scientists involved carry out experiments under controlled on-station or laboratory conditions and belatedly, at the farmers’ field only after the technology had been developed.

**Women as Technology Users (Researched)**

Undoubtedly, women participate immensely in improving food supplies to food production, either for household consumption or to be sold in the market. Women like men participate in all stages of the production cycle starting from pre-transplanting activities to planting, weeding and harvesting to post-harvest practices. In an effort to lessen the burden of these activities, technologies are being designed, developed and commercially produced for women. Technologies like rice micro mill, rice hull stoves and rice flourmill developed by IRRI and PhilRice were found to be time-saving and able to minimize the drudgery of these activities. Studies have also documented cases wherein men have taken over women’s activities because of the introduction of some technologies thus, depriving women of income from these activities (Dayo, 1997). For over 20 years, most research extension efforts have been on ways to increase the participation of women, their contribution in agriculture, but not much attention had been given to benefits that resulted from their participation (Castillo, 1987).

**Addressing Gender Issues as Academic Concerns: The Case of the UPLB-Gender Program for Rural Development**

**The Program and Project Contexts**

In 1990, a core group of researchers and faculty of the UP Los Baños doing women/gender related studies convened to study the creation of a program that will address gender concerns in the University’s academic curricula, research and extension programs (Figure 1). Soon after a number of meetings and seminars, the U.P. Los Baños Gender Program for Rural Development (UPLB-GPRD) was created as an inter- and multidisciplinary unit in the University. It was not until 1991 that the GPRD got its financial support from the Basic Research Trust Fund, when it began its review of the women-focused research projects in agriculture and natural resources done by the University’s students, researchers and faculty.
From the eight UPLB research and faculty that constituted the GPRD Core Group from five colleges with varied discipline as: development Studies, sociology, home technology, economics, development communication and library science, the group made considerable progress in increasing its membership from various disciplines and colleges by invitation. The result is a mixed group of professionals (women and men) in statistics, economics, engineering, plant breeding, veterinary medicine, crop protection, history and political science. Until more recently, it has grown to 35 women and 9 men professionals from nine colleges. Among the Program’s strategies is to combine gender sensitivity orientation by institution and by sector, and actively engage researchers, faculty, medical and police officers in committee works. In line with its commitment to create and sharpen awareness of gender issues in the University and to integrate gender-related issues in rural development, GPRD has provided a multi-and/inter-disciplinary program within the University for gender-related activities in research and extension, as well as in policy and advocacy.
To address gender issues and concerns in agriculture and natural resources, the GPRD deliberately and systematically exerted efforts to involve professionals pushing for and supporting gender-sensitive research and development. It also embarked on gender sensitive seminars/trainings to raise the awareness of the researchers, extension staff and faculty in addressing gender issues in various programs and projects in agriculture and natural resources in programs and projects. All these efforts were done with the support of the National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW), a government agency mandated to establish mechanisms and structures that would help institutionalize gender and development in the Philippines.
The Practice

The UPLB-GPRD was formally created in August 1991. It aims to integrate, assess, and document gender issues and concerns in the University’s academic curricula, research and extension programs. To pursue these objectives, four working committees were instituted, 1) Research; 2) Advocacy and Extension; 3) Instruction; and 4) Publication. Members of the committees come from the different colleges and research institutions.

Research

In its early years, results of researches conducted by members served (and are still serving) as vehicles for GPRD’s advocacy and extension program. This is to mainstream gender concerns and issues in research, instruction and extension, thus in supporting the tripartite functions of the University.

To date, more than a dozen research projects initiated by members in various disciplines have been completed. Important projects have been funded by the 1) National Commission on the Role of Filipino Women (NCRFW), 2) Center for Institutional Development Strategies of the University of the Philippines, 3) Foundation for Philippine Environment (FPE), from the University Center for Women Studies (UCWS) and 5) UPLB Basic Research Funds. Other researches with gender concerns have also conducted by GPRD members in conjunction with their respective academic units.

From the studies funded by NCRFW, seven training manuals and its accompanying video materials have been generated. These materials are now being used by government training institutes in agriculture, forestry and natural resources as part of their mainstreaming strategy. A
The strong and diverse academic preparation of the GPRD members have made them an important resource for international and national research institutions like International Livestock and Research Institute (ILRI), the Philippine Council for Agricultural resources Research and Development (PCARRD) and the Department of Agriculture (DA) to push for gender-responsive research and extension activities.

**Advocacy and Extension**

GPRD has organized various workshops, seminars and training activities either as sponsor and/or co-sponsor. In its early years, these activities basically aimed at sensitizing the UPLB constituents on gender issues and concerns in research, extension and instruction. This gradually turned to capacity building for researchers, extension workers and faculty teaching staff on how gender issues and concerns may be integrated in the tripartite functions of the University.

GPRD members were also often requested as resource persons by student organizations in campus as well as national and international organizations including the DA- Regional Field Units, Local government units, Department of Environment and Natural Resources(DENR), NGOs and even participant- trainees from other South Asian countries.

Further, GPRD was the first unit of the UP System that instituted Women’s Crisis Counseling Service (WCCS) attached to a health service unit on March 11, 1998. This provides counseling to victims of sexual abuse and harassment. Although its initial mandate was to receive only UPLB constituents, the lack of similar facilities outside the University compelled it to accept others outside UPLB.

**Instruction**

The UCWS, a UP system coordinating unit, recognized the challenge of integrating gender perspective in the curriculum particularly in the field of science and technology. In 1998, it initiated a workshop that brought together faculty in the UP System whose fields varied from social sciences, mathematics, to agricultural science and biology to acquaint the faculty on gender sensitivity and gender responsive teaching methodologies.

To introduce GAD in the curriculum would count on the support and participation of women and men faculty as well as the University administration. GPRD relied on the social capital of its members to influence the administrator and believe on pursuing a gender-responsive University. To ensure the gender responsiveness in teaching, the Program, led by the Office of Anti-Sexual Harassment has been regularly conducting orientation on gender sensitivity and advocacy against sexual harassment in campus for incoming freshmen students.

**Publication**

The program has produced various audio-visual and print outputs through internal and external funding. These include 1) a book written by GPRD members about the women and men who were challenged by their lived realities as students, teachers, researchers and activists, 2) training manuals for the use of NGO partners, 3) seven training booklets with accompanying video tapes.
for government training institutions in agriculture, fishery and forestry; 4) monographs of case studies for gender sensitivity, gender analysis, and gender responsive planning; and 5) numerous articles in journals and newsletters.

Assessment and Impacts

Key Partner and Collaborator in Mainstreaming Gender to National Concerns
Ever since GPRD embarked on gender mainstreaming, it has become a key partner in providing technical assistance to government agencies as well as a collaborator in developing case materials for gender sensitivity, gender analysis and gender responsive planning. With the NCRFW’s commitment to develop gender expertise in the academe, GPRD has actively provided technical assistance to government and non-government agencies and support in producing gender training materials in agriculture and natural resources.

Effectivity as Measured by Research Utilization
The GPRD members, through their initial and continuing researches, have made a strong impact on the University’s as well as on the Philippine agricultural research and development. Their present venture into two major GAD concerns – impact assessment and gender disaggregation of economic activities (?) – are indications of their ‘maturing’ concept of gender research and on the growing appreciation for the relevance, utility, and impact of gender concerns in R&D. The present researches are focusing on these two areas:

- Impact assessment of agricultural technologies for production and processing of selected agricultural commodities being promoted under the agricultural modernization program of the government;
- Gender disaggregation in the structure of the micro- and meso-economies which are arising from the adoption of these technologies, with emphasis on the effects on income and wages, and employment patterns.

To concretize the mainstreaming of gender in R&D, research results should be transformed into action, specifically into solutions that will address the identified issues and concerns of the researched. Assessment of the value of gender analysis in agricultural technologies will not only provide direction to the implementation of GAD concerns in modernizing agriculture, but also on the role that the program will continue to play in promoting a gender-responsive University.

Sustainability through the Proper Selection of Membership and Leadership
In the last three years, the GPRD had not been spared from University politics, with the administration unilaterally choosing the membership and leadership, thus totally disregarding the group’s history, tradition, and spirit of commitment.

Being one of the eight core group members who first constituted the UPLB-GPRD, I feel that the GPRD urgently needs to play a central role in convincing the administration to integrate the program in the tri functions of the University - in research, instruction and extension - as mandated in Executive Order No. 8, Series 1991. As a premier University, the administration must be encouraged to recognize the contributions of its R&D staff in rural development, especially where gender concerns are integral parts.
Opportunities for Mainstreaming and Scaling-Up

Of the several factors that made GPRD dynamic, three are of utmost importance: membership, support of government agencies, and group cohesion.

Membership.  
From its inception in 1990 until 2002, the GPRD earned respect for its highly qualified, deeply committed, and excellent members and leaders. They were not only recognized for their expertise in their respective fields, but were also known for their commitment and advocacy for gender-related issues. They were firm believers and practitioners – combining theories with praxis. Hence, they were particularly effective in carrying out GAD trainings and projects both inside and outside the University. The research outputs they generated through the years have been considered in the implementation of government GAD mainstreaming projects. Commitment comes from within each member and cannot be imposed by virtue of being assigned as member or leader by a higher authority.

Support of Government Organizations.  
From the start, GPRD sought the assistance of government organizations, especially the NCRFW. It also had the support of the UP System’s University Center for Women Studies (UCWS), which facilitated research on impact of technologies on gender, collaborated on the conduct of engendering the curriculum, facilitated the commitment of resources by government and international organizations like CIDA, and enhanced collaboration with NGO/PO partners.

Group Cohesion.  
The early accomplishments of GPRD can also attributed to the strong personal and professional relationships of the members. Despite divergent backgrounds and specializations, ideologies, values, and perspectives, they were bound together by a strong belief in the advocacy for GPRD. Hence, they complemented each others’ strengths and knowledge in the then emerging field of gender advocacy in the Philippine context. Despite the initial shortcomings in funding, institutional support, and even the lack of general understanding and support for their activities in the academe, they worked as teams to make simple headways during the birthing years of GPRD as well as in accomplishing major breakthroughs in later years.

Looking into the Future

The UPLB-GPRD has made inroads in developing training materials for gender sensitivity orientation, gender analysis, and gender responsive planning for GO/NGO partners, and in conducting R&D on the impact of agricultural technologies on women and gender relations. However, it must continue to advocate for the integration of gender concerns on the tri-functions of the University, especially on its R&D efforts.

This can be done by supporting the program in terms of encouraging a more dynamic involvement of faculty and researchers towards a gender responsive R&D; integrating gender perspectives in the curriculum; ensuring sustainable funding and incentives (including recognition) for gender-oriented R&D efforts; institutionalizing capability-building in gender
advocacy and gender-aware policies; and instituting policies supportive to the practice and pursuit of gender-related programs in instruction, research and extension. The ultimate aim of the program after all is to transform a premier R&D University into a gender-sensitive and responsive institution. This is because despite the S&T policy of the government on building a competitive edge in industrial and agricultural technology, and the vital role of gender-responsive R&D in promoting equity and social justice especially for the rural poor, a well-articulated gender agenda must still be defined, supported and sustained.

References

Castillo, G. 1987. Women in rice farming systems research/action research program? An operational research and training program. International Rice Research Institute

Title of Best Practice: Private Sector Participation in Farm Advisory Services. A Sri Lankan Experience

Country: Sri Lanka

Authors: N.F.C.Ranaweera and P.B.Jayamanne

Category of Practice: Privatization of support services to agriculture

Context and Genesis

One of the major objectives in Agricultural Development is the provision of adequate food for the population by the farming community, increasing farmer incomes, improving their livelihood and collectively alleviating the poverty among the rural population. This involves the transition from a low-productivity subsistence-farming situation to increasing productivity, based on comparative advantage and trading of surpluses in the market. Small farmers must produce a sufficient range of competitively priced outputs in the right quantity and quality at the right time. At present Sri Lanka has not met these situations and the challenge is to revitalize the agriculture sector.

Many players are involved in the process of development among which Agricultural Extension plays a major role. The Extension system facilitates the provision of new technologies, coordinate input supplies and secure markets for the produce. To perform these tasks, the Extension system – need not be exclusively a public good. The private and NGO sectors too could participate in this endeavor and effectively provide the service. As such Agricultural extension is a medium to long-term investment in the same way as education and research and the investment of domestic and external resources is fully justified.

In today’s context, agricultural extension is increasingly being viewed more as facilitation rather than merely a technological transfer process. It is viewed as a means of reducing poverty, social inequalities and encouraging the judicious use and sustainability of natural resources. As such in the current environment rather than have a single extension system, different institutions can play a role, particularly the private sector, which could be involved to support this advisory effort.

Centralized and standardized national extension systems do not provide satisfactory results. The wide range of social environments, economic contexts, agro-ecological conditions and many different types of crops have produced a varied mix of farms and as such no single approach or organization fits all. To be effective, extension must be able to address change and must be flexible to respond to new situations.

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8 IFAD Supported Case Study  
9 Chairman, Policy Developments Consultants (Pvt) Ltd., 124 Chilaw Road Kattuwa, Negombo Sri Lanka  
10 Head, Pilot Project Monitoring Unit, Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock, Colombo, Sri Lanka
The Setting
The agriculture sector in Sri Lanka which includes food crop agriculture, forestry and fishing contributes 20 percent to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP, contributing 20 percent of exports and provides employment for 38 percent. 65 percent of the population live in rural areas and dependent largely on agriculture for their livelihood. Growth of the agricultural sector has been modest in recent years and in 2002 this sector recorded a growth rate of 2.5 per cent compared with a 3.4 per cent decline in the previous year contributing only 6.1 per cent to the growth in the GNP. (Central Bank Report, 2002). The total area under cultivation is approximately 2.25 million ha divided roughly between annual crops and perennial crops with major crops being paddy, tea, coconut and rubber.

At present in Sri Lanka the Agricultural Extension System is essentially a public sector and centralized activity and to support the extension system, research, education and media all play a vital role. It is relatively ineffective and does not provide quality services to the farmer, on a timely basis and not able to access new technologies. The stagnation of yields for most crops cultivated by farmers can be partly attributed to this lack of a complete effort in agricultural extension.

Project Purpose and Objectives
An environment where the farmer becomes the decision maker and accesses services that is available by his choice is the ideal situation. This can be achieved by allowing more providers of extension services to enter the market and give farmers the opportunity to have different options and in this regard, a deviation from the traditional extension system which is treated as a free and public good will need to replaced, with a more focused client oriented and probably a fee based extension system.

The primary purpose of inviting the private sector to participate in agricultural extension services is to allow farmers access to a series of services including new technology, timely provision of inputs, information regarding management practices of crops and assured market options. Farmers will therefore in principal, have more opportunities to access these facilities, improve their productivity and incomes.

Towards this end a pilot project was undertaken in Sri Lanka involving three private sector service providers supplementing the activities. This pilot project was supported by the Second Perennial Crop Development Project of the Ministry of Agriculture funded through a loan provided by the Asian Development Bank. The pilot project commenced its activities in 2001, with three service providers operating in selected few districts. A Pilot Project Monitoring Unit set up at the Ministry facilitated the process of private sector participation by providing support for their capacity building and monitoring & evaluation of the pilot project activities.

The rationale of the project which was accepted as a strategic policy objective, envisaged to reduce Government expenditure, moving towards commercialization of agriculture. Moreover it was agreed that there should be the Pilot testing of the concept before adoption.
Pilot Project Objectives were:
- To encourage the participation of private agencies in agricultural extension activities
- In the longer term develop a sustainable fee levying advisory service with improved efficiency and effectiveness.

Implementation of the Project

The project assisted in the implementation of the extension activities with the following:
- Conduct of feasibility study – market survey
- Design of an Institutional framework
- Identification of private sector participants
- Formation of an entity and transfer of functions to the new entity.
- Monitoring of activities

Three private sector service providers were selected

i. CIC Fertilizers (Pvt), Ltd.
   Fruits & Spices - Gampaha District
   Kurunegala District
   Puttalam District
   Kegalle District

ii. MA’s Tropical Food Processing (Pvt Ltd.
    Fruits & Spices – Matale District

iii. EML (Hortech) Ltd.
    Floriculture - Gampaha, Kurunegala, Puttalam, Kegalle, Matale, Colombo, Kalutara and Kandy. Districts

Assistance provided from the project office
- Payment of seed money as start up cost
- Payment of Salaries of Field Officers
- Training of field staff of Service Contractors
- Fee supplement payments
- Organizing Bank seminars on value and procedures for credit disbursement

Progress of Activities /Services

- Loan facilitation
Sub-loan applications processed by three SCs in their operating districts as at 30th September 2003.
### Table 1. Sub-loan applications by SC

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service contractor</th>
<th>Recommended</th>
<th>Approved</th>
<th>Disbursed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CIC Fertilizer (Pvt) Ltd</td>
<td>1208</td>
<td>524.12</td>
<td>614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MA’s Tropical Food (Pvt) Ltd</td>
<td>239</td>
<td>100.15</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EML (Pvt) Ltd</td>
<td>261</td>
<td>76.73</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1708</strong></td>
<td><strong>701.00</strong></td>
<td><strong>759</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sub-loan applications processed by CIC in four Districts by different purpose as at 30th September 2003

### Table 2. Sub-loan applications by purpose

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Purpose</th>
<th>Recommended</th>
<th>Approved</th>
<th>Disbursed</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Crop Cultivation</td>
<td>1053</td>
<td>404.19</td>
<td>535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nursery Development</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>38.93</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agro. Processing / Marketing</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>80.25</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protected agriculture</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>1208</strong></td>
<td><strong>524.12</strong></td>
<td><strong>614</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- **Technical & Marketing advisory services**
  - Technical & Advisory Visits July – September 2003
  - Farmer visits
    - CIC Fertilizer Ltd - 180
    - MA’s Tropical Food Ltd - 25
    - EML (Hortech) Ltd - 132
- **Awareness programs conducted**
  - Number of Programs | Participants
    - CIC Fertilizers Ltd | 26 | 746
    - MA’s Tropical Food | 07 | 106
    - EML (Hortech) Ltd | 07 | 159
    - Crop Cultivation | 20 | 470
    - Farm Management | 18 | 498
• **Training of growers / processors**
  
  Technical Training – MA’s Tropical Food

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Program</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Post harvest Tech</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm management</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grapes cultivation</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated Farming</td>
<td>02</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Protected Agric.</td>
<td>01</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

• **Contract Farm Management**
  
  - The demand for this service is very limited
  - Only around 5% of the beneficiaries have extents > 20 acres
  - CIC has identified clients and initiated work

**Other opportunities that were offered in Farm Advisory Services**

- Offering a package of services
- Renting Farm machinery and equipment
- Expert advice on critical farm operations
- Advisory services on high tech agriculture
- Updated market information to clients
- Soil testing services
- Links with Research to obtain updated knowledge

**Results Obtained**

After approximately 2 years of implementation Responses to Service Contractor’s Services the views obtained from the farmers sample are the following

- Views on technical advice:
  - 40% positive.
  - 40% negative,
  - 20% no response irrespective of holding size

- Satisfied with money paid
  - 31% of large farmers,
  - 54% of small farmers
  - 43% for all

- Large farmers have received more visits for loan facilitation,
- small farmers more for advisory services
- Willingness to continue paying fees
  - 35% of large farmers,
  - 27% of small farmers,
  - 40% for all

Service Contractors were influential in providing new technology to large and small farmers alike. Where farmers had obtained advice from both SC’s and government institutions, satisfaction was expressed about both. Service contractors had not charged from farmers for advisory services – only the loan facilitation fee had been charged.
Fee Based / Privatized Extension Services

Fee rates were examined by estimating the cost of the salary package for public, SPCDP and private staff, along with their share of overheads and, where appropriate, depreciation and profits. These figures were divided by the chargeable days of these staff, when they can actually work for clients after taking account of week-ends, holidays, sick leave and operational efficiencies - respectively 110, 150 and 200 chargeable days per annum. Average daily rates are estimated at Rs.1,300, Rs 2,000 and Rs 2,500 respectively. In selling the concept to farmers the consultant advises that private sector advisory services should be marketed from a per visit viewpoint e.g. Rs 1000 per half day visit– smaller farmers are likely to find daily fee rate quotes as high and beyond their means, certainly initially in the Pilot Project.

In reality commercially viable daily charge rates will vary depending on experience and salary of adviser, performance incentive agreed to, type of transport used by the adviser (pick-up vs. motor cycle) and corporate scale and overhead cost structures. Companies are likely to broker different fee payment deals with farmers – hourly rates, daily rates, deferred payments until crop harvest or percentage share of production increments from quality advice.

Possible Weaknesses of Privatize Extension Services

- Comparatively weak linkages with research organizations
- Reluctant to operate in remote areas and among low income farmers
- Clients with low capacity to pay for service can be disadvantaged (removal of fee supplement from Government)
- Service providers agenda may not in line with government national policy
- Problem of accountability for the use of public funds
- May cover comparatively small area
- May neglect continuous capacity building of staff

Challenges Facing New Systems

Ability to Pay

Examination of the gross margins and farm models prepared in Stage 1 confirmed the view that farmers growing perennial crops could pay for advisory services from the profitability of those crops. In particular the four farm models were re-examined. A 25% improvement in price and/or yield at the same cost through good advisory services and surveys indicated farmers would be prepared to pay proposed fees provided the incremental income from the adoption of recommendations was at least 3 to 4 times the cost of advice.

Marketing

The market problem for perennial crops is critical for Sri Lanka. Quality and coordinated market information services involving: a) collaboration with existing organizations; b) marketing training; c) market information services; d), agribusiness training; e) crop production and post-harvest management training; f) effective advisory and farmer group training and communication skills training of DAAs must be provided on a sustainable basis during the Pilot Project and following its completion. The findings recommend that a two pronged approach is required to effectively meet these needs. Marketing as well as agribusiness and production related advisory services need to be delivered through the best available Service Contractors (SCs).
Lack of commitment of Private Service providers
There is a general perception among farmers that while Private sector service providers are more regular in their visits and other activities they are more profit oriented and as such does not have the confidence that they possess of the public sector extension service.

Opportunities for Mainstreaming and Scaling-up

For the successful up scaling of accepted technologies and encouraging the private extension participation, it is critical that strong linkages and good communication among national policy makers, and other stakeholders of the new technologies be established. To effectively play this role, the Extension coordinator in the Public sector will help build a multi-stakeholder research-extension-Private Sector partnership for up scaling and dissemination of technologies, promote open communication and interaction among various stakeholders. This will involve organizing and supporting training and dissemination activities as well and play a key role in helping develop and nurture technology integration and up scaling initiatives

It is therefore necessary to:
- strengthen the process of up scaling of such technologies through close collaboration with the extension and communication arms of the NARES and the Private Sector organizations in order to popularize, promote, and disseminate the technologies
- Facilitate the upgrading of technical knowledge and skills of NARES partners in farmer participatory research, technology evaluation and delivery, and impact assessment
- Working with national decision makers facilitate conducive policy interventions for upscaling of validated technologies, enhance regional collaboration, and develop funding support for in-country activities.

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Title of practice: Reaching the Unreachables\textsuperscript{11}

Country: Nepal

Authors: Amina Maharjan, Schulz S, Rajbhandari N, Regmi B, Dhital B, Paudel C and Hada N\textsuperscript{12}

Category of Practice: Participatory development for the ultra poors.

Context and genesis

Description of the Production or Service System
Agriculture (crop and livestock production) is the major economic activity in Nepal and the only economic activity in the hills of rural Nepal. There are limited other economic activities other than agriculture in the hills of rural Nepal. However, farming in Nepalese hills is yet to move from subsistence oriented farming to commercial one. Farming in hills of Nepal can be broadly categorized as subsistence agriculture with no/low external inputs. There are only a few pockets and a handful of farmers taking up commercial scale production in Nepal and they are more limited to the Terai region and less in the hills of Nepal and more concentrated in the road corridors. Fragmentation of holding over the years (mostly due to the inheritance laws) is reducing the average size of holding of the farmers. There is a section in each community with people with little or no land. Without other alternative sources of income these are the ultra poor farmers whose livelihood depend on the daily wages that they earn working in farm and off-farm sectors and supplemental food production from share cropping, known as Adhiya system in Nepal.

Description of Social, Economic and Institutional Context
The ultra poor farmers are also the ones facing discrimination in terms of own resource holding, use of community resources and also caste wise. Working with the ultra poor farmers over the years, it is seen that more than 80 percent of them belong to Dalit (the untouchables based on the existing caste system). They are socially considered as outcastes and face social discrimination. Historically, these groups of farmers have been excluded from development, politics and economic benefits. Economically these groups of farmers are very poor and fall into the lowest category of the Human Development index in the country and their livelihood depends mostly on daily wage labour. They have limited or no land (less than 0.15 hectare) in which to grow the crops to sustain their families. Some of them work other farmers' field in Adhiya system, where the harvest is shared with the land owner (50% of the production) whereas all agricultural inputs (except land) is paid by the ultra poor farmer.

Problem/Issue to be Tackled
Looking at the history of development intervention in Nepal, it is clearly seen that this group of ultra poor farmers have been left out of the benefit of various development work carried out in

\textsuperscript{11} IFAD Supported Case Study
\textsuperscript{12} Helvetas Sustainable Soil Management Programme, Kathmandu, Nepal
the last two decades due to various reasons. It is also seen from past experiences that until and unless specific and focused interventions for reaching this group of farmers are made, they will remain to be left out of the benefits of development work. This has indirectly widened the already existing wealth gap in the society, which is one of the root causes of the initiation of the present armed conflict in the country.

Sustainable Soil Management Programme (SSMP) works in 12 mid hill districts of the country. All the sustainable soil management (SSM) technologies promoted by SSMP like farm yard manure improvement, compost making, legume integration, fodder/forage promotion require only minimum use of external inputs. All these technologies are based on the principle of maximizing the local resource use. In promoting these technologies SSMP follows participatory approaches where various SSM technologies are promoted based on the farmers' demand for those technologies in those areas. Hence, farming with adoption of SSM technologies are found highly successful by the farmers in hills of Nepal. Increasing the efficiency of locally available resources is important and significant for subsistence farming with no/low external inputs as being followed by the hill farmers. However, SSM technologies were found most relevant to the medium farmers (0.3 – 2 hectares) and these groups of farmers were the ones benefiting most from adoption of SSM technology. As with most other development programmes/projects SSM technologies offer little benefit to the ultra poor farmers with little or no land and hence were left out from the benefits. In order to include the ultra poor, socially discriminated farmers in the programme benefits SSMP initiated the supplementary ultra poor focused programme in 2002. The focus of this programme is to reach the ultra poor farmers and support them with supplementary activities to improve their livelihood through access to resources and information.

Organizations and Stakeholders who were Involved in its Conception and Design

This programme was initiated in 2002 as piloting jointly by SSMP and its 6 collaborating institutions namely – Equality Development Center-Doti, Center for Environment and Agriculture Policy Research, Extension and Development - Surkhet, Community Development and Environment Conservation Forum & Tuki Association Sunkoshi- Sindhupalchowk, Social Welfare Youth Club- Parbat, Center for Agro-ecology and Development - Achham

The Practice

Description of the Innovations or Changes Introduced

All the organizations involved in this piloting were community based organizations with a strong relation with local people and community. All these organizations were accountable to the local people that they were serving, as they are also part of the benefitting community. Hence, it was decided that instead of following the traditional approach of using the district level or village level data on the household economic position, the participatory approach of selecting the households was piloted. Here instead of involving the data or asking the key persons in the community, the collaborating institutions helped in holding a village level meeting where the participants themselves ranked the households based on their economic situations. The poorest household in the village was identified and then other households similar to that or slightly above were then identified and grouped. The entire households in the village was categorised into four
category A, B, C and D, with A being the richest and D being the poorest. The farmers from the D category were then supported with the special ultra poor focused activities.

**Main Activities Undertaken**

Once the households were selected and groups formed, then the activities to be supported in the group were selected. In selecting the activities the ultra poor farmers were asked what they wanted to do and how they wanted to implement the activities so as to improve their livelihood. The activities were not forced upon the poor but SSMP listened to their choice of activities and helped them in choosing the best option. In this process, the entire group members participated and the collaborating institution facilitated the discussion. While selecting activities availability of required inputs, possible risks, market, and sustainability of activities were considered. Once the activities were selected then detailed plans were made. While planning the activities, the following issues were incorporated:

1. **Awareness:** Awareness was created in order to change in the attitude of the poor themselves (wish to change their social and economic condition) and attitude of others (elite class towards poor).
2. **Ownership:** Activities for instilling the feeling of ownership towards the programme like establishment of an equity fund, group savings and other kind of contribution from the beneficiary households were also initiated.
3. **Linkage:** Linkages was developed among the concerned organizations (District Agriculture Development Office, District Livestock Service Office, District Soil Conservation Office, District Forest Office), so that the group/community can continue receiving their services even after the termination of the project.

Awareness, ownership feeling and linkages are essential for sustainability of any programme. In the last three years more than 75% households have chosen goat keeping as their choice of activity for improving their livelihood. Most of these households were found to be raising goats on fodder/forage grasses and their limited land area was insufficient to meet the demand for fodder/forage. Moreover, the ultra poor households cannot replace their limited land from growing their staple food required for the farm family to growing grasses for the goats. Hence, linking these households to community lands/forest is of high importance. All these households were members of the community forests, but other than working for the conservation of the forest these households had rarely ever harvested any benefit from the forest that they protect. Hence, these households deserved to be given more access to community land/forest resources particularly for fodder/forage grasses. Most of these ultra poor groups were successful in gaining access to community forest for the fodder/forage. In some cases, the ultra poor even got access to cultivate non timber forest products (NTFPs) in the community land and earn income. The crucial role for bargaining/negotiating in having better access to community resources was played by the groups themselves and the collaborating institution helped the group in the process.

Strengthening and Institutionalization of the collaborating institutions and the groups is a must for success and feeling of ownership towards the programme. Each group was given free choice for making their own rules and regulations for better and efficient group dynamics. The groups were encouraged to initiate group savings and insurance fund for better risk management in case of failure (death of animal or loss of crop). The group was also given free hand in choosing the
modality for utilizing the group savings. This was essential to empower the groups and to instil in them that the group and the programme were their own. The trend in Nepal is that the group members do not relate to the group and so if one asks, "whose group is this?" the answer in 95% times will be that it is the organizations group and not the group members. To break away with this trend, SSMP had left all the works related to group dynamics to the group members and the collaborating institution only helped in facilitating them in taking correct decision.

While planning the activities, a long-term plan (minimum of 3 years) was envisioned. Action plans were made of the activities for all the three years before initiation of the activity. Since the programme cannot succeed in isolation, integration with the other SSM technologies is a must. In the process the groups were integrated in other SSM technologies like farm yard manure improvement, vegetable cultivation, legume integration and other cash crop cultivation. This integrated approach helped in increasing the income level of the farm family through diversification and thereby reducing risk of failure. The implementation approach was also decided by the groups themselves. Some groups had followed the passing on gift approach in goats, in which the first born was passed on to other poor members of the community. This way they felt that they were contributing to improve livelihood of other poor farmers like themselves and also there was no burden of being recipient of subsidy as they returned it over the time.

The households, under the overall supervision and regular follow up from the collaborating institution, implemented the selected activities. The programme was continually monitored by the group and the collaborating institution in a participatory way.

Resources Required
Under this programme each household was supported with material support and the technical support. The material support differed from one group to another and from one household to another. However, on an average each household was given a subsidy of US$30 per year for purchasing materials like goats, pigs, poultry or renting in land. This subsidy was given for two consecutive years and in the third year no subsidy was given for purchasing materials. Technical support consisted of training on goat raising, fodder/forage plantation and disease management. For technical support almost equal or slightly higher cost was required. However, this was not a hand out or subsidy programme. And this programme could not have succeeded in isolation without the integrated and complementary support that the farmers receive from other SSM technologies. So the resources required vary from one group to another.

Main Stakeholders and Actors in Implementation and in Outcomes
The main stakeholders in this activity implementation were the collaborating institutions and the farmers groups, in which SSMP supported with the necessary financial support.

Main Intended Target Groups
The target group for this programme were the ultra poor farmers who could not benefit substantially from the regular sustainable soil management practices promoted by SSMP. SSMP defines ultra poor as those households:
- with less than 3 months of food security from own production.
- without a permanent alternative source of income
- with little (0.15 heactare.) or no land
Assessment and Impact

Why Was it Considered Successful

The programme was considered successful because of its impact on the livelihood of the ultra poor households. The programme has not only improved their financial capital but has also improved their social capital, human capital, environmental capital and the physical capital. For example, goats have produced additional income which has helped in reducing poverty of the farm family and improve their food sufficiency level. Along with the goat keeping activity, other SSM technologies like FYM improvement, vegetable cultivation, legume integration and cash crop production were also initiated in the groups. While integrating the group members under various SSM technologies based on their available resources, they have gained knowledge and information on wide range of topics thereby developing human resources in the area. Also while working with mixed group of farmers (farmers from diverse caste and class) during trainings the ultra poor and discriminated farmers gained self confidences as their voices were also being heard in the group. So in this way the programme has helped in empowerment and inclusion of the most discriminated members of the farming community.

The additional income from various activities undertaken like goat raising, vegetable cultivation etc has helped in improving the asset holding of the farmers. Most farmers have replaced the thatched roofs in their houses with the GI sheets. This has also improved their status in the community. FYM improvement technology has helped to keep the homesteads clean. The household waste materials are dumped in the FYM heap instead of littering the area. This has kept the household area clean. Earlier in most of the Dalit communities, the household wastes were littered around making the whole area dirty. The improved FYM was then applied in the farming lands thereby recycling the nutrient materials.

Since the programme was not forced on the benefiting farmers, there was much higher ownership towards the activities that they had undertaken. The benefiting farmers were given the freedom to make their own selection of activities, implementation approach and rule and regulation for group functioning.

In the present armed conflict many private and government supported goat farms have been vandalized by the Maoists several times. However, none of the goats supported to the ultra poor were harmed by the rebels and none of their group activities had been hindered.

Evaluation of Benefits

1. Annual income of the ultra poor households increased by US$38, which is about 16.5% of per capita income of Nepal. Since the income of ultra poor households is about US$ 107 far below the national per capita income, the additional income from the goats constitutes about 35% of the total annual income.

2. Increased income leading to increased purchasing power thereby improving their food situation. Also adoption of other SSM technologies like FYM improvement and vegetable cultivation has increased their food production and food security situation.

3. Working in the group there is better sharing of problems and solutions and feeling of unity has developed.
4. Increased self esteem which helps in development of the feeling that their livelihood can be improved. The voices of the ultra poor are also being heard and this has helped in their empowerment.

5. Do not have to beg to the village money lenders for small amounts of money because of the group savings and even when the money is borrowed the money lender has increased trust that the money will be returned due to increased household income.

6. Respect from the community. Time spend in non-productive activities like drinking, gambling etc is being utilized for looking after the goats.

7. The village is being known as a centre for goat products in the vicinity and people come to buy the goats for meat purpose or kids.

8. As the animals are raised inside the shed, it does not hurt other plants in the area and there is more access to community resources.

9. The group savings has been used for other group activities like irrigation, community seed production etc. which helps in better group dynamics.

Significant Outcomes
The process of reaching the ultra poor households with specific activities suitable to their resource situation has been gaining importance in the recent days in Nepal. Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperative and Department of Agriculture under it has programmes targeted at the ultra poor farmers. Learning of SSMP in this aspect could be valuable for the department in developing its strategy in reaching the ultra poor farmers in the community. This was shared with the Task Team formed by the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives for reviewing the process followed by various agriculture projects/programmes working in the country and developing their own strategy.

Factors Contributing to Successes and Failures

Problems Encountered and Solutions Found in Implementing the Practice
While implementing the activities initially a number of problems were encountered. Some major ones were:

- Conflict in the community due to non support from elite farmers who could not get the benefit from these activities.
- Pessimism of the participating farmers that they will not benefit from this support due to their low self-esteem.
- A general satirist attitude of the development community that this programme cannot be successful. The goat keeping activity for improving livelihood of poor farmers is one of the most debated and criticized activity among the development worker in Nepal.

However, these problems were solved gradually by consistently working on it. The larger community was brought together and explained about the loop holes in the development history and how the ultra poor have been left out and its impacts in the community and how they should also be included in the programme benefits. Over the time, the community realised the problems and helped in helping the ultra poor to improve their livelihood. The other major obstacle was in raising the self confidence of the ultra poor that they can do it. The key to success is in the process and methods. Real proactive participation of the beneficiaries and their sustained and continuous interest in the programme helped in mitigating the problems and making the
programme a success. Involvement of community based organizations with strong accountability towards the groups that they serve has helped. Also long term and continued support has helped in overcoming the problems.

**Key Driving Forces in Managing Change**
The most important factor responsible for bringing the changes were proper selection of the households and the activities and accountability of the supporting institution to the group that they serve. Some of the important factors for success of the programme were:

1. The programme was an integrated one. It was a supplementary programme in addition to the regular SSM technologies. Better the integration of programme higher the rate of success.
2. It was a home grown and locally driven programme with little external advises.
3. Institutionalization and strengthening of community based organization and groups were the driving factor for success of the programme.
4. It was not a one shot programme but was planned with a long term vision (minimum of three years) and support.
5. Synergy with line agencies for support to trainings and other needs of the community well though out and planned.

**Opportunities for Mainstreaming and Scaling-Up**
The process and the programme are highly relevant for improving the livelihood of ultra poor farmers throughout the country and other developing countries. For improving the livelihood of ultra poor long term support on specific and integrated programmes are required and the participatory approach for selection of the households and the activities and its implementation is of utmost importance.

**Risks Associated with Scaling-Up**
1. Compromise on time and process of implementation will lead to failure of the programme. If appropriate methods to ensure real and proactive participation of the beneficiary households are not taken the programme is sure to be a failure.
2. Up scaling of the activities might also be limited by
   - Availability of resources at local level.
   - Availability of technical manpower at the local level to avoid losses.
   - Proper selection of households and activities.
   - Livestock can put high pressure on community resources (particularly community forests) and hence the resource needs to be planned in advance.
3. All these process can help in maximising success of the activities however, even after taking the necessary precautions failure in some groups cannot be ruled out.

**What Has to be Done to Promote it Elsewhere Successfully**
To promote it elsewhere successfully care should be taken in following points:
1. Proper selection of households. If targeted households are not selected then the chance of success of the activity is highly limited.
2. Proper selection of activities. Activities should be selected by the beneficiaries themselves and should be based on availability of resources at local level, market potentials, technical knowledge at local level and interest of the beneficiary households.

3. A long term vision (minimum of three years) is inevitable. As the targeted households are ultra poor farmers, small but consistent long term support is necessary and integration of the group members in other activities needs to be envisioned before initiation of the activities.

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Title of Best Practice: Recovery and Reintegration in the North Caucasus, Russia

Country: North Caucasus, Russia

Author: Natalya Andreeva

Practice Category: Agricultural and community service delivery.

Background

The history of the North Caucasus —and for many, its future— appears overwhelmed by continued insecurity, conflict, displacement and growing poverty. The events of summer 2004, including the attack on authorities in Ingushetia, the downing of two airplanes, a subway bombing, the tragic hostage-taking at the Beslan school in North Ossetia–Alania, and, more recently, the violent, ongoing spillover effects from the conflict in Chechnya affecting neighboring republics have re-emphasized the long-term need to stabilize this region and facilitate a more secure future.

In the larger context of the North Caucasus region’s continuing and complex instability, the urgent need for the UN to undertake substantive efforts going beyond emergency relief to improve human security is underscored. For more than a decade the UN has been working quietly, and largely independently, in mainly two republics, namely North Ossetia-Alania and Ingushetia, to integrate refugees from Georgia, Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs) from Chechnya, as well as forced migrants from other newly-independent post-Soviet states. Assistance has consisted primarily of humanitarian relief, with few resources available for more recovery- and development-oriented activities that would support durable integration through conciliation, poverty reduction and up-stream capacity building. It is felt that support in favor of social and economic recovery within the republics of North Ossetia-Alania and Ingushetia will enable a dynamic which is both complementary to, and mutually reinforcing with, new efforts being undertaken in neighboring republics. As a consequence, this region may be rendered less vulnerable to future crises.

International interest in supporting a transition towards economic recovery in the North Caucasus formally commenced in June 2004, with a multi-agency headquarters mission led by UNDP and including the Danish Refugee Council (DRC), the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC), and UNHCR. The mission assessed the general conduciveness of conditions for initiating recovery-oriented activities and provided recommendations on how best to address the human security needs of refugees, IDPs and their host communities. Recommendations furthermore addressed capacity requirements of government and NGOs to substantively engage in integration and longer-term recovery needs.

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13 IFAD Supported Case Study
14 UNDP-NC, Vladikavkaz, Russia
Assessment shows that there is a need to implement program and projects in 3 main areas:
- development of SME;
- promotion of microfinance programs;
- agriculture
In view of that several agriculture pilot projects are developed and implemented by some International agencies and organizations.

The successful activities in this sphere in North Ossetia-Alania and Ingushetia could be applied elsewhere in the North Caucasus as the situation permits, helping to stabilize the region. This may extend the potential impact of implemented pilot activities in a region and attract sorely lacking, but greatly in need of, substantive international attention that will enable the area and its partners to begin a reorientation beyond emergency relief.

**Case 1. Establishment of Mobile Station for Artificial Insemination of Cattle**

This case study reports of inventing new practices of veterinary service delivery in Russian Federation.

**Context and Genesis**

It needs to be brought to attention that collapse of the Soviet Union and subsequent economical crisis during the past 15 years left collective milk farms in North Ossetia-Alania completely destroyed. At the same time number of milk cattle in private sector (farmers and small plot stakeholders) increased. Most of the rural population currently breeds livestock in the republic’s highlands. For many poor local people, refugees and IDPs, privately owned dairy cows provide the only possible source of subsistence. However, most of the livestock in the region is inbred and extremely low in milk production capacities (4–8 liters per cow). At present, the high demand of milk in the local market is covered by milk products imported from neighboring regions and countries. New technologies and good experience in milk production are not known nor used. To increase the numbers of pedigree cows needs time and considerable funding.

One of the most effective and cost effective ways to improve the quality of milk cows and increase existing milk production found was introduction of artificial insemination. Projects are being proposed for pilot district Alagirski in North Ossetia-Alania and Malgobek district in Ingushetia. Respective districts were selected as such for highest number of cows in private sector, as well as capacities of local markets to absorb additional produces. Currently in Alagirski district there are 6330 milk cows and in Malgobeksky there 9400 milk cows.

The stations are organized based on usage of local veterinary service capacities. An inexpensive, locally-produced vehicle for the station ensured consistent and equitable outreach to villages around the districts.

Project participants will receive training in animal husbandry, nutrition, housing, breeding, artificial insemination and basic veterinary care provided by Heifer International organization, UNDP’s partner.
• Artificial insemination service is offered on a paid fee basis, thereby ensuring sustainability.
• Moreover it is the first mobile artificial insemination station in Russian Federation.

The Practice

In the first place UNDP came into oral agreement with Republican Ministry of Agriculture and Local Federal Department of Veterinary Service which implied arrangements of the parties for the project. It was agreed that local veterinary service will provide premises for housing the equipment and staff and UNDP will procure vehicle, mobile telephones, veterinary equipment and software for cattle breeding. Project is based on sustainable development:

• service is provided by veterinaries paid by Federal Veterinary Service;
• farmers pay for service;
• funds received from customers cover the expenses of fuel, semen and telephone.

The Lesson Learned

• practice show that we can build new practice using the old system of veterinary service;
• local government and farmers are ready to implement new practice and actively participate;
• comparatively small funds can be used to achieve wide results. In our case the total budget of project is 20 000 USD. It cover improvement of the herd consisting of 15 730 cows;
• mobility of service will improve not only the quality of the cows but also ameliorate health of cattle;
• implementation of the cattle improvement consequently brought the need for training of farmers and made a ground for the further establishment of Extension service.

Case 2. Agricultural Extension Service Development

This case study reports of establishment of Extension Service in two republics in the North Caucasus and its influence at economics recovery in the region

Context and Genesis

Development of Agricultural Extension Service in the area was based on the results of informational assessment and area researches made by UNDP, recommendations aroused from the missions of ILO and Heifer International Consultants, as well as undertaken Logical Framework Seminar outputs. Of note it can be stated that republics and territories of former Soviet Union mostly struggle with changing the mind set of the farmers from collective into private business oriented. Agricultural Extension Service is understood as one of the policy instrument that government can use to stimulate agriculture development.

The main goal of establishing Agricultural Extension Service is to support market oriented agriculture, improve livelihoods of the rural communities by means of technical assistance, trainings and upgrading capacities of the local decision-makers.
Agricultural Extension Service also becomes the focal point for collection and dissemination of information on market, “know-how”, best practices and expertise. This organization not only channels information to and from but also will serve as interpretation link between science and field in the attempt to translate scientific information into field related format.

The Practice

This case addresses sustainable development of agriculture and rural area. In this context Agricultural Extension Service plays very crucial role for upgrading capacities in decision making and management. Most difficult problem for the local economy is transition of ex-collective farm and state farms workers into private entrepreneurship, simultaneously building wholesale market infrastructure, marketing and extension which is necessary to make private farming viable. Extension Service is first of all called to transfer and disseminate relevant information and advice to and from producers. At the same time it serves as a joint between education and research centers, market organizations and policy-makers. Use of appropriate agricultural technologies and good farm practices releases more proactive and participatory role of Extension service. Considering area approach implemented by UNDP trainings and trials are concentrated on the territories of pilot districts chosen for UNDP activities whereas - beyond doubt - information will be shared among all districts of the republic. Extension Service supports sustainable agriculture and rural development by training farmers and rural entrepreneurs in better farming, simultaneously providing them with following:

- analyses of present and expected future situation;
- acquisition of specific knowledge related to certain problem solutions and their consequences, so that they could act on possible alternatives;
- assistance in changing opinions and making good decisions

Project Activities

- Analyze and evaluate republican resources, labor and processing potentials, points of growth, related markets and products availability; evaluate efficiency of land and other resources use in order to locate and determine potential conflict situations.
- Evaluate economic and geographical profiles for agriculture in view of diversification of the activities in the sector.
- Support local agriculture producers by means of new information accesses through upgraded capacities of the Extension.
- Provide recommendations on economical sector correlation, such as: development of agriculture, investor related movement in the sector, social and technical infrastructure, land related links.
- Arrange exhibitions and study tours in order to gain new ideas and best practices on sustainable economic recovery existing in Russian Federation.
- Identify and advise on conditions for sustainable improvement of livelihoods and social development through agriculture activities.
- Identify and prioritize projects in agriculture sector supporting improvement of livelihoods for the rural areas.
- Enable local agriculture producers to identify priority needs and seek for resource provisions.
• Enable different social groups of local and replaced population to correctly convey their interests and correctly address business issues

**Project Outputs**

• **Sustainable Agriculture Extension Center** – basic source of information and technical assistance for the republican agriculture producers provides fee based service. It introduces local products to Russian and international markets

• **Publication of monthly information periodicals** – specially hired staff with language skills supported by the relevant team specialists provide outlined information at the scope of local needs for monthly information bulletin

• **Internet site** – trained staff is able to establish web site and update information published at it regularly

• **Seminars for target groups** – trained staff provide trainings to the target groups that include farmers, entrepreneurs in agriculture, women and youth

• **Trials and Demonstration Fields** – Agriculture Extension Center is able to assist and arrange tests of new crops, fertilizers, animals and technologies

• **Pilot co-operatives** – based on need for development of co-operation, but taking into consideration low practice of cooperation in the area, Agriculture Extension Center promote and support as well as monitor activity of few pilot cooperatives in three pilot districts chosen for UNDP activities

• **Exhibitions** – assist and promote local producers to participate in agriculture exhibitions that are widely conducted in the neighboring well-developed agriculture territories of RF

• **Technical assistance** – is provided to individuals and groups of clients establishing new way of approach to the fee based provision of information and technical assistance

**Case 3. Building Capacities for District Development in Ingushetia**

This case study reports of multi-stakeholders process development for upgrading capacities of Local /District/ Administration and is implemented by International Center for Sustainable Development of Rural Area with State Agriculture University after Timiryazev (Moscow)

**Context and Genesis**

This project addressed the Government’s request for support in developing new tools and enhanced capacities for decision-making, leading to improved district development. One pilot district was selected by the Government Working Group. Training, research and tool development concentrate on the pilot district and its administration. Additionally, a Center for District/ Territory Development is established at the University, under the auspices of the Management Department, and closely coordinates with the Ministry of Economics at the Republican Level.

Outputs of the project include development of a strategic plan for district development, GIS capacities to support planning and decision-making. The Strategic Plan project development goals for 5-7 years and will require annual development reviews and updates, based updated statistics and participatory decision-making. To enable the district administration to update
without external specialists there will be a special training provided in the form of series of seminars.

The Practice

Established Center for District/ Territory Development is viewed as embryo institution for further evolving into Center for Republic Development.

District Administrations usually play a key role in upgrading local capacities to manage economic development. Although, in the North Caucasus, this is seen as an important role, it is still outside of the current experience and traditional functions of local governance. Elsewhere in the RF, local governments have been successfully taking on this new role, of supporting inclusive planning processes for improved socio-economic development. One of the main goals for good district management is to promote an enabling environment where livelihoods and job-related activities can flourish, based on efficient access to and use of the district’s existing resources and potentials. To ensure progress towards fulfilling this goal, the following was required in the existing environment:

(1) comprehensive socio-economic situation analysis, revealing priority development sectors for the district; (2) support and promotion of local economic development in prioritized sub-sectors, based on local resources and points of growth; (3) support to job creation, through managing the environment supporting markets and investments; and, (4) promotion of local potentials for development.

All that provides a foundation for strategic planning that is the main instrument to obtain socio-economic development goals and outputs of district development. A created Strategic Framework Plan provides basis for district management as well as a roadmap for various projects complimenting approved efficient socio-economic policy.

Project activities

Project activities at the local district level include the following:

- Establishment of a secretariat with clear leadership and support roles within the District Administration.
- Compilation of an inventory of key potentials and problem points within the district.
- Identification of primary “points of growth.”
- Evaluation of economic development potentials and determination of the district’s development trends.
- Elaboration of a map series for “Socio-Economic, Ecological and Resource Prerequisites for Development” (with the theme maps of “Land Use Structure or Landscape Map”, “Natural Resources and Ecological Potential”, “Population”, “Economic Infrastructure”.
- Elaboration of a strategic economic development plan for a period of 5-7 years
- Development of a complex map for the target district, based on the development plan and high-lighting the points of growth.
- Elaboration of a District work plan for implementing the Strategic Plan, which includes annual reviews and updates.
- Training provided in the form of a series of seminars.
Project activities at the republican level include the following:

- Establishment of a District Development center at the University to provide future technical assistance to district development
- Definition of roles and responsibilities
- Training for University and Republican level officers attached to the Center, including ToTs for District Management techniques, Community Mobilization, and, GIS
- Establishment of permanent GIS capacities at the center and housing of data bases for all districts.

Project Outputs

- **Strategy for District’s Transition into Sustainable Socio-Economical Development** – basic tool for shaping and obtaining goals and outputs in municipal unit development
- **District Development Center** – based at the University with support of the Government in order to create a direct link between science and governance
- GIS developed for one entire pilot district; provision of training for District Development Center staff on planning processes, provision of necessary equipment – trained staff is able to update GIS database for the district; support district development, organize panel discussions; minimum of necessary equipment is provided
- **Upgraded qualifications of Government and local specialists in the sphere of socio-economical development** – trained DDC (District Development Center) staff and local administrators are able to lead consulting activities on the issues of development processes in the district and in the territory, as well as contribute to dialogue on economic policies
- Close connection of DDC and republican government conducive to partnership development and joint planning – DDC is able to accurately and transparently handle information, support linkages in development and planning between republican and district levels
- **DDC staff obtain skills for supporting their partners to develop proposals and successfully raise funds** – DDC is able to support local administration in resource mobilization based on identified priorities. DDC staff consults fund-raisers how to address potential donors in appropriate manner and to correctly attract investors for economical development.
- **Study Tours** – at least one study tour is arranged to a better developed area in the country with similar experience in order to equip decision-makers at different level of governance with new ideas and best practices on sustainable economic recovery existing in Russian Federation
- **Investment CD and Information brochure** – developed based on district field priority investment projects for funding

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UNDP Project Proposal for Agricultural Extension Service Development. UNDP NC
Titre: Programmation de la recherche à moyen terme à l’INRA Maroc (2005-2008)

Pays: Maroc

Auteurs: B. Boulanouar

Catégorie Pratique: Approche participative pour la programmation de la recherche

Contexte et Genèse

L’institut National de la Recherche Agronomique au Maroc est mandaté pour faire de la recherche pour générer des technologies adaptée à l’agriculture marocaine. Deux dimensions ont été retenues pour répondre à ce besoins : 1. dimension produit (filières de production) et ; 2. dimension agro-écosystème.

Etant donnée la diversité des agro-écosystèmes au Maroc l’agriculture marocaine est diversifiées dans ces objectifs de production, ses performances et dans ses demandes en recherche. Mais on peut retenir qu’en majorité les producteurs marocains gèrent des exploitations de petite taille (terre et cheptel), sont majoritairement analphabètes et opèrent dans un milieu aride à semi aride. L’organisation professionnelle sous forme de coopératives ou d’associations est rudimentaire et ne touche qu’une faible partie des agriculteurs.

Bien que l’INRA soit la seule institution qui est mandatée à être active dans la recherche agricole, force est de constater qu’elle n’en a pas le monopole. En effet, de nos jours, une multitude d’intervenants (privés et publiques) s’implique dans l’exercice, le financement et la gestion de la recherche agricole au Maroc. En filigrane, ce réseau d’intervenant manque de coordination dans ces orientations et agit dans l’absence d’un système de suivi évaluation. Par ailleurs, le choix des orientations et des programmes de recherche manque d’une base objective associant systématiquement les utilisateurs des résultats de la recherche. Face à cette situation, l’INRA a, dans une approche nouvelle, associé ses partenaires dans la programmation de sa recherche à moyen terme (2005-08).

Des ateliers régionaux (10 régions représentant des agro-écosystèmes contrastés et lieu d’implantation des Centres Régionaux de la Recherche Agronomique) ont été initiés afin de collecter les besoins de la recherche mais aussi de sonder la réaction du terrain aux programme en cours d’exécution au sein de l’INRA. Ont été conviés à ces ateliers, des producteurs, des agents de développement, des universitaires et des représentants des structures centrales du Ministère de l’agriculture et du développement rural. Le format général a consisté en une présentation par les structures de développement des contraintes et atouts de l’agro-écosystème en question, des acquis de la recherche ayant une pertinence pour l’agro écosystème en question ;

15 Étude de cas soutenu par IFAD
16 Institut National de la Recherche Agronomique, Rabat, Maroc.
pour ainsi faire une analyse du déficit en matière de recherche. Dans une deuxième étape des sous ateliers par grande problématique combinant produit et agro écosystèmes ont été organisés, et tous les participants on mené un brainstorming sur la question. Lors d’un retour en plénière, les restitutions ont été faites par groupe et les recoupements et les critiques et amendements ont été faits en groupe. Une première esquisse des grandes orientations de la recherche a été alors faite. Par la suite un processus itératif (entre la région et la centrale) a été engagé afin d’opérer un ajustement entre la demande et les ressources disponibles à l’INRA (notamment humaines), prendre en considération le positionnement stratégique au sein de l’institut (en relation avec le contexte international), d’intégrer ses opportunités et ses points forts et enfin de tenir compte de la complémentarité entre les différents centres régionaux de l’INRA. Ce n’est que suite à cet exercice que les priorités par région ont été finalisées au sein de chaque agro-écosystème. Ces priorités ont été alors déclinées en projets de recherche assortis d’un budget. Ainsi, une première validation des projets a été faite au niveau régional suivie d’une deuxième au niveau national.

La Pratique

A travers cette programmation participative, il a été nécessaire, entre autre, d’écouter les utilisateurs des résultats de la recherche et les décideurs dans le ministère de l’agriculture. En interne il a été nécessaire de rester auto critique et ouvert à la critique. Ainsi certaines activités de recherche ont été arrêtées ou revues à la baisse contre des renforcements au niveau de certaines autres activités. La gestion par projet a été un autre élément structurant de cette programmation. A travers cette façon de s’organiser, il a été visé l’intégration des activités et des disciplines scientifiques autour d’une problématique commune en gardant une certaine visibilité au niveau de la programmation des moyens et des résultats à atteindre ainsi que du processus d’évaluation.

Les environnements national et international de l’agriculture ont été analysés (Exposés du secrétaire général et des directeurs centraux du ministère de l’agriculture) sur les accords avec les USA, l’UE et la Vision du ministère à moyen et long terme.

Cet exercice a été couvert en partie par les fonds propres de l’INRA. Il faudra aussi rappeler que l’intérêt qu’ont porté les partenaires à cet exercice a fait qu’ils ont généreusement accepté de prendre en charge une partie de la logistique de l’organisation des ateliers.

Une autre innovation de l’approche a résidé dans la mise en place d’un Conseil Régional de l’Orientation de la Recherche (CROR). (voir note en annexe sur les attributions de ce conseil).

Evaluation de L’Impact de la Pratique

Bien que la décision d’entamer ce processus a été totalement endogène à l’institution. L’approche a été bien acceullie par les partenaires dans la mesure où tout le monde y a retrouvé les bonne pratiques de la participation, la transparence et en définitive l’optimisation du coût de la recherches.

Le fait d’engager ce processus participatif a vraisemblablement stimulé la crédibilité chez l’INRA une certaine crédibilité et a incité des ébauches de partenariats.
Enfin, et bien qu’on soit encore à la phase de la programmation, le processus d’évaluation sera plus objectif dans la mesure où l’institution et ses partenaires partent d’une situation connue vers des objectifs concertés.

Le fait d’avoir associer une multitude de partenaires de l’institution dans une région donnée, a rendu l’expression de la demande égalitaire pour presque dire démocratique en reflétant les besoins pertinent et réaliste en terme de recherche.

Ce processus a aussi favorisé l’émergence de nouvelles problématiques recherchesables qui sont souvent très peu exprimées (conservation des ressources naturelles, diversification des productions, aspects socio-économiques de la production agricoles, etc.).

Il est clair, lors des ateliers, que malgré toutes les bonnes volontés du monde, les problèmes des ressources naturelles communautaires (forêt, parcours, eau, etc.) ne font pas toujours partie de la demande articulée par les producteurs. Aussi toutes les actions qui s’inscrivaient dans la durée (moyen et long terme) n’ont pas toujours figuré à l’ordre du jour des producteurs.

La programmation participative effectuée pourrait devenir une base légitime et crédible pour négocier le soutien financier nécessaire auprès des bailleurs de fond publiques et privés (nationaux et internationaux).


Il est toutefois clair qu’il faudra attendre 2008 pour constater l’effet de cette pratique afin de juger de son impact sur la qualité des résultats produits et de leur impact sur les producteurs.

**Facteurs Contribuant aux Succès et Échecs**

L’adhésion et le soutien du politique des résultats de cet exercice sont une condition nécessaire au succès de cette approche. A ce titre, le renforcement des capacités humaines (recrutement des profils adéquats, leur formation et perfectionnement, leur évaluation et reconnaissance) demeurent des éléments clés pour la réussite du processus et sa durabilité.

Bien qu’en arrière plan, on pourrait reconnaître l’existence d’une demande exogène à ce changement provenant des ministères de tutelles : financière et techniques quant à l’adéquation entre la demande et les activités de recherche pour assurer le soutien des deux tutelles.

Le fait que la demande est énorme et que la budgétisation par projet et sur plusieurs années (2005-2008 dans le cas présent) peut constituer un facteur d’échec dans la mesure ou le budget publique peut ne pas couvrir la totalité. Il est donc demandé à l’INRA plus que jamais de nouer
des partenariats avec les demandeurs de la recherche afin de diversifier ces ressources et faire aboutir ce programme.

Parmi les facteurs qui ont contribué au succès de cette opération : 1. la mobilisation au niveau de l’INRA des responsables centraux (notamment les départements scientifiques) et les responsables et chercheurs au niveau des régions. Chez les partenaires, l’adhésion à l’exercice était le facteur clé de sa réussite. Ces partenaires ont démontré une bonne connaissance des contraintes et atout de leur région ainsi qu’une certaine clarté dans l’articulation des besoins en recherche.

Le choix politique au Maroc pour le régionalisation et le processus de démocratisation qui est entrain de s’y installer ont été de bons catalyseur pour recourir à cette pratique.

Bien que la modération des ateliers et le reporting, les débats et discussions se sont déroulés dans un cadre égalitaire et transparent. Le cumul d’expérience des chercheurs et le savoir faire des partenaires dans leur région respective a servi de filtre à toute dérive dans le choix des orientation et par la suite des différents programmes de recherche dans les différentes régions.

**Opportunités pour la Généralisation de la Pratique**

Cette pratique a été jugée par plusieurs institutions sœurs et par les pouvoirs publics comme louable et doit servir comme une source d’inspiration pour d’autres intervenant dans d’autres domaines.

Cependant le fait d’avoir fait une programmation de proximité et spécifique à la l’ar-écosystème donné, toute extrapolation vers d’autres régions doit être faite avec précaution.
Title of Best Practice: Participatory mid-term (2005-2008) research programming and evaluation at INRA Morocco

Country: Morocco

Author: B. Boulanouar

Category: Participatory research programming

Context and genesis of the practice

The National Institute of Agricultural Research is mandated to conduct research in order to generate technologies adapted for Moroccan agricultural needs. In order to do so, two dimensions were retained: in the process: 1. Commodity concerns and; 2. Agro-ecosystem concerns.

Given the wide agro-ecosystem diversity, Moroccan agriculture objectives, performances and research needs differ from one region to another. The wide majority of Moroccan farmers manage small size farms and flocks, are generally illiterate, operate in semi arid to arid environments and only a very small number of them subscribe to farmers organisations.

Even if INRA is the only institute exclusively mandated to conduct agricultural research, it is clear that it does not own the monopoly in this field. Nowadays, a whole array of actors (private and public) are conducting, funding and managing agricultural research in Morocco. These actors are acting without coordination and a structured institutional system of monitoring and evaluation is lacking. Moreover, research orientations and priorities setting are not systematically defined based on an objective process that integrates user’s needs. While INRA has already conducted participatory research programming for several commodities, INRA has recently put together, in a pilot experience associating its partners, a mid term research program for ten different regions covering the 2005-08 period.

In order to do so, ten regional workshops were organized in order to systematically collect research demand for the ten agro-ecosystems covered by INRA’s 10 regional centers. In these workshops all potential partners in a given agro-ecosystem were invited (farmers and their professional organisations, development agencies, universities, representatives from the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development). The general format of these workshops consisted of plenary presentations by the development agency(ies) where constraints to the development of agriculture and possible advantages were outlined for that particular agro-ecosystem and for the commodities produced in that region. Following this, a synthesis of pertinent research results to the region is presented by INRA regional centers and the research gap was then derived. The group broke up, then, to several sub groups to tackle major natural resources or commodities
researchable issues that are specific to that given region. Sub groups brainstorming under the co -
moderation of an INRA and another outside partner resulted in general recommendations on
major issues that need to be addressed by research in that region and these recommendations
were presented back in a final plenary session. After long and critical debates the group came to
a consensus on a first draft of research orientations by region. After an iterative process between
the regional centers and INRA’s headquarter, research demand was adjusted and prioritized in
order to remain within INRA’s resources (human and financial) limits and its strategic views in
relation to national and international opportunities and finally in order for INRA to insure
complementarities and synergies between the ten regional research centers. Finalized and high
priority orientations for each regional center were the end product of such exercise. Research
projects were derived from the retained orientations and multidisciplinary research teams were
put together to run them. Projects were evaluated at the regional center and INRA headquarter
based on pertinence, coherence (logical framework), funding and expected results and necessary
amendments were made prior to projects final approval.

Practice description

In this participatory and ascending research programming process, it was necessary to listen first
to the research users and to decision makers in the ministry of agriculture. From inside INRA, it
was necessary to remain critical and open to constructive criticism. Another useful product of
this exercise was that INRA downsized certain ongoing activities and strengthened others.

Research management by project was a cornerstone in this programming process. By doing so,
multidisciplinary integration of the activities was sought in order to tackle major problems for a
given agro-ecosystem and a given commodity while remaining focused on clear assessment of
the necessary resources and the achieved results in a coherent monitoring and evaluation system
yet to be finalized.

Benchmarks for mid to long term policies at the national and international levels were exposed
by top level decision makers at the ministry of agriculture. The information contained in these
presentations and its analysis (namely the Free Trade Agreements recently signed by Morocco)
helped INRA update the comparative advantage of ongoing research activities and identify new
niches.

The cost generated by this process was partly covered by INRA’s core funding. The interest of
the research users in the process and in its success convinced them to pick up a large part of the
logistical cost of the workshops.

A major and premiere innovation of the process consisted of setting up a Regional Consultative
Council for Research Orientation for each one of the ten regions. Composed of INRA and its
partners in the region. This elected body has the responsibility to continuously revise and update
research needs for the region and to make recommendations to INRA for research programs
adjustments. Once this body is fully functional, INRA intends to put in place a similar body that
will serve the same purpose nationwide.
Impact assessment of the practice

Even if the decision regarding the launching of the process was INRA’s initiative, the approach was welcomed by its partners and decision makers in the ministry of agriculture who witnessed in it good principles of participation, transparency and finally the ingredients for optimisation of research cost. Consequently, the process boosted INRA’s credibility since many research contracts were signed between INRA and several of its partners once the process came to term.

Even if INRA is still at the research program implementation phase and that the evaluation process is under preparation, it is expected that the latter will be objective given the fact that both INRA an its partners start up from a known situation and aimed towards common objectives and concerted deadlines.

The fact that a variety of partners in a given region (small farmers, large farmers, producers associations, development institutions…) were associated in the process, made research demand duly negotiated in an egalitarian and constructive manner.

This process also promoted the emergence of new research themes that were seldom expressed and which needed to be taken more vigorously into consideration by INRA in its program (natural resources conservation, production diversification, socio-economics of agricultural production and natural resources conservation…).

However, it was clear from the workshops that issues related to community managed natural resources (forests, rangelands, water…) are not high priority items in the expressed research demand by producers. Generally speaking research demand that fits into a mid- to long-term timeframe is not on the farmer’s agenda. It was, then up to INRA to capture this strategic research need in the form of themes that cut across its research activities.

Participatory research programming is a good basis for INRA to legitimately negotiate financial support from public national and international funding agencies.

Finally, this way of doing, allowed INRA to achieve: 1. participation of several partners and actors which helped INRA elaborate a research program with large consensus; 2. multi-disciplinarity and system analysis were secured in the final research program; 3. ascending and descending iterations in the process translated the users needs while allowing for research program adjustment and fine tuning in relation to INRA’s resources and strategic views; 4. clear and targeted research portfolio is available at INRA; 5. improved internal and external monitoring and evaluation; 6. Improved credibility of INRA vis a vis its partners and decision makers. These achievements will improve the efficiency of research and R/D activities geared towards results and performance evaluation.

However, we must wait for the end of 2008 before we can appreciate the real impact of this practice measured in terms of deadlines and quality of research delivery and the potential impact on producers revenue and natural resources management.
Factors contributing to process success or failure

Political and financial supports from both finances and agriculture ministries are necessary to the success of the process. Human capacity building in terms of recruitment and training and performance evaluation based on merits are key elements in the implementation and the outcome of the process and its sustainability.

The fact that research demand is big and that budgeting by project calls for funding commitment over the four years term may constitute a factor that hinders the process implementation. Therefore, INRA is, more than ever, in an urgent need to seek research contracts with private and public partners. INRA also needs to outsource some of its activities in order to focus its efforts on the highest priority research topics in a more cost effective way.

Of the success factors one can recall the mobilization of managers at INRA headquarter (particularly the DG and the Scientific Division) researchers and their managers at the regional level. Partner’s and farmer’s support to the process was by far the most important success factor. These partners showed good knowledge of the assets and constraints of their agro-ecosystems.

The political choice by the government of Morocco for Regionalisation and democratisation of the decision making were a good catalyst for the success of the process. Partners know how and researchers experience in a given agro-ecosystem served as a preliminary filter against non pertinent and over indulging in research demand.

Opportunities for mainstreaming and scaling up the practice

This practice was seen a positive one by several research institutions public authorities and non governmental organisations which is likely to become a source of inspiration for other actors in research and research / development activities.
Contexte et sa Genèse

Le Contexte Social, Économique et Institutionnel
L’objectif stratégique du Projet Emploi Rural (PER) est d’accroître l’emploi et réduire la pauvreté pour compenser les effets de la stabilisation macro-économique et de l’ajustement structurel. Pour son contexte et sa genèse, le PER est venu répondre à une préoccupation majeure des autorités locales, à savoir, la résorption du chômage. L’opération s’inscrit dans une stratégie globale d’aménagement et de développement intégré des zones de montagne et des régions déshéritées.

La mise en œuvre dans des zones montagneuses enclavées et aux populations pauvres de l’approche participative est perçue comme un véritable catalyseur du développement durable. Cette participation s’est faite de manière progressive, elle a produit des résultats encourageants en matière de création d’actifs et de promotion de l’emploi. Le volume d’emploi généré par les chantiers de réalisation et les actifs créés (cinq millions de journées de travail et 18.500 bénéficiaires), a permis aussi de contribuer de manière significative à stabiliser les populations rurales et atténuer l’exode rural.

Le Contexte Physique
Le premier PER a été mis en œuvre dans la zone du Nord Ouest algérien et touche les 4 wilayas de Tlemcen, Sidi Bel Abbès, Ain Témouchent et Mascara. Il a été élargi par la suite aux 2 wilayas de Relizane et Mostaganem. La zone de projet s’étend sur une superficie totale 1.500.000 ha et englobe 165 communes. Son objectif principal est de créer des emplois et réduire la pauvreté en milieu rural dans les régions montagneuses du Nord-Ouest algérien, de façon durable par la création d’actifs. La zone du projet est constituée de sept périmètres d’intervention qui correspondent en grande partie au massif tellien du Nord Ouest de l’Algérie.

C’est une région pauvre marquée par le chômage et la faiblesse des revenus notamment au niveau des petites exploitations, qui représentent 58% des ménages ruraux. Cette situation conduit ces populations à développer des stratégies de survie, où l’exploitation abusive du milieu naturel n’est pas négligeable. La population a connu durant ces dernières années un taux d’accroissement annuel très élevé évalué à 5,4 % et le taux de chômage a été estimé à plus de 31% pour l’ensemble de la zone du projet. L’approche adoptée a consisté à proposer les activités

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19 Étude de cas soutenu par IFAD
20 Faculté des Sciences Sociales. Université d’Oran, Oran, Algérie
et les techniques qui ont une haute intensité de main d’œuvre. Il est fait appel à des travaux principalement manuels.

**Le Mode d’Exécution**
L’accent est mis sur la maintenance des infrastructures agricoles existantes, la protection de l’environnement et les actifs se trouvant sur les terres publiques et les champs des paysans. Les composantes couvrent :

- Les mesures anti-érosives : reboisement, fixation des berges, terrassement et création de structure pour le contrôle d’inondation ;
- Les interventions de développement agricole : amélioration foncière, plantation fruitière, viticulture, brise vents et désenclavement des populations riveraines par ouverture et aménagement de pistes rurales ;
- La mobilisation des ressources en eau : construction de retenues collinaires, fonçage et équipement de puits et aménagement de sources ;
- Les activités ciblant la femme rurale défavorisée (activités agricoles et artisanales) et,
- Le renforcement institutionnel (programme de formation, études et équipements).

**Les Impacts sur l’Environnement**
En matière d’environnement, on relèvera:

- l’extension des superficies forestières (de 202 906 à 216 506 ha),
- la réduction de l’envasement des ouvrages hydrauliques : les aménagements anti-érosifs proposés diminueraient le taux d’envasement annuel de 50%, soit un gain global de 10 Millions de m3 d’eau mobilisée/ an.

Le projet devait créer 30.000 emplois nouveaux directs pendant les cinq années, soit 7.200.000 journées de travail, contribuant ainsi à réduire le taux de chômage de 45 % dans la zone d’intervention.

La composante développement agricole permettrait une meilleure intensification de la production par la diversification des systèmes de culture. La production arboricole passerait de 90.000 qx/an à 1.500.000 qx/an et, la production viticole de 112.000 à 425.000 qx/an à l’année 10 du projet.

La composante mobilisation des ressources en eau permettrait une plus grande capacité d’irrigation et par conséquent une sensible augmentation du potentiel de terres irrigables.

La composante promotion de la femme rurale permettrait d’aider les femmes rurales socialement et économiquement défavorisées à améliorer leur condition de vie en mettant à leur disposition des moyens de production de base (technique de tissage et de broderie, aviculture et apiculture).

La composante renforcement institutionnel aura pour effet le développement des capacités administratives et techniques dans l’organisation rurale décentralisée de la Direction Générale des Forêts (DGF).
Le Système de Production
Les programmes dans les années 70 ont souvent été conçus et mis en œuvre par rapport à un objectif technique, sans considération suffisante des enclaves agricoles et de la nécessité d’intégration des populations riveraines qui ne représentaient le plus souvent qu’une source de main d’œuvre pour les chantiers.

C’est ainsi qu’au niveau de ces enclaves agricoles s’est développé une agriculture de subsistance où les populations concernées tentaient d’augmenter les rendements non pas par l’intensification des pratiques agricoles, mais plutôt par l’extension des terres par défrichement des sols à couverture permanente.

Les interventions prévues visent aussi bien la promotion de la protection agro-écologique de ces terres que l’augmentation et la diversification de leur production. Ces interventions encouragent également la substitution des cultures céréalières par l’arboriculture sur les terres pentues vulnérables à l’érosion. Il s’agit donc de :

(i) remplacer la céréaliculture par les plantations arboricoles ou fourragères ;
(ii) améliorer la qualité des sols par des travaux de défoncement mécanique (encroûtement important) et d’épierrage ; et
(iii) favoriser les travaux de mobilisation des ressources en eau pour développer des cultures plus rentables.

La Problématique
On relèvera, à travers l’évolution des modes d’interventions dans le domaine du développement rural en Algérie ; que l’essentiel des actions de développement rural étaient basés sur l’assistanat de l’Etat vis a vis des agriculteurs. Les années qui suivront la décennie 70, grâce, entre autres, aux différents programmes d’ajustement structurel, permettront l’émergence d’une agriculture libérale à travers les changements introduits par la globalisation des marchés et la mondialisation des échanges. Cette ouverture va dès lors intégrer la philosophie du développement durable avec l’approche participative, et l’émergence du développement local. Pour lutter contre le chômage, le gouvernement algérien va appuyer divers programmes multisectoriels à haute intensité de main d’œuvre conçus pour générer un très grand nombre d’emplois. C’est dans ce cadre que la Direction Générale des Forêts a initié le PER qui a bénéficié d’un prêt de la Banque mondiale pour son cofinancement, et qui vise la promotion de l’emploi et l’amélioration des conditions de vie des populations par la création d’activités à haute intensité de main d’œuvre.

La Pratique

Innovations et Changements Introduits
La démarche adoptée repose sur l’implication de la population rurale de manière durable et responsable, dans le choix et la mise en œuvre des activités du projet. Cette approche de type participatif vise surtout à intégrer ces populations dans une dynamique de durabilité des actions du projet. Cet intérêt particulier porté aux différentes activités de ce projet, notamment celles relatives aux plantations fruitières et à la mobilisation des ressources en eau, a impulsé une dynamique de développement agricole sans précédent dans la région et n’a pas manqué d’inspirer la mise en place de programmes similaires dans les autres régions du pays (Projets de Proximité de Développement Rural, notamment).
L’introduction et l’application du mode participatif dans la mise en œuvre des actions a contribué au succès de l’adhésion des fellahs au PER. On assiste à un recentrage des actions sur les modes d’implication des populations. Cette démarche prévoit que chaque activité qui intéresse les populations concernées, soit basée sur un besoin exprimé par le ou les bénéficiaires et que la mise en priorité des activités proposées soit le résultat d’un processus participatif.

**Au Plan Organisationnel**

La gestion décentralisée du projet constitue un puissant facteur de mobilisation des potentiels locaux et contribue au renforcement des capacités locales de planification et la mise en place d’un système de suivi/évaluation efficient des actions du projet. C’est aussi une opportunité ouverte pour accroître la durabilité de ces actions grâce au développement de la gouvernance locale.

La prise de conscience par les populations de la nécessité du reboisement augure de l’intérêt porté à l’environnement et à ses exigences pour atténuer les effets de l’érosion. On assiste à des mutations agricoles, en termes d’attitudes, dans le choix des productions et des techniques agricoles, aussi bien que dans l’émergence de nouvelles pratiques culturales qui se traduisent par l’introduction du système d’irrigation goutte à goutte par exemple. Les fellahs sont rentrés dans la dynamique du calcul économique : remplacement de la céréaliculture par la viticulture de cave avec des engagements contractuels avec l’Office National de Commercialisation des Vins, et avec des entrepreneurs privés qui se sont lancés dans la production vinicole après avoir restauré des caves laissées en abandon pour les réhabiliter avec de nouvelles productions commercialisées sur le marché depuis peu.

Le PER a permis aux bénéficiaires de s’équiper, ce qui a conduit à un changement de comportement en matière d’investissement : rénovation du moteur d’un tracteur, achat de matériel d’irrigation (tuyaux, moto-pompes, outillage) avec les bénéfices des premières récoltes de fruits. L’autofinancement de la maintenance est significatif de la rentabilité économique des investissements dès les premières années de la mise en œuvre du projet.

**Les Bonnes Pratiques Économiques**

La régulation des circuits commerciaux commence à s’opérer par la vente directe aux marchés des fruits et légumes: auparavant des mandataires achetaient les vergers sur pied, pratique qui continue certes, mais qui commence à être supplantée par des ventes directes par les fellahs. Ce raccourci dans la chaîne de distribution aboutira logiquement à une diminution des prix des produits agricoles du fait de la diminution des marges jadis prélevées par les mandataires.

L’esprit d’entrepreneunariat se développe peu à peu : création d’huileries, de conserveries de fruits, d’unités de transformation en jus de fruits, de caves par les privés pour la viti-viniculture qui redémarrer sérieusement. L’augmentation du programme apicole puisque le nombre de vergers augmentant, cela permet une meilleure pollinisation ainsi que la création de revenu supplémentaire. Les fellahs sont conscients de la nécessité de se regrouper pour les achats de produits phytosanitaires notamment qui coûtent relativement cher.
Le PER a permis l’introduction d’innovations dans la conduite de vergers (amélioration de la technique de palissage du vignoble et même des arbres fruitiers) : et dans la mobilisation de l’eau (économie). Les effets induits de l’arboriculture dans des zones traditionnelles de maraîchage sont la demande de brise-vents, la demande de clôtures pour protéger mais aussi délimiter leurs vergers ainsi que les demandes de prêts bancaires grâce au PER.

Les effets de l’introduction de l’arboriculture fruitière se traduisent par une prise en charge concrète : la systématisation des clôtures, l’utilisation de produits phytosanitaires, la création de nouveaux emplois induits pour la cueillette et le gardiennage. Par ailleurs, la création de nombreux maraîchages en intercalaires et la multiplication des vergers ont concouru probablement à l’augmentation de la SAU.

La diffusion de l’innovation en matières de pratiques culturelles se propage assez rapidement grâce à l’esprit d’émulation qui s’est instauré un peu partout et aux résultats obtenus par certains fellahs. L’incidence financière des produits apicoles est bien perçue comme intrant nouveau dans la stratégie d’investissement à terme, et cela illustre une dimension entrepreneuriale dans la démarche introduite au sein du ménage.

Au Plan de l’Approche Genre
La femme prend une nouvelle place dans la famille puisqu’elle peut intervenir dans l’investissement de l’argent gagné dans la pratique productive du ménage avec la valorisation qu’apporte l’offre des opportunités du projet, on relève une sorte d’élévation et de reconnaissance d’un nouveau « standing » de la femme. Le fait même que ce soit expressément à son adresse que sont attribuées les poules, les ruches ou la machine à coudre, apporte une vision différente du mari ou du père à l’égard de la femme: elle est reconnue comme source de revenus et comme exploitante ou bien travailleuse, voire propriétaire. Cela induit par-là même une autre identité et une reconnaissance de soi d’abord mais de l’autre, l’homme, forcé de porter un autre regard sur la femme dès lors qu’elle est ciblée comme destinataire d’un bien de production.

La gestion durable des ressources est assurée par la participation des bénéficiaires hommes et femmes et par la prise en compte des savoirs-faire locaux du fait que les paysans sont impliqués dès le départ dans la programmation du projet et surtout du fait qu’ils ont intégré l’idée que ce projet était le leur et non pas celui de l’administration seulement.

Au Plan des Résultats Atteints
Résorption du chômage grâce à la création d’emploi au niveau des chantiers de grands travaux de reboisement, de plantation fruitière, de mise en valeur, de correction torrentielle, de plantation viticole et fruitière. Amélioration complémentaire du revenu des exploitations familiales grâce notamment au soutien apporté à l’apiculture et à des petits élevages avicoles. Progression continue des revenus appelée à se renforcer dans le temps grâce à la dynamique entrepreneuriale introduite par le PER.

Préservation du milieu, élargissement de la couverture forestière et amélioration des conditions de vie de la population dans un développement durable grâce à une dynamique de pluri-activités pour l’amélioration du revenu des populations ainsi que la maîtrise des flux migratoires.
Valorisation des atouts et potentialités de ces zones. Le PER a permis souvent la réinstallation et le retour des populations qui ont déserté leur douar à cause de l’insécurité, se sont remis au travail et ont réoccupé leur terroir. L’ouverture et l’aménagement de pistes ont permis le désenclavement en facilitant les accès.

Valorisation de l’élément humain par la formation, l’apprentissage et la participation des populations locales, en particulier des femmes,

Les Facteurs Clés de Réussite

Le PER, par sa flexibilité, tient compte de la diversité des terroirs, les modes de vie et les activités dominantes de chacun d’eux, car chacune des régions se caractérise par une « histoire » agricole particulière, et surtout par une paysannerie sociologiquement différenciée. Les résultats les plus significatifs comme qui ont entraîné un changement au niveau institutionnel et des politiques différentes sont que le PER a permis aussi une réorganisation de l’attitude et du comportement de l’administration dans sa façon de travailler à travers les conditions nécessaires à la réussite d’une telle approche et les adaptations requises au niveau institutionnel pour l’harmonisation des stratégies d’intervention en milieu rural et la création des meilleurs cadres de concertation avec les partenaires.

Quant aux leviers ayant permis le changement, et les principales raisons ayant contribué au succès on peut globalement les résumer à la mise en œuvre d’un programme de formation des cadres aux méthodes de planification et de gestion décentralisée par les techniques de l’approche participative qui s’est traduit par une immersion de l’ensemble des services techniques dans un processus consultatif basé sur la concertation et la participation d’un nombre croissant de parties prenantes. Ce processus de formation a généré des effets de diffusion qui commencent à se concrétiser à travers les nouveaux programmes de développement rural lancés par le Ministère de l’Agriculture dans une perspective mieux comprise de développement durable.

Par ailleurs, l’implication importante des petites et moyennes entreprises du secteur privé a eu, elle aussi, des effets importants, directs et indirects, sur la création d’emplois et l’apport de revenus. Le fort accroissement de la création d’emplois produit par les chantiers du PER est accompagné de plus en plus par la demande de main d’œuvre introduite par les exigences des travaux de récolte de fruits et de vendange du vignoble ainsi que des travaux d’entretien.

Les impacts

Le PER a initialisé un processus cumulatif qu’il est important de préciser dans sa dynamique ; car c’est à travers cette dynamique d’accumulation que l’on peut mesurer quelle a été la contribution de cette valeur ajoutée, quelles en sont les raisons, et l’intérêt d’élargir les bonnes pratiques du PER. L’impact de la contribution du PER peut se situer à trois niveaux essentiels que l’on peut globalement évaluer comme suit:

- Les retombées des réalisations physiques;
- La valeur ajoutée sur une économie en voie de libéralisation;
- Les changements dans la gouvernance institutionnelle et locale;
- Une conception nouvelle dans l’exécution de l’assistance technique.
Les Retombées des Réalisations Physiques

Au-delà de la reconstitution des écosystèmes, le PER a permis :

- d’assurer une modernisation des exploitations traditionnelles qui s’est traduite dans certaines régions par l’introduction de nouvelles spéculations et activités (arboriculture fruitière, apiculture);
- les efforts entrepris par le PER dans le domaine de la mobilisation des ressources hydriques ont permis d’assurer le développement d’une base productive qui, nonobstant l’augmentation des quantités, agit sur la structure de la production agricole en général, notamment par le captage des sources et la généralisation de la micro irrigation ;
- il a permis la réintroduction de la vigne de coteau dans de nombreuses régions et renouvelé par ailleurs les cultures traditionnelles de l’olive, de l’amande et de la figue ;
- il a ouvert la voie une croissance qui sera soutenue au cours des prochaines années par la montée en puissance d’une dynamique de production diversifiée augurant d’une pérennité à long terme.

Il reste cependant à prendre en charge les activités en amont et en aval de la production agricole. Cela devrait inciter à aider les acteurs locaux dans l’appréhension de l’ensemble de la chaîne de production, de conditionnement et transformation et de commercialisation.

La Valeur Ajoutée de l’Impact Socio-Économique

Le processus d’accumulation s’est traduit progressivement par :

- La création d’un environnement favorable au développement du secteur privé confortant le passage à une économie de marché grâce à la libéralisation progressive des circuits commerciaux ;
- L’instauration d’un nouveau partenariat entre pouvoirs publics, entreprises privées et associations d’agriculteurs et irriguants ;
- La génération de revenus d’appoint pour les fellahs les plus pauvres et le renforcement de leurs capacités de négociation et de gestion au niveau local et régional ;
- Une intégration moins informelle au circuit commercial d’un plus grand nombre de paysans pratiquant l’arboriculture dans un marché en croissance assuré d’une rentabilité pérenne grâce à l’élargissement de cette production arboricole fruitière et des perspectives d’exportation ;
- Le renforcement des initiatives privées qui apportent un plus à la croissance économique et participent à la réussite économique ;
- Et enfin, la mise en œuvre d’une planification décentralisée des actions de développement permettant une concertation locale et plus sociale.

Les Changements en Matière de Gouvernance

C’est à travers son mode d’exécution, particulièrement les techniques de planification et gestion décentralisées par l’approche participative, que le PER a permis d’inspirer largement la démultiplication des projets de proximité de développement rural (PPDR) sur lesquels se fonde la stratégie actuelle du développement rural du pays. Des changements positifs se sont produits.
par l’introduction de modifications importantes dans la façon de gérer les projets, aussi bien à l’échelon central qu’au niveau local. On peut citer :

- le renforcement des compétences, obtenu par l’amélioration des capacités de gestion, a conduit au renforcement global des capacités des institutions de l’État dans la création d’un environnement propice à l’exercice d’une fonction publique efficace et légère, les cellules de gestion du projet, évitant les goulets d’étranglement bureaucratiques, et assurant plus de transparence dans la gestion des projet et une responsabilité partagée ;
- la capacité de mettre en œuvre le projet par un renforcement ciblé des agents de développement grâce à un appui en formations continues telles que l’approche participative ;
- la promotion concertée de programmes concrets assortis d’échéanciers avec l’introduction de mécanismes et procédures de contrôle qui permettent de surveiller régulièrement l’application sur le terrain.

L’impulsion des dynamiques régionales, suscitées par le PER, a conduit au renforcement de la décentralisation. Cette décentralisation permet de redéfinir les relations entre l’État et la société civile et les responsabilités de chacun. Ce renforcement de l’initiative locale a augmenté les capacités d’action de la société civile notamment à travers :

- la promotion de la perception du développement durable et de la mise en œuvre de projets de proximité ;
- la libération des potentialités face aux demandes de participation des populations ;
- l’image du projet qui s’est présenté d’emblée comme un bien commun visant des buts partagés et s’inscrivant dans la durée.

**Une Nouvelle Conception de l’Assistance Technique**

La méthode d’intervention du PER a permis de restaurer les capacités existantes de construction de projets à travers une nouvelle manière d’élaboration qui exclut la démarche unilatérale et privilégie la concertation participative insistant sur la nécessité de faire partager les buts du projet. Par ailleurs, la promotion de l’expertise locale a été un facteur déterminant dans ce processus d’appropriation des techniques organisant ainsi la relève et constituant une mesure de bonne administration fondée sur la décentralisation et la responsabilité des actes. Grâce aux méthodes du système de suivi et d’évaluation instauré par la Banque mondiale, le PER a permis d’assurer un meilleur apprentissage et une plus grande rigueur dans la maîtrise de la gestion financière, mais aussi, et surtout, dans les différentes actions d’évaluation, notamment l’évaluation sociale et environnementale.

**La Formation**

La formation joue un rôle primordial dans la réussite de la mise en œuvre de l’approche participative. Sans formation, les partenaires du développement rural ne pourront pas être initiés aux principes, méthodes et avantages de la participation populaire au développement. La formation en matière d’approche participative s’adresse simultanément aux techniciens de tous niveaux et aux agriculteurs. C’est pourquoi un programme de formation aux méthodes et
techniques participatives a été mis en place. L’objectif de ce programme vise le renforcement de la capacité de la DGF dans l’utilisation des techniques participatives dans la zone du PER. De ce fait il a été projeté la formation de formateurs et de spécialistes et d’agents de développement impliqués dans la réalisation du projet.

A travers la mise en œuvre d’une série d’étapes, la méthodologie de l’approche participative a pour objectif général d’impliquer et d’associer de manière étroite les populations dans le diagnostic, l’identification, la programmation, la mise en œuvre et le suivi des actions à mener au niveau du terroir et de définir les responsabilités des différents partenaires dans le suivi et la gestion des ressources. La mise en œuvre de l’approche participative impose l’apprentissage d’un mode d’intervention nouveau tant pour les populations qui avaient une perception déformée des forestiers, agents de répression, et de l’Etat, pourvoyeur de fonds que pour les agents de développement qui devaient apprendre à écouter les populations et ne pas imposer a priori leur savoir technique exclusivement.

Les Objectifs du Premier Cycle de Formation

- Conception et mise en œuvre d’un programme de formation en méthodes et techniques participatives.
- Formation de 10 formateurs en MAP.
- Formation d’agents de développement.
- Elaboration de supports didactiques adaptés au contexte algérien
- Intégration de la MAP dans la démarche de gestion décentralisée des projets de la DGF.

Ce premier cycle avait par ailleurs deux objectifs spécifiques :
- améliorer les capacités des cadres impliqués dans la planification et la gestion de projets utilisant des méthodes et techniques participatives (formation de planificateurs au niveau décentralisé)
- développer les capacités des cadres impliqués dans la préparation et la gestion d’activités de formation (formation de formateurs)

Il s’agissait de faire comprendre comment les méthodes et les outils utilisés lors de la mise en œuvre des différentes étapes du cycle de formation devaient susciter la participation de la population et instaurer le climat de confiance et de dialogue indispensable entre la population et les agents de développement

Les objectifs secondaires étaient:

- le développement de la communication, en appui à l’approche participative, qui nécessitait cependant certains préalables ainsi que la définition d’une stratégie de communication adaptée au contexte national, régional et local.
- La mise en œuvre d’un processus dynamique de diffusion des méthodes de l’approche participative par des effets d’entraînement grâce à une formation en cascade des agents de développement pour la maîtrise des outils.
Opportunités pour la Généralisation de cette Pratique

Le PER a ouvert la possibilité de généralisation au reste du pays de ce mode de développement. C’est ainsi qu’un deuxième projet s’appuyant sur l’expérience du premier et mettant en avant les principes de la démarche participative est en cours de mise en œuvre. Les résultats positifs enregistrés et la dynamique participative impulsée, ont milité pour l’extrapolation de ce type de projet, notamment sur le plan de la démarche, du mode de financement et des modalités de mise en œuvre, à d’autres zones présentant les mêmes caractéristiques agro-écologiques et socio-économiques. Ce projet a pour but également de développer des emplois en milieu rural à travers la réalisation et la réhabilitation d’infrastructures agricoles et de protection des ressources naturelles. Les résultats positifs enregistrés et la dynamique participative impulsée, ont milité pour l’extrapolation de ce type de projet. Le PER 2 a pour but également de développer des emplois en milieu rural à travers la réalisation et la réhabilitation d’infrastructures agricoles et de protection des ressources naturelles. Le projet proposé cible des communes spécifiques situées dans les wilayas de Tiaret, Tissemsilt, Chlef, Ain Defla, Médéa et Bouira. Comme le PER 1, il vise à :

- promouvoir l’emploi et réduire le chômage en milieu rural de manière durable par la création d’actifs ;
- augmenter les revenus et réduire la pauvreté en milieu rural par le biais d’activités économiques rentables à haute intensité de main d’œuvre, et durables du point de vue de la préservation des ressources naturelles ; et
- améliorer les conditions de vie en milieu rural par le biais de la création et de la réhabilitation des infrastructures de mobilisation des ressources en eau et de désenclavement avec la participation des populations affectées.

La zone de projet vient en prolongement de celle du PER 1 et couvre six (6) wilayas du Centre Ouest algérien avec 12 périmètres d’intervention, totalisant une superficie de 13 467 Km² et regroupant 93 communes.

On peut dire en conclusion que le PER a permis de capitaliser une expérience largement concluante en matière de développement participatif et d’intégration des populations rurales par le biais de l’approche participative. Elle a permis par ailleurs d’enrichir la stratégie de développement rural durable initiée par le gouvernement en assurant le champ d’expérimentation d’un programme pluridisciplinaire et multidimensionnel qui se base sur les orientations nationales en matière d’aménagement, notamment en zones de montagnes, du Plan National de Développement Agricole (PNDa) qui en a constitué le réceptacle.
Références


Rapport d’évaluation de l’impact social (O. Benbekhti)

Rapport final sur la formation à la MAP (O. Benbekhti)

Title of practice: Research and development in action: Promoting food security and well-being using farmer life schools

Country: South Africa

Authors: Maxwell Mudhara, Monique Salomon and Kees Swaans

Category of practice: Action research with HIV/AIDS affected farming households

Context and Genesis

Communal areas in rural South Africa present a paradox when contrasted to the highly developed urban and large scale commercial farming areas within the country. In the communal areas, one finds the typical smallholder farmer. Netting (1993) described smallholder farmers as being constituted around the household. The household is the major social and economic unit through which management of resources and organization of consumption occurs (Netting, 1993; Timmer et al, 1983; Hilbebrand, 1986, de Koeijer et al, 1999, Ruben et al, 1998). Smallholder households engage in diverse activities, such that they tend to have limited management time for undertaking any activity. In addition, low education levels and limited access to information tend to reduce the quality of management on small farms. Services such as information, marketing, transportation, storage and processing are limited (Hildebrand, 1986). Nevertheless, the households interact with the market to satisfy some requirements which they can not produce internally. Some labor is often dedicated to off-farm activities or production for the market. Such allocation occurs when the alternative activities a higher return or reduce the income risk associated with their traditional activities. The many activities occurring within the household are for the common good of the members. Nevertheless members undertake different activities depending on their expertise. The smallholder farmers in communal farming areas in South Africa fit this description. Theirs is a complex system, with an additional complexity deriving from the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS infection. Estimates indicate that the infection rates in SA are as high as 21% and could be higher in localized areas such as KwaZulu-Natal.

HIV/AIDS has adverse effects on the ability of households to lead sustainable livelihoods. The disease usually eliminates the bread winners, leaving vulnerable members, particularly females headed or child headed households. Often, households liquidate accumulated assets to meet medical costs of the sick or funeral expenses of the dead. The productive household members often find themselves expending considerable amount of time giving attention to the sick. This entails new development challenges in the face of the disease.

Under these circumstances, research needs to move beyond being academic to contribute to alleviating the precarious plight of smallholder farmers facing the HIV/AIDS pandemic. This entails designing action research programmes, where the research seeks to address issues of priority and immediate relevance to the intended beneficiaries. Such research methodologies

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require participatory approaches at all levels, i.e., identifying the developmental needs and then developing the technologies. One such approach is the Farmer Life School (FLS), which is a next generation development approach to the Farmer Field Schools (FFS). The FLS approach was employed in Msinga of KwaZulu-Natal province in South Africa.

Msinga is one of four Local Councils of the Umginyathi District situated in the Province of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The soils in Msinga are of poor quality, accompanied by adverse climatic conditions. The area has an estimated population of 160,000 people, with population density going up to as high as 1,400 persons per square kilometer.

HIV/AIDS infection rates in Msinga are high and increasing. In 2002, infection rates were estimated to be 15% of the total population and 65% of the sexually active females. As is typical of most communal areas, most males migrate to the urban areas in search of employment. This means that females constitute the majority of the adults. The IDP notes that females constitute 58% of the population, meaning that the burden of most activities at the household level is the responsibility of women. The areas also have very low literacy rates, especially among women.

Sinozwelo Drop-In Centre is one of the main organizations supporting HIV/AIDS infected and affected people in the Msinga District of KwaZulu-Natal. In 2003, with the help of HBC-workers, Sinozwelo mobilized people from HIV/AIDS affected and poverty stricken households into Support Groups around HIV/AIDS and food security. At the end of 2003, the Farmer Support Group (FSG) established a partnership with Sinozwelo Drop-In Centre and the Vrije Universiteit Amsterdam to address the negative impact of HIV/AIDS and the challenges of food insecurity on rural livelihoods using the FLS approach.

**The Practice**

An action research project, with specific attention on women, was designed to stimulate discussion on how HIV/AIDS affects infected and/or affected households, to discuss and negotiate ways in which the said households could protect themselves against HIV and the impact of AIDS, and to achieve food security and well-being under the prevailing circumstances.

Sinozwelo organised the farmers into three groups comprising between 20-25 members of both HIV/AIDS infected and affected households. Infected individuals were HIV positive and their status was usually identified during pregnancy. Affected individuals either had an HIV/AIDS positive member or had experienced death of a breadwinner or had orphans. Having groups comprising both infected and affected members was to minimise the potential stigmatisation and discrimination of the groups. In most cases, the members were not aware of their HIV/AIDS status.

The main aim of the project was to “Contribute to an improved food security and well-being of HIV/AIDS infected and affected farmers and households in Msinga district by increasing the resistance and resilience to HIV/AIDS at the household level.”
The specific objectives that underpin the project are:

- To improve insight into the relation between HIV/AIDS, agriculture, food security, and rural livelihood at the individual and household level;
- To understand the perceptions, attitudes, and practices of infected and affected farmers in relation to HIV/AIDS and farming, and the constraints and opportunities this offers to prevent and mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS;
- To strengthen capacity in sustainable farming in response to HIV/AIDS among infected and affected farmers;
- To identify, test and evaluate technical and social innovations in farming systems for their potential to prevent and mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS on rural livelihood of households;
- To transform infected and affected farmers to be able and willing to take their future in their own hands;
- To influence perceptions, attitudes and practices among stakeholders in relation to HIV/AIDS and food security based on a process of mutual learning;
- To improve the conceptual and methodological framework of innovation development in farming systems to prevent and mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS on rural livelihood of households.

Key steps undertaken to initiate the programme are as follows:

1. Initiation and preparation;
2. In-depth study;
3. Exchange and integration of information;
4. Priority setting and planning;
5. Project formulation and implementation.

The experience described here is the use of FLS, an innovative approach of conducting action research, in a semi-arid communal area KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The FLS approach is built on the theoretical underpinning used in FFS. FLS takes cognisance of location specific situations, allowing local knowledge, local cultures, values and institutions, and combine these with scientific knowledge and conventional ideas and practices, along with appropriate levels of experimentation and discovery. As in FFS, in FLS, farmers are trained in a school without walls, situated in the field, and the field is used as the main reference material. Farmers and facilitators are co-learners and farmers learn through active experimentation. With FLS, the agenda discussed in the open-classroom is expanded to include issues that affect farmers in their fields and in life, in general. The additional dimension is of going beyond the field activities, to include the socio-economic and socio-cultural issues not only into context, but into the agenda. As such, the activities in the field could be meant to strengthen the farmers’ agricultural knowledge. Other issues for discussion include HIV/AIDS, marketing, domestic violence, inheritance, etc., have a bearing on the broader well being and livelihoods of communities. The development issues included in the programme have to be pertinent to the farmers. Farmers and facilitators systematically identify areas in which to learn. The learning process involves discussions of issues and undertaking agricultural production activities that benefit target farmers.
The FFS uses the Agro-Ecosystem Analysis (AESA) and field experiments, yet the FLS uses the Human Ecosystem Analysis (HESA) during weekly meetings. In HESA, the farmers look at issues related to their daily lives. To implement the FLS in Msinga, a curriculum was drawn up from discussions with farmers, literature review, experience gained from Junior FLSs visited in Mozambique and on expert advice. The curriculum designed was synthesised at a workshop convened at FSG. Topics identified for the curriculum are as follows:

i. Getting to know each other, FLS outline, rules;
ii. Social organisation and vision building during which members expressed their vision of where they would want to see the garden activities after two years;
iii. Sustainable farming: An extension officer presented alternative farming methods on topics centered on low external input use such as mulching, cattle manure, and composting. They also discussed crop varieties and experimentation.
iv. Nutrition and HIV/AIDS: This was presented to the groups by a Nutritionist from the local hospital. Topics included nutritious foods, nutritious crops, the relationship between health and nutrition, and the link between HIV/AIDS and nutrition.
v. HIV/AIDS and social aspects were presented by the social worker. They talked about social grants and caring for the HIV/AIDS infected.

These topics were perceived important for increasing farmers’ knowledge, awareness of what they needed to do to improve their livelihoods. Nevertheless, the curriculum derived from this workshop was modified during implementation in view of the realities prevailing on the ground.

The FLS implementation was considered to have three key components:
1. The socialisation where members of the groups to open up to each other and gain empathy for each other’s circumstances. Activities were also included in the curriculum to help participants relax and develop closer trust and friendship.
2. The practical aspect in the garden which served both as a learning process and to contribute to food security in kind.
3. The discussion session where farmers analysed the activities in the gardens were and other life affecting issues.

The groups met once a week at the garden. Regarding groups, members came together to socialise and discuss broad issues related to the level of participation of their members and functions of the executive committees of the groups, etc. This component developed the leadership and communication skills of the members. The groups were facilitated to discuss a topic from the curriculum. In the garden activities, members worked and/or assessed the progress of the crops in the garden by visual inspection and discussion of key observations. Implementing the FLS through gardens allowed farmers to learn and produce food crops.

Gardens were the cornerstone of the FLS and contributed directly to food security of the group members, and created the environment for farmers to learn and share knowledge. Groups regard gardens as a source of food for their families. Members received maize for consumption. Some of the maize was sold through the group and the money was kept in a common account. Groups have organised themselves as money saving clubs. They believe that the gardens will generate enough income to strengthen this part of the project. Financial resources were required to initiate production activities in the garden. Resources included draft power, seeds, fertilisers,
perimeter fencing, etc. Sinozwelo provided these material requirements. There was also need to facilitate the activities that farmers would undertake in the FLS. FGS provided the personnel and resources for facilitation. FSG also convened monthly meetings where the stakeholders, including farmer representatives, met to review the activities in the FLS. The meetings ensured that all stakeholders were held accountable to meeting their obligations. The Free University of Amsterdam conducted studies on the implementation process.

Assessment and Impact

Gardens produced maize which was either shared (to fulfil food security need of was sold to realise income. Farmers shared the agricultural produce from the gardens. Maize was also sold to the community at large. The money realised from selling garden produce was deposited into project accounts. Farmers ranked the access of food from the gardens as one of the major benefits from the undertaking. They also were willing to continue with the project to realise the food security benefits in future. They also realised that the opening of the bank accounts allowed them to access other resources or the use the savings for activities that would allow them to develop further.

Farmers reflected on the FLS and indicated that they had gained confidence to drive the decision making process and the activities in the gardens. The FLS approach allowed the farmers to participate in planning and implementation, thus enhancing their capacity to deal with development issues, regardless of the low literacy rates within the groups. Low literacy rates tended to negatively militate on the farmers’ readiness to understand the functions of their committees. Even some members of the executive were not clear of their role, resulting in limited effectiveness. This had a negative effect on the quality of participation in decision making of other group members.

Issues related to governance, participation and commitment to the project, had implications on planning, problem solving and other processes that impact on realisation of the FLS objectives. They also had implications on the sustainability of the project activities. Group dynamics meant that no clear and easy solutions existed for addressing the institutional issues. Groups differed in levels of cohesion, which in turn depended of commitment to participation. While groups have a core group of ‘committed’ members, who actively participate in the FLSs, there is also another segment of members that does not participate or show any commitment to the work.

The expectations of the members, in turn, determined the level of participation. Gardens played a pivotal role in bridging up this expectation. Activities in the gardens stimulated attendance and have to run parallel to the discussion forum.

Holding FLS sessions once a week established consistency and encouraged participation. However, some members regarded this frequency as too high. Therefore, a balance is required in the frequency of the meetings, recognising the need to keep the activity vibrant and yet not stifling the activities that particularly women have to accomplish within their households.

The group members remembered the broader topics or themes discussed during the practical sessions in the garden, showing that they gained knowledge during these FLS sessions. This
emphasised the importance of carrying out practical exercises in conjunction with theoretical training exercises.

Working with groups creates a self-reinforcing environment, which promotes learning, particularly from peers. The group members back-up each other. The first phase enabled the members to learn to work together and gain strength from interacting with their peers. Farmers considered trials carried out in the gardens to have been particularly useful as they allowed them to try out things, yet also enabling them to use newly acquired skills.

The FLS approach allowed women, i.e., those most vulnerable to HIV/AIDS impacts, to actively participate in generating a deeper understanding of their lives and how they can strengthen themselves by taking a positive attitude to life. It also allows them to share their experiences and learn from each other.

The in-depth study on stigma and discrimination revealed that FLS presents a platform for detailed studies on HIV/AIDS. The discussions during the in-depth study improved members’ insight in HIV/AIDS, and widened their ways of preventing and mitigating the impact of the disease.

FLS allowed a more holistic coverage of the issues related to the farmers’ livelihoods. Besides the in-roads made with regard to awareness of HIV/AIDS, FLSs also addressed the other side of the farmers life, i.e., the farming system, food security, and rural livelihood in general.

The FLS approach created room for in-depth study, through discussion, of specific issues with the groups. This was used in one of the groups to study the nature and impact of HIV/AIDS stigma and discrimination within the groups and the broader community. A study, implemented through discussion, whose objective was to generate a better understanding of the influence of stigma and discrimination on infected people and affected households’ ability to cope with HIV/AIDS in Msinga, was conducted with the groups. It also sought to identify points of entry for efforts on effective HIV/AIDS intervention strategies. The study methodology comprised focus groups discussions the members of the groups. In addition, interviews and informal conversations with service providers were held.

**Stigma and Discrimination**

The FLS enabled the group members to talk openly about HIV among themselves. This would allow for the development of more responsive interventions to deal with stigma and discrimination. Therefore, the approach has the potential of improving the knowledge that members have about the disease and how they can deal with it. It is also a friendly an avenue for outsiders to conduct research through the discussion forums.

The groups revealed that HIV stigmatisation manifested itself in various ways in the community. Through stigmatisation, every disease was perceived as related to HIV and having simple common illnesses like flue became embarrassing. HIV was associated with promiscuous behaviour, to the total disregard of the many ways that one, especially women, could become infected. Therefore, the infected or affected denied the existence of the disease, at least publicly.
The net result is that people were not confident to disclose their status for fear of stigmatisation. Consequently, appropriate diagnosis and treatment of the disease was not sought.

HIV positive individuals are discriminated in social activities. Contact with the positive person, e.g., through shaking of hands or even sitting next such a person, is avoided. This is not only a manifestation of discrimination but also a genuine ignorance about the disease. The discrimination also manifests itself as resentment of the infected when the community regards that the infected did something wrong to acquiring the disease, e.g., promiscuity.

**Factors Contributing to Successes and Failures**

FLS require that farmers are at least literate so that they effectively follow the curriculum. The major challenge in Msinga is the low literacy rates, especially among women. However, FLS showed versatility in dealing with developmental issues, in general and agricultural and HIV/AIDS related issues, in particular. Farmers enjoyed the open discussion forums and working together in the gardens. They also allow multiple stakeholders, with varied interests to find a common niche within the activities of the FLS, e.g., FSG, Sinozwelo Drop-in Centre and Free University of Amsterdam.

HIV/AIDS infected and affected households are constrained of different resources, especially labour. As a result, members of support groups often have to send their children to represent them or simply fail to attend the meetings regularly due to ill-health or the need to look after the sick.

There is need for a focal point/activity for the FLS, e.g., the garden in this project. The garden motivates members to participate in other aspects of the FLS. However, the members participate more effectively in FLS when something is growing in the garden. Dependence on the garden as focal point meant that the momentum of the programme could not be maintained off-season when there were no crops in the garden. Alternative activities that can make a change in the farmers’ lives and improve food security can be focal points.

The members of the groups did not know the role that the executive committees played in the project. Therefore, project facilitators are required for keeping the group active and focussed, especially during discussions. Facilitators should continuously inform (train) the members on the composition and functions of committees.

The stigmatisation of the FLS groups can have negative effects on the participation of the membership. To minimize stigmatisation, the group identification should not in any way refer to the HIV/AIDS status of the constituent members.

Communication between project partners and participating groups is to be improved through the convening of regular partners meetings. Involvement of other stakeholders, in particular home-based care workers, social workers, and VCT councillors may be required for backstopping and for a more integrated approach that includes health, agriculture and social development. In addition, the strengthening of the committees can be improved so that the quality of the
deliberations at all levels is of high standard. Stronger committees will also empower the groups to be able to take decisions about different aspects of the project. Project partners should continuously clarify their roles in partners meetings so that the groups know whom to approach when they require specific services. A balance is required in the frequency of the meetings, recognising the need to keep the activity vibrant and yet not stifling the activities that women have to accomplish within their households.

There is a need to explore the possibility for engaging groups in other activities to supplement the gardens and to broaden to topics of discussion with the groups. Although the FLS provides an ideal platform for exchange and integration of information, there is need to take account of the diversity among support group members. This entails broadening the activities that the FLS undertakes beyond gardens.

Opportunities for Mainstreaming and Scaling-Up

The FLS present an effective way of mainstreaming HIV/AIDS into farming systems research and development efforts. The FLS are versions of the FFS, which has been developed more elaborately to deal with the new challenges, particularly arising from HIV/AIDS and its feminization. FFS have been widely used in many other African and Asian countries (Darvis, 2005). The FFS approach can be adapted to result in FLS. To progress from FFS to FLS, the issues that are covered in the practicals and discussions are broadened to include non-farming, life-related issues.

References


Title of practice: Farmer field school methodology for information and technology transfer among smallholder farmers. The case of Soil Management Project in western Kenya

Country: Kenya, Western Region

Authors: Mureithi J.G., Nyambati E.M., Mutoko M., Akuno W., Kidula N., and Wamuongo J.

Category of practice: Methodology for information transfer and technology up-scaling

Context and genesis

Description of the Service System
Farmer Field School (FFS) is a participatory approach that uses non-formal adult education methods based on experimental/discovery learning techniques and participatory training (Miagostovich et al., 1999). The FFS approach shifts from targeting farmers with pre-set extension messages to improving farmers’ capacity to analyze their farming systems and practices, and to develop and test possible solutions that address their prioritized needs, combining local and scientific knowledge. The FFS approach emphasizes learning by doing. The learning process takes place in the field and is normally designed to last for a full growing/cropping cycle. This enables farmers to participate fully in implementation of all components of the technology from planting to harvesting. The learning process accords farmers an opportunity to observe and reflect the merits and demerits of the technologies and thereby make informed decisions of whether to adopt them or not.

The approach was adopted in 2001 to scale-up technologies on soil fertility maintenance/improvement, suitable crop varieties, alternative food legumes to beans, insect pest control using plant pesticides and fodder production among smallholders in western Kenya (Mureithi et al., 2003 and 2005; Nyambati et al., 2004). So far a 150 FFS have been conducted and over 3000 farmers have been trained on the technologies and graduated. Several studies conducted to assess the effectiveness of the FFS process have found that high quality learning takes place in the schools, technology adoption is higher among the FFS graduates, FFS graduates are better disseminators of technology knowledge and group cohesion is stronger among FFS participants. And because farmers participate in data collection and evaluation of technology demonstrations during the FFS process, they acquire experimentation skills and eventually become researchers by their own right.

Social, Economic and Institutional Context
In western Kenya the dominant farming system is crop-livestock mixed farming system where intercropping of maize and common bean is closely integrated with livestock production (Nyambati et al., 2003). The population density ranges from 250 to 1200 persons/km². The household land sizes vary from as low as 0.02 acres in the densely populated highlands to as high

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24 Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI), Nairobi, Kenya

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as 100 acres in low potentials areas. Most of the land is under freehold land tenure system, but majority of the farmers have not acquired title deeds for it. About 54% of land is used for growing food crops (e.g. maize, beans, sorghums/millets, and vegetables), 15% for cash crops (e.g. tea, coffee, sugarcane, crops for sale) and 23% for pasture. The mean household size is 6 persons and majority of the households (over 80%) are male headed. Females perform more than half of the household activities. About 50% of household heads are educated to primary school level. The percentage of those with higher level of education is greater in households with livestock. Over 70% of agricultural households have income of less than US $ 65 per month, translating to income per capita of less than US $ 0.36 d⁻¹. There is severe food insecurity because majority of households have no food (particularly maize that is the staple food) for three to eight months in a year. Only about 5% households have piped water and electricity is connected to only about 2% of the households. The mean distance from households to roads passable by vehicles year round is about 3 km and can be as high as 30 km. The average distance from households to the nearest market or trading center is 1.8 km. The poor infrastructure and long distances to urban centers limit access to markets and availability of other essential services. However, there are limited government services mainly for cereal crops and milk. Due to low quantities of farm produces, farmers depend on middlemen for marketing of produce. Informal and semi-formal credit is available but mainly for non-agricultural activities. Formal credit too is available but it is of limited access because farmers do not meet collateral requirements (Mutoko et al., 2005).

Problem/Issue or Circumstances that Gave Rise to it (Mureithi et al., 2003)
Given the need for increased adoption of technologies by the farming rural communities, Kenya Agricultural Research Institute introduced the FFS approach to promote promising technologies of the Soil Management Project (SMP). The SMP was initiated in 1994 to combat soil fertility decline in smallholder farms in Kenya. The first phase ended in year 2000 after being on the ground for six years. At the end of the phase about ten soil management (SM) technologies were ready for wide scale dissemination in neighbouring villages and regions with similar agro-ecological characteristics to the study sites. These technologies were:

- Improved preparation, management and use of organic manures to improve soil fertility.
- Different combinations of organic and inorganic fertilizers for maize, finger millets, forages and vegetables (kales and cabbages).
- Soil improving green manure legumes.
- Low cost soil conservation structures.
- Bean varieties tolerant to bean-fly infestation and root rot.
- Food legumes other than beans for intercropping with maize.
- Suitable forages for waterlogged soils.
- High yielding forage species for milk production.
- Suitable crop varieties for different agro-ecological zones.
- Plant extracts for control of crop pests.

Organizations and Stakeholders Involved
- Kenya Agricultural Research Institute
- The Rockefeller Foundation
- Ministry of Agriculture
- FAO, Nairobi office
The Practice

FFS Process - Steps in Establishing an FFS

1. Village immersion: This is an activity whereby the facilitators of the planned FFS enter into a community. They hold a series of meetings with the local opinion leaders and local administrators in which they explain the objectives and goals of the anticipated activities. They also explain the roles of the facilitators, what they can do and what they may not do. They also discuss what is expected of the community. This is all done with a view to solicit their support in forming the FFSs.

2. Ground working: With the assistance of the opinion leaders, facilitators convene an open meeting with members of the community. In the meeting, the facilitators with assistance of opinion leaders explain the objectives and goals of the anticipated activities. They also explain the roles of the facilitators, what they can do and what they may not do. They also discuss what is expected of the community and the facilitators (levelling of expectations). The site(s) for the school(s) is/are chosen and farmers willing to enrol in the respective school(s) are enlisted.

3. Day one of FFS: In day one of the school, the school leadership is chosen as well as the norms and rules governing the school developed. The FFS concepts and objectives / goals are spelt out to the enrolled participants. The types of records kept by the school are also spelt out.

4. Setting up participatory technology demonstrations (PTDs): In this stage plots are laid out and planted with options of the technology to be scaled-up. A farmer practice plot is included for purposes of comparisons. Participation of farmers in planning, laying out and planting the technological options including their participation in the management of the plots enhances their ability to experiment and fosters farmer to farmer communication by collecting and interpreting of the PTD results.

5a. Running the FFS - The monitoring of PTDs using the agro-ecosystem analysis (AESA) approach: In setting up the AESA, the participants look at the interface between a crop and its physical environment. Farmers interpret the performance of the crop in relation to the physical environment. They collect data, process them and present them to the “class”. Based on the results, decisions are made on their next course of action.

5b. Running FFS - Facilitation of the FFS: This involves the weekly routines of the FFS. It starts with prayers, roll call, taking of the AESA and presentations, and finally decision on the next course of action by the host team. The lesson of the day and / or special topic is presented by the facilitator(s).

6. Special topics covered in the FFS: Households have many objectives that need to be met. They could be productive e.g. food production, or social e.g. disease control, or physical e.g. water provision. These objectives if not met may adversely affect the performance of a FFS. On certain occasions, the FFS members may demand special topics addressing such objectives. In
most cases, this special topic is unrelated to the lesson of the day for a particular FFS but nonetheless important.

7. Field day hosted by the FFS: This is an open day for exchanging messages/information about technologies demonstrated to the wider community with the intention of increasing diffusion and a possibility of enhancing adoption.

8. FFS exchange visits: Exchange visits are made to other FFS in similar or different AEZs and socio-economic settings. They could also be made to other places of particular agricultural interest. The purpose of the exchange visit is mainly to broaden the visitors’ knowledge in terms of how other farmers manage their resources, given their circumstances to meet their farming aspirations. During such visits other unintended benefits may occur through personal interactions and observations such as conflict resolutions among FFS members.

9. Group cohesion and dynamics: Group cohesion is critical to successful completion of any FFS. This is fostered by good leadership and facilitation as well social activities that cement the group together.

10. Graduation of FFS: At graduation those farmers who have successfully gone through the season long FFS training and have met the groups’ norms and conditions for graduation are given certificates. Some of them can facilitate new FFS with the same PTDs.

11. Assessment of FFS graduates one year after graduation: This assessment aims at establishing the value of FFS in diffusing knowledge/technologies, how acquired knowledge contributes to the welfare of farmers and how FFS enhances farmers’ experimentation skills.

Main Activities Undertaken
The FFS approach was introduced in March 2001 in five KARI centres; Kitale, Kakamega, Kisii, Embu and Mtwapa and four major activities were involved
- holding of a FFS sensitization workshop
- training of trainers course (ToT) on the FFS approach
- development of participatory monitoring and evaluation tools for the FFS approach
- support to Msc. students to evaluate the FFS methodology with a view to fine-tuning it.

These activities are briefly described below.

a) FFS sensitization workshop. This workshop was held from 6-8th March 2001 in western Kenya. Its primary objective was to sensitize senior managers of KARI and Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development (MoARD), researchers and extensionists implementing SMP and LRNP, and farmers on the role of FFS approach in information transfer and scaling up of agricultural technologies. About 90 participants attended the workshop. Topics covered during the workshop included genesis of FFS approach and its principles and concepts, running FFS in the field, development of FFS training curricula, monitoring and evaluation of FFS and FFS for scaling-up integrated soil fertility and nutrient management and conservation technologies. Country experiences on FFS approach from Philippines, Indonesia and Kenya were shared during the workshop.
b) Training of Trainers (TOT) course in FFS approach (Mweri and Khisa, 2001). The aim of this course was to equip the SMP and LRNP staffs with methods, skills, attitudes and knowledge to design, facilitate and implement FFS in their project mandate areas. The participants came from the KARI centers. A total of 60 participants underwent the training and they comprised of 30 research officers, 15 extensionists and also 15 farmers. The course was in two parts; the first part covered the theory of the FFS and the second part was a season long training in the field. FAO Kenya provided two facilitators to conduct the training. The second part of the ToT was a season long field-based training on how to run a successful FFS.

c) Development of participatory monitoring and evaluation (PM&E) tools for the FFS (Asiabaka et al., 2002). A six day workshop for development of the tools was held in March 2002. The main objectives were to, a) expose participants to the basics of participatory monitoring and evaluation, b) jointly design and develop participatory tools for internal monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of FFS as an approach for up scaling adoption of technologies, and c) impart participants with analytical and reporting skills for participatory M&E exercises. A total of 35 participants attended the workshop.

d) Support for Msc. students. The Msc. training was included in the project to evaluate effectiveness of FFS approach and to contribute to the development and refinement of the FFS process. Master’s students undertook research to address this objective and also evaluate the rate of technology spread and the impact it had on smallholder farming.

Resources Required
Funds were provided by the Rockefeller Foundation and KARI to support the main activities. Resources/costs required included;
• FFS facilitators – their costs included field allowances, transport, refresher training, stationeries, etc
• Learning materials – flip charts, marker pens, note books, pens and pencils, roll call registers etc.
• Inputs for setting technology demonstrations – seeds, fertilizers, cattle manure, pesticides etc
• Costs to support subject matter specialists to train farmers on topics not related to the technologies up-scaled through the FFS process (e.g. special topics requested by the FFS participants).

Main Stakeholders and Actors in Implementation
Government organizations
• Kenya Agricultural Research Institute
• Ministry of Agriculture
Non-governmental organizations
• Vi-Agroforestry
• Community Mobilization Against desertification
Others
• FAO, Nairobi office
• The Rockefeller Foundation
Main Intended Target Groups
Smallholders and their leaders in project sites in western Kenya

Assessment and Impact

Why it was Considered Successful
Farmers gained significant levels of knowledge of the technology up-scaled; they adopted and disseminated gained knowledge to fellow farmers (Bunyatta et al., 2005; Mwagi et al., 2005).

The FFS process disseminated information to many farmers directly and indirectly. Many neighbouring farmers attend field days hosted by the FFS participants and they learnt a lot about the technology. After graduation the FFS farmers passed on technology knowledge to an average of 10 farmers each (Bunyatta et al., 2005).

FFS farmers acquired leadership skills and group cohesiveness remained strong among FFS farmers (Mwagi et al., 2005).

FFS farmers gained significant experimentation, organizational and decision making skills (Akuno et al., 2005).

The FFS process helped building social capital. This is attested by the fact that FFS groups did not disband after the training but formed FFS networks for accessing more knowledge and improving their welfare in general (Mureithi et al., 2005; Bunyatta et al., 2005).

Evaluation of Benefits
Farmers gained the most! Because FFS process is interactive it helped illiterate farmers to learn better that in a conventional farmer training. Farmers gained more knowledge beyond agriculture through training in the requested special topics. For example in HIV/AIDS prevention and management, improved nutrition, environmental management, group dynamics, poultry and dairy production, recording keeping etc. Because farmers remained as cohesive groups and formed networks they engaged in income generating activities (e.g. seed production of indigenous vegetables) and some were able to attract credit (e.g. a group has attracted credit from a semi-formal credit institution for farming and small rural business).

FFS groups have accessed government funds for development through constituency development funds. The FFS process/training has impacted positively to vulnerable poor especially women in many ways as indicated here:

- More women attend FFS training and hence gaining new skills in farming, leadership and decision making. As a result they help in running women groups in the rural areas and gender differences at house hold level were lessened.
- They gained significant amount of knowledge in HIV/AIDS management and prevention which is a pandemic of greater national and global interest.
- Their livelihoods have been enhanced by being exposed to many different food crops and taught how to add value to their staples. For example, an FFS in one of the project site is baking bread at home and making tomato and fruit jams.
Extension gained too! Because of intense interaction with researchers, extension got more updated on current research findings and sharpened their research skills. The FFS approach was an additional extension methodology in their arsenal.

Researchers did not gain as much! Researchers spent too much time in the field at the expense of conducting research which is their core function. However, they learnt a lot about the methodology and identified its weakness and strengths. Currently they are conducting studies to improve its effectiveness.

Significant Outcomes
The FFS process was recognized by KARI as an important participatory process for technology up-scaling. The number of FFS conducted in KARI centers is a key ‘operation output’ in KARI’s projected outputs.

The Ministry of Agriculture has embraced it as promising extension tool.

The NGOs in project site are recognizing FFS as an up-scaling methodology. These include Livelihood Improvement for Farmer empowerment (LIFE) and VI-Agroforestry.

The FFS methodology has been incorporated in the extension training curriculum of Egerton University. This is due to the interaction of the university professors with four Msc. students sponsored by SMP to undertake research on FFS process.

Factors Contributing to Successes and Failures

Problems Encountered and Solutions Found in Implementing the Practice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problem encountered</th>
<th>Solutions</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Farmers’ expectation were too high at the launching of the FFS process.</td>
<td>1. Spent more time explaining the objectives of the FFS training.</td>
</tr>
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<td>2. Facilitators took time to adjust to the techniques of adult teaching – slow to change attitude.</td>
<td>2. Refresher training of adult teaching/learning techniques.</td>
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<tr>
<td>3. Lack of training curriculum of the technologies to be scaled-up.</td>
<td>3. Developed curriculum during the ToT course.</td>
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<td>4. Participatory monitoring and evaluation tools were not integrated in the FFS process.</td>
<td>4. Identified minimum indicators for PM&amp;E of the FFS process and defined roles on data collection and analysis.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Though some technologies were related, they were promoted as separate technologies.</td>
<td>5. Combined related technologies in one FFS to speed-up up-scaling and to reflect a realistic farming situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Initial AESA too laborious and not linked to technology performance.</td>
<td>6. Minimum parameters linked to technology performance identified.</td>
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<tr>
<td>7. Quality facilitation of farmer and extension trainers deteriorated with time.</td>
<td>7. Organized refresher training of the methodology as researchers backstopped extension and farmer led FFS.</td>
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The Key Driving Forces Contributing to Introducing the Change

- Availability of reliable funding
- Support from KARI and the Ministry of Agriculture
- Technical support from FAO FFS trainers
- Availability of packaged technologies for up-scaling
- Support from local administration
- Strong research-extension-farmer linkages
- The participatory nature of the training
- The opportunity to demand for additional knowledge/information during training
- Group dynamics during the FFS process
- Graduation ceremony at the end of training and award of certificates to graduates

Main Reasons / Factors that Contributed to Success or Failure

**External factors**

- Training of trainers exercise conducted by FAO trainers at the beginning of the project imparted quality FFS facilitation skills to training teams. During the training curriculum for the technologies were developed.
- Availability of backstopping support from FAO trainers and availability of FFS manual.
- Reliable funding from the Rockefeller Foundation and KARI.
- Liberalized input-output markets in Kenya encouraged farmers to seek new knowledge to produce effectively.
- Due to low extension to farmer ratio, extensionists were encouraged to learn and adopt the FFS methodology which is group extension approach.

**Internal factors**

- Village immersion techniques were instrumental in articulating the objectives of the FFS training to community leaders and the community at large.
- The FFS process fitted well with social cultural dynamics of the local community.
- Training farmers in groups was not a new concept and its encouraged by the prevailing extension policy.
- Including farmers in the ToT training demystified the FFS process to the community.
- Support from local administration in mobilising the communities made setting the FFSs much easier.

Opportunities for Mainstreaming and Scaling-up

**Suitability for Scaling-Up**

In the countries where smallholder farming predominates and literacy levels are low the FFS methodology is suitable for training farmers and up-scaling agricultural technologies. This is because of its adult education techniques and focus on group training. It is also suitable in countries whose extension policy favours group training.
Risks Associated with Scaling-Up
Since FFS approach leads to increased technology dissemination and adoption there is the risk of overproduction and hence glut. However, FFS networks can play a role in exploring for markets and playing the role of honest broker.

The current extension policy focuses on group training and hence the suitability of the FFS methodology. The risk here is the likelihood of the policy changing from group focus to individual contacts.

Another risk is deterioration in the quality of facilitation in farmer-led and extension-led FFS. This is because the facilitators may not be very versed with facilitation skills and subject matter of the technologies to be up-scaled. Refresher training and backstopping by trained FFS practitioners can alleviate the risk.

References


Title of Best Practice: Farmer to Farmer Extension System

Country: Kenya

Author: Mercy Karanja

Category of Practice: Farmer to farmer provision of agricultural services

Context and Genesis

Kenya is primarily an agricultural country in which, agriculture constitutes a shrinking, but important 26% of the national gross domestic product. Changes in national GDP figures over the last four decades since independence directly reflect changes in agricultural GDP and this in-turn mainly reflects changes in rainfall amounts and world prices for horticultural products, coffee and tea.

The role of the Kenya’s agricultural sector is to contribute to food security for the population estimated to be about 30 million (National Human Population and Housing Census, 1999). The sector has not performed well due to many factors such as low productivity; produce marketing and the related problems, the long time unfavorable policies and unfavorable weather conditions. Due to the population pressure, land, which is the single most important natural resource for agriculture, has continuously been subdivided. This has led to some parts of arid and semi-arid lands initially unsuitable for crop farming having been converted into agricultural use while sections of natural forests initially protected, have been cultivated in order to provide food and livelihood support to the 67% of the Kenyans living in the rural areas. The number of people estimated to be living in poverty was 17 million (56% of the population by the year 2001). Three quarters of the poor people live in rural areas, according to welfare monitoring surveys (Ministry of Planning and National Development, 2003).

The role played by agriculture in the Kenyan economy cannot be overemphasized. The sector is expected to contribute to the national economic recovery as envisaged in the Economic Recovery Strategy for Wealth and Employment Creation. The sector contributes 26% directly to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and a further 27% indirectly. The sector accounts for 80% of rural employment, 60% of export earnings, 45% of annual government revenue and almost all raw materials for agro-industries. The Kenyan agriculture is mainly rain-fed with 20% of land being medium to high potential and producing most of the crops while 75% is arid and semi-arid lands (Nasals), receiving little and unreliable rainfall and is best suited for extensive livestock production. The ASAL areas are the main source of red meat and are occupied by pastoralists and agro-pastoralists.

Six commodities, namely, beef cattle, dairy products, maize, tea, coffee and domestic horticulture account for 68% of the agricultural production and contributes about 17% of

25 IFAD Supported Case Study
26 IFAP, Paris, France
Kenya’s total economy. Agriculture-related activities, including transportation, trading and processing, make for another 20-30% of the economic activity, signifying that agriculture and its related activities are responsible for up to half of the economic activity in the country (IEA, 2001).

Notwithstanding the fact that small-scale farms contribute 80% of the agricultural GDP, many of these farms do not provide farmers with sufficient means to live on; 50% of Kenya’s rural farming households are involved in off-farm income–earning activities (Tegemeo Institute, 1998). These together with the low contribution to agricultural production by the arid interior lowlands (80% of land area) constitute the key issues in Kenyan agriculture today.

The Extension System in Kenya in the Last Three Decades

The extension and research systems in Kenya have been a public good provided by the government with the help of development agencies during the 1970 and 1980’s. Different models of extension were used but all had a component of the “expert” and the “recipients”. The 1990’s brought the structural adjustment programs by the World Bank which essentially meant that government should get out of non-core business of offering services and allow the private sector to take over. For this reason the government announced liberalisation of services which hitherto were provided free of charge. The expectation was that the private sector would take up these roles which were no longer in the domain of government. The problem, however was that there was no private sector which was ready and willing to invest in this sector. There was therefore a total collapse of the extension system in the country. This is a big challenge in a country where most of the small-holder farmers are not agronomists and most are not even literate.

The Kenya National federation of Agricultural Producers (KENFAP) was confronted by the need for extension services by the members, who had nowhere else to turn to and demanded that the organisation get ways and means of offering this important service without which most farmers were neither able to make a living out of farming as nor pay their membership dues. This became a major condition for members to pay their membership dues. While the organisation took a new turn to meet this new challenge, there were great challenges of resources in terms of capital and personnel.

The Practice

To overcome the above constraints KENFAP through the executive board decided to use the FAO farmer schools concept. However, they did not have the resources to engage the extension staff and they therefore adopted the system to suit their meagre resources. The members themselves offered to have some of the farmers as trainers and leaders in this process as hiring of staff like the government or FAO was not possible. Hence the method got the name “Farmer–to-farmer extension”.

A project was formulation by the author with the help of the Country Director of FAO who was persuaded about this collaboration and offered information on the methodology of the farmer field schools, to seek resources from FAO. The Ministry of Agriculture had been also persuaded as the grant would be signed by the Minister of Agriculture. A tripartite agreement was then formed.
with the FAO, Ministry of Agriculture and KENFAP. The initial pilot was in three districts in Kenya; Muranga, Nyeri and Kiambu.

There were 10 field schools in every district and 5 would be run by government extension workers and 5 by farmers (members of KENFAP). The training was conducted by FAO trainers already trained through the farmer –field schools programme. This meant having farmers trained with ministry technical staff and this was quite a new experience for the two groups.

Farmers formed schools, where they discussed with other members and made priorities for their training. The work of the lead farmer was to get the resource people to assist in the identified areas of learning from the whole spectrum of service providers and this was done with the help of the KENFAP field officers. Seed money was needed to pay for the costs of this resource person as the training took place on farmers’ fields. The farmers were also resource people teaching the others a practice that worked for them in their own fields. These field schools are still on-going as they could go on with very little support and members are able to contribute to sustain the process. Over time KENFAP has got more resources and have expanded and continue to provide seed money for new innovations which require an external input.

This process proved very successful and some schools have become full fledged commodity groups. An example is the Maragua Banana Producers who started this way and were able to focus on the development of Banana production for consumption and market. Other groups in Nyeri were able to penetrate the export market with fresh produce and in Kiambu; they have concentrated on the leafy vegetable for the local supermarkets and other outlets.

**Assessment and Impact**

This process give rise to the reality that farmers could indeed be in charge of determining their own needs and addressing them as opposed to the top-down extension approach of the 1970’s and the 1980’s.

The most impact aspect is that farmers were able to come together at the local level not only to do the learning but to be able to influence the market and do collective bargaining, increasing their chances of earning a good price in the market. Others were able to penetrate the export market as they were able to achieve the right quantity to allow for collection by the export companies. These are normally the very small holders who would not otherwise have been able to penetrate the market on their own.

This experience shifted the focus of KENFAP from being entirely a lobby network to an organisation providing services to the members.

This model of working has been adopted in the Kenya Agricultural Productivity Program and farmers are now in a position to choose their extension providers from and alley of service providers.
Lessons Learnt

- There is a real need to empower farmers by making them get involved in decision making right at their level
- This process empowers farmers to understand their place in the development chain and they are better able to demand service from third parties
- There is high level of sustainability as the farmers are active actors being trainers themselves and teaching each other through learning by doing
- This is a grassroots process right where the poor live and they are all included in the process regardless of their land size and asset level
- The extension/service providers have been able to appreciate the farmers as real partners other than receivers of knowledge.

Factors Contributing to Change

Any change in the social sector requires champions who are willing to be unpopular with changing from the known to the unknown. The factors attributed to this were a real overhaul of the organisation and a new restructuring to take up these new roles.

This meant new leadership and staff who were willing to walk this unfamiliar path. New development partners with the same kind of vision and this requires a lot of boldness as it can be a real risk for an organisation. The leaders must be willing to say no to development partners who want to impose their development models on them. The old staff who did things differently both in the ministry and KENFAP had a lot of opposition to this way of working and many had to get out of the way.

The other main constraint was the policies were not inline with this kind of working though the liberalisation had taken place. This means there was no real framework and great room for resistance from the government staff. This was however resolved through personal persuasion.

Opportunities for Mainstreaming and Scaling-up

This is an excellent process as the production is determined by the producers themselves, the most important factor is to have food for the family and surplus for the market. The fact that the farmers are able to exchange with their other members in other parts of the country opens opportunities for markets elsewhere in the country, the advantage of the membership in the organisation.

The work has been promoted in the 20 districts where the Kenya Productivity Program is taking place and KENFAP is taking the lead. More needs to be done to train and get more members involved.

References

- FAO manuals on Farmer Field schools
- KENFAP proposal and the project documents
Evaluation reports by FAO (Kenya Office)

Field Learning from experiences of farmers in NICARAGUA
Title of practice: Prioritising farmer extension needs in a contract system of extension.

Country: Uganda

Authors: B. Obaa, J. Mutimba and A.R. Semana.

Category of practice: Farmer empowerment for contract system of extension

Context and genesis

Description of the New Extension System
The Government of Uganda (GOU) is taking the lead in transforming its public extension system in conformity with the rest of its economic transformations. To improve relevance and effectiveness of agricultural advisory services, the government created National Agricultural Advisory Services (NAADS) by an Act of Parliament in 2001 to spearhead the privatization of the public extension systems (GOU, 2001). The public extension system is therefore, gradually being phased out and replaced by a contract extension system or ‘private service provider advisory system’ coordinated by NAADS – a very small secretariat. Essentially, the private advisory services providers operate on contractual bases with farmer organizations. Farmers are empowered to source for advisory services from the private sector using public funds.

The specific objectives of NAADS are to: increase the availability of appropriate advice and information to all categories of farmers in an equitable and cost-effective manner; avail appropriate technologies in sufficient quantities to meet identified farmer needs; assure the quality of advice and information provided to farmers by service providers; enhance the capacity of private sector service providers to meet farmer advice and information needs; and, develop appropriate farmer-controlled institutional structures and processes for managing NAADS at all levels. NAADS plans to achieve this by providing public funds to farmer groups, on a scaled counterpart contribution basis, to enable the farmers engage private sector agricultural advisors to provide farmer-identified priority services and to engage researchers in developing technologies at their district and sub-county level.

The Institutional Context
NAADS is guided by, and indeed fulfils, government policies on decentralization, liberalization, privatization and increased participation of the people in decision-making and aims to develop a demand-driven, client oriented and farmer-led agricultural advisory service delivery system particularly targeting the poor and the women (MAAIF, 2000).

Problem and Circumstances Leading to the New System
Agricultural extension services are under constant pressure to be responsive to the ever-growing challenges of, and to show impact in, food production. The pressure for responsiveness is giving rise to calls for changes in the traditional public extension systems which are now seen as

27 IFAD Supported Case Study
28 Department of Agricultural Extension, Makerere University, Kampala, Uganda
outdated, top-down, paternalistic, inflexible, subject to bureaucratic inefficiencies and, therefore, less able to cope with the dynamic demands of modern day agriculture (Rivera et al., 2000). ‘Contracting extension’ is one strategy increasingly being promoted, especially by the World Bank, to expand extension coverage and improve performance and impact.

**Organizations Involved**

The new system is authored and promoted by the World Bank, which is also the main funder through a system of basket funding in which other donors like the EU also make their contributions following a Government of Uganda/Donor memorandum of understanding.

**The Practice**

Uganda is divided into 56 districts each of which is divided into a number of sub-counties depending on the size of the district. Each sub-county, in turn, is divided into a number of parishes, again depending on size. The parishes are further divided into villages. Villages, parishes, sub-counties and districts are local government administrative units.

As a strategy for achieving its objectives, NAADS supports the establishment and development of farmer institutions starting with farmer groups at village level which, in turn, form farmers’ forums at the sub-county levels. The sub-county farmers’ forums are composed of representatives from farmer groups under the respective sub-counties. The intention is to form farmers’ forums at district and national levels as well.

Figure 1 below illustrates the process followed. As NAADS moves into a district, the initial major activities include sensitization of the leadership at various levels about the NAADS programme and conditions for farmer participation in the programme. This is usually followed by farmer mobilisation and group formation and establishment of sub-county farmer forums. NAADS usually recruits NGOs and other suitable service providers to assist with farmer institutional development which involves mobilisation, forming new groups where they do not exist already, transforming existing groups to ensure compliance with the NAADS programme, and training. Part of the training involves improving farmers’ capacity to articulate their own needs.

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29 Farmer groups usually form according to villages although they can also form across village boundaries according to their interest and proximity of members.
This is followed by a process of enterprise selection and prioritisation which is also facilitated by the NGOs or other suitable service providers. At group level, farmers select 4-6 priority enterprises for which they require advisory services. The actual number of enterprises to be selected is set by the NAADS Secretariat depending on what it feels would be feasible given the resources available. The criteria for identifying priorities are also given by NAADS.

The group priority lists are then submitted to the parish level where, together with the lists from other groups in the parish, are subjected to a further selection and prioritisation process to come up with one priority list for the parish. In turn, the parish priority lists are submitted to the sub-county farmers’ forum where the process is repeated in order to come up with a sub-county priority list.

Once the priority list has been established, the sub-county works out a budget for advisory service provision and submits it to the NAADS Executive. NAADS then allocates funds to districts based on the consolidated sub-county plans and budgets. From the funds allocated, the sub-county identifies suitable advisory service providers and awards them contracts to provide the services.

**Criteria for Enterprise Selection**
The selection of enterprises is based on guidelines developed by the NAADS secretariat and disseminated to the districts and sub-counties. The actual selection process is contracted out to NGOs who organize farmer meetings and facilitate the process of compiling the priority
enterprises, which are then consolidated at parish and sub-county levels. The NGOs also compile the major constraints for the selected priority enterprises for the sub-county.

The enterprise selection guidelines are based on key attributes that are considered to be important for the various enterprises. The attributes are further weighted according to their perceived relative importance. Below are the attributes with their weightings in parenthesis:

- profitability of the enterprise (4);
- availability of market (3);
- low financial outlay (2);
- low risks (2);
- farmers’ production knowledge (1).

The total score for each enterprise is calculated by multiplying the number of farmers who mention the attribute by the weight of the attribute. The enterprises are then ranked in order of the total score starting with the enterprise with the highest score. The first six (or any other number as determined by NAADS) enterprises form the priorities at the respective level (group, parish, or sub-county).

The priority enterprises are further subjected to another analysis to identify major constraints for each enterprise using guidelines also set by NAADS. Through a problem-tree analysis procedure, farmers discuss and highlight the major/priority constraints (two or three per enterprise) that are preventing, or could prevent, them from getting the best results from the enterprises. The selected enterprises and their constraints are compiled in a format designed by NAADS and submitted to the respective higher level up (parish or sub-county).

Selection of Sub-County Priority Enterprises from Parish Proposals

Once the parish proposals have been received at the sub-county, the farmers’ forum, assisted by technical experts and the local government staff, work through them, using matrix scoring and ranking, to come up with the priorities for sub-county advisory services and technology development in each enterprise. It is these sub-county advisory service and technology development priorities that eventually go into the sub-county NAADS plans from where they are translated into contracts for service providers to service. The selected sub-county priorities are subjected to yet another set of analysis on cross-cutting issues.

Analysis of Sub-County Priority Enterprises for Cross-Cutting Issues

The selected sub-county priorities are further subjected to three different types of analysis:

- poverty targeting – to assess the extent to which the enterprise target the poor;
- gender mainstreaming – to identify the beneficiaries of the enterprise; and,
- natural resources management and productivity – to assess the impact of the enterprise of the natural resources.

Impact Assessment

Why the New System is Considered Successful

According to a recent mid-term review of NAADS, the new system has been successful in creating a demand structure by developing farmer institutions that are able to articulate their
advisory needs, contract advisory services, monitor and evaluate services provided. In the four years that NAADS has been in operation, over 16000 farmer groups have been registered and over 300 farmer fora have been formed at both sub-county and district levels in a third of the country. The plan is to cover the entire country over time. Once completed, this programme will put farmers firmly in a controlling position regarding advisory service programmes and provision.

By the time the review was conducted in May 2005, advisory as well as technology development service contracts had been undertaken in 21 districts.

In a recent study, Obaa et al (2005) also found that farmers appreciated the knowledge they were getting through the new system.

**Evaluation of Benefits**

Data collected by Obaa et al (2005) from six parishes in one of the Districts (Mukono) of Uganda (Tables 1-5 below) show that the prescribed criteria can be too mathematical and idealistic for farmers to make sense out of the process. In this case, the selection process called for higher levels of literacy and lengthy debates that precluded women and the poor. Some of the criteria (Tables 4 and 5) were also so idealistic that even the facilitators did not understand them well. In the end, they were used as an academic exercise (because the facilitator had to be seen to have used the criteria), but did not add any much to the selection process.

The hierarchical needs assessment process tends to smother minority interests as shown in Tables 2 and 3 below). For example, when the needs assessment was done in Namaliri Parish (Table 1), banana, pigs, local goats, maize, vanilla and pumpkins were identified as the top six most important enterprises.
Table 1. Enterprise selection process matrix for Namaliri Parish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enterprise</th>
<th>Profitability-high (wght=4)</th>
<th>Ease of market (wght=3)</th>
<th>Low risks (wght = 2)</th>
<th>Financial outlay low (wght=2)</th>
<th>Product’n knowledge (wght =1)</th>
<th>Total Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><em>Banana</em></td>
<td>12 = 48</td>
<td>20 = 60</td>
<td>19 = 38</td>
<td>18 = 36</td>
<td>14 = 14</td>
<td>296</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Pigs</em></td>
<td>11 = 44</td>
<td>13 = 39</td>
<td>10 = 20</td>
<td>13 = 26</td>
<td>14 = 14</td>
<td>143</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local goats</td>
<td>04 = 16</td>
<td>14 = 42</td>
<td>15 = 15</td>
<td>14 = 28</td>
<td>13 = 13</td>
<td><strong>129</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maize</td>
<td>15 = 60</td>
<td>02 = 06</td>
<td>09 = 18</td>
<td>13 = 26</td>
<td>13 = 13</td>
<td><strong>123</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanilla</td>
<td>15 = 60</td>
<td>10 = 30</td>
<td>02 = 04</td>
<td>07 = 14</td>
<td>09 = 09</td>
<td><strong>117</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pumpkin</td>
<td>06 = 24</td>
<td>18 = 54</td>
<td>10 = 20</td>
<td>15 = 30</td>
<td>09 = 09</td>
<td><strong>107</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local cattle</td>
<td>06 = 24</td>
<td>10 = 30</td>
<td>10 = 20</td>
<td>04 = 08</td>
<td>11 = 11</td>
<td><strong>93</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rice</td>
<td>05 = 20</td>
<td>11 = 33</td>
<td>14 = 28</td>
<td>00 = 00</td>
<td>04 = 04</td>
<td><strong>85</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Melon</td>
<td>06 = 24</td>
<td>04 = 12</td>
<td>04 = 08</td>
<td>08 = 16</td>
<td>05 = 05</td>
<td><strong>65</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exotic cattle</td>
<td>10 = 40</td>
<td>07 = 21</td>
<td>00 = 00</td>
<td>00 = 00</td>
<td>03 = 03</td>
<td><strong>64</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moringa</td>
<td>03 = 12</td>
<td>06 = 18</td>
<td>06 = 12</td>
<td>03 = 06</td>
<td>03 = 03</td>
<td><strong>51</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fish farming</td>
<td>04 = 16</td>
<td>08 = 24</td>
<td>01 = 01</td>
<td>00 = 00</td>
<td>02 = 02</td>
<td><strong>44</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken</td>
<td>06 = 24</td>
<td>03 = 09</td>
<td>00 = 00</td>
<td>00 = 00</td>
<td>04 = 04</td>
<td><strong>37</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tomato</td>
<td>05 = 20</td>
<td>00 = 00</td>
<td>00 = 00</td>
<td>00 = 00</td>
<td>06 = 06</td>
<td><strong>26</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Exotic goat</td>
<td>03 = 12</td>
<td>02 = 06</td>
<td>01 = 02</td>
<td>00 = 00</td>
<td>05 = 05</td>
<td><strong>25</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passion fruit</td>
<td>02 = 08</td>
<td>02 = 06</td>
<td>01 = 02</td>
<td>00 = 00</td>
<td>03 = 03</td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eucalyptus</td>
<td>02 = 08</td>
<td>02 = 06</td>
<td>01 = 20</td>
<td>01 = 02</td>
<td>02 = 02</td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td>00 = 00</td>
<td>01 = 03</td>
<td>00 = 00</td>
<td>00 = 00</td>
<td>17 = 17</td>
<td><strong>20</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pineapples</td>
<td>02 = 08</td>
<td>03 = 09</td>
<td>00 = 00</td>
<td>00 = 00</td>
<td>02 = 02</td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mushrooms</td>
<td>00 = 00</td>
<td>01 = 03</td>
<td>01 = 02</td>
<td>02 = 04</td>
<td>01 = 01</td>
<td><strong>10</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

When the priority enterprise list for Namaliri was put together with priority lists from other parishes in the sub-country (Table 2), Namaliri lost three of its enterprises (goats, maize, and pumpkins). Namaliri later regained pumpkins when an arbitrary decision was made to combine beans and pumpkins as one enterprise for the purposes of providing advisory services. In the end Namaliri lost goats and maize and were going to get advisory services on chicken and cattle instead, although farmers in the parish had not considered these two to be among their top six.
Table 2. Sub-county priority list worked out from parish lists

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Enterprise</th>
<th>Kabimbiri</th>
<th>Namaliri</th>
<th>Kakunakulu</th>
<th>Kigogola</th>
<th>Kasana</th>
<th>Kitovu</th>
<th>Totals</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bananas</td>
<td>161</td>
<td>296</td>
<td>289</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>341</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>1284</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chicken</td>
<td>250</td>
<td>284</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>388</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>1249</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vanilla</td>
<td>202</td>
<td>117</td>
<td>498</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>817</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cattle</td>
<td>180</td>
<td></td>
<td>104</td>
<td>415</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>798</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pigs</td>
<td>165</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>77</td>
<td>355</td>
<td></td>
<td>740</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Beans</td>
<td>222</td>
<td></td>
<td>311</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>533</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Potato</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>352</td>
<td></td>
<td>352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>283</td>
<td>54</td>
<td></td>
<td>337</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Goats</td>
<td>129</td>
<td></td>
<td>84</td>
<td></td>
<td>95</td>
<td></td>
<td>308</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vegetable</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>302</td>
<td></td>
<td>302</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maize</td>
<td>123</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>113</td>
<td>236</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passion fruits</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>232</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>232</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pumpkin</td>
<td>107</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>107</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cocoa</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>102</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

NB: Total Scores = Sum of scores from the six parishes

Table 3 summarises the effects of this hierarchical selection process. In this example, one of the parishes, Kitovu, lost 50% of what it had wanted.

Table 3. Extent to which the selection process met farmers’ needs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Parish</th>
<th>Number submitted by parish</th>
<th>Number approved by sub-county</th>
<th>Percent</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kabimbiri</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kasana</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kanakulu</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Namaliri</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kigogola</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kitovu</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4. Enterprise analysis for impact on natural resources in Kasawo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Criteria</th>
<th>Banana</th>
<th>Chicken</th>
<th>Vegetable</th>
<th>Vanilla</th>
<th>Cattle</th>
<th>Pigs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is the effect of the enterprise on?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Soil</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Water</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Wetland</td>
<td>-5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>-5</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>-2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. N. forests/products</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+4</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Captive fishes</td>
<td>-5</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>-5</td>
<td>+2</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Biodiversity</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+3</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+1</td>
<td>+1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

-5 significant negative impact; 0 no impact or not relevant; +5 significant positive effect
Table 5. Enterprise analysis for ‘other’ issues during enterprise selection in Kasawo

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Banana</th>
<th>Chicken</th>
<th>Vegetable</th>
<th>Vanilla</th>
<th>Cattle</th>
<th>Pigs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Access to information</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improve access to inputs</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase employment</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Increase market information</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reduce market susceptibility</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>People with disability</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elderly</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Youth</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

0 will not address the issue; 5 strongly addresses the issue

**Significant Outcomes**

In the beginning, NAADS had wanted farmers to select only three enterprises, but changed to six after farmers pointed out that this would be too limiting.

NAADS had also wanted to focus on commercial enterprise but the recent mid-term review reveals that farmers are also interested in food crops. The review recommends a re-orientation to include food crops.
### Success Factors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Problems encountered</th>
<th>Solutions found or suggested</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmers initially expected ‘sitting allowances’ for every meeting.</td>
<td>Through explanation, expectations were clarified.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Problems of marketing at farmer group level</td>
<td>NAADS now supporting the development of higher-level associations to undertake marketing on behalf of groups.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A significant proportion of the farmer groups appear not to meet the sustainability criteria, especially with regard to internal resource mobilisation.</td>
<td>There is a recommendation for community-based facilitators to enhance continuity and sustainability. The community based facilitators would also provide advisory services after expiry of service provision contracts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NGOs observed to have generally inadequate capacity to guide the farmer institutional development process effectively.</td>
<td>There is a recommendation that NAADS should be involved directly in capacity development of service providers, including NGOs, if their performance has to improve so that there is value for money of the contracts that they undertake.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Funds for securing advisory services released out of sequence with the period the services were required by farmers.</td>
<td>Government now reviewing this in order to improve the matching of the contracts and the advisory services delivery.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Owing to the current funding mechanisms, contract periods are short, hence interrupting continuity in farmer training.</td>
<td>There is a recommendation for mechanisms (both financial and technical) to have contracts run beyond a given financial year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is increasing farmer demand for agricultural advisory services for food security crops, as opposed to NAADS focus on commercial crops.</td>
<td>There is a recommendation for the development of approaches that will allow different farmer types to access agricultural advisory services – the main ones being the community-based facilitator approach and nucleus farmer approach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The selection criteria for service provision tend to be too mathematical and complicated.</td>
<td>The enterprise selection criteria need to be greatly streamlined and simplified for all farmers to engage in the process meaningfully.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some politicians tend to want to make political capital out of the process by putting pressure to role out to their district faster than planned.</td>
<td>NAADS has developed a strong Information Communication Unit with clear mechanisms for reaching the different NAADS audiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Government extension workers were to have been ‘de-layered’ by now so that they would form companies and be available for the contract system. This has not yet happened, presumably because of the financial implication for paying off the workers.</td>
<td>Yet to be resolved.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Opportunities for Mainstreaming and Scaling-Up

NAADS is indeed going to role out to cover the entire country. The weaknesses and suggestions cited above are meant to provide self-learning lessons that will enhance its performance as it takes on more districts.

References


**Title:** Institutionalizing Learning in Rural Poverty Alleviation Initiatives

**Country:** Latin America and Caribbean Region

**Authors:** I. Guijt, J. Berdegue, G. Escobar, E. Ramirez, and J. Keitaanranta

**Category of Practice:** Institutionalizin learning for rural poverty reduction.

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**Context and Genesis**

Poverty reduction is a complex task that requires tackling issues of power imbalances, limited economic opportunities and long term capacity-building to ensure good governance, reduce inequity, improve well being and incomes and deal with sustainability threats. Most projects funded by IFAD deal with contextually specific poverty phenomena and processes. This requires project participants to adapt theoretical ideas about poverty reduction to suit their situation and to innovate continually. Not surprisingly, solutions for the complex environmental, poverty and democracy challenges they face very often emerge from the trial-and-error of project experiences.

Tapping into the analytical potential of IFAD project staff is critical – they form a key source of institutional innovation. A growing trend has been to ask such professionals to produce ‘lessons learned’ and to document ‘best practices’, and therefore, to make their projects into active learning initiatives.

IFAD has stressed its ongoing commitment to improved knowledge management and learning that is centered on projects. It seeks to gather insights about a selection of key themes from practical project experiences and use them to shape new policies, projects, procedures and practices - as well as to improve the performance and impact of the project that generated the insights in the first place. This concern is not about knowledge for knowledge sake but about seeking insights to improve their actions, either immediately, in next phases of funding or more generally within the area of poverty reduction. The assumption is that, in so doing, IFAD’s

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30 IFAD Supported Case Study
31 RIMISP, Santiago, Chile
32 Based on work undertaken with a selected number of projects supported by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) in Latin America and the Caribbean and builds on work with systematization methodology. From 2002 – 2005 16 IFAD projects in 11 countries were accompanied with varying degrees of intensity and success in undertaking systematic learning efforts around themes or questions of core concern. A combination of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) applications and direct technical assistance and interpersonal exchange are used in the construction of a learning and knowledge management system in each project.
33 The term “project participants” includes not only the staff in the project management and implementing units , but also co-implementing organizations, rural grassroots organizations, NGOs, perhaps municipal governments and other local level agencies, and governmental organizations such as Ministries of Agriculture. In this paper, it is a term that refers to the set of organization and groups directly engaged in the implementation of the project.
34 Priority themes in the 2002-2006 Latin America and the Caribbean Regional Strategy were: rural financial services, decentralization and capacity-building, market development of services for the rural poor, indigenous people, and access to dynamic regional and international markets.
funding will not only have local impact but can also add value to the thinking on poverty reduction.

By implication, IFAD projects should be judged, at least in part, by how well they identify lessons from projects, synthesize these lessons at a regional level and use them to make a relevant contribution to improved knowledge, policy and, above all, practice in the field of poverty reduction and sustainable rural development.

However, more critical than learning as a performance criterion is the emphasis in this paper on the need to organize IFAD projects in ways to make this learning process explicit and effective. Experiences with implementing a program or project must be used to generate understanding and lessons learned that improves ongoing implementation and makes a contribution to a wider body of knowledge. Learning from action does not happen by accident – it needs to be planned for in project design, in staff job requirements, in the cycle of meetings and reflections, in the general project culture, and so forth. Like many development projects, most IFAD projects are not designed to be action learning processes. The challenge, therefore, is how to promote, design and conduct learning processes within organizations and project activities that have not been designed with this purpose in mind.

**The Practice**

Between 2002 and 2005, as part of the work of the FIDAMERICA Regional Network the authors of this paper undertook work with staff from 16 IFAD projects in 11 Latin American and Caribbean countries (see Table 1) facilitating systematic learning efforts around themes or questions of core concern to project participants. This work built strongly on earlier work by FIDAMERICA and on ongoing collaborative work with PREVAL, in particular on developing methods and building capacity for systematization of rural development experiences.

Using a common framework known as ‘Aprendizaje y Gestion de Conocimiento’ (AGC – Learning and Knowledge Management), we accompanied projects with varying degrees of intensity and varying learning outcomes. In some cases, the AGC concept was added to existing learning processes, in others it has remained more of a one-off effort, and with one project we were unable to move past the initial steps.

AGC, as we initially defined it in 2002, consisted of a six stage process:

1. Development experiences;
2. Identifying critical themes and formulating questions;
3. Systematizing development experiences;
4. Analyzing to identify lessons that can be generalized for wider use;
5. Documentation of the learning process and its results;
6. Institutionalizing lessons learned (socializing, capacity-building, norms, incentives).

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35 In this paper, learning focuses around the process of generating knowledge from project experience and using it to improve future action. It could be called ‘action learning’ or ‘experiential learning’.
36 FIDAMERICA is a regional learning network funded by IFAD and coordinated by Rimisp-Latin American Center for Rural Development (www.rimisp.org).
In April 2004, we revised our original AGC concept to a five stage process (see Figure 1), to incorporate the realities we experienced in the projects with which we had interacted. Thus this paper represents a tested and revised understanding of ‘learning’ in the context of IFAD projects.

Our purpose in this paper is to provide a methodological summary of the AGC concept and practice, as implemented in a particular type of rural development context, namely that of IFAD projects. These poverty-reduction efforts have certain features that affect their capacity to learn based on the AGC concept (see section Organizational Conditions for Effective Learning in IFAD Projects below). IFAD projects are:

- government-based and therefore embedded in existing government and political systems, cultures and procedures;
- focused on rural households and regions of extreme poverty, often with strong incentives from the project’s beneficiaries and its institutional environment, to project staff to deliver fast and concrete solutions and not ‘waste’ time on processes that do not clearly lead in this direction;
- involve a significant amount of money – around $10 to $25 million dollar loans;
- longer term than the usual 3 year time horizon of projects, stretching to 6 or 7 years;
- multi-component (typically including financial services, technical advisory services, support to rural organizations, training and capacity-building, and small-scale infrastructure);
- complex in terms of the range of issues they are seeking to address; and
- not action learning focused by nature.

We hope this paper will inspire others who are already active with systematic learning and knowledge management initiatives or those keen to try this to improve the critical and reflective

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**Table 1. IFAD projects involved in the AGC initiative**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project and Country</th>
<th>Involved with AGC since</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CORREDOR CUSCO-PUNO, Peru</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DOM HELDER, Brazil</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAT, Nicaragua</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HULE, Mexico</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PADEMER, Colombia</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRODAP II, El Salvador</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRODECOP, Venezuela</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRODERCO, Honduras</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRODERQUI, Guatemala</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRODEVER, Guatemala</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRONADEL, Honduras</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROPESUR, Dominican Republic</td>
<td>2003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROSALFA, Venezuela</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROSOC, Honduras</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TRIPLE C, Panama</td>
<td>2002</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>URUGUAY RURAL, Uruguay</td>
<td>2004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
capacity of their rural development initiatives. Thus we anticipate the ideas in this paper to be of particular use to project directors/coordinators (NGOs and governmental), facilitators/consultants, leaders of rural organizations, and to the Regional Networks analogous to FIDAMERICA that IFAD is supporting in West Africa (FIDAFRIQUE), Asia (ENRAP), and North Africa and the Near East (KariaNet).

Figure 1. The Five Phases of the AGC Process

The case study begins by describing the importance of ‘learning’ as a conscious process in rural development initiatives, before describing in detail how we implemented the AGC concept in different contexts. We discuss the organizational conditions that appear critical for effective learning and highlight a number of key issues that require special attention. The paper is illustrated with examples from the different IFAD projects with whom we were privileged to work, to which we are grateful for the collective ideas discussed here.
Why Learning Matters in IFAD’s Rural Development Initiatives

IFAD has invested over US$ 1.1 billion in rural development in Latin America and the Caribbean between 1978 and 2002. To ensure that the rural poor benefit optimally from this investment, it is continuously seeking new ways to combat rural poverty. Innovation is essential for overcoming problems with existing poverty reduction strategies and to deal with new problems that emerge. Prevention of the mechanical applications of limited or inadequate strategies is also important, as is not wasting time multiple reinventions of the wheel. Thus, despite being geographically separate, and subject to specific economic, cultural, political and environmental contexts, the sharing of IFAD project experiences is potentially a rich source of finding and spreading innovation in relation to their common goal of poverty reduction.

Learning must occur at the fundamental level of individual projects. It is here that “the interaction with rural poverty, its causes, dynamics, and consequences takes place, and where strategies and interventions are designed and managed to reduce poverty” (IFAD 2002).

Experiential Knowledge

One main source of knowledge at this level, on which the AGC concept is based, is ‘experiential knowledge’. Such knowledge constitutes the insights emerging from the daily practice of those involved in poverty reduction initiatives. Often, learning processes are not explicit in project processes; such knowledge remains ‘tacit’ (Nonaka and Takeuchi, 1995). Although tacit knowledge is made visible through individual capacities and competencies, people often have difficulty articulating this type of knowledge. For them, tacit knowledge is often not recognized as possibly being of value to others or not common knowledge to others as well. As tacit experiential knowledge also consists of an individual’s mental models of reality, articulating experiential knowledge will also require clarifying the underlying perceptions of how and why ‘things work’.

David Kolb (1984) has explained how experiential learning works that enables tacit knowledge to become explicit and understandable for others. This is based on an understanding that knowledge as continually being ‘constructed’ through complex social processes as individuals interact with each other and their environment. So knowledge is placed firmly within the knowers and their contexts. In our case, the knowers are IFAD project participants who use their experiences as the basis for generating new insights.

An ‘experiential learning’ view of knowledge sees those involved in a project as needing to create knowledge appropriate to their own situation by integrating and internalizing existing, formal knowledge with an understanding of their own specific context and reflection on their own experiences.

According to Kolb’s theory, learning from experiences involves a four-stage cyclical process (Figure 2). An individual or group must engage in each stage of the cycle in order to learn effectively from their experience(s). The cycle starts with an individual’s or group’s experiences of events. But these experiences alone do not lead to learning.

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37 Knowledge is not seen as truths about an external reality but rather as the negotiated understanding that individuals and communities use to make sense of their worlds and to take effective action.
Of course, learning occurs in every single project. But usually, learning is crisis-driven, by unconscious trial-and-error efforts, and not shared among all project participants who are essential for ensuring impact. Usually only stages 1 and 2 of Kolb’s learning cycle occur, leading to ongoing errors. Thinking about a project with Kolb’s four stages in mind can greatly help to improve existing learning processes. It can help avoid costly errors and speed up the development of effective innovations that lead to greater relevance, efficiency, and ultimately impact.

The experiential learning cycle can lead to what we call ‘institutionalizing learning’ if the following occurs:

1. Practice-based findings, recommendations and lessons learned are extracted from the (comparative) analysis of local development experiences;
2. These are then used to improve the quality of people’s work in the project (and perhaps elsewhere in the IFAD system);
3. Identifies which capacities need revising, strengthening or creating, as lessons often indicate existing gaps in this area.
4. Leads to changes in project concepts, methods, procedures, norms, rules and incentive systems (and perhaps elsewhere in the IFAD system).

![Experiential Learning as a Four Stage Cycle](image-url)
However, certainly in the context of most IFAD projects – with large geographic scales, many diverse groups and interests, and a range of activities – such experience-based learning needs to be designed, facilitated, implemented and followed up. To be effective, learning must be viewed as a structured process that requires dedicated planning and management within an organization.

*Clarifying Experiential Learning for IFAD Projects*

To ensure clarity about the focus of AGC, three aspects of experiential learning merit some attention:

i. how M&E links to AGC-type learning;

ii. the kind of learning we are *not* talking about; and

iii. nested learning.

*i. How M&E links to AGC-type learning*

Two frequent questions of project staff when first exposed to the idea of the AGC learning cycle is ‘is AGC different from M&E?’ and ‘If they are different, how do they link?’ The answers are: yes, they are different and yet they are closely related. While AGC and M&E processes use information on results, their purpose, focus and rhythm differs.

Monitoring and evaluation focus on the results related to the intended goals of the project. Evaluations happen sporadically (typically only twice in the lifetime of an IFAD project) and focus on five important standard questions: relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability. Monitoring systems focus on tracking progress towards *intended* goals. Neither of these processes encompasses questions and dilemmas that emerge during the implementation of activities.

Furthermore, almost no M&E system is guided by questions set by project participants and which are renewed after a learning cycle. M&E systems are designed to have a long shelf life and to provide standardized information over a long period of time. Indicators are usually not updated or changed, unless project goals or results are modified.

AGC aims at retrieving knowledge about the processes of implementing strategies. The learning cycle of AGC focuses on questions that emerge from practice, assumptions that underpin the strategy and about which some doubts might emerge, new areas of activity that have popped up in the course of the project and about which ideas are not fully formed. The regular renewing of questions allows AGC to offer project participants the timely opportunity to examine critical topics. Table 2 gives some ideas about the types of questions that an AGC process provides an opportunity to examine.

During the systematization phase, solid use should and will be made of any monitoring information and evaluation reports that might exist. Information on results will be used in both M&E and AGC. But for AGC, this use will focus on the themes and questions identified as particularly relevant at that moment in time for ensuring project impact. Furthermore, a systematization process will require additional collection of information, such as about the operational difficulties and dilemmas that project participants encountered.
Hence a separate but complementary investment of resources, time and focused information collection must be made for a learning cycle along the lines of AGC to complement the information flow produced by M&E systems and processes.

ii. The kind of ‘learning’ not central to AGC
Clearly we are not talking about the transfer of an existing idea, which is more in line with teaching of know-how. Such capacity-building efforts are often important components of IFAD projects but do not constitute new learning based on project experiences. For example, training courses for community groups on how to manage micro-credit activities can be updated by reflections on what has worked well and what has failed in the past – and in that sense experiential learning is a source of insights to improve capacity-building efforts, an option we recognize in the institutionalization phase of AGC (see section Phase 5 - Institutionalizing).

Second, we are not dealing with anticipatory learning that uses scenarios of possible futures to anticipate problems and opportunities and plan strategies to deal with them pro-actively. The AGC concept offers an approach for retrospective learning, which focuses on making sense of past actions and detailing lessons that can shape the next improved iteration of poverty reduction strategies. Thus information from monitoring systems and (mid-term) evaluations become important sources of information for the analysis.

A third type of learning we are not talking about, but is complementary to project-based learning, is that of sharing of lessons learned among projects. Such sharing requires an interpretation of what is meaningful for projects in other contexts. It is an example of ‘nested learning’, see next section.

iii. Nested learning
For project-focused learning to have a value outside the project context, follow-up activities are needed after experience-based insights have been identified and documented. In addition, the experiences of project participants need to be enriched by other experiences and information external to their specific project. One clear example of how this mutually enriching flow of information occurs is that of the bi-annual ‘Meetings of Innovation and Learning to Eliminate Rural Poverty’ organized by FIDAMERICA and other IFAD-supported projects and programs, and attended by representatives of most IFAD projects in Latin America and the Caribbean. Only by investing in project-based learning is there something of potential interest to others to share at such events - and thus contribute to inter-project learning.

The AGC work is part of a larger set of activities by FIDAMERICA to stimulate and facilitate knowledge processes at a regional level (Latin America and the Caribbean) with the participation of a number of IFAD-supported rural development projects. As a learning network FIDAMERICA supports learning and knowledge management processes focused on five priority themes. The results and products of within-project AGC work are inputs of the region-wide, inter-project learning processes. For example, many projects share similar development components. ‘Financial services for the rural poor’ is a good example. After completing about 14 systematizations in several projects and a panel that discussed the topic in a meeting in Lima,

38 These are: market access, financial services for the rural poor, development of markets for technical services that are inclusive of the rural poor, indigenous peoples, good governance and decentralization.
FIDAMERICA held an electronic conference with more than 1000 participants. After that, a consultant was contracted to analyze the 14 cases, the e-conference conclusions and the state of the art on financial services for rural poor. The results are used to inform the individual projects as well as IFAD as an organization (to improve project design) and other private and public organizations involved in rural development in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Hence the five phase AGC model is nested in a more general model of a learning system that aims to reach more universally valid and relevant conclusions and lessons learned, but always based on particular intervention processes linked to the real world of rural poor.

Project-specific experience is not the only knowledge source that feeds learning among project participants. Much relevant knowledge on key rural development topics is produced elsewhere. Accessing this information must be explicitly incorporated in the design of a project level learning system. All good quality and applicable information on the topic in question must be considered to strengthen the basis for deciding which improvements to the intervention process are worthwhile and which are not. This external information should be taken into account when deciding what is going to be institutionalized.

The Focus of Learning – and Expected Results
In our work with the IFAD projects, a wide range of learning questions and themes were identified (see Table 2). Some focused on assessing the impact of specific methodologies on gender relations, while others were broader questions to understand success factors and obstacles in certain cases: ‘What seemed to make the difference?’. Some themes were internal-focused and operational, aiming to understand how project procedures could be improved, and others questioned deep underlying principles in the project strategy.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Project</th>
<th>Themes</th>
<th>Learning questions</th>
<th>Lessons and project improvements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>PROSOC Honduras</td>
<td>Family-to-family technology transfer The community capitalization process</td>
<td>What are the effects on intra-family relations of implementing the FAPRIN methodology? Has the Communal Management Committee (CMC) improved and made fund transfers to the Segua community faster and more efficient?</td>
<td>The FAPRIN approach has introduced technical change and has improved human and family relationships. A delivery gender focus will improve the FAPRIN effect on intra-family relations. The CMC did improve efficiency in fund disbursement but it is subject to capacity-building through training and technical support. The involvement of other organizations, such as on rural credit, may stimulate extra social participation and financial rationalization.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PROSAL AFA, Venezuela</td>
<td>Supporting and strengthening community organizations</td>
<td>What are factors affected the outcomes of the Buena Siembra Cooperative in the State of Lara?</td>
<td>Community organizations can be constructed on social solidarity and common needs. However, other services, such as rural credit and a marketing strategy supported by the project, are key factors to strengthening social-based organizations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAT-Nicaragua</td>
<td>The negotiation processes and the agreement between farmers and technical service providers</td>
<td>Who defines the needs for non-financial services in rural communities that operate in a competitive market system - and how is this defined?</td>
<td>To improve the definition of technical service needs, two elements need to be considered: (1) avoid price-related incentives for specific services, except when aiming to scale up a certain kind of support; and (2) information and confidence are two necessary elements to define non-financial service agreements - and therefore must get project support.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PRODAP II El Salvador</td>
<td>The processes of organizational strengthening in the execution of infrastructure projects</td>
<td>Which conditions are needed for community-level infrastructure investments to contribute to organizational strengthening?</td>
<td>The project must ensure that community organizations operate with a minimum level of internal democratic process and that they have some basic experience, norms and rules before asking of them high levels of human, financial and material investment.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CUSCO-PUNO, Peru</td>
<td>Impacts of the transfer of funds to Andean communities Effectiveness of empowerment strategies Relationship between project targeting and impact</td>
<td>What are the organizational effects of the transfer of funds to Andean communities for technical assistance and training? How effectively are the local organizations managing their contracts with their Technical Advisors? Is there a trade off between targeting the project on the poorest of the poor and meeting the project’s objectives in terms of improving rural financial and technical assistance markets as a means to reduce poverty?</td>
<td>Changes in the strategy used to transfer funds for Andean communities Recognition of the need to strengthen the capacities of the local organizations and development and implementation of specific processes to do so Revision of targeting criteria and modification of strategies and procedures in several of the project’s components</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uruguay Rural</td>
<td>The functioning of decentralizing certain aspects of the project</td>
<td>What elements ensure that decentralized decision-making components/aspects function adequately?</td>
<td>For decentralization to be effective, the project must not only transfer functions but also human and financial resources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Learning can occur and be facilitated at different levels. One way to imagine this is in terms of the intervention logic, which identifies the activities needed to achieve specific results and how these results will help achieve the overall project goal:

- **Activities- or method-focused learning** will be more frequent and the derived lessons may be more context-specific. For example, “How can we simplify the ‘Business Plans’ that the local organizations need to develop in order to access the services of the project?”

- **Results-focused learning** is likely to be less frequent as this relates to ‘higher-order’ theories about how activities are supposed to lead to change. The derived lessons may be more generally relevant. For example, “What can the project do to stimulate and increase the rate of savings in the local Savings-and-Loans clubs?”

- **Goal-oriented learning** will be even less frequent, as it will be the result of a series of linked activities and their results, and lessons may be relevant at even higher levels (beyond the specific context). For example, “What critical changes need to be made in the core project strategy in order to enhance and speed its impact without sacrificing the mandate to focus on the ‘poorest of the poor’?”

For each of these types of levels, lessons can focus on underlying assumptions or on more operational aspects.

**A. Questions that enable testing of underlying project assumptions**

Any development intervention is based on a theory of action. This is a set of assumptions that describes what project staff think will happen if they undertake an activity or set of activities. For example, agricultural development projects often train farmers as tractor drivers and mechanics. Staff assume – their theory of action – that this will support agricultural intensification. The theory may be confirmed, but it may also happen, as it often does, that many of the new mechanics use their new skill as the ticket to migrate to the city. If this happens and project staff question their theory of action, then they may be able to develop a new strategy and sets of activities that is more likely to lead to the intended development goal.

A theory of action may be more or less tacit or explicit and may draw on formalized or on ‘everyday’ knowledge or both. Consequently the intervention is based on many assumptions about cause and effect relationships that will to varying degrees be made explicit (see Box 1). For example, project staff who involve local people in micro-credit groups make many assumptions about how people will behave if they are given joint responsibility for this collective financial opportunity on which they depend. If assumptions are correct, then results are more likely to fulfill expectations.
Box 1. Examples of IFAD Projects Questioning Strategic Assumptions

- In Cusco Peru, one fundamental assumption underlying the project strategy was that targeting the ‘poorest of the poor’ was completely compatible with working on developing rural financial and technical services markets. The project questioned this key assumption and concluded that they needed to reformulate their theory of action, for example, by redesigning their strategies and developing indicators to closely monitor trade-offs that might be occurring between targeting a certain economic group and having a certain economic impact.

- In FAT - Nicaragua, a core assumption is that technical service markets for the rural poor only require resource transfers in response to a need that is formulated as a group project. The need would be satisfied when the group selects the best service provider's offer for the price that it can afford. The project questioned this assumption and identified a set of objectives that guides rural communities and service providers in the demand/supply of technical service support and establishes quality standard agreements between communities and providers, without defining specific prices for certain services or market procedures for such valuation.

There are some often astoundingly simplistic views by organizations on how social change happens through participatory development processes. Blair (2000) points out a simple causality that lies at the basis of much that is called ‘participatory development’: more participation is expected to lead to more representation of underprivileged citizens, and to more empowerment of these groups to affect laws, plans, and budgets, which in turn will lead to benefits to all, and therefore to poverty reduction. Blair's conclusion is that "as we proceed analytically through the … formula, the results registered to date become successively less substantial" (ibid, p.25). He hastens to say that this does not mean it is not worthwhile but that they remain untested. Similar theories of action underlie many efforts on promotion of market access by small farmers, the benefits of decentralization, the roles and impacts of community-based organizations, the goods to be derived from social capital, the power of micro-credit, the benefits of gender analysis and approaches, and almost all of the theoretical and ideological pillars of contemporary rural development.

Whenever a project or program is designed the people involved, either implicitly or explicitly, resort to their individual and collective theories of action and build many assumptions into the rationale of the intervention. The theories of action we use partly come from society’s established and formalized knowledge base, partly from the accumulated experience of those involved in designing the project or program, and partly from political correctness. Not all theories of action in use are well tested before being used to design the project. This may lead to unreliable assumptions or hypotheses informing the core strategy. Some assumptions are explicit, but many only become evident for people when deviations from the expected reveal the hidden assumption. Hence explicitly questioning assumptions will help a project learn about fundamental anomalies or weaknesses in its strategy.

A note of caution is due here about the transforming potential of ‘questioning strategic assumptions’. Identifying a problematic assumption does not always mean it can be corrected. Other constraints will affect the possibility of strategic adjustments. For example, IFAD projects are developed and negotiated between national governments and multi-lateral organizations, sometimes requiring parliamentary approval as a project affects foreign debt levels. This reduces
their flexibility for adjustment once contracts have been signed. Furthermore, projects are
implemented by management units that depend on or are housed within larger organizations,
such as the Ministry of Agriculture or a national institute of rural development. Sometimes the
project assumption that has proven problematic also underpins the strategy of the larger umbrella
organization, which might not be keen to revise its assumptions. Therefore, this reduces the
option for the project to deviate and operate with refined but differing assumptions. Both factors
relate to the limited autonomy of IFAD projects. Project participants, in particular the
management staff, can only make decisions within the bounds set by others in the national
hierarchy.

B. Questions focusing on operational dilemmas and challenges

Most project staff are involved in implementing fixed tasks, for example, setting up micro-credit
facilities, constructing roads, providing technical assistance or training to local organizations,
and so forth. While there is considerable standard knowledge about most of these operational
aspects of a program - and staff are usually contracted with the appropriate skills - there will
always be new contexts that cause challenges and dilemmas for implementation.

In such cases, staff must be able to talk about the new challenges they face, the questions they
have, the dilemmas that emerge, in order to seek solutions together. If the project culture is an
open one, then staff will seek each other’s advice in an ongoing dialogue. However, some
dilemmas may go beyond the in-house capacity. Then external expertise needs to be sought.
Also, sometimes staff do not have enough time or opportunities to seek advice when they need it.
Then management needs to create more moments for exchange of opinions and experiences. And
not always are new insights shared with all those who would benefit from them. For example,
one extension agent may have had success with a farmer-to-farmer integrated pest management
activity as an alternative to an extension agent-to-farmer process. But unless this gets recognized
as being useful for others and shared with them, it will remain an isolated case of good practice.

Learning that enables staff to reflect on their practical experiences and make sense of this together
(stages 2 and 3 of Kolb’s learning cycle) can form a solid basis for improving the daily
implementation of core activities. Three examples illustrate how questioning operational challenges
differs from questioning assumptions (see Box 2).
Box 2. Examples of IFAD Projects Questioning Operational Challenges

• The technical services component in IFAD’s Corredor Puno-Cusco project worked as follows: selection of community-based organizations on the basis of simple ‘business plans’ that defined which type of technical advice they need and for what purposes. If the idea was approved, the project would transfer the money for the organization to hire any technical advisor they chose, define his/her terms of reference, terminate the contract whenever they wanted, negotiate the fees/products/results, and so on. The organization operated autonomously, with no intervention or even support from project staff. The project’s only role was to select the organizations eligible for funding, with the devolved process being the full responsibility of the selected organizations. In one AGC cycle, the project team wanted to review how this process worked in practice and what the project could do to improve the outcomes. They concluded that many organizations needed to develop their capacities to manage these services and operate with 100% autonomy in these ‘rural markets for technical services’. This then helped the project to provide additional support that would increase the project’s impact.

• In PRODAP, El Salvador, the social infrastructure component was designed in such a ways as to improve community infrastructure conditions but in particular to strengthen local organizational capacities. The assumption was that by organizing and implementing a school or road construction initiative, local organizations would be strengthened. During an AGC cycle, the assumption itself was not questioned but the operational aspects were refined. The project team realized that local organizations need basic support in terms of internal democracy and in terms of shared norms and rules - and that it cannot just automatically result from being involved in construction work. The team also agreed the need for a gradual process of accumulating experiences- and organizational strengthening - before expecting local organizations to undertake large construction efforts.

• In PRONADEL, Honduras, resource transfer to small farmer communities was implemented through community-based organizations (local management structures, or LMS) that was taken for granted as the mechanism that will create and sustain a revolving fund from which every community member could benefit. The analysis of the fund transfer process to the community showed that, contrary to expectations, the LMS were not the proper community-based structures to handle funds and that community institution-building was a missing element in the fund transfer strategy.

Assessment and Impact

Understanding the Five Phases of the AGC Process

Turning now to the learning process itself, this section describes in detail the current understanding of AGC as it has emerged from our work with the projects. This section will discuss each of the five phases – as we now view them (see Figure 1), and discusses important questions such as:

• Who is/should be present in these phases?
• What outputs are needed from each phase?
• What quality criteria can be used to ensure that good quality work is taking place?
• What types of variations in implementing this phase can be considered?

Throughout this section, we refer to ‘the facilitator’, who is plays a critical role in guiding the AGC process. In our initial work, we acted as AGC facilitators and – in collaboration with
PREVAL - many project staff received initial training to act as facilitators. Many have proceeded beyond this initial stage of capacity development. With this paper, we hope to encourage others to take up this role. This may be a national external consultant, as undertaken now by Corredor Cusco-Puno Project (Peru) in its subsequent applications of the AGC process. The former M&E coordinator of the same project is now helping other projects with their own AGC efforts, as is the former director of PRODAPEN, Costa Rica, who is currently facilitating AGC processes with a number of projects in Central America and the Caribbean.

It may also be someone within the project, such as in the case of PRODERCO in Honduras, where previously trained staff members facilitated an AGC process and, going even one step further, organized a program to train technical staff and leaders of rural grassroots organizations as facilitators of systematization processes (one critical part of the AGC cycle). In Prosalafa II, Venezuela, the main AGC ‘champion’ is the director who was a staff member during the first phase of the project when he received training in the AGC process. If the facilitator is internal, then careful consideration is needed to ensure he or she is respected enough by all project participants, especially senior management, to be able to ensure their commitment to the process. Furthermore, they must be given enough time to undertake this process.

However, one facilitator alone will probably not be enough to keep the process moving, as that person’s presence is sporadic and their role often specific to a certain phase in the AGC cycle. Crucial for the process is the presence of ‘champions’, two or three people with some leverage and respect in the project. As most IFAD projects are not designed as learning projects, someone has to invest time at creating and then keeping open the space and opportunities for learning to occur. Until it becomes embedded in project practice, someone or several people need to work at several fronts to build it into staff practices, allocate budgets, and keep people focused on the questioning mode of working that AGC calls for. Recognizing and stimulating these champions early on in the AGC process can greatly help the work of the facilitator.

Phase 1 – Laying the Basis

Considerable preparation is needed to lay the basis for effective AGC activities. This involves making contact with the project and obtaining the support of senior management for subsequent stages. Essential for this phase is explaining what AGC consists of in terms of the timeframe, focus, possible benefits and stakeholder involvement. During the initial conversations, the most frequent question we had from senior managers were: How much time of my staff will it take? How much does it cost and who will pay for it? These questions surely reflect the perception that, despite interest in the potential benefits, the proposition to engage in a learning process is not really at the core of a project’s role and mandate. Yet, the idea makes enough sense that it cannot be rejected out of hand. Senior managers will decide based on their perception of the cost-benefit balance. Facilitators need to be ready to answer such questions with convincing and context-specific arguments. This phase is delicate in the sense of needing to create commitment and enthusiasm.

‘Laying the basis’ also requires the facilitator to start understanding the different interests involved in participating in an AGC process. There are likely to be different interests and different understandings of what such a learning approach means in practice. Some may view
AGC more as a focused ‘marketing’ exercise that requires sharing some positive experiences. For example, some projects value the systematizations (Phase 3) for helping them make their success stories visible. Others active in the same project may grab the opportunity to deepen their understanding of a stubborn dilemma, a problem or a question they have about their work. Clearly such different understandings of learning will have implications for the willingness of project participants to explore failures or problems as well as errors. It is critical to get clear and obtain consensus on this, otherwise during the analysis (Phase 3) the facilitator may well be puzzled by different degrees of frankness of participants.

A useful part of Phase 1 is a relatively quick participatory diagnosis of the existing learning processes in the project. One option is to simply ask these questions:

1. Is there a culture of dialogue and critical debate within the project, does the director and other senior staff stimulate and reward innovation and entrepreneurship?
2. How do changes occur in the project strategy and operations and what does this tell you about how learning takes place?
3. What are the core reflection moments of the project, who is present and what kinds of reflection, based on what type of information is undertaken and with which methods?
4. To what extent do project participants perceive ‘learning’ to be part of their jobs and core project business, and valued as part of the project culture?
5. What are the strengths of the project in terms of learning from problems and successes and doubts?
6. What are the weaknesses of the project in terms of learning from problems and successes and doubts?

The facilitator can seek to answer the questions, either in a short group discussion with key project staff and other participants, or via a series of one-on-one discussions. For many projects and staff, it will be the first time they think actively about something called ‘a learning process’. Therefore, these initial discussions are useful to help them think through what it might mean for them, as well as giving the facilitator insights about the existing learning moments and processes.

In this first stage, facilitators must aim to actively capture the interest of senior management in making project learning more systematic and explicit. Senior management must be seen to support subsequent stages of the work. For the participatory diagnosis of internal learning, the facilitator may find it useful to speak with unit or thematic coordinators, the person responsible for monitoring and evaluation and coordinators of co-implementing organizations. Finding a ‘champion’ - someone internal to the project who will support the AGC idea and help make it happen can make a significant contribution to a smooth AGC process. Remember, however, that champions will be paralyzed within the project systems if they lack support from senior managers.

In a project where systematization is being well embedded, AGC may not be recognized as being any different than yet another systematization workshop. During a previous phase of FIDAMERICA, the work was exclusively focused on systematization, which quickly became one-off documentation exercises and did not lead to institutionalizing of improvements. Therefore, it is critical to clarify that AGC is more than a one-off systematization by discussing all five phases and stressing that systematization is only one (important) step in a more elaborate
way of viewing and implementing systematic project learning. Ensure that people are aware of the role and importance of the other steps and of the need to seek non-project insights during subsequent phases. Systematization can end up being a simple, insular documentation exercise, whereas learning requires all five phases that draw on project-derived as well as external information.

In summary, therefore, expected outputs from Phase 1 are: formal agreement by senior management to proceed with AGC, interest by a large group of project staff and other participants, clarity about the AGC concept, and agreement on the timing and sequence of next AGC steps.

**Phase 2 – Identifying Themes and Questions**

Not all themes can be the focus of learning at the same time. The AGC process, which includes systematization workshops, requires some effort and implies costs and allocation of staff time; therefore a single AGC cycle should focus on priority themes at that moment in time and questions related to each theme. But identifying key learning themes is not only about efficiency and use of scarce resources and time. Identifying, formulating and prioritizing themes and questions, is in itself part of the learning process, without which the learning lacks purpose and direction. It takes project participants through an open-ended exchange of topics where dilemmas exist, challenges occur and improvements are needed.

In this phase, the multi-actor approach that characterizes the learning process, becomes prominent. If the theme and questions are formulated only by one person or one interest group, then the wider relevance and interest may well be lost. The topic of learning should reflect not just one manager’s interest or concern but a curiosity or question that is present among a wider group of project stakeholders. So it is vital that a range of project stakeholders are involved as the themes selected and questions drafted will form the backbone of the entire learning cycle. A good selection of stakeholders to participate in this phase is:

1. the project senior management;
2. the project technical team;
3. co-implementers (e.g. private firms and NGOs that are contracted to assist farmers and implement the project strategy with beneficiaries), and
4. representatives of the rural organizations the project is working with directly.

In Phase 1, one tries to negotiate wide participation of stakeholders as an essential part of Phase 2. In some cases, phase 2 may be undertaken at the same time as Phase 1. This will depend on the access that the facilitator has to key people and whether or not senior management is immediately supportive of the learning process. In some newer projects, the Directors had been staff members of an older project in which he/she had become acquainted with AGC. In their new capacity and project, they immediately requested that his/her new project be involved in the AGC process, as in the cases of PRODAP Phase 2 in El Salvador, PROSALFA phase 2 in Venezuela, PRODERQUI in Guatemala, and PROSOC and PRODERCO in Honduras. Thus the project immediately started with Phase 2. Usually, however, Phase 2 takes place well after Phase 1 as it requires time to organize sufficient and diverse participation of a wide range of people.
A frequent and important challenge with this multi-stakeholder approach is that different participants will usually have different questions and priorities. These can often be reconciled, in particular if the differences relate mostly to the scale or level at which the theme is examined or of motivation for asking the question. For example, the same problem can be addressed through a method or activity question or through a results or even a goals question. But often they are quite different and may require two sets of themes and questions to be addressed separately but in parallel. For senior managers, it may well come as a surprise that technical staff and grassroots organizations have different priority themes/questions than his or hers. If a good dialogue can be facilitated about the reason behind such differences, this can extend everyone’s understanding of where project challenges are perceived to lie and, thus, contribute to the learning exercise.

To ensure everyone has a fair say in theme selection, small separate workshops should be held with each group (notably senior management, local staff, co-implementers, and rural organizations). The output of each workshop is a prioritized list of themes each group considered critical for systematic learning. If there are differences between these lists, a critical next step will be to reach agreement about which themes are more critical than others. The AGC experiences to date show that sharing these lists and becoming aware of possibly different priorities is often a significant first eye-opener for senior management from the AGC cycle.

In this phase, three decisions must be made as preparation for Phase 3 but do not necessarily require the presence of a facilitator. They can be the responsibility of someone who knows the project well and can ensure solid collective discussion around these questions.

1. **What themes are most critical on which to focus learning efforts of a wide group of project stakeholders?** Usually each stakeholder group ends up with a prioritized list of eight to 12 learning themes. Several issues can be then derived from each theme that merit critical analysis.

2. **What kinds of questions need to be answered for each theme?** What are the problems, challenges, dilemmas, curiosities? This additional step helps define key areas of interest of project participants and can lead to defining the precise question or issue on which the critical analysis will concentrate in the systematization phase. Sometimes, this degree of specificity is not defined in Phase 2 but instead takes places early on in Phase 3 with those who are participating directly in the systematization.

For those keen to share success stories, the interesting experiences will be those where good results are known and can be shown. For those keen to overcome operational obstacles or rethink strategies, the interesting experiences will be those where problems have occurred. Some of our work indicates that learning from a complete success story can be less striking and profound than where it involves examining a less successful innovation or example (see Box 3).
Box 3. Learning from success, mistakes, or others?

In the Corredor Cusco-Puno project in Peru, it was decided to select four critical themes, one for each of the three local offices and one to be addressed by the senior management unit. In each of the four processes, participants in the AGC cycle selected one successful example, one unsuccessful or less successful, and one example that was known to be successful but in which the project had not played any role at all, but had been developed or supported by some one else, which they included to have an independent point of comparison. This is an important innovation and contribution to the AGC model. It allowed the participants to enrich their discussion of the critical themes and questions by comparing between cases.

3. Where are there interesting experiences in the project from which to learn through a systematic look? While the exact locations of empirical experiences that can be systematized are not usually discussed at this stage with the facilitator and is purely a decision of project participants, it is essential that this must be considered before Phase 3 if the systematization exercise is to be successful. This last decision is critical if the next phase can be planned in time (see Phase 3). It is also a decision that might lead to differing opinions, based on why people feel AGC is useful.

4. In summary, therefore, expected outputs of Phase 2 are: agreement on which themes and related questions will be examined, agreement on which project experiences will be used for the learning process, and agreement on the date for Phase 3.

Phase 3 – Systematizing Experiences, Lessons and Documentation

The third stage of the AGC concept is the most visible, as this is when the systematization workshops take place that lead to the documentation of lessons and recommendations. It is this phase that is most directly appealing to projects that are undertaking a systematic learning cycle for the first time, as it is clear that outputs will be concrete. Often however, as explained above, this becomes a one-step substitute for the entire learning cycle. This short-cut view of learning should be avoided. In particular, if the ‘institutionalization phase’ is not carried out, this increases the likelihood that project implementation continues as usual. One cannot not assume that if a lesson emerges and is made explicit during the systematization phase, that it will automatically lead to changes in project design or implementation.

Much can be written about the detailed facilitation of this phase. Much of this information is already documented in the methodology guide ‘Sistematización de Experiencias Locales de Desarrollo Agrícola y Rural’ by Berdegué, Ocampo and Escobar. It can be found at: www.fidamerica.org. In this section, only a few highlights will be discussed as they emerged from the AGC processes in different IFAD projects. Below is a schematic overview of systematization that is described in detail in the guide (see Figure 3).

Being clear about the methodological limitations of this step is important to ensure realistic expectations about the process and outputs. For example, a trade-off needs to be made between tightly defined themes that are conducive to deeper analysis and broad themes that are conducive to greater participation. Other drawbacks include: lack of generalization power due to the case
study nature of a systematization exercise; the lack of a control group or benchmark against which to compare a specific example that is analyzed; lack of indicators related to the theme in question that would enable a more comparative analysis; and the ubiquitous difficulty of guaranteeing the presence of sufficient creativity to deal with contextual variables and processes and of analytical skills needed to ensure deep analysis. Despite such limitations, experiences to date with over 250 systematizations (most of which were undertaken on the initiative of project participants themselves) indicate that the process and outputs are sufficiently beneficial to generate ongoing enthusiasm.

Start Simple

Starting simply is better than trying to create a perfect first process and making it overly complex. If the learning cycle may be institutionalized as part of the project approach, then it is worth considering starting with a simplified version with low costs and limited staff input. If the first try at explicit learning is perceived to be a success by senior managers, then subsequent cycles can involve more and more diverse stakeholders, treat more complex themes, examine more challenging questions, and make use of more elaborate information gathering exercises. This, in turn, should generate higher quality reflections and learning.

Institutionalizing learning is a multi-year process so do not expect to get it perfect in the first round. The first ‘systematization method’ that took place in the late 90’s by FIDAMERICA and PREVAL (with the collaboration of the MARENASS project of Peru), was significantly more complex than the one that was finally adopted and utilized: it was more powerful and led to deeper insights but also took more time of very busy staff and rural people, was more costly, and, in the end, was less attractive, despite offering more learning benefits. The simpler version, in which concrete insights emerge from a week of debate and reflection, has proven a success as projects have adopted and adapted it. FIDAMERICA and PREVAL have conducted about 60 systematization workshops as part of their training workshops, while staff have independently undertaken more than 200 systematizations of their own based on what they learned at the initial training workshops. The results from the first attempt should drive the project towards increasing investment in learning and lead to better quality outputs - but above all to valuing sustained learning efforts.
Initial situation
- Describe the development problem or opportunity before the intervention of the project

Context
- The causes or determinant of the problem or opportunity
- Factors that limited local action to solve the problem or take advantage of the opportunity

Development process
- What was done (activities)?
- When? (organization in time)?
- Who did it (actors)?
- How was it done (methods)?
- With what was it done (resources and costs)?

Context
- Factors that favored the process
- Factors that constrained the process

Current situation
- How does the current situation compare with the initial situation?
- What are the tangible and intangible benefits?
- Who has captured or benefited from these benefits?

Contexto
- Factors that amplified the magnitude of the benefits or the number of beneficiaries
- Factors that constrained the magnitude of the benefits or the number of beneficiaries

Figure 3. An overview of questions that guide the systematization workshop

Ensure Core Elements are Present - But Be Open to Variation

Having the right people present and ensuring that appropriate and enough information is at hand are critical for a successful outcome of this phase. It is obvious that a closed discussion with only project coordinators around the table will not be as rich as when co-implementers and beneficiaries are present. More interview-based and monitoring data will give allow for more triangulation and reflection.

However, while people and information are the undisputable backbone of this phase, there is no single answer as to who should be present and exactly what information must be at hand. Understanding the variations that may be possible will help in making appropriate preparations and making conscious choices.

Variations will occur as a result of the type of themes selected and how tightly or broadly they are formulated. A tightly formulated theme, such as ‘the process of creation and operation of a specific rural micro-credit facility’, will allow for more focused information seeking and more
focused invitation of participants. However, the relevance of a tight theme may be more limited. A broad theme, such as 'the process of providing technical assistance to production initiatives supported by the project', will require more extensive efforts at information gathering and will also require more diverse project participants, as the theme is more likely to be relevant for them and will need their perspectives for a meaningful analysis. There is, however, a trade-off between tightly and broadly defined themes. The broader the focus, the less intensive the analysis will be but the more project participants will be able to contribute, while a tight focus will make a deeper analysis and insights possible but with a reduced number of project participants. An ideal theme is concrete but general enough to allow reflection by a large group of project participants that work in different geographic regions of the project.

Another source of variation can occur in terms of stakeholder participation, which is in part, a result of the nature of the project. For example, a project with a small coordination unit that has decentralized much of its operations is more likely to automatically tap into non-unit stakeholders, than a project with a large coordination unit where operations are controlled internally. Decisions about who to invite to the systematization workshops and who to involve as interviewees will also be affected by the theme. Representatives from all active participants must be present during the workshop, with the active engagement of as many as possible of the 'indirect actors' (those affecting the context) either in the workshop or in the subsequent fieldwork process. Clearly, ensuring the participation of direct stakeholder groups will be more straightforward. However, having insights from the indirect actors will qualitatively enhance the insights. In one case, a community leader was a member of the systematization team. His contribution was extremely important in drafting the questionnaire that was used to gather additional information, and also in interviewing community members, which was an indigenous community and thus presented language and cultural difficulties for others in the systematization team.

Obviously as many different perspectives as possible on the chosen themes should be present. Also consider that the more people are present who might need to carry out improvements that emerge from the reflections, the smoother will be the institutionalization process (Phase 5). Consider the following factors when identifying and prioritizing which direct and indirect actors to invite to participate in Phase 3 and in which role (as workshop participants or as interviewees):

- the thematic focus of the systematization exercise;
- the type of actors involved in the intervention process (management, technical designer, co-implementers, rural organization associated with the process, farmers and producers directly involved in the process, local authorities, private actors, competitive institutions, complementary institutions, etc.); and
- the extent of direct influence over the process being systematized.

Clearly, practicalities such as available time, the size of the workshop group and available resources (transportation, facilities, proximity of direct actors) will ultimately affect who and how many will be active in the analysis and who will be interviewed (see Berdegue et al 2004 for more details on this).

A third variation occurs in the actual sequence and length of workshops. A solid systematization process has, so far, taken place in the form of a workshop or a set of workshops. A single
comprehensive workshop using the FIDAMERICA-PREVAL method usually lasts 7 days. Two outputs of each workshop are a 15 to 20 page document and a power point presentation. Attempts by us to reduce the number of days for this first exposure have not worked well.

What FIDAMERICA has done is that Phase 3 in the first round of AGC in a given project takes the form of a ‘learning-by-doing’ workshop. About 20-30 individuals involved in a project apply the FIDAMERICA-PREVAL systematization method in seven days, with the support of two or three facilitators. An optimal size of each group appears to be about six participants and one facilitator, as this allows for active involvement in both critical analysis and documentation.

The first day is dedicated to introducing the key concepts. Days 2 to 6 focus on a hands-on exercise, in which participants split into groups, go to the field, systematize a specific development experience with the direct and active involvement of all direct actors, write the first draft of a systematization report, and prepare a power point presentation. The final session of this workshop is a half-day seminar in which the final, complete products are presented by the participants to their co-workers, project senior management and, in many cases, top authorities from the Ministry of Agriculture or other important decision-makers. The final results include (per critical theme/set of questions) a 20-30 page document, a power point presentation, and a comprehensive set of lessons learned and recommendations for improving the work of the project.

We have observed that out of the 20-30 people involved in each training workshop, a significant number will continue to do this type of work on their own, in the context of their normal work routine. The web page of FIDAMERICA has dozens of examples of systematizations undertaken by former participants of the training workshops. Several of these individuals have evolved to become facilitators of similar processes in other projects.

If the process is internally facilitated, then the workshop could be divided into two parts: the first ending with the drafting of the questionnaire (see Berdegue et al 2002), and the second part consisting of the field work and analysis (see Box 4). However, there should not be much time between the two parts. What is clear from our experiences is that the systematization document, including final editing, must be edited during the workshop. Afterwards other demands take over and organizing the time to make the final touches becomes very difficult.
Box 4. Varying rhythms for a systematization process

In the case of the Corredor Puno-Cusco project in Peru, senior management requested that the different activities that are usually packed into one training workshop, be separated into two parts, with a few month gap in between. During the first workshop (lasting 2.5 days), participants reviewed the concepts underpinning ‘systematization’, and proceeded to identify, prioritize and select their priority issues and critical questions to guide the learning process. ‘Homework’ was defined by the participants to obtain, organize and analyze background information, talk with different rural communities to see if they were interested in participating in the upcoming exercise, prepare the logistics for the field work, etc. During the second session (6 days), participants undertook fieldwork, talking with communities and organizations, processing this information, writing the (draft) reports, and preparing the (draft) power point presentations.

The Puno-Cusco project experimented with yet another variation. Here, the systematization was going to be carried out directly by the most senior project managers, including the Director General. However, it was impossible for them to dedicate a full week to undertaking a systematization exercise. Instead, they decided to contract a consultant who, over a period of four months, visited the project several times to facilitate brief but intensive and well-prepared sessions, each lasting between a half to a full day. In between visits, each team member prepared for the next step by fulfilling agreed tasks.

Ensure Analytical Thinking - As Well As Critical Reflection

Two analytical challenges often present themselves as challenges for the facilitators: how to analyze beyond specifics, which makes identifying lessons learned an abstraction for many, and second how to ensure sufficient trust and safe space that people can make honest appraisals of what lies at the root of success and failure.

A common limitation of the final documentation is the absence of deep analysis about the intervention process. Participants struggle with thinking beyond the specific conditions of the case being analyzed and with drawing general lessons. The capacity for analytical thinking is frequently not a feature of the profile of staff engaged in these projects. They are usually selected for their expertise in facing and solving concrete and situation-specific challenges, not for their ability to conceptualize general ideas from an analysis of concrete experiences. For most people, analytical thinking is much more challenging than asking them to describe what happened. Therefore, documentation is often focused on project efforts and the immediate and localized lessons, as opposed to drawing conclusions and recommendations that can be of more general use. From the point of view of the direct participants and the project, this is not a problem: the learning has already taken place and the results can be put to immediate use. But it becomes a significant limitation when it comes to contributing to the wider body of knowledge about rural development. Thus it is a key constraint to consider when one thinks about ‘scaling-up’ lessons learned to influence other projects or public policies (see Section 5).

Critical reflection is a second challenge. This results from the broader institutional context in which project activities take place. How open are organizations that are hosting IFAD projects to open criticism, to recognizing mistakes, to challenging deeply and long-felt assumptions?
Critical discussion is important as the learning that is to be shared should be as honest as possible to ensure relevance and usefulness. Facilitating critical reflection is an art, as it requires creating an environment of trust and frank discussion in contexts that might not normally entertain such debates.

The term ‘critical reflection’ is often used by people without full understanding of its meaning. Learning comes from realizing that there is a difference between what one expected to happen and what actually happened – and then identifying which assumptions might need revising and what that revision needs to be. Reflection relies strongly on the ability and the opportunity to challenge the assumptions that informed actions. Hence reflection can be considered the way in which people explore and reassess their assumptions.

To reflect, a person needs a certain level of curiosity that enables her or him to shift between inquiring (seeking information) and interpreting (giving meaning to the information) before developing useful insights. Williams (pers. comm.) suggests that three things help: the challenge needs to tough but not too tough; curiosity needs to be aimed at a real purpose that requires resolution and the issue needs to be slightly nebulous, thus inviting reflection. Berdegué (pers. comm.) adds a fourth condition: the consequences to the individual or group doing the critical thinking must be acceptable. This means, that there must be no fear of retribution from others, whether the immediate boss, the authorities in the Ministry to which the project belongs, or an international NGO that provides the funding to its local counterpart, or from peers. This crucial factor must not be underestimated in any project that is embedded in a broader set of institutions and relationships.

Most people are able to have critical thoughts about what they experience. However the difficulty lies, from a facilitation perspective as encountered in AGC processes, in making these critical thoughts public. There is much at stake to criticize one’s peers or superiors but there is as much at stake when being asked to reflect critically on one’s own practice, as it means questioning one’s identities, capacities and aspirations.

Clarify the Difference Between Conclusions, Recommendations and Lessons Learned

The systematization process distinguishes between conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned as follows (Berdegué et al 2004).

- A ‘conclusion’ is a synthesis of confirmed facts that relate to a certain situation. For example, ‘the policy X did not fulfill its objectives’.
- A ‘recommendation’ is a specific idea about how to deal with concrete problems or take advantage of concrete opportunities in a given situation. For example: ‘to improve the level of repayment in project X, the following changes are needed in the credit facilities....’.
- A ‘lesson learned’ is a generalized statement of what is likely to work and/or what has to happen to obtain (or prevent) a certain result. For example: For example: ‘Collective guarantee systems based on group credit have been shown to be an effective instrument to improve repayment rates with poor rural communities in Central America’.

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39 This paragraph and the next are from Guijt (forthcoming).
40 This paragraph is based on Klouda (2004, pg 7).
Experiences show that project participants find ‘conclusions’ and ‘recommendations’ easier to handle than ‘lessons’. In part, this is because they are more direct useful for them - they do, after all, relate directly to project implementation and strategy. Jointly agreed themes and questions, rather than underlying issues and assumptions, guide the investigation of several very local experiences -. Identifying ‘lessons learned’ requires being able to discard site-specific features and focusing the analysis on underlying logics and ideas. This makes a considerable demand on the analytical capacity of participants. If this is low, identifying lessons will be a struggle.

Identifying lessons is the only attempt to scale up the analysis from the immediate context of the project. Lessons should be relevant knowledge that can be shared among all IFAD stakeholders, since they represent generalizations on rural development components that are common to most IFAD projects, leaving out project-specific aspects. Lessons often tend to become cliché statements, such as strong community organizations are needed to put in place an efficient micro-credit system. Facilitators need to pay particular attention to the formulation of useful lessons learned (see Box 5).

Box 5. Bringing quality and clarity to conclusions, recommendations and ‘lessons’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Several considerations can help increase the quality of the lessons that are documented:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>• Ensure the lessons are comprehensible for others - include a description of the context in which the lesson was learned, the topic under investigation, a short description of the commonly held belief that was the starting point of the intervention, what triggered the lesson and the lesson itself in the form of ‘If X, then... ‘.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Be clear about the sources of lessons - Which project experiences and which stakeholder groups’ perspectives are included?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Identify a clear audience - For who are the conclusions intended and to whom will it be communicated?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Dealing with Documentation

If the audience for the recommendations and lessons learned are simply the direct actors of the systematized experience, then there is no need to document every detail – the learning will have already taken place in part during the systematization process itself. However, FIDAMERICA’s focus has been on adding value by sharing systematization outputs with a broader audience through e-conferences, e-bulletins and face-to-face meetings. Given this need to communicate results beyond the immediate analysts to others in the project and those outside the project context, then written or audiovisual communication is essential.

Getting the analysis on paper is the last hurdle in Phase 3. Writing skills are often few and far between among project staff, let along other participants. Furthermore, while discussions may be frank, hesitation can occur when asked to put this down in writing. If capacities do not exist in the project, then contract additional help for this part of Phase 3. It has also helped to ask groups to think not in terms of writing a formal report but simply about sharing a story of their experiences.
In summary, therefore, expected outputs of Phase 3 are: a set of documented experiences describing the initial situation, the intervention process and the subsequent situation and containing critical reflections on what could have been done better; a set of lessons learned to be communicated more widely; and agreement on the audience to whom to communicate the outputs plus a process for ensuring meaningful sharing and debate (see Phase 4).

Phase 4 - Communication and Socialization
One of the key observations after the first experiences with the AGC learning cycle were that the impacts of a cycle could be significantly improved if communication strategies are formulated and integrated into the learning process. This phase, being relatively new to the team’s experience with AGC, is less clearly defined that the other four phases. This section will describe initial ideas on what such a phase should aim to undertake and key considerations.

Due to the size of IFAD projects and the intensive nature of Phase 3 that makes wide participation unfeasible, it will always be essential to share the outputs from Phase 3 with a much wider group of people who are critical for the success of the project. If the analysis and discussions remains restricted to those present at the systematization workshop, then it may prove very difficult to generate an interest in any proposed operational or strategic improvements.

Two steps or levels of communication and debate are needed. The first takes place at the project level and encompasses discussing the systematizing document, conclusions, recommendations and lessons learned with those who were not present at the systematization workshop. These outputs should be put on the agenda of any of the existing reflection spaces that all projects have. This will ensure wide sharing and therefore contribute to scaling up the understanding about the processes that were questioned in the systematization efforts. This is the direct institutional and social learning in project implementation. An output of this phase would be actor-specific recommendations to be institutionalized at the project level.

The second level of communication and debate is with those external to the project, inside other parts of IFAD, with other IFAD projects or with other rural development practitioners. This has two benefits - bringing what might be new insights to others as well as asking them to comment on the insights and thus add value and deepen the insights that emerged through the systematization exercise.

In both cases, this phase calls for an explicit process to share and debate the findings from the systematizations. This means that ‘communication’ does not refer to simply transferring information but rather to a process of internalizing the analysis by those who are responsible for the kinds of experiences for which the systematizations have tried to identify lessons and improvements. ‘Socialization’ is the process of debating widely that enables lessons to embed themselves - or, after further reflection, to be consciously rejected.

If recommendations and lessons learned are simply communicated as tasks to undertake, then the reasoning behind it gets lost. The output from the systematizations needs to be understood per level, per domain in the project so that people are motivated internally to instigate what they believe to be improvements.
Therefore, two considerations are vital - the participants and the methodology. As the purpose of this phase is to share, careful thought is needed about who should be targeted for this phase. The learning cycle can be viewed as a chain of people - who asked (Phase 2), who analyzed (Phase 3), who heard and debated (Phase 4), and who changed (Phase 5). By analyzing the change chain in this manner, and assessing who was not present during Phase 3 yet needs to change (Phase 5), the focus of the communication in Phase 4 will become clearer.

Obviously methodology needs to be meaningful for the target groups. In most IFAD projects, reading documents is the way in which staff and other project participants are assumed to learn. Yet, documents are hard to get hold of, not reproduced, not circulated, nor deliberatively discussed during meetings or reflection opportunities. Other forms of disseminating and sharing will need to be created and implemented. This can include putting the outputs from Phase 3 on the agenda of standard meetings with different groups or organizing separate meetings or short workshops with focus groups. In either case, the Phase 3 outputs must be shared, their validity must be discussed, and participants must themselves identify what this might mean for their future actions vis-à-vis the project. For a development project that wishes to operate as a ‘learning organization’, appropriate communication and socialization fora, such as periodic workshops, and tools, such as a newsletter, are essential. Furthermore, project management must allocate resources, mainly in terms of time and money to enable project participants to exercise this responsibility as part of their regular terms of reference and not as an optional, secondary activity.

Due to the need for creative, localized solutions for communicating and socializing the outputs of Phase 3, this phase will require some input of time and resources. It will also require careful feedback to ensure that significant insights from those not present during Phase 3 and who will not be present during Phase 5, help to inform the subsequent analysis during institutionalization events. In one project, those participating in the systematization workshop did not have a strategic perspective on the project. Hence lessons learned focused on micro-level issues. In such a case, the communication and socialization will need to target senior managers or others with a more strategic perspective of the project, so that they can raise the relevance of the lessons to a level that may have a greater impact on project effectiveness.

In summary, therefore, expected outputs of Phase 4 are: a much larger group of people who are not only aware of Phase 3 outputs but have also discussed their validity and what they might mean for them and their role/tasks in the project, and possibly adaptations to the lessons learned from the systematizations.

Phase 5 - Institutionalizing
The final stage is critical for institutionalizing learning, when the value of AGC can finally hit home. As mentioned above, changes may well be implemented as soon as the door closes after the systematization workshop (phase 3). Senior managers may well recognize the merit in a recommendation or a lesson learned, and then immediately instigate improvements. This has occurred more frequently than we anticipated when we designed a Phase 5 as part of AGC. However, if the workshop ends up being a documentation exercise or the results of the systematization are not very popular with senior managers at first glance, then phases 4 and 5 are
important to give an extra impetus that the systematization outputs are considered carefully. So socializing results and having all team members analyze and suggest specific recommendations to be institutionalized should be a common practice at the project level within an AGC process.

This stage requires the embedding of the recommendations and lessons learned from Phase 3, as approved and perhaps adapted through Phase 4, into the everyday life of the project. Three aspects need explicit attention:

- Adapting or establishing new norms, rules and procedures;
- Establishing or modifying the incentive system; and
- Incorporating improvements into human resource development policies.

Changing the norms that govern project staff behavior and their culture means modifying the rules by which the project operates so that favorable processes are encouraged and hindering processes are discouraged. For an example, see Table 3.

Shifting the incentives basis requires clarity about what ‘incentives’ mean and their role in the project. Incentives are stimuli that encourage a certain way of working. The types of incentives will be specific to the way of working that is being encouraged and will be specific for the different interest groups in a project - project unit staff, co-implementers, and beneficiaries. For example, if as a result of a systematization process, a project is keen to encourage field advisors to focus on results more than on activities, then the staff evaluation system can be changed to heighten the importance of effect or impact criteria and reduce the weight given to simple completion of activities. Sometimes very simple incentives can be effective. In projects that are moving from a control-oriented to a learning-oriented M&E system, something as simple as providing training to staff and other stakeholders shows they are trusted and being encouraging to contribute to M&E. By investing in staff, the transition of project style becomes real. For another example, see Table 3.

The third type of institutionalization aspect is the internalizing of new insights into the skills base of project participants. This usually involves some shift in capacity building programs, adapting on-the-job training, or short workshops. By ensuring that those that can benefit from the lessons learned are all up-to-speed on the improvements, the responsibility to implement the improvement becomes shared. For an example, see Table 3.

Any of these three types of changes can be institutionalized in two ways. If an idea that has emerged from the above stages is valued and understood, it may almost imperceptibly find its way into the daily practice of project and partner organization staff. But sometimes institutionalization is also a specific event of filtering insights and transforming them into action points. In the second case, such an event will take place after the systematization workshop.

In one project, two months after the systematization workshop, the director met with the management team to review each recommendation and lesson learned in order to identify what needed to be institutionalized. Two months proved to be long enough for the meaning of some of the lessons to have become fuzzy, requiring substantial reinterpretation. Therefore, think carefully about the timing of Phases 3, 4 and 5.
If a separate event is conducted, plan to include the following tasks:

1. Analyze lessons of the systematizations undertaken;
2. Eliminate whatever has already been taken up by the Project and those that are no longer relevant.
3. Discuss the implications of the remaining recommendations and lessons learned (see Table 3).
4. After the implications have been determined, write up a plan identifying who is responsible and the source of funding for the planned changes, as well as the deadline by which progress with implementation is expected.

Success at this stage will depend greatly on the willingness of two parties: the project management team, including the director, to devote time to this and formalize changes in the project, and those who are supposed to implement changes. This can be project unit staff, beneficiaries or co-implementers. Therefore it is critical to ensure the presence of key partners who are to support and undertake the changes at an institutionalization event. Only then can it be considered ‘collective learning’.

Remember that not all lessons can or need to be institutionalized. What is important is that this becomes an explicit decision, rather than the usual default option of ‘business as usual’. For example, one project director decided not to change a strategy of empowering the rural organizations to make decisions about the project resources, even when the systematization showed that the strategy had significant flaws. His reasoning was that within the past year, the project had made a major change in several of its strategies, and that yet another change would cause confusion and exasperation.
Table 3. A structure for analyzing lessons to ensure three levels of institutionalization, with examples

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recommendations and lessons from the systematization that still need consideration</th>
<th>Implications for the norms governing the project</th>
<th>Implications for the incentives system</th>
<th>Implications for human resource development</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Lesson 1. Rural organizations often lack the capacity to manage technical advisory services on their own. The development of this capacity needs to be supported by the project. | a) A simple method needs to be designed to assess if a rural organization does or does not require this type of capacity-building.  
b) Resources from the project budget need to be allocated for the organization to contract consultants that can help it develop this capacity. | The method for selecting organizations that receive project support is discriminating against organizations that lack the capacity to self-manage external consultants. The evaluation criteria have to be changed so that promising organizations lacking this capacity can opt for capacity-development support. | Need to reinforce with co-implementing agencies the importance of identifying the capacity of rural organizations to self-manage technical consultancy services paid for in part with the project funds. |
| Lesson 2. Community capital formation through direct transference for productive projects requires a solid organization and a legal structure for funds administration | a) The local community structure through which community capitalization is envisioned needs to be redefined with the participation of direct actors.  
b) The community organization component must be adapted to the needs of the capitalization structure. | a) Accumulation and savings mechanisms for the community must be developed. This is one way to increase common capital.  
b) Social accountability must be made explicit to all group members to ensure fund repayment.  
c) Incentives for producers to become new members are required. | Training of co-implementers and small producers is needed. Main topics for workshops are: analytical information on productive alternatives, simple project evaluation techniques, basic administrative capacities and social leadership. |
| Lesson 3. For the effective development of a market in technical assistance services, FAT must invest in strengthening the supply and demand sides. This means that the project should not only focus on producers and their organizations but also on technical professionals that are part of the service supply, to ensure that this continues to be increasingly effective. | a) Project proposal forms need to include technical management activities.  
b) Allow for technical professionals to help identify and formulate proposals. | a) Incentives for the suppliers to facilitate access to resources for upgrading skills and other incentives that they might identify.  
b) Define criteria to ‘recognize the best technical professional’.  
c) Define criteria to identify farmer groups that have worked well to be awarded prizes. | a) Strengthen the technical professionals’ and farmers’ understanding of the FAT project (what is a service market, pricing, how to assess benefits, negotiation between supply and demand, etc)  
b) Prepare technical professionals and producers to shift from external technical assistance to locally managed technical services. |

His argument was valid – the timing was not right to introduce the recommended change. But it was an explicit decision, resulting from a debate stimulated by the results of the systematization and offering insights into a problematic aspect of the work that might be addressed at a later stage.

Keeping this in mind, the expected outputs of Phase 5 are: clarity about the changes needed in the project in terms of norms, incentives and human resource development that result from the
systematizations, and support from decision makers and implementers about the way forward with these changes.

Factors Contributing to Successes and Failures

Organizational Conditions for Effective Learning in IFAD Projects

Implementing the approach to organizational learning described above does not guarantee that learning occurs. It can, if implemented in the wrong context, simply become a mechanical exercise that is insufficiently well analyzed or carried by a wider group of people to generate any meaningful improvement in project activities or strategies.

Creating the opportunity for a systematic and critical look at core aspects of an IFAD project asks that certain conditions are in place or are established beforehand or concurrently with the learning process. Without these conditions, project and partner organization staff may undertake AGC but it will likely be limited to an information collation and documentation or marketing exercise that does not help them question core strategic assumptions of the project. This will significantly reduce the likelihood of significant improvements emerging from fresh insights on project experiences. Note that these are not absolute “yes or no” conditions. In each case, it is a matter of the degree to which these conditions are met that will determine how it affects the learning process and its results.

Conditions in the project context

Any project is embedded in a socio-political culture, which affects the extent to which government agencies and staff engage in frank and open critical reflection. Clearly, there is little one can do about these factors but knowing which ones are problematic for AGC may help determine whether or not to initiate the process at all or not.

Some contexts are repressive towards the critical spirit of project staff and dissuade dissent and the frank exchange of ideas. For example, a high ranking official of the Ministry of Agriculture of one country in Latin America invited to the final presentations of the systematization training workshop, jumped from his seat on hearing someone say “learning also from our mistakes”. He loudly and clearly stated, “We do not make mistakes in this ministry and anyone who does make mistakes does not belong here”. This gives a clear and harsh message to those involved in development projects in that country that learning from errors - and discussing this in public - is not likely to be lead to promotion.

Another frequent situation relates to the administrative and legal regulations that are so rigid in some countries, that projects are essentially paralyzed in terms of innovation. This substantially raises the cost of institutionalizing the lessons learned and recommendations from the learning process, as projects cannot make meaningful changes without a long and complex process of bureaucratic maneuvering.

Both are examples of disincentives for institutionalizing learning. Within the context of the AGC work, we decided not to work in some projects where we felt the context was insufficiently open
to even allow the minimum debate and therefore could not provide even the minimum chance of success.

A second aspect is the context of promotion and relocation that determines the stability of the core team. The longer a core set of managers, unit staff and co-implementers have to work together, the better they know the project and each other. In some IFAD projects, we have started afresh several times, with new directors or ‘learning champions’ and have still not moved past Phase 2 or 3.

A third contextual factor comes from the responsible government department and their desire for quick results. The more pressure that a ministry - or foreign donor - puts on a project for rapid achievement of intended objectives, the less inclined the project will be to stop, reflect, and shift direction and modify plans. A strong ‘do, don’t think’ culture in the ministry to whom the project is accountable will certainly give an additional challenge to convincing project directors to try out an AGC learning cycle.

Project design

Many development projects, including those of IFAD, have poverty reduction aims. But it is rare indeed to find any project that includes ‘learning’ as part of its core activity or of its strategy. Many IFAD projects are conceived of and implemented as blueprint projects and not as learning endeavors. Fortunately, those of more recent design tend to be more flexible and more open to implementing changes in operations, and even in strategies, during implementation, but there is a need to advance much further in this direction.

Furthermore, many projects are conceived as projects with beneficiaries receiving fixed outputs. Such projects are less likely to deviate from the existing list of development options than other projects that see local development as a process of co-creating the direction, strategy and approach.

Not being designed with learning in mind, leads to a number of challenges for implementing AGC. First, no resources for any of the five phases will be reserved in the budget, nor will there be any project staff who have ‘learning’ as their formal responsibility or in their terms of reference. The most common situation is that M&E staff get allocated the AGC set of activities but even they do not have extra time to invest in what remains ‘an additional’ or ‘extra-curricular’ activity. While fun and useful, it is not the core business of a project. A second challenge is that there will generally be a marked skepticism about the merits of investing precious time and money in an activity that is not considered important. Only when the merits of AGC emerge after Phase 5, have many projects recognized the value of ‘learning’ as part of its way of operating.

Some IFAD projects have an innovative design not only in terms of what they are trying to achieve but also in terms of how they operate vis-à-vis the existing bureaucratic structures. In such cases, much time is spent on sorting out the many new bureaucratic issues that need resolving and figuring out the boundaries of decision-making for the project. Besides being a
drain on time, this can compromise the flexibility of the project to undertake innovations such as AGC.

**Dealing with small implementation units**

Some project implementation units consist of 10 to 20 individuals responsible for implementing a set of activities worth several dozen million US dollars. This requires them to channel much work through sub-contractors. If a project is predominantly sub-contracted and the project unit is small, then the experiential base is far from the project unit. This makes the communication process more demanding as more groups need to take the AGC idea on board, in order for them to be willing to contribute to reflections and institutionalize changes.

Furthermore, if the project unit is small which is usually the case, then staff time will be even scarcer and they need more convincing before engaging in an activity that is not considered ‘core business’. This opens the way for shifting parts of the AGC cycle to other actors. For example, in many cases, staff from co-implementing organizations were involved in the systematization process. In one project, the systematization of all activities completed by co-implementers was institutionalized as a result of the implementation of Phase 3.

Another factor that affects an AGC cycle is that co-implementers or sub-contractors often operate under quite narrow terms of reference aimed at producing well-defined and specific outputs in as brief as possible period of time. These sub-contractors are then free to move on to other things, perhaps outside the realm of the project. Understandably there are few incentives for the sub-contractors, who embody much of the project’s field experience and knowledge, to engage in AGC type activities. No one is paying them to do this and it is almost never part of their terms of reference. This can be remedied in the project design but can also be considered at the time of contracting and agreeing on terms of reference.

**Project culture and skills**

Perhaps most significant of all conditions is the internal project culture, which is very strongly influenced by the characteristics and disposition of senior management. Projects with open-minded directors and managers, who not only support but also behave transparently and in an inclusive and innovative manner, are much more likely to welcome the idea of AGC than those in which authoritarian managers call the shots. This of course is closely related to the issue of the wider institutional and political context surrounding the project.

The nature of the senior managers is critical for the entire culture. A curious manager will stimulate others to be curious and seek information outside the experiential bubble of the project. A manager who seeks critical feedback is more likely to see staff do the same. An innovative manager willing to take risks with new methods, activities or strategies is more likely to encourage risk-taking by others. A sharing-oriented manager is more likely to organize informative meetings and encourage staff to ask and give opinions, and to organize informal meetings on their own initiative.
Such ideal conditions occur but not often. Their absence does not mean that AGC is impossible. It simply means that different types of managers will require different approaches in Phase 1, when more skepticism has to be overcome and perhaps a less ambitious first trial of the learning cycle should be conceived. The less democratically minded managers will also require continual convincing until after Phase 5, which, if successful, may reduce the level of skepticism.

A more practical condition that AGC can help to address is a common one - the absence of skills in reflective practice. For many staff, the defining of priority themes and the formulation of relevant questions is a new skill that they must acquire. This is also usually the case for the critical reflection process and the subsequent formulation of lessons learned. Exploring the extent to which this has already happened, as part of Phase 1, can help prepare the facilitator for Phases 2 and 3.

**Stage in project life**

Each project has a lifetime with stages that affect the enthusiasm to undertake AGC-type learning. During the initial first couple of years, the project has relatively little incentive as they feel they have not undertaken enough to learn from. In addition, a young project is under much pressure from many sources to get the ball rolling, assemble teams, increase the number of households being reached, raise annual expenditure levels, design basic information and management systems, establish local and regional alliances, and develop the necessary relationships with co-implementers and beneficiaries,... all of which leaves little time for anything else. In this stage, the cost-benefit analysis tends to not come out in favor of initiating AGC. Yet, it is a stage in which a new project may be extremely interested in learning from other similar projects, and this can be an entry point into the issue of learning systems. In such cases, accessing and incorporating knowledge from other non-project sources is critical to good quality learning. Key sources of information are other IFAD projects and nearby rural development initiatives.

Some middle-aged projects reach a certain static state, influenced in part by the way they were designed, into rigidly compartmentalized teams of activity. In such situations, divisions are rigidly maintained between components, zones, and units. The communication barriers that become entrenched in such set-ups need to be recognized and addressed if learning is to take place across the project. Without this, the risk is high that AGC occurs in pockets and little islands, with the subsequent loss of the benefits of collective learning. In such situations, Phase 5 of institutionalization will also prove challenging.

On the other hand, projects that are nearing the end of their lifetime have shown great interest in AGC. Those with up to two years left, realize the need to take stock, document, share and show what has happened. This situation is also not ideal for AGC. While it creates an opportunity to share project experiences with others, there is no time for feedback and Phase 5 becomes virtually meaningless as far as the project is concerned, although it may be of great importance for other projects and for IFAD as an organization.

In all cases, the challenges for facilitators are different. Early on in a project lifetime, AGC may need to be conceived as a very modest endeavor. With projects due to retire, the emphasis may
Critical Issues to Consider during the Process

In the AGC work with IFAD projects, five weak areas have emerged that need extra attention for learning. These are suggested here in the form of ‘do’s and don’ts’ that will give additional quality to the process of undertaking an explicit learning and knowledge management process within the project.

Do not forget to link the phases well. In the work, the link between the documentation during systematization (Phase 3) and institutionalization (Phase 5) is not always clear. Sometimes the documented outputs are ignored and decisions about changes are made by the project director and a couple of senior managers. Make conscious use in Phase 5 of the documentation results. Also keep an eye on who is present during institutionalization discussions, as this can quickly become the domain of a handful of higher placed people.

Seek information from outside the project experience. Learning that is based entirely on internal project experiences is a very good start. However, it may well be that other projects elsewhere have also grappled with similar issues and may have advanced further in terms of finding solutions or alternatives. Actively seek to include ideas from outside the project experience during the systematization process. The type of reflection and changes stimulated by AGC could dramatically improve if external information could enter the project-level discussions.

Crowds can be wiser than individuals – so think wisely about participation in each of the five phases. Often projects place imaginary boundaries around groups of people who should and should not be involved in an AGC process. In many cases, collective analysis was weak. It often fell on the shoulders of a few keen individuals. More minds can greatly enrich the discussion. However, involving all stakeholders will never be a feasible option. Consider carefully how collective the analysis process should be. In particular, consider how marginal groups, those not usually involved in learning exercises or strategic thinking about the project, can make a meaningful contribution. This is not about simply inviting them but about informing them, accompanying them, giving them space and time to speak up and analyze.

Be aware that learning often stays within the comfort zone of the project – and that this may not always be desirable. AGC as currently implemented does not, in general, lead to discussing the ‘undiscussables’ that could lead to significant strategic shifts in the intervention. Sometimes, project strategies and operations are improved in small steps but the larger changes that could make efforts really worthwhile for the rural poor requires project participants to dare to discuss sensitive topics. If undiscussables are holding back project effectiveness and should be put on the table, carefully explore how this might occur without jeopardizing the entire AGC effort or relationships or the jobs of project participants who engage in the process. Examples of undiscussable topics that might be worthwhile exploring include corruption, illegitimate political influence on project decision-making process, unjustified removal of key staff and directors due to their personal political preferences, gender and race discrimination and severe and costly...
failures which if exposed would lead to heads rolling – perhaps of those exposed, but most likely of those doing the exposing. In some countries with harshly polarized relations between government and opposition, the political climate will not tolerate frank admission of problems or failures.

There is nothing embedded in AGC that will ensure its sustainability so it risks being an interesting one-off exercise. Don’t forget institutionalizing an AGC type process itself! This does not mean that the exact scheme of five phases must be adopted but rather the core elements. In one project they have now created a regular process of systematization, discussions of results, and so on. Some phases may become more prominent in project culture, which is clear from the rapid and widespread update of systematization within IFAD projects Many projects include spontaneous practitioners amongst the staff and other stakeholders, subsequent to a training workshop.

Institutionalizing the AGC process itself means trying to establish or strengthen the preconditions mentioned in the previous section:

- providing political support to project participants so that they have sufficient autonomy from the political and institutional context, or housing the project within reformist institutions that are willing to support this kind of learning initiative;
- selecting project directors and senior managers who truly understand and share the importance of critical reflection and frank debate, and who can promote innovation;
- designing projects so that they are learning projects that encourage frank debate, from their objectives, to their management culture and strategies, to the regular methods and tools, to the allocation of human and financial resources to support learning activities;
- developing the skills of project participants to engage in the different learning activities; and
- adapting the learning strategies and methods to the different stages of a project’s life cycle, starting with project design and ending with ex post evaluation.

In the end, institutionalizing learning in development projects being implemented by government entities will require a sustained effort that is not substantially different from the ones put in motion to institutionalize other major changes in a project’s culture, such as gender perspectives or participatory approaches to development.

While AGC is an easy concept, the ramifications and political skills needed should not be underestimated by any facilitator. The idea of a learning cycle with five phases can be grasped by anyone. However, in its implementation, in some projects it means opening a Pandora’s box. As the basis for AGC success is dedicated critical reflection, which may well challenge accepted thinking and relations, it requires a good understanding and negotiating of the political system of the project. It also requires articulating the theory-of-action - project intentions - and then relating it to the theory in practice. This may reveal conflicts between the good intentions of objectives and local realities and aspirations. For example, a project may be focused on poverty reduction yet the specific activities it promotes lack the potential to create new or better jobs, increase income, or reduce risk and vulnerability. Another project is trying to promote market access for poor peasants, yet the systematization reveals that traders, wholesalers and retailers
are not interested at all in the staple crops produced in the project area and which the project is supporting with credit and technical assistance. So what progress can be made on objectives, and therefore what is the basis for a learning cycle?

Application of the AGC cycle always highlights such design failures, as project designs are inevitably based on a partial reading of local realities and can never account for unanticipated future changes. This is only a problem in contexts where self-criticism is not valued and performance hinges on strict adherence to original project goals. As this is true in many cases, an AGC facilitator needs to tread consciously and carefully. However, when managers recognize it as the useful management tool that it is and project implementers see the effects of improvements induced by their reflections, AGC becomes an obvious and valuable process to guide IFAD projects towards greater impact.

A frequent justification for and expectation of introducing learning processes is to use the lessons learned to influence public policy or the design/implementation of projects similar to the one in which the learning took place. The notion that sending AGC reports to policy makers or even holding a workshop with them to discuss results will be sufficient has proven to be unfounded.

Scaling up lessons requires building up of an ‘interface’ between project level learning and the higher-scale processes that one is trying to influence. Such an interface includes three elements at least. First it requires a synthesis, that is, an analytical process to adapt the original lessons learned to the degree of abstraction that is appropriate for the decision making processes being influenced. It requires a concrete opportunity, that is, an active demand for the message one wants to convey, and not just a general interest. Third, it requires a communication strategy for engaging in an active dialogue with those decision makers that actually wish to hear what it is that projects have to offer in terms of lessons. In the past three years, FIDAMERICA has started testing elements of this approach to up-scaling, which will be a major component of its plans for the immediate future.

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Context and Genesis

The high education has boarded the socio-economic and environmental problematic through the teaching, research and extension. With no doubt, it has promoted the disciplines development and the creation of encounter scenarios of themselves (interdiscipline), but also has proposed formulas to revert productive processes, searching to make them more efficient, worthier and with less environmental impact. In general, the education has increased indexes of literacy, has permitted a higher sensitivity of the community towards specific topics (i.e. environmental education) and has created a crowd of qualified workers.

In spite of theorical formulation and the research and development efforts, the academic proposals have been far away from real solution of problems and institutional frames have contributed to the profundity of the inequality. The proportion of rural indigents and urban poverty in Latin America has been increased, at the same time with the environmental deterioration. Summarizing, the gap between rich and poor grows simultaneously with the environmental destruction and the weaken of the community rights upon the resources base (IDRC, 1993). It is quite probably that rural youth in Latin America has not been object of high education, the one that brings up integral citizens, able to revert processes and being interlocutors with external actors who want to work with the communities. The commitment of the university with the generation and diffusion of a universal knowledge, free and transformer of the culture, science and economical base, demands to go from the rhetoric to the action.

Education constitutes the main weapon to overcome not only the poverty but the structural causes that produce it: low productivity, sociocultural marginality, vulnerability. To optimize this impact it is necessary to count on an educative system which tends to equity, offering a higher quality and a better social distribution (Franco, 1998). Those who are not educated, they can hardly overcome their social restrictions and have less opportunities to appropriate technical proposals which contribute to reduce the environmental deterioration. This endless situation of lack of opportunities, marginality and poverty, as well as the unsustainable productions systems, lead the Colombian society with an armed conflict as a result, complex in its dimensions and with multiple actors, that make progress and development impossible. The peace and the equitable rural development wait for the academic contribution, but it is necessary reorient the
way so that the science and education can contribute to overcome violence, injustice and discrimination.

The chances the peasants have to keep up and to grow in a world stigmatized by globality, depend on that society is able to solve its disadvantages: marketing failures, inefficient institutional structures and unfortunate state interventions (De Janvry and Soucet, 1998). The marketing failures mean high transaction costs for small farmers (Schejtman, 1998) and the inefficient institutional structures have destroyed the tries to democratize the rural society and have delayed the process of resource transfer to the poorer (Haudry de Soucy, 1998). The most important study about education in Colombia recognizes that the educative politics has forgotten about the peasants and that the few teens who do not migrate from the country to the cities are condemned to the most severe cultural marginality (Gómez, 1998).

In the “Selva de Florencia” influence area, to the east of Caldas state, a strategic area for regional interests, there has been promoting and performing a new proposal for regional development, based on a multi-stakeholder collaborative learning system. We will strengthen our capacity to articulate the academy, represented by Caldas University, joined with the private sector, represented by a community of small peasants, through local institutions of government order and civil society. This contribution looks for discussing new ways of interaction among the university with the civil society, NGO and private sector, so that the knowledge development can make the difference in the welfare of small farmers and the rural poor.

**The Practice: Inter-Institutional Experience of Caldas University**

The institutional frame of the Caldas university stimulates: a) the bringing up of a human talent with social commitment, b) the research and socialization of technical information useful for decentralized decision making, and c) the application of a systematic, holistic, interdisciplinary and participatory approach (Universidad de Caldas, 1997). This intention looks for changing the high education into a reflection process and a permanent research, to generate and transform knowledge, being agent of social change and the development of poor in rural areas. Consequent with its institutional project, the Caldas University with the support of the Consortium for the sustainable development of the Andean ecoregion (Condesan) and the institutions joined to the consortium, have been promoting a new model that brings together the academy to the problems of people, with the purpose of that participative development has enough technical strength to assure its belonging and sustainability. The inter-institutional relationship university – small peasants for the regional development implies at least three main recognizances:

That the presence of the university in the regions has high costs, mainly in marginal, conflictive and far from urban centre zones; Aldana et al. (1996) affirm that the university can seldom dedicate its scarce research efforts to the local development from its own resources.

1) That to break the vicious circles of the underdevelopment it is necessary to have open institutional arrangements, but in the institutional spectrum the university has less comparative advantages for local works and direct interventions in the country.

2) That knowledge is not only generated through formal research in centres of scientific excellence, but it is and will be generated out of the academic and research institutions.
An inter-institutional model demands the capacity of the academics to articulate to the local governments, private sector, and civil society organizations. The process of institutional transformation demands to close the gap among the communities, the productive sector and the state (Aldana et al., 1996). Together they can build up a new rurality through an interdisciplinary exercise and knowledge integrator in technological, economical, social and environmental aspects. Social changes require an organized community, a development plan and a local human trained talent. But it also requires institutions that give technical, on time, and documented information, that strengthen the projects and contributes to a better policy making.

The way Caldas University has done operative the strategic alliance with small peasant to promote rural development, has implemented trough three initiatives: the research group in production system analysis (ASPA), a local bachelorship program in environmental education, and the Master program in agricultural production systems. The ASPA group was created as a “semillero” of researchers which is recognized as “the space to show freedom and creativity, the critic and amazing capacity, that means the skills that are denied over and over in the educative systems” (Bonilla, 1998). The group promotes attitudes, a higher social commitment and stimulates the relationship between students and peasants, as well as his way of life to look for adecuated solutions to his social and economical context (Rivera et al., 2000).

Owing to the fact that the local community identified education as the strategy for development, the Caldas University implemented there a program of Environmental Education. The purpose was to bring up individuals capable of identifying problems, recommend and carry out alternative solutions with a holistic approach and put forward for the resolution of environmental conflicts. The delicate task of promoting a sustainable development requires persons skilled put forward in training the community in the management and exploitation of the resources.

On the other hand, the Master program in agricultural production systems committed itself to bring up researchers able to board the agricultural and rural problematic, through a system analysis that incorporates and integrates competitiveness, sustainability and equity criteria. During the formative process, it is promoted the autonomy to inquire and the research work is developed for, with and where the producer, given that the strengthening of the human resource is based on the strategy learning by doing it.

The contribution of a modern university to the build of a new rurality is not conceived as an isolated effort by the researchers, but rather the outcome of the capacity of making strategic alliances with the development organizations. Researchers and development agents need new methodologies to integrate different hierarchical levels, taking into account the total allocation of resources and the interactions of subsystems, especially crop productivity, soils and markets (Estrada et al., 1999). The inter-institutional interaction has brought about the joint management of research and development projects in the fields of environmental management, conservation of biodiversity, establishment of sustainable agribusinesses systems, and political tools (Estrada et al., 2001). The comparative advantage that the University has in the inter-institutional alliance is the contribution of ex ante analysis of proposals, prioritization of target population, and identification of critical areas for intervention (Estrada et al., 1999).
Assessment and Impact

The results of the joint efforts among academics, development institutions and peasants, can be considered as the advancement of a new strategy that can contributes to the pacification of the region. It is possible, if in the long run, the activities generate economic development, welfare and community empowerment. The strategy has allowed the University to reduce the institutional costs and to increase its social legitimacy and recognition. It involution in the social, economic and political regional process, has contextualized the teaching and research, has generated knowledge for the promotion of a sustainable development of the poor and marginal communities, and has reinforced the social commitment in the future professional.

The interdisciplinary and inter-institutional analysis of the productions systems reinforces the competency of the new professionals in the build of a new rural social order and in the conception of ways to deal and to take advantage of the natural resources. The interaction of students with the community mutually enriched them. So that, learning through the research-action projects, and contributing to the development of their own management capacity and institutional relationship. The student is the most available resource for the University and constitutes the process motor. The fact of prioritize the participation of the community in the diagnosis of their social and environmental reality, strengthened the local capabilities to take decisions and promoted community leaders to take part in the management instances.

For the University, the experience promoted a collaborative learning system with the other links of the development chain, and reduced the institutional operating costs. For the community, the achievement of the process is the recent declaration of the “Selva de Florencia” as an international importance area for birds conservation (in Spanish A.I.C.A.). This recognition has been validated by the “Instituto de Investigaciones Biológicas Alexander von Humboldt” and Bird Life International. More recently, it was declared a Natural National Park. In both, not only has it recognized the regional biodiversity, but mainly because of the participation of local peasants in conservation initiatives.

Factors Contributing to Successes and Failures

Without a doubt, the best resources for the innovation are the skilled human resources and the necessary technical information to produce efficiently, but it also requires organization and an adequate political framework. A fundamental factor for an inter-institutional and participative process is getting the academics to recognize that the community is the real development stakeholder. Only the empowerment of the community, results of the education, organization and opportune and confident information, will allow them to take part effectively in the process and at negotiation tables. Two additional strategies allow the strengthening of the process: the establishment of entrepreneur funds for the financing of scholarships and small grants for joint research with the participation of the local NGO. The financing for graduate and post-graduate scholarships favored the participation of students with scarce economic resources and the generation of a commitment of social solidarity. On the other hand, the small grants promoted the advancement of agribusiness research projects and the evaluation of natural resources as well as the participation of students and the institutional articulated presence in the region.
A process of opening frameworks of the University, mainly in conflictive, marginal and poor rural zones, it is not exempt of difficulty either. Changes in the institutional culture are long term process and only a strategy with a sustained effort can concluded in a successful outcome. Participative research outside the University campus is a more personalized effort than an institutional one. The traditional way to do research at centers with absolute control of variables, with emphasis on discipline and isolated from the productive and institutional context, struggles with the universality of a proposal that accepts other approaches and strategies to contribute to the regional development. In a strategy of wide institutional participation, the management of the financial resources for the projects should fall upon the institutions that have the most administrative flexibility and agility; given that the university does not have them, it becomes a permanent source of criticism, jealousy and conflict.

Opportunities for Mainstreaming and Scaling-Up

The alliance between the academics, represented by researchers of Caldas University, and the private sector, represented by the peasant communities, mediated by local institutions is surely not the first but either the only initiative that the University has undertaken in its goal to achieve its mission, to contribute to the regional development and to legitimize itself socially. But it does form part of a continual effort and a systematic and repeatable process, though it could be said to be imperfect and still under build, even so, it calls the attention with the outcomes that have been reached, in the midst of the political violence undergoing in the region.

Since Bolonia meeting, the European university expressed its will to integrate and to increase the mobility and homologation of languages for the evaluation for credits, giving degrees, and recognition of competencies, amongst others. This university macro-zone at the Andean regional level with universities committed to the internationalization of academic activities and the promotion of inter-disciplines, is yet to be built. It requires the will to interchange methodologies and research results, capacity to be mutually enriched by the systematization and extrapolation of the experiences acquired in local environments, and an attitude that promotes academic mobility.

References


Title of Best Practice: Social construction of knowledge: a leading perspective in a participatory research training programme in Santa Catarina, Brazil

Country: Santa Catarina, Brazil

Authors: Sergio L. G. Pinheiro and Walter S. de Boef

Practice Category: Participatory research training based on the social construction of knowledge

Context and Genesis

The professionalism of agricultural scientists and extension workers is often described as barrier in moving to more participatory approaches in research and extension. Establishment of public – civil partnerships is often promoted as one mechanism moving professional paradigms. In the current paper we describe how a perspective based on the ‘social construction of knowledge’ has been used as a leading perspective in a participatory research training programme in the State of Santa Catarina (Brazil). The aim of the programme is through action learning foster public-civil society partnerships and to provoke agricultural professionals to shift from a ‘blueprint’ to ‘process’ in agricultural research and development paradigm as described by various authors (Korten, 1984; Pimbert & Pretty, 1997; & De Boef, 2000). The training programme is organised by the Santa Catarina State Institution for Agricultural Research and Rural Extension (EPAGRI) and through the Micro-watershed Project 2 (MB2) financed by the World Bank and the State Government of Santa Catarina. The authors are members of the coordination team and responsible for the design, facilitation and execution of the training programme.

Santa Catarina State and Micro-Watershed 2 Programme

Santa Catarina State is located in south Brazil; it is characterized by small scale family farmers. The territory offers a variety of climatic and topographical conditions, soil and vegetation types. This diversity presents several opportunities for sustainable development, including agricultural, industrial and commercial opportunities as well as leisure and tourism.

During the first colonization period (earlier-mid 20th century) a “traditional” type of agriculture was practiced, characterized by a diversification of crops and livestock production mainly for subsistence. Since the 1960s, a first transformation process resulted in a “partial modernization” of production targeting commercial crops (tobacco) and animal (pig and poultry) production. This development was stimulated by the globally oriented agro-industrial conglomerates. Many small scale family farmers modified their production system purchasing “modern inputs”

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44 Empresa de Pesquisa Agropecuária e Extensão Rural de Santa Catarina S.A (EPAGRI), Florianópolis, Santa Catarina, Brazil
45 Department of Crop Science, Centre for Agricultural Sciences (CCA), Federal University of Santa Catarina (UFSC), Florianópolis, Santa Catarina, Brazil
(chemical fertilizers, pesticides and fungicides) and selling their products to industries in contractual arrangements. As in most regions of Brazil, this agricultural modernization process resulted in undesirable social (increasing exclusion of small scale farmers) and environmental (land and water pollution) impacts. Since the 1990s, many rural families have migrated to urban cities that cannot offer revenue opportunities. As a consequence, rural exodus, poverty, urban violence, environmental degradation, health problems and other social-environmental effects have reached levels increasing social-economic inequity and ecological unsustainability in both rural and urban settings. With this development model, Santa Catarina as Brazil proves a model for unsustainable growth for many countries in the South.

The majority of rural problems related to production, processing, commercialization and infrastructure (such as energy supply, roads construction and maintenance, communication, education and health services) common to Brazil can also be encountered in rural Santa Catarina. These problems remain without solution for years because they are far away to be solved individually by any small rural community. Agricultural research and rural extension through federal and state level public agencies have been established primarily catering for the above described agricultural modernization process; as a consequence the contribution by public agencies responding to scenario of rural poverty and exodus has proven to be marginal. In order to contribute to the solution of the social, economic and environmental problems, collective action planned at a regional level is required. Since the 1990s a change in professional and institutional orientation to research and extension has been advocated by authors such as Chambers (1993), Pretty (1995) and Röling & Wagemakers (1998). They call for joint action. Since the early 2000 such joint action is referred to as public, private and civil society partnerships. Partners in society join in learning and action referred to as the social construction of knowledge within local development processes (Reason & Heron, 1986; Maturana & Varela, 1995; Pinheiro, 1998).

Consequently, a key objective of the MB2 project is to promote collective action and solidarity among the diverse institutions and stakeholders in the territory of Santa Catarina as means to escape from individualism and competition, environmental degradation, inequity and economic exploration of rural families. The project aims to promote sustainable development and to reverse rural exodus of the territory, the main common problem of rural communities in Santa Catarina. This sustainable development proposal is based on the principles of participation, cooperation and solidarity and involves partnerships between civil society organisations and public entities at local, regional and state levels. The social organisation of small scale farmers in association at the territorial level of micro-watersheds is the first step in this process and the larger project. The main goal is to promote in each association the capacity to local and endogenous development as well as social construction of knowledge.

The MB2 project is initiated and implemented by the State Government of Santa Catarina with financial support by the Worldbank. It aims to be implemented through partnerships of the State Government with Municipal Governments, universities, cooperatives, farmer associations, NGOs and other institutions. Specific objectives are to improve the quality of life of rural families that have historically been excluded from economic and social development. Various lines of actions aim to increase the income of these families, support levels of social organisation providing social, cultural and economic opportunities, and the recovery, conservation and sustainable
utilisation of natural resources. The principal operational strategy is to plan and implement its activities at the local community level and link those to the project economic, social and environmental activities (see also www.microbacias.sc.gov.br).

The MB2 Project has various components addressing agricultural and environmental research and rural extension. One is the participatory research component. It aims to support research and extension capacities and stimulates a change in orientation from more conventional passive and functional to more interactive modes of participatory interactions between researchers, extension officers and rural communities (following the typology of participation developed by Pretty, 1994). The aim is that such a change in interaction will empower rural families and communities within the research and extension system. The current paper reports on design and partial results to a specific training component associated to this programme component.

Situational Analysis: Participatory Research in Santa Catarina
Agricultural and environmental research and rural extension in Santa Catarina, likewise to other regions of Brazil, can be characterised by a major orientation to industrial agriculture targeted at export markets. Formal education in agricultural colleges and universities formats agricultural professionals primarily using blueprint models to research and development. Many research and education institutions have their foundation in the agricultural revolution and expansion since the 1970s. Within public research and extension agencies (as EPAGRI) the Transfer of Technology paradigm even though debated since the 1980s and 1990s is predominant and uncontested. Through this model, the demands of small scale farmers - ‘agricultura familiar’ are hardly catered for. Civil society organisations through NGOs and social movements have been criticizing the model and public sector orientation. They have developed parallel structures for research and extension with hardly any public sector linkages. Few efforts for more participatory research have been initiated. The scale of these efforts is limited and has resulted in restricted changes in professionalism among agricultural researchers and extension workers. The results in professional change within the public sector and public-civil partnerships are that limited that we could consider institutionalization or mainstreaming participatory approaches a huge step within the Santa Catarina context.

Basic Concept: Social Construction of Knowledge
Conventional agricultural research is built on the presupposition that knowledge exists “out there”, on objects, events and systems, and science has privileged access to it trough scientific methods. This belief is epistemologically founded in positivism, cartesian and reductionistic approaches to science. Methods are usually quantitative and a “hard” system approach is dominant in design. This perspective has the following foundations: (a) the objectivity of knowledge, or independence of the researchers or observers. The basic belief is that one reality exists that can be identified, quantified and that science is privileged to access through scientific methods. (b) Predictability that is characterized by causal effect relations, operationalised through system engineering and through control (the objective is to control systems and optimize outputs as visualised in figure 1a). (c) Simplicity, as output of reductionism, the identification of problems and technical solutions, analysis and optimisation of system (see figure 1a). In practice, this perspective has proven useful in relatively complex situations (e.g. non-living systems such as machines and equipments). In these cases, conventional science has contributed to important advances in various industries, commerce and also agriculture (“green and gene revolutions”).
Within such context, the transfer of knowledge is centralised and unilateral (the technology packages transferred from the top (science) down to the bottom (farmers, users). Research is put in a position that we characterise as “research for” from those who know more to those who know less. These patterns of knowledge transfer result in dependence of actors and create fewer opportunities for users’ interests and values. Such developments have been described by those analyzing the green and gene revolution resulting in socio-cultural, political and economic exclusion of farmers and consumers and processes of concentration of knowledge, resources and power.

In more complex situation, typical for living and human system, the above described perspective has demonstrated to be inadequate and ineffective. The awareness of this limitation has pushed for groups of scientists looking for alternative epistemological approaches. More participatory and qualitative research approaches has been designed, through which knowledge is constructed socially and through facilitated learning processes. This process assumes knowledge as a product of human distinctions, generated within the “head” of the researcher or observer through his/her cognitive system. This view contrasts with the perspective that knowledge exists “out there”, on objects and systems, and science has privileged access to it through scientific methods. The goal is control inputs and systems to maximize outputs. Some resulting perceptions may be similar others different. Language or dialogue stimulates shared understanding and learning of our diverse realities. In this manner, knowledge is socially constructed as illustrated in figure 1d.

**Fig. 1a** - Conventional research assumes knowledge exists “out there” (on objects or systems) and science has privileged access to it through scientific methods. The goal is control inputs and systems to maximize outputs.

**Fig. 1b** – In contrast, participatory research assumes knowledge as a product of human distinctions, realized by their cognitive systems (knowledge is in the “head” of observers/scientists).
The principal epistemological characteristics of participatory and qualitative research are to include a constructivist and “soft” system perspective. In synthesis, this perspective has the following foundations: (a) Understanding of the subjectivity of knowledge (existence of multiple realities, through dialogue and learning). (b) Recognition of unpredictability of human and complex systems. (c) The premise of complexity and focus on relations (in life, systems, nature, society and human beings). (d) Recognition of the human nature of learning about the world and the resulting human organisations. This proposed learning and research process focuses on relations, or in other words, “research with” in contrast to “research for” rural communities and local partners. Dissimilar actors with diverse knowledge system (scientific, local, popular, all equally relevant) and through dialogue socially construct knowledge. This perspective focuses on the values of diversity (biological, cultural, social, and in knowledge systems) and promotes
endogenous development and autonomy of participating social actors. In that manner, rural communities or local partners will be in the position to manifest their values, interests and transform these into opportunities. The research pathway is changed and values life and the human being, and embraces human’s critical capacity to dialogue and learn.

The Practice

Concept to Training Programme
The design of participatory training programme discussed in this paper is founded on the above analysis and concepts of the social construction of knowledge. Teams of researchers and extensionists from public and civil society organisations in an equalitarian manner join in participatory research teams. Thereby the linear model and separation of research and extension (as dominant within EPAGRI) is broken. Partners from local government and civil society organisations (farmer associations, NGOs) and other scientific organisations (universities) are invited to join the teams. An action learning approach is used whereby team learn through various steps in a reality situation to conduct a participatory research activity. The programme strives for moving in participatory research for (dominant within current nature of institution and professionals) to participatory research with (requiring an institutional and professional paradigm shift).

Participatory Research Training Programme: Principles and Approach
The participatory research training has the following guiding principles:

- The recognition that a multitude of methodologies exist with clearly defined thematic foundations, regional backgrounds and school of thinking. Instead of following these methodologies in a rigid manner, the teams are trained to be critical, to compare them and learn from their background and experiences.
  - Methods are used as orientations; they are Participatory Technology Development (PTD), Experimental Farmers, Participatory Learning and Action Research (PLAR), Experimental Farmers Committees (CIAL) and Farmer Innovation (PROLINNOVA).
  - The methods are considered processes for participatory research; methods are applied, shaped and adapted to the regional context in space and time;
  - Taking the process approach, various themes can be addressed (social and cultural issues, income generation, dairy production, natural resource management, soil fertility, forest management, chain development, etc);
  - The process approach equips teams with the capacity to deal with a diversity of situations; they will be effective in the process of facilitating sustainable agricultural and rural development.

The participatory research training programme uses a decentralised approach that is characterised as follow:
- A decentralised and regional approach is used in the training; Santa Catarina State is divided in 8 major regions with 10 regional teams for participatory research (EPPR or Equipes de Pesquisa Participativa Regionais).
- An interdisciplinary and multistakeholder approach is used that emphasises the involvement within each EPPR of professionals with a diversity of backgrounds and working for various stakeholders including EPAGRI (research and extension), universities, NGOs, municipalities and/or farmer associations;
Each EPPR consists of 5-6 members that take part in the process of joint learning; they take a shared leadership role and become within their sub-region responsible for mainstreaming participatory research approaches.

Each EPPR links and works with a diversity of thematic areas, thus takes an integrated approach. The resulting facilitation approach caters to a diversity of situations that cannot be separated in different sub-themes.

The training is linked with diagnosis and design processes in one particular micro watershed and associated rural community. Training in isolation would remain conceptual and distant from reality and project modalities. Some training components are conducted in the reality of one of the EPPR’s local partners (community) setting. EPPRs are trained through a series of five one week workshops. In that manner, they experience various phases of participatory research processes;

Based on the training an internal monitoring and evaluation system is being established that facilitates learning, allows for adapting processes to diverse realities and local demands, and allows for management to follow project activities according agreed modalities (human resources, financial resources, project logical framework).

Participatory Research Training Programme: Methodological Steps

- State level introductory workshop (September 2004) during which the process approach and training programme was discussed with a wide audience of potential beneficiaries and participants and establishing a foundation for the training programme in each region. Participants were identified and leadership within EPAGRI and partner organisation was exposed in order to create a favourable and stimulating environment in all regions. In fact, 9 EPPRs were created in 7 of the 8 regions of the state.

- Two training workshops (November 2004 & February 2005) were organised on concepts and theory that are discussed based on experiences and cases. The teams are exposed to a diversity of participatory research methods. The participants share experiences among each other and elaborate lessons learnt from cases and experiences to the participants’ professional setting and project framework; participants obtained a shared understanding of concepts and theories that support participatory research in rural and agricultural development and natural resource management. Another critical of this phase was to form teams and throughout the training enhance their facilitation skills (learning by doing).

- Two training workshops were organised on diagnosis in a field work setting (February – March 2005). The workshops were conducted within an identified location. A participatory rural appraisal (PRA) was conducted in a realistic setting within components of MB2. This proved to be the first a first critical step for each EPPR to start working with, instead of working for a rural community. The outcomes of the appraisal conducted during the training contributed to the work of the EPPR hosting the event. Following this training workshop, each EPPR conducted a similar PRA or participatory diagnosis in the micro-watershed identified for their action learning project.

- Two training workshops were organised to support the design of participatory research projects (April – May 2005). The outcomes of the regional PRAs were presented and discussed. A community consultation was conducted in the actual context of the EPPR’s hosting the event. During this community meeting results of the PRA were verified and the partnership between the EPPR and the community was strengthened through joint decision making. The EPPRs entered a process of design a research project outlining in particular its consecutive steps. Community representatives participated during some steps of the design process.
Following these workshops, the teams submitted the project proposals to course coordination and each team started to implement their project. The projects are considered pilot projects within the larger framework of the MB2 participatory research component. The strategy is taken that these pilots turn into reference points in Santa Catarina. Table 1 demonstrates the diversity of themes addressed by the EPPRs and their local partners. Apart from being partner in these projects, the EPPR become gradually involved in stimulating process approaches and institutionalising the new “research with” approach within EPAGRI and MB2.
Table 1  Titles and locations of the participatory research projects resulting from the MB2 training programme

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Municipality</th>
<th>Watershed/community names</th>
<th>Lead organisation</th>
<th>Title / research theme</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Guaraciaba</td>
<td>Ouro Verde</td>
<td>ADM</td>
<td>Participatory research in natural resources addressing local knowledge, soil management within a context of small scale milk production.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saudades</td>
<td>Santa Catarina and Santo Antão</td>
<td>ADM</td>
<td>Collective knowledge and understanding the relation between soils, water and forests</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campos Novos</td>
<td>Rio Hipólito</td>
<td>ADM</td>
<td>Constructing in a participatory manner a dairy cattle feed system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Videira</td>
<td>Biazollo</td>
<td>ADM/Epagri</td>
<td>Zero tillage in the production of vegetables and fruits</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cerro Negro</td>
<td>Araçá e Cruzeirinho</td>
<td>ADM/Epagri</td>
<td>Local knowledge and rural development addressing agriculture, forest and animal production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>São Bento do Sul</td>
<td>Rio Natal</td>
<td>ADM</td>
<td>Participatory research and the sustainable management of forests, emphasising the use of medicinal plants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ituporanga</td>
<td>Rio das Pedras</td>
<td>ADM/Epagri</td>
<td>Sustainable soil fertility management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Garuva</td>
<td>Palmital</td>
<td>Cipó-Imbé hand-crafted farmer’s association</td>
<td>Study and enforce the life cycle of hand-crafted Cipó-imbé production addressing design, management and economy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>São Bonifácio</td>
<td>Rio do Poncho</td>
<td>ADM/Epagri</td>
<td>Quality of life: the grasslands farmer innovators group</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

ADM: Associação de Microbacias (Association of the Microwatershed)
Epagri: Santa Catarina State Institution for Agricultural Research and Rural Extension

Two state level synthesis workshops are going to be organised. They are planned in November 2005 and February/March 2006. All EPPRs and representatives of their community partners participate. They will share the experiences, monitor and evaluate the effectiveness in using a process approach to participatory research, and based on learning modify and adapt the approach. Issues such as intellectual property rights, institutional and professional barriers encountered while working in participatory processes are discussed. These discussions are aimed to contribute to EPAGRI and MB2 developing strategies and policies for mainstreaming and institutionalising participatory research and process approaches; i.e. to transform the organisation and partners from working for to working with rural communities.

Mainstreaming and institutionalisation is the subject of two state wide seminars with EPAGRI and MB2, and partner organisations’ managers (July 2005; March 2006). Partial
results of the training and pilot projects are presented as strategic instrument facilitating the required institutional change.

Initial Lessons Learnt

The training programme has progressed to the stage where the EPPRs have started with the implementation of their projects. It is therefore early to draw general conclusions on the effectiveness of the training programme in contributing to EPAGRI and partners in MB2 going through a paradigm shift. However some initial lessons can be learnt on the process of training and establishing the teams and about the institutional environment in which the training programme is set. The fact that research projects have been developed following a process approach can already be considered an important output, particularly understanding the diversity of nine projects within Santa Catarina. The collection of projects has the potential to become a network of reference supporting a larger institutional and professional change in Santa Catarina.

The experiences have shown the strong dependence on the existence of high level of social organisation for starting the promoted research process. The structure of MB2 with the component of establishing Micro Watershed Community Associations (ADM) proved to provide the EPPR with local partners.

The training programme through its intensity and action learning process turned out to be a process of “natural selection” of only those researchers, extensionists and partners committed to continue participating in the training programme and finally forming the regional team. The orientation on local innovations as starting points has advocated the researchers and extensionists in avoiding returning into the dominant ToT model and passive or functional modes of interaction. The action learning process used has increased the capacity of the members of regional teams and the local partners through socially construct knowledge within a local setting.

Most members of the regional teams and training programme coordination team (among which the authors of this paper) experience a reluctance and resistance attitudes in their institutional environment to the change process among leadership within a larger institutional setting of EPAGRI and MB2. They encounter professional attitudes that respond in an uncooperative manner to the training programme. These attitudes are founded in existing bureaucratic and political structures and interests that are part of conventional research in top-down and control management. Our strategy has been to consider the proposed process complementary to conventional research and extension practices. Other strategic components used to respond to this reluctance are to create safe learning environments within the sessions of the training programme, invest heavily in group dynamics for EPPRs to become learning groups, and focus on local experiences and learning before emphasising institutional and professional change.

Another hindrance encountered is directly related to the public–civil society partnership that is considered critical in participatory research. The partnership between the EPPRs and ADM has been established primarily through MB2 and EPAGRI affiliated organisations. Partnership with other institutional public entities (universities, local government) and non-governmental organisations turned out to be very limited. This partially embedded in the political setting of Santa Catarina (and Brazil) where public, private and civil society work in parallel structures
oriented either with a commercial industrial or small scale farming agro-ecological and development orientation with few informal but hardly any formal linkages between the two networks.

**Opportunities for Mainstreaming and Scaling-up**

Although the training programme has almost been concluded, its success can only be evaluated upon two or three years implementation of the pilot projects and its spin-off in ‘second generation’ participatory research projects within and beyond the context of EPAGRI and MB2. However the direct return in relationship developed between partners within micro-watersheds and regions and the direct contact between the EPPR and local communities has proven worth the investment by the participants and the project resources. The learning approach used oriented through the social construction of knowledge can be considered a model that can be used in other states or regions of Brazil or beyond. It should however be realised that the training approach is dependent on a high level of local social organisation (ADM s within MB2) and resources available for training and action learning projects. Another critical factor is the presence and commitment of local facilitators or extensionists working in the identified communities. What turns out critical is the commitment of the participants to join a professional change process. These create the setting for an action learning approach building teams developing learning projects that can inspire to larger institutional and professional change.

The experience does not provide ample understanding of the potential of the approach used to change public research and extension organisations such as EPAGRI. Even though individual researchers, extensionists and company managers endorse the process, the insertion of the approach to conduct participatory research with communities instead of for communities still seems a long way ahead. Careful monitoring of the pilot projects by the network of EPPRs, EPAGRI managers, MB2 partners and Word Bank and implementation of the larger participatory research component of MB2 have a potential for institutionalisation and mainstreaming the approach. Once favourable conditions as presented to support the training approach in MB2 can be realised the approach may be used in similar programmes financed by federal, state or international bodies as World Bank, Global Environment Facility and/or Regional Development Banks. In Santa Catarina some steps still need to be made, we guarantee to maintain the training programme to be a safe place for the participants to learn together with the partner communities. We share a commitment to join in the social construction of knowledge addressing local issues related to rural community social organisation, agro-ecological production and sustainable management of the natural resources. Our shared strength is the scale of nine regional teams, 10 pilot projects with as local partners’ rural communities that cover all corners of the state and the personal commitment of 36 EPAGRI researchers and extension workers and 18 partners. We form a network in shared learning, motivated by our experiences in joint personal and professional change process. We belief that agricultural and environmental research agencies and rural extensions organisation in Santa Catarina should seize the opportunity with this shared potential and network for mainstreaming and institutionalising the learning approach in participatory research.
References


Title of Best Practice: The establishment of Educative Committee to help cooperatives improving the members' involvement

Country: Brazil

Authors: Ana Alice Vilas Boas and Lisete Furlan Canabarro

Category of Practice: Learning and interaction mechanisms for group solidarity

Context and Genesis

The global competition that stresses the differences between and inside countries, increasing the number of social and economical exclusions, is determining the revision of productive and commercial processes transforming the competitiveness into a permanent question. Even cooperatives are inserted in the context of global economy and they need to improve their activities in order to survive and help other to survive too.

How to face and win the great challenge of managing cooperativism everywhere, acting competitively in the market and internally creating an economic-cultural partnership for cooperation, taking care of members that are themselves owners of the business?

It is a great challenge for people dealing with cooperatives. Thus, it is relevant to understand this situation and try to help members and committee members to get the best from their membership in this kind of institution. However, members and even committee members sometimes do not have the proper skills to overcome their own deficiencies and push cooperatives ahead, when their are in charge of it.

Many people do not have the ability and communication skills to involve properly in this kind of movement. For this reason, to search for experiences that enhance this skills may help other to overcome their needs and even help other to do so. Believing on it, the researchers decided to analyse the role of a Educative Committee in improving members' involvement in a wine cooperative in Brazil.

The practice

The Wine Cooperative Aurora Ltd, with headquarters in Bento Gonçalves, Rio Grande do Sul, was created on February 14th, 1931, grouping producers dispersed, but sure of that solidarity in the cooperation and the cooperation in solidarity also could be, a boost for the economic progress for themselves and consequently for the region were they live.

Aurora is nowadays the great wine cooperative in the country. It started with familiar and communitarian group of 16 idealists who had identified in the cooperation a horizon of personal growth. From that time it was developed and it turned to be a significant business, as displayed

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46 Federal Rural University of Rio de Janeiro, Institute of Human and Social Sciences, Seropédica, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
in Table 1. This table shows the main crises the cooperative suffered and its return to the growing process. It fits to stand out that in 1996, the Aurora Cooperative, that already had been a remarkable representative, had a debt of R$ 127 million and an incoming of R$ 84 million.

This hole was getting bigger and bigger because of the difference by the amount of money coming in and the money going out. In the night of November 5th, 1996, Professor Hermes Zaneti was invested in the new functions through the ‘Act of Advice’ elaborated in a board meeting. He was nominated for the Advice of Administration in the hope that he could help the cooperative to overcome its problems. He helped the members to establish an educative committee to help members to be more committed to the cooperative.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1931</td>
<td>Foundation of the cooperative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1933</td>
<td>First warding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1936</td>
<td>First crisis – Climatic factors has destroyed the vineyard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1953</td>
<td>Second crisis – sinister followed of death of one employee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Third exponent crisis – the destruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Renegotiation of the debts with the banks and suppliers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>Retaken of the growth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>The first chairman of the boarding committee is elected by direct vote</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Canabarro (2003)

**Educative Committee**

The Pillar Master, created in December of 1997, the Educative Committee of the Wine Cooperative Aurora, has been one of the main instruments of direct communication between the associates and management team of the institution; turning to be a place for discussion and debate of the main subjects concerning the Cooperative. The Educative Committee was responsible for carrying out the statutory reformulations in 1988 and 2003, as well as for the creation of the operational remuneration criteria in the harvest of 2003.

Without removing from The Administrative Council the prerogative of the final decision regarding the debated questions, the Educative Committee is, in truth, a catalytic agency of opinions and necessities of the social context of the Cooperative. Beyond the associates the children and young associates also participate of this Committee, as well as the wives of the males involved, creating conditions that allow all the family to participate of the general cooperatives activities.

We may say that there are three basic functions of the Committee: social, technical and educative. Through the **social function** democratic bonds of participation in the management of the Cooperative are established. In the **technical function** the specialized context of the Cooperative is formed by agricultural engineer and agronomists or technicians, as they feed information and knowledge related to the vineyard. On the other hand, the **educative function** is given through the process of exchanging information and permanent communication, where
associates, controllers and executives deepen into questions related to the market competition and important strategies of the Cooperative.

The creation of the Educative Committee of the Cooperative Aurora also takes care of the fifth principle of the cooperativism that establishes the education, formation and information as basic condition for the cooperative society’s survival. The cooperative also mark presence in local and communitarian fairs to narrow relations within the community where she acts, in the region of the Gaucho Mountain.

The Educative Committee clarifies the associates in the meetings that precede the assemblies in its respective area. This committee offers the guideline of the assembly and clarifies all the possible doubts that may appear. It also accepts the suggestions supplied for the group and later provides feedback to the council members. In this case the cooperative members felt guided and some times not sufficiently forced to take part in the general meeting or assemblies.

An aspect to be pointed out as important and that to the times it collaborates so that the number of participants in some assemblies is not expressive. It is that of the 1.230 associates, more or less 600 of them belong to a branch of common family group, and for occasion of the meetings, only one member of each family group attend the meetings and later on they transfer information for the other members in their families. Another aspect that some times makes it difficult the presence in meetings and assemblies is the age group of some members. In this case, 30% of the associates are older than 70 years. Despite this reality, the Educative Committee is helping direct or indirectly all of them to get the best of their cooperative. It also strengthened the links between committee' members, employees and members.

The current administration knows the relevance of education to eliminate the weakness of the base that supports the cooperative society. The Cooperative fulfills its objective of promoting the human being, it is also essential that the set of norms support the Cooperative System, either to improve economic level of individuals or the development of their region.

Effective communication skills and flow of information are important to get the best of the members’ involvement with their institutions. Mutual aid and reciprocity among partners are basic principles for development of membership, thus having a world more just and balanced.

The Wine Cooperative Aurora Ltd through its associates suggests a model of "cooperativism of results", therefore they consider the cooperative as an economic company which will have to produce "leftovers", being what differentiates it from too many companies in terms of management and distribution of economic results.

Assessment and Impact

Cooperatives are relevant for members and to the development of their own regions. The good quality communication and flow of information are important to get the best of the members’ involvement with their institutions. The impact of the Educative Committee in this cooperative passes through the enhancement of awareness among members and they transfer it to other members whom are part of their families or neighbors, since not all the members can take part on
The improvement of the communication skills was also observed with time among members and committee members, and even among employees.

Cooperative members, as manager of a common enterprise, must harmonize their political participation in the definition of objectives and goals, with their economic participation in capital and operations, aiming both to the managerial capacity of helping the institution to accomplish its relation with the market and attend the demand of the cooperative. Of this form, cooperative results turn to be an effective space where there is also power dispute, which can turn to a good or to bad, depending on the level of members’ commitment and involvement with committee members. In it, different forces need to be coordinated and disciplined in the direction to guide them for the fulfillment of the cooperative’s objective that is to provide services to themselves.

It is important to improve the level of commitment among members, committee members, employees and consumers in order to have a better quality of life for the whole society. In this case, education and training play a relevant part in this process because people need to change their values in order to get the best of their own cooperatives. During the presence of researcher in the cooperative, it was possible to observe and evaluate the activities of people involved on it.

The establishment of this Educative Committee was very effective indeed because it helped members from different background, age and size to get closer and more involved in the decisions of the cooperative. It also became a space for the development of three main functions: social, technical and educative. It is important to mention its positive impact in the region and in the members' life. Most of them learned new skills and abilities to deal with other people.

We may say that cooperativism will grow in the desired direction if attention is given to one basic issue: formation of human resources to develop the movement, in all levels: members, committee members and employees. It is relevant because the actions of modernization will be processed by joint venture of cooperatives, professionalism, focus on marketing, strategic attention to customers, alliances, basic leadership, capitalization and other points for the advance of cooperativism, in Brazil and worldwide. Thus, the educative committee seems to play a special role to achieve it in this field.

References


