Institutional Mechanism in Participating Countries for Dynamic Conservation of GIAHS

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1. Justification

The FAO-GIAHS project is ending its PDF-B phase, and approaching full implementation. In participating countries, practitioners need instructions for GIAHS project formulation and implementation. GIAHS background documentation is clear on the definition of GIAHSs and their importance. The earlier Project Framework provides some hints on possible activities of projects, but does not provide the clarity national, local and community level stakeholders need for project formulation and implementation. The mandate of Wageningen International in the global GIAHS project is to build capacity on Multi-Stakeholder Processes in various Pilot Sites (IAC and FAO, 2005).

In the field[1] it was observed that much participatory expertise (application of tools, involvement of a wide variety of stakeholders) is already in place or perceived unneeded in the particular situation. However, *project management structures* (plans, platforms, procedures) through which Multi-Stakeholder Processes were to be implemented were neither conceptualised nor very functional. They were followed common project implementation practice, with little appreciation of GIAHS characteristics: traditional populations that need support to establish a self-determining form of governance to continue and adapt the systems they base their lives on. The project is now departing from brainstorming and conceptualisation to active implementation of dynamic conservation.

This new phase justifies the development of a project implementation strategy that stands on the shoulders of past practitioners, and anticipates future development of the GIAHS initiative. This document draws on both literature on Multi-Stakeholder Processes (see Woodhill, in prep., and http://portals.wi.wur.nl/msp/) and more explicitly literature on project management for institution building (SWAPs experiences in practice (e.g. Schoubroeck and Karna, 2003), Soft Systems Methodology (Checkland, 1999), Institution literature (e.g., Ostrom, 2005)). Furthermore, the document draws on GIAHS project documentation (FAO, 2002-2006, FAO, 2006) and suggestions from project implementers and experiences in China and The Philippines and FAO-GIAHS staff.

2. Project set-up methodology

2.1 Principles for building a GIAHS project implementation framework

The aim of GIAHS support projects is the transformation of existing (threatened) Agriculture Heritage systems into future viable (flexible, adaptively managed) systems. We propose to adhere to the following principles in this effect:

- The GIAHS project promotes *self-determination* (i.e., the political dimension of poverty in OESO's DAC-criteria) of the GIAHS community through appropriate institutional adaptations, to enable the GIAHS community to develop their system according to contemporary needs
- Dynamic conservation of GIAHSs is a *global* concept; yet conservation happens through the establishment of *national* policy frameworks and *local* institution building to support *community level* dynamic conservation activities
- The GIAHS dynamic conservation concept provides an alternative to mainstream agriculture development
- GIAHS dynamic conservation is multi-disciplinary: agriculture / economy, biodiversity / environment, anthropology / culture and decentralisation / governance all interact in a single GIAHS site. The GIAHS community is in charge of combining these different disciplines into one coherent 'dynamic conservation' of their system.

The project will thus be organised as a "consortium of organisations" in a multi-layered network at international, national, local and community level. These organisations co-operate with the objective to foster self-determination of the GIAHS community (within the national legal framework).

2.2 Multi-Levelled structure of GIAHS projects

As the nature of project outcomes varies for different management levels, the project is best structured by defining different, complementing planning and implementation structures. In principle, higher-level structures formulate policy objectives, and delegate authority to lower level structures to enable GIAHS communities on the ground to maintain and adapt their own system. Operational levels include:
- The global level – that defines GIAHSs and communicates definition and recognition to lower levels
- The national level – that develops a national policy framework for dynamic conservation of GIAHSs (through local self-determination)
- The local (provincial, prefecture, region, district, county) level to develop institutions in support of GIAHSs
- The community level – to dynamically conserve GIAHSs
Thus, the project is organised *level-wise*; each level has its own *mandate* with an explicit *communication*

protocol between levels. Each level fulfil its mandate through the most appropriate management modality.

3. Project development methodology in practice

3.1 Initiation of a GIAHS support project

Initiation of a GIAHS project typically starts with informal discussion and networking, and creating support for participation in the global GIAHS initiative. This process is often driven by experienced individuals and leads to informal support with practitioners such as FAO, national agencies, NGOs, local governments, and above all, the GIAHS community. The ownership of the *community level* initiative lays with the GIAHS community. The GIAHS community can embrace the opportunities that practitioners thus create.

The informal phase of project development results in:
- a network of organisations and individuals willing to implement a GIAHS support project
- the GIAHS community knowing about the opportunities and limitations of the GIAHS initiative, and
- a preliminary project proposal submitted to FAO

3.2 Initiation of project structures

A first step in formalisation of the management structure is the selection of a National Focal Point Institution (NFPI). We propose the following procedure. When it is decided that a particular site will get project support, FAO-Rome instructs the national FAO-office to co-ordinate with an appropriate local high government office (e.g., the GEF focal point). These two institutions select the most appropriate organisation to act as the NFPI. The selecting national government institution should not take up the NFPI-position itself. Criteria for selection of an organisation include:
- Government or NGO institution with access to policy making processes and sympathy towards the GIAHS concept and project principles
- Willingness and capability to co-ordinate multi-stakeholder and multi-discipline processes, including likely access to funding
- Commitment to subsidiary principle: delegate management and implementation authority to the lowest appropriate level, and to the most appropriate authority, including GO, NGO, community, private sector, etc. The organisation is acceptable to other players in the sector as a co-ordinating agency
- No better such institution is available in the country, i.e., the selected institution is "the best" for GIAHS proj-

ect implementation

Selection of a national focal point is concluded by signing a Letter of Agreement between FAO and the NFPI which spells out the role division between organisations at national level.

3.3 Developing action-level wise project structures

Tasks and structure of community, local and national action levels vary in nature, and their management will therefore be different. Yet, a few basic rules apply to all action levels:

Outcomes of a different nature for each level will be needed to achieve structural dynamic conservation of GIAHSs. Thus, national projects are best formulated for each action level separately; indicating the upward and downward linkages for each level. Table 1 suggests an elaborated list of tasks of separated action levels, along with the support levels need in order to fulfil their tasks.

The four different outcomes defined in the GIAHS project document coincide to some extent with the tasks each level has in the project, although particularly tasks of the local (government) level and the community level are not clearly separated. The project needs to specify tasks for community and local government level to enable them to practically implement activities. The elaboration of tasks from each level sheds some light on one more aspect of GIAHS project implementation. Even if GIAHS communities ultimately

Table 1. Tasks for each action level to arrive at dynamic conservation of GIAHSs

Action level	Prime tasks	Support needed	Likely stakeholders
Global	Define international policy objectives and communicate them Develop a conceptual framework for GIAHS and site designation standards and procedures Control the quality of national (possibly local) GIAHS designation processes Develop GIAHS conservation scaling up mechanisms (Grossly outcome 1 and 4 of the Global Project Logframe)	Mandate to define and designate sites as GIAHSs Feed-back from national initiatives	FAO, GEF / other donors, nature INGOs, etc.
National	Develop national policies conducive to self-determination of GIAHS population Initiate GIAHS project structures Develop a national policy framework for GIAHS dynamic conservation Support local government initiatives to designate sites as GIAHS (Grossly outcome 3 of the Global Project Logframe)	Internationally acknowledged conceptual framework for GIAHS National political support Project finances	National Line Ministries, national FAO offices and GEF-focal point institutions, academe, INGOs
Local	Develop supporting institutions Initiate local GIAHS project structures Develop functioning supporting institutions for GIAHSs, such as financial mechanisms, land use planning, eco tourism planning, technical support	Standards for GIAHS site designation Supporting national policies Mandate to develop a GIAHS conservation initiative for listing Project finances	Local Government Units, local NGOs, academe, local businesses, etc.
Community	Dynamically conserve the GIAHS Operationalise self-determining political setting in which GIAHS project can support Operationalise institutional links to support dynamic conservation of the GIAHS (agriculture, natural links, cultural links, tourism / environmental services / product trading links, etc.) (Grossly outcome 2 of the Global Project logframe)	Self-determinating rights Facilitation for development of payment-for-services Standards for GIAHS designation Technical support for re-inventing traditional practices in a future institutional setting	Local communities, local businesses, academe

carry out conservation of GIAHSs, it is well possible that threats are caused by failures at other levels (e.g., blanket extension approach for green revolution techniques; no payment for environmental services; central planning rather than local self-governance). Thus, in particular instances policy level investments are justified. This notion fundamentally challenges some donors' prescription that certain minimum fractions of the project funds need to be invested in communities. This does not change the fact that GIAHS increased capacity to dynamically conserve the GIAHS is the ultimate proof of success.

3.4 Action-level wise project formulation

At each level, the Focal Point Institution coordinates project formulation for that level only. The level-wise project formulation covers grossly the points presented in Table 2.

The global GIAHS project developed a generic "GIAHS project framework" format, with an elaboration of the contents of this table. Focal Point Institutions may need facilitating support to put the GIAHS support programme in a proper project framework.

It is in this phase of project development that capacity building such as "Multi-Stakeholder Processes" may be very useful. The process follows general participatory methods, resulting in the commitment of relevant stakeholders.

3.5 Action-level wise project implementation

The PDF-B phase of the GIAHS project already invoked some limited implementation. The best way to formulate and develop projects is to start some limited activity, and look who you need for what you want to do. Donors however require first an elaborated plan, after which project implementation may start.

1. Vision	Overall GIAHS vision: self-determination of GIAHS community Vision for the necessary structural support from this particular management layer
2. Strategy	Overall strategy: what legal instruments will be used to increase self-determination of the GIAHS community? What will the economic underpinning of the local self-determination be? How will this particular layer contribute to the implementation of the strategy?
3. Logframe	Overview of outcomes and related activities and outputs Overview of necessary support from other action layers in the 'assumptions' section
4. Organisation and management	Links with higher levels (services expected) Links with lower levels (outputs and services expected) Main stakeholders and tentative role division Co-operation structure Financial management and administration Monitoring and learning structure

Table 2. The building-up of a layer-level project plan

3.6 Action levels require services from each other

An explicit layered project structure bears the risk that the project will not be carried out coherently. Individual layers (e.g., the national layer) may not fulfil its main tasks with great consequences at the local and community level. On the other hand, the rationale for "layering" the project is exactly to prevent incomplete project implementation. For example, if a project is strong in its field level implementation, while the national policy objectives are not met, it is partly successful – but not for long.

When the project is explicitly sliced in action lev-

els, levels can hold each other accountable, and eventually report failed functioning to the highest project structure. This implies that action levels are explicitly accountable to each other. Such accountability must be specified in the accounting structures of the project. Upward accountability is a standard feature in accounting – however, downward accountability (in the shape of creating conditions for functioning at lower levels and delegation of authority) is not a common feature. Much of the success of the GIAHS project will lay in the ultimate accountability of different project (i.e., governance) structures to the GIAHS community.

3.7 Withdrawal of project support

If the project takes sustainable impact seriously, it withdraws more and more from explicit support of the system. E.g., when national legislation is in place so, that GIAHS dynamic conservation (through local

government structures) have a legal base, the national tasks are over. The NFPI and other stakeholders can refrain from further action and keep informed about on-the-ground achievements, and give feed-back. Similarly, if ecotourism programmes start running, they are to be handed over to community-private partnerships, and the project withdraws, unless it is explicitly needed (for equity, further development, etc.)

Good project implementation implies a continuous uptake and handing over of institutional arrangements, so that by the end, the project can "naturally" phase out – without much impact on the daily flow of affairs. By the end of the project, institutions have developed in support of dynamic GIAHS conservation.

3.8 Summary – steps in project formation and withdrawal

The previous sections cover the setting-up of project structures, and can be summarised in a flow of steps. Even if the project flow will be far more blurred in practice, the different steps indeed indicate the process to come to dynamic project structures, which keep addressing the needs of the moment in project implementation.

4. Protocol for GIAHS project implementation

The above elaborated project management methodology logically leads to a list of "do's and don'ts." These can be caught in a few "rules of thumb" that summarise some sort of Project Implementation Protocol. When entering a project cooperation, stakeholders are requested to take note and subscribe the protocol. This protocol is not a fixed set of rules. During project implementation, rules can be added, deleted or amended. Common practice and legislation are taken as starting point in the protocol. The protocol is to foster constructive co-operation between stakeholders to come to dynamic conservation of GIAHSs.

4.1 The GIAHS community as the ultimate beneficiary of the project

- The GIAHS project promotes *self-determination* of the GIAHS community through appropriate institutional change
- The local government tailors services to support self-determination of the GIAHS community
- National line agencies channel their services to the GIAHS community in close co-operation with local government structures
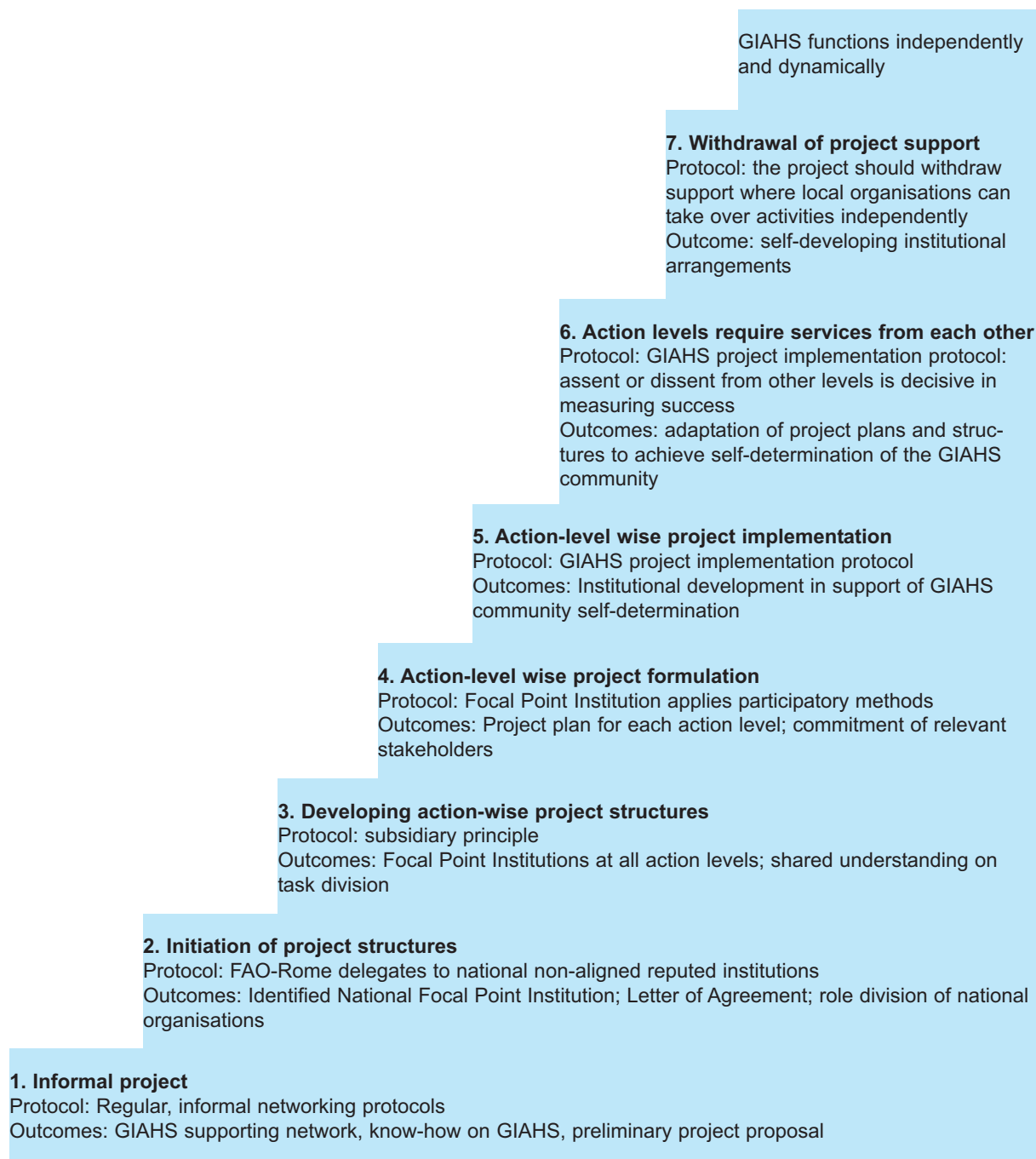
GIAHS functions independently and dynamically

7. Withdrawal of project support
Protocol: the project should withdraw support where local organisations can take over activities independently
Outcome: self-developing institutional arrangements

6. Action levels require services from each other
Protocol: GIAHS project implementation protocol: assent or dissent from other levels is decisive in measuring success
Outcomes: adaptation of project plans and structures to achieve self-determination of the GIAHS community

5. Action-level wise project implementation
Protocol: GIAHS project implementation protocol
Outcomes: Institutional development in support of GIAHS community self-determination

4. Action-level wise project formulation
Protocol: Focal Point Institution applies participatory methods
Outcomes: Project plan for each action level; commitment of relevant stakeholders

3. Developing action-wise project structures
Protocol: subsidiary principle
Outcomes: Focal Point Institutions at all action levels; shared understanding on task division

2. Initiation of project structures
Protocol: FAO-Rome delegates to national non-aligned reputed institutions
Outcomes: Identified National Focal Point Institution; Letter of Agreement; role division of national organisations

1. Informal project
Protocol: Regular, informal networking protocols
Outcomes: GIAHS supporting network, know-how on GIAHS, preliminary project proposal

Figure1. Methodological steps for the formation of GIAHS support project structures.

- NGOs engage in facilitating change of practices as an

intermediate between (local) government and the GIAHS community
- Scientists detect bottlenecks for GIAHS dynamic conservation, and support NGOs, local governments, national governments with information as well as skills / perspectives to achieve a sustainable GIAHS
- The GIAHS community, rather than following "mainstream" development, takes its own tradition serious and engages in developing a self-defined way of development and promotes this through legal involvement in local governance procedures

4.2 The relation between management levels

- The project is organised level-wise differentiating between community, local, national and international action levels with an explicit communication protocol between levels
- Action levels get a mandate and authority from higher action levels, and tasks from both lower and higher action levels, including the task to organise itself most appropriately

4.3 Co-operation between stakeholders

- Existing organisations develop a co-operation modality to implement the task of an action level
- At each level, one Focal Point Institution establishes and co-ordinates an appropriate steering mechanism to initiate a multi-stakeholder process resulting in a work plan with role divisions and mandates of individual stakeholders, integrating different expertise in fulfilment of the level's mandate
- The implementing agencies report on their activities to the co-ordinating body; the focal point institution consolidates and reports to other action levels
- The focal point institution co-ordinates the action level project formation and learning
- Stakeholders respect the "best position" of other stakeholders and provide due space for manoeuvre for each stakeholder to support system development
- Stakeholders work actively to establish self-sustaining institutions and withdraw when their support need is over

4.4 The formation of project structures

- Project establishes co-operation patterns that can develop into future mainstream working patterns
- "Prior informed consent" and "monitoring" of the project are carried out as a part of existing local accounting and reporting procedures
- When local governance procedures are not of the quality desired for project reporting, the project supports capacity building to improve their performance
- Additional project staff consolidates project reporting to donor institutions
- Specific project staff is hired for project-specific activities only; all major jobs are carried out by regular organisations in the area

4.5 Financial management

- Financial support is managed as if it were a local fund
- paying fees at local level and respecting local implementation procedures
- Project financial flows and accounting routines follow standard local accounting patterns

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[1] The field experience of this document is based on visits to China and The Philippines. The authors welcome further GIAHS pilot experiences.