

Part II: FFS Planning and Management

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Implementation Structure

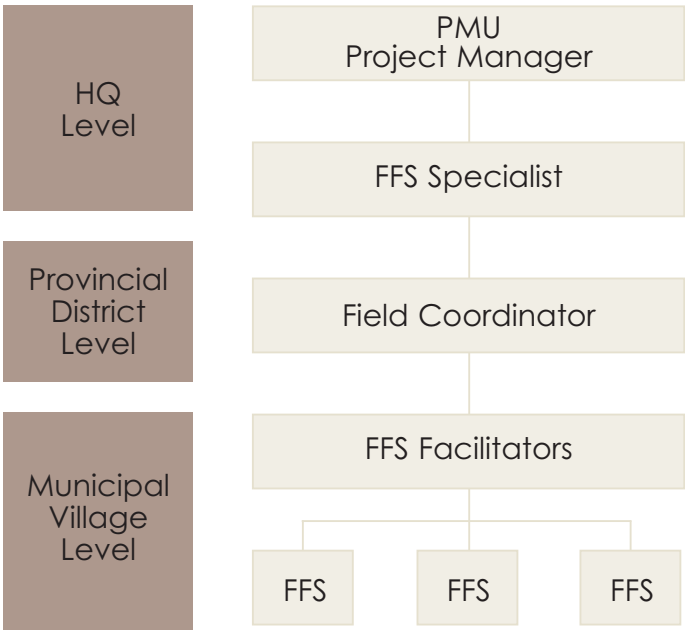
Setting up a Management Structure

Project management of FFS should strive to promote open, transparent and democratic processes that strongly support the participation and capacity building of government staff and beneficiaries in the implementation process. Management of FFS should preferably be decentralized to the local level with an appropriate headquarters (HQ) project management structure providing administrative support. However, any FFS project must have a field coordinator assigned to the target area to provide backstopping and technical support needed to maintain the quality of FFS.

For the ISFP, a project management unit (PMU) was set up in KFS HQ to handle administrative matters including preparation of plans, allocation of budget, provision of technical support and capacity building. However, management responsibility for FFS implementation was assigned to DFOs of the three project districts.

The FAO LFFS in KFS Kericho district does not have a PMU at the HQ; instead it has a project coordinator at KFS HQ to provide administrative support and liaise with FAO, while it has a field coordinator (DFO) and an assistant field coordinator at district level to oversee the performance of LFFS and provide backstopping.

Typical Structure for Implementing FFS



Identification of Facilitators

FFS has a long history in many countries, and identification of experienced facilitators may not be an issue in such countries. However, even in the Philippines where there are many experienced facilitators available, identification of sufficient number of facilitators can be a major issue if a project must work with many FFSs over a short period of time. FFS programme planning must start by identifying facilitators, determining their availability to be assigned to each target community, and then assessing their ability to plan a capacity building programme.

Setting up Logistics

Key issues in FFS logistics are: (i) transportation of facilitators; (ii) timely delivery of learning material to FFSs; and (iii) payment of facilitator allowances. As both the ISFP and FAO LFFS targeted remote areas, they provided a motorcycle to each government staff facilitator to reach the FFS sites which were usually non accessible by foot from their offices. If the project budget is limited, the procurement of

means of transport can be a major issue. To avoid such a major expenditure, the FFS programme can use Farmers Facilitators (FFs) from the target communities. However, they are not available in the first year. It is also important to create a group of experienced FFS facilitators who can provide technical and process backstopping. This issue is closely linked with the project expansion planning as described below, and must be addressed at the early programme planning stage.

As explained in the weaknesses of FFS, timely delivery of learning materials to each FFS is a challenge for many FFS programmes. In many countries, an overly bureaucratic system does not allow timely funds release to procure learning material, which severely undermines the ability of FFs to perform well. Careful planning of procurement is a must, especially where procurement delays are apparent. Effective decentralization of procurement to the local level is highly desirable for timely delivery of learning material.

Finally, support to FFS programmes has not yet been recognized as a part of the work responsibilities for government extension staff in many countries. An FFS programme is usually considered to be a project, and therefore extension staff expect to be paid a facilitation allowance for their participation. Once agreed, timely payment of allowances becomes an issue especially if the target area is widely dispersed and its facilitators are scattered in remote areas. This guide recommends that an FFS programme must have monthly facilitator meetings to plan for the coming month and share the experience among the facilitators. The monthly meetings can be used to make allowance payments and collect monthly reports.

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Programme Cost and Fund Disbursement

FFS Implementation Cost

FFS programme costs vary from place to place and according to the enterprises to be practiced. A benchmark for planning is around USD 1,000 to 1,700 per FFS as shown in the table below:

No	Item	Indicative figure USD/FFS/Yr
1	Stationary	100
2	PCE inputs	300 – 500
3	Allowance + transportation for facilitators	300 – 500
4	Exchange visits	100 – 150
5	Field day	100 – 200
6	Graduation	100 – 250
Total		1000 – 1700

In addition to these direct costs, the following costs must be included to maintain the quality of FFS:

- Monthly meeting transportation cost;
- Allowance for lecturers of special topics (once per month per FFS);
and
- Backstopping costs.

The cost of constructing a learning site is optional. FFS programmes are usually carried out during the rainy season and provision of roofing material may be required.

An intensive (two weeks) FFS TOF is required for inexperienced FFS facilitators as well as training for all facilitators (one to two weeks) on the technical aspects of the learning enterprises and PCE. A one week TOT FFS facilitation course must also be offered to FFs who will be engaged to work as facilitators.

Direct Funding Mechanism vs. Delivery-Based Funding Mechanism

Funds and materials can be channelled to FFSs by: (i) **direct funding** whereby a project advance is paid into a bank account operated by the FFS; and (ii) **delivery-based funding** in which the project office procures all learning materials including stationeries and PCE inputs, and pays allowances to its facilitators.

Many FFS projects supported by FAO and other donors in Kenya used the direct funding mechanism. Around USD 600–800 was deposited into each FFS account as an accountable advance to meet the cost of eligible FFS expenditures. The merit of this direct funding mechanism is a considerable reduction in project management costs since each group is responsible to procure its own learning materials and pay allowances to their facilitators. This experience develops each group member's capacity to manage a bank account and funds; skills that can be used for income generation activities (IGAs) after graduation. The direct funding mechanism also contributes to cost consciousness among farmers and raises awareness about the cost of extension services.

Improved facilitator performance is a further benefit; they become directly accountable to the group rather than to project supervisors. Some FFS groups have refused to pay the field allowance when members were not satisfied with the facilitator's performance or requested the project to change the facilitator because of poor delivery. This system has many advantages for project management as well as empowerment of farmers.

Despite these merits, the direct funding mechanism is usually not permitted in governmental FFS programmes due to accounting policies. This was the case for the ISFP. The rationale was that direct funding may undermine the accounting integrity and result in unaccounted expenditure. For FAO projects, direct fund transfer to FFSs was carried out under a memorandum of understanding (MOU) between the project, the counterpart government agency and the FFSs, whereby each FFS acknowledges its responsibility and

accountability in its use of project funds. The FFS was also obliged to provide an accounting report supported by evidence of expenditure.

A clear advantage of a delivery based mechanism is that the project can control procurement and be accountable for the expenditure. Bulk procurement can also reduce overall costs. However, this system requires adequate administrative capacity in management, planning and logistics. Disadvantages of the delivery based mechanism include complex procurement and delays in delivery of learning material. The experience of ISFP as well as other FFS programmes that have used a delivery based mechanism demonstrates that procurement and delivery can create a major bottleneck to meeting FFS demands. As a result, some FFSs became idle due to lack of learning material.

This guide recommends the use of the direct funding mechanism, but incorporating some aspects of a delivery based funding mechanism. The FAO funded LFFS procured key stationary items, such as manila paper and pens that are essential during the early stage of the FFS. The LFFS also procured initial inputs required for the first PCE. This arrangement allowed each FFS time to register with the government and open a bank account. The balance of funds needed for FFS activities was then deposited into the bank account. The project supported only 16 FFSs in the first year so this approach was feasible. However, if there are more than 50 FFSs distributed in different areas, delivery of FFS materials would be a major task as was experienced in the SSIS FFSs in the Philippines where wells/engines/pump sets as well as inputs including fertilizer and certified seeds were provided to 145 FFSs in five provinces.

Curriculum Development

Technical Package: Enterprise Catalogue

This guide does not aim to develop a procedure and facilitation skills for a site specific enterprise solution as in the process of participatory comparative experiment (PCE). An open end approach with PCE is in fact ideal in FFS, which can address the issues that farmers are currently facing. However, it has its own disadvantages and limitations such as:

- During the initial phase of an FFS programme facilitators may not have a sufficient level of participatory facilitation skills for an open end participatory approach;
- Every organization has its operational mandate which may limit the activities that can be supported and the knowledge of its facilitators may also be limited; and
- Many inexperienced facilitators would not be able to design PCE or identify design parameters for unfamiliar subjects.

Instead, this guide is designed to help inexperienced facilitators and groups to select enterprises to be practiced, and advise how to establish and monitor/evaluate the performance of the enterprises selected by the FFS members. Therefore, any project that adopts this manual must prepare in advance of project implementation a set of clear technical enterprise packages described in an Enterprise Catalogue, to offer to FFSs (see an example in Annex 1) and a Study Guide (Annex 2) that includes basic enterprise designs and suggested parameters to be measured in PCE. Preparation of the Enterprise Catalogue and Study Guide requires a process of community consultation as well as technical and market knowledge.

The main advantage of preparing and using such a catalogue is to standardize the fieldwork and allow the project to deliver a consistent quality of facilitation services. However, such a prescriptive enterprise catalogue limits the ability of facilitators to respond to improvised requests and incorporate new ideas from farmers.

Thus, enterprise catalogues must be developed with caution, to reflect real issues that FFS farmers face, allowing flexibility, and the proposed enterprises should be technically appropriate and economically feasible for the target farmers.

Period of the FFS Cycle

The climate, local environment and study focus as well as local people's preferences should be carefully considered in deciding how many months are required to help farmers to achieve the desired project result. Although the length of the study cycle may vary, this guide recommends a one year FFS programme to foster farmers' analytical skills as well as members' empowerment processes.

Trees planted in FFS host farms after one year



Introducing Tree Nursery Enterprise

A distinctive feature of this guide is in the tree nursery enterprise which is a requirement for all FFSs during the dry season or when AESA becomes routine. This was the key component for promoting crop diversification and a means for farmers to make effective use of the season with less labour demand. However, the experience of both the ISFP and the JICA funded FFS in Ethiopia showed that tree nursery activities were not popular among farmers as the first field activity.

Usually, farmers much prefer agriculture or livestock production systems that can generate immediate cash income. Therefore, any FFS that includes tree nursery activities should begin with agricultural and/or livelihood enterprises and introduce the nursery enterprise only after the members have become accustomed to the FFS concept. Tree nursery enterprises can enhance PCE and AESA skills since seed treatment, observation on germination and initial growth can be repeated within a short period of time. Grafting of fruit trees, as an example of IGA, can also provide a good exercise for PCE and AESA using a comparison procedure.

2

Capacity Development

Training of Facilitators

Training of facilitators (TOF) is crucial in all FFS programmes. FFS master trainers, who have a vast experience in FFS, usually conduct TOFs. FFS extension staff who are to become facilitators must undergo a minimum of a two week TOF course (a typical course agenda is provided in Annex 4). In addition, they must complete at least a one week technical training on Enterprise Catalogue related technologies, including agriculture, livelihood development and forestry issues. Only after completing the two courses, should trainees be allowed to conduct FFS.



TOF for Candidate Farmer Facilitators (FFs)

This guide promotes farmer facilitators to support expansion of FFSs and improve project sustainability. Candidate FFs are selected from their own groups and provided a week long training to improve their facilitation skills. The selection of candidate FFs is carried out under the guidance of the facilitator in consultation with the members after completing several months in FFS. The candidates are selected according to criteria approved by group members (see Part III Step 10 for more details).

The following basic criteria are applied in selecting farmer facilitators:

- Level of attendance in FFS sessions;
- Level of adoption of practices learnt at the host farm (i.e. PCEs in their own farms);
- Willingness to provide their own time to run FFS;
- Communication skills;
- Physical fitness;
- Willing to stay in the community; and
- Socially accepted by their community.

After the one week TOF course, these FF candidates were given the opportunity to facilitate FFS sessions with their own groups under supervision of their extension facilitator (a typical FF TOF course agenda is provided in Annex 5). While conducting FFS, they were backstopped and evaluated by the extension facilitator. Once the FFs passed evaluation (see Part III Step 10) by the facilitators, they were tasked to form new FFSs in their neighbourhoods.

2

Expansion Planning

Extension-led and Farmer-led FFS

FFSs supported by an extension facilitator are referred to as “**Extension-led FFS**”, and those run by FFs as “**Farmer-led FFS**”. A FFS programme must start with Extension led FFS. Each extension worker is typically expected to manage two FFS sessions per week during the first year. During the period of the Extension led FFSs, each group identifies two farmers who can be selected as FFs; though as many as four or six may be identified.

After graduation from the Extension led FFSs and basic training, FFs are usually assigned one or two new FFS groups (usually referred to as child FFS in the neighbourhood of the mother FFS). Such FFs are also given an allowance per session, but no transportation allowance is given since they are conducting their FFS sessions near their own localities.

The chart below demonstrates an example of how the number of FFS can be expanded within a five year period with Extension led FFSs and Farmer led FFSs. The following assumptions are made for this example FFS programme:

- There are 10 project extension led facilitators;
- Each extension led facilitator has two FFS per week for the first year but one FFS from the second year in order to provide backstopping to his/her Farmer led FFSs;
- Each Extension led FFS would produce one pair of FFs (two FFs every year; and
- One pair of FFs would conduct two FFSs per year

This guide recommends two FFs would form a team to facilitate one FFS in order to maintain quality FFS. Farmer led FFS would not produce any FF.

TABLE 1 Indicative Expansion Schedule

Year	Type of FFS	No of Facilitators	No of new FF	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	Total FFS
1	Extension-led	10		20					20
	Extension-led	5			5				5
2	Farmer-led	20	20		20				20
	Extension-led	5				5			5
3	Farmer-led	30	10			30			30
	Extension-led	5					5		5
4	Farmer-led	40	10				40		40
	Extension-led	5						5	5
5	Farmer-led	50	10					50	50
Total				20	25	35	45	55	180

With help from FFs, the project would be able to support 180 FFSs over five years. Relying solely on its extension facilitators, the project could cover only 100 FFS (maximum) at a rate of two FFSs per year. This expansion strategy also promotes sustainability of the project because it will produce FFs who can become focal persons for agricultural extension in the target communities. In addition, it is difficult for government staff to each support two FFSs every year because of their non FFS workload.

Field Day and Graduation

The “Field Day” (see Part III, Step 12) and the “Graduation” (Step 14) are important aspects of an FFS expansion strategy. These two events entail inviting non FFS neighbours to view the results of FFSs. Frequently the neighbouring farmers who attend these events request their own FFS and/or copy what they see in the field.

2

Monitoring and Evaluation

Regular Backstopping to Monitor FFS Performance

The backstopping provision of technical and management support to FFS facilitators by experienced staff, is a major part of progress monitoring of FFS with an aim to increase FFS quality. Monthly meetings among facilitators are also useful to share FFS facilitation and technical skills.

Based on the ISFP and FAO LFFS experience, the most challenging aspects that backstoppers must pay attention to are:

- Concept and methodology for PCE;
- AESA session;
- Time allocation; and
- Mode of facilitation this requires behavioural changes for facilitators who are used to operating as instructors.



A regional FFS master trainer (left) and a DFO (right) backstopping FFS groups in ISFP

Backstoppers must recognize that backstopping is provided as assistance and not as evaluation of facilitators. Backstoppers should not conduct FFS sessions and should not disrupt FFS sessions frequently; rather, they should observe and provide members and facilitators with advice at an appropriate time. Such advice to facilitators should not be given in front of FFS members; it is important

to maintain farmer trust in their facilitator. Backstoppers must participate in the whole FFS session and check facilitation skills using a “Session Check List 1 and 2” (see Annex 3 1 and 3 2). The check lists will then be used for review at a separate meeting with the facilitator after the session. The first sheet of the check list is more qualitative and the second sheet more quantitative. It is recommended that the first sheet be used during the initial period of the project to provide more detailed advice to the facilitator, and the second one be used to identify strengths and weaknesses of the FFS. Either sheet must be used with care when presented to the facilitators and never shown to the FFS members.



Backstopping teams giving recommendations to facilitators after FFS sessions

Group Weekly Report/Record

After each FFS session, the members of each FFS group should prepare a “Weekly FFS Report” to describe the learning sessions of the FFS. This is not a report for facilitators to complete. The report is used by the FFS group members to monitor and evaluate the performance of the FFS and facilitators. In addition, it aims to:

- monitor whether the facilitators were present during FFS sessions;
- capture how the session was conducted problems, impressions of members;
- check relevance of sessions; and
- record the activities.

The weekly reports should be made in duplicate using carbon paper; the original is sent to the field coordinator, and the copy remains with the FFS. The report is sent to HQ and the facilitator's allowance paid on the basis of the report. However, paper based reports have limitations; they are often time consuming to prepare, must be physically transported from FFS to HQ, and must be manually processed. If not submitted and processed in a timely manner their information is of limited value for monitoring and management.



Mobile phones are beginning to replace paper based reporting methods. Mobile phone coverage is becoming widely available in less developed countries and the technology provides a new dimension for project management, especially in M&E. FAO projects in Kenya (LFFS) and the Philippines (SSIS FFS) have developed a Mobile Phone Based Monitoring System, which enables a continuous recording of performance of FFSs and the FFS facilitators. The system is designed in such a way that data are sent by mobile phones to a web based database which automatically processes and aggregates data for presentation through the project's website.⁷ This system allows the field coordinator and project staff members at the HQ, or even in the donor HQ offices, to monitor the performance of the facilitators and FFSs through the internet. Monitoring templates are structured in a simple format with questions mainly requiring either a numerical or Yes/No answer (see FFS Mobile Phone Question Sheet, Annex 3 3). A maximum of 20 questions is advisable. Major advantages of the Mobile Phone Based Monitoring System are: its ease of use (farmers with primary school education can operate the mobile phone with minimal training), timely availability of outputs (due to immediate transmission and automated processing),

7. For details, visit:
<http://mpbms.atsafrica.com/index.php#>

User name: visitor,
Password: visitor

widespread accessibility (due to web based application), and ability to link with electronic funds transfer (for payment of allowances, transfer of funds for purchase of inputs, payment for sales, repayment of credit, etc.).



However, paper based reports must still be used to provide a permanent record at the FFS site. One disadvantage of the Mobile Phone Based Monitoring System is its limited ability to capture qualitative information.

Mobile Phone Monitoring System



Both FAO projects provided a mobile phone to each FFS and an FFS member (usually M&E office of the FFS) was tasked to report weekly FFS performance by completing the report using the mobile phone as shown above. The designated operators were given a short training and the results show that farmers have no problem to use the mobile phone.

Graphs Generated with the Data Provided by Mobile Phones



Sustainable Livelihood Development Project in the Mau Forest Complex

Home Reports Logout

Welcome, Iaka (Taka)

Aggregated Report

Export From Week 30 Up to Week: 35 Filter

No.	LFFS Name	Name of facilitator	Total Members	Total Dropouts	Total No of FFS members attended on time	Total No of FFS members came late	Total No of FFS members left earlier	Total No of FFS members absent	No. of Times Facilitator came to session
					%	%	%	%	
1	Lamotit	Edward Kimaiyo	34	5	71.43	17.14	2.86	11.43	5
2	Kilelesh	Edward Kimaiyo	30	2	66.67	20.00	6.67	13.33	1
3	Nyakinywa	Everlyne C. Rotich	27	3	70.37	11.11	3.70	16.32	5
4	Kadawa	Everlyne C. Rotich	29	3	79.26	13.04	4.38	8.70	5
5	Ogak	Lawrence Oryango	33	0	66.29	8.88	0.00	8.82	2
6	Sapit	Lawrence Oryango	32	4	66.67	14.61	3.70	16.32	2
7	Kurit	Duncan Mwengi	30	0	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	
8	Chonwet	Duncan Mwengi	30	0	87.10	0.00	3.23	12.90	5
9	Kileten	John Mugenda	30	1	81.60	9.09	3.03	9.09	5
10	Mwengaza	John Mugenda	29	3	89.29	3.87	3.87	7.14	5
11	Chamchemi	John Twai Somol	27	3	77.42	0.00	0.00	22.58	5
12	Tegat Chapitil lei	John Twai Somol	30	1	70.97	0.00	3.23	29.03	5
13	Tendeno Development	Charles Makau	30	3	87.88	9.09	3.03	3.03	5
14	Chepluyat multipurpose	Charles Makau	31	4	100.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	5
15	Kahututa	Mary W. Nyamu	27	3	62.07	3.48	13.79	34.48	5
16	Nuru	Makokha Daniel	27	1	48.15	40.74	25.93	11.11	2
	Total		479	36	76.77	8.81	4.87	13.72	3.98

Facilitator and Members performance key: 5: Excellent, 4: Good, 3: Fair, 2: Poor and 1: Bad

Facilitator's Monthly Report

Each facilitator must prepare and submit a written monthly report summarizing his/her FFS sessions (see Annex 3 4). This report is used to monitor FFS performances and to understand whether the facilitators are on the right track, if they have requested help from the coordinator, and how they are handling issues that arise during FFS.

Other Key M&E Templates

There are other reporting templates that may be useful for any FFS programme. The following were used in the ISFP.

Problem Report by Facilitators.

This report can be used when facilitators have problems that require intervention from the coordinator (see Annex 3 5).

Empowerment Process Report.

Qualitative assessment of FFS is mainly carried out using the Empowerment Process Documentation Report (see Annex 3 6). This template was designed to observe changes and/or signs of empowerment of each individual and group during the project implementation. Those changes are documented for management staff to assess the level of empowerment within the FFS.

