

**ANNEX 09**

**POSITION PAPER: CAPACITY-BUILDING & TRAINING**

## Capacity-building & Training in the FISRI Project

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Capacity building, as it encompasses the transfer of knowledge and skills for the purpose of empowering the recipients to practice what has been exposed to them, is a deliberate process that entails a change in the mindset. In adults this must be undertaken following the experiential learning cycle which is learner-centred and involves a period of experiencing/ exposure followed by a process of reviewing, reflecting and applying thereby allowing the learner to internalize the message. Such an approach would enhance effective skill transfer to facilitate conceptual and attitudinal development and eventual change in behaviour of the learner. Capacity building in this context demands a well planned process encompassing theory (conceptual issues) and practise: Definite activities must be planned for each stage of the learning cycle with an action plan for application.

Training of farmers requires that the felt needs (training needs) are identified and specific training materials that respond to the needs are prepared or procured and delivered within the experiential learning cycle context. In the FISRI project training was conducted, but without making it respond to 'felt' needs. Undoubtedly, the frame within which the project was conducted, under emergency conditions, may have compromised the planning of the trainings. It was evident from the field visits that a number of training interventions were made via out-sourced facility (the Conservation Farming Unit). While the content could have been of good quality the programming of the interventions did not guarantee maximum effect of the training. Referencing the CFU training programme, the FISRI project training was not in synch with the season (for example there was training on herbicide use in May 2012!). The CFU trains farmers on herbicides in October, closer to the time of application. The FISRI situation in training is likely due to absence of a training needs assessment and training programming.

The duration of exposure is critical in training as shorter periods reduce probability of appreciation of the messages, while longer periods are simply inefficient. From the field visits it was noted that most training events reported to have been conducted (based on what the farmers said) were of very short durations; the field visits cannot ascertain whether there was more and longer training sessions in the field in the absence of records on training in the project.

The art of training needed to be consolidated at the CEOs and LFs levels through a training-of-trainers (ToT) programme allowing for technical reference for the farmers to be closer to them and also ensuring that there are updated training materials responding to emerging issues (innovations and shifts in the agricultural sector at large). The assumption under the FISRI project that the CEOs constitute a cadre of ToTs is not warranted as the support extended to them under the project does not guarantee provision of such a responsibility. There was no such a strategy under FISRI, but would be useful for the future.

As training is aimed at changing the behaviour of farmers, ultimately, the issue of quality assurance is important. How can we know that there has been a change in the behaviour of the farmers? Capture of salient information about the farmers before, during and after the training events could allow gauging the effectiveness of the training. No consistent records of any training event or follow up reports (checking on the action plans from training) under FISRI were provided. It would have been useful to know the date of training, participants (disaggregated by gender, age and otherwise) and, the focus of the training event (guided by a concept note that spells out the objectives of the training event). Good training should not stop at exposure, rather should follow the learner through the application stage, therefore under FISRI a deliberate follow-up process would have positively contributed to quality assurance. It is through deliberate quality assurance setting that improvement in the content of the training and the delivery can be realized, responding to the farmers' needs. Again referencing CFU where the aspect of quality assurance is explicitly addressed, involving internal systems and external input, the impact of training intervention can be followed with clear indicators.

Capacity building can also be extended to the institutional levels in which case the frame within the FISRI project was implemented is an important candidate of some capacity building. It was noted that the extension service delivery system involving the Ministry district staff and the CEOs was key for the success of the project, to the extent, therefore, that these offices needed to be supported. The evaluation revealed that implementation was challenged by poor support of these offices through the project. At all visited locations the challenge of delayed funding for fuel and poor maintenance programme were cited.

A brief comparison between FISRI and CFU training programmes revealed that the FISRI approach was closed due to the LF-FF focus, while the CFU was open; that is to say training was open to any farmers who was interested. This allowed for early adopters to advance and become 'models'. The LF equivalent in CFU was the Farmer Coordinator, was supported (via the e-voucher) by the organization on a performance basis for the training that was conducted and this was evaluated before payment is done: Poor performers were dropped off! As mentioned above the CFU training programme represented a well programmed intervention which FISRI could have emulated for impact. It was noted that the delivery system adopted by the FISRI project omitted the Block Extension Officer, further compromising the integrity of the system. It was not easily discerned as to why this done.

## **Conclusions**

1. There was no comprehensive training programme though capacity-building was taking place at all levels (with MAL staff, agri-dealers, agri-contractors, lead-farmers and to some very limited extent with participating farmers). The training was not well aligned with the training needs of the farmers as they were not based on training needs assessments that would have guided the topics for specific target beneficiary category. Evident also was that the interventions, while targeted, were of varying quality in terms of 'fitness for purpose'; some training being out-of-sync with season, while some was too brief to be of any effect, as was the case with tractor operators on agri-business principles, maintenance and record-keeping, which was conducted in one day only; indeed the need for expediting the roll-out of tractors was clearly expressed but necessary minimum training was required but not conducted.
2. The MAL DACOs and CEOs are critical to CA adoption as they are key components of the delivery system of the extension messages; unfortunately they are currently not as effective in ensuring adoption of the technologies due to poor logistical support in terms of fuel provision, allowances and transport repairs. The functionality of the system is further compromised, in the project, by the omission of the Block Extension Officer, who is the direct supervisor of the field staff who ensures closer follow-up of implementation of activities.
3. The frame used by the FISRI project in implementing CA was inefficient compared to those used by other players in terms of scope, application of the lead-farmer model, targeted farmers, capacity-building approach and the use of the e-voucher concept as an incentive, among others. As a process project, FISRI should have opted for an opened participation to all farmers so as to identify and empower 'early starters/adopters'. The support to lead farmers should have been based on performance allowing for weaning off of those not making the grade and indeed avoid farmers developing a dependency on inputs.

## **Lesson learnt**

In the absence of a comprehensive training programme whose effects will take time when in place concentration of key interventions/activities into 'specialised nodes' should be considered. This would serve to minimise risk and maximise capacity-building/training effect at the early stages of target-farmer development. The 'specialised nodes' would provide services such as ripping, herbicide application (e.g. agri-contractors being trained on use of herbicides, creating synergies in bringing together spraying equipment, procurement of herbicides and application of herbicides more effectively), tractor maintenance and others of this nature which would have been concentrated into few hands of 'specialist practitioners'. This would make training more effective as a few but detailed points of interventions would be created, reducing risk and improving learning. Undoubtedly the strategy would encourage more private sector participation. Diffusion of such service provision would increase with farmers becoming more advanced in their knowledge of these technologies.

## **Recommendation**

Capacity-building needs to become more sustainable and replicable through a Train-the-Trainer (ToT) approach linked to performance-based incentives. Embarking on a ToT programme to sustain capacity-building of CA in the farming community is thus a key success factor for future initiatives.