

LAO Swedish forestry programme (LSFP) 1996-1999

Brief on concepts and approaches

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1. OVERALL OBJECTIVE AND EXPECTED RESULTS

LSFP is a programme with the over all objective formulated as ' Improved productivity and sustainable use of forest and agricultural land in combination with conservation and protection of target areas'

The objective is to be accomplished through the strengthening of skills and know -how needed to improve people's livelihood through more efficient and more sustainable management of land and natural resources.

By the end of this Programme, the capacity of the centre, provinces, districts and villages, will be improved to support sustainable land management practices in the target areas. Institutional strengthening and human resources development will provide for sustainable practices and further dissemination.

2. APPROACH

2.1. Lao Ownership - A Basic Approach

LSFP is a programme implemented through DoF. It operates within the systems and procedures established and applied by the Department and is co-ordinated through existing management structures with other programmes and projects carried out by the Department and its parent ministry, the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry. DoF's management of the programme include planning and implementation of agreed activities as well as management of the resources provided for by the LSFP.

The Programme was initially structured into six components, which corresponds to/belongs to established organizational units within DoF: Institutional Strengthening and HRD, Land Use Planning and Land Use Allocation, Extension, Conservation, Shifting Cultivation, and Forestry Research. Naturally, TA inputs have been organized accordingly, but also included resources at decentralized level to work with programme issues at regional, provincial and district level.

In terms of geographical coverage LSFP involves units at the central level, selected provinces and districts as

well as the forestry sector training institutions with their regional coverage. Developmental work is carried out in selected villages and NBCAs. The villages involved in the work are selected on the basis of a set of criteria including the following:

- The selection should reflect ecological and socio-economic condition.
- There should be at least one village selected in each of the four Provinces
- Villages are selected to participate in the work on the basis of their interest and willingness to commit themselves to the process. This guarantees that the programme is demand-driven and reflects the priorities of the target population.

The ambition for the LUP, Joint Forest Management, Extension and Conservation work is to increase integration and co-ordination in order to develop LUP and LA procedures and appropriate methods for villages in general but also for villages which have traditional village land boundaries in State Areas. This is accomplished through an enhanced geographical focus as compared to the previous programme phase.

2.2. Process Orientation

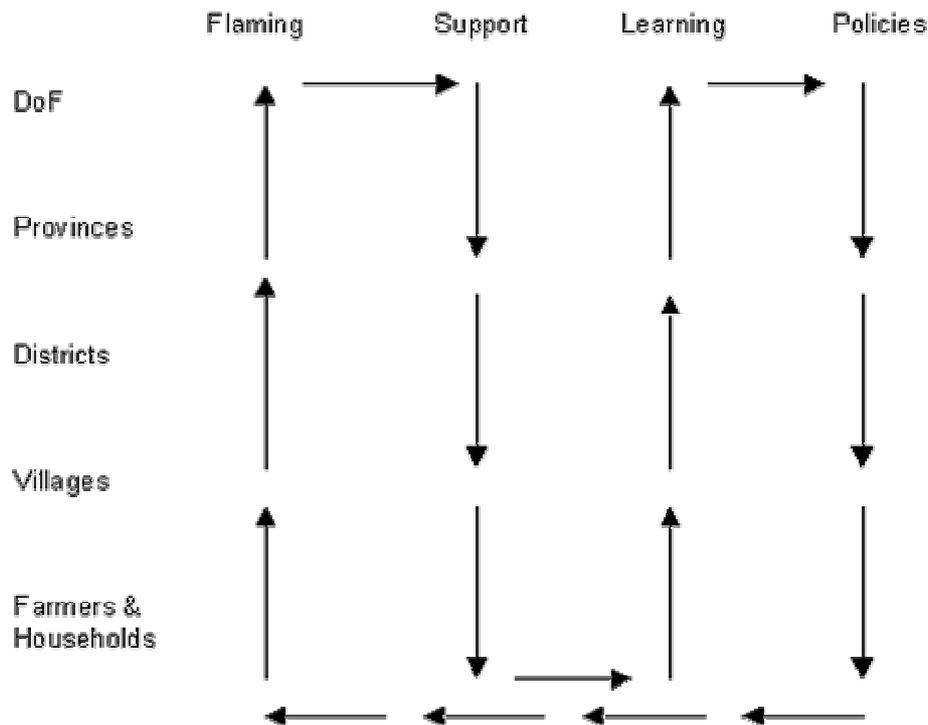
LSFPs main instrument for strengthening of individual and organizational capacity within the forestry sector takes place through a process where concerned organizational units participate. The joint development effort contributes to the enhancement of the quality of results from the work and provides at the same time a unique training situation. The skill development takes place at different levels, through the exchange of knowledge as well as through the process of joint assessment of activities and their outcome. By proposing and promoting organizational changes which supports new methods and procedures, the conclusions are gradually institutionalized at institutional as well as at village level. This will provide a basic for policy formulation.

A further implication of the process approach is that activities are planned and reformulated in the light of lessons learnt. This requires that a certain level of flexibility is allowed in the annual plans and budgets against the background of the APD.

A pre-condition for the applied process approach is that DoF is committed to and has the capacity to absorb information and new ideas. Broad participation and acceptance that conclusions and views are disseminated and discussed in various contexts are features that can contribute to the achievement of these requirements. Learning within DoF is facilitated through a series a planned intervention: seminars and workshops, the compilation of basic guide-lines and manuals, production of regular technical and managerial reports, support for the analysis of issues as part of DoFs established procedures for management and reporting, etc.

The process-oriented approach is also assisted by the programme based monitoring of activities as a complement to DoF's regular management and reporting systems and procedures. The latter is also important since interaction and information sharing outside the formally agreed situations (monitoring exercises, evaluations, programme review seminars, technical discussion, etc.) contributes to overall absorption of new ideas and methods.

To summarize, an ongoing dialogue between the different actors in the programme is an essential part of this approach, which can be illustrated through the following figure:



Source: Vietnam Sweden Mountain Rural Development Programme 1996-2000

Learning takes place in co-operation between different actors at farm and village levels, the learning is recognised at District, Province and DoF levels and experiences are used to guide development of policies for all levels. The policies are the basis for planning, the plans are implemented by farmers with support from staff and advisers with knowledge and experiences. The implementation leads to new learning which will influence policy development etc.

2.3. Demand Driven

A partnership for development as crucial is LSFP. Farmers will be encouraged to demand services related to extension, land use, forest protection and the Government Institutions should be able to respond to their demands. It is towards those lines that LSFP will further support DoF, PAFOs and DAFOs. At all levels special attention is given to gender dimensions.

Forum are organized for farmers to plan their own development efforts and to express their demands for services. When the appropriate methods for dialogue with farmers have been established they can be replicated in other areas.

LSFP has a strong field orientation. The focus of the programme's developmental activities are selected villages where the various components come together in a joint effort to develop, pilot-test and further refine methods and procedures.

Implementation by staff from target provinces (PAFOs) and districts (DAFOs) with participation of key institutions such as the Extension Training Centre, means that the necessary 'local' inputs are provided and a long-term ownership of the process at the level of implementation is achieved. Functional integration is achieved through the establishment of teams consisting of staff from several of the technical and training units. The integrated field-approach contributes to a reduction of professional boundaries between the various technical disciplines and supports a common 'one-target' interpretation of tasks and responsibilities in the field situation.

2.4. Advisory Support

Long - term advisers are attached to all major components of LSFP and are positioned throughout the

geographical spread of the Programme. All Programme activities field work, research, human resources development, policy formulation -give the opportunity to learn. The advisors role are primarily to facilitate learning and development processes for group and individuals in organization involved in LSFP at all levels.

For specific issues, short term advisory support inputs are used, covering important aspects of the Programme.

The long term advisory support is documented through a set of reports, starting with inception reports followed by monthly progress reports, annual analytical reports and final reports. During ongoing work the advisers are also producing discuss and learn about findings and recommendations.

3. PROGRAMME FOCUS

LSFP has two different but inter-related focal points, i) applied research and method development, and ii) competence development.

3.1. Applied Research and Method Development

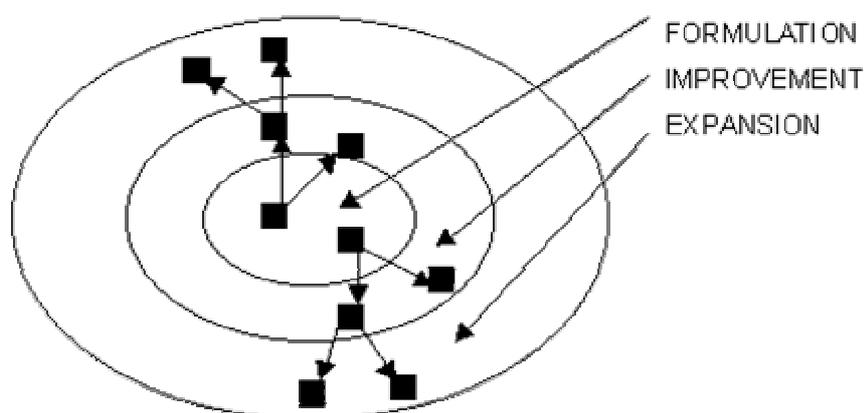
Applied research and method development (*What to do and How to do it*) and capacity building are the main aims of all parts of LSFP.

Results of applied research '*What to do*' are used as inputs into the methods development and consist of understanding of socio-economic and socio-cultural conditions.

- Recommendations on crops, farming systems, management of forests
- Understanding of socio-economic and socio-cultural conditions

Methods development follows a specific format which has been elaborated and agreed on between the various parties concerned within DoF and with advisory inputs from the Consultant. The concepts accommodates the necessary stages in methods development: methods formulation, pilot-testing, improvements, further field-testing, acceptance by DoF institutions and a wider dissemination.

The concept is illustrated in the diagram below:



The important principles that are followed when concept is applied are described below. While the description relates primarily to LUP, LA, extension and conservation, with certain modifications, it is also applicable to institutional strengthening, human resources development, gender and forestry research.

1. The 'formulation' stage is the primary method development (and competence development) period.
2. Only a limited number of areas, villages, farms and families are included in the 'formulation' stage when the methods are formulated, tested and staff develop an understanding of the methods,

3. The 'formulation stage' is a training and learning stage where PSFO and DAFO staff and staff of the Extension Training Centre learn and start to practice the methods in conjunction with the centrally based resource persons or specialists.
4. Lao subject matter specialists and advisors have a leading role in method development at the 'formulation stage' and would act as resource persons. They will therefore need to spend considerable time in the method development location in the Provinces to train provincial and district staff as well as staff of the Extension Training Centres.
5. In the '**Improvement**' stage methods previously formulated are further tested, applied and reinforced so that PAFO, DAFO, staff and Extension Training Centres staff assume more of a leading role in using the methods. The Lao subject matter specialists and advisors assume more of a guiding role than a teaching and method developing role. At this stage methods and experiences are documented in technical reports as well as in manuals and simple How to do. Booklets.
6. The number of locations, villages, farms and families in which the improvement activity is undertaken is increased, about two-fold, while the formulation villages and activities are retained in the programme/work plan to maintain continuity of extension inputs and to ensure that there is adoption of the methods by the communities, villages and families.
7. In the 'expansion' stage the central level input and guidance is further reduced, or discontinued depending on circumstances, and the PAFO, DAFO staff and Extension Training Centres staff continue with the application of the procedures and methods. The training centres have an important competence development role.
8. The application of the methods is undertaken in an increasing number of villages, which will depend on capacities and capabilities.
9. The villages or activities of the 'formulation' stage would be progressively phased out (from work plan funding) but the improvement villages or activities would be retained in the work plan to ensure that adoption of methods take place.

There is no set period for moving through the process of formulation, improvement and expansion. The speed at which it is accomplished will be a matter of judgement for the staff involved. The important point is that both the staff and the villages are ready and competent before moving on to the next stage.

In order to reinforce the process of expansion, manuals and booklets are compiled for DoF consideration, agreement and subsequent distribution to department implementing staff, as appropriate to given ecological and socio-economic condition. Lessons are also fed back into policy formulation by the Government.

To exemplify, based on the above approach the following methods have been or are presently being developed within the respective target areas.

Participatory village planning methods, i.e.

- Collection and analysis of village data
- Village problems and need identification
- Problem analysis and problem solving with villages
- Consideration of development and extension activity options
- Annual work plan preparation based on agreed activities.

Participatory village land allocation methods, i.e.

- Preparation of staff and villagers
- Village boundary delineation, forest survey, forestry and agricultural land use zoning and village land use mapping
- Village land use planning and land allocation activities
- Agricultural field measurement
- Preparation of agricultural and forestry agreements and transfers to villagers
- Methods development, farmers trials, credit assessment, village commons
- Village level extension planning procedures and methods

Participatory village forest management.

To the above activities should be added a more detailed and methodical survey of village forest use and inventory, and forest category delineation based on the results of the surveys. The work has been piloted and will require further refinement. Procedure and systems for joint (participatory) forest management of state owned production forests (and NBCAs) are also included.

Research

Attention is paid by LSFP to the improvement and the capacity building of Forestry Research. Applied research needs an organizational framework for identification of research priorities building up of the competence of research staff and for establishment of an information system. The information system is required to improve access to information from outside the programme and to screen, synthesize and make results more easier to understand. Special efforts are paid by the programme to these issues.

Institutional strengthening and human resources development

A similar approach as mentioned above is applied aiming at institutional strengthening/ human resource development in the following examples of activities:

- Annual planning procedures and systems based on the LFA-format
- Quarterly and annual reporting procedures and systems (LFA -format)
- Financial management systems, procedures and methods
- Systems for regular monitoring
- Systems for measurement of institutional strengthening
- Development of a human resource development plan
- Procedures for documentation, filing and work organization at PAFO, DAFO level.

3.2. Competence Development

Competence development refers to the strengthening of individual skills and knowledge as well as to the improvements of organizational systems and procedures

Through competence development staff are equipped with 'What to do and How to do' partly based on experiences gained within LSFP through methods development applied research. Knowledge from outside LSFP is gained by staff through participation in workshops, training programmes in Lao PDR as well as abroad. Training Needs Assessment are carried out as a basis for the selection of trainees. Individual needs as well as overall sector requirements are considered in this context.

Individual and organizational competence development is accomplished through the implementation of a series of activities and measures including the following:

- The integrated, participatory method development approach provides a 'real life' learning situation where people with various fields of specialization come together and tackle a complex development task. BY participating in the method development process the participating staff acquire knowledge and experiences which go far beyond what could be accomplished in a classroom or a more recurrent work situation. The involvement of staff members from different levels of the organization and disciplines/areas of competence contributes to an enhanced communication and understanding of field-level problems and constraints.
- The adoptions process of new methods provides further opportunities to internalize lessons learnt as the conclusions and the newly developed methods are assessed, adapted in the light of existing policies and experiences provided by other development activities, and finally accepted for broader dissemination by the organization. Example of the latter is the fact that LUP and LA basic guidelines produced in the context of the programme have already been adopted by the Ministry as tools in the on-going, nation-wide land allocation process.
- Regular monitoring with participation of subject matter specialists and staff of institutions provides a valuable learning instrument.
- Recurrent assessment of the institutional capacity of the forestry administration through the application of an adapted instrument which embraces the resource side, operations as well as the client value

dimension. In parallel the instrument could also be used as a tool for self-assessment of performance by units and work group within the administration.

- On the job training is also provided by the advisors out side the actual periods of intensive development activities.
- Conducting workshops and seminars, considering language barriers and time constraints is an effective way of disseminating information and of obtaining feedback on finding and method design.
- Finding are also recorded in technical reports and booklets suitable for use by officials with limited language skills and limited exposure to the actual process of method development. This also allows for broad, low cost introduction of methods country wide.
- Short term training programme on administrative as well as technical matters (accounting, computer, English as well as a variety of technical courses in Lao PDR and abroad)
- Long term training in co-operation with academic institutions in Sweden, England, Holland, Malaysia, Thailand and India.

The emphasizes on interaction forms of learning should be noted, as the Lao culture more readily assimilates verbal communication than reading. The use of video for mutual learning and exchange of knowledge will be explored.

The Extension Training Centres are key units of the Forestry Sector for institutionalizing lessons learned in method development and applied research and for transforming knowledge gained at the level into curricula and training materials contents that are issued by the centres in their continuous staff training and upgrading programme.