

Basic Tools Handbook

for
Agricultural
Extension



CETDU
Central Extension Training and
Development Unit
NAFES

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CETDU
Central Extension Training and
Development Unit
NAFES

The Central Extension Training and Development Unit (CETDU) is a unit of the technical division at the National Agriculture and Forestry Extension Service (NAFES). NAFES is a department under the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF).

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Foreword

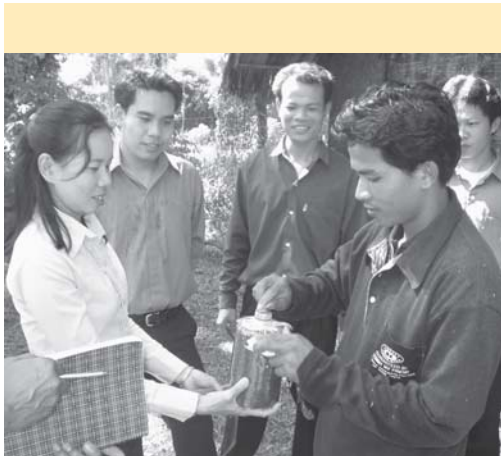
Development projects with strong extension components have increased dramatically in Lao PDR over the last few years, and agriculture extension is seen as a potential road to effective development. This has led to a multitude of approaches, each promising results to overcome rural poverty.

The official extension system envisioned for Lao PDR is a well-defined set of interrelated units that provide professional agricultural and forestry advice. It is founded on the Prime Minister's Decree 01/2000 on decentralisation and the subsequent formulation of "The Government's Strategic Vision for the Agricultural Sector" of MAF.

These two policy papers together with the "National Growth and Poverty Eradication Strategy" (NGPES) provided the framework for a bottom-up approach to extension where village initiatives are encouraged and supported. With the establishment of the National Agriculture and Forestry Extension Service (NAFES) in 2001, MAF has expressed its view that extension is the principle focus for its agricultural development strategy.

The primary goal of agricultural extension is to assist farmers in adapting their production and marketing strategies to rapid changes in economic, social and political conditions. Eventually the farmers are expected to be able to shape their lives according to their personal preferences and those of their community.

The Laos Extension for Agriculture Project is a product of Lao-Swiss cooperation, funded by the Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation (SDC) and implemented by Helvetas, the Swiss Association for International Cooperation. Since November 2001, LEAP has supported NAFES in the development of a decentralized, participatory, pluralistic and sustainable agricultural extension system. The results so far are quite promising. A national bottom-up extension system has been developed, which is seen



as unique in Southeast Asia. The system is now being promoted by NAFES for implementation through the entire country and will harmonise the various existing approaches to agricultural extension. As a practical tool for extension staff, a Tools Handbook has been prepared by LEAP. It provides the basic tools and the methodology urgently needed by the extensionists for working effectively with farmers.

This Tools Handbook was only made possible due to the outstanding commitment of Mr Somxay Sisanonh, National Project Director, and the LEAP Technical Advisor, Ms Andrea Schroeter. The CETDU staff and other Master Trainers of NAFES have also made countless valuable contributions. I hope that this manual will find acceptance among practitioners and will prove helpful in enabling extension workers to achieve their goals in their dedicated cooperation with farmers.

Vientiane, May 2004

Karl Gerner

Chief Technical Advisor

LEAP



Preface

Why did we develop this Tools Handbook? How is it connected to the Lao extension approach? Who will use it? And what advantages does it have?

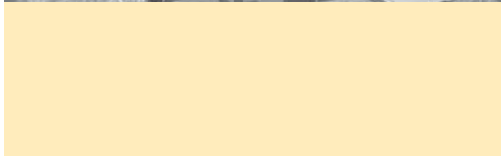
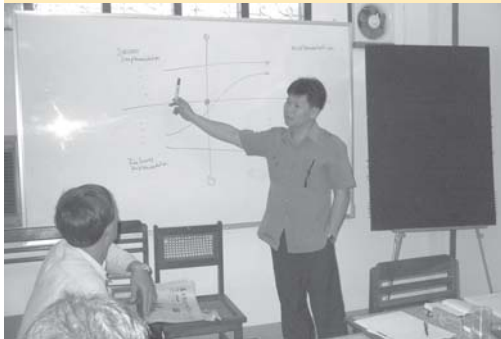
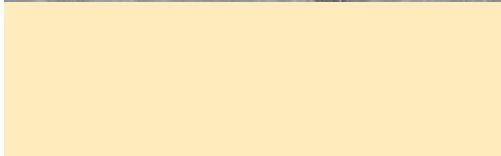
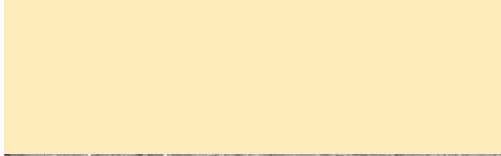
Until recently Lao PDR did not have an effective agricultural extension service. Technology transfer was carried out by the Technical Departments of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF) on a campaign basis, and development projects conducted extension in their own individual and distinctive ways. To harmonise agricultural extension in Lao PDR to make it more effective, a nationwide approach to extension was needed. In August 2001 the National Agriculture and Forestry Extension Service (NAFES) was established as a department of MAF. This was a fundamental step in the development of a national extension system.

Towards the end of 2001, the Laos Extension for Agriculture Project (LEAP) was established, to support the founding of the national extension system. LEAP's goal is defined as supporting the establishment of a decentralised, participatory, pluralistic and sustainable agricultural extension system that reaches male and female farmers equally. During the first years, LEAP worked on appropriate extension system design and on testing methodology. LEAP

also developed mechanisms for the future expansion of the system.

In collaboration with NAFES Master Trainers - mainly composed of staff from the Central Extension Training and Development Unit (CETDU) - LEAP established an agricultural knowledge support system that focuses on village level improvements. The system is based on participatory principles and operates on a sustainable basis. It aims at effectively coordinating various donors and is even capable of continuing its performance once a support project comes to an end. The foundation of the system is the Village Extension System (VES).

Although the VES is expected to be the key element in successful agricultural development in Lao PDR, it cannot simply be launched by decree. Villagers and DAFO staff must develop minimum skills to bring about successful implementation. Therefore LEAP, together with the CETDU team of Master Trainers, established and tested a basic curriculum for training extension staff.



This Tools Handbook is the essence of the basic curriculum to upgrade skills and knowledge of district extension generalists.¹ The complete set of tools represents a simple standard process to launch the Village Extension System. Nevertheless each tool can be used as a stand-alone instrument as all tools include step-by-step introductions. Although the tools are self-explanatory and can be used by every extensionist just by following the instructions, the most effective way is to make them accessible through introductory training and to provide subsequent coaching by experienced extension trainers.

The upgrading of extension workers' skills includes methodological training, technical input, provision of extension material as well as continuous on-the-job supervision to enable them to provide demand driven training and support service to the farmers. The successful participation in one training-coaching-production cycle will eventually lead to the establishment of a Village Extension System in at least one village. At the end of that process, the extension staff will have all the knowledge and skills required to fulfil their duties successfully. For this they will receive official certification from NAFES.

¹ The extension generalist from DAFO is sometimes called a Farming System Extension Worker (FSEW). A final agreement on the exact title is pending.

LEAP and the CETDU Master Trainers have developed, tested and adjusted the tools over a two-year period. All tools have been applied in 96 pilot villages of three provinces, under different agricultural conditions and potentials.

The Tools Handbook has been specifically designed for DAFO extension generalists, the direct beneficiaries. Of course PAFES staff responsible for training and supporting the districts have to be familiar with the approach, so they also will benefit. Furthermore, other interested individuals from the Government and international organisations - Lao staff as well as expatriates - may profit from this Tools Handbook by learning how the Lao Village Extension System was developed and how it is to be maintained.

We consider the Tools Handbook an important vehicle for the development of Lao PDR's agriculture sector, however, the curriculum deals with only the basic knowledge and skills an extension generalist needs for his or her day-to-day work. Additional know-how, for example on farm economics, marketing and management of village funds, are still needed to serve farmers properly. As a consequence, LEAP will continue to

improve and develop the extension methodology and ultimately design comprehensive and advanced curricula for extensionists at all levels.

We are happy to share our experiences with you and hope you will find the Tools Handbook useful. As LEAP and CETDU will continuously supervise the use of these tools and adjust the material accordingly, we welcome your comments and suggestions.



Andrea Schroeter

Technical Advisor

LEAP

Somxay Sisanonh

National Project Director

LEAP



Acronyms

CETDU	Central Extension Training and Development Unit
DAFO	District Agriculture and Forestry Office
EVES	Expansion of the Village Extension System
FEF	Farmers Exchange with Farmers
FSEW	Farming System Extension Worker (at district level)
LEAP	Laos Extension for Agriculture Project
LWU	Lao Women's Union
LYU	Lao Youth Union
MAF	Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry
NAFES	National Agriculture and Forestry Extension Service
PAFES	Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Extension Service
PAFO	Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office
SIFT	Success, Implementation, Failure, Training needs
SDC	Swiss Agency for Development and Cooperation
SMS	Subject Matter Specialist (at provincial level)
TNA KISS	Training Needs Assessment - Keep It Short and Simple
VES	Village Extension System
VEW	Village Extension Worker

Background

This Tools Handbook for Agriculture Extension belongs to a series of support materials for agricultural extensionists. These materials are intended to provide background information on agricultural extension methodology and can be used as training and working tools in extension work to help extension generalists at the district level deliver demand-driven training and service-support to male and female farmers.

Other materials in the series include:

- Extension Methodology Modules
- Technical Subject Modules
- Curricula (for extension generalists from DAFO and for Village Extension Workers)
- A set of posters, leaflets, VCDs and other material for farmers' training

The Tools

There are many other tools that can help district extension generalists work with farmers to improve agricultural production and their livelihoods. This series concentrates on the tools we found most appropriate in the majority of the pilot villages. They are easy to use, easy to understand and easy to apply.

The Tools Handbook will help extension staff prepare for village meetings and training. Furthermore, application of the tools helps to create a dynamic and enjoyable atmosphere in the village. The tools can be adjusted to individual situations and help achieve specific objectives.

Gender Sensitivity

The extension approach in Lao PDR is based on the creation of a Village Extension System (VES). The VES relies on participatory principles. In the past, participatory approaches often maintained an idealised fiction that communities, production groups or households had the same needs and ambitions. It became obvious, however, that this is not the case. It is therefore necessary to define priorities of households, communities and other groups based on their socio-economic well being, age, gender and so on.

Gender is a central issue for rural development and extension. Reference to gender is used to illustrate specific roles and values a society attributes to its female and male members. Social roles and positions encourage or limit the participation of individuals in important discussions, implementation of activities and decision-making processes.

A participatory extension approach needs continuous reflection on the potentials and constraints of male and female members. Thus, all the tools offer a gender sensitive perspective so that the different needs and priorities of the gender specific roles are considered.

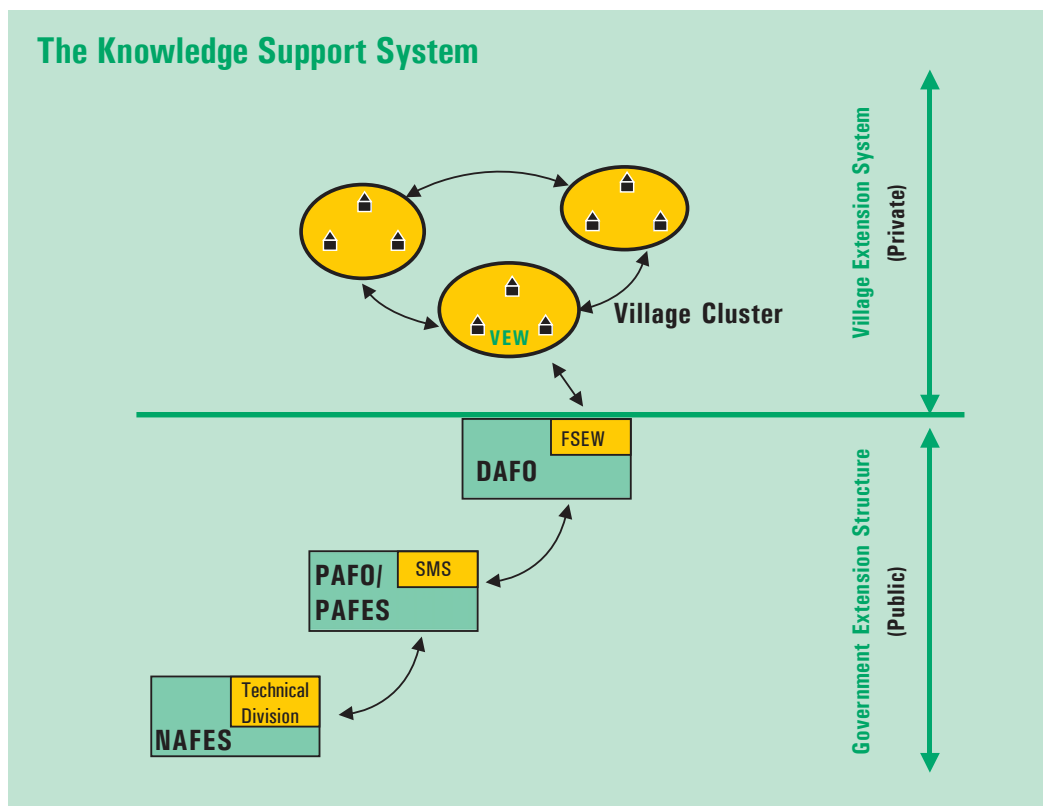
The guiding principles in creating gender awareness should be useful for the villagers as they identify their own potentials and constraints. The duty of an extensionist is to facilitate this process. The hints on gender are meant to initiate communication processes which ensure that every participant gets a chance to speak and be included in decision-making. Within this communication process the extension worker and the participants have to reach conclusions that satisfy the various interests.



The Development Process

The LEAP tools have been developed and tested over a continuous training, coaching and strengthening process with provincial and district agricultural extension staff. After successfully participating in at least one training-coaching-production cycle, the extension staff will have the required knowledge and will receive a certificate from NAFES, recognising them as trained agricultural extension staff. In addition to being able to initiate a sustainable increase in agricultural production, they will be capable of transferring their knowledge to other provinces and districts.

Since the VES relies on the support of the village authorities throughout the entire process it is important to give an introduction to the main stakeholders. Consequently the process started with [Introduction of the Village Extension System \(VES\) to village authorities](#).



The first training for provincial and district agriculture extension staff was provided before the main cropping season. It concentrated on explaining the objectives of the project, including the principles of a demand-driven, pluralistic and participatory agricultural extension, the philosophy of the Village Extension System, and the tasks and duties of extension staff at the central, provincial and district levels. Staff members also learnt how to assess the needs of villagers.

Following the training, the main village activities during the first implementation phase was the introduction of the learning process leading to VES, basic data collection and a simple and easy [Training Needs Assessment - Keep It Short and Simple \(TNA KISS\)](#), supplemented by a [Constraints Analysis \(CA\)](#) of a production process. During the TNA KISS the most pressing training needs were identified and groups for the learning process were established.



Based on this socio-economic information, agricultural data and the needs identified, the **second training** focused on preparing for the village training sessions: training curricula were developed, technical input was provided and further extension and coaching activities were scheduled. After this training the extension staff were ready to conduct training for the farmers' groups. It is important to point out that farmers training is not a one-day event, but several training inputs are provided along with the respective production cycle. Strengthening group performance and continuing support to the future Village Extension Worker are integral parts of this training process. Furthermore, the extensionists were trained in facilitation and monitoring techniques to help them work effectively with farmers. The training process was continuously monitored using the coaching and monitoring tool **Strength, Implementation, Failure and Training need (SIFT)**.

The monitoring data collected was the basis for the **third training** for provincial and district staff as it provided an assessment of the villagers' training process. The challenge during this stage was to evaluate the learning practice, to spread positive experiences in the village and to launch the Village Extension System officially. Consequently the two tools: **Farmers Exchange with Farmers (FEF)**, how to conduct farmer-to-farmer exchange, and **Expansion of Village Extension System (EVES)**, how to launch a Village Extension System, have been introduced.

With the application and a successful output of these two tools, the first learning project was terminated and those activities completely handed over to the village. A Village Extension Worker was appointed and the village extension system was thus fully recognised.

All tools have been tested in 96 pilot villages in three provinces and reflect farmers' local conditions. Pilot provinces have been Luang Prabang (Pak Ou, Nambak and Pak Saeng Districts), Champasak (Phonethong, Soukhouma and Kong Districts) and Saravanh (Kongsedone, Nakhonepheng and Toumlan Districts). Even though each of the modules and tools can be used as a stand-alone effort, using them as a complete package covers all the minimum basic knowledge and skills an extension generalist needs.

The Basic Curriculum

In order to launch a VES, extension generalists at DAFO need a basic education. LEAP developed and tested a simple standard process, the “Basic Curriculum for Training Extension Generalists at District Level”. The sequence of the curriculum is fixed, but the contents and pace of implementation are variable. The basic curriculum will train district extension generalists to perform the following steps.

Step 1	Inform the village authorities about VES and explain the process. The village authorities will agree to begin the learning process. On their agreement, a study tour to see an operating VES is usually a good idea. During the field visit they can talk with the village authorities and farmers of the experienced village and get a firsthand impression.
Step 2	A half day Training Needs Assessment is done with all villagers. The result is the decision to begin one initial learning project on one topic and the identification of the first 10 households who will participate. This step has inbuilt gender-sensitive procedures. A constraints analysis is included in the assessment in order to identify more precisely the real constraints.
Step 3	Training is then designed and conducted according to the findings of the Training Needs Assessment. This represents the first Learning Project of the village.
Step 4	During the implementation of the learning project, an assessment is undertaken using the participatory monitoring tool SIFT.
Step 5	A farmer exchange is held with all interested households so they can discuss the results with the 10 households who participated in the first learning project. This exchange has gender-sensitive procedures. Households interested in joining this particular learning project are identified. Interest in further learning projects is identified at the same time.
Step 6	A final meeting with the village authorities, future Village Extension Workers and interested farmers is held. Here the mechanisms of the VES are explained in detail. The village authorities may then decide to launch a comprehensive VES. The village authorities would mandate the VEW to share throughout the village what was learned during the first learning project and organise new learning projects on additional topics with technical support from the district staff.



Guidance for the User

Dear User,

If you work on a DAFO extension team you are exactly the person for whom this Tools Handbook was developed. Of course, PAFES staff supporting your work, interested individuals from government and international organizations may also benefit from this handbook, but the extensionists in DAFOs are the main intended beneficiaries.

This is your personal Tools Handbook

If you work in a DAFO and you have been provided with this Tools Handbook, then it is your own personal copy.

You should use this handbook and the folder with the forms for making notes, collecting data and reporting sheets from your target villages. Based on your remarks you can share your experiences and discuss challenges with your colleagues or supervisors. You can also add interesting leaflets, brochures or material produced by yourself to the accompanying folder.

The practical implementation steps

This handbook accompanies you from the beginning of your extension training. The training includes theoretical in-class training as well as practical exercises and implementation. The practical implementation follows six steps:

Step 1	Introduce the VES to the village	Tool 1: VES
Step 2	Assess the needs and problems in the villages	Tool 2: TNA KISS and Tool 3: CA
Step 3	Organise and conduct village training	Farmers' training curricula
Step 4	Follow up and assess the production activities	Tool 4: SIFT
Step 5	Organise farmer exchange meeting	Tool 5: FEF
Step 6	Expansion of Village Extension System	Tool 6: EVES

The theoretical training

You will be trained and supported in your work by experienced trainers. The theoretical in-class training consists of three phases; each with in-class training of approximately 7 days complemented by practical implementation. Each phase covers two of the above-mentioned implementation steps.

Phase 1: In-class training

This is where you are instructed on the general aspects of the Village Extension System, how to inform villages about VES, and how to conduct a Training Needs Assessment in a village.

Phase 1: Implementation (Steps 1 and 2)

Based on the knowledge gained during the first in-class training, you will now introduce VES to village authorities and conduct a Training Needs Assessment in about 3 to 5 villages in your district. DAFO and the district authorities will have identified your target villages. During this time you will be supported in the field by experienced extensionists. They are your DAFO colleagues who have already successfully accomplished the basic curriculum. If you are among the first trainees in your district, you will be supported by trainers from PAFES or even by Master Trainers from NAFES. During their visits you have the opportunity to discuss your practical experiences and questions regarding the implementation.

This phase is completed when you have done a successful Training Needs Assessment in at least one village and a production group has been set up in that village.

Phase 2: In-class training

This is where you are educated in developing curricula for technical training and instructed on organizing and conducting village training sessions, and how to follow up the activities using the SIFT tool.

Phase 2: Implementation (Steps 3 and 4)

You will now conduct village training sessions based on the identified technical requirements following the production cycle. Provincial Subject Matter Specialists (SMS) will support you with technical material that will provide you with valuable inputs on the most common technical questions. You can also request information through the CETDU library, which already has more than 1,000 titles. After the training you will regularly follow up on the production group's activities.

This phase is completed when the training that you gave to the village production group achieves some tangible results.

Phase 3: In-class training

This is where you are trained on how to prepare and conduct Farmers Exchange with Farmers and Expansion of Village Extension System meetings.

Phase 3: Implementation (Steps 5 and 6)

You will go back to your target villages and implement what you learned in the above training, a farmer exchange with the FEF tool and the final meeting of this first learning cycle using the EVES tool.

This phase is completed when a Village Extension Worker is designated, and when the production group achieves positive results.

Confirmation

If you successfully reached the end of the training process, you completed the basic curriculum for becoming an "Extension Generalist". You are capable of initiating a VES. Your new skills and knowledge will be recognised and confirmed by NAFES.

So, Dear User, let us together move forward and introduce the Village Extension System to as many villages as possible. Please, use this manual intensively - it is your manual! Use it in the classroom during training, and use it in the villages during implementation. In the end, you will enjoy the exciting results of your endeavours.



Tool 1

VES

**Introduction of the
Village Extension
System
to village authorities**

VES - Village Extension System

Introduction to the tool

The introduction tool is used during your first visit to the village. It helps you introduce to the village authorities the Village Extension System (VES), its principles, the interaction between the VES and the government extension system as well as the learning process. During this meeting the village leadership decides whether they want to launch the VES and are aware of their active role in the process. If you are going to launch the VES in more than one village, it is possible to arrange the meeting at cluster level for several villages together.

After the meeting, the village authorities should get an idea of the learning process and their support required during the specific steps and be able to answer the following three questions.

What is the VES?

The VES is a village based development approach that includes all local efforts to ensure food security and economic progress for the villagers.



The diversity in Lao PDR's agro-ecological conditions (e.g. ethnic and cultural aspects, available infrastructure for marketing and market access, trade connections), has been recognized at a high policy level. Development efforts by government agencies should be based on real local conditions and potential. It is therefore obvious that concrete development efforts must be informed by, and based on, the ideas and inputs of the local people who understand best the special aspects of their own situation. This development structure and the related procedures are called the VES.

The concept of the VES can be applied all over the country, and the supportive roles and responsibilities of DAFO and PAFES should be the same everywhere. But of course, the technical aspects need to be adapted to the different localities and requirements.

What are the main principles of the VES?

The main principles of the VES, applied everywhere, are:

The village authorities in Lao PDR include several persons such as village head and deputies, representatives from the elders, the Lao Women's Union (LWU) and Lao Youth Union (LYU). It is the responsibility of the **village authorities to organise and supervise the operation** of the extension system in their village.

The village authorities will mandate an experienced farmer chosen by the villagers to be the **Village Extension Worker (VEW)**. The main task of the VEW is to ensure that **innovations spread** throughout the village among all interested households. It is possible that villages may have several VEWs, one for crops, another for livestock, and so on, depending on the interests and requirements of the households in the village. The VEWs are accountable to the village and the village authorities, not to DAFO.

In most cases the VEWs cooperate with groups of interested farmers on particular topics. These "**production groups**" **learn and exchange new techniques** for agricultural production. There may also be groups that explore and develop storage and processing techniques or marketing channels for their products. The development of production groups is supported by DAFO in a process of identifying needs, training as well as coaching and exchange activities.

The extension generalist will interact mainly with the VEWs. Once a new technique has been successfully introduced in a village, it is no longer the responsibility of the DAFO staff to spread the technology further throughout the village. This is taken care of by the VEWs.

All the resources for the VES are organised and managed by the village. This means that VEWs are not paid out of the DAFO budget. How the VEWs should be compensated for their services to the farmers is up to each village to decide. This may be in cash, in kind or in labour; there is no blueprint for the compensation procedures. We expect that the village development funds will have an important role to play in this context.

How does the Village Extension System interact with the government extension system?

Prime Minister's Decree 01 on the socio-economic development of the country forms the basis of MAF's policy guidelines for work in the agricultural, livestock and forestry sectors. It is understood that all public levels from MAF down to DAFO are part of a support system for the village's development (private level). The main restructuring so far has been that at the provincial level there will only be strategic support units, whereas the planning and financial aspects of implementing publicly funded development efforts will be located at the district level. The actual work, however, must be organised at village level and rely on the villagers' responsibility.



This of course means that at the district level we need capable and competent extension generalists, who know how to support villages in their efforts. Since each village will have different requirements and ideas for developing its agriculture, livestock and forestry, these extensionists will need a wide range of appropriate methodological and technical skills. If there are questions that the generalists cannot answer, they can ask Subject Matter Specialists based in the provincial centres or research stations for assistance in providing the services requested by the villages.

Materials you will need

Flipchart

with at least 5 sheets of paper

Whiteboard

if available

Tape

to stick paper on a wall or board

Marker pens

at least 2 colours

Posters

to explain

- objective and components
- the learning process
- stakeholders and their roles

Leaflet

to allow the village authorities to review the main issues

Extension Song

to help to create a relaxed atmosphere

Video (if player available)

to review important VES issues



Steps for application

Preparation

Step	Time (estimated)	Activity	Comments and Suggestions
1	1 hour	Prepare all extension material for explaining the VES	Compulsory material includes the posters and the leaflet. The video can be used to further explain the VES. Take a copy of the "Extension Song". After the official meeting there is probably time to practice the song with the villagers.
2	30 minutes	Write a letter informing the village of your visit and include the reason for your visit	The letter should include the exact date, time, place, objective and number of participants. Make it clear that all village representatives, like the village head, elderly, youth union, women's union, sub-district leader and other relevant people in the village are invited. You will probably hand deliver the letter yourself.
3	30 minutes	Invite district representatives to join the meeting	It is advantageous if district representatives join the meeting, especially if you are conducting this introduction for the first time. The presence of district representatives indicates the importance of the VES.

Implementation in the village

Step	Time (estimated)	Activity	Material	Comments and Suggestions
1	5 minutes	Introduce outside participants and explain the reason for the visit	None	Check whether all stakeholders in the village are present.
2	10 minutes	Explain the objectives and principles of VES	Poster 1: Objective and components of the VES Leaflet	Use simple words and try to give examples, especially when you talk about the principles. Just reading the principles is too dry and not sufficient for real understanding.
3	20 minutes	Explain the steps of the learning process and provide examples	Poster 2: The learning process	When you explain the learning process, highlight the objective of each step and avoid explaining the different tools in detail, as it would be too confusing during this stage.
4	20 minutes	Explain the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders	Poster 3: Stakeholders and their roles in the VES	Explain roles and responsibilities of village authorities, VEW, group members, DAFO and PAFES staff
5	15 minutes	DAFO and District Office representatives summarise the process	Flipchart paper and markers	It is important to invite DAFO or even District Office representatives to join the first meeting. It indicates the importance of the meeting and you will be sure that the district governor supports the idea.
6	20 minutes	Facilitate the discussion among village authorities on their agreement to launch the VES	Video (if player available) Flipchart paper and markers	There is no need for a signature by the village authorities, but they should clearly express their motivation towards launching the VES.

Follow up

After the meeting you will be sure of the support of the village authorities. You can now begin the learning process and plan for data collection and the training needs assessment.

Notes on timeframe

Preparation (2 hours)

You will need about two hours to prepare for this meeting. Most of the material, like posters, leaflets and videos, will be provided to you during your own training. You just have to review the content and make sure that you are able to highlight the main issues.

Implementation (1.5 hours)

It is important that the village authorities understand the process and principles of the VES. Most crucial is that they are aware of the support needed by the stakeholders. We recommend that you invite the sub-district leader and a representative from the district governor's office to join the meeting.

Follow up (none)

There is actually no follow up to be done. If the village authorities agree on the joint process for launching the VES, you can proceed implementing the learning process, starting the first step: the data collection and the needs assessment using the TNA KISS and the constraints analysis.



Total Estimated Time

Preparation	2 hours
Implementation	1.5 hours
Follow-up	none

Poster 1: Objective and components of the VES
(to be used during step 2)



Poster 2: The learning process

(to be used during step 3)

The learning process

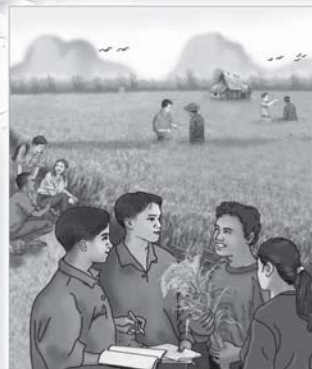
Identify learning needs to improve farmer's living conditions



Train and transfer knowledge to villagers



Exchange experiences between farmers



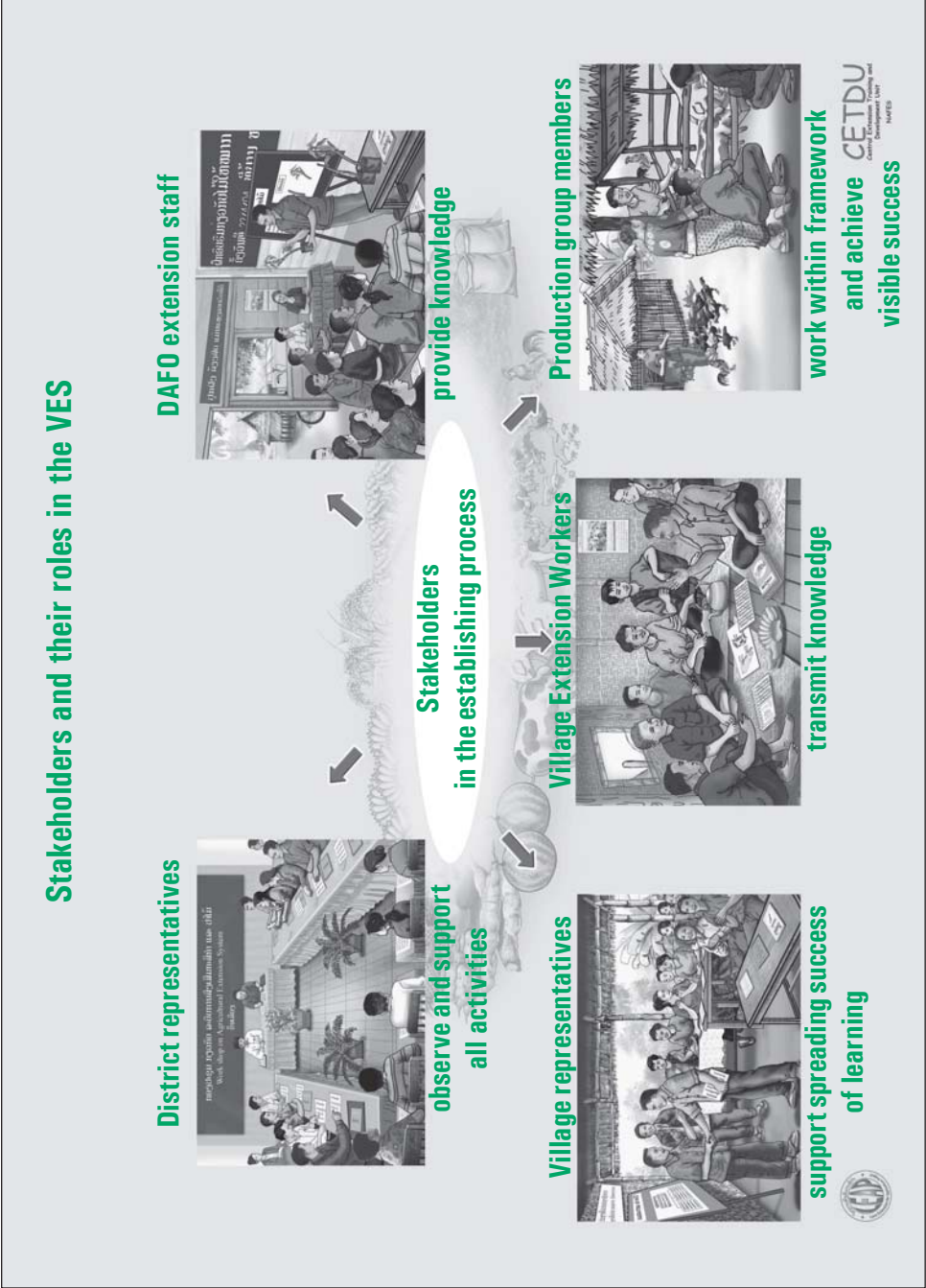
Support and coach the implementation of villagers' activities



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Central Extension Training and
Development Unit
NAFES

Poster 3: Stakeholders and their roles in the VES

(to be used during step 4)



Extension Song

Our village has an extension development system,
Has got VEWs to expand the extension network.
Starting from learning advanced technology,
Let's get all together to develop and strengthen our economy
beyond self-sufficiency so that we can sell surplus in the market.
We are very happy to have village leaders,
we are very happy to have village leaders
to look after the villagers.
Everyone has got training, both women and men
And expand according to the process.

Oh baby, let's do practice,
Pay attention to exchange experiences with each other
In order to use this knowledge for our country's development.
Transfer this knowledge to other interested participants.
To succeed this aim has to be coordinated with all concerned organisations
based on the village procedures.
based on the village procedures.
Oh baby, please do not be slumberous!



IV. Management Responsibilities

Management and implementation of the VES is in the hands of various groups. The VES is functioning successfully if all stakeholders implement their tasks according to the following responsibilities:

1. District staff

- coordinate with provincial and national teams and village authorities
- collect village data for analysis
- organise training on new topics for the farmers
- follow up on activities implemented
- extend positive results to new participants

2. Village authority and supervisors

- facilitate implementation with district staff and production group
- ensure cooperation between group members and district
- initiate formation of the production group and set up of their structure
- operate the VES (this is the responsibility of the village head)

3 Village Extension Worker

- transfer knowledge to the farmers and production group
- follow up and report on achievements and constraints
- Exchange knowledge with other VEWs

4. Production Group

- participate in the training and use the knowledge gained (put the knowledge into practice)
- address the extension generalists for support
- take initiative and experiment with innovations

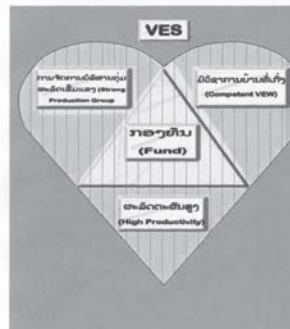


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Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF)
National Agriculture and Forestry Extension Ser
(NAFES)

Village Extension System

“ VES ”



Developed by CETDU
Central Extension Training and Development

Supported by LEAP
Laos Extension for Agriculture Project

Introduction

The main goal of agriculture and forestry extension work is to develop and improve farmers' production through using existing resources. To reach this goal, it is necessary to replace out-of-date production methods and begin to use more appropriate techniques. Therefore, setting up a village extension system is extremely important.

I. Objective

The objective of the government is outlined in the social and economic development policy of the party. It states that the village should be the implementing unit of any development activity. So an extension system which is centred at the village level is extremely important in the Lao PDR.

II. Significant aspects of the VES

II.1 The model of management in the village extension system is one that is able to function under the existing village authority.

II.2 The VES network consists of

- a strong Village Extension Worker (VEW);
- a strong production group;
- a source of funding - this could be the production group itself or a village development fund – to pay the VEW for services to the farmers or the production group; decisions about the source of funding will be made by the village authority;
- an effective production



General Principles of Setting Up the VES

1. Learning projects for the production group should consist of a complete cycle.
2. The learning project should produce positive results in order to gain credibility.
3. The VEW is responsible for delivery of knowledge to the interested parties.
4. The transfer of knowledge or new technology gained by a production group is the responsibility of the extensionist in cooperation with the VEW.
5. The village authorities should take ownership of the agricultural production.
6. The village authorities are responsible for finding funds to carry out village extension activities.

III. The Learning Process







Access to the learning process of the VES is not gender-restricted. Every villager is entitled and encouraged to participate in the following stages of the learning process:

- production groups and VEW together explore the farmers' needs for improving production technique
- farmers receive training and technical knowledge in their expressed areas need
- implementation results and constraints followed up, coached and evaluated every stage
- positive results are spread to other interested villagers through farmer exchange events, group to group and village to village exchanges.



Formsheet

Framework for Introduction of VES to village authorities

Step	Time (estimated)	Pictures	Activity	Material
1	5 minutes		Introduce outside participants and explain the reason for the visit	None
2	10 minutes		Explain the objectives and principles of VES	Poster 1: Objective and components of the VES Leaflet
3	20 minutes		Explain the steps of the learning process and provide examples	Poster 2: The learning process
4	20 minutes		Explain the roles and responsibilities of all stakeholders	Poster 3: Stakeholders and their roles in the VES
5	15 minutes		DAFO and District Office representatives summarise the process	Flipchart paper and markers
6	20 minutes		Facilitate the discussion among village authorities on their agreement to launch the VES	Video (if player available) Flipchart paper and markers



Tool 2

TNA KISS

Training Needs Assessment

- Keep It Short and Simple -

TNA KISS - Training Needs Assessment

- Keep it Short and Simple -

Introduction to the tool

The Training Needs Assessment - Keep It Short and Simple (TNA KISS) is a method that identifies the main problems in a village and assesses training needs in an easy and timesaving manner. Based on this needs assessment, you will be able to set up a training schedule which responds to the most pressing problems in a village. Before performing the TNA KISS, you should assess basic agricultural data on the village. This might be data collected by you first-hand and/or secondary data available in every DAFO or district office.

It is better to carry out the TNA KISS with two or three extension staff. If this is not possible, select a villager as a volunteer to support your work.

As mentioned in the introduction, there are other methods, such as PRA or RRA to assess villagers' needs, which you might already be familiar with. Select the most appropriate method depending on your respective needs and time constraints.

As a supplementary tool, we would like to suggest that you become familiar with the constraints analysis. This method helps you identify more precisely the problems contained within a single issue, if you feel unclear about the information received. This tool is especially relevant when upgrading training to identify constraints relating to one activity (e.g. if you are not yet able to answer questions like: *"Are chickens dying because of: the lack of feed, the inability of the farmers to vaccinate or the inaccessibility of the vaccine?"*).

Materials you will need

Flipchart

with about 8-10 sheets of paper

Whiteboard

if available

Tape

to stick paper on a wall or board

Marker pens

at least 2 colours

Reporting sheet

2 copies of the TNA KISS

A4 paper and a pen

for writing down names and other relevant information



Steps for application

Preparation

Step	Time (estimated)	Activity	Comments and Suggestions
1	2 hours	Analyse and summarise all available data on the village	Use data you have collected together with secondary data available in DAFO or the district office. Once the data has been summarised, collate it into a simple presentation that can be used during discussion.
2	1 hour	Prepare for the village meeting	Prepare all necessary materials, organise transportation, make a list of the participants and prepare the necessary budget.
3	1 hour	Write a letter informing the village of your visit and the reason for your visit	<p>The letter should include the exact date, time, place, objective and number of participants.</p> <p>Make it clear that the whole village (at least 1 representative of every family) should attend the meeting. Also point out the importance of an equal representation of men and women.</p> <p>In setting a date, do not forget to consider the time it takes to deliver the letter to the village and time required by the villagers to prepare for such a meeting.</p>

Implementation in the village

Step	Time (estimated)	Activity	Comments and Suggestions
1	5 minutes	Introduction of staff	Include icebreakers, songs or games in the introduction to create a relaxed atmosphere.
2	10 minutes	Explain the reason for your visit	Pictures, charts or other tools are useful when explaining the purpose of the visit.
3	20 minutes	Explain your understanding of the main occupations in the village (use a visual presentation which suits the prevailing literacy levels of the villagers), asking villagers to confirm whether this information is true	It is essential to present the secondary data visually. Be aware of the literacy level in each village and prepare your presentation accordingly. Without any visual representation, it will be difficult to generate a discussion about the data. Adjust your presentation according to the feedback of the villagers.
4	10 minutes	Facilitate the selection of 1-3 topics that represent the main problems in the village. The training needs for these topics will be explored in the next step	The topics selected should represent the main problems and training needs of the villagers throughout the year. Seasonality will be considered in step 8.
5	30 minutes	Form groups for each topic (ask villagers to raise their hands and divide them into groups according to which topic is most relevant or interests them most), split into groups and discuss the training needs for each topic (each training need will be called a 'learning project')	Each extensionist should facilitate one group's discussion. One member of staff should be responsible for involving and motivating those villagers who did not join a group. If there are not enough staff, select a volunteer to support the activities.

Implementation in the village (continued)

Step	Time (estimated)	Activity	Comments and Suggestions
6	15 minutes	One villager out of each group presents a 'learning project' to the plenary	Leave the summary of the discussion to one villager and avoid doing a presentation yourself.
7	15 minutes	Each villager should write his/her priority interest on the whiteboard or paper (men and women use different colours). If the meeting is in a temple, make sure that the board is accessible for women.	Writing interests can be difficult or cause chaos if not introduced properly. Villagers might all rush to the board at the same time. Others might not want to express their opinion. It is therefore important to select an appropriate location. The time needed can vary, depending on the number of participants.
8	5 minutes	Facilitate the choice of which 'learning project' is of most interest	During this stage it is important to consider seasonality. Agree on the most appropriate timetable for the 'learning project'.
9	5 minutes	Write down the names of participants interested in this particular learning project	Be sure that all interested villagers are on the list. Consider gender: interested villagers should be women or men who are most involved in the activity.

Implementation in the village (continued)

Step	Time (estimated)	Activity	Comments and Suggestions
10	20 minutes	<p>Facilitate the selection of 10 families (maximum) and 2 contact farmers (maximum) for the first training.</p> <p>In order to be able to transfer knowledge properly consider:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Motivation 2. Financial ability 3. Knowledge 4. Experience 5. Gender 	<p>Be aware that you are only the facilitator. Set up criteria for the selection, but avoid influencing the decision. This is quite important for the process of spreading information and the development process.</p> <p>In order to achieve good results and be able to perform a suitable follow-up, the number of trainees should not exceed 10 people (even if the selection might be difficult).</p> <p>The chosen contact farmer and/or his/her deputies can be officially appointed as village extension workers at a later stage.</p>
11	Flexible	Field visit to the identified production site and families	Visiting the production site is important to give you valuable insight for your training preparation.
12	30 minutes	<p>Discuss the detailed procedures of the training and follow-up with the contact farmers and the village representatives:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Detailed skills the villagers expect to attain 2. Concrete results to be achieved 3. Time schedule of the training and follow-up 4. Preparation to be done by farmers 5. Preparation to be done by extension staff <p>Be sure to include indicators for numbers 1 and 2 on the list.</p>	<p>Use your TNA KISS reporting sheet and fill in numbers 3,4,5,8 and 9. Be sure that villagers agree on indicators in order to be able to measure the success of the project. Fill in the two sheets and leave one copy with the contact farmer.</p> <p>Steps 11 and 12 are interchangeable, depending on the specific conditions in the village (e.g. distance to production area, praying hours of the monks if the meeting takes place in the village temple).</p> <p>It might be helpful to arrange an additional meeting with the contact farmers and village representatives prior to the training to confirm the time schedule, the contents and expected outputs, and to discuss open questions.</p>

Additional remarks

Gender

Special attention should be paid to women's participation. Our experience shows that women's involvement in meetings is lower than men's. While in Lao Loum and Lao Theung societies women's participation averages 40 percent, among most of the Lao Sung groups only men attend the meeting. In terms of identified training participants, the percentage of women was even lower. Less than 5 percent of contact farmers selected were women. It is therefore important that you select the time and place of the meeting very carefully to allow women to participate. Discuss this issue with the village authorities prior to the meeting.



Literacy

To avoid excluding villagers who are not able to read and write, the training aids you use should reflect the prevailing literacy levels in the village. Use drawings or pictures as much as possible when in villages where you know few can read and write. You should point out clearly that illiteracy does not exclude them from training or other extension activities.

Follow-up on the village meeting

Step	Time (estimated)	Activity	Comments and Suggestions
1	5 minutes	Summarise the results	Collect the TNA KISS reporting sheet together with the adjusted baseline data of the village and make the data available for other extension staff.
2	3 hours	Prepare a training plan based on training needs	Prepare a timetable, session plan, training material and budget. Get the plan approved by your office.
3	2 hours	Coordinate with other DAFO staff and PAFES for technical input	Contact Subject Matter Specialists at the provincial level to support you with technical input, literature, leaflets, posters, etc.

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Notes on timeframe

Preparation (4 hours)

You will need half a day to prepare the training needs assessment. It is best to prepare a plan for a number of villages or a sub-district cluster at one time.

Implementation (3 to 4 hours)

Carrying out the TNA KISS will take about half a day (3 hours in the meeting room plus the time needed for the field visit). The timeframe may be adjusted to fit the specific conditions in a village.

Group discussion of the training needs (see Step 5 above) is the main part of the assessment. At least 30 minutes should be devoted to the discussion. Any time taken to relocate or move groups and get them organised should be additional. Do not deduct that time from the allotted 30 minutes for discussion.

Another important discussion is on detailed training procedures (see Step 12 above), which should also take around 30 minutes. During this step you should complete the reporting sheet. Give one copy to the contact farmer and keep one copy for yourself. You should agree on the definition of the skills and concrete results to be achieved. These issues will be crucial for follow-up activities and help you decide whether a project was successful or not.

We strongly recommend that you accept an offered invitation to have an informal meal with the villagers and village authorities, as this provides an excellent opportunity to collect useful information during the mealtime discussion.



Follow up (5 hours)

Follow up of the training needs assessment is a critical factor for the success of the learning process. Clear identified needs are the basis for the preparation of the training plan. You therefore need to devote enough time for coordination with other DAFO staff and SMS from PAFES.



Total Estimated Time

Preparation	4 hours
Implementation	3 to 4 hours
Follow-up	5 hours

Report Form

How do you use the report form? The report form is easy to fill in. It helps you to summarise the requirements of the villagers, the time schedule and the duties agreed on. It is the basis for developing your training schedule and monitoring activities.

Training Needs Assessment Report

KISS (Keep It Short and Simple)

1. Village 1 _____ Date _____ Participants: _____ Total (_____ Women)

2. Objective of learning project 2 _____

3. Definition of skills

Skills the villagers want to achieve	Indicators for assessing skills
3 _____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

4. Definition of concrete results

Concrete results of skills	Indicators
4 _____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

5. Time schedule 5

First training (date, time, training place): _____

Follow up (date, time, meeting place): _____

6. Participating Farmer Families (max. 10 farmers)

- 1.
2. 6
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

7. Name of contact farmer (and deputy): 7 _____

8. Preparation to be done by farmers: 8

- _____
- _____
- _____

9. Preparation to be done by DAFO: 9

- _____
- _____
- _____

10. Remarks 10

10.a Other learning projects

Second Priority _____ 10a Total interested farmers _____ (_____ Women)

Third Priority _____ Total interested farmers _____ (_____ Women)

The most important information is mentioned under topic 3 and 4. This information will give you a clear picture of the knowledge and skills required and a means for verifying the outcomes. Clear and precise definitions, including indicators, are necessary for assessing the success of a learning project.

- 1 Village name, date, participants
- 2 Clear objective decided during group work
- 3 Which skills do the villagers want to achieve (e.g. all participants able to vaccinate chickens) and how can you measure them? Use SMART to identify the indicators.
- 4 Which concrete results do the villagers want to achieve (e.g. 20 chicken houses built) and how can you measure them? Use SMART to identify the indicators.
- 5 Agree on the schedule for training and follow-up. Confirm the dates 2 to 3 days before the visit.
- 6 Fill in the names of participating farmers (consider gender) and choose these family members who are actually doing the work.
- 7 Insert the name of the contact farmer and maximum one deputy.
- 8 Agree on the preparation to be done by the farmers: e.g. arrange for meeting room, get materials for building a chicken house, provide food.
- 9 Agree on the preparation you will do, and also how much has to be paid and by whom.
- 10 Include special observations, or reminders.
- 10a Include other issues discussed and the number of interested farmers. A separate report form will be needed for these learning projects.

What is an indicator?

An indicator can be defined as a quantitative or qualitative characteristic of a process or activity against which changes are to be measured.

With the help of indicators, you will be able to follow up the training and to decide whether a project was successful or not. You can use the indicators to point out changes initiated through your training input and support.

Four types of indicators are usually distinguished. They are result, impact, process and context indicators. Result and impact are most relevant for us.

The most obvious ones are result indicators. They simply measure whether what was planned has been achieved.

Impact indicators measure the long-term and broader effect of activities. For example, good quality seeds (**input**) lead to higher yield resulting in more income (**effect**), which may translate into more bicycles in the village (**impact**). Be aware that the impact of an activity may also be negative.

How can you formulate indicators properly?

Useful indicators should be short and precise, and verification should be easy. It is not a simple task to define such indicators and it will take some time and practice. One well-known and simple method for assessing formulations is the **SMART** approach. An indicator is explained in a **SMART** way if the statement reflects each of the five **SMART** components.



Criterion	Specification	Remarks
Specific	Is the object addressed precisely e.g. who and what?	A clear and simple description will make the indicator understandable
Measurable	Can the indicator be expressed in figures or numbers?	Quantitative criteria for achievement are required. In some cases, qualitative criteria may be used if no quantitative measure is suitable - but they should be clearly characterised!
Achievable	Can the task realistically be accomplished?	The yardstick should not be set too high!
Relevant	Does the indicator clearly relate to a specific task?	The indicator should have a clear relationship to the objective.
Time bound	Within what timeframe should the objective be achieved?	The indicator must specify by when the task is to be achieved.

The following example will help you understand the system:

A skill every participant wants to attain (**objective**):

“To be able to use good quality rice seeds”

Description for the verification of the achievement (**indicator**):

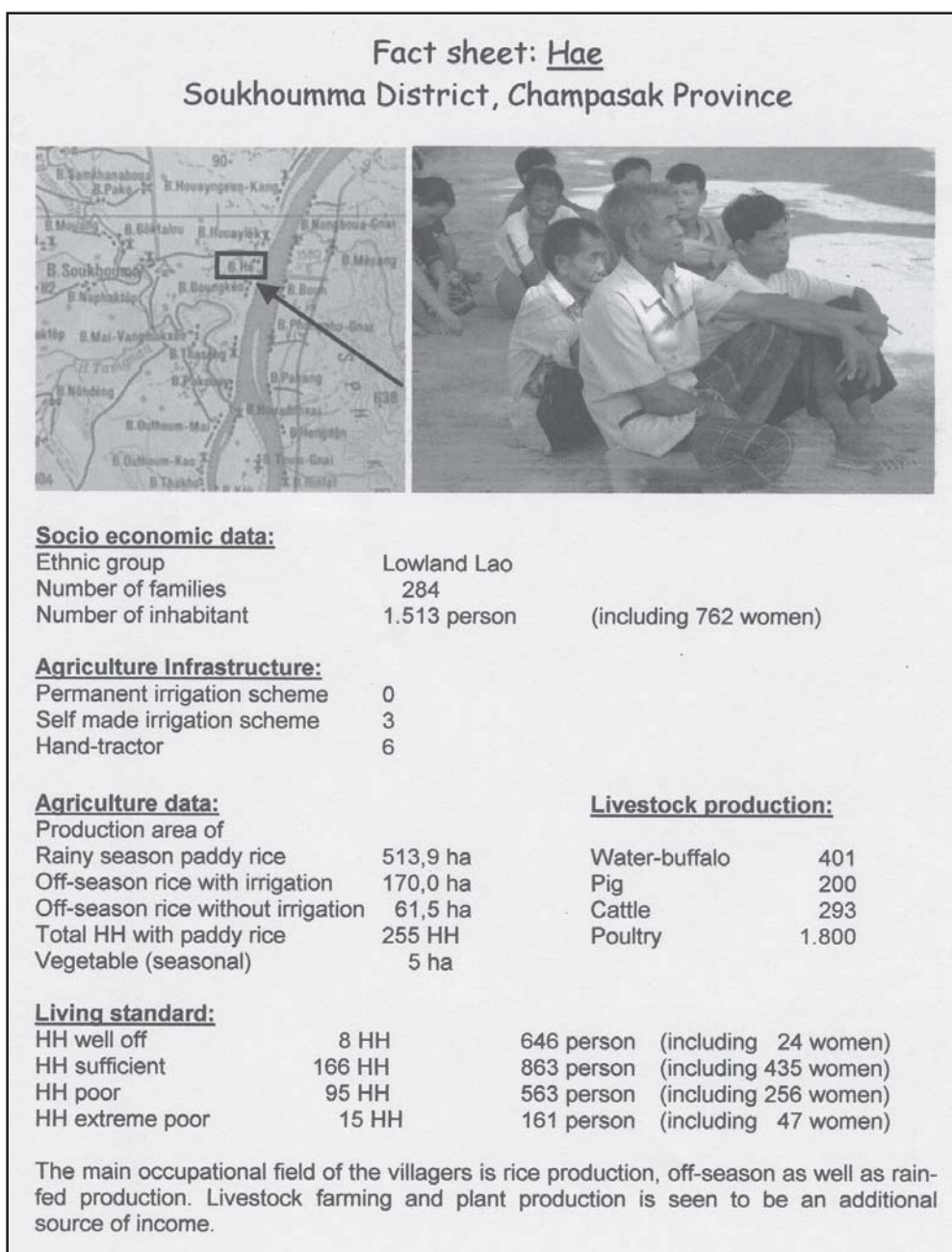
“All participants of the training will have planted certified rice seeds in all their fields during the next planting season (by June/July 2003)”

SMART indicators in the example:

Specific	Actors (participants), activity (planting) and object (rice seeds) are clearly expressed.
Measurable	All participants use certified seeds on all fields. Easy to measure!
Achievable	The creators of the indicator consider it realistic that all participants can plant certified seeds in all fields.
Relevant	Planting certified rice seeds is related to the achievement of the objective .
Time bound	The time frame is clearly defined.

Example

This example is from Ban Hae, Soukhouma District, Champasak Province and was performed on November 1, 2002. Three DAFO generalist extension staff and one PAFES Subject Matter Specialist carried out this TNA KISS. The agricultural data collected before the visit was summarised on a fact sheet (see below) and presented to the villagers on a flipchart.



Training Needs Assessment Report

KISS (Keep It Short and Simple)

1. Village Ban Hae, SKM Date Nov 1, 2002 Participants: 83 Total (13 Women)

(Rice production)

2. Objective of learning project Every participant will be able to sell more rice than last year

3. Definition of skills

Skills the villagers want to achieve	Indicators for assessing skills
Be able to produce enough, high quality and strong seedlings sufficient for the whole land	Seeds have a high germination ability, whole area is planted with well selected, high quality seeds considered by the farmers
Be able to improve the way of transplanting rice	Transplants are 1-3 plants/hill, average tiller/plant is 10, spacing is 20 x 15 cm
Be able to improve the efficiency of chemical fertilizer	By end December 2002 the leaves are light green, panicles consist each of about 200 grains and the farmers consider the average grain size big.

4. Definition of concrete results

Concrete results of skills	Indicators
Yield is increased	By February 2003 every participant increased the yield compared to the last year off-season rice yield. (Increase calculated according to individual plan)
Certified/pure seeds are accessible	All participants have planted certified rice seeds on all their fields during the next planting season (June/July 2003)

5. Time schedule

First training (date, time, training place): 16.11.2002, 9.00 am, at Boungkeo temple

Follow up (date, time, meeting place): Twice a month: 01.12.02, 15.12.02, etc

6. Participating Farmer Families (max. 10 farmers)

- | | | | |
|----------------------|-------------------|-------------------|------------------|
| 1. Mr. Homedone | 4. Mrs. Kausuan | 7. Mrs. Saegluaei | 10. Mr. Duandiou |
| 2. Mr. Kidaenghueang | 5. Mrs. Keaokham | 8. Mr. Thambha | |
| 3. Mr. Ananmee | 6. Mr. Fangphumee | 9. Mr. Fanpheng | |

7. Name of contact farmer (and deputy): Mr. Homdone (Deputy is Mr. Kidaenghueang)

8. Preparation to be done by farmers:

- Prepare training place
- Prepare food
- Bring a handful of rice seeds

9. Preparation to be done by DAFO:

- Training plan
- Training material, material for demonstration
- Handbooks and leaflets for farmers

10. Remarks

DAFO staff will need upgrading training and/or support of PAFES SMS in order to prepare and perform the training according to the needs of the villagers

10.a Other learning projects







Second Priority Improve chicken production Total interested farmers 31 (10 Women)

Third Priority Planting off season vegetables Total interested farmers 15 (06 Women)







Based on this TNA KISS, the training and coaching were conducted according to plan on November 16 2002, then respectively twice a month. The monitoring tool, SIFT, was also applied to assist in planning further group activities.

Formsheets

Framework for a Training Needs Assessment - TNA KISS

Step	Time (estimated)	Pictures	Activity
1	5 minutes		Introduction of staff
2	10 minutes		Explain the reason for your visit
3	20 minutes		Explain your understanding of the main occupations in the village (use a visual presentation which suits the prevailing literacy levels of the villagers), asking villagers to confirm whether this information is true or not
4	10 minutes		Facilitate the selection of 1-3 topics that represent the main problems in the village. The training needs for these topics will be explored in the next step
5	30 minutes		Form groups for each topic (ask villagers to raise their hands and divide them into groups according to which topic is most relevant or interests them most), split into groups and discuss the training needs for each topic (each training need will be called a 'learning project')
6	15 minutes		One villager out of each group presents a 'learning project' to the plenary

Framework for a Training Needs Assessment - TNA KISS (continued)

Step	Time (estimated)	Pictures	Activity
7	15 minutes		Each villager should write his or her priority interest on the whiteboard or paper (men and women use different colours). If the meeting is in a temple, consider a location that is easily accessible for women.
8	10 minutes		Facilitate the choice of which 'learning project' to start first (consider seasonality)
9	5 minutes		Write down the names of participants interested in this particular learning project
10	20 minutes		Facilitate the selection of 10 families (maximum) and 2 contact farmers (maximum) for the first training. In order to be able to transfer knowledge properly consider: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Motivation Financial ability Knowledge Experience Gender
11	Flexible		Make a field visit to the identified production site and families
12	45 minutes		Discuss the detailed procedures of the training and follow-up with the contact farmers and the village representatives <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Detailed skills villagers expect to attain Concrete results to be achieved Time schedule of the training and follow-up Preparation to be done by farmers Preparation to be done by extension staff Include indicators for numbers 1 and 2.

Report form

Training Needs Assessment Report KISS (Keep It Short and Simple)

1. Village _____ Date _____ Participants: _____ Total (_____ Women)

2. Objective of learning project _____

3. Definition of skills

Skills the villagers want to achieve	Indicators for assessing skills

4. Definition of concrete results

Concrete results of skills	Indicators

5. Time schedule

First training (date, time, training place): _____

Follow up (date, time, meeting place): _____

6. Participating Farmer Families (max. 10 farmers)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

7. Name of contact farmer (and deputy): _____

8. Preparation to be done by farmers:

- _____
- _____
- _____

9. Preparation to be done by DAFO:

- _____
- _____
- _____

10. Remarks

10.a Other learning projects

Second Priority _____ Total interested farmers _____ (_____ Women)

Third Priority _____ Total interested farmers _____ (_____ Women)



Tool 3

CA

Constraints Analysis

CA - Constraints Analysis

Introduction to the tool

The Constraints Analysis is a supplementary tool to complete the Training Needs Assessment. It helps to identify more precisely the specific problems within a single issue if you feel unclear about the information received. The tool helps you to identify all the constraints relating to one activity (e.g. if you are not able to answer questions like: "Are chickens dying because of the lack of feed, the farmer's inability to vaccinate or is medicine unavailable?"). The tool is very gender sensitive and gives you a clear picture of female and male roles and workload in a production process. It is also useful during the monitoring of a learning project. In case a project failed to achieve the planned results, the Constraints Analysis can help you to identify both the reason and the corrective action needed, e.g. the need for more training on one particular technical issue.

The need for this Constraints Analysis became apparent during our pilot program. The villagers' objectives for a learning project tended to be very broad. Without a clearly defined objective it was not possible to agree on the precise skills the villagers wanted to acquire. So the staff found it difficult to identify the real limitations. In order to identify the main problem concerning a specific production issue, we developed and introduced the Constraints Analysis, and it was found to be useful.

Thus, after the identification of the main learning needs through a TNA KISS (e.g. to improve the production of wet season rice), this tool will help to clarify the concrete results and specific skills the villagers want to acquire, based on the main restrictions they face in the production process.



Materials you will need

Flipchart

with 1-2 sheets of paper

Whiteboard

if available

Tape

to stick paper on a wall or board

Marker pens

at least 2 colours

Completed cards

showing the production steps

Blank cards

for additional steps mentioned by the villagers



Tape or pin the cards on a pin-board, a piece of wood or a wall or use string and clips. If none of these materials are available, writing or drawing on the earth or in the sand will do as well.

Steps for application

Preparation

There is not much to prepare prior to conducting a Constraints Analysis. If you have already planned to perform the analysis, write down the steps of a production process on cards. This should take no more than 10 minutes if you are familiar with the technical issues. However, very often this tool will be used spontaneously because it is helpful in cases where it is difficult to clarify the definitions.

Implementation in the village

Step	Time (estimated)	Activity	Comments and Suggestions
1	15 minutes	Together with the villagers, identify the steps in one production process	It is important that you involve the villagers in this step to ensure their participation and attention. Avoid simply presenting your prepared cards, because the process of identifying the steps may reveal constraints. Later on, you can add production steps that were not mentioned by the farmers. The steps should be written on cards. Use drawings or pictures if the literacy level is low among the villagers.
2	20 minutes	The villagers identify and rate the labour intensity and gender specification of every step	The findings should be written above the cards from step 1. Check that villagers understand any symbols used (e.g. ♂ or ♀). It is also possible to divide this step into two parts by rating labour intensity and then identifying gender specification.
3	20 minutes	The villagers identify inputs needed for every production step	An important consideration is that certain inputs like threshing machines or tractors need maintenance, repair and petrol. The issues should be written under the production cards.
4	5 minutes	The villagers agree on the production step that represents the main constraint and the action to be taken to overcome this difficulty	In assessing this information, the most pressing problem usually becomes obvious to the villagers. Based on this evaluation, you are now able to set up a training and coaching program. If problems occur beyond your influence, discuss solutions with the villagers and agree on an action plan. Make your contribution clear, namely to facilitate the coordination and cooperation with political authorities, researchers or other organisations.

Follow-up on the village meeting

Step	Time (estimated)	Activity	Comments and Suggestions
1	5 minutes	Summarise the results	Collect the results of the Constraints Analysis with the TNA KISS reporting sheet and the baseline data for the village. Make the data available for other extension staff and technical units.
2	1 hour	Use the identified constraints as the starting point for your training preparation	During the training preparation, spend most of your time on the constraints that were identified. Approach the target group along the identified gender specific orientation. For example, it does not make sense to train men on the marketing of chickens, which is considered to be a woman's task.
3	2 hours	Coordinate and cooperate with: (a) PAFES for technical inputs (b) Political authorities, researchers or other organisations	(a) Contact provincial Subject Matter Specialists to support you with technical input for the training. (b) If problems occur beyond your influence, it is your duty to look for solutions by coordinating and cooperating with political authorities, researchers or other organisations. (For example, if the water supply is identified as a constraint because the pump is under the supervision of a neighbouring village, two possibilities for finding a solution could be: arrange a meeting with district and provincial authorities or develop user arrangements with both villages.)

Notes on timeframe

You will need between 30 and 90 minutes for the complete analysis, depending on how long the farmers need to discuss the various issues. Gaining agreement on the production steps will often take time. The average time needed to complete a Constraints Analysis is about 1 hour.

There are no restrictions on the number of participants; but you should make sure there are an appropriate number of male and female contributors. As it is very important to identify gender specific differences during every production step, be sure that the time and date chosen for the process suits both women and men equally.

LEAP experience shows that the Constraints Analysis is best used in combination with the TNA KISS. We suggest that you allow time to complete both the TNA KISS and the Constraints Analysis on the same day.



Total Estimated Time

Preparation 10 minutes

Implementation 1 hour

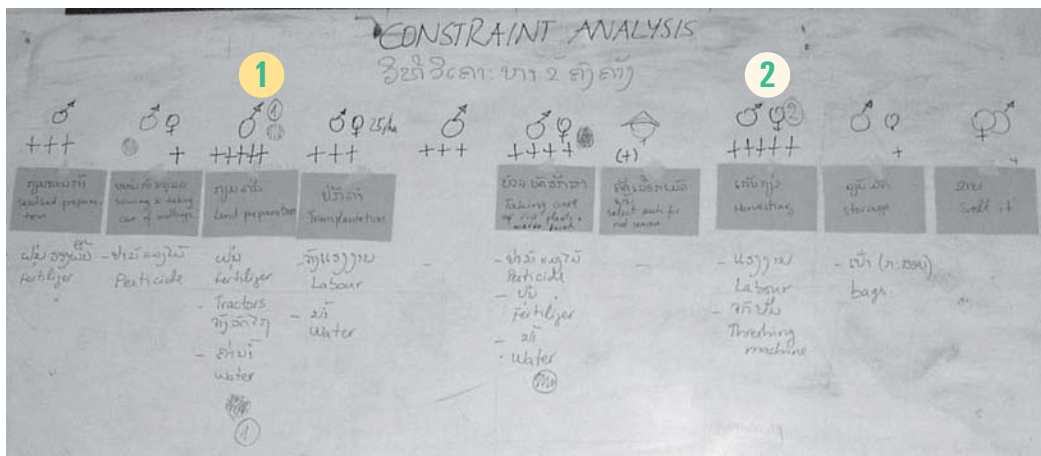
Follow-up 3 hours



Example





This example is based on wet rice production. It was conducted on March 21, 2003 with villagers of Ban Haddu in Kongsedone District. The main labour constraint identified by the farmers was “soil preparation”, with “harvesting” being the second priority. Following the lower line of information marked on the flipchart paper, and analysing the material input needed, the biggest constraint was supply of fertilizer and water in relation to the preparation of soil. Consequently the crucial issue for extensionists to concentrate on during the training and coaching input was land preparation. If this issue had not been addressed, the villagers would not have been interested in the input.

Production Process	Labour Intensity	Male	Female	Materials Needed
Seed bed preparation	+++	♂		Fertilizer
Sowing and taking care of seedlings	+	♂	♀	Pesticides, seeds
Land preparation	ranked 1 +++++	♂		Fertilizer, tractor, water
Transplantation	+++	♂	♀	Labour, water
Taking care of plants and water level	++++	♂	♀	Pesticides, fertilizer, water
Seed selection	+	♂	♀	None
Harvest	ranked 2 +++++	♂	♀	Labour, threshing machine
Storage	+	♂	♀	Bags
Selling	+	♂	♀	None



Formsheet

Framework for a Constraints Analysis (CA)

Step	Time (estimated)	Pictures	Activity
1	15 minutes		Together with the villagers, identify the various steps in one production process
2	20 minutes		The villagers identify and rank the labour intensity and gender specification of every step
3	20 minutes		The villagers identify input needed during every production step
4	5 minutes		The villagers agree on the production step that represents the most significant constraint and the action to be taken to overcome this difficulty.



Tool 4

SIFT

**Coaching and
Monitoring a
Learning Project**

SIFT - Coaching and Monitoring a Learning Project

Introduction to the tool

This tool is called SIFT, which stands for Success, Implementation, Failure and Training Needs, and is designed for coaching and monitoring a village learning project. It is based on objectives, expected results and skills to be learned, identified during a TNA KISS.

The SIFT tool will help you to provide essential and appropriate training to farmers, assist you in determining which lessons from previous training have been understood, and which activities should be continued and how. Remember that the SIFT will be repeated following each production step. To measure what the villagers have learned, whether they are able to apply the knowledge and what results have been achieved, you must ask, *“How do we know that the villagers are capable of applying the knowledge?”* and *“How can we measure practical results?”*

The SIFT can provide an answer. The SIFT can be further used for coaching and monitoring on district, provincial and central levels. The structure for these levels will remain the same, but the questions to be tackled and the content will differ.

Materials you will need

Flipchart
with about 3-5 sheets of paper

Tape
to stick paper on a wall or board

Marker pens
at least 2 colours

Completed TNA KISS report sheet
from the initial needs assessment

SIFT report forms
at least 2 copies



Steps for application

Preparation

Step	Time (estimated)	Activity	Comments and Suggestions
1	30 minutes	Review the outcome of the learning project	Review the TNA KISS report form. Look especially at the desired skills and results agreed among the production group members. Take a copy of the TNA KISS report form with you.
2	30 minutes	Send a letter informing the village group members of your visit and the reason for your visit	The letter should include the date, exact time, place, objective and number of participants. To obtain information on how to continue, point out the necessity for all group members to participate in the meeting. It might be an advantage if a village representative joins the meeting. Select the time carefully, being aware of peak working seasons (especially for women), because of intensive agriculture activities, festivals or other religious or traditional obligations.
3	30 minutes	Prepare for the village meeting	Prepare all necessary materials including the SIFT report forms, organise transport and prepare the required budget.



Reporting of a Training Needs Assessment (revised)
KISS (Keep it Short and Simple)

1. Village No./Th./SKM _____ Date Nov. 1, 2002 _____ Participants: 3 Total () (Women)

2. Objective of learning project (Date production) _____
(Date production will be able to self-manage according to season)

3. Definition of skills

Skills the villagers want to achieve	Indicators for assessing skills
Be able to produce enough, high quality and strong seedlings sufficient for the whole land	Seedlings have a high germination ability, which were planted with well selected, high quality seeds considered by the farmers
Be able to improve the way of transplanting rice	Transplants are 1-3 plants/hill, average tiller/plant is 10, spacing is 20 x 15 cm
Be able to improve the efficiency of chemical fertilizer	By end December 2002 the leaves are light green, panicles consist each of about 200 grains and the farmers consider the average grain size big

4. Definition or concrete results

Concrete results of skills	Indicators
Yield is increased	By February 2003 every participant increased the yield compared to the last year off-season rice yield (increase calculated according to individual plan)
Certified pure seeds are accessible	All participants have planted certified rice seeds on all their fields during the next planting season (January 2003)

5. 1-year-activities
First training (date, time, training place): 16.11.2002, 9:00 am, at Bhumakun temple
Follow up (date, time, meeting place): Twice a month, 01.12.02, 15.12.02, etc.

6. Participating Farmer Families (max. 10 farmers)

1. Mr. Huanthong	4. Mr. Khamtan	7. Mr. Sangkran	10. Mr. Duendou
2. Mr. Kilamhangsam	5. Mr. Kuantham	8. Mr. Thasitha	
3. Mr. Anouan	6. Mr. Pengphome	9. Mr. Pengthong	

7. Name of contact farmer (and deputy): _____ Mr. Homsouk (Deputy is Mr. Kilamhangsam)

8. Preparation to be done by farmers:

- Prepare training place: _____
- Prepare food: _____
- Bring a handful of rice seeds: _____

9. Preparation to be done by DAFES:

- Training plan: _____
- Training material, material for demonstration: _____
- Handbooks and leaflets for farmers: _____

10. Remarks
DAFES staff will send assisting training and/or support of FAO'S SMS in order to prepare and perform the training, according to the needs of the villagers

10 a Other learning projects

Second Priority (response to farmer production, Total interested farmers: 31 (10 Women)
Third Priority (training off-season vegetable, Total interested farmers: 15 (06 Women)

Implementation in the village

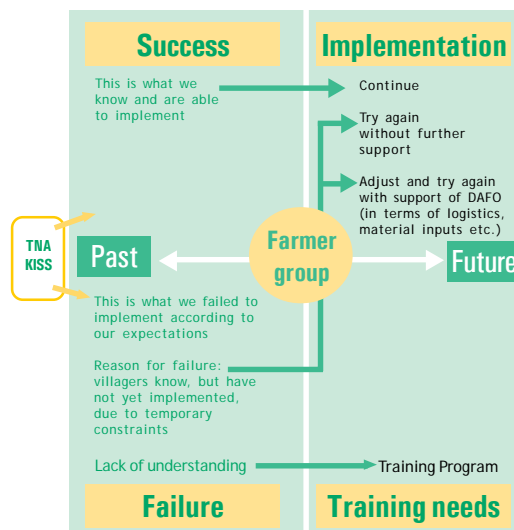
Step	Time (estimated)	Activity	Comments and Suggestions
1	5 minutes	Explain the reason for your visit	The coaching visit is a regular activity to follow up and improve the application of the knowledge gained during the learning process.
2	15 minutes	Explain what SIFT is and how to use it	Explain the meaning of the four quadrants and how they relate and interact.
3	10 minutes	Clarify skills and results agreed on during TNA KISS	Write the skills and concrete results to be achieved on the flipchart. Point out the indicators agreed on.
4	30 to 60 minutes	Discuss successes, failures, constraints and further training needs	Ask the villagers to report on achievements and constraints. Write their answers in the SIFT table on the whiteboard or flipchart paper. Use the top left quadrant for "success" and bottom left for "failures". Together with the group members, analyse why some things worked and some did not. Agree on how to proceed and continue to complete the table. Use the top right quadrant for "implementation" without any further input of the district and the bottom right for "training needs" mentioned.
5	15 minutes	Report on the findings (2 copies)	Fill in the SIFT Report and check again with the group. Decide on further steps to be implemented. Set up a schedule and agree on who will be responsible for each activity. Give one copy to the head of the group and use this sheet during the next visit.
6	10 minutes	Discuss with all participants the timeframe for your next coaching and monitoring visit	Based on the decisions made, agree with the group members on the date, time and content of your next coaching and training visit.

SIFT quadrant table

There is a relation and interaction among the four quadrants of the SIFT table. The left side shows the past while the right side shows future activities. By evaluating the successes and failures of the past, future activities and/or training can be identified and planned.

The specific definitions agreed on in the TNA KISS for skills and concrete results, including indicators, are the preconditions for proper monitoring and evaluation of each learning project.

Evaluation is the systematic and objective assessment of design, implementation and results of an ongoing or completed project, program or policy. The aim is to determine the relevance and fulfillment of development objectives, efficiency, effectiveness, impact and sustainability.



In this context it is necessary to be clear about the wording used. There is an obvious difference between training and coaching inputs and you should be aware of when you are giving training and when you are coaching. Training concentrates on **knowledge transfer** while coaching is mainly **transmitting skills**. There are clearly defined tasks and the following definition will help you to differentiate between them.

	What is a trainer doing?
T	Teaching and delivering lessons
R	Researching and developing
A	Aiming for the brain - academic
I	Intellectually applying intelligent and prudent methodologies
N	Networking (with other trainers)
E	Exchanging knowledge
R	Releasing new content

	What is a coach doing?
C	Controlling the application of knowledge
O	On the job support
A	Adjusting content to fit local knowledge
C	Coordinating with stakeholders involved in implementation
H	Helping skills to develop

Follow-up on the village meeting

Step	Time (estimated)	Activity	Comments and Suggestions
1	5 minutes	Summarise the results	<p>Collect all SIFT report forms and put them in a file with the Training Needs Assessment KISS and village baseline data.</p> <p>Make the information available to other extension staff.</p>
2	25 minutes	Prepare for upgrading training or other support based on the lack of understanding observed	Analyse what additional training or other support is needed and prepare a plan. Get the plan approved by your office.
3	Depends on input requested	Coordinate with other DAFO staff and PAFES for technical input	Contact Subject Matter Specialists at the provincial level to support you with technical input for the additional training.



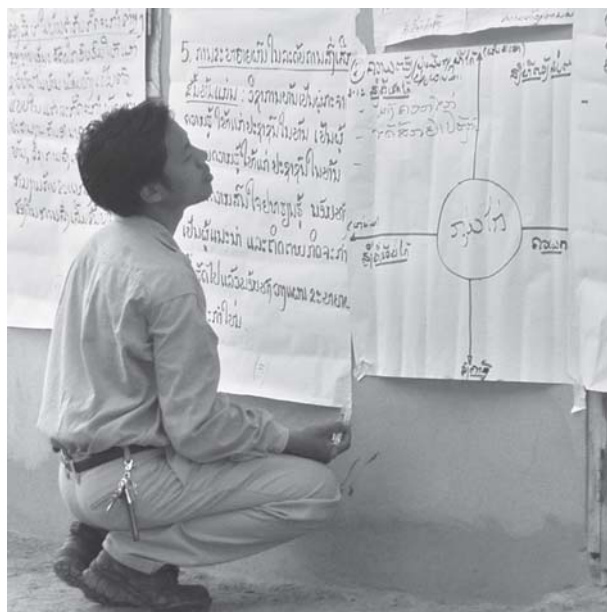
Notes on timeframe

Preparation (1.5 hours)

You will need about 1.5 hours to prepare for SIFT. Review the TNA KISS and Constraints Analysis reports and be aware of the skills and concrete results agreed during the TNA KISS.

Implementation (2 hours)

Depending on the size of the group, carrying out SIFT should take a maximum of 2 hours. Good preparation will save time and will facilitate straightforward proceedings.



Follow up (30 minutes)

The total time required for the follow up is very much related to the outcome of SIFT. If further training or exchange visits are needed, you will require additional time.



Total Estimated Time

Preparation	1.5 hours
Implementation	2 hours
Follow-up	30 minutes

Report form

The report form is easy to fill in. It helps you to follow up the activities and to identify the obstacles that require additional input from you. You will need the TNA KISS report forms and the SIFT table.

SIFT Report

Coaching and monitoring a learning project on village level

1. Place: 1

Village..... District..... Province.....
 Learning group..... Date..... No of participants..... Female.....

2. Skills the farmers wanted to achieve (identified during TNA KISS)

2

.....

3. Results:

Achievement	Favourable condition for achievement	What and how to continue	When	Person responsible
3	3a	3b	3c	3d

Failure	Reason for failure	Corrective action	Time	Person responsible
4	4a	4b	4c	4d

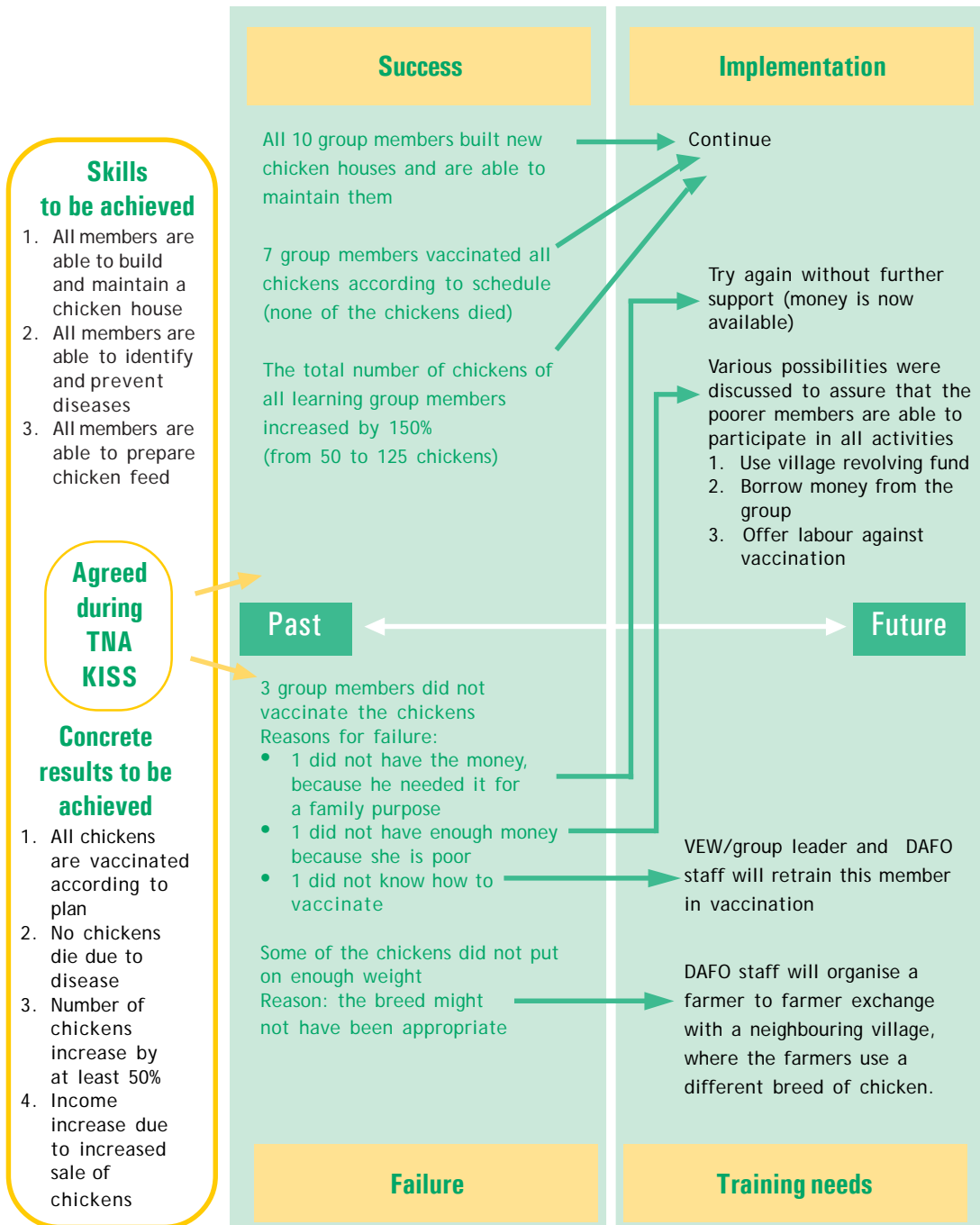
Certified by Village Authority 5 District Trainer Team Head of Production Group

Fill in the form as follows:

- 1 Insert village name, district and province, and name of learning group, date and participants
- 2 Write down the skills identified during TNA KISS and mentioned on the TNA KISS reporting sheet
- 3 Insert the achievements identified from the top left quadrant of the SIFT Table (e.g. the envisaged rice yield was achieved).
 - 3a Note special conditions (e.g. only because there was enough water).
 - 3b Mention what will be continued and how.
 - 3c Don't forget when it was achieved
 - 3d and person responsible.
- 4 Insert the failures identified in the bottom left quadrant of the SIFT Table.
 - 4a Write down the reason for the failure
 - 4b which leads you to the corrective action needed.
 - 4c Don't forget when the failure occurred
 - 4d and person responsible.
- 5 Because the future activities should be known and agreed by the village authorities, the production group and the district team, all three parties should sign the report.

Example

This example of a SIFT is from Ban Mokvaed, Nambak District, Luang Prabang Province and was conducted on May 16, 2003. Three DAFO extension generalists and one PAFES Subject Matter Specialists carried out this SIFT.



SIFT Report

Coaching and monitoring a learning project on village level

1. Place:

Village.....*Boa Melayang*.....District.....*Palembang district*.....Province.....*Lampung Provabang*.....
 Learning group.....*Chicken raising*.....Date.....*May, 16, 2003*.....No of participants.....*10*.....Female.....*3*

2. Skills the farmers wanted to achieve (identified during TNA KISS)

Skills

- Concrete results*
- All members are able to build and maintain a chicken house*
 - All members are able to identify and prevent diseases*
 - All members are able to prepare chicken feed*

3. Results:

Achievement	Favourable condition for achievement	What and how to continue	When	Person responsible
All members build new chicken houses	Labour and time was available	Maintain and clean regularly	daily	Every member
7 members vaccinate all chickens	Medicine was available at the district	Continue Newcastle and cold vaccinations according to schedule	June 03	Every member
Total number of chickens increased by 150 %	Money to buy small chickens was available	Learn how to build a breeding machine	Start of 2004	Every member, DAFO

Failure	Reason for failure	Corrective action	Time	Person responsible
5 members did not vaccinate	No money, because needed for a family purpose	Continue, in future money no problem	According to plan, June 03	Respective person
Chickens do not put on much weight	No money, because poor Did not understand the technique Feed or breed	Support through village revolving fund or neighbours Train again Organise study tour to examine other breeds Check the feed (maybe repeat introduction to proper feeding)	According to plan, June 03 Now 5 June 03 July 03 now	Respective person, village representatives, neighbours Group leader, DAFO DAFO, group leader DAFO

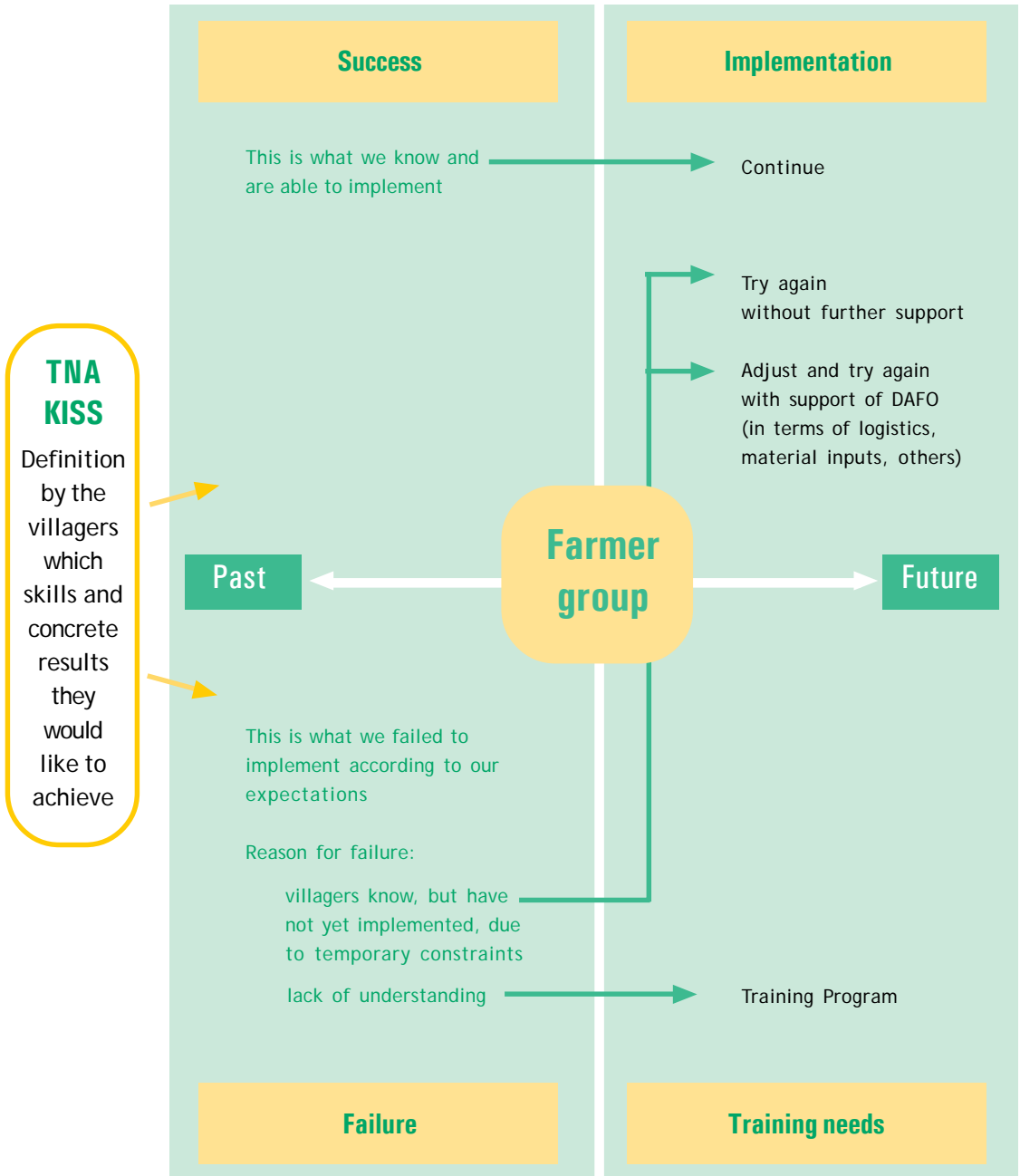
Certified by
Village Authority

District Trainer Team

Head of Production Group

Formsheets

SIFT Format for coaching and monitoring a village learning project



Report form

SIFT Report

Coaching and monitoring a learning project on village level

1. Place:
 Village.....District.....Province.....
 Learning group.....Date.....No of participants.....Female.....
2. Skills the farmers wanted to achieve (identified during TNA KISS)

3. Results:

Achievement	Favourable condition for achievement	What and how to continue	When	Person responsible
Failure	Reason for failure	Corrective action	Time	Person responsible

Certified by
 Village Authority
 District Trainer Team
 Head of Production Group



Tool 5

FEF

Farmers Exchange with Farmers

FEF - Farmers Exchange with Farmers

Introduction to the tool

Farmers Exchange with Farmers (FEF) allows all interested villagers to learn from the experiences of advanced farmers. Be clear that the farmer exchange is not training, where you teach, but rather you facilitate an exchange of information among farmers. Explain that the production group members give details how they applied a new technique and what profits they earned from a learning project. However, a farmer exchange requires preparation and structure to ensure the participants obtain useful information on technical issues.

Remember that the learning project is based on the most important needs identified in the TNA KISS and there should be a maximum of 10 individuals per production group. So not all villagers who show an interest in joining the learning project can participate. Farmer exchange is conducted to ensure that all the remaining interested villagers will have the chance to learn about the improvements from the project. This is a promise stated in the TNA KISS. At the end of the exchange, the villagers can then decide if they want to use the information and how.

Thus the purpose of FEF can be summarised as being a meeting where (1) all interested villagers are informed about the activities of the learning project and (2) can hear about the experiences of the production group members so that (3) they can develop strategies for using or improving what has been learned.

As participants will be split into small groups, it is better to carry out this FEF with two or three extension staff. One of the staff can be the facilitator of each group. If this is not possible, select a villager as a volunteer to support your work. It is necessary to discuss this duty with volunteers prior to the FEF.

Materials you will need

Flipchart
with about 5-6 sheets of paper

Whiteboard
if available

Tape
to stick paper on a wall or board

Marker pens
at least 3 colours
(one for each working group)

FEF form sheet
2 copies

Notebook
to write down your observations

Cards
to present the steps for
implementation



Steps for application

Preparation

Step	Time (estimated)	Activity	Comments and Suggestions
1	2 hours	Prepare the exchange with representatives of the production group in the village	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Explain the objectives of the exchange to the village authorities and group representatives. Be sure to agree on a date and time. 2. Work with the VEW and group leaders on how they present important issues of the learning project. Make sure they understand that benefits are to be stated clearly. 3. Together select three families who will host a visit of their production areas. Visit these farmers and make sure their success is visible. The families should be able to explain the progress they have made and raise interest in the new technology.
2	1 hour	Prepare and organise the materials you will need for the meeting	Prepare flipcharts (agenda, group formation, checklist for reporters) and make sure you have any other necessary materials. Organise transport and prepare a budget.
3	30 minutes	Write a letter to the village authorities to confirm the exchange	The letter should confirm the date, time, place, participants and objective of the visit (as agreed with the learning group). Make it clear that all interested villagers of the village should attend the meeting. Be sure to point out the importance of an equal representation of men and women.

Implementation in the village

Step	Time (estimated)	Activity	Comments and Suggestions
1	15 minutes	Explain the objective and expected output of the farmer exchange	<p>An important element of your introduction will be to review the Village Extension System and where FEF fits in the process. Remember, during FEF, all villagers who were not part of the production group (learning project) now participate.</p> <p>Think about using small cards with details showing implementation steps to date and what the possibilities are in the future.</p>
2	5 minutes	Explain the activity plan for the day	A flipchart can be used to write the day's agenda. Be sure to ask the villagers if they understand each step and if the activity plan is acceptable to them.
3	15 minutes	<p>VEW or group leader review the five important elements of the learning project</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of participants 2. Objective of the activity 3. Learning process 4. Achievements 5. Introduce families that produced well and will be visited 	<p>Ask the VEW or group leader to present important elements of the learning project along with these five criteria.</p> <p>Here the importance of preparation becomes obvious as you discussed the five points with the VEW prior to the meeting. The introduction of the families to be visited is important. These farmers should be able to explain the progress they have made and raise interest in the new production methods.</p>

Implementation in the village (continued)

Step	Time (estimated)	Activity	Comments and Suggestions
4	20 minutes	<p>Prepare for the discussion by</p> <p>a) forming groups</p> <p>b) nominating a villager as reporter</p> <p>c) distributing the list of questions to the reporters</p>	<p>a) Form all production group members around the three selected model farmers and write their name on the flipchart. Then add names of villagers who would like to visit that family (not more than 10 per group). You should form three gender sensitive groups. One will be all female, one will be all male, and one will be mixed.</p> <p>b) Every group selects one person for reporting the discussion. Underline his or her name with a different colour.</p> <p>c) Explain the following reporter's checklist to the plenary:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What issues or innovations are of interest to you? 2. What do you think has changed (e.g. inputs, benefits) on the farm you visited? 3. Which conditions are indispensable? 4. Have you any suggestions for modification? 5. Who is interested in learning more or joining the group?
5	90 minutes	Facilitate group discussion at the selected family's production area	<p>You and your DAFO colleagues facilitate the group discussion, each in one group.</p> <p>The reporter writes down the answers to the questions (see step 4 above).</p>

Implementation in the village (continued)

Step	Time (estimated)	Activity	Comments and Suggestions
6	10 minutes	Groups prepare for the plenary presentation	Writing the results on a flipchart will help organise the presentation.
7	30 minutes	Each group presents what has been learned	Facilitate the presentation of the group results. Add missing information to the flipchart and be sure to clarify points that are vague.
8	30 minutes	Summarise the most important issues raised during the presentations	Be sure the summary includes a record of: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. What issues were of greatest interest? 2. What methods could be improved and how? 3. What new needs were identified? 4. What ideas for reducing the input costs were suggested? 5. What ideas for increasing the benefits were suggested?
9	10 minutes	Discuss how the groups will continue	Write the names of interested people on the flipchart and be sure to include the gender ratio. If new issues or training needs were identified, these should also be written down.
10	5 minutes	Agree on the next meeting which marks the official recognition of the VES	You will explain that in the next meeting, the learning project will be evaluated and everyone will have a chance to talk about how the production groups can continue. It is very important that the next meeting includes the village representatives, the VEW and all group members. This meeting will be the formal designation of the VEW and the official recognition of the VES.

Additional remarks

Why group according to gender?

As is made clear in the above table, a major activity of the FEF is small group discussion, because small groups offer everyone the chance to participate actively. An important consideration in forming groups is their gender make up. This is important because women and men talk differently when they are in gender specific groups. By having gender specific groups, you will learn if they have differing opinions on any aspect of the process.

How do you form the groups?

You should be familiar with every group member and his or her production ability. During your preparation visit, you will determine with the group on the members to be visited and arrange the remaining group members around those selected. During the FEF exchange you present this pre-selection of the group members to the plenary and start a gender specific formation of interested participants (see Step 4 above).

- Ask female participants in the plenary to join the women's group
- Ask male participants in the plenary to join the men's group
- Facilitate the allocation of the remaining male and female participants to the mixed group
- Ask the groups to nominate their reporter

	Group 1: Women	Group 2: Men	Group 3: Mixed
Production Group members	♀ ♀ ♀	♂ ♂ ♂	♀ ♂ ♀ ♂
Interested villagers	♀ ♀ ♀ ♀ + Reporter	♂ ♂ ♂ ♂ ♂ ♂ ♂ + Reporter	♂ ♂ ♂ ♀ ♀ ♀ + Reporter
Extension generalist	♀	♂	♀ or ♂



Who should be in the discussion group?

A discussion group should consist of the production group members and a maximum of 10 interested people. If you can keep the number of interested people to 5 to 6, the participation level will be higher. Nevertheless the size of a group depends on the total number of participants and the number of available facilitators.



What is to be discussed?

The discussion is open to every issue of interest, but our experience shows that a simple agenda is helpful in keeping the discussions focused and making sure you capture useful analysis. Remember, the agenda is there to make sure important issues are not overlooked, but the pace of the discussion is determined by the participants (see Steps 6, 7 and 8 in the above table). At the end of the meeting, everyone should understand

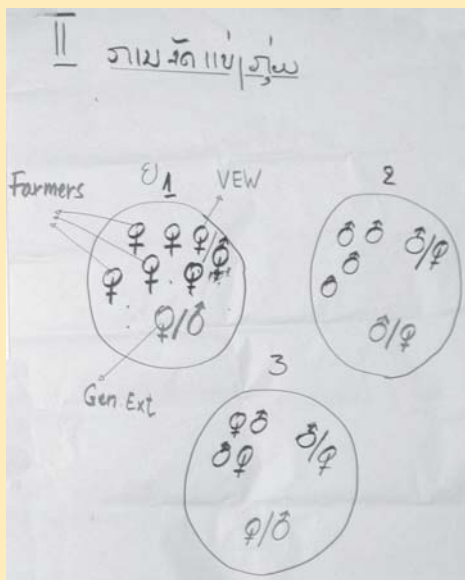
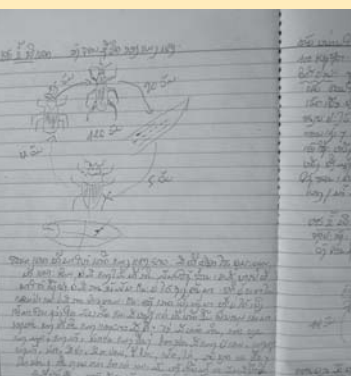
(1) the production process, (2) the costs and benefits, (3) what they want to copy from what they have seen and (4) what modifications they want to make.

Be sure to draw attention to the similarities and differences that are mentioned by each group.



Follow-up on the village meeting

Step	Time (estimated)	Activity	Comments and Suggestions
1	5 minutes	Summarise the results	Collect the result sheets along with the adjusted baseline data of the village and make the data available to other extension staff.
2	25 minutes	Prepare for EVES	Prepare a schedule for the learning project evaluation. Get the plan approved by DAFO.
3	30 minutes	Contact district authorities and ask them to attend the EVES meeting	Invite DAFO, PAFES and district authorities to join the evaluation. Be sure they understand that EVES is a special event that marks the end of the first learning cycle.



Notes on timeframe

Preparation (3.5 hours)

You will need about 3.5 hours to prepare the farmer exchange. Most important is the preparation in the village, about 2 hours. It is crucial that the selection of farmers to be visited is done carefully to make sure they are able to give explanations and raise interest in the technology. If there is more than one production group in the village, concentrate on one group per one day. A joint FEF on different technical subjects at the same time is too confusing. It also means that villagers who are interested in all the topics can only attend (and learn) from one group.

Implementation (4 hours)

Conducting a FEF will take about half a day. You need less than one hour (in the meeting room or meeting area) to explain the objectives and divide into discussion groups before going to the production area visits. These visits are the main component of the FEF and experience suggests this takes about 90 minutes. Remember, if the production areas are far away from the meeting room, you may need additional time to reach them. Establish a fixed start time for the joint summary meeting (after the production area visits) to ensure that all groups come back at the same time. The summary and analysis should take a little more than one hour. Remember, this schedule represents an average of the experiences in 96 pilot villages and can be adjusted to fit the specific village conditions.

Follow up (1 hour)

The follow up is in preparation for the EVES meeting that determines if the village will have an ongoing Village Extension System.



Total Estimated Time

Preparation	3.5 hours
Implementation	4 hours
Follow-up	1 hour

Report form

The FEF report form is easy to fill in. It helps you to summarise the results of the exchange and the requirements of the villagers. The form is the basis for preparing for the EVES meeting that will determine if the village will have an ongoing Village Extension System.

FEF Report

1. Village _____ District _____ Date _____

2. Objective of learning project _____
 Name of group members visited:
 Group 1 _____
 Group 2 _____
 Group 3 _____

3. Participants:
 Learning group members _____ Total (___ Women)
 Interested villagers _____ Total (___ Women)

4. Results:

4a. Ideas on how to reduce the costs, inputs or labor

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

4b. Ideas on how to increase the benefits

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

4c. Ideas on what could be improved and how

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

4d. Names of people who want to apply the proved method

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. _____
8. _____
9. _____
10. _____

5. Time-schedule
 Next group meeting (date, time, place): _____
 EVES meeting (date, time, place): _____

6. Remarks _____

- 1 Fill in the village name, district and date of meeting
- 2 Write down the name of the learning project and the group members visited
- 3 Insert number of participants. Separate the number of group members and interested villagers. Compare with number collected during the TNA KISS.
- 4a Summarise the main ideas on how the group could reduce the costs, input or labour
- 4b Summarise the ideas on how to increase the benefits
- 4c Insert all different views on improving production and how
- 4d Note all names of interested villagers who would like to improve their knowledge and skills in the topic. Note if they want to join the existing group or set up their own one.
- 5 Agree on the next group meeting with old and new group members. Agree on a schedule for EVES with village representatives and the VEWS.
- 6 Mention here any special observations or reminders






Example

This example is from Hadkham village, Pak Ou District, Luang Prabang province and was conducted on October 11, 2003. Two DAFO extension generalists carried out this FEF. One PAFES Subject Matter Specialist and three NAFES Master Trainers coached the event.





FEF Report	
1. Village	<u>Hadkham</u> District <u>Pak Ou</u> Date <u>October 11, 2003</u>
2. Objective of learning project	<u>Improve chicken raising</u>
Name of group members visited:	
Group 1	<u>Mr. Inkham (men's group)</u>
Group 2	<u>Mrs. Khamphan (women's group)</u>
Group 3	<u>Mr. Unhuean (mixed group)</u>
3. Participants:	
Learning group members	<u>10</u> Total (<u>3</u> Women)
Interested villagers	<u>22</u> Total (<u>9</u> Women)
4. Results:	
4a. Ideas on how to reduce the costs, inputs or labor	
•	<u>Raise termites for feed</u>
•	<u>Raise the chickens on the rice fields</u>
•	<u>Buy feed jointly to reduce transport costs</u>
•	<u>Plant own feed and mix feed themselves to reduce costs</u>
4b. Ideas on how to increase the benefits	
•	<u>Collect chicken manure for vegetable growing</u>
•	<u> </u>
•	<u> </u>
•	<u> </u>
4c. Ideas on what could be improved and how	
•	<u>Stay together as a group and continuously exchange experiences</u>
•	<u>Use an egg incubator (training on construction of an incubator needed)</u>
•	<u> </u>
•	<u> </u>
4d. Names of people who want to apply the proved method	
1.	<u>Ms. Noy</u>
2.	<u>Ms. Souk</u>
3.	<u>Ms. Keo</u>
4.	<u>Ms. Ounkham</u>
5.	<u>Mr. Sengkeo</u>
6.	<u>Mr. Ngeun</u>
7.	<u>Mr. Maikuea</u>
8.	<u>Mr. Thongdi</u>
5. Time-schedule	
Next group meeting (date, time, place):	<u>October 30, 2003 (to be confirmed during the EVES meeting)</u>
EVES meeting (date, time, place):	<u>October 13, 2003</u>
6. Remarks	
	<u>DAFO to organise training for construction and use of egg incubator (look for material and technical support at PAFES or NAFES)</u>
	<u> </u>
	<u> </u>

Formsheets

Framework for Farmers Exchange with Farmers (FEF)

Step	Time (estimated)	Pictures	Activity
1	15 minutes		Explain the objective and expected output of the farmer exchange
2	5 minutes		Explain the activity plan for the day
3	15 minutes		VEW or group leader review the five important elements of the learning project <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Number of participants 2. Objective of the activity 3. Learning process 4. Achievements 5. Introduce families who produced well and will be visited
4	20 minutes		Prepare for the discussion by <ol style="list-style-type: none"> a) forming groups, b) nominating a villager as reporter c) distributing the list of questions to the reporters
5	90 minutes		Facilitate group discussion at the selected family's production area

Framework for Farmers Exchange with Farmers (FEF) cont.

Step	Time (estimated)	Pictures	Activity
6	10 minutes		Groups prepare for the plenary presentation
7	30 minutes		Each group presents what has been learned
8	30 minutes		Summarise the most important issues raised during the presentations
9	10 minutes		Discuss how the groups will continue
10	5 minutes		Agree on the next meeting which marks the official recognition of the VES

Report form

FEF Report

1. Village _____ District _____ Date _____

2. Objective of learning project _____

Name of group members visited:

Group 1 _____

Group 2 _____

Group 3 _____

3. Participants:

Learning group members _____ Total (___ Women)

Interested villagers _____ Total (___ Women)

4. Results:

4a. Ideas on how to reduce the costs, inputs or labor

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

4b. Ideas on how to increase the benefits

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

4c. Ideas on what could be improved and how

- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

4d. Names of people who want to apply the proved method

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.

5. Time-schedule

Next group meeting (date, time, place): _____

EVES meeting (date, time, place): _____

6. Remarks



Tool 6

EVES

**Expansion of the
Village Extension
System**

EVES - Expansion of the Village Extension System

Introduction to the tool

EVES - Expansion of the Village Extension System - will help you to facilitate a meeting with the village authorities, the Village Extension Workers and interested farmers.

Your extension activities - at all levels of the public sector from MAF down to districts - are a support system for village efforts to implement their own development. For the Expansion of the Village Extension System, it is crucial that you internalise the principles of the VES and how it interacts with the government extension system. Because this is so important, the mechanisms of the Village Extension System are repeated here from [Tool 1: Introduction to the Village Extension System](#). They are explained again in detail, as you will have to refer to them during the EVES meeting.

What is the VES?

The VES is a village based development approach that includes all local efforts to ensure food security and economic progress for the villagers.

The diversity in Lao PDR's agro-ecological conditions (e.g. ethnic and cultural aspects, available infrastructure for marketing and market access, trade connections), has been recognized at a high policy level. Development efforts by government agencies should be based on real local conditions and potential. It is therefore obvious that concrete development efforts must be informed by, and based on, the ideas and inputs of the local people who understand best the special aspects of their own situation. This development structure and the related procedures are called the VES.



The concept of the VES can be applied all over the country, and the supportive roles and responsibilities of DAFO and PAFES should be the same everywhere. But of course, the technical aspects need to be adapted to the different localities and requirements.

What are the main principles of the VES?

The main principles of the VES, applied everywhere, are:

The village authorities in Lao PDR include several persons such as village head and deputies, representatives from the elders, the Lao Women's Union (LWU) and Lao Youth Union (LYU). It is the responsibility of the **village authorities to organise and supervise the operation** of the extension system in their village.

The village authorities will mandate an experienced farmer chosen by the villagers to be the **Village Extension Worker (VEW)**. The main task of the VEW is to ensure that **innovations spread** throughout the village among all interested households. It is possible that villages may have several VEWs, one for crops, another for livestock, and so on, depending on the interests and requirements of the households in the village. The VEWs are accountable to the village and the village authorities, not to DAFO.

In most cases the VEWs cooperate with groups of interested farmers on particular topics. These "**production groups**" **learn and exchange new techniques** for agricultural production. There may also be groups that explore and develop storage and processing techniques or marketing channels for their products. The development of production groups is supported by DAFO in a process of identifying needs, training as well as coaching and exchange activities.

The **extension generalist** will interact mainly with the VEWs. Once a **new technique** has been successfully introduced in a village, it is no longer the responsibility of the DAFO staff to spread the technology further throughout the village. This is taken care of by the VEWs.

All the **resources for the VES are organised and managed by the village**. This means that VEWs are not paid out of the DAFO budget. How the VEWs should be compensated for their services to the farmers is up to each village to decide. This may be in cash, in kind or in labour; there is no blueprint for the compensation procedures. We expect that the village development funds will have an important role to play in this context.

How does the Village Extension System interact with the government extension system?

Prime Minister's Decree 01 on the socio-economic development of the country forms the basis of MAF's policy guidelines for work in the agricultural, livestock and forestry sectors. It is understood that all public levels from MAF down to DAFO are part of a support system for the village's development (private level). The main restructuring so far has been that at the provincial level there will only be strategic support units, whereas the planning and financial aspects of implementing publicly funded development efforts will be located at the district level. The actual work however, must be organized at village level and rely on the villagers' responsibility.

This of course means that at the district level we need capable and competent extension generalists, who know how to support villages in their efforts. Since each village will have different requirements and ideas for developing its agriculture, livestock and forestry, these extensionists will need a wide range of appropriate methodological and technical skills. If there are questions that the generalists cannot answer, they can ask Subject Matter Specialists based in the provincial centers or research stations for assistance in providing the services requested by the villages.

Expected output

During the EVES meeting, the village authorities will decide if they want to run a comprehensive Village Extension System. They assign the Village Extension Worker to officially spread the achievements of the first learning project throughout the village. This is the Expansion of the first activities of the Village Extension System, hence EVES. The Village Extension Worker is also mandated to organise new learning projects on new topics with technical support from district staff.

In order to run the Village Extension System, you need to ensure there has been
(1) an evaluation of the learning project,
(2) villagers understand the Village Extension System
and (3) there are activities planned for the next season.



The evaluation looks at the successes of the learning project and these are compared against the indicators agreed on during the TNA KISS. You will have conducted a final SIFT and this will help you determine the costs, benefits and profitability. You will have identified the training the VEW will provide to new members and new training topics which require the support of the district.

When you are reviewing the principle of the Village Extension System, be sure to discuss how the Village Extension Worker will get started on his or her activities and how he or she will share what was learned during the learning project.

As explained above, the EVES meeting is crucial for all further extension activities in the village. We suggest inviting a district representative to emphasise the importance of the meeting and to confirm the decision to launch an ongoing Village Extension System.

Materials you will need

Flipchart
with about 8-10 sheets of paper

Whiteboard
if available

Tape
to stick paper on a wall or board

Marker pens
2-3 colours

Last SIFT evaluation
from your files

FEF report forms
from your files

EVES report forms
2 sheets, one for the village and one for you



Steps for application

Preparation

Step	Time (estimated)	Activity	Comments and Suggestions
1	3 hours	Prepare the content of the village meeting	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Summarise the FEF report forms. 2. Compare achievements and outcomes collected with the SIFT tool against the TNA KISS indicators. 3. Prepare a presentation on VES which should include information on the sustainability of VES, stakeholder roles and responsibilities and compensating the VEW. <p>Create visual aids which will simplify the discussion during the meeting.</p>
2	30 minutes	Organise the meeting logistics	Prepare all necessary materials, organise transport and arrange the budget.
3	30 minutes	Confirm the date of the meeting	This date should have been set during the FEF, but it will be necessary to confirm it.

Implementation in the village

Step	Time (estimated)	Activity	Comments and Suggestions
1	5 minutes	Explain the reason for your visit	Talk about the expected outputs of this meeting. Remember, village authorities should make decisions on future extension activities, decide on action plans and appoint those responsible.
2	30 minutes	Explain the expansion of the Village Extension System and stakeholders' roles and tasks	Be sure to point out that VES is a sustainable system which relies on: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The support of the village authorities 2. The VEW, who organises and conducts training for new members 3. DAFO staff, who train and support the VEW in new techniques as well as with administrative and organizational issues 4. Financing, which is organised by the village (however the extension generalist will offer suggestions)
3	45 minutes	Explain the FEF output and compare achievements with the expected results	Your explanation should include: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. A summary of the exchange 2. A comparison of the achievements with the TNA KISS indicators and outcomes identified with SIFT 3. A costs and benefits comparison of the learning project
4	70 minutes	Ask the VEW, the village authorities and the district authorities to comment on the Village Extension System and to give ideas for expansion	The discussion should identify VES advantages and disadvantages as well as any strong and weak points. Your role is to facilitate discussion. Make sure all participants contribute to the dialogue.
5	30 minutes	Facilitate the identification of future activities and an agreement on responsibilities	All participants of the meeting define and plan activities for new learning projects. Be sure to agree on who will do what and how. At this point, village representatives should officially hand over responsibility to the VEW.

Additional remarks

During your facilitation, there are a number of key points that you may want the group to discuss, and in some cases, reach agreement upon. The key points are:

The evaluation of the learning project should be based on the experiences of the group and the outcome of the farmer exchange. The benefit of the learning project to the villagers' socio-economic development is an important point to be brought out of the discussion.

Be sure participants understand the extension system in Lao PDR, especially the Village Extension System approach. The roles and responsibilities of the VEW, group members, village head and district generalists should be clear.

Be sure village authorities discuss the future extension system in the village. Participants should reach agreement on what activities will be continued and how future activities of the VEW can be launched. Furthermore, discuss what kind of support is required from the district.

In cases where several learning projects have operated in a village, evaluation of activities should take all learning projects into consideration. Consequently farmer exchanges in all subjects should take place before this EVES meeting. However, it is recommended that you initiate only one production group in one village during any one season.

Special attention should be paid to women's participation. Experience shows that women's involvement in meetings is lower than men's. While in Lao Loum and Lao Theung societies women's participation during EVES is about 30 to 40 percent, among most Lao Sung groups only men attend the meeting. This means you need to raise this issue during the preparation of the meeting. Discuss the point with the village authorities and talk to women to motivate them directly. Select a suitable timeframe which allows the woman to participate. Always remember that because the VES is based on the interaction between men and women, women's involvement is essential. Without this, a sustainable extension system at village level will not be fully successful.

Another important point in the meeting preparation is the supporting material. You should create simple visual aids (e.g. on flipchart paper) on your visit objectives, a VES diagram, role and duties of a VEW, TNA KISS summary, last SIFT outcomes and FEF output. These help you give a straightforward presentation. But remember, your role is to summarise the background information. After your initial presentation the participants should take ownership of the discussion.

Follow-up on the village meeting

Step	Time (estimated)	Activity	Comments and Suggestions
1	30 minutes	List the ongoing and new activities and inform district and provincial representatives	List all learning projects and include the number of participants, their responsibilities and activities. Be sure to include the name of the appointed VEW and the action plan. Provide this information to DAFO and PAFES staff and the district authorities.
2	90 minutes	Arrange for activities which need DAFO support	The support requested might include training, study tours or technical information. Prepare those activities and get the plan approved by your office.
3	1 hour	Coordinate with DAFO and PAFES staff for technical input	Contact provincial Subject Matter Specialists and arrange for technical input, literature, leaflets, posters, etc.
4	Continuing	Cooperate with the VEW	Support the VEW in his/her implementation and be available to help with problems



Notes on timeframe

Preparation (4 Hours)

EVES preparation in your office will take about half a day. The presentation of the learning project outputs and the introduction to the Village Extension System will be easy if you follow the visual aids you create in advance. Take your time to prepare the material properly.

You should confirm the date agreed on during the FEF with the village authorities.

Be aware of peak seasons in agricultural production or commitments to traditional customs and avoid those dates. Be sure to select a date that is appropriate for female villagers. Remember, to operate a sustainable Village Extension System, it is important to reflect on the potential of both male and female members of the community.

Implementation (3 hours)

Implementation will take about 3 hours. Try to start early, as this will leave you time in case some topics are discussed in more detail and run long. Most important is the discussion of the village stakeholders on advantages and disadvantages of the VES (70 minutes), leading to a plan how to take over a VES in the future (30 minutes). During this step you facilitate and take notes.





Follow up (3 hours)

Follow up of the meeting is very much related to the support requested by the villagers. A qualified and capable VEW may not need much training or input from DAFO. However, you should stay informed about the progress of the production group and support the VEW in his or her implementation when needed.



Total Estimated Time

Preparation	4 hours
Implementation	3 hours
Follow-up	3 hours

Report form

The report form is easy to fill in. It helps you to summarise the data concerning existing and new learning groups in the village. This report will also help the village authorities coach and follow up the activities. It also records the support needed from your district extension service.

- 1 Write village name, district and date of meeting
- 2 Record number of participants
- 3 Indicate all learning projects: existing and newly established
 - 3a First learning project
 - Agree on clear group objectives
 - Number of group members (motivate women to participate)
 - Write the name of identified VEW
 - Write the name of the group leader
 - Indicate when the group was established and started working and learning together
 - Identify the next activities planned. Don't forget the date and person responsible.
 - Be clear what support is needed from the district extension service in terms of training, information, material, facilitation, etc.
 - 3b For other learning projects follow the same reporting schedule outlined above.
 - 3c

EVES Report				
1. Village	1	District		Date
2. Participants	2	Total	(Women)
3. Further Learning Projects (existing and newly set up)	3			
3a		Objective of learning project	_____	
		Number of Group Members:	_____Total (_____ Women)	
		Name of Village Extension Worker	_____	
		Name of group leader	_____	
		Start of project (month/year)	_____	
		Related actions planned, including date and person responsible	_____	
		Support needed from DAFO	_____	

3b		Objective of learning project	_____	
		Number of Group Members:	_____Total (_____ Women)	
		Name of Village Extension Worker	_____	
		Name of group leader	_____	
		Start of project (month/year)	_____	
		Related actions planned, including date and person responsible	_____	
		Support needed from DAFO	_____	

3c		Objective of learning project	_____	
		Number of Group Members:	_____Total (_____ Women)	
		Name of Village Extension Worker	_____	
		Name of group leader	_____	
		Start of project (month/year)	_____	
		Related actions planned, including date and person responsible	_____	
		Support needed from DAFO	_____	

<u>Signatures</u>				
VEW 1	VEW 2	VEW 3	Village Leader	DAFO Staff
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Those involved should sign the agreement and give one copy to the village leader to be kept in the village.






Example

This example is from Ban Lak 8 in Phonethong District, Champasak Province. The EVES took place on October 30, 2003 and involved village representatives, the VEW, district authorities and members of the chicken group. Three DAFO extension generalists with the support of one PAFES Subject Matter Specialist performed the EVES. The chicken group will have three new members and the activities will be led by the VEW. A new group was set up to improve pig production. Village authorities support the identified activities.

EVES Report				
1. Village	<u>Ban Lak Baed (Lak 8)</u>	District	<u>Phonethong (CPS)</u>	Date <u>Oct 30, 2003</u>
2. Participants	<u>19</u>	Total (<u>8</u> Women)		
3. Further Learning Projects (existing and newly set up)				
3a. Objective of learning project	<u>Improve chicken production</u>			
Number of Group Members:	<u>5 (+3 new members)</u>	Total (<u>0 + 3 new</u> Women)		
Name of Village Extension Worker	<u>Mr. Ae</u>			
Name of group leader	<u>Mr. Boam</u>			
Start of project (month/year)	<u>February 2003</u>			
Related actions planned, including date and person responsible	<u>1. VEW to train new members in vaccination, Nov 03</u>			
	<u>2. Construction of an egg incubator, Jan or Feb 04</u>			
	<u>3. Economic analysis of chicken production, mid 04</u>			
Support needed from DAFO	<u>For 2. Provide information & training on building a simple egg incubator</u>			
	<u>For 3: Provide tool to conduct economic analysis</u>			
3b. Objective of learning project	<u>Improve pig raising</u>			
Number of Group Members:	<u>10</u>	Total (<u>5</u> Women)		
Name of Village Extension Worker	<u>NN</u>			
Name of group leader	<u>NN</u>			
Start of project (month/year)	<u>November 2003</u>			
Related actions planned, including date and person responsible	<u>Training in basic pig production, February 2004</u>			
Support needed from DAFO	<u>1. Conduct a constraints analysis for pig production</u>			
	<u>2. Conduct training in pig production and provide info material on improved pig production</u>			
Signatures				
VEW 1	VEW 2	VEW 3	Village Leader	DAFO Staff
_____	_____	_____	_____	_____

Formsheets

Framework for Expansion of the Village Extension System (EVES)

Step	Estimated Time	Pictures	Activity
1	5 minutes		Explain the reason for your visit and expected outputs
2	30 minutes		Explain the expansion of the Village Extension System and stakeholder roles and tasks
3	30 minutes		Explain the output of the FEF exchange and compare achievements with the expected results
4	60 minutes		Ask the VEW, the village authorities and the district authorities to comment on the Village Extension System and give ideas for expansion
5	30 minutes		Facilitate the identification of future activities and an agreement on responsibilities

Report form

EVES Report

1. Village _____ District _____ Date _____

2. Participants _____ Total (_____ Women)

3. Further Learning Projects (existing and newly set up)

3a. Objective of learning project _____

Number of Group Members: _____ Total (_____ Women)

Name of Village Extension Worker _____

Name of group leader _____

Start of project (month/year) _____

Related actions planned, including date
and person responsible _____

Support needed from DAFO _____

3b. Objective of learning project _____

Number of Group Members: _____ Total (_____ Women)

Name of Village Extension Worker _____

Name of group leader _____

Start of project (month/year) _____

Related actions planned, including date
and person responsible _____

Support needed from DAFO _____

3c. Objective of learning project _____

Number of Group Members: _____ Total (_____ Women)

Name of Village Extension Worker _____

Name of group leader _____

Start of project (month/year) _____

Related actions planned, including date
and person responsible _____

Support needed from DAFO _____

Signatures

VIEW 1

VIEW 2

VIEW 3

Village Leader

DAFO Staff



Support Material

No.	Extension Methodology Materials	Developed
First Training Manuals		
1	Module 1: System and training process in agriculture extension	June 2003
2	Module 2: Training Needs Assessment	October 2002
3	Module 3: Communication techniques	June 2002
4	Module 4: How to work with farmers	June 2002
5	Module 5: Fieldwork in extension	December 2003
Second Training Manuals		
6	Module 6: Efficient farmer training and extension	June 2002
7	Module 7: Participatory training techniques	June 2002
8	Module 8: Participatory training	June 2002
9	Module 9: Facilitation skills	June 2002
10	Module 10: Farmer group development	December 2002
11	Module 11: Effective farmer group management	April 2003
12	Module 12: Strengthening community leaders and village extension workers	December 2002
13	Module 13: Coaching and monitoring of villager extension training	April 2003
14	Module 14: Planning methods	June 2002
Third Training Manuals		
15	Module 15: Development concepts and participatory agricultural extension	April 2003
16	Module 16: Vision in agricultural extension improvement	June 2002
17	Module 17: Human resource development in agricultural extension	June 2002
18	Module 18: Organising a study tour	April 2003
19	Module 19: Paternalism, enthusiasm and participation	May 2004
Video CD		
20	Video CD: The Lao Extension System	January 2004
Other Materials		
21	Leaflet: Principles of the Village Extension System	February 2004
22	Poster 1: Objective and components of the Village Extension System	February 2004
23	Poster 2: The learning process	February 2004
24	Poster 3: Stakeholders in the Village Extension System	February 2004
25	Song: The Village Extension System	February 2004



Interview about the VES

Interview with Mr Somxay SISANONH, National Project Director of Laos Extension for Agriculture Project (LEAP) at the National Agriculture and Forestry Extension Service (NAFES), November 2003

Suitable policy framework for Village Extension System

Q: At the first National Workshop on Extension convened by NAFES (supported by LEAP/SDC) on 1-2 October 2003, NAFES presented a practical vision of how extension will be developed in Lao PDR. An important feature of this vision is the Village Extension System (VES). A VES is to be operated by the villagers themselves. What is the basis for this concept?

A: The policy framework for the VES is actually very clear. There is the Prime Minister's Decree 01 on the socio-economic development of the country. Over the past years the MAF has evolved various policy guidelines for implementing the principles of this decree in the agricultural and forestry sectors. The main outcome so far has been that at the provincial level there shall only be strategic support units, whereas the planning and financial aspects of implementing publicly funded development efforts shall be located at the district level. The actual work then must be organized in the villages, under the responsibility of the villagers themselves. So all the public levels from MAF down to districts are a support system for the efforts of villagers to implement their own development.

This of course means that at the district level we will need capable and competent extensionists, who know how to support villagers in their own efforts. Since each village will have different requirements and ideas for developing its agriculture and forestry, these extensionists will need a wide range of suitable methodological and technical skills. We therefore regard district extensionists as "generalists". They can always refer to specialists based in the province [in centres and research stations, etc.] in order to assist them in providing the services requested by the villagers.

Q: So this means that the extension system in Lao PDR will be driven by the demands of the villages. But if each village has different demands, how can you manage to provide all the diverse services?

A: That is the challenge we face in Lao PDR. You must understand the situation in our country: We have a huge diversity in agro-ecological conditions, in soil fertility, in ethnical and cultural aspects, in available infrastructure for marketing and access, in trade connections, etc. There are tremendous differences between [for instance] an irrigated area in the lowlands with easy road accessible for all kinds of vehicles and a remote mountain area with very difficult access. The economic and cultural differences are enormous, and the useful ideas for development therefore differ tremendously.

This diversity has been recognized at a high policy level. Development efforts by the government agencies shall be based on the real local conditions and potentials. It is therefore obvious that concrete development efforts must be informed by and based on the ideas and inputs of the local people who of course understand the special aspects of their own situation.

Q: Does this mean there will be different extension procedures in each province, in each district and in each village?

A: That is precisely the case. It is quite clear in the policies that there will not be a standard way to do extension for the whole country. This quite simply is not possible. We must learn to adjust to the diversity in our country and learn to continuously adapt in each district according to the results of the local efforts.

Q: In view of this diversity, what exactly is the vision that can be regarded as the overarching principle for extension in Lao PDR?

A: It is the VES. The concept of the VES shall be applicable all over Lao PDR. And the supportive roles and responsibilities of the DAFO and PAFES shall be the same everywhere. But of course, the technical contents need to be adapted to the localities.

Main principles of VES

Q: But if organisation and implementation can be different in each village and district, this can create confusion among the district staff. Surely there must be some principles and guidelines that apply everywhere for all villages?

A: Correct. The main principles of VES will apply everywhere too. These are:

a) The village authority in Lao PDR consists of several organizations within the village such as Village Head [and Deputies], Lao Women's Union [of the village], representative from youth and elderly organizations and village trade union. It is the responsibility of the village authorities to organize, and if necessary, supervise the running of the extension system in their village.

b) The village authorities will mandate an experienced farmer chosen by the villagers to be the Village Extension Worker (VEW). We expect that most villages may have several VEWs, i.e. one for crops, another for livestock, etc. depending on the interests and requirements of the households in the village. The VEWs are accountable to the village authorities, not to DAFO.

c) We expect that in most cases VEWs will work with groups of interested farmers on a particular topic. Such farmer groups may be called "production groups", who learn and exchange ideas about new techniques for producing a particular product. They may also be groups that explore and develop storage and processing techniques or marketing channels for their products, etc.

d) The main task of the VEWs is to ensure that innovations will spread throughout the village among all interested households.

e) The extension generalist from the district will mainly interact with the VEWs. Once a new technique has been successfully introduced in a village, it is no longer the responsibility of the DAFO staff to spread the technology throughout the village. This is taken care of by the VEWs.

f) All the resources for the VES are organised and managed by the village. This means that VEWs are not paid out of the budget of the DAFOs. How the VEWs will be compensated for their services to the farmers in their villages is up to specific agreements in each village. This may be in cash, kind or labour. There is no blueprint for compensation procedures. We also expect that the village development funds, which are funds collected in the village, will have an important role to play.

Task of the district

Q: What then is the task of the district extension generalist when they work with a VES?

A: The role of the district extension generalist towards the VES is to provide and arrange for technical training and information and to support the establishment of a network among the VEWs and specialised farmers in their districts in order to push forward the learning processes.

In effect this means that district extension generalists will work in a village when introducing a new technology that the VEW does not know about. Remember that spreading a known technology in the village is the task of the VEW. District extension generalists will arrange for meetings among the VEWs of different villages to discuss and learn about new methodologies and will also arrange meetings among specialized farmers from different villages. These farmers are delegated by the members of their own village production group in order to learn and exchange ideas about specific technology. The farmers go back to their villages and spread the specific technology in their own groups.



Dealing with projects and programs

Q: Up to now, almost all extension activities in Lao PDR have been operated and funded within the framework of various projects or programs. Now the VES shall become the basis and focus of the Lao extension system. Will this too be taken up by a special project?

A: This is a very important point. It is true that up to now projects and programs were crucial for conducting extension. Where there was no project, we could do very little. We have had mixed experiences with this. On the one hand we had really good success with some projects, whereas others were not so good. There was a wide range of approaches. Almost every project had its own idea of how to do extension. And unfortunately we have had little success in continuing these successful approaches when the projects ended. So even now many district staff think of extension as something that is only done within projects.

But this has to change. We need a specific Lao extension system that is designed in a way that we can operate it on a sustainable basis with or without a project. Sustainable means we can continue to operate it even when a project ends. We also need a Lao system in order to effectively coordinate the various donor efforts that are designed to support us in the development of rural extension. As opposed to a project, we need to make extension services available in all villages throughout our country.

Q: Does this mean that donor-funded efforts for extension must adopt the VES approach?

A: Let's put it this way: Whenever a project proposal is submitted or a new phase is planned, we will want to know how the planned activities of the project will help us in developing a sustainable VES in the area where it is active. And I would like to stress the sustainability aspect. We will want to know how a project intends to capacitate the VES and districts to be able to continue to operate when the project funding stops. This means that financial mechanisms for sustaining the operations must be developed alongside the actual implementation of extension services by the project.

We know that this is a difficult undertaking. But we have no choice. We must make sure that we get out of the cycle of dependency [based] on projects in order to sustain the extension services in the many villages and the support services by the districts. In our view, projects are here to develop and establish training in new steps, new methods and new ventures -based on sustainable achievements of past projects - sustainable both in terms of staff qualifications as well as financial matters.

We intend to be clearer about this in our future negotiations with donor agencies. No doubt we are far from this goal. There is a long road ahead of us, but we intend to make the first steps and continue walking.

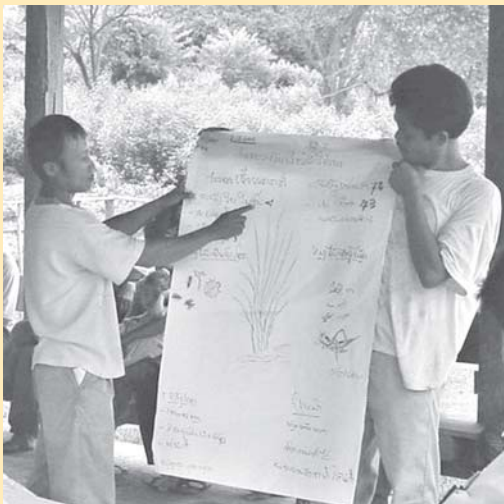
Immediate challenges

Q: This sounds very exciting and no doubt is a strategic challenge that will be with NAFES for many years to come. However, at this moment, what are the most important challenges you face in order to move ahead on the first steps to introduce the VES?

A: At present we see three main aspects we must face simultaneously:

a) The financial aspects of VES

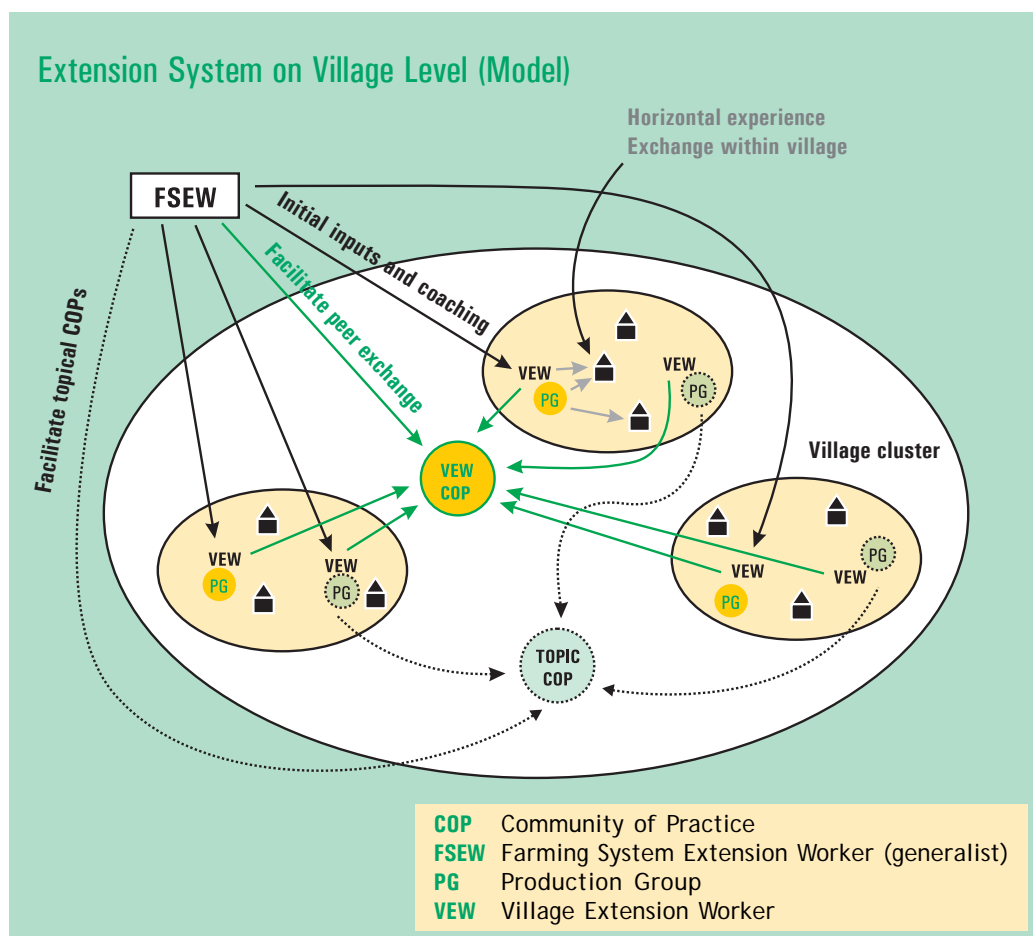
Here we think that each village will have its own way of organising the required funds to run its VES. But no doubt some common features will emerge. We need to explore various ways villages can compensate the work of their VEWs. We must identify successful ways and network between experienced villages and those who want to learn how to arrange their finances. We will also have to think very hard on what kind of training village authorities and VEWs need in order to manage their resources. And no doubt the village development funds will have a crucial role to play. All these financial aspects at the village level and the required training needs must be explored and developed.



b) The delivery mechanisms of DAFO services to VES

Here we have to take care of operational concerns. What are the most efficient procedures for DAFO services to be reliably available for the VES? We have to explore what the most useful distribution of roles and responsibilities shall be. This again will probably depend a lot on the specific situation in each district.

A further challenge is the logistics. In some regions of our country, it can take a lot of time to get from one village to another, or from a village to district headquarters. We will have to find a solution to this problem of distance in remote areas. We are already discussing sub-centres in the district, which will be the locations where the villagers can meet the district extensionists. These sub-centres may later be under the sole responsibility of the village clusters that are serviced by them. So this is now where the issue of "ownership" emerges. It is stated government policy that



local people and their local authorities shall govern the local institutions, which provide them the required services. This means that the villagers will be in charge of the sub-centres where they can find the services they need. But still, we must find out how best to organise this and how to build up local capacity.

c) The training of DAFO staff to be competent service providers to VES

This is the most serious immediate bottleneck we have to break through. We need many capable generalist extensionists who can help start VES [programs] and support their further activities. Training people in each and every district will be time-consuming. We must start immediately. As a matter of fact, LEAP has already started.

Q: So how can projects and programs help the MAF in this huge effort?

A: As I said before, we intend to use existing project structures and their programs as much as possible. We will screen their planned and budgeted activities to see whether some of the training required for DAFO staff and VEWs can be done within the planned programs. When new phases of projects are negotiated, we will make sure that they take into account our efforts of introducing sustainable VES [programs]. And when negotiating new projects, we of course will ensure that their extension components support our VES-based strategy to the maximum extent possible.

Keeping everybody informed

Q: We wish the MAF and the Lao PDR all the best in following this comprehensive and long-term strategy. It will be interesting to learn how your efforts evolve. Will there be a way to follow the news about how your efforts are proceeding?

A. That's a good point. Yes, we need to develop communication channels that allow everybody both within the country and outside to follow our successes and failures. It is important that the Lao public knows how our strategy for rural extension is developing, and it is imperative that foreign agencies that intend to support us are well informed. One important recurring event will be the yearly National Workshop on Extension. We had the first one on October 1-2 this year. Every year this event will pull together all experiences and make them available for discussion. However, we of course also intend to use media in order to inform [the public] about progress and for staying in contact. Yes, you will hear from us!

Thank you for taking the time to answer my questions.



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