Rural Learning Networks

Farmers’ Forest Management
Schools

Et al.

III DRAFT FOR COMMENTS
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Facilitator’s Field Manual
## Table of Contents

**Foreword**  
4

**Overview**  
5

Farmers’ Forest Management School  
6
- Background  
6
- Purpose  
7
- Learning approach adopted  
8
- The role of the facilitator  
8
- The role of scientists  
9
- The purpose and the use of the manual  
10
- How to use the manual  
10
- When and where to run a school  
11

Overall school flow  
12
- Pre-school activities  
12
- School meeting  
14

**Step 1**  
Selecting forest users group and the FFMS group  
17

1.1 Selection of a forest user group or community  
18
1.2 Present the approach to community and its leaders  
20
1.3 Selecting the FFMS group members  
21
1.4 Stakeholder analysis tool  
23

**Step 2**  
Opening session  
25

2.1 Sharing of expectations and school introduction  
26
2.2 Setting group norms  
28

**Step 3**  
Identify group learning interests and the forest area  
31

3.1 Past, present, and future needs (first option)  
32
3.2 Past, present, and future needs (second option)  
35
3.3 Needs prioritization  
36
3.4 Forest area identification - a simple forest map  
39
3.5 Forest area identification – A forest walk  
41

**Step 4**  
Selection of forest management practices and topic of special interest  
43

4.1 Need based resource assessment  
44
4.2 Preference ranking  
47
4.3 Exploring differences between experimentation and demonstration  
48
4.4 Selection of forest management practices to be tested  
50
Step 5  Planning field experimentation  
  5.1 Selection of plots for testing purposes  
  5.2 Workplan for field experimentation  
  5.3 Planning school meetings for one year  

Step 6  Preparing for monitoring of field experimentation  
  6.1 Monitoring in our daily life  
  6.2 What to measure and selection of indicators  

Step 7  Regular meetings and topic of special interest  
  7.1 Review of previous meeting  
  7.2 Briefing on today activities / Today agenda  
  7.3 Observation in the experimental plots  
  7.4 Reflection and analysis arising from the field observations  
  7.5 Special topics  

Step 8  School evaluation and re-planning  
  8.1 “T Chart”  
  8.2 Attainment of learning objectives  
  8.3 Questionnaire  
  8.4 Before and after picture  
  8.5 Exploring new learning opportunities (re-planning)  

Recurrent exercises  
  R.E-1 Review of the previous school meeting  
  R.E-2 Briefing on today activities / today agenda  
  R.E-3 Daily feedback: Feedback fishbowl  
  R.E-4 Daily feedback: Like and dislikes (statements)  
  R.E-5 Daily feedback: Words remembered  
  R.E-6 Ice breaker: Stand up if…  
  R.E-7 Ice breaker: counting  
  R.E-8 Team building: Pen in the bottle  
  R.E-9 Building a bridge (or a house)  

Reading material
Foreword

To be developed .....
This overview contains information on the reason why the Farmers’ Forest Management School methodology has been developed and the main principles on which it is based.

In this session you will also find a summary on how the manual was developed, suggestions for its use and the overall school flow.
FARMERS’ FOREST MANAGEMENT SCHOOL

Background

Community forestry is most accurately and usefully understood as an umbrella term denoting a wide range of activities which link rural people with forests, trees, and the products and benefits to be derived from them.

Community forestry is at least as much about improved management of existing resources as it is about reforestation. Community forestry may therefore be considered not as a separate discipline or even a programme, but as one dimension of forestry, agriculture, rural energy and other components of rural development.

Nowadays community forestry programmes are based on recognition of the dependence of local people on their resources and their interest in managing them. Moreover, governments are increasingly shifting towards more participatory forest management strategies, and this has implications for how community forestry extension programs are planned and implemented.

It has been recognised that processes, methods and tools to support the development of community forestry have been developed and are presently in use throughout Asia. These processes include several steps such as investigation, negotiation, land allocation, and endorsement of management agreements/plans. Through these processes the rights to the use and management of forest areas have been transferred to local communities.

In recent years it has been observed that a high percentage of communities have a tendency to over-protect the community forest area, and that forest departments knowledge focuses mainly on timber production. Therefore it is felt that the present community forest management strategies are not capable of providing the expected benefits to forest users.

One of the main constraints identified to meeting current users’ interests and needs is the limited amount of training available for facilitating active forest management and practising this with forest user.

It is believed that if the capacity of community forest users to manage their forest could be engaged and strengthened, paying attention to both timber and non-timber forest products, increased benefits could be shared amongst users, not only without depleting forest resources, but actually enhancing its productivity.

Transfer of technology model is still the dominant approach in both forestry and agricultural research centers and extension departments. Forest management systems, silviculture operations (focussing mainly on timber production) are more closely tailored to foresters’ rather than villagers’ skills, experience, and often not always compatible with local needs.

In particular extension has not been part of conventional forestry and foresters thus are not trained in its practice. Participatory extension methods and promoting farmers experimentation are more likely not only to articulate farmers’ knowledge and concerns, but also to facilitate the process of action research needed to identify and refine appropriate technologies, and also help people develop their own problem solving skills.

This approach, and the consequent shift in roles for extension service providers, may require some re-orientation training, as well as training in communication skills, analysis and problem solving, the ability to facilitate decision-making processes among and between users, and in technical areas related to forest management and tree crop production.

The learning process/approach presented in this field manual has been developed to offer an approach to build forest users groups’ capacity in forest management with less focus on transfer of technologies and more emphasis on facilitating group learning and participatory group decision-making.
Purpose of the Farmers’ Forest Management School

The Farmers’ Forest Management School (FFMS) is being developed to respond to farmers’ identified need and interest to learn more about forest management practices, and to create an opportunity for joint learning between rangers and communities to generate new silvicultural knowledge.

The school aims to build farmers’ capacity to analyze their forest management system and practices, to identify the present and future forest production needs, and to experiment possible solutions on their forest, eventually identifying and adopting the practices that will solve farmers’ felt forest production needs.

The proposed learning process gives forest users the opportunity to learn by doing, by being involved in experimentation and discussion, developing their ability of making critical and informed decisions that render their forest more productive, profitable and sustainable.

The purpose is also to assist users to organize themselves and their communities, and to create a strong working network with other groups, forest officers and researchers. In doing so the role of farmers in the researcher - extensionist - farmer chain will be strengthened. Through utilizing the skills developed in local analysis forest users are enabled to adjust input recommendations or technical packages to suit local conditions.

Consequently the school is not meant to teach farmers new technologies developed outside their environment but through participatory training methods to provide them with tools and skills which will enable them to analyze their own forest management practices, to generate new ideas on silvicultural practices for non timber and timber forest products, to identify and experiment possible solutions and potentials for development.

Learning approach adopted

Farmers’ learning is directed by goals and needs looking for solutions to real life problems. The learning process has been designed to create suitable conditions for forest user group members to become fully involved in identifying what to learn, become fully involved in an experience, observe and reflect on the experience from many perspectives, create concepts and use theories and newly acquired skills to make decisions and solve problems.

The Farmers’ Forest Management School uses “non-formal adult education” methods, based on experiential learning techniques, and participatory training and group decision-making methods.

Adults come to any new experience knowing a great deal, and they learn best by building upon their own experiences. They learn more by doing than by listening, and they learn best when they are engaged and assisted. Adult learning theory stresses that adults need opportunities to experience, reflect, discover, and apply.

In practice, then, we need to understand that:

- to learn from new experiences, farmers need to be able to relate these to their own values, beliefs and previous experiences;
- to learn by discovery, farmers need to have confidence and responsibility, to experiment and find their own conclusions;
- to learn by applying, farmers need to use and test a new skill and receive feedback on their performance, and
- to learn by sharing, farmers need to be able to trust that learning by sharing with other farmers will not harm their business.
Experiential learning advocates:

- the establishment of optimal learning environments in which participants have a sense of belonging, and security;
- freedom to make choices;
- energizing group knowledge (intellectual capital) and good will to promoting group positive change;
- active group members participation and group ownership of the solution to the problem addressed;
- voluntary attendance, informality of meetings, freedom of expression, and avoidance of pressure.

**The forest as classroom.** Typically a group of 20 to 25 selected members of a forest users group meets regularly for half-day over a period of 12 months (or more) on one of the group selected forest areas.

All learning is based in the forest. Farmers identify and experiment different forest management practices and practice new skills. Through direct observation of experimental plots data are collected and decisions made based on analyses of this information. Farmers present their decisions to the other group members in the field school for further discussion, questioning, and refinement. Using this approach problems are seen as challenges not constraints.

Members of the Forest User Group are taught numerous analytical methods. Problems are posed to groups in a graduated manner such that they can build confidence in their ability to identify and tackle problems they might encounter in the forest.

**The role of the facilitator**

The Farmer’s Forest Management School is facilitated by a field officer, or group leader trained in adult education principles, facilitation skills, participatory training and group decision-making methods, has an understanding of the social of forest practices development, and has implemented a forest management school at least once as part of her or his training.

Facilitation can be best described as a conscious process of assisting a group, functioning as a group, to successfully achieve its defined task. In order to facilitate, we need to facilitate the process of group dynamics and the team learning process.

To understand the role of the facilitator it is necessary to appreciate that to learn adult need opportunities to experience, reflect, discover and apply. The evidence for learning is change - changes in behavior, knowledge, understanding, skills, interests, values, awareness, or attitudes.

In order to facilitate these changes in farmers, it is more effective to assist with an experiential activity during which the farmers work out their own conclusions, than to give lectures or demonstrations. Thus, facilitators need to match learning activities with desired learning outcomes.

A good FFMS includes a broad variety of learning activities, such as field exercise experimentation, group reflection and discussion, presentation and demonstration. Each has its own merits and uses. These activities are selected specifically to encourage farmers to become active and animated - farmers offer ideas, raise questions, build on one another’s statements and challenge one another’s opinions. They learn from and with other farmers and work together on a collective analysis.

Therefore, the facilitator's job in the FFMS is to structure and encourage rather than deliver information, explain or provide answers. The facilitator does not owe the content but s/he advocate a fair and open process. Facilitators initiate discussion and then draw in the farmers; they amplify some comments and summarise others; they compare and connect remarks and point out opposing views; they draw the threads of discussion together and highlight the learning points. In short, the facilitators guide the process, but not the outcome.
The following have been identified as being necessary functions for a facilitator in a FFMS:

- to create interest, identify forest users groups, and mobilise farmers for participation in the FFMS;
- to create a comfortable and open learning environment;
- to be accepting, supportive, and most important to be able to establishing a pattern of communication that creates a climate of trust and safety eventually increasing the flow of information and cooperation amongst group members;
- to understand and explore farmers' problems and priorities;
- to facilitate dialogue and participatory group decision-making to promote mutual understanding;
- to foster inclusive decisions;
- to provide assistance for solving problems;
- to build farmers' confidence in experimenting, reflecting and learning from this process;
- to increase farmers' knowledge in forest management/silviculture techniques, and
- to encourage and promote the sharing of learning and best practices;
- to help the group reflection and analysis of field experiments, assist in summarizing the results of each discussion,
- to when needed, provide (or make available) adequate information related to forest management practices from within or outside their village context;
- to promote network with extension service and specialists;

**The role of scientists and other technical resource persons**

It is recognized that a facilitator may not have all the technical knowledge and skills required to cover the full range of forest management issues which the group may express an interested in. Therefore, s/he will identify and mobilize the appropriate resources, such as forestry staff, knowledgeable farmers, specialists, visits to near by villages, so as to timely provide farmers with the required information and skills, and to make sure that the school curriculum meets farmers' expressed interest.

Since forest management may involve knowledge on different disciplines in particular those related to non timber forest products (e.g. soil nutrients, pests, harvesting techniques, marketing/selling of produce) scientists and/or resource persons may need to be involved during the implementation of a school. Multidisciplinary teams including locally available expertise (knowledgeable farmers) are particularly appropriate in the school process. They provide backstopping, support, knowledge on a specific topic, and they also learn to work with farmers.

Resource persons not familiar with this training approach may need to be briefed by the facilitator, and assisted in the preparation of his or her session plans (exercises). Lectures need to be avoided giving preference to direct experimentation, observation, and reflection.
The purpose and the users of the manual

The overall objective of the manual is to provide the basic framework and materials for the implementation of the Farmer’s Forest Management School (FFMS).

This manual is intended to be used by:

(a) people who would like to organise a FFMS and need ideas and exercises on how to set up a school programme, and to prepare a field manual in their own country;

(b) trainers or coordinators who will be training field-level facilitators using these guidelines.

(c) field based extension officers, farmers’ leaders and field-level development workers to facilitate the implementation of a FFMS, when this English version is translated into the language of the country of use and adapted to local/field circumstances where needed.

Overview of the manual

The manual contains eight chapters. The chapters follow the school flow cycle as shown on page 9. Each chapter deals with a main topic and it contains an introduction and a number of exercises related to the main topic. In some cases two or more exercises have been included for one topic. This will give the user the flexibility to choose the most appropriate for a particular situation.

The first chapter provides information on the activities suggested to be carried out before the beginning of the Farmer Forest Management School (FFMS). This includes hints on group selection and negotiating the FFMS programme with the user group.

Chapter two contains exercises related to the opening of the school, setting expectations and setting groups norms.

Chapter three contains exercises to guide participants to the identification and prioritization of common learning interests (forest production needs) and forest areas to be used as a learning site.

Chapter four deals with the generation of ideas and selection of forest practices to be experimented.

Chapter five includes exercises to assist users to plan field experimentation including selection of plots.

Chapter six deals with monitoring of farmers’ experimentation and demonstrations (season-long studies).

Chapter seven includes exercises to facilitate the regular group meetings, including reflection and analysis of field observation. The chapter also includes sessions according to different forest management practices.

Chapter eight contains exercises on participatory school evaluation, and re-planning.

Recurrent exercises presents exercises that are regularly used during each half-day meeting such as daily review, summary, daily feedback, team building and ice breakers.

Reading material/case studies includes a selected numbers of background papers on school process, adult learning principles, facilitation, and case studies on users group/communities that have implemented their own Farmers’ Forest Management School.

How to use the manual

This manual contains a number of exercises from identifying interested users groups to monitoring and evaluation of field experiments. Each exercise is described in detail so as to provide sufficient guidance to the facilitator. Each exercise includes a brief introduction, learning objectives, time and material needed, and steps to be followed. Each exercise ends with suggestions for leading questions to facilitate group reflection and discussions.
Adult learning and change are facilitated best by a process that begins with an experience followed by the collection of observations about that experience. This information is then analyzed and the resulting conclusion used by the learners to modify their behavior and select new experiences. Consequently each exercise has been designed to promote farmers learning using experiential learning techniques and participatory training methods.

To implement an exercise it is often suggested to form small groups of 4 to 5 people. The group’s assignment includes idea-generation, brainstorming, information sharing, list making, and problem solving or skill practice. The facilitator does not interfere, but monitors progress of the groups and offers procedural guidance, content suggestions, and feedback.

Working in small groups is a very effective participatory training method increasing learner participation and commitment. Small-group task requires and encourages active engagement of all participants. In small group people have less chance to hide or get lost. Participant speak more freely than in large groups where people feel little or no personal responsibility. Working in small groups offers the opportunity to:

- Stimulate individual inputs,
- break the ice,
- gather opinions and identify preconceived ideas,
- rank order item and create an agenda,
- collect questions and issues
- promote feedback
- measure knowledge and experience.

During the exercises, you may also be asked to promote group discussion or assist groups in accomplish the task assigned. To be able to promote group learning making the best use of the suggestions included in each exercise you will need to use a variety of facilitation skills you have learnt during the facilitators’ training.

**When and where to run a school**

Typically a group of 20 to 25 farmers, selected within the larger user group/community, meets regularly (for a morning or an afternoon). The frequency of meetings may vary from once a month to every 3 months. In general there are about 8 to 10 meetings in one school.

**Time of the year:** The school is scheduled to start with five half-day meetings before the beginning of the season for forest operations. This will allow participants to go through the initial school assessment phase and to identify forest management practices that may be chosen for experimentation during the season. After the initial assessment phase the school continues with regular half-day meetings during the season (cycle).

In scheduling the school the facilitator should be aware of farmers’ availability and it is important to involve participants in setting the time and schedule of meetings. Women may not have the same availability as men. To guarantee that women can attend regularly suitable times need to be identified. Facilitators have an important role to play in this respect.

**Duration:** The school has a duration of at least 12 months, and it may become a continuous on-going group learning process.

**Length of each school meeting:** There are no fixed rules on the duration of each meeting. This will depend on farmers’ and facilitators’ availability. In general it is not possible for farmers to spend a full day away from their farm or other commitments very often. Therefore it is suggested the school meetings take no more than half a day.

**Venue:** The school meets at a convenient meeting place and close to the forest area where forest management practices are been tested.
Overall school flow

**PRE-SCHOOL ACTIVITIES**

1.a  **Forest User Group selection/ site selection**

Due to the complexity of factors that influence the management of the community forest some prerequisites need to be taken into consideration when planning a FFMS programme in your area where many user groups are present. The selection of the user groups is an important step for the success of the programme itself. The main reason being that the learning process to identify and test alternative forest management practices will take at least one year and full commitment from the group is required. Therefore, a user group with clear rights and responsibilities over a community forest area, functioning as institution and with sincere interest in the results will facilitate establishment of a conducive learning environment that will allow participants to learn.

Once you have identified (short listed) potential groups you may need to conduct a series of formal or informal meeting with leaders and the community as a whole better find out about their interest and priority to look for solutions to forest management topics though the FFMS approach, eventually identifying which one has more potential. In the event the FFMS is not responding to farmers interest you may look for other approaches that better respond to forest users’ needs.

1.b  **Selecting the FFMS group members**

Adult learning occurs best when it fills an immediate need. In other words farmers’ motivation to learn is highest when it meets their immediate real-life needs. Therefore participating farmers must have expressed their interest in the learning process and school subject, and be interested in actively participating in the identification of forest production needs and management solutions.

Once the FUG has indicated its interest to develop the school programme you may need to assist the forest users/community to select a smaller group of members (20 to 25 persons) that will form the FFMS group. This is due to the fact that many users’ groups have more than 100 members and it is too large for all to be involved. It should be kept in mind that users’ group members may most likely have different visions on how the forest should be used and therefore different needs (stakeholders). The members’ selection for the smaller group should therefore represent different interest groups and gender (all stakeholder in the community).

In addition the mandate, links, and flow of information between the user group and the smaller FFMS group need to be worked out at this early stage. Once the FFMS group has finalized the venue for the meetings and the starting dates you may then start to facilitate the first school day.
1 - Forest User Group selection & Selecting FFMS group members

2 - Opening and setting expectations

3 - Identify learning interests & selection of forest area

4 - Selection of forest management practices & topics of special interest

5 - Planning of field experimentation & plot design

6 - Preparing to observe changes in the experimental plots

7a - Establishment of experimental plots

7b - Conducting regular meeting

8 - School evaluation, & re-planning

Overall school flow
SCHOOL MEETINGS

2. Opening and setting group’s expectations

Adults learn best in an atmosphere of respect and support, and when a group of farmers first meet they are usually somewhat full of questions. Who is there? What is going to happen? Where do I fit in? In addition, farmers will most likely not be used to the participatory training methodology.

The main objective of this step, then, is to help the group to get settled in, create a sense of welcome, and establish an atmosphere of co-operation, and sharing, thus increasing their self confidence, and enabling a free exchange of information.

3. Identify learning interests and selection of forest area

Farmers’ learning is directed by goals and the needs to be looking for solutions to real life problems. Consequently forest users will be interested to learn more about forest management and alternative forest practices only if identified needs are thereby addressed.

The main objectives of this step are to assist the user group to identify and to prioritize their learning interests (or needs) related to forest products and management, and to identify the forest area that the group think will be most appropriate to be used to test alternatives forest management practices.

4. Selection of forest management practices and topics of special interest

The group, to address the selected production need, could adopt different forest uses, forest operations, and silvicultural techniques (solutions) and no one can offer ready-made solutions to the user group on how to manage their forest.

The main objectives of this step are to generate ideas on possible site-specific, low-input, readily-available management practices, and to select the ones most suitable to address the identified needs and in accordance with existing forest laws. The idea generation may be promoted by pooling group internal knowledge as well as exchanging information with other groups or knowledgeable farmers.

These forest management practices will form the base from which the school will select the field experiments to be conducted by users in their own forest.

In addition, the group will identify special forest management topics they would like to learn more about. Demonstrations of appropriate technologies and skills related to these special forest management topics will also be carried out in their own forest area.

5. Planning field experimentation & plot design

During the season the FFMS group will conduct field experiments to study alternative management practices or technologies. These season-long experiments need to be planned carefully.

In general, the interaction between farmers, researchers and extensionists is often based on top-down communication. One of the consequences of this is farmers’ dependency, which manifests itself as a lack of confidence in their own experimental capacity (farmers may strictly follow the (extension/ranger) recommendations, and in some cases wait for advice on how to do things instead of using their own initiative and judgement).

Therefore, the main objectives of this step are to strengthen forest users’ confidence in their own experimental capacity so they will feel free to experiment, and to assist the group to plan in detail the field experiments.

6. Preparing to observe changes in the experimental plots

Field experiments are soon going to be established in the selected forest area. Since changes may occur at any time during the season, regular observations of selected indicators will allow users to
follow the performance and comparison of the different practices under experimentation. This will enable them to make informed decisions on management practices and on corrective measures that might be necessary.

The main objectives of this step are to build users confidence in monitoring and to assist the group to identify what, when and how to observe changes in their field experimentation. During this step you will also assist the group to decide on how data will be presented and made available to all school participants and shared with the whole user group.

It is very important that the group itself identifies what and how to measure or observe. Attention should be paid not to introduce or ask farmers to measure and keep records of data not relevant to them. Group’s sense of ownership may be lost as well as interest.

7. **Establishment of the experimental plots and conducting regular meeting**

At this stage of the school farmers have established a number of season-long experiments (learning plots). Further, a list of selected topics, which users would like to learn more about, have been developed, and an overall school programme prepared.

During the season the school continues with half-day meetings, which are organized on a regular basis for a total of about 8 to 10 meetings.

The half-day meetings scheduled during the season all have a similar schedule. After the introductory focus segment farmers will conduct, process and discuss their field observations on their field trials. During the second part of each meeting farmer will focus and learn more about one of the selected forest management topic. (E.g. singling, soil nutrient management and other forest management topics). The meeting will conclude with a summary and feedback of this school session.

The real value of skills training, and the justification for most adult-education efforts, lies in real-life application. Field experimentation, practice, reflection and analysis by individual with the support of group feedback provide farmers with opportunities to acquired new skills.

The main objectives of this step are to encourage the group’s members active participation in the learning process by promoting sharing of farmers’ knowledge and experience through direct field observations and reflection, and subsequent analysis by small sub-group. Sub-group observations are then presented to all participants for further discussion. Avoid lecturing.

8. **School evaluation and re-planning**

At the end of the season the group undertake a participatory evaluation to measure changes in knowledge and field skills between the beginning and the end of the process. Farmers will have the opportunity to finalise their analysis on the results of the field experiments, judging differences between experiments, and deciding on how to make it available to the whole User Group or community and to other communities as well.

According to the group interest and priorities a re-planning exercises could then be conducted to continue with the present experimentation or to explore new issues and looking for answers to new questions.
Step 1

SELECTING FOREST USERS GROUP AND THE FFMS GROUP MEMBERS

In this step you will find hints and ideas on what to consider when selecting a new forest user group or community to implement a FFMS programme in your area, and ideas on how to assist the user group to select a smaller FFMS group to represent (to participate) in the school learning process.
1.1 SELECTION OF A FOREST USER GROUP OR COMMUNITY

Due to the complexity of factors that influence the management of the community forest and the functioning of a user group as an institution, some prerequisites need to be taken into consideration when planning a FFMS programme in your area. The selection of the user group(s) is an important step for the success of the programme itself.

Objective

- Identification and selection of interested forest users groups or communities in your area

Criteria

You may need to identify some criteria for the selection of FUG or community that will allow you:

- To identify which FUG is more interested
- To know which one is more capable and active
- To know which one gives more guarantee for continuity according to agreed objectives

Some of the criteria you may consider for group selection are presented.

a) The first criteria that may need to be considered is that there should not be unresolved tenure issues between government and users. The community or user group or individual households have clear user rights, titles over the forestland, and management agreements have been at least broadly prepared and implemented. This also implies that there is no tension between government units and FUG and that the FUG or other forest user groups are institutionally functioning.

b) In the presence of a conflict it should be analyzed whether the school process could be one of the solutions that could contribute to settle the conflict or not.

c) Another factor to be taken into consideration is that a group to be interested to undertake a process to learn more about the management of forest may need to have a degree of dependency/needs on forest production.

d) You may also consider the type of forest and diversity of conditions to ensure that selected group/forest is to a certain extent representative of a larger area, for dissemination purposes.

e) Small user group (60/70 Households), accessibility for regular meetings, and for exposure tour to show other people what they have done could be criteria you may want to consider.

Some more criteria you may consider for FUGs / communities selection (generated from a Nepal ranger perspective).

f) Distance between FUG and the forest and distance between ranger post and FUG

g) The ranger has experience in working with the FUG

h) FUG has an operational plan and constitution

i) FUG has regular meetings and general assembly, annual plan and regular forest management activities

j) Record keeping and financial statement well kept

k) Less conflicts levels within the group

l) Level of members’ satisfaction on FUG functioning

m) FUG needs, demand, and interest to learn. (Number of application submitted to DFO for courses and other learning activities).

n) Relations with NGOs

o) Level of implementation of their forest work plan

p) Other development activities accomplished in the community

q) Knowledge on forest policy

r) Equal opportunity given to members in attending training. Representative participation from different interest, level, gender
The space below is provided for your own criteria for your future reference

s)

t)

Steps

1. **Review of secondary information on farmers’ expressed forest production needs.**

   Diagnostic surveys, PRA’s, Participatory Assessment and Planning exercises, benchmark studies, in addition to district forest office records, may have been previously conducted in your area with many forest communities. The data collected during these activities can be very useful to make a preliminary assessment of farmers’ expressed needs and learning interests.

   Review of secondary information in particular those related to existing forest management systems and on farmers’ expressed forest production needs in relation to management practices will help to clarify whether the school could be a solution to farmers needs.

2. **Review communities / users groups according to the criteria** you have identified, and prepare a short-list of “potential” communities that you think could be interested to learn more about forest management practices.

3. **Meet the communities**

   Once you have short-listed the users groups or communities, you may need to conduct a series of formal or informal meeting with the selected forest users group or community to explain the FFMS objectives and approach, and to confirm that forest management practices are one of the farmers’ priority concerns, and that they are sufficiently interested to attend a season-long course organized on that subject.

   Adult learning occurs best when it fills an immediate need. In other words farmers’ motivation to learn is highest when it meets their immediate real-life needs. Therefore a very important element contributing to the success of a farmers’ forest management school is that participating farmers have expressed their interest in the school subject. The following activities are suggested:

   ✓ **Present the FFMS approach and objectives to committee members / group leaders**

   For most of the farmers the FFMS approach will be new and they will not be used to this learning method. It is important for the successful development of the FFMS that the farmers know what they can expect from the school and the benefit they may gain (e.g. to learn, to experience, to exchange, to identify, to test, to reflect, to evaluate). It is also important they know what is expected from them (e.g. active participation from all the farmers for one or more season).

   ✓ **Consulting the whole community.** When committee members / group leaders are clear about the FFMS process and have confirmed their interest they may need to consult with the whole user group or community (general assembly) to introduce the FFMS approach so that the whole group/community is aware of.

4. **Finalize the selection of the user group(s) or community (ies)**

   Once the community has agreed initial logistic arrangement worked out, including the selection of the members of the smaller FFMS group as indicated in the next exercise.
1.2 TO PRESENT THE APPROACH TO THE LEADERS AND COMMUNITY
### 1.3 SELECTING THE FFMS GROUP MEMBERS

In many instances a user group or a community will be too large to attend the school meeting as a whole. It will therefore necessary for the user group to identify a smaller group (20/25 people) that will represent/attend the FFMS meeting. This is a very important step in the whole process because the FFMS group need to be able to take decisions on what to learn (needs) and select where and how practices will be tested (experiments).

It should be kept in mind that users’ group members might most likely have different visions on how the forest should be used and have therefore different needs (stakeholders).

You may need to facilitate the selection of the FFMS group, ensuring that all different interest groups are represented. If needed you may facilitate a stakeholder analysis (see exercise No. 1.4) with the whole user group to identify all stakeholder in the community.

In addition the mandate, links, and flow of information between the user group and the smaller FFMS group need to be worked out at this early stage. Once the FFMS group has finalized the venue for the meetings and the starting dates you may then start to facilitate the first school day.

**Objectives**

- To assist the user group in the selection of a smaller group that will attend the FFMS
- To identify group mandate and flow of information
- To finalize length and frequency of each school session, location and starting date

**1. FFMS group formation**

The following activities are suggested to be conducted during the preparatory meetings:

- Based on your knowledge on the community forest stakeholders, the selection is often made through a sincere discussion with community leaders and community’s organizations representatives.

  In the event you feel that the community is not in the position to appropriately select the members of the small group, you may then facilitate a stakeholder analysis which will help the group to adequately identify who should be part of FFMS group. *(See exercise No.14)*

  Make sure that all community forest stakeholders are included. In particular make sure that men and women are equally represented. The availability of women for attending school sessions may not be the same as that of the men.
It would be best if FFMS members are men and women with sincere interest, proactive, and having good relation and good communication with the rest of the FUG. This will facilitate exchange of information between FFMS and whole user group or community members.

- In addition the FFMS group needs to be “recognized” by the larger group, and the decisions taken by them agreed as in the interest of the whole group.

The links, mandate and flow of information between the FUG group and the smaller FFS group need to be worked out. This because during the implementation of the school programme the FFMS group need to take decision on needs and experiments, and since the forest is a common property the FFMS group may need to have clear their mandate to act on behalf of the whole FUG or community.

You may add here your suggestion on how to assist the FUG to appoint a smaller FFMS group:

- 
- 
- 

2. Finalise the length and frequency of each school meeting

Once the FFMS group has been formed it is important to involve them in setting the time and schedule of meetings. You have an important role to play in this respect.

It is often not possible for farmers to spend a full day away from their farms and families. It is therefore important to discuss with them how long each school meeting should be. Remember that women may not have the same time availability as men, and suitable times should be identified to guarantee regular school attendance by women. Half a day (3-4 hours) seems to be a suitable length of time for the majority of farmers.

3. Identify the meeting point of the school

Ensure that all FFMS group participants’ opinions regarding the proposed meeting point are heard.

4. Decision on school starting dates

Through group discussion a consensus should be reached on the school starting date. The initial five/six school days can be carried out before the start of the main rainy season, when forest users are less busy with farm work. All the subsequent school days will be carried out during the season.

5. Your preliminary forest visit

If you are not very familiar with the community’ forest area it will be an advantage to you to walk through the village and forest area to become familiar with the soil types, geographical characteristics, forest condition and management practices presently used before the first school day.

Once the group finalizes school location and starting dates you may then start to facilitate the first school day.
1.4 Stakeholders analysis tool for FFMS group formation

When a community there are groups that have different interests or needs on forest resources use. These interest groups are called stakeholders. This implies that the forest would be used and managed in different ways according to each stakeholder interest.

To be able to identify forest management practices that will respond to the majority of the community members vision and interest it is important that all stakeholders are represented in the FFMS group.

**Learning objectives:**

- Farmers will have identified and listed the community forestry stakeholders groups present in their community;
- Farmers will have identified the interest/use and the influence of each group on the forest resources;
- Farmers will have agreed on the composition of the FFMS group

**Time** 1 hour

**Material** colored paper circles of different sizes, flipchart.

**Steps**

1. Explain the learning objectives and the procedure of this exercise, remanding participants about the importance of stakeholders (interest groups) analysis in the school learning process. (This analysis is based on the use of the Venn diagram tool)

2. Ask participants to brainstorm and list the key stakeholder groups in the village according to the interest (or use or need or stake) in community forest resources.

3. Next, use the coloured paper circles (previously prepared) to represent each stakeholder group. Write one group name on one circle and so on. You should choose a circle size to represent the relative interest or stake of the group in the community forest use and management. The larger the circle the bigger the stakeholder interest in community forestry is.

4. On a large piece of paper write “community forest” written in the center.

5. Once farmers are satisfied with their stakeholders’ circles, ask farmers to discuss the influence of each of these groups have in relation to community forestry management and use. Base on this they should glue each stakeholder circle closer or distant from the center according to each group identified influence.

6. At the end of this activity the farmers should have a flipchart with:

   - the stakeholders groups and their interest (or use/need/stake) in community (circles of different sizes), and
   - the stakeholders influence on forest management (circles at different distance from the center of the chart).

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1 Adapted from Integrated Conservation and Development Trainer’s Manual, by Sejal Worah et al.
7. Facilitate a group reflection by asking:
   ✓ What is the main interest of each group on community forest resources?
   ✓ What could be the negative impact if a interest group is left out/not represented in the FFMS group?
   ✓ What contribution each group could bring to the FFMS process?
   ✓ What influence each group has on forest management?
   ✓ What conflict stakeholder groups may have with the FFMS initiative?

8. Based on this information ask the farmers to decide:
   • which stakeholder group (interest group) should be included in the smaller FFMS group?
   • What could be the effect of leaving some stakeholders groups out of the FFMS?
   • how many persons from each group?

9. Assist farmers in finalising the members of the FFMS group (*maximum 20 to 25 people*)

10. Wrap-up, summarising the main points discussed

**Note:** Stakeholder analysis can be carried out with a variety of tools. You may choose the one you are most familiar with.

**Your notes:**
OPENING SESSIONS

Adults learn best in an atmosphere of respect and support, and when a group of farmers first meet they are usually somewhat full of question. Who is there? What is going to happen? Where do I fit in?

The main objective of this step is to help the group to get settled in, create a sense of welcome, and establish an atmosphere of co-operation, and sharing, increase their self confidence, and increase exchange of information.

This step contains exercises that will help the group to:

- introduce participants
- setting farmers’ expectations from attending the school
- review principle and schedule of the FFMS programme
- setting group norms
2.1 SHARING OF EXPECTATIONS AND SCHOOL INTRODUCTION

FFMS can only become a success with active participation from the farmers. For most of the farmers the approach is new and they are not used to the kind of learning methods used. It is therefore very important that participants share what they expect from the school and clarify whether their expectations will be met.

Learning objectives

- Farmers will be able to explain the concept of the school;
- Farmers will be able to list the objectives and the steps of the school;
- Farmers will have indicated their expectations and, together with the facilitator, agreed on the school programme content and schedule.

Time needed  1 hour

Materials

- Large pieces of paper, cards, pencils, pens for each sub-group, tape, pins

Steps

1. Explain the learning objectives and the procedure of this exercise to the participants;
2. Prepare a wall chart labeled “By the end of the course I want to be able to:”
3. Ask the participants to form small groups of 4-5 persons each. (or individually)
4. Ask each group to discuss their expectations as indicated in the wall chart heading;
5. After 15 minutes ask each group to write each expectation on a separate card, using key words and block letters;
6. Ask farmers to then stick their cards on the chart;
7. Quickly cluster the responses as they are placed on the chart. Place the expectation that can not be met outside the chart. Then invite participants to look at the chart for a few minutes.
8. Present the concepts, objectives and approach of the school, and what the participants can expect to learn. During this presentation show the overall school flow-chart (previously prepared) and give farmers an overview, in a chronological order, of the school.

   NOTE. This step is very important helping farmers to understand the whole school process. You may need to prepare yourself in advance for a clear presentation making use of drawings, flip chart or any other communication tool you feel appropriate.
9. Respond to the posted expectations, giving reasons;
   - Do they match what you have planned? Give reasons.
   - Which are or are not likely to be met.
   - Which one can you accommodate and which one lie outside the school parameters?
10. Wrap-up, summarising the main points discussed.
Some suggestions to facilitate group discussion

- Are the expectations of the farmers different from those one presented by the facilitator(s)?
- Which topics and/or skills are missing in the facilitators’ expected learnings?
- Which topics and/or skills are missing in the participants’ expected learnings?
- Are all the participants and facilitator(s) willing to commit to the school?

Example of wall chart for setting expectations

Your notes:
2.2 SETTING GROUPS NORMS

Experiential learning advocates the establishment of learning environments in which participants have a sense of belonging, security, and freedom to make choices. Necessary ingredients include the voluntary attendance, informality of meetings, freedom of expression, and avoidance of pressure. Setting group norms allow participants to agree on general roles of behavior and logistics that will help the group to get settled in, establish and atmosphere of co-operation, increase their self confidence, and increase exchange of information.

Learning objectives

- Farmers will have contributed and agreed on guidelines for group functioning during the school
- To create a sense of welcome, establish and atmosphere of co-operation, and sharing

Time 20 minutes

Material Flip charts, coloured yyyyyys

Steps

1. Prepare in advance a flip chart with the suggested norms (see suggestion at the end of this exercise)
2. Explain the learning objectives and the procedure of this exercise to the participants.
3. Ask farmers to first indicate/list what norms they would like to be applied during the meetings;
4. Write farmers’ norms (or ask a farmers to write) on a chart and ask them to think about them for a few minutes;
5. Present the norms that you have previously prepared and discuss them with farmers.
6. Make necessary changes and additions to the norms;
7. Post in a prominent place at the meeting point for all to see and refer to the norms throughout the meeting, as necessary
8. Point out that respecting the norms is everyone’s responsibility

Suggested norms

- Everyone has the right to know (participants can ask the facilitator at any time why something is being done, said, and how it relates to the overall school aim)
- Contributions/speech from each member should not be too long.
- Side tracking should be avoided
- Any question is a good question
- Practice what we are learning
- Start and finish on schedule and accept flexibility in the schedule
- Share responsibility for group task
- Allow all to participate
- Everybody feel comfortable to work in group
- No smoking during the training

Note: Revise these norms to make them appropriate to the school setting.

Adapted from: Integrated Conservation and Development Trainer’s manual.
Tips for the facilitator

Often farmers indicate norms that are mainly related to logistics such as starting and ending time, punctuality, no-smoking etc. The suggested norms presented above are a mix of norms that will support the group learning process and regulate logistics.
IDENTIFY GROUP LEARNING INTERESTS AND SELECTION OF THE FOREST AREA

Farmers’ learning is directed by goals and needs looking for solution to real life problems. Consequently forest users will be interested to learn more about forest management and alternative forest practices only if they address or are a solution to their identified needs.

The main objective of this step is for the FFMS group members to identify and to prioritize their learning interests (or needs) related to forest products and forest management, and to identify the forest area that the group think will be most appropriate to be used to test alternatives management practices.

During this step you will facilitate a number of exercises such as past, present and future needs, needs prioritization, forest sketch map or forest walk that will help the FFMS group to:

- identify and prioritized forest production needs, and therefore what they would like to learn more about;
- select a forest area they would like to use as learning site to set up field experiments to learn more about management practices to satisfy the selected need. (It would be best to focus only on a limited number of learning interests/needs, leaving the rest to a later stage or to farmer’s own initiative).
- Endorse the FFMS plan by the FUG. Since most likely a FFMS group has been selected within a larger FUG you may need to assist the FFMS group to present their finding, conclusions and proposed future actions to the FUG assembly for endorsement.
3.1 **PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE NEEDS (first option)**

Farmers’ learning is directed by goals and needs looking for solution to real life problems. Consequently forest users will be interested to learn more about forest management and alternative forest management practices only if they address or are a solution to their identified needs.

With this exercise farmers will examine and analyze their overall situation in relation to how the forest is used now and its links with their present livelihood systems. Changes over time also need to be discussed to help farmers link the role of forest management practices with forest use and condition in order to extract implications for the future in terms of needs and forest management practices.

This exercise aims to extract the current and future needs of the farmers from the forest and implications for the future. **The exercise is divided into 3 main parts.**

**Learning objectives**

- Farmers will be able to explain what resources contribute to their livelihood system
- Farmers will be able to describe how their need for each resource has changed over time and how they predict it will be in the future.
- Farmers will have listed their needs and some ideas of how they predict forest management practices should change to achieve the range of needs.

**Time needed** 3-4 hours

**Materials**

Large pieces of paper, cards, pencils, pens for each group, tape, pins

**Steps**

1. Explain the learning objectives and the procedure of this exercise to the participants.

**Part 1  Making a matrix chart**

2. Prepare a matrix chart on paper or on the ground (see example) with empty columns. Ask participants to write on cards **what resources contribute to their daily lives e.g. livestock, fodder, crops, firewood, cash income, etc.** and place them in logical groupings down the left hand side of the matrix. You may need to use helper questions so the group systematically analyses the resource use and needs.

3. Label 3 vertical columns with the words **past, present and future.** Ask the group to place stones or draw a picture representing how each aspect/resource need has changed over time; how was in the past, how it is now, and how we think/predict it will be in the future.

4. During the compilation of the matrix discuss also on forest use. Introduce forest management aspects for discussion like regeneration, and other management practices. Ask farmers to indicate the management practices used in the past and at present and how they see management practices in the future. If necessary add more cards to the chart.

5. Ask the group if they would like to add any other elements to the chart which they feel has influenced resource use and management over time e.g. outsiders, sickness, policies etc.
Part 2  Analysis of the needs

6. When the group is satisfied that the chart has been completed assist the group to analyze the chart so that the priority needs are clearly identified. You may ask farmers to split into three groups or to work on plenary, and ask them to answer the following questions based on their experience of making the diagram together

• What are our present needs and what will we need more of in the future?
• What do we need to get more of from the forest?
• How can we change what we do to achieve more of what we need for the future?

Part 3  Finalizing the list of resources’ needs

7. Guide the group through the chart extracting the main needs for the future and writing each new need on a card. At the end of the session display the cards as a list of needs and you can also summarize the ideas of how these needs can be achieved in the short and long term.

8. Wrap-up, summarizing the main points discussed.

Note: In some cases it may be necessary for the FFMS group to go back to their FUG or community and repeat this exercise with different interest groups of users within the FUG so that the needs identified represent the whole FUG needs. This will very much depend on how the FFMS group members have been selected (different stakeholder) and the mandate given to them by the User Group or community at the beginning of the school process.

You may need to spend some time discussing the exercise and process just used among the participants and make an action plan of how to reach a range of users and summarize needs for the general assembly.

Example Chart

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Resource</th>
<th>Past</th>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Future</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Water</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>• •</td>
<td>• •</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fuelwood</td>
<td>• •</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>• •</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Food crops</td>
<td>• •</td>
<td>• •</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cash crops</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>• •</td>
<td>• •</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>• •</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grass/Fodder</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>• •</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Leaf litter</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>• •</td>
<td>• •</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Timber</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>• •</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NTFP</td>
<td></td>
<td>•</td>
<td>• • •</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bamboo shoots</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cardamon</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Broom grass</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aesthetic Value</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>•</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livestock</td>
<td>•</td>
<td>• •</td>
<td>• •</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Forest Management</td>
<td>Free access</td>
<td>Protection Plantation Natural Regeneration</td>
<td>Firewood production Coppicing technique Growing selected species Fire prevention</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Some suggestions to facilitate the group discussion

- Have we listed all the needs identified during our discussion?
- Are there still some needs missing from the list?
- Are there needs on the list, which are closely related to each other or may even be considered to be the same?
- Are there needs which can be considered as specific for a certain area or group of farmers?

Your notes:
3.2 PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE NEEDS (second option)

This need analysis exercise can be used in alternative of the “past, present, an future needs” presented in the previous exercise (No.3.1) You may choose the most appropriate to your situation.

With this exercise farmers will examine and analyze their overall situation in relation to how the forest is used now and its links with their present livelihood systems. Changes over time also need to be discussed to help farmers link the role of forest management practices with forest use and condition in order to extract implications for the future in terms of needs and forest management practices.

This exercise aims to extract the current and future needs of the farmers from the forest and implications for the future.

Learning objectives:

- Farmers will have identified the forest resources that contribute to their livelihood system;
- Farmers will have described the change of their needs and the change of their available resources over the years;
- Farmers will have described how they would like to see their community forest in the next ten years from now and link with their needs;
- Farmers will have identified key actions to be taken to fulfill their needs.

Time needed 2-3 hours

Materials A quiet place, flip chart, index cards, pens for every participants

Steps

1. Explain the learning objectives and the procedure of this exercise to the farmers. (saying that in this session they will have an opportunity to reflect about what forest resources they had in the past, they have now, and they will look at the future forest condition that would serve best their livelihood)

2. Ask participants to relax and feel free to sit in any comfortable position. In order to bring farmers into focus briefly mention that the forest is providing a whole variety of resources to them, and to think about forest resources:
   - What do they get from the forest? What products?
   - How products fulfill their needs? Firewood 30%? Fodder 45%?
   - Are products used for self-consumption or cash?
   - What good things are in the community forest? Good soils? Good number of seedling? Good group management? Good support? Funds are available in the group savings?
   - and so on.

3. Past. Ask participants to close their eyes and think about being in ten year ago. Starts the process by asking participants slowly and gently to dream that they go back ten years. Ask them to focus on their livelihood about ten years ago and think about how they lived, how were their families, how the forest look like, what source of food they had, how the forest supported their living, any products they could get from the forest, how much they could have, and how the forest changed. Allow few minutes

4. Present. Ask them to think about now. How their living is today, what kind of resources contribute to their living, how the differences are, how the forest look like, how the forest support their families, what kind of products they get from the forest, how much they can get, how the forest change, and so on. Allow few minutes
5. **Future.** Ask participants to dream about the future ten years from now. How their living would be, what kind of resources should contribute to their living, how the forest should look like, how the forest should support their families, what kind of products they should get from forest, how much they like to get, and so on. *Allow few minutes.*

6. Then, ask participants to write what they dream to see in next ten years on each card.

7. Compile all what they want to see from all participants and put on the board so that everyone can see.

8. Assist farmers to group all dreams into main categories and clarify for common understanding.

9. Then, explain them that we may not fulfill all what we want to see in the short term and therefore we need to set priority, which one we would like to see in the short period (five years), and which one in the long period (ten years).

   Assist the group to finalize the production needs (learning interests) according to short and long term requirements.

   **Example of needed activities:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>What we dream to see in the next five years?</th>
<th>What we dream to see in the next ten years?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Fodder, Firewood, Birds, Water</td>
<td>Water, timber, NTFP</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. In the next exercise you will assist the group to prioritise each need and the school will focus to learn more about management practices to fulfill their prioritised learning needs.

11. Asks participants to reflect on each learning need and ask participants how we can achieve each need one by one. List down the learning activities that could be possibly done to achieve these learning needs on the board and make sure every one can see.

12. Summarizes the results and clarify for common understanding among farmers.

**Comments:**

1. Facilitator may ask participants to draw picture of forest they dream to see in the next ten year if they cannot write and list down in pictures the activities that could be done to fulfill their needs.

2. Facilitator must establish the atmosphere that encourages people to dream by using the speaking tone, control light, and so on.

3. Facilitator may consider when should be appropriate time to do this session due to the inspirational ability and condition that allow them to dream.
3.3 NEEDS PRIORITISATION THROUGH “PAIRWISE RANKING”

This exercise can be used as an alternative to the “Needs prioritisation through individual voting”, and it is best used when the number of needs to be ranked is not higher than 4 or 5.

During the previous exercises farmers have discussed and identified how the forest is presently used and their future needs and they have also produced an initial list of production needs.

In order to identify what farmers see as their most relevant forest management related need and what they would like to learn more about during the school sessions the identified needs have to be prioritized according to the farmers’ assessments.

Through this exercise the prioritization of needs takes place in a structured way which compares needs one with each other.

Learning objectives

- Farmers will have prioritised forest users’ needs/problems in relation to forest use/production.

Time needed 1 hour

Materials

- White board or large sheet of paper,

Steps

1. Explain the learning objectives and the procedure of this exercise to the participants.
2. Write on the board or large sheet of paper the list of identified needs (by major categories).
3. Ask farmers if they wish to include additional needs. Add them to the list.
4. Prepare a matrix on the large paper or board. Write the needs across the top and down the left of the matrix.
5. To get the participants’ preferences, ask the farmers to compare the needs with one another. The first need listed on the left side of the matrix shall be compared with all the needs listed on the top. A simple raising of hands can assess the participants ranking of the needs. Repeat the process until all the needs have been covered.
6. Note the number of times each need was assessed as being the most important. Make a summary of the preferences and rank them accordingly.
7. Ask participants if they agree with the results of the prioritisation and finalise the list.
8. Discuss with participants if these needs represent the topics they would like to know more about the Farmers’ Forest Management School.
9. Wrap-up, summarising the main points discussed during this exercise.

Important note: Some of the needs identified may not be related to technical aspects, forest practices/management, but be institutional or group decision-making system. These problems may not find a solution within the present school context (which focuses more on technical management aspects). You may need make farmers aware of and help them to identify where and how these problem might be solved.
### Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Need 1</th>
<th>Need 2</th>
<th>Need 3</th>
<th>Need 4</th>
<th>Need 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Need 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need 2</td>
<td>2 (need 2 is more important than need 1)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need 3</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need 4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Need 5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5 (5 is more important than 4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Scoring

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need 1</th>
<th>Need 2</th>
<th>Need 3</th>
<th>Need 4</th>
<th>Need 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 time</td>
<td>4 times</td>
<td>2 times</td>
<td>0 times</td>
<td>3 times</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Priority

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need 1</th>
<th>Need 2</th>
<th>Need 3</th>
<th>Need 4</th>
<th>Need 5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>is 1st priority</td>
<td>is 2nd priority</td>
<td>is 3rd priority</td>
<td>is 4th priority</td>
<td>is 5th priority</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Tips for facilitators
3.4 FOREST AREAS IDENTIFICATION - A SIMPLE FOREST MAP

After having prioritized needs the group will now decide where or which part of the forest they would like to consider as a learning site to experiment alternative forest practices. This exercise is best used when the group has already good knowledge of their forest resources and already ideas on which area they would like to select.

The preparation of a simple forest map may help the group to visualize and/or identify the main features of their forest such as boundary, as well as different forest areas, their location and condition, bare land, streams, roads etc. Thus the map provides a clear picture of the forest at a glance.

When used as a point of discussion this map gives school participants a common orientation toward the resources within the forest area, and it will be useful to selecting a learning site to experiment alternative forest management practices.

This simple forest map could also be followed by a short walkthrough the forest to confirm representative forest features.

Learning objectives

- Farmers will be able to identify the position of their forest on the map;
- farmers will be able to distinguish different forest areas, their location and conditions;
- farmers will have selected a suitable area to experiments different management practices.

Time needed 1 to 1.5 hour

Materials

- Large piece of paper, (or on the ground), pencils or pens, tape

Steps

1. Explain the learning objectives and the procedure of this exercise to the participants.
2. Ask participants to draw a sketch map of their forest and nearby features on a large piece of paper or on the ground indicating main features such as roads, rivers, and settlements.
3. Ask the participants to mark the location of their forest on the map;
4. Ask participants (plenary or smaller sub-groups):
   - to identify the different forest areas indicating the main features such as boundaries, the forest conditions and composition, erosion, slope, present management system and forest management practices
   - to indicate/report their description on the initial sketch map, and
5. Promote plenary group discussion on the characteristics of each identified forest area to share individual perceptions and to reach a consensus on each area.
6. Considering the different areas identified on the map assist the group to finalize / select which forest land they feel would be most appropriate for experimenting management practices to address the previously selected need. (The forest area that has better potential for the particular need e.g. firewood, fodder)
7. After completion of the map you may suggest to the group to go for a short forest walk to visit the selected are and confirm the decision. (or change it if appropriate)
8. Wrap-up, summarising the main points discussed during this exercise.

**Some suggestions to facilitate the group discussion**

- Are you using different forest management practices according to forest type and location? Why?
- Are you using different forest areas for different purposes?
- Are there differences in forest features which can be related to location?
- Are there forest areas considered to be better or poorly managed?

**Your notes:**

**Tips for facilitators**

The map is best done at a meeting place from where the forest can be fairly clearly seen.

Methods. Facilitating a general discussion
3.5 FOREST AREAS IDENTIFICATION – A FOREST WALK

This forest walk can be used in alternative of the “simple forest map” (3.3 previously described) and it is better used when there are differences of opinion within the group on which forest area should be selected.

Undertaking a short field walk may help the group to closely see and discuss the different forest areas and resources available, and to reach an agreement. The forest walk ends with farmers summarizing the information gathered during the walk, and it will be useful to the group to decide where or which part of the forest they would like to consider as a learning site to experiment alternative forest practices.

Learning objectives

- Farmers will be able to identify the position of their forest on the map;
- farmers will be able to distinguish different forest areas, their location and conditions;
- farmers will have selected a suitable area to experiment different management practices.

Time needed 1.5 to 2 hours

Materials

- Large piece of paper, (or on the ground), pencils or pens, tape

Steps

1. Explain the learning objectives and the procedure of this exercise to the participants.
9. Ask participants (in plenary) to draw a sketch map of their forest and nearby features on a large piece of paper or on the ground, indicating main features such as forest boundary, and reference points such as roads, rivers, springs, special places, local names. (this will give them a good orientation)

2. Prepare the field walk.
   - Decide on the size and composition of the group(s). You may undertake the walk in one group or you may decide to divide the participants into two groups.
   - Decide on the route to be followed. Making use of the sketch map discuss with the participants which parts of the forest and village lands will be visited; these should be areas of interest to them.
   - Discuss and agree on the different aspects to be noted (e.g., forest compositions, soil types, forest management practices, performance, problems related to production, advantages and disadvantages for selection of a specific area, etc)
   - Assign tasks to the participants who will take notes of the different aspects.

3. Start the walk as early as possible in the day. Stop at interesting places and assist the participants to make their observation, what they observe in relation to forest management and its performance
4. Promote group discussion on the advantages and disadvantages of each area to be selected.
5. At the end of the field walk (at the meeting place) following on the map the route taken during the walk:
   • Ask participants to form small groups (3 or 4 groups) to discuss and to write on a large sheet of paper the main observations recorded in particular advantages and disadvantages for selection;
   • Ask each group’s representative to present their observations. Fix the charts on the board for all to see or update the sketch map with the new information. Note those observations on the map.

6. During the presentation promote group discussion; share with farmers your knowledge and observation of management practices, adding your comments and ideas.

7. Based on forest description and the prioritized needs ask the farmers where they think it would be most appropriate to establish experiments plots. Ask them to finalize / select the forest land they feel would be most appropriate for experimenting management practices to address the previously selected need. (The land that has better potential for the particular need e.g. firewood, fodder)

8. Assist the group to finalize their selection of the forest area for a particular need.

9. Wrap-up, summarizing the main points discussed during this exercise.

**Some suggestions to facilitate the group discussion**

•
SELECTION OF FOREST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND TOPICS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

To address the selected learning interest (production need) the FFMS group could experiment different forest uses, forest practices, and silvicultural techniques. The main objective of this step is to generate ideas on possible site specific, low inputs, and ready available management practices and to select for experimentation the one most suitable to address the identified need.

In addition, the group will identify special forest management topics they would like to learn more about (but they will not be part of the field experimentation).

This chapter contains exercises that will help you to assist the group to:

- Describe and discuss the present forest area condition;
- describe and discuss present forest management applied in the selected area and the influence that these practices have on forest production;
- generate ideas on alternative forest practices, and silvicultural techniques that could be tested;
- undertake a feasibility analysis to prioritize forest practices;
- finalize what will be experimented in the forest and the topics of special interest.
4.1 NEED BASED RESOURCE ASSESSMENT

Having agreed on what they want to learn (need/s) and selected a forest area as learning site farmers will now generate ideas on possible management practices to satisfy that need.

This step also helps farmer to understand why and how they collect information about the resource in order to make management decisions related to their own needs.

Before starting to discuss possible changes to the existing forest management system and silviculture practices, it could be important for forest users to first assess and share the practices used in the selected forest area, the problems and solutions they have already identified and, often, tried. An effective way to do this is through undertaking a short field walk (in the selected area) and directly observing and discussing what is available (growing) there, present management practices and generate ideas on possible management practices.

Farmers should try to implement their self-designed assessment themselves using the output of previous discussions to gather relevant information about the resource. This will help them identify management practices they are interested in learning about, which is appropriate to the need and resource condition.

Farmers and specialists working together should identify which, if any, solutions are already being used locally. New practices or technologies based on specialist knowledge may be available from the school facilitator. Similarly, the appropriate solutions may be found in the farmers’ indigenous knowledge either within the community or in near by communities. During this exercise all these possible solutions will be listed and discussed, first in small groups and later in a plenary session.

Learning objectives

- Farmers will be able to explain the purpose of the need based assessment
- Farmers will have identified the relevant categories of information needed to assess the forest resource in relation to the chosen need;
- Farmers can explain why they need to collect such information;
- Farmers will have observed and listed current management practices that are carried out in the area which effect the proposed option;
- Farmers will have generated ideas on a number of forest practices, and silvicultural techniques that could be tested;

Time needed 4 hours

Materials

- Large pieces of paper, cards, pencils, pens for each group, tape, pins

This exercise is divided into three parts, preparation, field observations, and generation of ideas

Steps part 1: Preparation

1. Explain the learning objectives and the procedure of this exercise to the participants. Be clear that this is preparation for a field walk that the group will actually do later.

2. Divide the group into two and provide the participants with large sheets of paper and ſﬀﬀﬀ pens. Ask each group to think carefully what they need to know and observe about the resource in order
to decide which is an appropriate management practice to help them achieve their agreed need. Ask the groups to make 3 columns on their chart: **What - How - Why**.

3. Explain each column with particular emphasis on the **why** stressing there is no need to collect information that will not help them make a decision.

4. After 20 minutes ask the groups to swap sheets and compare. Ask them to tick the things they agree with in another colour and make a cross where they do not agree.

5. After 15 minutes ask the group to come together and hang the papers on the wall. You should extract what the group agree on first and write it on another chart making sure the rationale for collecting such information is clear to all.

6. Then you should take each point where there is disagreement and clarify rationales and facilitate a group decision whether the information is needed or not.

7. Ask the group to finalize the list of what should be observed and counted and past it on the wall for all to see. (you may also include suggestions for recording ready for the field exercise)

8. Wrap-up, summarising the main points discussed and the final list of observations to be made.

### Steps part 2: Field observations

9. The agreed observation can be made by the group as a whole or by two/three sub-groups according to your situation.

10. Invite the farmers to take a walk in the area to carry out their assessment, and then to at a predefined meeting place;

11. When everybody is back, give the groups 30 minutes to prepare their presentation (informal discussion or with charts) to share and discuss what they observed based on the categories that were agreed including a list or map identifying current management practices.

12. Ask the group(s) to present and the facilitate the **reflection** (discussion) focussing on the following questions
   - What do our observations tell us about the resource in relation to our selected need(s)?
   - What are the positive and negative impacts of current practices in relation to the selected need(s)?

### Steps part 3: Generating ideas on management practices

13. When the discussion has covered the above questions ask the farmers to list all different ideas (management practices) that they think could be used to improving the current resource condition with regard to the selected need. (*Some groups may prefer to undertake this part of idea generation while in the forest. This can be done by plenary discussion or by writing one card one practice.*). Encourage the participants to give their ideas with reasons.

14. Post the list (or cards) on the wall and group them in categories of ideas. Clarify reasons that are not clear between both the facilitator and the group and between group members.

15. At the end cluster/regroup the identified practices according to major categories so that a total of 6-10 are listed. Prepare a clear list for all to see

16. Ask the group to finalize the practices and other topics they would like to experiment in the forest and paste it on the wall for all to see.

17. Explain that next there will be an exercise to understand which ideas are possible for the group to try out in small scale experimental plots.

18. Wrap-up, summarising the main points discussed during this exercise.
Some suggestions to facilitate the group discussion

- To be able to change the present practices what do you need to know about the resources present in the area?
- How would you like to collect them?
- Why do you think it is important to collect that information?

Example (In this example the need identified was to increase fuelwood production)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Presence and location of prioritized fuelwood species</td>
<td>Counting and position on the slope</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number for each species</td>
<td>Counting</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Density of forest cover</td>
<td>Seen with our eyes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How much fuelwood could be extracted now (headloads)</td>
<td>Estimating number of headloads</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are preferred species effected by other species</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many and where are the mother/seed trees of preferred species</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Present practices used (including traditional one)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Presence and location of wildlife (especially birds)</td>
<td>How many nests</td>
<td>We don’t want to cut trees that are a good habitat for birds</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generate ideas for practices to manage fuelwood species to increase production</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2 PREFERENCE RANKING (for fodder/firewood/other species)

Very often, if not always, there is more than one species that can be used for the same purpose. But not all species have the same characteristics. Farmers have their own perceptions, criteria, and preference on trees or shrubs species for a given purpose.

This exercise is used to assist farmers to identify which species they think can give the best benefit for a specific purpose.

Learning objectives

- Farmers will be able to list all the species they think are suitable for a given purpose;
- Farmers will be able to indicate their preference for each species;
- Farmers will have prioritised several species according to their preference.

Time needed 1 hour

Materials

- Large pieces of paper, cards, pencils, pens for each sub-group, tape, pins

Steps

1. Explain the learning objectives and the procedure of this exercise. (assessing local needs for a specific forest product or to identify which species, amongst many, are more valuable to the group e.g. for fodder or for fuelwood or other)
2. Ask farmers to list all the species they are interested in and they want to rank.
3. Ask farmers to identify the criteria each species will be ranked? (e.g. fuelwood species: good for burning, good regeneration, good production, resist to cold, easy to cut, good coppicing capacity, etc.)
4. Prepare a matrix (on the ground or on flip chart). Label each column with the name of one species (or use a spacemen such as leaf, seed, fruit, branch, at top of the chart), and write the criteria on the left side of the matrix. (see example)
5. Ask the group to rank each species against each criteria by for example using a mark or placing object in each square (seed, stones).
6. Looking at the matrix highlight the most promising species, and finalise the prioritisation according to farmers preference.
7. Wrap-up, summarizing the main outcome.

Your notes:
4.3 Exploring Difference Between Experimentation and Demonstration

In their agricultural field farmers are used to experimenting with new practices, although they may not call it an experiment, or trial or on-farm research. A farmer may try out a new promising practice on a small scale, to enable an assessment to be made of its’ suitability before using it on a larger scale. Less experience exists in experimenting with forest management practices, which also implies group experimentation (not as individuals).

Since the school learning process is based on farmers’ own experimentation and reflection the following exercise promotes forest users’ confidence in their own experimental capacity.

Objectives:
- This role-play is designed to support the session on promoting farmers’ confidence in experimentation.
- The role-play is to help participant reflect on the differences between demonstration and experimentation

Material
Two actors for the first role-play and two for the second role-play
Kettle or saucepan, cups, tea and a makeshift stove or other props

Time
20 minutes

Guidelines for role players

First role play
Set up the scene as a local kitchen with local utensils. There are two main roles. The first is an “expert” tea maker and the second is a local man or woman who is alone in the house and has never actually made tea before.

The “expert” character should introduce him/herself clearly as having more experience and knowing very well how to make a good tea and what taste its should have. He/she can add that they attended formally courses in college or even in a country famous for tea of a certain taste like England or China!

On agreement with the local character the “expert” can then proceed to invite the other to learn how to make a tea to the “expert” taste step by step, clearly demonstrating the tea making but with little or no participation from the observer. The step should be clear with no adaptation to taste.

At the end the “expert” can “tell” to the local person that the next time he has visitors he/she will be able to make the same type of tea. The local person responds to the question by scratching his/get head (not fully convinced).

Second role-play
Set up the scene similar to the previous role-play. In this role-play there is no “expert” but two people/friends visiting each other in the house, and both having limited experience in making tea. Both of them are thirsty so they would like to make some tea. They decide to try as although they don’t have experience, but they have some ideas.

They start by looking at the ingredients and with what they know. They decide to boil some water. They do not know how long the water should be on the fire so they test the water with their fingers at different periods. Once the water is ready they make the tea through trial and error and end by adding sugar to their taste. This can be made amusing.
At the end of the role-play they both drink their tea and feel satisfied. They both can comment how this was useful, how they were able to make the tea to their taste, and now they will be able to make tea for themselves in the future.

Tips for reflection

- Ask the participants what they saw happening in the two role-plays and what was the difference?
- Be aware that they may believe at the beginning that the first scenario is the “right answer” as the demonstrator had experience and the second was too ad-hoc
- Probe to challenge them into thinking about who decided how a tea should be made at to whom taste in the first role-play and who decided how a tea should be made at to whom taste were the driving force is the second role-play.
- Probe and challenge them to think about the concept of capacity building; in which role-play would the local person be better able to make tea again?
- Focus on the second role-play to draw out the concept of experimentation and corrective actions. (such as when the friends measure the water to know for how long it should be on the fire, or adding the tea leafs to taste, or adding and tasting and adding again sugar to make it to their taste)
- Link the learning from the role-play with the school process in particular the establishment of experiment plots in the forest to try solutions to make their forest satisfying their needs.

Some broad differences between experimentation and demonstration are given below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Demonstration/Demoplot</th>
<th>Experimentation/learning plot</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Result orientated</td>
<td>Process orientated with focus on learning process to build capacity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monitoring often guided and does not involve corrective action</td>
<td>Monitoring done by user and should involve corrective action</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No long term involvement of group</td>
<td>Long term active involvement of users</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience transferred from another area</td>
<td>Experience adapted to local needs and conditions</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4 SELECTION OF FOREST MANAGEMENT PRACTICES TO BE TESTED AND TOPICS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

Users adopt forest management practices that are suitable to obtain the product they are interest in, influenced heavily by the resources available, by their household farming system, and by existing lows and regulations.

To be able to choose appropriate practices/solutions to be tested, it is important for the school participants to assess correctly whether an identified forest management practice (solution) is appropriate for the need they experience within the present forest management system.

A simple assessment of the suitability of the proposed technique and the resources needed (e.g. labor, cash, material, knowledge, etc.) and their availability should therefore be carried out.

This exercise will help the farmers to identify, amongst the several possible solutions listed, the most promising practices to be experimented during the school and to identify what changes to the present forest management system may be required in order to adopt a particular practice or technology.

This exercise aims to assist farmers with making realistic assessment of the suitability and practicality of the identified solutions and to select the most promising for field experimentation.

Learning objectives

- Farmers will have assessed the suitability of the proposed forest practices to be experimented;
- farmers will be able to select practices and technologies that they wish to experiment on their own forest;
- farmers will have selected additional topics, practices and technologies, that they wish to be included in the school programme.

Time needed  1 hour

Materials  Large sheet of paper and

Steps

1. Explain the learning objectives and the procedure of this exercise to the participants. This exercise can be conducted with sub-groups (4-5 farmers in each) or through a plenary session.

2. On the board or a large sheet of paper prepare a matrix. Write the practices that have been previously identified on the left column for all participants to see.

3. Promote a quick brainstorming to identify all possible limitations and difficulties farmers foresee in testing and using the proposed practices (e.g. labor, availability of material, cost, land access, risks, regulations, knowledge, confidence in using it). Allow everyone to express their view.

4. On the matrix label each column heading with the main limitations possible.

5. Ask the group to draw picture or numbers or place stones representing how each aspect/limitation is affecting the suitability/use of the selected practice. (1 = not much-cheap ; 5=very much-expensive);

6. In plenary session, help the group to reflect on the results indicated on the matrix, and assist them to finalize the list of forest practices starting with the most promising (of most interest to farmers) and ending with the least promising. Be careful not to introduce your own criteria.

7. Since only 1 or 2 practices (solutions) can be tested during season ask participants to select the practice that they wish to experiment in the fields and the forest management practices (special topics) that they would like to know more about.

8. If needed, you may force a final choice by asking the farmers, "If you were to choose only one of these, which would you choose?" "Which would you choose next?"
9. Reach an agreement and finalise the list of suitable forest management practices to be tested in the farmers’ forest and the special topics that farmers would like to learn more about.

10. Wrap-up, summarising the main points discussed during this exercise.

Some suggestions to facilitate the group discussion

- What impact will the new practice have on family labor? *(NB: The men may have different opinions from the women).*
- Is the necessary material available?
- What changes may be needed in the …..
- What will be the labor (or skill) requirement in order to adopt such a practice?
- Is it available?

Your notes:
During the season the FFMS group will conduct field experiments to study alternative forest management practices or technologies. These season-long experiments need to be planned carefully. In general, the interaction between farmers, researchers and extensionists/rangers is often based on top-down communication. One of the consequences of this is farmers’ dependency and lack of confidence in their own experimental capacity. The main objectives of this step are to strengthen forest users confidence in their own experimental capacity so they will feel free to experiment, and second to assist the group to plan in detail the field experiments.

This chapter contains exercises that will help you to assist the group to:

- Increase their self-confidence in experimentation
- selecting plot site
- design of treatments
- prepare a work plan for the treatment, and
- Prepare the school programme overview. Based on farmers’ findings it is appropriate to prepare an overview (plan) of the remaining school meetings for the entire season. This exercise will reinforce the concept that the school runs for one season and that each selected topic will be dealt with at the appropriate development stage.
5.1 SELECTION OF PLOTS FOR TESTING PURPOSES

There is much to be arranged before experimentation can begin, and it is important for the forest users to have ownership and full responsibility of the research activities starting from the planning process.

During the regular school field days farmers will observe and compare the effect of different forest management practices on forest development. The selection of appropriate testing sites, where external influences can be kept to a minimum, is important. This exercise aims to guide farmers in making the right choices in plot selection.

Learning objectives

- Farmers will be able to plan field experiments in their own forest;
- Farmers will be able to identify where experimental plots should be established within the selected forest area;
- Farmers will be able to demarcate the plots for testing purposes.

Time needed  2 to 3 hours

Materials

- Large pieces of paper,
- Measurement tools, i.e. pegs (for land), measuring tapes, colored ropes (25/30 Mt. long or more)

Steps

1. Explain learning objectives and the procedure of this exercise to the participant. (saying that we need now to select and demarcate the plots where experiment will be conducted)
2. Walk with the farmers to the selected forest area and remind them the list of forest practices that have been chosen for experimentation (prepared by farmers during previous sessions).
3. In a plenary session ask farmers to think and make a decision on:
   - How many plots they want to establish (keep experimentation simple!)
   - What will be the size of each plot;
   - Where, in which plot, each practice will be tested (this selection is indicative and it may change when farmers finally demarcate the plots), and
   - If needed, what will be used as control plot to compare results (best control is the forest under present management)
4. Ask farmers to draw on a peace of paper or on the ground a sketch of the plots, i.e. the indicative location and lay out. (this will help farmers to have an orientation on what they want to do before going into the forest to demarcate plots)
5. When farmers are clear on the general plot lay out walk with the them into the selected area to demarcate the plots; (allow at least 1 hour for demarcation)
6. Once plots have been demarcated ask farmers to confirm or change the practice that will be tested in each of the demarcated plots.
7. Ask farmers to draw the final experimentation layout on a piece of paper for future reference.
8. Wrap-up, summarising the main points discussed during this exercise.
Some suggestions to facilitate the group discussion

- Which locations within the selected forest area are best suited to establish experimental plots?
- Why have you selected this piece of land or trees?
- What will be used as the control plot to compare results?
- Are there differences (different forest condition) between the experimental plot and the control area/plots?

Your notes:
5.2 WORKPLAN FOR FIELD EXPERIMENTATION

At this point the plot(s) location has been decided on and demarcated. Farmers need now to decide the schedule of activities, and who will be responsible for what. These decisions need to be recorded in a workplan which can be used as a guideline during the implementation phase of the experimentation. This exercise will assist you to facilitate the workplan preparation.

Learning objectives

- Farmers will be able to plan all the activities related to field experimentation/testing
- Farmers will be able to assign and undertake assigned responsibilities
- Farmers will have decided on starting dates for the field trials

Time needed 1 hour

Materials Large pieces of paper,

Steps

1. Explain learning objectives and the procedure of this exercise to the participants.
2. Divide the farmers into as many groups as the number of experiments and assign to each group one experimental plot. If there is only one experiment selected, assign the test to various groups and compare groups’ findings later in the exercise.
3. Ask each group to brainstorm all the activities that should be undertaken to carry out the experiment.
4. Ask each group to list all these activities in chronological order on the left side of a large piece of paper.
5. For each of the activities written on the paper ask each group to list in which month those activities need to be carried out, the length of time needed, materials needed, and persons responsible.
6. Each group will then present their workplans for discussion, comments, and correction if needed.
7. Finalise the workplan.
8. Wrap-up, summarising the main points discussed during this exercise.

Note: At this stage the workplan does not include the activities related to “observing changes” or “monitoring” of field experiments. These tasks will need to be added to the workplan later.

Some suggestions to facilitate the group discussion

- What are the activities you need to carry out in preparation for the experiment?
- What are the materials you need?
- Who will be obtaining those materials?
- When do you have to carry out those activities?
- Who is going to do it? (Who will be responsible for the preparation of the test plot (group or individuals/owner of the land)?
- Does your the workplan include all the activities?
5.3 PLANNING SCHOOL MEETINGS FOR ONE YEAR

Based on farmers’ identified needs and solutions it has now come the moment to prepare an overview (plan) of the remaining school meetings for the entire season. This exercise will help you and farmers to plan future meetings and will reinforce the concept that the school runs for one season and that each selected topic will be dealt with at the appropriate time.

Learning objectives

- Farmers will be able to prepare a general overall school plan, including the main topics of each meeting.

Time needed  1 hours

Materials  Large pieces of paper,

Steps

1. Explain the objectives and procedure of this exercise to the participants.

2. Present, on a flipchart, the list of forest practices selected for field experiment and the list of the farmers’ selected special topics (forest management practices and techniques).

3. Prepare and present to farmers a flipchart which contains the school staring date on the far left and the school ending date on the far right (see the Overall School flow on page...).

4. Facilitate a plenary discussion, asking participants to indicate at what time of the season each topic should be studied and discussed. Complete the school calendar so that each of the half-day meetings is shown with a date and main topic.

5. Discuss on how and when experiments finding will be made available to the whole user group;

6. Finalise the meeting calendar

7. Wrap-up, summarising the main points discussed.

Some suggestions to facilitate the group discussion
PREPARING FOR MONITORING OF FIELD EXPERIMENTATION

Field experiments are soon going to be established in the selected forest area. Since changes may occur at any time during the season, regular observation of selected indicators will help farmers to observe the effects that the forest management practices being tested has had on production.

Eventually this will allow farmers to evaluate the results of the practices selected and enable them to take informed decision on management practices.

The main objectives of this step are to building users confidence in monitoring and to assist the group to identify what, when and how to observe changes (monitor) in their experiments plots. In addition the group will agree on how and when information on experiments development/results will be made available to the whole user group.

During this step you will assist the group to:

- Clarify what monitoring is and its purpose
- Identify what to monitor and the most suitable indicators to be used
- Decide how data will be presented and made available to all school participants and to the whole user group

It is very important that the group itself identifies what and how to measure or observe. Attention should be paid not to introduce or ask farmers to measure and keep records of data not relevant to them. Group’s sense of ownership may be lost as well as interest. In the unlikely event you (or outsiders) may need to collect additional (often more scientific) information this has to be clearly explained and kept clearly separate from farmers own records.
6.1 MONITORING IN OUR DAILY LIFE

Although often not aware of it, farmers are used to monitoring in their daily life. This exercise expose participants to the concept of monitoring as a tool for evaluating the efficiency of forest management practices tested in the forest and allow farmers to decide whether they might find it useful to keep more records than they currently do.

This exercises can also be done through a plenary discussion or sub-groups

Learning objectives

- Farmers will have understood that monitoring is part of our daily life;
- Farmers will be able to explain that regular monitoring of the field test is necessary and simple.

Time needed 30 minutes

Material Large sheet of paper, sticks, tape

Steps

1. Explain learning objectives and the procedure of this exercise to the participant.
2. Write on the board or chart the word “monitoring” for all to see and ask participants what they think monitoring is. Facilitate a quick brainstorming.
3. On the basis of the answers finalise participants’ definition of monitoring.
4. Ask participants to form subgroups (or plenary), and to think about one aspect of their daily life they monitor every day (or regularly, e.g. food, cooking, a sick person, money) and how (15 minutes for this step), and how they monitor it;
5. Write on the large sheet of paper what they monitor every day;
6. Go through the list and ask for clarification. For example, if FOOD has been listed ask the group what does it mean, and how is it monitored?
7. Summarise the exercise by emphasising that monitoring is part of our daily life, that it is something we all do every day, and ask them how this may relate to the monitoring of field tests. You may also make reference to the role-play on making the tea.
8. If you have time you could elaborate on the meaning and function of indicators using the same examples.
9. Wrap-up, summarising the main points discussed during this exercise.

Suggestion to promote brainstorming and group discussion

- Monitoring cooking: we monitor that the food is not overcooked by testing it at different times during cooking; we monitor the taste so we know if we need more or less spices or salt or chilly.
- Monitoring when a person is sick: we monitor the person by measuring their temperature, pulse.

Source: RECOFTC
6.2 WHAT TO MEASURE AND SELECTION OF INDICATORS

In a Farmers’ Forest Management School, indicators are those variables which are used as tools for monitoring and eventually evaluating how the forest practices tested are improving forest production.

The actual selection of indicators depends on what the group wishes to pay attention to, and how they want to measure change. The indicators selected must allow valid measurements.

It is important that a consensus is reached within the group on the selection of indicators, so that everyone is observing and “monitoring” the same thing, by the same standards. This requires in-depth discussion with all members of the group.

Remember that indicators must be valid, reliable, relevant, sensitive, specific, cost-effective and timely.

Learning objectives

- Farmers will be able to identify indicators that will be used before, during and after the field experimentation to measure selected characteristics and forest performance changes.
- Farmers will be able to explain how data will be kept and presented;

Time needed 1 hour

Materials Large sheet of paper or board,

Steps

1. Explain the learning objectives and the procedure of this exercise to the participants.
2. Explain to farmers what an indicator is, its purpose, when and how it is used.
3. Ask farmers to form three (3) small groups. (Alternatively you may conduct this exercise on plenary session) and go to the plots area to identify what and how they would like to measure changes in the selected plots.
4. Ask each sub-group to discuss and indicate/write what they feel should be measured during the field test (production, income, soil changes, tree/crop health, labor requirement, etc.);
5. Then, ask each sub-group to indicate/write for each measurement how they want to measure it. Which indicator they want to use to measure changes.

Note: (Some groups begin selecting indicators by brainstorming – In this case farmers listing all possible indicators on a large piece of paper or chalkboard, and then deleting those found unsuitable).

6. Ask farmers to write which indicator they would like to use to measure the changes for each measure they have selected (e.g. kg of production, times of harvesting, number of seeds, number of new branches, number of new shoots, water infiltration rate etc.)
7. Promote discussion and brainstorming amongst members of each sub-group.
8. Ask a representative from each group to present the results of their work. Fix the list of measurements and respective indicators on the wall for all to see.

---

4 Source: FAO-RAP publication. PME
9. Ask farmers to look at the indicators and identify the ones that are most valid, reliable, relevant, specific, cost-effective, timely. This step will allow them to identify indicators that are most suitable and easy to measure.

10. Ask farmers to finalise the list of measurement and indicators they will use during the regular field school session. One or two indicators for each measure could be sufficient. Write the final list on a flipchart for all to see. See example table below.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Measurement</th>
<th>Indicator (examples)</th>
<th>How</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Production (fuelwood, coppicing)</td>
<td>• Number of new shoots for each species tested</td>
<td>• Counting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Vigorousness of shoots for each specie,</td>
<td>• by finger size</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Height of shoots,</td>
<td>• by bamboo measuring pole</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Number of back-loads (or Kg)</td>
<td>• Counting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Species</td>
<td>• Number of species</td>
<td>• Counting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>• Canopy of each specie</td>
<td>• Visual observation - ocular estimation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Others</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. Ask farmers when the first measurement should start, how often it should be done, how records will be kept, and how the information will be shared amongst the group and with the whole user group.

12. Ask farmers to decide who will keep the records (each farmer, a sub-group leader etc.)

13. Once the selection of indicators has been completed facilitate the following:

- the appointment of record keepers;
- frequency of data collection, weekly, monthly etc.;
- how results/data will be presented to the other school participants; and
- record the decisions on the workplan

Some suggestions to facilitate the group discussion

- Are the indicators selected easy to measure?
- How often should they be measured?
- How do we share this information with the rest of the users?
-
REGULAR MEETINGS AND TOPICS OF SPECIAL INTEREST

At this stage of the school forest users have established a number of season-long experiments. Further, a list of selected topics, which forest users would like to learn more about, have been developed, and a overall school programme prepared. During the season the school continues with half-day meetings, which are organized on a regular basis for a total of about 8 to 10 meetings depending on group needs and availability.

This session includes exercises that will be used at every meeting, such as observation in the experimental plots and discussion arising from field observation.

The half-day meetings scheduled during the season all have a similar schedule. After the introductory focus segment farmers will conduct, process and discuss their field observations on their experimental plots. During the second part of each meeting farmer will focus and learn more about one of the selected forest management topic. (E.g. tinning, singling, soils and crop nutrient management, fodder production, and other forest management topics). The meeting will conclude with a summary and evaluation of this school session.

A learner-focussed approach to training encourages creativity and reflection by participants, leading to shifts in attitude and awareness.

This chapter contains exercises that will help you to:

- Facilitate the group learning through an action-reflection process
- Facilitate group observation and discussion on practices under experimentation
- Introduce forest management topics/technologies of special interest to farmers
### 7.1 REVIEW OF THE PREVIOUS SCHOOL MEETING

Each of the half-day meetings starts with a summary of what has occurred the previous school day. This will help to bring attention back to the school topics, and to refresh memories on what has been discussed, achieved, and agreed during the previous meeting.

#### Learning objective

- Farmers will refresh their memories of what has been discussed, achieved, and agreed during the previous school meeting.

#### Time needed

15 minutes

#### Steps

1. Encourage everyone in the group to review what was achieved and discussed during the previous meeting by asking each farmers, one farmer one question, one of the questions listed in the suggestions;

2. Extend and explain the summary when needed;

#### Some suggestions to facilitate the review/summary

- Which were the main topics discussed?
- What were the participants’ main observations/comments
- Which were the main group conclusions or agreement?
- What the group has learned most?
- Where the group go?
- Any observation and discussion on forest management practices?
- Which other forest practice was observed, demonstrated and discussed?

#### Your notes:
7.2 BRIEFING ON THE DAY’S ACTIVITIES/TODAY AGENDA

At the beginning of each meeting it is important for farmers to know what is today agenda and which activities have been planned. This helps the group to settle in and focus on the meeting.

Learning objectives

- Farmers will know the programme, activities and tasks for today’s meeting.

Time needed 15 minutes

Steps

1. Prepare the meeting agenda at least a day in advance.
2. Present to the participants the activities that have been planned for today. Use a poster or a flip chart for all members to see;
3. Discuss briefly the objective of each activities and expected outputs; and
4. When each activity will be undertaken during the today meeting
5. Ask farmers if there is anything else to be included;
6. If there is a visit to the forest, make participants know about it.
7. Wrap-up, summarising the main points discussed.

Some suggestions for leading question

Example of a “Today agenda”

- Today agenda
- Review of previous meeting
- Field visit – observation in the experimental plots
- Reflection and analysis on field observations
- Other topics
- Feedback
- Summary & closure
7.3 OBSERVATIONS IN THE EXPERIMENTAL PLOTS

(This session will be further developed…)

The forest is where experimentation takes place and where farmers exchange their views on what they see. During this meeting farmers will move to the experiment plots to observe, to monitor changes, compare results, and exchange opinions. This is an important moment in the field school, where there is much sharing amongst farmers and no lecturing.

Learning outcomes

➢ Farmers will have measured indicators, and recorded data;
➢ farmers will have observed, exchanged views, reflected and compared results;
➢ farmers will be able to identify and explain the effect of the tested practices on forest performance;

Time needed 1 to 1.5 hours

Steps

The visit to the experimental plots can be undertaken in one group, or in sub-groups.

1. Explain the learning objectives and the procedure of this exercise to farmers.
2. Prepare for the field visit.
   • Where we will go?
   • What we will observe?
   • What indicators we decided to record (see farmers list of indicators)
   • Who will keep records?
   • How we will share the information amongst sub-groups (if the visit was in sub-groups)
   • Make sure the group is focussed and know the purpose of visiting their experimental plots.
3. Walk with the sub-groups (or one group) to the experimental plots and observe plot conditions.
4. By asking questions promote discussion amongst farmers based on what is being observed. Focus on management practices, crop or tree performance, and other forest management related issues.
5. Be curious. Ask farmers questions that will promote discussion and exchange of information and opinion amongst themselves.
6. Assist farmers to collect and record monitoring data (use of indicators).
7. .
8. .

Some suggestions for leading question

• What data will be collected?
• Who will keep the records of the observation and monitoring data?
• Are the agreed practices correctly applied in the experimental plots?
• Do you observe differences in crop/tree performance? What are the reasons?
• What practices do you observe that improve soil fertility or water infiltration or canopy development or ……?
• Do you observe any problems in crop/tree production? What do you think are the reasons?
7.4 REFLECTION AND ANALYSIS ARISING FROM THE FIELD OBSERVATIONS

(To be further developed)

Returning from the field visit farmers gather at the meeting place, and their views on what they have observed during the field visit are further elicited. This is another important moment to promote learning through farmers’ own reflection and analysis.

Learning outcomes

- Farmers will have exchanged information on what has been observed during the field visit;
- farmers will be able to uncover new information and observations (reflection);
- farmers will have shared their knowledge and experience building a clear picture on experimentation process and progress;
- farmers will be able to identify, clarify, and explain the effect of the tested practices on crop/tree/plot performance (analysis);
- farmers’ confidence in experimentation, monitoring and analysis will have been increased.

Time needed   Half an hour

Steps

1. Explain learning outcomes and the procedure of this exercise to the participants.
2. Ask one farmer from each group to summarise what they have observed and discussed during the field visit.
3. Ask the selected farmers to present the monitoring data collected. Promote discussion on the data.
4. Identify key points of their presentation and promote discussion on them.
5. Share your experience and knowledge on the topic being discussed.
6. If during the field visit you have noted an important/relevant practice present it to farmers for discussion.
7. Wrap-up, summarising the main points discussed.

Some suggestions for leading question

Reflection

- Where did each group go?
- Are the practices being correctly applied in the experimentation plots?
- Which forest management practice did you observed and discussed?
- What data has been collected? Comment on quality and quantity of monitoring data collected.
- Do you observe differences in crop/tree performance? What are the reasons?
- What are your (group) observations/comments?
- What other changes did you observe in the plots?
- Did you observe any problems in crop/tree production?

Analysis

- Did you observe any improvement in plant performance?
- What do you think are the reasons?
- What are the differences (performance) amongst experimental plots?

-
Special topics

To be developed
SCHOOL EVALUATION AND RE-PLANNING

At the end of the season the group undertake a participatory evaluation to measure changes in knowledge and field skills between the beginning and the end of the FFMS program. In addition farmers will have the opportunity to finalise their analysis on the results of the field experiments, judging differences between experiments, and deciding on how to make it available to the whole User Group or community and to other communities as well.

According to the group interest and priorities a re-planning exercises could then be conducted to explore new issues and looking for answers to new questions.

This chapter contains exercises that will help you to:

- organize a participatory school evaluation
- Undertake an evaluation to improve the school process;
- Undertake an evaluation on what has been learnt, and group changes
- Undertake a school re-planning exercise to continuing for one more year or
- Identifying new issues to be addressed
8.1 T CHART

This exercise will help you evaluate the school so as to provide useful information on how the school programme, its schedule, and the facilitation process can be further improved.

Learning objectives

✓ Farmers and facilitator will have evaluated the school schedule and curriculum.

Time needed 1.5 hour

Materials large sheets of paper or board, pencils,

Steps

1. Explain the learning objectives and the procedure of this exercise to farmers.
2. On a large piece of paper, draw one line down the middle, and one across the top to form a "T". On the top of one column, write "Needs to be improved". On the top of the second column, write "It's good".
3. Now ask the group to make a list of items in the school that fit under each title. Each point can be considered as it is given, or you may use it like a brainstorming session in which only phrases are written with no comments.
4. Then go back and ask for clarification of each point with further discussion.
5. The points under "Needs to be improved" should be discussed with the aim of finding solutions.
6. Keep records of the answers to help you to improve the next school.
7. Wrap-up, summarising the main points discussed.

Note. This exercise can be conducted in plenary session or by forming sub-groups.

Some suggestions to facilitate group discussion

- Was the duration of the school appropriate?
- Was the length of each meeting appropriate?
- Was the time of each meeting appropriate?
- Was the meeting place appropriate?
- Was the time of each meeting suitable, especially for the women?
- Was the field practice appropriate?
- What do you think about working in groups?
- Did you find the plenary discussion appropriate and useful?
- Where the learning objectives appropriate?
- Was each selected topic adequately studied?
- Was the field experimentation useful for identifying solutions to production problems?
- Was the language used by the facilitator (or resource person) clear?
- 
- 

5 Adapted from IPM Facilitator's Manual
8.2 ATTAINMENT OF LEARNING OBJECTIVES

This exercise will help you evaluate the school so as to provide useful information on how the school programme, its schedule, and the facilitation process can be further improved.

Learning objectives

Farmers and facilitator will have evaluated the school in terms of the suitability of the learning objectives.

Time needed 1.5 hours

Materials Cards, pins, tape.

Steps

1. Identify in advance and prepare a list of the school learning objectives you want farmers to evaluate.
2. Explain the learning objective and the procedure of this exercise to the participants.
   Note: This exercise could be done in plenary or with sub-groups.
3. Prepare in advance cards each containing one learning objective that was the focus of one of the school sessions (for example: ability to describe forest condition, ability to measure indicators). Write each selected learning objective on different cards. You should prepare as many card sets as the number of groups.
4. Distribute the set of cards to each sub-group.
5. Ask the groups to sort the cards containing the learning objectives according to I have learnt it, I have used it, it was useful; (write it on the board for all to see)
6. Paste the cards according to the sorting on the board or large paper for all to see.
7. Explain the resultant ranking through plenary discussion.
8. Keep records of the answers to help you to improve the next school.
9. Wrap-up, summarising the main points discussed.

Note: this exercise could alternatively be done in a plenary session.

Some suggestions to facilitate group discussion

You can find the school learning objectives in this manual on the first page for each chapter and at the beginning of each exercise.

Example: If you have chosen the learning objective “Farmers are able to describe forest condition”:

- Were you able to learn how to describe forest conditions?
- In doing that did you discover something that you did not know before about your forest?

Example: If you have chosen the learning objective “Farmers have identified suitable forest practices to address identified need”:

- Were you able to learn what are the suitable forest practices to address identified need?
- Did you analyse your own production problems?
- Did you discover, learn something that you did not know before about forest production?
**Exemple of chart**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>I have learnt</th>
<th>I have used</th>
<th>It was useful</th>
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</table>
8.3 QUESTIONNAIRE

When using a questionnaire for evaluation, it is important to consider the literacy level of the group, and their knowledge of technical terms. The terms used in one village may not be the official names used nationally and this can lead to confusion. Written questions must be tested for clarity beforehand, and checked to ensure local applicability. Remember not to be academic about names, or definitions. Be practical and keep the questionnaire focused on real issues, skills, and knowledge.

Learning objectives

- Farmers and facilitator will have evaluated the school in terms of changes in knowledge, skills, and attitudes that were the focus of the school.

Time needed 1 hour

Materials List of questions, paper, pencils

Steps

1. Prepare the questionnaire in advance.
2. Explain the learning objectives and the procedure of this exercise to the farmers.
3. Distribute the questionnaire to each farmer and allow time for clarification.
4. Collect the results and analyse them overnight.
5. Present to farmers your observations from the questionnaire and promote discussion so as to clarify and reach a consensus on each reply they gave in the questionnaire.
6. Alternatively (from step 2) you may also form sub-groups and ask each group to discuss and reply to the questions. Then ask each group to present their answers and promote discussion so as to clarify and reach a consensus on each question answered.
7. Keep the questionnaire for your records. This will help to improve your next school.

Some suggestions for questions

In the manual look at the learning objectives of each exercise and ask questions to learn if the farmers were able to acquire the knowledge, skills or attitude specified by the learning objectives.

Related to school curriculum and schedule:

- What did you like most about the school?
- What did you not like?
- Which was the most important lesson you learnt?
- What did you find difficult to understand?
- What main obstacle do you anticipate in applying what you have just learnt?
- What are your suggestions for improvement?
- What do you consider was the most valuable experience you had at the school?
- Why is that?
- What aspects of the school could have been strengthened?
- How could that be done?
- What other comments do you have?
8.4 BEFORE AND AFTER PICTURE

This exercise will help you evaluate the school so as to provide useful information on how the school programme, its schedule, and the facilitation process can be further improved.

Learning outcome

- Farmers and facilitators will have evaluated the suitability of the methods used during the school.

Materials: sheets of paper, pencils

Time: 2 hours

Steps

1. Explain the learning objectives and the procedure of this exercise to the farmers.
2. Ask the farmers to form sub-groups and give a large piece of paper (or two) to each.
3. Ask them to divide the paper in half. On one side ask them to draw something that represents your life before the training, and another item which represents your life afterwards.
4. After the drawings are completed, ask each group to post it for all to see. Ask each group to go round to look at the drawings. (allow 10 minutes)
5. Then, ask each group representative to present/explain their drawing, and allow time for questions and answers.
6. Keep records of the main points discussed to help you to improve the next school

Some suggestions for questions

- What did you like most about the school?
- What did you not like?
- Which was the most important lesson you learnt?
- What did you find difficult to understand?
- What main obstacle do you anticipate in applying what you have just learnt?
- What are your suggestions for improvement?
- What do you consider was the most valuable experience you had at the school?
- Why is that?
- What aspects of the school could have been strengthened?
- How could that be done?
- What other comments do you have?

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6 Source: IPM Facilitator’s manual
8.5 EXPLORING NEW LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES (re-planning)

To be developed
Recurrent exercises

This session includes exercises that will be often used during the meetings.

⇒ Review of pervious meeting
⇒ Today agenda
⇒ Summary
⇒ Feedback
⇒ Team building
⇒ Ice breakers
R.E- 1 REVIEW OF THE PREVIOUS SCHOOL MEETING

Each of the initial five or six half-day meetings starts with a summary of what has occurred the previous school day. This will help to bring attention back to the school topics, and to refresh memories on what has been discussed, achieved, and agreed during the previous meeting.

Learning objective

- Participants will refresh their memories of what has been discussed, achieved, and agreed during the previous school meeting.

Time needed  15 minutes

Steps

1. Ask a selected farmer to summarise for the participants what was achieved and discussed during the previous meeting.
2. Extend the summary by asking individual farmers on activities conducted the previous meeting
3. Explain the summary when needed.
4. Before the end of the day’s meeting identify the farmer who will summarise findings at the next school meeting so that they can prepare notes.

Some suggestions to facilitate the review/summary

- Which were the main topics discussed?
- What were the participants’ main observations/comments
- Which were the main group conclusions or agreement?
- What the group has learned most?
- Where did the group go?
- Any observation and discussion on forest management practices?
- Which other forest practice was observed, demonstrated and discussed?

Your notes:
R.E- 2 BRIEFING ON THE DAY’S ACTIVITIES/ TODAY AGENDA

At the beginning of each meeting it is important for farmers to know what is today agenda and which activities have been planned. This helps the group to settle in and focus on the meeting.

Learning objectives

- Farmers will know the programme, activities and tasks for today’s meeting.

Time needed 15 minutes

Steps

1. Prepare the meeting agenda at least a day in advance.
2. Present to the participants the activities that have been planned for today. Use a poster or a flip chart for all members to see;
3. Discuss briefly the objective of each activities and expected outputs; and
4. Explain when each activity will be undertaken during the today meeting
5. Ask farmers if there is anything else to be included;
6. If there is a visit to the forest, make participants know about it.
7. Wrap-up, summarising the main points discussed.

Some suggestions for leading question

Example of a “Today agenda”

- Today agenda
- Review of previous meeting
- Field visit – observation in the experimental plots
- Reflection and analysis on field observations
- Other topics
- Feedback
- Summary & closure
## Indicative meeting agenda for the initial five meetings (before farming season)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Objective</th>
<th>Exercise No.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10:00</td>
<td>Opening</td>
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<td>Setting expectation</td>
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<td>Group norms</td>
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<td>Past, Present and Future needs</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Learning interests / Needs prioritization</td>
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<td>Feedback</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Summary &amp; closure</td>
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<th>Time</th>
<th>Session</th>
<th>Objective</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Review of previous meeting</td>
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<td>Today agenda</td>
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<td>Forest area identification</td>
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<td>Need based resource assessment</td>
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<td>Feedback</td>
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<th>Time</th>
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<td>Today agenda</td>
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<td>Preference ranking</td>
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<td>Experimentation VS demonstration</td>
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<td>Finalize forest management practices to be tested</td>
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<td>Feedback</td>
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<td>Summary &amp; closure</td>
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<td>Today agenda</td>
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<td>Selection of plots for testing</td>
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<td>Workplan for field experime.</td>
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<td>Today agenda</td>
<td>Today agenda</td>
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<td>Monitoring in our life</td>
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Farmers’ Forest Management School manual - by RECOFTC Marco Miagostovich
R.E. 3     DAILY FEEDBACK: FEEDBACK FISHBOWL

The use of feedback exercises and summaries informs the facilitator and farmers on how the school is progressing from the point of view of the participants. The summary of the feedback informs as to how participants are reacting to the school. It enables the facilitator to stay abreast of participants’ feelings as well as their learning.

Future plans for the school can be adjusted in line with the responses to the participants’ feedback. Daily feedback strengthens school design and increases participants’ feelings of ownership.

Learning objectives

➢ Farmers are able to give accurate feedback on a school session or day;
➢ Farmers’ showing evidence of reflecting on the feedback given.

Time needed  30 minutes at the end of the daily meeting

Materials  none

Steps

1. Explain the learning objectives and the procedure of this exercise to the participants.
2. Ask participants to divide into two groups.
3. Appoint a person to record the main points that will discussed/mentioned.
4. One group sits in an inner circle facing each other and the second group is on the outside.
5. Give to the inner circle group a question related to learning from the day’s meeting to discuss. For example:
   • What was the most interesting event in today meeting?
   • Why?
6. Only those in the inner circle can speak. Those on the outer circle listen.
7. After a few minutes, have them change places (inner group goes to the outer and the outer to the inner).
8. Ask the inner group a new question. For example:
   • How would you do thing differently from what we have done today?
   • Why?
   or
   • What did you learn most today?
   • Why?
9. Ask the recorder to summarize the main points, and clarify when needed.
10. Keep records of the answers and comments, for your future reference.
R.E.- 4  DAILY FEEDBACK: LIKES AND DISLIKES - STATEMENTS

The use of feedback exercises and summaries informs the facilitator and participants on how the school is progressing from the point of view of the participants. The summary of the feedback informs as to how participants are reacting to the school. It enables the facilitator to stay abreast of participants’ feelings as well as their learning.

Future plans for the school can be adjusted in line with the responses to the participants’ feedback. Daily feedback strengthens school design and increases participants’ feelings of ownership.

Learning objectives

- Farmers are able to give accurate feedback on a school session or day;
- Farmers show evidence of reflecting on the feedback given.

Time: 10-20 minutes at the end of the daily meeting

Materials  none

Steps

1. Explain the learning objectives and the procedure of this exercise to the participants.

2. There are two parts to this exercise. Arrange participants in a circle or hollow U, so that all have eye contact with each other. In turn each participant completes the sentence:

   “I didn’t like it when .......... because........”

This may refer to anything that happened during the session or day. Each person may choose to say nothing or complete the sentence as many times as necessary. No one should pass judgement on what others say.

3. After everybody has answered this question, the procedure is repeated for what they appreciated. This time complete the sentence:

   “I liked it when.......... because...........”

4. Keep records of the answers and comments and discuss with the farmers.

Note

- The exercise finishes with what was liked, so participants finish on a positive note.
- You can also end by asking participants to mention one good thing they feel they have personally contributed to the group. This helps to build self-esteem.
- You can also end by asking for “suggestions”. Participants’ comment on what they would like to see changed.
R.E- 6       ICE BREAKER / ENERGISER

Stand up if

Objectives
➢ to energize the group
➢ to get to know each other a bit better

MATERIALS list of questions adapted to the school settings and people

Time 10 minutes

Steps
1. Ask farmers to form a circle with their chairs (or on the mat) and explain the purpose and procedure.
2. Ask the first question: stand up if you are a father .......... give people the time to look around and request people to sit down again.
3. Ask the next questions in the same way: stand up if
   • you are a mother
   • you like cooking
   • you are a forester
   • you have a girlfriend
   • you like lectures
   • you have been to see a ... (famous temple)
   • you like sports
   • you like group work
   • you have a boyfriend
   • you .........................
   •
   •
   •
   •
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   •
   •
   • (add your own school specific questions)
4. Ask if any of the participants wants to ask a question to group

Comments
Very quick and nice way to get some ideas about the group, both for the participants as for the facilitators.
ICE BEAKER

Energizer - Counting

Explain to participants that we will now test our mathematics abilities.
R.E- 8 TEAM BUILDING
Pen in the bottle

Objectives
To increase cooperation and exchange of information amongst group members

Material
One bottle for each group (about 3), one pen for each group, and ropes (thin)

Time
15 minutes

Steps
1. The winner is the group that will first put the pen into the bottle
2. Ask farmers to form 3 or 4 groups (at least 5 members each group)
3. Tide as many strings to the top of the bottle as the number of farmers in each group.
4. Ask each group to make a circle with the bottle in the middle.
5. Pulling the strings each group has to put the pen into the bottle.
6. In plenary ask participants:
   • if they found difficult to work in group;
   • what made them to succeed in completing the assignment;
   • if everyone was able to contribute;
   • how did they feel when there was no progress and someone came up with a good idea;
   • if they felt the cooperation from the other members.
7. Conclude by indicating the value of team work, the need for cooperation and supporting each other, and the better results that can be obtained by good team work.
R.E- 9    TEAM BUILDING

Building a bridge (or a house, or a tree)

At the beginning of the school before farmers go to the field

Material

- Plastic straws (50/60 each team), tailor pins (50/60 each team).
  
  If this material is not available, find some other suitable “building material” such as cartoon paper, boxes, large sheet of paper, glue, tape, ropes, and distribute the same quantity of martial to each groups.

- Prizes for the winning team, and encouragement prizes for the others.

Steps

1. Ask farmers to form two or three groups;
2. Explain that the assignment is to build a bridge (or a house or tree) with the available material;
3. Indicate that each team has 30 minutes to complete the bridge;
4. Add that a jury will be appointed to judge the bridge, and that the winning team will be the one that has build the longest, strongest, and most beautiful bridge (or taller for house)
5. After 30 minutes ask farmers to display their bridge to all. Everyone goes around to see the others bridge;
6. The jury will decide on the winner and distribute the prizes
7. In plenary ask participants :
   - if they found difficult to work in group;
   - what made them to succeed in completing the assignment;
   - if everyone was able to contribute;
   - how did they feel when there was no progress and someone came up with a good idea;
   - if they felt the cooperation from the other members.

8. Conclude by indicating the value of team work, the need for cooperation and supporting each other, and the better results that can be obtained by good team work.
Reading material
FARMERS’ FOREST MANAGEMENT SCHOOL

Background

Community forestry is most accurately and usefully understood as an umbrella term denoting a wide range of activities which link rural people with forest and trees, and the products and benefits to be derived from them. Community forestry is at least as much about improved management of existing resources as it is about afforestation. Community forestry may therefore be considered not a separate discipline, or even a programme, but one dimension of forestry, agriculture, rural energy and other components of rural development.

Nowadays community forestry programmes recognize the dependence of local people on resources and their interest in managing them. Such programmes support participatory approaches that includes all stakeholders, from policy makers to local communities, and work to create an enabling environment where communities can negotiate as equal partners and where equitable solutions can be developed. Attention is paid to develop tools, methods and approaches for participatory forestry, and strengthen the ability of local and national institutions to work in participatory forestry and related fields.

It has been recognized that processes, methods and tools to support the development of Community Forestry have been developed and are presently in use worldwide. These processes include several steps such as investigation, negotiation, land allocation, endorsement of management agreements, and/or preparation of operational plans. Through this process the rights over the use and management of forest areas have been transferred to local communities and much effort has been given to the formation of forest user groups as the local institution that take responsibility on the management and development of the forest area. The result is that the number of the user groups has increased and is increasing every day.

In the recent years it has been observed that a high percentage of forest users/communities have the tendency to over-protect the community forest area and that the present management level of forests could not provide the expected benefits to forest users. More on timber than NTFP.

In other words it could be said that many of the community forest user groups are presently under-utilizing the forest and that management is more oriented towards protection than towards natural regeneration and sustainable production. Silvicultural practices are partially used due to the limited implementation of active forest management and difficulty to mobilize users groups as an institution.

It has been often pointed out that handing over of forests to the communities is the starting point of the Community Forestry Programme. There is today great scope to assist forest users functioning as their own managers as well as managers of the forest with increased self-reliance and ability to run the institutions.

Projects in Asia have promoted a number of initiatives aiming at building Forest Departments and local NGOs staff capacity to provide technical assistance to forest users in managing their forests. This includes guidelines and training to prepare Working Plans and Management Plans, Action Research activities to identify suitable and sustainable forest management options, farmers’ led research, and Rural Learning Networks.

One of the main constraints identified to satisfy today users’ interests and needs is the limited practice on facilitating active forest management with forest user groups. This constraint has been identified in several countries in Asia including China, India, Indonesia, Lao, Nepal, Pakistan, and Vietnam.

How identified forest users’ needs and forestry development priorities could then be addressed by a development initiative/programme?

In many countries transfer of technology model is still the dominant approach in both forestry and agricultural research centers and extension departments. Forest management systems, silviculture operations (focussing mainly on timber production) are more closely tailored to foresters’ rather than villagers’ skills, experience, and often not always compatible with local needs.
In particular extension has not been part of conventional forestry and foresters thus are not trained in its practice. Participatory extension methods and promoting farmers experimentation are more likely not only to articulate farmers’ knowledge and concerns, but also to facilitate the process of action research needed to identify and refine appropriate technologies, and also help people develop their own problem solving skills.

Growing recognition of the importance of income in the decision of the rural poor calls for supporting the growing of species which respond to farmers’ perceived needs for higher valued tree products such as fodder, fruits, poles and protection is more likely to ensure continued tree cover than support aimed primarily at fuelwood production.

The recognition of forest users’ need and capacity to adapt both indigenous and modern technologies to their present agro-socio-economic and political environment is a prerequisite to encourage a diversity of extension service provision which may promote farmer decision-making and local technology development, support to farmer-to-farmer extension/networking and give farmers greater choice of their source of information so as to support the long term sustainability of their forest management systems.

Farmers have a holistic approach to any problem related to their forest and to the production of a specific forest product. Their problems need to be approached with the basic understanding of the array of factors that enter into their own analysis and decision making. In addition, to grow a profitable forest product implies access to knowledge and skills on a variety of forest management practices on the several factors that influence its production and marketing.

It is believed that if community forest users’ capacity in managing their forest could be engaged and strengthened, giving shared importance to both timber and non timber forest products, increased benefits could be shared amongst users without depleting forest resources but on the contrary enhancing its productivity.

Late 1999 RECOFTC has undertaken a series of visit in the region to explore interest and opportunities for collaboration to develop a suitable approach to build forest users groups’ capacity in forest management with less focus on transfer of technologies and more emphasis on facilitating group learning approach.

One promising approach to local knowledge and information systems has been the FAO's Farmer Field Schools (FFS). Based on that experience the FTPP and RECOFTC have analyzed the applicability of the approach to local forestry activities. This manual and the training of field facilitators are the result of such work.

**Purpose**

The Farmers’ Forest Management School is being developed to respond to farmers’ identified need and interest to learn more about forest management practices.

The school aims to build farmer’s capacity to analyze their forest management system and practices, to identify the present and future forest production needs, and to experiment possible solutions on their forest, eventually identifying and adopting the practices that will solve farmers’ felt forest production needs.

The proposed learning process gives forest users the opportunity to learn by doing, by being involved in experimentation and discussion, developing their ability of making critical and informed decisions that render their forest more productive, profitable and sustainable.

The purpose is also to assist users to organize themselves and their communities, and to create a strong working network with other groups, forest officers and researchers. In doing so the role of farmers in the researcher - extensionist - farmer chain will be strengthened. Through utilizing the skills
developed in local analysis forest users are enabled to adjust input recommendations or technical packages to suit local conditions.

Consequently the school is not meant to teach farmers new technologies developed outside their environment but through participatory training methods to provide them with tools and skills which will enable them to analyze their own forest management practices, to generate new ideas on silvicultural practices for non timber and timber forest products, to identify and experiment possible solutions and potentials for development.

Training approach adopted

The Farmers’ Forest Management School uses “non-formal adult education” methods, based on experiential learning techniques and participatory training methods. Farmers’ learning is directed by goals and needs looking for solutions to real life problems. Experiential learning advocates the establishment of optimal learning environments in which participants have a sense of belonging, security, and freedom to make choices. Necessary ingredients should extend to “voluntary attendance, informality of meetings, freedom of expression, and avoidance of pressure”.

The learning process has been designed to create suitable conditions for forest user group members to become fully involved in identifying what to learn, become fully involved in an experience, observe and reflect on the experience from many perspectives, create concepts and use theories and newly acquired skills to make decisions and solve problems.

Typically a group of 20 to 25 members of a forest users group meets regularly for half-day (morning or an afternoon) over a period of 12 months or more on one of the selected forest areas.

The initial 4 to 5 meetings aim to identify and prioritize users needs and forest area where solutions will be tested. Through the analysis of the present forest management system and practices farmers set their learning priorities. These learning priorities are the base from which field trials, demonstrations, and skills practice will be selected and included in the school programme, and undertaken during the following half-hay meetings.

The group conducts a number of trials (season-long studies) as well as some demonstrations of alternative technologies during the season.

The group meetings continue during the season during which field experiments and demonstrations are carried out, monitored and evaluated by the participants.

The activities are highly practical, involving careful observations of factors affecting trials performance and joint examination of possible solutions: there is much sharing of experiences among the farmers and a minimum of lecturing.

The forest as classroom. All learning is based in the field. Working in small sub-groups farmers test/experiment different forest management options and practice new skills. Through direct observation data are collected and decisions made based on analyses of this information. Farmers present their decisions to the other group members in the field school for further discussion, questioning, and refinement. Using this approach problems are seen as challenges not constraints.

Members of the Forest User Group are taught numerous analytical methods. Problems are posed to groups in a graduated manner such that they can build confidence in their ability to identify and tackle problems they might encounter in the forest.

The role of the facilitator

The Farmer’s Forest Management School is facilitated by a field officer, or group leader trained in adult education principles, facilitation skills, participatory training and group decision-making methods,
has an understanding of the social of forest practices development, and has implemented a forest management school at least once as part of her or his training.

The facilitator main role is to initiate the process, guide the farmers through the meetings, facilitate discussion, mediate conflicts, facilitate group-decision making, and help the group reflection and analysis of field experiments, assist in summarizing the results of each discussion, and, when needed, provide (or make available) adequate information related to forest management practices.

It is recognized that a facilitator may not have all the technical knowledge and skills required to cover the full range of forest management issues which the group may express an interested in. Therefore, he or she will identify and mobilize the appropriate resources, such as forestry staff, knowledgeable farmers, specialists, visits to near by villages, so as to timely provide farmers with the required information and skills, and to make sure that the school curriculum meets farmers’ expressed interest.

The task of the facilitator is to devise learning opportunities that would enable individuals to meet their specific learning needs. The facilitator task is to be accepting, supportive, and most important to be able to establishing a pattern of communication that creates a climate of trust and safety eventually increasing the flow of information and cooperation amongst group members.

She or he become a co-learner and makes available a wide range of resources and learning techniques. In doing so the learner is encouraged to take risks, and to experiment.

In addition, the facilitator has the responsibility to initiates the school, identify interested forest users groups, promote network with extension service and specialists. At the beginning of the school the facilitator role will be very important because farmers and resources have to be mobilized. As the school evolves farmers will gradually take up a more active role.

The role of scientists

Since forest management may involve knowledge on different disciplines in particular those related to non timber forest products (e.g. soil nutrients, pests, harvesting techniques, marketing/selling of produce) scientists or resource persons may need to be involved during the implementation of a school. Multidisciplinary teams including locally available expertise (knowledgeable farmers) are particularly appropriate in the school process. They provide backstopping, support, knowledge on a specific topic, and they also learn to work with farmers.

Resource persons not familiar with this training approach may need to be briefed by the facilitator, and assisted in the preparation of his or her session plans (exercises). Lectures need to be avoided giving preference to direct experimentation, observation, and reflection.

How to use this manual

The purpose and the users of the manual

The overall objective of the manual is to assist facilitators by providing the basic framework and materials for the implementation of the Farmer’s Forest Management School (FFMS). This manual, when translated into the language of the country of use and adapted to local/field circumstances where needed, is intended to be used by:

(a) field based extension officers, farmers’ leaders and field-level development workers to facilitate the implementation of a FFMS;

(b) those people who would like to organise a FFMS and need ideas and exercises on how to set up a school programme; and

(c) trainers or coordinators who will be training field-level facilitators using these guidelines.
How to use the manual

This manual contains a number of exercises on a selected range of forest management topics from identifying interested users groups to monitoring and evaluation of field experiments. Each exercise is described in detail so as to provide sufficient guidance to the facilitator. Each exercise includes a brief introduction, learning objectives, time and material needed, and steps to be followed. Each exercise ends with suggestions for leading questions to facilitate group reflection and discussions.

Adult learning and change are facilitated best by a process that begins with an experience followed by the collection of observations about that experience. This information is then analyzed and the resulting conclusion used by the learners to modify their behavior and select new experiences. Consequently each exercise has been designed to promote farmers learning using experiential learning techniques and participatory training methods.

To implement an exercise it is often suggested to form small groups of 4 to 5 people. The group’s assignment includes idea-generation, brainstorming, information sharing, list making, and problem solving or skill practice. One or two persons work as recorders, summarising the groups’ output, and reporting to the larger group afterwards. The facilitator does not interfere, but monitors progress of the groups and offers procedural guidance, content suggestions, and feedback.

Working in small groups is a very effective participatory training method increasing learner participation and commitment. Small-group task requires and encourages active engagement of all participants. In small group people have less chance to hide or get lost. Participant speak more freely than in large groups where people feel little or no personal responsibility. Working in small groups offers the opportunity to:

- Stimulate individual inputs,
- break the ice,
- gather opinions and identify preconceived ideas,
- rank order item and create an agenda,
- collect questions and issues
- promote feedback
- measure knowledge and experience.

During the exercises, you may also be asked to promote group discussion or assist groups in accomplish the task assigned. To be able to promote group learning making the best use of the suggestions included in each exercise you will need to use a variety of facilitation skills you have learnt during the facilitators’ training.

Overview of the manual

The manual contains eight chapters. The chapters follow the school flow cycle as sown on page 3. Each chapter deals with a main topic and it contains an introduction and a number of exercises related to the main topic. In some cases two or more exercises have been included for the one topic. This will give the user the flexibility to choose the most appropriate for a particular situation.

The first chapter provides information on the activities suggested to be carried out before the beginning of the Farmer Forest Management School (FFMS). This includes hints on group selection and negotiating the FFMS programme with the user group.

Chapter two contains exercises related to the opening of the school, setting expectations and exercises which are regularly used during each half-day meeting such as daily review, summary and daily feedback.
Chapters three through six are grouped together and include the exercises used during the initial phase of the FFMS, which are scheduled before the season/cycle. Chapter three contains exercises to guide participants to the identification and prioritization of common learning interests (forest production needs) and forest areas to be used as a learning site. Chapter four deal with the generation of ideas and selection of forest practices to be experimented. Chapter five includes exercises to assist users to plan field experimentation including selection of plots. Chapter six deals with monitoring of farmers’ experimentation and demonstrations (season-long studies).

Chapter seven includes exercises to facilitate the regular group meetings, including reflection and analysis of field observation. The chapter also includes sessions according to different forest management practices.

Chapter eight contains exercises on participatory school evaluation, and re-planning.

**When and where to run a school**

Typically a group of 20 to 25 farmers, selected within the larger user group, meets regularly (for a morning or an afternoon). The frequency of meetings may vary from once a month to every 3 months. In general there are about 8 to 10 meetings in one school.

**Time of the year:** The school is scheduled to start with five half-day meetings before the beginning of the season for forest operations. This will allow participants to go through the initial school assessment phase and to identify forest options and practices that may be chosen for experimentation during the season. After the initial assessment phase the school continues with regular half-day meetings during the season (cycle).

In scheduling the school the facilitator should be aware of farmers’ availability and it is important to involve participants in setting the time and schedule of meetings. Women may not have the same availability as men. To guarantee that women can attend regularly suitable times need to be identified. Facilitators have an important role to play in this respect.

**Duration:** The school has a duration of at least 12 months, and it may become a continuous on-going group learning process.

**Length of each school meeting:** There are no fixed rules on the duration of each meeting. This will depend on farmers’ and facilitators’ availability. In general it is not possible for farmers to spend a full day away from their farm or other commitments very often. Therefore it is suggested the school meetings take no more than half a day.

**Venue:** The school meets at a convenient meeting place and close to the forest area where forest operations are been tested.
How adults learn

Adult learning occurs best when it:

- **Is self-directed**
  Adults can share responsibility for their own learning because they know their own needs

- **Fills an immediate need**
  Motivation to learn is highest when it meets the immediate needs of the learner

- **Is participative**
  Participation in the learning is active not passive.

- **Is experiential**
  The most effective learning is from shared experience; learners learn from each other, and the trainer often learns from the learners.

- **Is reflective**
  Maximum learning from a particular experience occurs when a person takes the time to reflect back upon it, draw conclusions and derive principles for application to similar experiences in the future.

- **Provides feedback**
  Effective learning requires feedback that is corrective but supportive.

- **Shows respect for the learner**
  Mutual respect and trust between trainer and learner help the learning process.

- **Provides a safe atmosphere**
  A cheerful, relaxed person learns more easily than one who is fearful, embarrassed, nervous, or angry.

- **Occurs in a comfortable environment**
  A person who is hungry, tired, cold, ill or otherwise physically uncomfortable cannot learn with maximum effectiveness.

Learning cycle

```
Experience

Practice Reflection

Generalization
```
Remember...

- Adults learn throughout their lives. Training is only a small element; a person 40 years old has 40 years of learning experience.

- Adults are more afraid to fail. A safe and open environment is needed and a lot of time should be spent on getting to know each other and building group norms.

- Adults like their learning to be focused on their own specific situations. Try to relate those in a training. Give specific examples related to the working areas of participants.

- Adults decide for themselves what is important to learn. Give adults a say in the training agenda. Include a session on expectations.

- Adults draw from past experiences. Refer to those past experiences and encourage exchange among trainees by working in groups and by asking them to link things to their own working situations. Use reflection exercises.

- Adults question the truth or usefulness of information they receive. Before a session explain the need and usefulness of the session for the participants.

- Participation in learning for adults is voluntary. If they are convinced of the usefulness of material they are more motivated.

- We can remember of....................

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<tr>
<td><strong>what we ourselves do and explain</strong></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>what we see and hear</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>what we see</strong></td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>what we hear</strong></td>
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<td><strong>what we read</strong></td>
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- i.e. simulation game, exercise in class or field using new insights or skills and a presentation of results

- i.e. participants asked to present information

- i.e. a lecture with visual aids and demonstration

- i.e. a poster with no explanation or demonstration without explanation

- i.e. a lecture with no visuals

- i.e. training materials, handouts with no accompanying explanation (if read!)
FACILITATION FUNDAMENTALS

- **Why are facilitation skills so important?**
  A facilitator has to facilitate the communication and organization of a often divers audience. He/she has to increase the exchange of information amongst farmers attending the meeting, allow individuals to express their opinions and to be heard. You will need the skills to channel all these divers communication styles in an effective way, so that effective sharing can take place.

- **How does good facilitation support effective sharing?**
  Of all ideas and experiences that are put forth in the course of meeting, some gain a bit of attention while others disappear as if they had never been said. Why does this happen? The following diagram illustrates the problem:

  ![Diversity in communication](image)

  Here is the principle: an idea that is expressed in an acceptable communication style will be taken more seriously by more people. Ideas that are expressed poorly or offensively are harder for others to hear. For example, many people are impatient with others who are very shy or nervous and speak in broken sentences, or who don’t master the language well enough.

  There are a great number of groups whose members really want to voice opinions, share their insights, listen to each other’s experiences and come up with interesting new ideas. But the range and richness of their sharing will be limited by their status and the degree to which they can follow and accept diverse communication styles.

  In the next diagram less ideas get lost, more ideas are shared by stretching the limits of acceptable communication styles. By using good facilitation techniques, a facilitator can be an excellent support to such groups.

  The following examples and diagram illustrate how less ideas get lost, more ideas are shared by stretching the limits of acceptable communication styles. By using good facilitation techniques, a facilitator can be an excellent support to such groups.

  **For example:**
  - When somebody is repeating herself all the time, a facilitator can summarize what she said to help her thinking.
  - A facilitator can help those who speak in broken sentences by slowing them down and drawing them out (probing).
  - A facilitator can repeat a point of idea from a shy participant to bring it under everyone’s attention.
A facilitator can treat interruptions firmly and respectfully, by assuring the speaker that when the current discussion ends, the facilitator will ask the group what to do with the new topic.

**Diversity in communication**

Instead of the diagram, it might be better to use a drawing with a group of people sitting in a circle ..... with arrows indicating exchanged information (inward) and arrows indicating lost information (outward) in different colors.

These situations demonstrate how important it is for a facilitator to listen skillfully and respectfully to everyone!
Farmers' Forest Management School in Sarda Debi Forest User Group, Kabhre, Nepal

Background of User group
Sarda Debi is a forest-user group in Kavre District with 150 households as members. Sarda Debi means Goddess of Wisdom. The group manages a total area of 42 ha and has been managing this area for 6 years. After 2 years of protection, regeneration of the forest was extensive so that there was no need for plantation establishment.

The FUG has a regime of thinning only 15 ha of the forest at the present time. The main benefits of protection were given as increases in water sources and supply, although it was also mentioned that they were satisfying only 25% of their fuelwood needs from the forest. The group has its own office and 27,000 rupees in their account and have employed a forest watcher at a salary of 1,200 rupee a month.

School opening, & setting expectations
Farmers from the FUG were introduced to the team of rangers and other facilitators using an interactive method whereby each person was given a tree leaf and searched out a partner with a similar leaf.

A general discussion on the forest-users’ experiences in forest management was used as a basis to introduce the field school. The users offered the information that in the past, six people from the FUG had been involved in forest management training in another district and following that training some demonstration plots had been established where they had carried out thinning, pruning and singling. The objectives of the FFMS were introduced and linked to this information by informing the users that this school would help them learn about forest management in a larger group in their own forest.

After expectations were discussed the name of the FFMS was also debated. As there was no general consensus the group was divided into four smaller groups to choose a name. The four suggestions were as follows:

- Forest Management Improvement Group;
- Forest Management Multi-product Program;
- Our Forestry School, and
- Model Experiment Forest Management School.

An older female FUG member proposed that the naming of the school should happen on the 6th day as this is the tradition in Nepal for naming a baby. This was agreed to by the rest of the group.

Learning interests and priority needs
The group worked together to discuss the past, present and future needs for forest resources. A lot of debate was generated, related to needs or availability, and there was some confusion evident. When the farmers were asked to list the needs that were most important in their lives, instantly they agreed that it was water and fuelwood. The outcome of the discussion is shown below.
### Prioritising needs, and forest area selection

At the next meeting, the group tried to prioritise their forest resource needs through pair-wise ranking. This meeting took place in the forest. The results of the ranking are given below (highest priority on top).

1. Income Generating Activities  
   (1-lapsi, 2-bamboo, 3-cardamon, 4-broom grass, 5-bauhinia, 6-locket (paper), 7-shrub bamboo)  
2. Fuelwood  
3. Fodder trees  
4. Timber  
5. Leaf litter

Having prioritised their needs overall, with IGA activities as first priority, the group decided to also prioritise the IGA activities. It became clear that Lopsi was identified as a priority because the users were aware that Lopsi could be involved in a possible project initiative. Some users then expressed an interest in "making the most of what was already in the forest" and went back to the original chart and identified fuelwood production as a priority need/interest. After some discussion the group decided to look at forest management for fuelwood but keep in the back of their minds their interest in Lopsi for future processes.

A map was then made, showing forest blocks with creek names, and the group identified an area on the map which they felt would be most appropriate for forest management for fuelwood. A short walk was taken to the identified area.

The users’ rationale for selecting the proposed area as a "learning site" was based on their knowledge of the forest condition (dense shrubland) where no forestry operations had been implemented since handover to their group. The facilitators observed that the area was overdue for more active management. The users explained that under the rotation system for harvesting, this block had not yet been harvested. When challenged with the proposal that there was potential for extraction from the

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block now, and that the forest would be more productive if they extracted, the users expressed concern that if they opened the block up for use, over-extraction by other users would occur. The group was still in favour of protection, as they felt that was easier to control.

During the feedback exercise at the end of the meeting, the users commented that they enjoyed the prioritisation exercise as it helped them to come to a consensus and see the common needs and views among them. Surprise was also expressed that there was still much asking of questions and no answers. Some users commented that they had started to see the relevance of identifying needs so that they could manage their forest according to their needs. In addition, comment was made on their own social dynamics: a woman suggested that it would be better if they took turns to speak. Other users also said that the people who were not speaking much should try to speak more.

**Selecting forest management practices**

During the next session the facilitators and farmers together recalled and summarised the output so far. This was followed by a walk around previous demonstration plots to share experiences of forest management practices. In a plenary group discussion, users who had been involved in the demonstration plots explained what they did.

However, when questioned on the purposes of the practices demonstrated, the users found it difficult to explain. One of the practices demonstrated was singling, and having seen the results of the demonstration plot, the FUG had decided to adopt singling in the rest of the area. However, one user expressed concern that he felt some users did not properly understand the practice of singling, as in many instances where it was being applied outside the demoplot, two stems had been left. This discussion was useful for the facilitators to explore the perspectives of the users towards the practices demonstrated.

The group then walked to the area selected for the experiment plot. The forest users were then asked to list the species in the forest and prioritise fuelwood species. The objective of this exercise was to enable all to understand the users' preferences by species, which would help them to identify appropriate practices based on the species that they would like to promote and improve production of.

The users selected and prioritised seven fuelwood species. This step took some time and was done using preference ranking in two groups. Criteria used for ranking the fuelwood species included good copping, good for burning, fast growing, and others.

In the feedback session at the end of the meeting, the users expressed their satisfaction with having shared their knowledge on fuelwood and deciding which ones were the best.

The forest watcher commented that the exercise had been useful for him as he realised that the species that they had removed from the other demonstration plot were the species they were prioritising for fuelwood production. This had raised questions in his own mind about which species should be kept or removed.

The users also expressed satisfaction with the group-interaction norms that had been generated at the beginning of the day, as this had made the process smoother.

**Resource assessment based on needs, and ideas for practices**

The next session began with a group recap, of the output of the previous day's exercise followed by discussion of what should be done next. The users expressed interest in discussing harvesting practices for fuelwood, and the whole group moved to the forest area. There, a game was set up, which involved questions and false answers. For example if asked a question to which the answer was yes, the answer should be a shake of the head as if to say no, and vice versa. Each person took a turn to answer questions from the facilitator. The exercise generated a lot of laughter, and generated the comment from one woman that the exercise had made her think how it is sometimes difficult to try new ways of doing things.
The users agreed that it was important to look at the resources in the area, so a walk was undertaken in the area, by three groups taking different routes. Before setting out, the walkers were asked what and why they should observe. They generated a list as follows:

- presence and location of prioritised fuelwood species;
- density of forest cover;
- how much fuelwood could be extracted now (headloads);
- how are preferred species are affected by other species;
- how many mother/seed trees of the preferred species there are, and where they are;
- presence and location of wildlife (especially birds), and
- to generate ideas for practices to manage fuelwood species to increase production.

At the end of the walk the group met up again and shared their observations using the list as a guideline, one of the facilitators recording and one summarising.

The forest users had many opinions regarding which species should stay and which should be removed, which stems to remove and why, according to different perceptions and their observations of how some species were affecting others. Observations were also made that one of the preferred species (Schima) was only present at the top of the slope.

After sharing observations the facilitators tried to summarise the ideas for forest management practices. A list of practices that the users would like to carry out in the experimental plot was drawn up as follows (at this stage the rationale and details of the treatments were not finalised):

- thinning;
- promote coppicing;
- cleaning, and
- shrubland management.

Finalisation of forest management practices

The next day's session began with a re-cap of the previous day's outcomes. Some of the users found this to be more difficult than on previous occasions, and there was some confusion about what had been decided the previous day. The discussion was dominated by the men who had been involved in previous forest management training.

The word "demoplot" was used often in the discussion and some expressed concern that the area selected for the plot was not appropriate, as it was not at the side of the road.

Following this discussion the facilitators decided to try and explore the concepts of experimentation and demonstration with the users. This was done using a role play: somebody who knew how, demonstrated how to make tea, and two people experimenting to try to make tea to their own tastes.

When encouraged to express their thoughts, it was clear that the users saw the main differences between learning by doing something already within their experience, and generating new ideas to suit a new situation. One woman commented that if we do new things, we might have new ideas on how to do better the things we already know how to do. Following this, the users constantly referred to the fact that they needed to try different ingredients and methods to see how the taste changed.

The women in the group were keen to experiment with different treatments for coppicing and suggested that thinning would help for timber production only, and not fuelwood, and their identified need was fuelwood. A discussion of an appropriate mix of practices followed.
In the feedback session at the end of the meeting the users were very confident that they wanted to experiment, and now they were clear on how this would be different from their experiences with the previous demonstration plot.

**Designing the experimental plot**

After recalling the highlights of the previous day's session, the group moved to the selected area. A plot of 25 m x 25 m was chosen for practice. Practicing within sub-plots to learn more about coppice management for fuelwood production was discussed. The final practices to be implemented and the experiment design are outlined below.

Following clarification of the purposes, the plot was demarcated by the users and facilitators by means of a rope, and a channel of 0.5 m around the boundary cleared. After this the what/who/when/where of the workplan was discussed and is presented below.

**Workplan**

The main ingredients of the workplan as decided by the group were:

- trees will be marked and cut only after discussion with other users;
- saws and not sickles will be used for cutting as sickle use means having to cut many times and damages trees while saws make smooth cuts;
- work in the plot to begin on March 28th;
- forest users not in the FFMS will be informed through notice about the experimental plot;
- the plots will be protected from other damage;
- observations of growth of coppice will include which species show better growth, and the number of shoots;
- observation of changes will be done on the last Wednesday of June and then every Saturday of each month;
- the group will maintain records in a diary in CF office(one woman/one man responsible)
- a whiteboard showing results will be displayed in the community building;
- the date of the next rangers' visit was agreed, and
- the group was finally named as the Sarda Debi farmer forestry school.

**Monitoring - "See Changes", and selecting indicators**

The group agreed that the first observation would be done three months after initiating the changes and then as above, through regular meetings. The indicators selected were:

- number of shoots, counting for each species;
- vigorousness of shoots, measured by finger size;
- height of shoots, use of bamboo measuring pole.

In the final feedback session the users expressed their thoughts regarding the changes wrought in their feelings throughout the process and towards the process. Some of the comments were:

"We thought you would come and tell us what to cut and how but we have learnt that we can find out by ourselves by answering your questions."
"At the beginning it was a very confusing process but after 3-4 days when we prioritised our own needs it became clearer and we found out that maybe we can answer our own needs through different management practices."

"At the beginning I was confused because every day I brought my sickle but we never used it, but now I understand when I can use it."

"We thought you were going to talk about forest management when you first came, but we talked about all everything except forest management, but now after struggling we have come to a conclusion."