THAI-GERMAN HIGHLAND DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMME

Concept Paper for a Participatory M&E System

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1. Background and Assessment of Experiences

Since the beginning of the TG-HDP the project has put much emphasis on the development and operation of its M&E system. A quite wide ranging and sophisticated approach to monitor programme activities and outputs (results) according to medium-term plans (PPM) and annual operational plans (1-Year-Management Plans, 1-Y-M-P) was developed and was in operation for many years. The M&E system has been adjusted since 1992 and requires further revision and modification. The experiences have been reviewed within the TG-HDP Management Unit, in particular by the Planning and Monitoring Section (PMS), and have revealed the need for amendments. Within GTZ a number of systems, approaches, tools, formats and instruments for Project Management is available, focusing on project planning and reporting. However, it was found that the field of M&E is not appropriately covered and that approaches and tools have been developed in dependently by numerous projects. This situation applies to both output and impact monitoring. Regarding impact monitoring, concepts have been developed only during recent years and their application is still limited. This fact has been of major concern and a main reason for establishing a GTZ Regional Working Group on Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation (RWGM&E). PMS’ and the Planning Advisor’s experiences in participating in the group have been very beneficial to the process of applying participatory M&E approaches to the TG-HDP.

1.1 Past and present Performance Monitoring

The Monitoring system on output/activity level (performance monitoring) mainly aimed at providing the large amount of data for the needs of the project (TG-HDP MU) and was characterised by a strongly formalised system. A vast amount of information was provided according to the high numbers of output indicators (OVIs of the PPM) and Performance Indicators (Pis for the 1-Y-M-P). M&E data focused on quantitative information and on information about plan/target fulfillment. The required quality was limited by the actual way of collecting and providing the data. M&E activities were carried out mainly by TG-HDP MU staff. They had defined indicators during ZOPP workshops and the annual planning process with some participation of Responsible Implementing Agencies (RIAs) RIAs' main role, however, was the approval of the plan only. RIAs supplied data according to these indicators but villagers did not participate actively in M&E activities at all.
Information has been used only internally for programme steering and for concept development by the TG-HDP MU. Reports have been prepared according to GTZ, BMZ, ONCB and DTEC requirements. Feedback to RIAs and/or joint evaluation of data between RIA and TG-HDP MU staff was limited. No feedback on M&E results was given to villagers and thus data were not used for corrective action and further planning at village level.

Whereas villagers' active participation in M&E was not practised, much emphasis has been given to their active involvement during the assessment of the village situation and the planning process. For the last two years Rural System Analysis and Rapid/Participatory Rural Appraisal have been increasingly utilised to assess the situation, problems, resources and potential of villages. Regarding monitoring, an attempt was undertaken by the TG-HDP MU to establish a "Farmer-Based M&E" system. Under this approach farmers from various villages in Nam Lang have meet several times in order to exchange and evaluate experiences. The approach has proved promising. However, it has been limited to agricultural issues and is at present not regularly carried out.

During the past two years the monitoring system has been developed into a less formalised system by reducing its magnitude according to the simplifies plan format. In addition, the provision of monthly monitoring information according to performance indicators and monitoring milestones was changed from using large numbers of forms to quality oriented, mostly verbal, reporting. This monitoring process takes place within the NL and HPL area teams. During their monthly meetings field staff and respective programme coordinators (PCs) report on the progress of implementation. The data are based on RIA's or their own information. In general looking back on two years experiences with the modified approach, the monitoring of information provided by this more informal approach is considered to be only partly satisfactory. It was found that the information flow from the new, more informal system is less regular and less systematic. The purpose of measuring programme performance and further developing of concepts could only be partly fulfilled. Thus, monitoring information should be provided in a more structured and more comprehensive way in order to be better able to take corrective action and other management decisions.

For an overview on TG-HDP's management cycle for annual planning - past and present working steps - please see the diagram on the following page.

1.2 Past and present Impact Monitoring

Whereas monitoring at output/activity levels ensures the generation of data about the quantitative dimension of programmes, impact monitoring or impact assessment appraises the qualitative dimension, including the adoption of improved practices by villagers and other target groups, economic gains of beneficiaries, socio-cultural aspects and group capacities. Impact monitoring/impact assessment has been conducted in the TG-HDP with the aim of further developing concepts and programmes.

The following major methods have been used:

- baseline surveys
- special studies for various subject matter including case studies
- household surveys ("Distribution Survey")
- Impact Survey Nam Lang (1992)
- Impact Assessment Study Nam Lang (1994)
- Indicators of the PPM at project purpose level have been used to measure changes. This information was mainly based on (verbal) reports by TG-HDP staff and has been used for semi-annual progress reports (SAPRs).

Data collection and data analysis for impact assessment were conducted by TG-HDP MU. Report have been prepared for internal purpose (mainly for concept and programme development) and according to GTZ and BMZ requirements. There was hardly any active involvement of RIAs and villagers.