ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

1. Intended Audience of this Document

1. Supervisors, planners and implementers of village extension programs.
2. Heads of Provincial Forestry and Agricultural Sections
3. Heads of District Agriculture and Forestry Offices
4. District Agriculture and Forestry Extension Officers.

2. Explanation of "Component"

The "extension component" is one part of the participatory village development and sustainable land use system. This component document contains information on recommended processes, procedures and methods for village extension work.

3. Purpose of this Document

- To explain the extension procedures and methods practiced in LSFP target areas.
- To make information available for personnel involved in extension work.

4. Information Provided in this Document
• Objectives of the extension method development activity.
• End-users and beneficiaries of the procedures and methods.
• The conditions and farming systems for which the procedures and methods have been developed.
• The village development process, the core extension process and the four functions of the extension support system used in village development.
• The linkages between the extension service and the Regional Agriculture and Forestry Training Centres.
• The methods to facilitate linkages with research organisations and the development and dissemination of technologies.
• Village financing including types of finance, village-centred financing methods and village fund management methods.
• Gender responsiveness of the extension procedures and methods.
• Monitoring and evaluation of extension activities.
• The lessons learned from experiences with extension method development.

GLOSSARY OF TERMS AND ACRONYMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>APB</td>
<td>Agricultural Promotion Bank</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAFO</td>
<td>District Agriculture and Forestry Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DMS</td>
<td>District Management System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>GOL</td>
<td>Government of Laos</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JFM</td>
<td>Joint Forest Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LSFP</td>
<td>Lao-Swedish Forestry Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCP</td>
<td>Model Consolidation Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAFRI</td>
<td>National Agricultural and Forestry Research Institute</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAFO</td>
<td>Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PVD&amp;SLUS</td>
<td>Village Development and Sustainable Land Use System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RTC</td>
<td>Regional Training Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S&amp;L</td>
<td>Savings and Credit/Loan (Groups)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VRF</td>
<td>Village Revolving Fund</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

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1. INTRODUCTION

The extension component is one of four in the participatory village development and sustainable land use (PVDSLU) system. The general description document of the PVDSLU system should be read in conjunction with this document as it explains how the extension component links with and complements the other three components; "land use planning and land allocation", "research" and "joint forest management".

The procedures and methods of extension have been developed in different geographic and topographic areas. Procedures and methods described therefore cover three quite distinct situations; the rain-fed sloping lands in the north (a shifting cultivation area), the rain-fed lowlands in the central plains and the rain-fed uplands of the southern plateau.

It should be noted that the program has not undertaken work in highland areas so methods described in this document do not relate to farming systems in highland areas. However, as will be explained later, the core process for extension is applicable to all three situations mentioned above.

2. OBJECTIVE OF THE EXTENSION COMPONENT

“To develop and provide participatory extension procedures and methods which promote positive interaction with village communities and enable self reliance, sustainable livelihood and the sustainable use of natural resources.”

3. END USERS AND TARGET BENEFICIARIES

3.1 End Users and Co-operators

1. Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office (PAFO) and District Agriculture and Forestry Office (DAFO) personnel responsible for village development and sustainable land use are the primary end users in partnership with village communities, village organisations and groups, village families and men and women
2. Government programs and other donor projects operating in similar farming system situations could adopt or adapt the tools to their particular requirements.
3. The Faculty of Forestry and the Faculty of Agriculture of the National University of Laos and the Regional Agricultural and Forestry Extension Training Centres, (Xieng Ngeun, Huay Nyang and Xepon).
4. Research organisations including NAFRI, Thong Khang Agro-Forestry Research Station, Forestry Research Centre (FRC) and National Agricultural Research Centre (NARC), Keng Ben Teak Research Station and the Northern Agriculture and Forestry Research Centre.

3.2 Beneficiaries

1. The Nation, provincial and district authorities, village communities, village organisations, village social and development groups, individuals (both men and women).

4. METHOD DEVELOPMENT SITUATIONS

Extension method development and consolidation activity has been undertaken in three locations in which geographic and topographic features differ. The three situations are:

a) Farming System: Sloping land rainfed farming system
Main Characteristic: Semi-subsistence, shifting cultivation
Project location: Luang Prabang
Brief summary of conditions: Sloping land dominates, limited forest cover, shifting cultivation is the dominant land use, primarily semi-subsistence agriculture, commercial field crops and teak increasing, dense population, substantial land pressure, access to markets, wide spread poverty, low food security, low access to schooling, project research capacity present, other research programs present, regional training centre present.

b) Farming System: Lowland rainfed farming system

Main Characteristic: Semi-subsistence paddy production

Project Location: Savannakhet Province

Brief summary of conditions: Flat land dominates, substantial forest cover, rainfed paddy and shifting cultivation mix, semi-subsistence agriculture, virtually no commercial crops, dependence on forest products, low-moderate population density, little land pressure, poor access to markets, wide spread poverty, low food security, low access to schooling, no project research capacity, GOL research stations present, training centre present.

c) Farming System: Commercial upland rainfed farming system

Main characteristic: Commercial agriculture

Project Location: Laongam, Salavanh Province

Brief summary of conditions: Gently sloping land dominates, fertile porous soils, favourable rainfall, very little forest cover, little or no paddy cultivation, commercial crops important and expanding, access to markets, little poverty, good food security, low access to schooling, no project research capacity, technical advice available from GOL agencies.

5. DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF TOOLS (PROCEDURES AND METHODS)

5.1 Preliminary Planning

The five stages in the extension core process are preceded by annual preliminary planning. Preliminary planning is undertaken to organise annual extension and village development activities and may include activities such as village studies (village profiles) village selection, staff pre-training, budget estimates and organisation, and sourcing available secondary data, eg, land use planning and land allocation data and land use maps.

5.2 The Extension Approach for Participatory Village Development

The extension approach for participatory village development has two key specific tools:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool Name</th>
<th>Explanation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Core Extension Process</td>
<td>• The core process for planning and implementing extension provides the framework in which extension support functions are conducted.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(DAFO ↔ Villagers)</td>
<td>• The process is the same for all situations or farming systems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Extension Support System</td>
<td>• The support system performs four functions to respond to needs and opportunities identified with villagers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(DAFO)</td>
<td>• The functions are extension tools for field staff to use in assisting villagers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• The functions are flexible and may be adapted to different agro-ecological situations.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: The core extension process and the extension functions occur simultaneously
The Core Process and the Extension Functions are performed with support from the Regional Training Centres (RTCs) and a District Management System (DMS). These relationships are represented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Extension Process and Functions Relationship

5.3 Justification for Adopting a Core Extension Process

It is important that method development activity take into account the current policies and future visions which the government has for extension. The following is a brief account of the factors considered.

5.3.1 Reason for a Core Process

- There needs to be a mechanism to enable the DAFO to service and support village organisations with village development activities.

5.3.2 Characteristics of the Core Process

- The extension approach is compatible with the government’s visions and policies.
- The process and functions are applicable within existing village organisations and seek to strengthen them.
- The approach aims to assist village organisations to systematise village development processes.
- The approach is compatible with the government’s development and extension functions at the various levels of administration.
- The approach is compatible with the established planning procedures of the Government.
- The process is relatively simple and can be internalised and utilised nation-wide, while being flexible enough to implement in different farming systems.

The cyclical extension process is repeated annually following monitoring and evaluation of the previous year’s activities. This cyclic pattern is represented in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Annual Cyclic Pattern of the Extension Core Process
**5.4 Description of the Stages in the Core Extension Process**

Detailed descriptions may be found in Extension Technical Booklet named "Stages in the Core Extension Process". A summary is presented below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Preparation</th>
<th>Includes staff and villager orientation and awareness of development processes, orientation training and participatory needs and opportunity analysis.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual Activity Planning</td>
<td>May include: identifying and deciding on solutions, group formation and group activity planning, on-the-job training plan, training course plan, and activity plans concerning forestry, agriculture, livestock, fish, gender, community development etc, as identified in the preparation and dialogue stage with villagers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Activity Implementation | **a) Review and Confirmation of Activities**  
Activities identified and planned are reviewed and confirmed with farmers  

**b) Implementation of Activities**  
Activities are conducted by villagers and extension staff. Technical follow-up and support activities are performed by DAFO extension staff in conjunction with monitoring. |
|             |                                                                                                                                       |
| Activity Monitoring | Monitoring of activities in the annual activity plan is conducted concurrently with implementation. Villagers and extension staff participate in monitoring activity. |
|             |                                                                                                                                       |
| Evaluation and | An assessment is undertaken of results and merits of activities conducted in the annual |
|             |                                                                                                                                       |
5.5 Extension Support for the Core Village Development Process

Needs and opportunities are identified during the core process. Extension response and support activities that address these needs and opportunities are planned during the village development planning process with villagers.

The extension support system has four functions:

- **Function 1: Village Community Strengthening**
- **Function 2: Technology Development**
- **Function 3: Technology Dissemination**
- **Function 4: Village Finance Provision and Management**

### 5.5.1 Function 1: Village Community Strengthening

The participatory activities of preparation and activity planning as described in the core extension process involve village organisations, village social groups, village development groups and individuals in dialogue with extension staff. This dialogue includes: understanding the village situation (situation analysis); social analysis (gender related discussions); orientation training; problem, needs and opportunity analysis.

This dialogue increases villager awareness regarding development, involves them in a decision making process and strengthens their capacities in communication with extension staff.

Participatory planning and problem solving sessions are conducted with various sectors of the community to identify possible solutions and appropriate activities for extension and development. During this procedure social and gender analysis tools are used to ensure that all sections or stakeholders in the community have opportunities to express views and provide information for decision making. Activity groups and village cooperators are identified and appropriate extension activities are identified and recorded for further consideration in extension support plans.

This planning activity strengthens the various sectors of the community in problem analysis, problem solving and activity planning. The formation of groups (S&L loan and development groups) prepares villagers for managing development activities and village finances. The promulgation of management rules improves villager capacity to operate groups, village land use agreements etc.

Villagers are involved in technology development with extension and research staff during activities such as on-farm trials, testing and evaluating promising technologies exchange visits and study trips to other areas.

This involvement broadens their vision on opportunities for improving land use practices and improves their technical knowledge.

The participatory approaches used ensure that strengthening activities are distributed through the community including village authorities and organisations, activity groups, social groups and men and women.

This approach provides opportunities for extension activities to reach the poorer and less advantaged members in the community.

### 5.5.2 Function 2: Technology Development

Methods for conducting extension support have been developed for three situations:

- Sloping land rain-fed farming system
Different approaches to sourcing and developing technologies for the three situations have been used.

5.5.2.1 Approach 1. The Project has its own facilities and capability

In the Luang Prabang area the Lao-Swedish Forestry Program (LSFP) used it’s own resources (the Research Sub-program) to attend to the technology testing and development function. This was in response to the national policy to ameliorate and reduce shifting cultivation, a key concern and priority of the GOL.

Three research tools are utilised in the sloping land situation:

- Descriptive studies
- On-station research
- On-farm research-extension

The procedures and methods for these tools are explained in detail in the document: “Sloping Land Research: A Component Description.

A key feature of technology development for the sloping land situation is the link created between research and extension and the integration of the two tools. Briefly this procedure is as follows:

Villagers, researchers and extension workers engage in dialogue during which village problems, needs and opportunities in relation to sloping land farming are analysed and potential solutions are discussed. Interested farmers are identified and trained and then participate in testing any of the potentially appropriate technologies in which they are interested.

Further development of the technologies is done in parallel by research and extension with small groups of farmers. Saving & Loan groups are set up to provide financial support to the extension (and research) activities. Evaluation of the research and extension experiences provides feedback on the appropriateness of the technologies. Knowledge is also gained on the adoption and/or adaptation of the technologies over time.

5.5.2.2 Approach 2: Line agency research capability exists and/or technologies are available

Assistance is sought from established research stations and relevant agencies with technical competence, for example National Research Stations, and line Departments. The research stations and technical agencies have tested technologies available for dissemination. Extension personnel identify the research stations and technical agencies that can assist and support them.

Two technology development and sourcing options are used:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Option 1</th>
<th>Option 2</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>On-farm Research Required to Test Technologies in the Village Situation</strong></td>
<td><strong>Relevant Technical Departments have Proven Technology and the Competence to Introduce the Technology:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Identifying research stations with appropriate expertise and technologies.</td>
<td>- Identifying appropriate technical agency</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- On-farm (adaptive) research</td>
<td>- Farmer demonstrations using developed technologies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Monitoring and assessment of the technologies tested</td>
<td>- Farmer training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Technology introduction</td>
<td>- Monitoring and assessment of the technologies tested</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Farmer training in technologies</td>
<td>- Technology introduction and expansion</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

During the above work the extension units at PAFO and DAFO co-ordinate with established research and other institutions to supply and support the application of appropriate technology for village development activities.
The process and the results of applying Approach 1 and Approach 2 are very similar:

- Farmers have been through a process of identifying problems and opportunities
- Research and extension staff have co-operated in working with interested farmers to test and evaluate the potential technologies, or to assess and demonstrate proven technologies
- Farmers have gained practical experience in using the technologies.

5.5.2.3 Outputs from Technology Development

The outputs from technology development and co-operation with relevant agencies are extension tools such as activity recommendations and calendars, activity budgets and extension aids.

Table 1 indicates the technologies that have been either developed and/or sourced in the three situations in which extension method development has been undertaken.

**Table 1: Technologies Developed in Three Situations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sloping Land Rainfed Areas (Luang Prabang)</th>
<th>Lowland Rainfed Areas (Savannakhet)</th>
<th>Upland Commercial Rainfed Areas (LaoNgam)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Field Crops (Research and Extension)</td>
<td>Field Crops</td>
<td>Soil Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Upland Rice; varieties</td>
<td>- Rainfed Paddy Rice</td>
<td>- Contour tillage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Maize; varieties, seed prod.</td>
<td>- Varieties</td>
<td>- Upland rice/peanut rotations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--ground nut; varieties, seed production</td>
<td>- Fertilizer practices</td>
<td>- Upland Rice/Soybean rotations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Mung bean; varieties, seed production</td>
<td>- Seed multiplication</td>
<td>Field Crops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Job’s Tear ; varieties, spacing, seed production, relay cropping</td>
<td>- Dry Season Peanuts</td>
<td>- Rainfed peanuts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Introductions; rice bean, cowpea (black bean)</td>
<td>- Varieties</td>
<td>- Varieties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved Fallow</td>
<td>- Husbandry practices</td>
<td>- Husbandry practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Long –term legume spp. inter-cropped with upland rice and job’s tear</td>
<td>- Seed multiplication</td>
<td>- Seed multiplication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agro-Forestry Conservation Farming</td>
<td>- Dry Season Maize</td>
<td>- Cardamom</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Permanent tree crops, paper mulberry and annuals combined with or without contour hedgerows</td>
<td>- Varieties</td>
<td>- Cardamom/bush fallow/field crop rotations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Fruit trees; species and varieties inter-cropped with annuals, husbandry practices, short term and long term tree mixes</td>
<td>- Husbandry practices</td>
<td>- Maize</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Contour hedgerows; species, mulch application, spacing</td>
<td>- Seed multiplication</td>
<td>- Varieties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Pineapple; plant spacing, contour planting</td>
<td>- Disease control</td>
<td>- Husbandry practices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Banana; contour planting and spacing</td>
<td>- Housing methods</td>
<td>- Seed multiplication</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Nutrition</td>
<td>Tree Crops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Fish</td>
<td>- Coffee Production</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Fish in paddy practices</td>
<td>- Varieties</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>- Fish pond practices</td>
<td>- Spacing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>- Fertilizer practices</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.5.3 Function 3: Technology Dissemination

When suitable techniques and practices have been identified successfully, tested and evaluated with farmers, various extension activities are required to disseminate this information. The work of developing and demonstrating appropriate technology is focused on a few co-operating villagers or small activity or interest groups.

The dissemination activity is facilitated through the few volunteer farmers who have adopted the technology. They assist others who have become interested.

Tools such as targeted training, study tours, expanded demonstrations coupled with village group and media extension methods are used to diffuse the technologies to other members of the community. Other individuals become aware, test, evaluate and decide whether to adopt practices and techniques relevant to their needs. By this means program benefits are expanded through adoption by the wider village community. While similar methods are used in each situation, extension personnel promote different technologies because of the different farming systems encountered. They therefore need a different set of skills when working in different situations.

Table 2: Extension Technology Dissemination Methods

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dissemination Methods</th>
<th>Sloping Land Rainfed Areas (Luang Prabang)</th>
<th>Lowland Rainfed Areas (Savannakhet)</th>
<th>Upland Commercial Rainfed Areas (LaoNgam)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Farmer Study Trips</td>
<td>. Research station visits; improved fallow, sloping land farming</td>
<td>. Savings and credit/loan groups</td>
<td>. Savings and credit/loan groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technologies, cropping trials</td>
<td>Rattan production</td>
<td>Coffee production</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td>------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit trees</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contour planted pineapples</td>
<td>Fish in paddy fields</td>
<td>Fish ponds</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit trees</td>
<td>Small livestock</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper mulberry</td>
<td>Field crops</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hedgerows/annuals</td>
<td>Fish ponds</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Farmer Exchange Visits**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Formal Farmer Training Courses</th>
<th>Demonstrations</th>
<th>Farmer Field Days</th>
<th>Farmer Group Meetings and Training Sessions</th>
<th>Extension Aids</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Contour planted pineapples</td>
<td>Fruit trees (mixed varieties)</td>
<td>Fruit trees</td>
<td>Technical recommendations</td>
<td>Posters and prepared hand-out sheets on:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fruit trees</td>
<td>Paper mulberry</td>
<td>Varieties &amp; fertilizer</td>
<td>Savings and loan groups</td>
<td>Contour conservation farming methods</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paper mulberry</td>
<td>Fish ponds</td>
<td>Fish in paddy fields</td>
<td>Integrated farming</td>
<td>Land use option photo sheets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intergrated farming (fruit trees, paper mulberry,pigs, poultry, paddy rice, fish ponds)</td>
<td>Contour planted pineapple</td>
<td>Fish ponds</td>
<td>Conservation farming</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pigs and poultry</td>
<td>Rainfed paddy rice</td>
<td>Fish ponds</td>
<td>Activity review/monitoring</td>
<td>Technical booklets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coffee processing between hedgerows</td>
<td>Fruit trees</td>
<td>Peanuts</td>
<td>Farm activity calendars</td>
<td>Pamphlets on: fish, field crops, fruit trees, steer fattening, coffee husbandry, small livestock</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Farmer Group Meetings and Training Sessions**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Farmer Group Meetings and Training Sessions</th>
<th>Extension Aids</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Technical recommendations</td>
<td>Technical booklets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savings and loan groups</td>
<td>Pamphlets on: fish, field crops, fruit trees, steer fattening, coffee husbandry, small livestock</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Integrated farming</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conservation farming</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity review/monitoring</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activity review/monitoring</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farm activity calendars</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical recommendations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Technical recommendations</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savings groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Savings groups</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.5.4 Function 4. Village Finance Methods and Management

5.5.4.1 Sources of Village Finance

Villages have experiences with various credit sources - merchants, friends, revolving funds, savings groups and the Agricultural Promotion Bank (APB) etc. These experiences should be fully explored by group discussion to draw out valuable lessons to help villagers make decisions about the most appropriate sources of finance.

The following finance sources are available:

- Personal savings
- Village savings and credit/loan groups (S&L)
- Village Funds
- Merchants and money lenders
- Village revolving funds (VRF)
- Institutional credit - APB

Each of these sources has its own characteristics and merits. The advantages and, disadvantages of each are discussed with villagers. Villagers can then make collective decisions on what financial source/s serve their needs.

5.5.4.2 The Principles for Village Financing

Table 3: The Principles of Village financing

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Principles for Consideration</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Financing operations must be transparent (open for inspection/audit)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Proper accounting procedures must be adopted by the group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Management rules and regulations must be developed with members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Procedures and policies for loans and repayments must be developed with members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Equitable procedures for distributing interest must be adopted by members</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Safe lending policies must be adopted by the group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Borrowing policies must be based on:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>¬ true needs,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>¬ commitments and guarantees to repay loans</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Lenders must consider loan applications carefully, including:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>¬ the history of the applicant,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>¬ the safeness of the proposed loan activity</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.5.4.3 Village Financing Strategies, Procedures and Methods

a) Strategies

The program has developed strategies for the following village financing options:

1) The establishment of Village Savings and Credit/Loan Groups.

2) The maintenance of established revolving funds.

3) The rehabilitation of inactive or struggling village funds.

4) The establishment of new village revolving funds.

5) Accessing institutional credit and savings sources

b) Procedures and Methods for Village Financing

A set of general procedures have been developed and tested. These have been adapted to the different situations in the uplands and lowlands.

Table 4: Procedures for Village Savings and Credit Groups and Village Revolving Funds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Activity or Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1. Orientation and Dialogue | - Source of savings  
- Advantages of savings  
- Management principles |
| 2. Establishing Group Management Rules | - Establish S&C group rules  
- Decide membership criteria and conditions  
- Decide on management team – numbers and functions  
- Make decisions on group policies  
- Establish accounting and cash management methods  
- Agree on savings deposit frequency and amount  
- Set rules for withdrawals of group savings  
- Rules for management of funds loaned  
- Loan agreements  
- Interest rates  
- Contingency arrangements  
- Establishing rules for monitoring committee meetings and member meetings |
| 3. Forming the Group | - Meeting of interested families  
- Revision of committee functions with interested families |
c) Procedures for Rehabilitating Village Revolving Funds

Some revolving funds of the past have encountered difficulties in management and operation. Members have also to deal with the problem of taking up ownership because in the past numbers of VRFs were managed largely by DAFO staff. The following procedures and measures have been developed for the rehabilitation of VRF’s experiencing difficulties.

Table 4: Procedures for Rehabilitating Village Revolving Funds

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Step</th>
<th>Activity or Task</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>1. Problem Recognition</strong></td>
<td>• Identify with members the VRF problems  &lt;br&gt; • Discuss causes of the problems  &lt;br&gt; • Decide on proposed solutions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>2. Transfer of Ownership from DAFO to Village</strong></td>
<td>• Clarify the meaning of “fund ownership” with villagers  &lt;br&gt; • Use problem census and problem solving meetings to facilitate discussion  &lt;br&gt; • Explain the role of staff as facilitators not managers  &lt;br&gt; • Develop strategies with villagers to recover outstanding loans  &lt;br&gt; • Develop strategies to deal with defaulters  &lt;br&gt; • Develop routines for future loan recovery</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>3. Establish New Management Rules</strong></td>
<td><strong>Note:</strong> The activities and tasks are the same for new revolving funds and savings and credit groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>4. Committee Training on S&amp;L Group Operations</strong></td>
<td><strong>Note:</strong> The activities and tasks are the same for new revolving funds and savings and credit groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>5. Monthly Extension Follow-up and Support</strong></td>
<td><strong>Note:</strong> The activities and tasks are the same for new revolving funds and savings and credit groups</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.5.4.4 Financing Methods for Different Situations

Adaptations of the central principles, strategies, procedures and methods are recommended in different situations. Variations have been devised to deal with particular situations, eg., the shifting cultivation farming system, and the lowland semi-subistence farming system.

(a) Village Financing in Shifting Cultivation Areas

- Village Savings Credit/Loan Groups
- Village Sustainable Land Use Funds

In the sloping land situations of Luang Prabang village savings and loan funds are used as a means of encouraging and financing the small scale investments in development of sustainable land use in sloping land farming systems. Part of the savings and loan fund is utilised as a "sustainability fund" to finance the development of productive and permanent land use of sloping land, minimising soil erosion and improving the livelihood of sloping land users.

Savings capacity is low because of the relatively serious poverty situation. The S&L fund is therefore augmented with program funds for specified purposes.

c) Village Financing in the Lowlands

- Village Revolving Funds
- Village Savings and Credit/Loan Groups
- Institutional Credit
- Multi-purpose Village Funds
- Joint Forest Management (JFM) Village Development Fund

In the lowland rain-fed situation of Savannakhet and the uplands of Laongam District the establishment of savings groups and development of revolving funds is encouraged as a problem solving strategy. In some cases village access to finance for production purposes and other family needs is identified as a high priority. In other cases the S&L group potential and benefits are identified through on-going dialogue.

In villages testing the JFM model a village development fund is established from portion of the logging revenue. This provides a finance resource to service village development needs.

6. GENDER RESPONSIVENESS

The extension component exhibits gender responsiveness in both model development and model implementation.

In Model Development

- Model development and testing is undertaken by women and men from program offices at central, provincial and district levels and the RTCs.
- Time is provided for discussion on gender issues during staff training workshops, village planning, extension activities and monitoring and evaluation activities.
- Both male and female staff members are involved in meetings concerning development planning and activity implementation.

In Model Implementation

- Gender sensitive approaches are used in problem identification, planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation.
- Village gender study and analysis
- Approaches to obtain participation from various social groups in village meetings and training events are used, ie.,
  - Inviting both men and women to attend village meetings
Setting meeting appointments to ensure youth and village elders are encouraged and motivated to attend.
Choosing times and venues for training sessions and meetings in consultation with women in order to optimise female participation.

- Gender focal people learn to facilitate the full range of extension activities so they are capable of mainstreaming gender.
- Women's participation in village meetings is used to build confidence, facilitate expression of opinions and concerns and encourage involvement in decision making.
- Dialogue is held with separate groups of women.
- The practice of electing at least two women on S&L group committees is adopted.

7. MONITORING PROCEDURES AND METHODS

The focus of monitoring work has been discussed in the Participatory Village Development and Sustainable Land Use System document, i.e.,

- Development of monitoring procedures and methods, and
- Application of the monitoring procedures and methods

This document explains the progress made in developing monitoring procedures and methods for Extension.

The development and documentation of extension monitoring procedures and methods is still in the early stages. Work is progressing with testing "progress or activity" monitoring of work plan activities undertaken at village level.

Some initial work has been done on "farmer adoption" monitoring of farming or husbandry practices. This has not reached a stage of development where meaningful guidelines can be presented.

There has been no attempt to date to deal with "impact monitoring" because it is too early to assess the impact of extension activities recently undertaken. Guidelines for future "impact" monitoring have therefore not been formulated. Indicators are being identified and baseline status established.

Three aspects are discussed:

- Types of monitoring
- Purpose of monitoring
- Procedures and methods used

7.1 Types of Monitoring

7.1.1 Progress or Activity Monitoring

This is the monitoring of extension activities conducted during the annual work plan. It is conducted for two reasons:

a) to assess the achievements and quality of extension activities conducted by farmers and extension staff
b) to provide useful information aimed at effecting ongoing improvement of extension activities.

Examples:

- The collection of information from members of S&L and production groups to understand their views on the performance of the group, i.e., checking the S&L accounts
- The inspecting and discussion on the construction and stocking of fish ponds by co-operating farmers
- The recording of information on training activities conducted, i.e., training events for villagers and training events for staff
7.1.2 Staff Adoption of Procedures and Methods

The purpose of this aspect of monitoring is to assess the degree of adoption of recommended extension procedures and methods by field staff after they have received training and on-the-job experience.

This type of monitoring has not commenced because insufficient time in model application has prevented meaningful assessment of staff adoption of procedures and methods.

7.1.3 Villager Adoption of Farming or Husbandry Practices

A tentative start has been made with assessing farmer adoption of farming or husbandry practices, eg,

- Indicators to assess the adoption of soil conservation measures in sloping land areas.
- The adoption of rice variety multiplication and fertilizer application in lowland areas.
- Uptake of family planning (birth spacing) measures in areas of accelerating population growth.

Further work is required to develop and test this type of monitoring.

7.1.4 Monitoring the Impact of Extension

No method development work has been attempted for this type of monitoring. However, indicators of impact as they relate to activity purposes and objectives are being identified, for example, indicators of rice sufficiency and income generation. Major baseline impact indicators are available but further documentation is required.

7.1.5 Monitoring Procedures and Methods

7.1.5.1 Progress or Activity Monitoring

The following procedures and methods are used:

- Groups interviews of villagers. Existing production groups or other groups are interviewed as a group to get their views on progress.
- Staff observation of activities undertaken by village groups using indicator monitoring forms, eg, for S&L Groups and livelihood production groups.
- Discussions with farmer co-operators involved in extension activities.

8. EXPERIENCES AND LESSONS LEARNED

8.1 Institutional Experiences and Lessons

- Research has been linked to village development and extension.

Initially research method development activities focused on on-station research. As the program continued emphasis was re-focused towards adaptive research in close cooperation with extension. As a consequence approaches linking extension and research have been positively demonstrated in contrasting situations.

In the shifting cultivation areas of the north the research component uses on-station and on-farm research methods to address and demonstrate conservation farming technologies. This is done in collaboration with other research organisations, district extension and land use planning staff and villagers. In the lowland rainfed areas of the south, the participatory extension program involves the GOL rice research station in rice trials, training of district staff and villagers and demonstrations to address the problem of rainfed paddy rice insufficiency.

- The RTCs are linked to village extension activities through the DAFOs.

Staff of the RTCs have been involved in all method development activities with extension, commencing with initial dialogue and planning activity through to progress and activity monitoring. Formal and informal training for extension staff and villagers is provided in collaboration with DAFO. Curriculum development at the RTCs has been based on field experiences during method development work in target areas. Thus effective linkages
between DAFOs, the RTCs and villagers have been created.

- **Consultation between provincial, district and village stake-holders is important**

The method development work has indicated that all members of the provincial-district team should keep in mind the need for meaningful consultation with each other, the villagers and other ‘stakeholders’. Such integrated and consultative effort results in more efficient extension activity because support mechanisms function more effectively.

- **Support and advisory assistance to villagers is very important.**

In future programs attention should be given to developing an understanding of the essential differences between "inspection", "monitoring" and "support" particularly when farmers are experiencing difficulties when attempting to introduce new technologies. The LSFP extension approach places more importance on the advisory and support activities from extension staff to farmers than inspection and monitoring. "Monitoring" activity should therefore be separated from "inspection" because inspection implies a penalty such as fine if the ‘rules’ have not been followed.

- **Model farmer limitations**

The concept of extension working with one or two ‘model’ families to achieve adoption is strongly internalised. The provision of budget to expand activities is perceived as an extension function. The dissemination function of expanding benefits to the community through demonstration, learning and improvement followed by adoption and expansion, is not well understood. These perceptions have two consequences:

- Demonstration occurs without accompanying dissemination.
- Scaling-up is achieved through funding without community evaluation and decision.

Within the Model Consolidation Program (MCP) the perceptions led to misunderstandings with some extension workers seeing the method development activity as a ‘model village’ development proposal. Continued and consistent assistance to staff is needed to work through all processes in the extension model over a period of several years.

- **Collaboration and technical competence**

Learning at district level is constrained by isolation from outside collaboration and new information. Ongoing development and improvement of extension training capabilities in the RTCs is one practical solution. Well-trained staff with on-the-job supervision and support will be more likely to seek professional collaboration. The RTCs would also regularly collaborate with outside institutions while maintaining ‘hands on’ contact with district extension workers.

- Mechanisms have been created for linking the RTCs to DAFO extension work. Benefits would increase if similar linkages could be created between the research resources of NAFRI and the RTCs. If RTC staff were given time to do relevant research in collaboration with researchers, NAFRI would make a valuable contribution to capacity building of the RTCs and, indirectly, to extension.

- Future attention to preparing technical recommendations would assist extension workers. In addition, the documentation of land use options for different land use types needs further elaboration as this would facilitate staff training and result in improved planning of field activity.

- Extension workers give insufficient attention to preparing themselves before conducting extension and training activities with villagers. The use of prepared notes on the subject matter to be discussed and visual aids would improve the effectiveness of the messages which extension staff want to transmit to villagers.

- **Facilities, mobility and flexibility**

- Facilities: District staff work with very limited facilities and mobility. These are the basic tools for an extension service. Insufficient field allowances means that it will be difficult to maintain motivation in a non-project environment. While LSFP did not exacerbate the problem with artificial per diem rates, it did provide a structure and activity budget to work with, along with stimulation provided by advisors and counterparts. This provides significant staff motivation. The extension model developed can be continued in target and other villages by extension services with limited resources provided staff at least have access to per diem and transport. Staff could assist many villages that now have village funds (S&L, VRFs & JFM) to further expand the funds and increase community selfreliance.

- Mobility and Flexibility: The procedure of per diem and fuel tied to activities hinders flexibility in response
to village needs. Extension work involves maintaining an ongoing dialogue with the target communities to respond to changing situations. To maintain dialogue staff need to be able to travel and spend time in target villages. If visits are always linked to a particular activity, dialogue on all issues of concern to villagers will not occur. Much village extension work can be conducted in a manner responsive to changing village needs by provision of a motorbike, monthly fuel and per diem allowances.

- **Staff transfers and hand-over procedures**

Extension workers are often transferred with little attention to hand-over of responsibilities to replacement staff. This is counter-productive to providing continuity of extension support. Procedures for routine in-service training followed by active supervision and coaching of replacement staff would reduce the time taken for new staff to become effective. It also provides continuity of extension support to villages, thereby reducing the likelihood of set-backs.

### 8.2 Process Related Experiences and Lessons

- **Participation**

While the word participation in both Lao and English has the same connotation in meaning, the practical context of ‘participation’ in extension is not universally understood. For example ‘having a meeting’ may be seen as being ‘participatory’.

A lot more time and work is needed at all levels to have real impacts. This is not just an issue at field level but permeates through all levels. At times even ‘participatory’ programs, become "directive" in nature in order to quickly achieve a result.

- **Gender responsiveness and social issues**

  - Gender: To obtain good participation gender sensitive approaches are needed. This leads to a full expression of community views and problems. In rural communities some main problems are social in nature: women’s issues of heavy work burden; many children; population growth; health; poor school attendance, particularly girls; women’s participation in community and family decisions etc. Staff need continued special assistance if they are to further adopt gender responsive approaches because some issues raised are beyond their present level of training and experience.
  
  - Social Issues: Social issues in many instances are given high community priority and impinge on other sectors. Thus to be consistent, there needs to be institutional links to facilitate and enable concurrent attention to these important social issues. In the LSFP this was done by involving district and village representatives in gender and social extension activities.

  - The current Strategic Vision for the Agricultural Sector does not address gender issues nor related social development needs. However, gender mainstreaming guidelines are being developed by working groups at MAF and DoF. These guidelines will provide guidance for staff at all levels.

### 8.3 Technical Experiences and Lessons

- **Procedures and methods for linking village savings to the provision of credit for socio-economic development activities are better understood**

Prior to LSFP Phase 4, the provision of credit to farmers was through village revolving funds. Management and supervision was provided from DAFO. Approaches to involve villagers in decision-making and management were not well developed and village ownership was not well incorporated. In Phase 4, methods for providing funds for economic activities have been progressively developed which facilitate the release of program funds, or funds from other sources, to village credit organisations. These credit organisations may be village savings groups or village revolving funds. Fund management is based on the principle of village ownership, whereby villagers take decisions on selecting fund managers, making fund rules and regulations and operating loan accounts and records. Village S&L groups, VRFs and JFM funds have great potential to empower communities, increase self-reliance and accelerate village development.
9. ADDITIONAL SUPPORTING DOCUMENTATION


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Anon., (January 2001) Training Course Curriculum Module 3- Participatory Extension: A five segment course curriculum document prepared by the Northern and Southern Regional Training Centres. Lao Swedish Forestry Program, Department of Forestry.