Training Capacity Building
within the SFDP strategy for community forestry training

Consultancy Report No 27

by

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Part 1
March/April (A) and June (B) 2002

August 2002

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Introduction

The main objectives of the consultancy are to define a practicable structure, objectives and the main contents for an overall TOT training approach in collaboration with the technical advisors and staff from SFDP.

The consultant further assesses future training needs and evaluates and re-adjusts an existing TOT training manual based on existing training modules and capacity of available trainer pool.

For the period from 2002 to 2004, SFDP and RECOFTC collaborate in Training Capacity Building in the context of SFDPs handover and training strategy. The collaboration mainly focuses on

i. the capacity building within the trainer pool of the 2 involved vocational schools
ii. the design and implementation of specific TOT modules at different levels and in different technical topics
iii. the facilitation of a dialogue and assessment of a future linkage between the Social Forestry Training Center in Xuan Mai University and the vocational schools.

RECOFTC provides technical support in form of several short-term missions in the project area in Vietnam as well as advisory support on request during the whole period.

The consultant worked for the project from the second half of April 2002 for 20 days in close collaboration with the international advisers for training and community forestry and project staff. Logistic and technical support are provided by the project. The consultant conducted some revised modules of the TOT level training course on LUPLA and test a prepared coaching form.

For the detailed Terms of Reference refer to Annex 1 to Part A.

This report deals with the assignments 30 March – 12 April 2002 and the Reflection Workshop for Commune Forestry Extension Workers 16 – 24 June 2002.

PART A: Training Capacity Building Program for SFDP Vietnam - 30 March – 12 April 2002-

1. Objectives of the Mission

Referring to the RECOFTC and SFDP Collaborative Program on Training Capacity Building, the first trip has been made to pursue the main activities mentioned in the proposal. There are 2 main objectives in the first mission initially developed between SFDP and RECOFTC; Training Capacity Assessment and Planning for Capacity Building Strategy.

However, for pragmatic reasons and responding to the dynamic of SFDP program, a few more tasks have been integrated in the first mission to ensure the most effective and efficient quality of SFDP’s Training Capacity Building Program. Attached please find the TOR (Annex 1 to Part A) and the workplan (Annex 2 to Part A).

Main objectives of the mission are to

- Assess the training capacity of SFDP trainers and prospected trainers as well as to identify the needs for training capacity
- Provide feedback on the existing training materials in specifically the Training-of-Trainer Reference and Coaching Guideline
- Plan a further collaboration program to ensure that the Training Capacity Building process fits to the overall program and the schedule suits for prospected trainers.
- Identify criteria for Co-trainer(s) for the future training workshop who can be responsible for follow up activities.

2. What has been observed?

After working with the international experts, SFDP staff, prospected training agencies, and reviewing the existing training materials, a number of issues were found that the project has to consider for the training capacity building process.

2.1 Training Strategy

Within this final phase, the project wants to scale up the tested methodologies such as LUPLA, PAEM or VDP into the project area both in Son La and Lai Chau Province. This extension will be performed by various types of training. Three levels of training have been initiated and applied so far to ensure the quality of implementation. Each level has different levels of trainers and own modules.

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<td><strong>ToT</strong>: 3 Modules (each 5 days) + 1 coaching meeting (3 days)</td>
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The trainers on specific topic TOT normally come from the SFDP project and related Departments. At provincial and district level, trainers come from line Departments at provincial and district offices respectively. At commune level, people who have been trained at district level are supposed to work closely with villagers on the specific methodology. Starting from 1999, the project got both Vocational Schools (Son La and Lai Chau Province) to cooperate and ultimately take a leading role in providing training services. The training mandate is officially assigned by Provincial Committee decision, even though the vocational school staff are yet lacking field experience on the methodologies, especially in Dien Bien Vocational School.

2.2 Trainer Capacity

The methodologies that SFDP wants to expand through Lai Chau and Son La are skill-based techniques. To scale up their application, proper training programs are required to enable participants to apply and practice in their own context. So far the project has been trying to apply an experiential learning concept and to promote more participatory training in the current programs; the practical application obviously has not been made yet. So far there are only a few project trainers trained or experienced in participatory training and skill-based learning programs. Presently, training techniques used in existing programs are more or less lecture, group discussion, study tour, demonstration and test. This might not guarantee sufficient opportunities for participants to have hand-on experience and gain sufficient skills to implement the methodology.

From the observation of one training program, it was found that the trainer, who taught participants the value and principles of Adult Learning and Experiential Learning, has not yet accommodated real practices in the current programs. Feedback was given on the Training Logbook and Coaching guideline.

2.3 Training Program Development and Implementation

The existing training programs have been performed based on the needs identified by related organizations including administrative demand in community-based natural resource management. These programs require proper training development and implementation. Reviewing of the project training packages it is obvious that the basic elements for quality training development such as training strategy, training design process, learning objectives, session plan and evaluation mechanism still need to be strategically articulated and practiced. This was also evident in the LUPLA training program for which a detailed feedback was provided.

2.4 Training Materials

There is a list of training materials developed by SFDP to enhance effectiveness of training programs and ultimately for methodology application. They are training packages, field guidelines, training manuals, training coaching guideline and TOT reference. These have been used by different groups of related people engaged in the methodology dissemination. Annex 4 to Part A lists the documents revised. In Annex 5 to Part A the documents are listed that were handed out.

2.5 Linkage between Project and Universities

At the beginning of the final phase SFDP has attempted to develop a collaboration with related Universities
such as Xuan Mai and Thai Nguyen so that the project can gain didactical support from universities and the university in turn can integrate field experiences into the university curriculum. Although a number of efforts have been made through different means by the project expert, the long-term vision for a concrete collaboration has not been finalized.

3. Suggested Actions

A detailed overview of proposed activities is attached in Annex 3 to Part A.

3.1 Training Design Workshop

There is a great need for teaching on training design techniques and skills application for project trainers. The project trainers have to understand the foundation of participatory training approach and be able to integrate Experiential Learning in their training programs. This requires certain skills and practices to become more confident in application. The training workshop is recommended to be done as soon as possible. For strategic reasons, the project plans to organize the training workshop in September 2002 with support from RECOFTC in close cooperation with project co-trainer(s).

At the end of the workshop participants

- can design effective training programs related to their own community forestry context by applying participatory training techniques
- can develop training agenda and session plans based on experiential learning concepts
- can select appropriate training methods for various situations and target groups.

To gain most effective and comprehensive achievement, the workshop must be organized in Vietnamese. It is strongly recommended to have Vietnamese Co-trainer(s). There are some specific suggestions for project consideration in identifying who would work as co-trainer(s)

- English Communication
- Commitment and Interest
- His or her time availability
- Experience in participatory approach
- Experience in field work
- Training characteristics
- Experience in facilitation

It seems that Mr. Inh has been more aware of the concept of Experiential Learning, training techniques and adult learning than the other project trainers, and he has substantial experience both in the field and training. Even though he might not communicate perfectly in English, he could be recommended to work as co-trainer with translation support.

The workshop should be limited to only 15 participants and focus for trainers of TOT, prospected trainers from SFDP project, vocational schools and line departments.

The workshop should be held at a place distant that keeps participants away from their working atmosphere - otherwise they may escape for any emergency task. Hanoi is recommended.

A first itinerary for the workshop was proposed and is being further discussed.

3.2 Reflection Workshop for Commune Forestry Extension Workers

It was stated by the project that there is an immediate need to further differentiate the training strategy and provide some basic facilitation skills for Commune Forestry Extension Workers Most of CFEW are not familiar with the concept of participation and facilitation. It will be very useful if RECOFTC can work together with project trainer(s) to organize a field reflection workshop for CFEW. The workshop was proposed for the second week of June 2002. In this workshop, the observation by the co-trainer for the training design workshop would be preferable. The detailed program was further discussed with the project community forestry expert.

3.3 Training Material Development
There is a need for the development of training materials. This must be considered strategically regarding the ultimate goal of training. It will be very useful for project dissemination if the materials are systematically developed to associate different training means so that these materials can complement the success of the project methodology application. It is suggested that the material should state clear purposes, target users, subject focus and a simple language used with appropriate sequence.

PART B: Reflection Workshop for Commune Forestry Extension Workers - 16 – 24 June 2002 -

1. Purpose of Mission

SFDP is currently testing the implementation of Commune Forestry Extension Worker in Lai Chau province to help villagers on forestry development and management. The implementation and monitoring is contracted out to a Provincial Working Group. The working group consists of representatives from line agencies and commune level representatives. The Working Group had so far developed CFEW TOR and submitted to Lai Chau People Committee for approval. By applying a set of criteria, 12 commune representatives were selected from Dien Bien District, Lai Chau Province for a testing phase to work as Commune Forestry Extension Workers to help coordinating forestry issues between District Office and villages. They all have been introduced to the draft Terms of Reference approved by the district and briefly trained on certain methodologies used in SFDP such as LUPLA, Forest Protection Regulations and Village Development Planning.

This mission is part of the request from SFDP to assist in developing and implementing CFEW reflection. After an initial training course carried out in May, the reflection workshop has been decided by the project to aim at sharing and reflecting the working experience as commune forestry extension workers. It was proposed to provide principles of adult education and facilitation concepts and to gain feedback for CFEW. The workshop also allowed participants to develop their work plans for the next months. Together with SFDP staff and the consultant the reflection workshop was designed, prepared and implemented during 20 – 22 June 2002.

2. What happened in the Workshop

The 3-day workshop was organized at Muong Pon commune office. All 12 commune forestry extension workers and program staff joined the workshop. Besides reflecting CFEW’s working experience, the basic concept of facilitation, adult education, participatory decision-making process, meeting preparation, and group dynamic was introduced and discussed. Please see agenda in Annex 1 to Part B.

Key Observations

2.1 Workshop Preparation

Based on the discussion between RECOFTC and SFDP staff during the last mission, we realized that - when working with commune forestry extension workers - the workshop has to be simple and clear. We also agreed that this workshop would be a step to help us prepare for the Training Workshop which will be held in September. It was suggested by the consultant that it would be useful to have a co-trainer start learning or becoming familiar with participatory learning techniques used within the reflection workshop. Even though SFDP had decided to have Mr. Inh and Mr. Hue work as co-trainers for this time, the co-trainers unexpectedly were busy with emerging tasks. The workshop agenda and sessions were developed by the consultant and modified by the community forestry advisor, but there was no time for translation. Local staff did not have sufficient time to provide feedback on the sessions and prepare them together with the consultant until the day before the workshop, due to the mentioned reasons.

The interpretation of “co-trainer” was confusing between consultant and co-trainers. It was assumed by project staff that co-trainers did not need to run any session except arranging logistics and observing the workshop process. However the consultant expected that the co-trainer would run the sessions in Vietnamese with the support from the consultant.

2.2 Agenda and Session Plan

The Consultant worked together with the Community Forestry Advisor to develop the details of the workshop agenda and session plans. Some of these sessions required inputs and feedback from local staff. The original plan was to work and discuss about the agenda and session through e-mail, but this was a bit too ambitious.
The Consultant could not understand clearly the role of CFEW and the level of communication among workshop participants until he arrived. Therefore the agenda and sessions were finished late and could not be translated in advance. That explained why local staff did not have time to provide inputs and preparation, even though they were prepared for the event.

2.3 Field and Training Manuals

SFDP planned to have a guideline for CFEW implementation and a manual for the reflection workshop. After clarifying the purpose of having these documents, the consultant suggested that SFDP should consider to have a Reference Book, a Reflection Workshop Manual and a Field Book separately. The Reference Book will cover the complete CFEW approach developed by SFDP. The CFEW Reflection Workshop Manual will help facilitators organize a similar type of workshop. The Field manual will guide CFEW to perform their roles more effectively and efficiently. The sessions used for this reflection workshop will be modified and adjusted by the community forestry advisor in close cooperation with the project's training coordinator Mr. Inh, in order to be more appropriate for the Vietnamese context. The adapted version will be used as a Reflection Workshop Manual and the Training Workshop for SFDP.

2.4 Implementation

As the workshop was organized at the commune office, CFEW felt more comfortable and less stressed. The workshop was done in Vietnamese by local staff and in English by the consultant and the community forestry advisor. There are some general observations which can be summarized as follows:

- **Workshop Techniques**

  Facilitators used different participatory and experiential learning techniques to encourage CFEW share and learn from each other. Most of these were new for commune level since they mostly get used to conventional learning technique such as lecturing. For some parts, exercises and questions used during the workshop were difficult to follow by the participants and these need to be further adjusted by the project. The Consultant also could not bring in concrete examples that were close to CFEW to elaborate some learning principles. After realizing this problem, local staff was requested to help facilitate the sessions, but on very short notice and therefore not timely prepared. It was found that most participants appreciated the exercises and lessons that were facilitated by experienced and skillful Vietnamese facilitators.

- **Facilitation Concept**

  Concept of facilitation was discussed under the context of Commune Forestry Extension Role and being referred throughout the workshop. The facilitation house was difficult to understand for participants in the beginning but later helped them to comprehend how to be a good facilitator by frequently referring to the principles described. The word "attitude" was too abstract to understand among commune extension workers in the beginning, but after explanation participants felt confident with the presented form. Later the facilitator handed out cards of different skills and asked participants to place in the facilitation house. This was obviously helpful to allow participants discuss about the specific skills and link the concept to their real experience. The house was referred to as the workshop went on. Basic facilitation skills e.g. listening, questioning and probing were introduced and practiced with games and group work.

- **Participatory Decision Making**

  CFEW has the mandate to help villagers identify their own solution for forest management. They have to organize village meetings. This session helped them understand the nature of participatory decision-making process. Role-play was used to show how people behave and how to reach inclusive solutions. The facilitator reflected the process by drawing a diamond that represents the process of gaining full participation, developing mutual understanding, identifying inclusive solution and sharing responsibilities. Participants referred back to this diamond throughout the program. In order to have an effective meeting, the crucial components e.g. meeting agenda, expected output, and meeting process were introduced and practiced. At the end different types of people in a meeting were discussed.

- **Daily feedback**

  Each day participants were asked to give feedback on what they learned or felt at the end of the day. This feedback was very useful and it helped facilitators to know the level of learning so that the facilitators could adapt exercises to be simpler and more appropriate for commune level. Also after the workshop finished each
day facilitators spent time to reflect on all exercises used for the day and prepared for next day.

2.5 Debriefing

It was decided to have a debriefing meeting in order to share workshop outputs with provincial working group representatives for further actions and to gain feedback from all people involved. A one-day meeting was organized immediately after the workshop. The participants were representatives of the Agricultural Section, Forest Development Sub-Department, SFDP staff, Mr. Ronnakorn and the community forestry advisor. It was agreed that the session plans will be simplified and put into a training manual as a Vietnamese version.

3. Lessons learned and Suggestions

3.1 Co-trainers

The function of co-trainers in a workshop must be clarified. During the first visit in April it was agreed that co-trainers and consultant must work closely together before and during the workshop, so that co-trainers can help prepare and implement the program, as well as learn from being involved. He or she also must help conducting sessions so that the sessions can be run smoothly in Vietnamese language and fit better to the commune context. Co-trainers also are supposed to develop a session plan and agenda with inputs from the consultant.

From the experience of working together with Mr. Inh and Mr. Hue, they became familiar with the participatory learning techniques. It was suggested that they should be in the team of co-trainers for Training Workshop. Mr. Inh can later help coaching prospected trainers in Son La, and Mr. Hue will be able to help coaching prospected trainers in Lai Chua.

It was found more useful and effective when local staff facilitated sessions rather than when the consultant did this with a translator. It saved time and effort to help participants learn especially with participatory techniques. However this requires sufficient time for proper preparation.

3.2 Preparation

Due to the fact that the program has been customized to achieve SFDP goals, the consultant proposed a framework and outline to the project for decision. To maximize the most effective outputs and use of efficient available resources, it is necessary that project staff have sufficient time to provide feedback before the consultant comes and spend time to prepare the program together with consultant in advance. Consultant cannot work with international expert solely but both feedback and supports from domestic staff are much more important. It was suggested by SFDP local staff, advisor, and consultant that consultant must give the framework, agenda, and session plan as early as possible for translation. Then co-trainers should have a training plan including preparation time to give feedback and work with the consultant in advance.

3.3 Concept of being an Extension Worker

There was some confusion among workshop participants on the role of CFEW and it was explicitly found that most of CFEW perceived their role as a policeman to monitor village forest protection. In the reflection exercise participants asked for more power and authority to handle violations as well as more technical support from district level office. Three statements were used to develop a discussion on the role of CFEW. The role of learning from and encouraging villagers to make their own decision was often emphasized during the workshop. This requires some further follow-up by field staff and provincial working group to clarify and closely work together with them in the field. When all participants were asked for feedback on the existing Terms of Reference, it was hard for them to make comments since they have been working in this position for only one month.

3.4 Facilitation in CFEW

Though the value of facilitation in Commune Forestry Extension was briefly discussed, the concept of being a good facilitator was still not internalized by participants. Most of them had perceived "Facilitation" similar to "Support" or "Giving". Consequently they believed CFEW was supposed to give something to address villagers' needs and neglected to empower villagers to show more initiative. They also misunderstood that they were supposed to be subject specialists and be able to provide good technologies for farmers. It was
suggested that SFDP and the Working Group have to find a way that helps CFEW change this perception and attitude towards being a neutral worker who learns from and facilitates the process that allows villagers develop their own solution for sustainable forest management. There was a need to let participants discuss when to play which roles e.g. facilitator, extension worker, observer, or technical specialist.

3.5 CFEW Approach

Feedback from the representatives of the Provincial Working Group showed strong support and commitment to continue testing this initiative. Under Vietnamese circumstances this is admittedly very new, and it needs time for Vietnamese to get accustomed to it. There is no need for the project to push this idea in a rush process, as most of the people currently see that forest resources must be protected. Therefore, a step-by-step approach seems adequate. However, there are some concerns that SFDP may have to address cautiously with the Working Group and local staff, such as:

- How to challenge the perception of Forest Protection and promote the value of Forest Management
- The strategies used to educate forest users in Forest Management and Sustainable Utilization
- How to make use of this pilot program to influence the Provincial Forest Policy and Agenda
- How to monitor the achievement of the program and use these monitoring indicators to convince the Provincial and National Level.

3.6 Capacity for handling Group Decision Making

Many participants said the concept of Participatory Decision Making was not new for them. When asked about how the decision was made, many of them admitted the decision came from majority vote and many times the solutions and following actions were not accepted by the minority. It was a bit doubtful in how far they promote full participation, develop mutual understanding, help farmers identify with the method, inclusive solution and sharing of responsibilities. The explanation for this could be that they did not really understand the Participatory Decision Making process or did not know how to use group communication skills, such as encouraging full participation, team building, managing conflict and so on. There was also a discussion about different types of people that might participate in their meeting. Some of them were difficult and some were supportive. Participants discussed how to deal with those people, but there was no time to practice yet. It would be more useful for the next reflection workshop to allow them to practice these group communication skills and gain more insight in the process of decision-making.