Extension Guide
for
the Afforestation Project
in
"Ha Tinh, Quang Binh and Quang Tri"

December 1997

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A Ideal Preparation of Field Staff for Village Land Use Planning (VLUP)
1. Introduction

The Afforestation Project in Ha Tinh, Quang Binh and Quang Tri Provinces which started in July 1997 has appointed 36 District based Field Staff and nearly 100 Commune based Extension Workers as it's main extension agents.

A short-term consultant for Village Land Use Planning and Extension has been working in the Project from July until the beginning of December 1997 to prepare the extension agents for their work.

The Extension Guide first describes the projects' extension agents, it explains what has been done in the field of training so far and finally it identifies topics for attention for the near future. This short report is based on first experiences in the Afforestation Project so far as well as on an evaluation of the extension component of the Lang Son - Bac Giang Afforestation Project in which the short-term consultant took part as evaluation mission leader (September 1997).

2. Extension Agents

A short description of extension agents, their tasks in the afforestation project and their preparation so far is given below. Technical Project Officers from Provincial level who supervise the District teams are included here. Also suggestion for further preparation and support are done.

2.1 Field Staff

After an orientation Study Tour to the Lang Son - Bac Giang Afforestation project in August 1997 all 10 Project Management Units have appointed 3-5 Fields Staff per District to become the major extension agents for the project. The Field Staff selected are regular staff from either the District or Provincial section of ARD (mainly Ha Tinh and Quang Binh Province) or of the District Forest protection Station (Quang Tri and Quang Binh). A minority of Field Staff originates from Forest Enterprises (Ha Tinh).

The average age of Field staff is 35 years. Out of 36 Field Staff 7 are female. One fourth of the Field Staff have Forest University background and three fourth has a Forest College education. Most Field Staff have already experience in former afforestation Projects like PAM (Quang Tri) or 327 (Quang Binh, Ha Tinh). Field Staff have their office at the District level. Their working area is the Commune Level.

Field Staff tasks

Field Staff are the projects' planners, extension workers and monitors at the Village and Commune level. Field Staff has a pure technical but also a 'social' or facilitating role in the Communes. Field staff has a full time job for the project and will be by far the busiest staff of the project. The Lang Son - Bac Giang Afforestation Project
Project uses a standard norm for 1 Field Staff for 100 hectares of project plantations. Major tasks of Field Staff can be listed as follows:

- organize and implement Participatory Village Land Use Planning
- organize and implement Plantation Design
- coordinate the needs of seedlings (production and distribution)
- organize extension activities and fieldtrips for farmers
- participate in monitoring an evaluation of the plantations
- support the Commune Extension Workers

**Preparation of Field Staff**

**Field Staff specialization**

Due to the total number (36) of Field Staff and the diverse tasks it was proposed to create a specialization among Field Staff in all project Districts. During their actual work Field Staff will work as a team however, especially during the Village Land Use Planning process. The selection was made after observations during general training on communicative skills for all Field Staff. Selection was based mainly on either the ability of communicative skills or on the experience and skill in mapping techniques (see appendix C and D).

- 15 Field Staff has been selected to become specialists in the use of the Village Land Use Planning tools and,
- 21 Field Staff were selected to become VLUP Mapping specialists

**Training schedules**

The original plan for preparation of Field Staff for Village land use planning is appended. The first one (appendix A) is the originally planned ideal preparation of the Field Staff, the second one (appendix B) is the amended plan one after delay in implementation due to unavailability of project budget during the month of October.

The first implication of this one month delay was that the international consultant on village land use planning was not able to do follow-up after the training in the field and to support Field Staff and District PMU's during first implementation of VLUP.

The second implication was that it has not yet been possible to adjust the land use planning methodology to the specific situation in the provinces. Extensive discussions with relevant officers at the Provincial levels have not yet taken place. This can only be done after experience with the methodology has been gained in the field and the respective officers have a complete understanding of all steps of the land use planning methodology.

**Trainings implemented**

The following trainings have been implemented for Field Staff in order to prepare them for their task (for exact time schedule see Appendix H):

- Training in communication skills (5 days) for all Field Staff (two groups)
- Training in the use of VLUP tools (3D model, village transect, etc.) for 15 selected Field Staff (4 days)
- Training in Village Land Use Planning (5 days) for all Field Staff (two groups)

The on-the-job training / study tour to the Lang Son - Bac Giang Project for 15 selected Field Staff and the mapping training for 21 selected field staff could not be implemented any more before the end the first consultancy period (December 8).

Although it has been stressed several times that it is highly recommended that the same Field Staff will participate in all the trainings that are needed for Village Land Use Planning four previously trained Field Staff did not appear in the Village land Use Planning training. They had been replaced by "new comers".

It is recommended that Field Staff starts with the implementation of VLUP direct after the training and that they finish VLUP work in one whole Commune first.
2.2 Extension Workers

Extension workers have been selected in September 1997. A list with 98 extension workers exist for all Project Communes. Extension workers are residents of the Commune where they are supposed to work. Their age ranges from 20 to 55 years. For each Commune 2 extension workers have been selected. In the three Project Provinces the selection has been rather different.

In Ha Tinh usually the Chairman of the Commune People Committee and an Officer of the Woman Union (female) have been selected. In Quang Tri only in very few Communes woman were selected as extension worker. As women are an important target group of the project it is highly advisable that in each Commune a male and a female extension worker are selected. A re-selection of extension workers is necessary. In order to save budget and effort it is recommended that extension workers will only be employed in Communes where the project actually starts activities.

Criteria for extension workers are as follows:

- One male and one female extension worker per Commune
- The female, preferably the leader of the Woman Union
- The male not the Commune head or Village Head which have only little time available, but could be a Commune Officer / Technician (ARD)
- Others like age, health, speaking capacity, knowledge and education

Extension Workers’ tasks

Extension workers are an important extension agent in the project as they are the closest contact person for the farmers in the Villages. They will deal mainly with technical tasks but will also assist the Field Staff in Commune work. Extension workers should not become staff of Field Staff however! Usually extension workers will be employed direct by the District Project (Vice) Director.

Candidates could be proposed by the Commune and then could be finally selected by the Project Vice-Director. Extension workers will need a monthly remuneration (about 200.000 VND) and will obtain a bicycle in order to do the following tasks:

- to explain steps and methods of Project activities to households
- to help farmers to set up afforestation plans (also Household Application)
- to advise on afforestation techniques and maintenance practices
- to assist in Village Land Use Planning
- to assist in land (re)distribution
- to distribute seedlings and to inspect plantations
- to assist households in applying for savings accounts
- to report at the District office

Preparation of Extension Workers

Extension workers have not yet been instructed and trained for their tasks. It is advised to train them at the District level and supply them with extension materials like pamphlets, posters and flipcharts in order to facilitate their work.

Therefore it is suggested to train extension workers only after the project flipcharts have been finished (see chapter 3.)

2.3 Village Support Group

The concept of Village Support Groups has developed in the Lang Son - Bac Giang Afforestation Project only after one year of project implementation and therefore is not yet so relevant for the Central Vietnam Project. However is should be realised already that they will be necessary in the future.
Village Support Groups are not part of the Project Organization but belong to the participating farmers. The VSG works in the interest of the benefit of the farmers who have plantations. That's why the Project cannot force, but can only strongly advice the farmers to form a VSG. VSG could develop earlier or later into the form of a Plantation Owners Association.

VSG are only important in villages where tree planting is starting. It is recommended that the Village head is one of the 2-3 VSG members and that existing village structures are used for it (e.g. a well functioning cooperative). One VSG for 50 ha of plantation seems appropriate. It could be considered to include also the Commune head in the VSG e.g. as an advisor.

**The Village Support Group has minimally the role to:**

- organize the logistics of seedling distribution
- to inspect the seedling quality
- help solving plantation related problems
- represent the plantation owners towards the project

**2.4 Technical Project Officers (Province and District)**

Being the indirect or direct leader of District Teams of Field Staff, Provincial as well as District Technical Project Officers should be regarded as very important for the success of the projects’ extension component.

Therefore they have been included in some trainings for Field Staff as well. The Provincial Technical Officers have joined in both the Communication as well as the VLUP training whereas the District Technical Officers have only been involved in the VLUP training.

It should be mentioned however that in several Districts double functions exist which means that one Field Staff is also the Projects’ Technical District Officer.

In the future special attention should be given to the leaders of the Field Staff teams and Extension Workers teams as they should be able to guide and manage the extension agents properly in order to work as effective and efficient as possible.

**3. Extension Materials**

The evaluation of the extension component of the Lang Son - Bac Giang Project identified a high need for extension materials at the Commune and Village level which can be used by the Extension Workers.

There seems to be a need for the following materials:

- **Flipcharts, that come in a logical set and can be explained by EW or FS** Characteristics: few words, few colors (4), give information

- **Posters, that are self explanatory and for permanent presentation in the Village** Characteristics: more words, more colors, create awareness

- **Pamphlets, which are a folded leaflet (A4) for individual farmer use** characteristics: temporary character, examples, figures

The consultant has prepared a proposal for the production of a set of flipcharts and posters in order to support especially the extension workers in their work in the future. The basic design for 13 Flipcharts has been prepared of which 3 have been selected for Poster. As both Lang Son - Bac Giang as well as the Central Vietnam Afforestation Projects have the same need for Posters, work and costs could be shared by both projects.

National Project Management still had to take a final decision about the production of the materials by the
time this report was written.

Pamphlets were not yet prepared but can be produced by time the need arises and can be produced and multiplied by the project itself by means of the photocopier.

4. Conclusions

Field Staff

- Field Staff has been selected by the PMU's at District level mainly on criteria like education and previous working experience.
- Field Staff in each District are supposed to function as a team in which a number of different specializations exist.
- Not all Field Staff has joined all trainings that were provided by the project.
- Due to financial constraints and related time-loss Project Field Staff could be prepared for the implementation of Village Land Use Planning in a sub-optimal way. After the training no follow-up in the field has been possible.

Extension Workers

- As a result of time constraints extension workers were not yet given due attention to and have not yet been prepared for their tasks.
- The selection of extension workers has to be reviewed.

VLUP concept and methodology

- Extensive discussions about the VLUP concept with relevant officers at the Provincial levels have not taken place. Therefore the character of the VLUP methodology has changed from a "develop with" to a rather "training for" character.

5. Recommendations

- For reasons of continuity it is strongly advised not to exchange Field Staff in the near future.
- The performance of Field Staff should be evaluated on a 6-month basis.
- Project Management should pay due attention to incentives for increased motivation of Field Staff to do field.
- Field Staff should start their work in Village Land use Planning as soon as possible. Required preparation activities are listed in Appendix G.
- The second input of the short term consultant for Land Use Planning and Extension should take place upon finalization of the first Commune Land Use Plan in each District (soon after TET?)
- Extension Workers should be recruited only in actual Project Communes for the first 6 months of 1998 and should be selected upon the in the report mentioned criteria.
- Performance of extension workers should be evaluated on a yearly basis.
- Flipcharts and Posters should be produced soon in order to support extension workers and field staff in their task.
- A training for Provincial and District Project Management on leading / managing the extension agents is required in the future.