PARTICIPATORY ELABORATION OF MANAGEMENT GOALS FOR NATURAL FORESTS

SFDP Song Da

TRAINER GUIDE

by Björn Wode

First Draft, August 2001 Son La

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I.   Purpose of the Methodology

Following the ongoing shift in policies from state managed forest to participatory forest management, increased rights over forest resources are being transferred to local organisations, households and individuals. Handing over of user rights further includes increased independent management and self-reliance in the decision-making process. Consequently, sufficient capacity of local forest users has to be further strengthened by practising active forest management with local communities.

The methodology is designed to facilitate a participatory approach to enable forest users to develop basic silvicultural management practices for their specific forest area according to their needs.
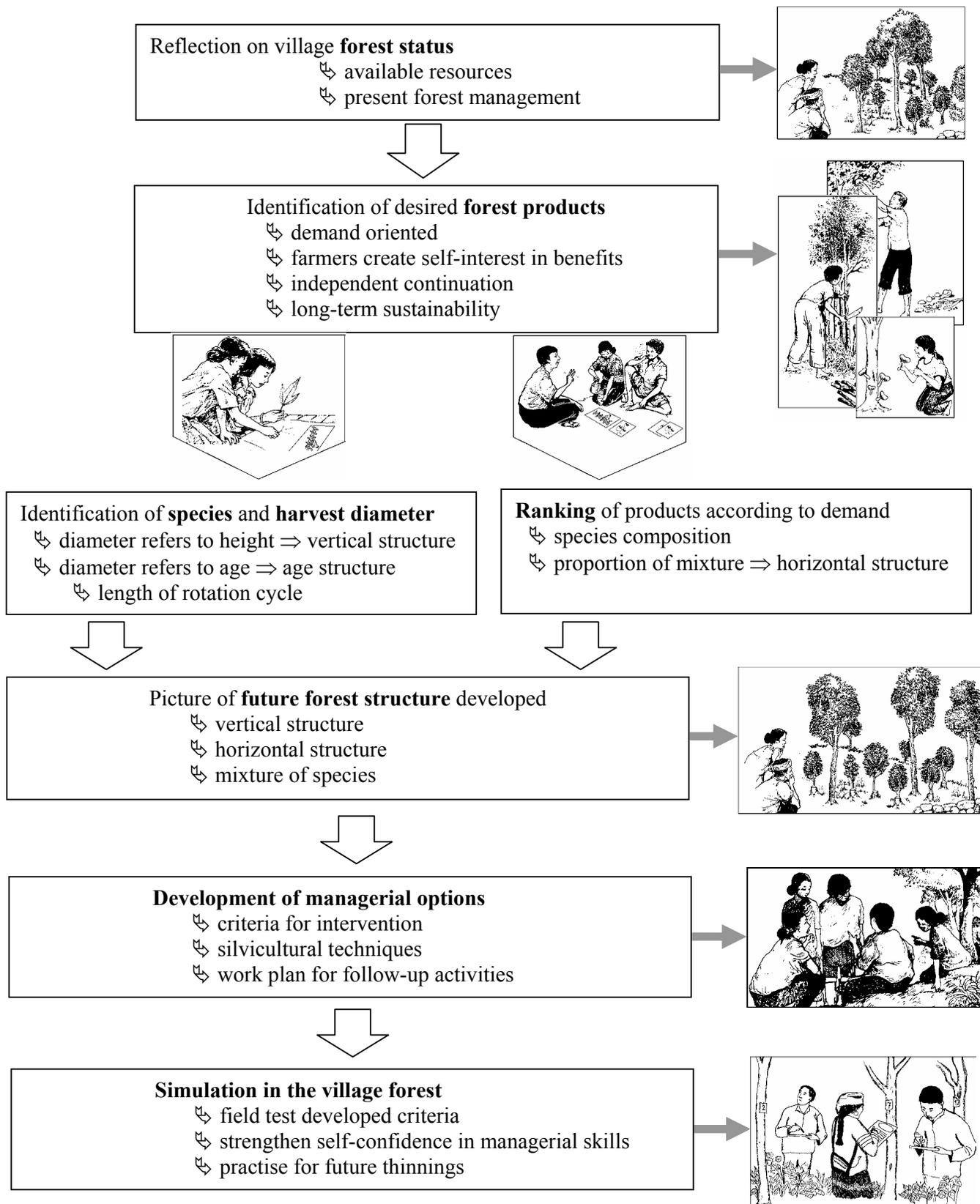
Main objectives of the approach are (i) to facilitate forest user to assess their available forest resources, (ii) to promote participatory forest management and (iii) to develop the necessary management regime to achieve the identified managwement goal.

Considering desired forest products, species providing these products and rotation cycles needed for these products, a clear future picture of the desired forest structure is drawn. By further reflecting on the present forest structure, ideas are generated on how to reach this desired forest structure, leading to a set of management practices.

In the next step the elaborated management practices are field tested in form of two simulation rounds on a selected cluster of numbered trees. The first round is practised in form of a plenary discussion to explain the simulation and the utilisation of the participatory elaborated techniques. To strengthen his/her self-confidence in his/her management capacity a second round is carried out by each participant independently.

After finalizing this exercise the results are shared among the group, which may also lead to further adaptations on the practices identified. After full agreement of the forest user group follow up activities and clear responsibilities will be defined.

SEQUENCE OF DEVELOPING MANAGEMENT GOALS FOR EXISTING NATURAL FORESTS

Reflection on village **forest status**
- ↳ available resources
- ↳ present forest management

↓

Identification of desired **forest products**
- ↳ demand oriented
- ↳ farmers create self-interest in benefits
- ↳ independent continuation
- ↳ long-term sustainability

↓

Identification of **species** and **harvest diameter**
- ↳ diameter refers to height ⇒ vertical structure
- ↳ diameter refers to age ⇒ age structure
- ↳ length of rotation cycle

Ranking of products according to demand
- ↳ species composition
- ↳ proportion of mixture ⇒ horizontal structure

↓

Picture of **future forest structure** developed
- ↳ vertical structure
- ↳ horizontal structure
- ↳ mixture of species

↓

Development of managerial options
- ↳ criteria for intervention
- ↳ silvicultural techniques
- ↳ work plan for follow-up activities

↓

Simulation in the village forest
- ↳ field test developed criteria
- ↳ strengthen self-confidence in managerial skills
- ↳ practise for future thinnings

II.   Methodological Aspects

Peoples' interests in forest utilisation differ according to physical, social and economical site conditions. In order to meet this varying demand the approach focuses mainly on providing a structured, logical sequence to participatory elaborate management practices according to local needs, rather than to provide specific silvicultural standard techniques.

The intention is to ensure enough freedom for forest users to design their individual management tool and on the other hand to provide a step-by-step guidance to enable facilitators to support this forest user group decision-making process. The methodology incorporates "non-formal adult education" methods, based on experiential learning techniques, and participatory decision-making techniques.

Increasing peoples' participation in the decision-making process to identify and agree on suitable forest utilisation is considered the principal mechanism available to facilitate sustainable use of natural resources and thereby link forest utilisation with effective forest protection.

Since women represent an important forest user group with specialised needs and knowledge it should be ensured that both gender are free to attend the meetings to represent the demand of the whole community. As each gender often follows different resource utilisation pattern in the same woodlot their activities have to be identified and co-ordinated for mutual long-term benefit. To guarantee that women can attend the meetings, suitable times need to be identified taking into consideration the different time availability of men and women.

Working together in a group often requires different techniques to encourage all participants to share their opinions, feelings and thoughts. To achieve an output that represents and satisfies all involved members is a very difficult task and needs a high qualified facilitator. One method to achieve the full participation of all members can be the formation of sub-groups for specific tasks during short periods of the session. The facilitator does not interact but offers support and gives suggestions when needed. A selected person of the sub-group then presents the outcome in plenary.

As explained above the effectiveness of the methodology depends to a great extend on the qualification of the facilitator. The main role of the facilitator is to guide villagers through the approach, to facilitate discussion, to settle conflict, to facilitate group decision-making, and to help in summarising the results of each discussion.

Therefore the selection of suitable facilitator for this approach is a main precondition for a successful training.

III. Introduction of the Field Guide

The overall objective of the Field Guide is to provide a practicable, compact manual giving step-by-step instructions for the facilitator to guide the process of participatory development of silvicultural management practices on village level.

The field guide is divided into two parts, following the two-way approach of the methodology. The first part covers the theoretical part including the need based resource assessment and the set up of the managerial regulations. The second part describes two simulation exercises to be carried out in a specific forest area of the village and defines the role and main responsibilities of the facilitator during this exercise.

Each of these two parts consists of several exercises in a chronological sequence. For every exercise detailed information about the objectives, time frame and material needed are given. In order to ensure sufficient guidance for the facilitator further suggestions and examples for supporting the group decision-making process are provided.

Each of the meeting sections are based on visual material in order to reduce communication barriers, often occurring when working together with people having differences in social origin, age, language, and intellectual capacities. Pictures serves as a tool to motivate and help people reflecting and discussing about the topic presented. The role of the facilitator is to guide the participantsthrough the steps of the approach. But the participantsare leading the discussion; their remarks and interests will determine the orientation of the meeting. The facilitator has to adapt his meeting at any step to the interest of the group.

This leads to a situation of participatory relationship in which people together develop knowledge according to their demand. The pictures are intended to clearly explain main activities and objectives of each step to assist an independent decision making process and to support the memory of the trainees. The facilitator should only give a brief introduction about the use of each picture, ensuring enough freedom for participants to incorporate their own ideas or improvements.

The participants should be encouraged to work as independently as possible to increase their sense of ownership over the whole process.

IV.   Preparation

Before facilitating this meeting course it is suggested to follow some preparatory steps in order to provide suitable working conditions for this participatory approach and to ensure independent follow-up activities of the forest user group. Assuming that giving forest user groups the opportunity to express their needs and incorporate their local knowledge into the process, increased sense of ownership and further independent management can be expected. Especially in the field of forest management with rotation cycles of tens of years this independent continuation forms a crucial factor to achieve the desired long-term production aim.

1 Village selection

As this approach strongly depends on the mutual support of both parties, facilitator and forest user group, the selection of the community forms a very crucial precondition. Only if villagers develop a strong self-interest in the support offered, an independent continuation can be expected in the long-term.

A commune or district wide application in form of a quantitative top-down decision can therefore not lead to the desired long lasting effect.

Steps to be followed:

✓ Gather and analyse **secondary information**:

- ❑ Existing data on forest resources
- ❑ Village socio-economic data
- ❑ If necessary re-confirm and update selected secondary data during field visits
- ❑ Village (or commune) regulations and other government documents related to land-use planning and land allocation and forest protection and management

✓ Finalise a first **pre-selection** of "suitable" villages according to selected criteria as:

- ❑ Land allocation completed, forest protection regulations approved
- ❑ Community dependence on forest products
- ❑ Clear defined village borders, no current land right conflicts
- ❑ Sufficient remaining forest cover within the village proximity
- ❑ ...

✓ Conduct **formal and informal meetings** in the selected villages to:

- ❑ Introduce and brief the objectives and contents of the approach
- ❑ Clarify benefits and obligations
- ❑ Get feedback and expectations
- ❑ Answer questions
- ❑ Understand farmers concerns in forest management
- ❑ Get final agreement on the organisation of the approach

2 Selection of participants

The group of participants should represent the whole village population in terms of gender, age and social status. Especially the participation of women has to be encouraged and promoted during the whole process of the approach.

The final selection of 10 to 15 participants should be done among the villagers themselves and not appointed by the village head alone.

The facilitator should attend this process in order to ensure a selection according the above-mentioned criteria and to reach a conclusion on the date of the first meeting section.

Note: All following activities are carried out directly **in the forest area**.

↳ Support the selection of a **well-known** meeting point in the forest for the approach.

↳ The meeting point should be within easy **walking distance** and provide a **good view** of the village forest.

3 Time for implementation

The meeting should be scheduled before the beginning of the season for forest operations. This allows participants to carry out the identified management options within the same year. A suitable time would be in March or April, prior to the elaboration of Community Forestry Management Plans and Village Development Planning. Especially for silvicultural activities including timber harvest, this will ensure enough time to prepare the application form to be approved by the district Forest Protection Units.

The meeting consists of two half-day meetings with the first meeting for the theoretical part and the second one for the two simulation cycles. In scheduling the training into two meetings the participants have the chance to further discuss about the training and disseminate their so far gained experiences to other villagers.

Chapter 1 - Theoretical part

Introduction of the approach

Expectations and role of participants clarified

Forest products identified according to demand of participants

Species and suitable harvest diameter identified

Product ranking based on quantitative demand

Agreement on desired future village forest structure

WHY

WHEN   -- **to carry out silvicultural interventions**

HOW

1.1 Introduction of facilitators and participants

Forest users are only be willing to share opinions and support a decision-making process if they have a clear understanding of the approach, their specific role in it and expected benefits arising from it.

Providing sufficient information and opportunities to clarify remaining questions therefore forms a crucial precondition for all further activities.

Facilitators and participants introduce themselves to create a friendly atmosphere and mutual trust among all members. The facilitator should encourage people, sitting outside the meeting round or in a hidden position, to join in the round.

Material   Prepare tape and markers to write name cards

Time   15 minutes

1.2 Presentation of approach and training agenda

A brief presentation of the approach following the main steps of the training agenda presented in Annex 1 helps participants to understand the development cycle of the approach. The use of pictures for main activities may be helpful during this step especially when introducing new techniques like simulation. One participant should be selected to present the results at the end of the theoretical part in form of a summary together with the support of the facilitator.

Suggested content of the introductory presentation:

✓ Why we come today...   ✓ Steps we want to do...

✓ What we want to do...   ✓ Who will do the summary…

✓ What we hope to achieve...

Material   flip chart no. 1 ("villagers reflecting on their forest")

                  poster no. 1 ("development cycle")

                  training agenda

Time   15 minutes

Note: Frequent reflection on the steps of the training agenda and the logical sequence in it will strengthen the self-confidence of the participants.

  ✥ Regularly ask if clarification is needed for the steps presented so far

  ✥ The sequence of the steps will become very important during the simulation

1.3 Need based forest resource assessment

Forest user only take over and independently continue developed ideas if their demand and expectations are represented. Participants should therefore be the leading party in all debates and the facilitator should adapt his training to the direction suggested by the group.

a) Reflect on **available forest resources** during a short walk in the village forest. Participants and facilitators will become familiar with the forest status and it encourages people to think about their recent resource situation. During the forest walk participants are asked to collect leaf samples of the available tree species. When the group returns to the meeting point, the leaves have to be collected and stored aside. After the forest walk participants have a clear picture of their forest area and available forest species.

Some suggested questions to support a discussion among the participants:

  ✓ Do you know about the history of the forest?

  ✓ How is this forest used in the moment?

  ✓ Does the forest always looked like this in the past?

Material   leaf samples

Time   30 minutes

b) ✓ **What products do you want from your forest?**

In the following villagers are asked about desired forest products from their forest area. The discussion is supported by use of flip charts and new identified products are sketched on further flip charts. The facilitator should (i) help people reflecting on daily life products, household articles and agricultural tools etc. and (ii) ensure that all stakeholders are represented in the selection and all opinions shared in plenary.

Material   flip chart no. 2 ("Product samples")

flip charts no. 3 - 8 ("Forest products")

flip charts, marker

Time   40 minutes

c) ✓ **What forest species can provide these products?**

After participants agreed upon the selected products it has to be clarified which of the available forest species can provide these products. The participants therefore group the leaf samples and the flip charts of specific forest products. The use of pictures and leaf samples reduces the problems of differing local species names and other language barriers. The picture "species selection" provides clear guidance for this step and enables participants to independent carry out this activity.

Material   flip charts no. 3 - 8 ("Forest products") + additional

flip chart no. 9 ("Species selection")

leaf samples

Time   15 minutes

d) ✓ **What harvest diameter do you need for each product?**

This step of the resource assessment asks for the dimension of the trees needed to provide a specific product. As the diameter of a species strongly links to height and age, important information about the vertical forest structure can be derived from this as well. Instead of using scientific measurement units, the palm of one's hand is selected as a tangible unit (see flip charts "diameter"). Similar techniques like in the previous step are used to encourage the independent operation of the learning group and by this strengthening their self-confidence. Support from the facilitator is only given on request.

Material   flip charts no. 3 - 8 ("Forest Products") + additional
                  flip charts no. 10 - 12 ("Diameter")

Time   15 minutes

e) ✓ **What products do you need most in terms of quantity?**

After having identified products, species and harvest diameters participants are asked to prioritise their product needs. Using similar techniques like in the previous steps participants group "forest products" and "ranking basket" flip charts. The baskets on the 3 flip charts represent the quantitative amount of the specific product desired by the villagers.

    ✍ e.g.   1 basket = low demand   3 baskets = high demand

Material   flip charts no. 3 - 8 ("Forest Products") + additional
                  flip charts no. 13-15 ("Ranking basket")
                  flip chart no. 16 ("Ranking")

Time   15 minutes

1.4 Generating future forest structure and management goal

Through reflecting on the identified products and selected species ($\Rightarrow$ horizontal structure) and their harvest diameters ($\Rightarrow$ vertical structure) a clear picture of the desired forest structure will be drawn for the future. Using the 3 flip charts "forest types" different future options are presented as a basis for discussion.

a) ✓ **How must your forest look like in the future to provide these products?**

Participants discuss which of the three forest types is the most suitable one to satisfy their identified needs. The result of the discussion is a detailed management goal, leading to the question on how to achieve this goal.

> **Some suggested questions to guide the discussion:**
> > ✓ **Considering time:** even aged or uneven aged?
> > > ✎ Yearly selective harvest or total harvest after the rotation period
> > ✓ **Considering area:** one species or mixed species?
> > > ✎ Only one product or a variety of products will be available
> > ✓ **Considering ranking:** Proportion of each species?
> > ✓ Can all products be produced simultaneously or does one exclude others?

Material   flip chart no. 1 ("Villagers reflecting on their forest")
                   flip chart no. 17 - 19 ("Forest types")

Time   20 minutes

b) ✓ **What can we do in order to achieve this management goal?**

By reflecting on the present forest status ideas are generated on how to reach the desired forest structure, leading to a set of criteria for silvicultural techniques to be tested later in the simulation.

The discussion should focus on the questions of -

<div align="center">✓ WHY ✓ WHEN ✓ HOW</div>

- to carry out silvicultural interventions.
As these questions are formulated rather abstract, participants might face difficulties starting a discussion and developing concrete ideas without external guidance. In order to initiate and to direct the discussion three poster books "silvicultural interventions" have been designed. Each book provides one forest stand with two different options for further treatment. The inner page provides the future results after the intervention has been carried out. Drawings of human faces indicate the success or failure of the intervention. During the decision-making process participants are only allowed to see the outer page (*status quo*). After the group has come to an agreement the inner page (*future result*) will be presented and discussed among the group. The poster books can by no means offer a complete set of all possible silvicultural options but should be understood as a flexible tool to support the decision-making of the learning group.

Some suggested questions and possible answers to guide the discussion:

✓ What trees will we cut in order to improve our forest?

    ↳ Bad formed, diseased, undesired species

✓ Where can we see if other trees oppress our target tree?

    ↳ If they have contact in the canopy

    ↳ If a higher tree overshadow our target tree

✓ How can we help the small regenerating trees?

    ↳ Create gaps in the canopy for light

✓ What happen if we cut too much?

    ↳ If the gap will be too big we will have erosion

    ↳ Grass will invade and hinder our small trees to grow

✓ Do we need to cut grass and shrubs?

    ↳ Only if our small regenerated trees are covered

Material   poster books no. 1 - 3 ("silvicultural interventions")

Time   30 minutes

1.5 Conclusion, summary and feedback

During the previous exercises participants have discussed and identified a set of criteria and techniques for silvicultural interventions following the described development cycle.

As the sequence of the cycle remains very important during the simulation it is useful to group the steps and results on one poster and come to a conclusion on the so far gained results. The outline of the poster should be prepared in advance following the form presented in Annex 2 and completed together with the participants using flip charts and leaf samples.

The participant selected during the introduction finally summarises the content of the poster. The summary may also be presented in local language if the facilitator still can follow the content of the presentation. The poster has to be stored, as it will be needed during the simulation.

Material   poster, marker, flip charts, tape, leaf samples

Time   20 minutes

Note: A short introduction about the next meeting can be useful to avoid confusion about the approach:

 During the simulation no trees will be cut $\Rightarrow$ no products will be harvested; no knife is needed

 We will test and discuss our developed management option in the forest

 We will meet at the same meeting point like before

Chapter 2 - Simulation

Objective and procedure of simulation introduced

         ⇨ **Group**

         ⇨ **Individual**

Role of participants clarified

Reflect on ⎡ WHY ⎤
         WHEN   to carry out thinning
         ⎣ HOW ⎦

Experiences shared and discussed in plenary

Agreement on follow-up activities

2.1 Presentation and 1st simulation cycle

Before starting with the introduction of the simulation approach a selected person of the group reflects on the poster elaborated at the end of the first meeting. The poster should also be visible while carrying out the simulation. This helps the participants to refresh their memories of what has been discussed and agreed during the previous meeting.

A woodlot of 12 neighbouring trees is selected and numbered using flip charts and pins. For each of these numbered trees possible future options are discussed in plenary and the results documented in the simulation form (see Annex 1).

Right at the beginning it has to be emphasised that the selection of each single tree will affect the long-term management goal. Therefore, each decision has (i) to be taken strictly according to the criteria defined by the group and (ii) to be followed during further interventions.

A theoretical introduction of the simulation can be effectively substituted in form of "learning by doing". While starting the decision-making process for the first trees the learning group becomes confident with the simulation technique and the use of the simulation form. The facilitator should try to create an atmosphere of trust and mutual support in order to encourage participants to freely exchange opinions and questions.

Note: Always reflect on the development cycle

      ✎ WHAT? ⇒ (i) product (ii) species (iii) diameter (iv)management

   No tree is growing alone, every tree has a neighbour

      ✎ Always take into consideration the actual and future competition situation of all neighbouring trees

   If participants can not agree on a specific tree selection, explain that:

      ✎ There often exists more than one suitable option for a specific tree

      ✎ Different selections can all lead to the same desired production aim

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Participants should be encouraged to have a close look at each specific tree for assessing the competition situation and not just gather at one edge of the woodlot.

At the end of the first simulation the participants have developed a clear management strategy for the selected woodlot and are familiar with the use of the simulation form.

Material   flip chart no. 20 ("simulation")

                flip charts, marker, pins

                simulation form

Time   30 minutes

2.2 The 2nd simulation cycle

After participants completed the first simulation cycle, a new woodlot of 12 neighbouring trees is selected and numbered. This time each participant tries to independently complete the simulation form to strengthen his/her self-confidence in his/her own management skills.

Note: Participants might feel unease, considering this exercise as an examination.

    ✎ Clarify, that the whole group learns and develops together ⇒ **no** test, **no** notes

    ✎ Nobody will collect any forms, the form is just a help to remember each specific selection for the plenary discussion later

    ✎ As everybody will keep his own form, no need to write a name on it

    ✎ Remember that there exists often more than one suitable choice only

    ✎ Make your own choice, don't look what the others are doing. If you will do a real thinning in the future you will also have to decide on your own.

Each round three participants are provided with pencil, simulation form and writing pad to carry out the exercise at the same time. There should be no time limit or any other restrictions that could put participants under pressure. The facilitator should watch this exercise from some distance and only intervene if requested.

After all participants finished the simulation round, they discuss in plenary their individual tree selections. The facilitator should guide this discussion by reflecting on the agreed production goals presented on the poster. Main focus should be given on the question of why a specific tree was taken out or remained and what they hope to achieve by doing this.

Material   flip charts, marker, pins, 3 writing pads, pencils
                  simulation forms

Time   40 minutes

2.2 Conclusion, feedback and follow up activities

After this exercise the facilitator gives a conclusion and should allow participants to give feedback on the suitability of the training. This can provide valuable information to adjust future plans according to the demand of the participants. In order to facilitate this exercise some guiding questions may help participants at the beginning. The facilitator should ensure that both gender and all interest groups share their opinion with the group.

Some suggested questions for the feedback could be:
   ✓ What was the most interesting aspect of the training? Why?
   ✓ What you think we should do in a different way?
   ✓ Was the use of the pictures and the simulation form suitable for you?

Finally a work plan for follow up activities has to be elaborated. Participants discuss and agree on a date for the first real thinning to put into practise the gained knowledge and experiences of the training. The real thinning will offer favourable conditions to reflect and if necessary to re-adjust the developed management goal according to the real life conditions. Therefore it is very important for the facilitator to attend and support this first thinning activity.

Note: When carrying out a real thinning in the future:

- ✋ Always provide the "management goal" poster to reflect on the agreed points.

- ✋ Permanently mark target trees in order to ensure that the previous selection will be taken into consideration during further thinnings.

- ✋ Mark the bole **and** the stump so that a former target tree can still be identified even after it was cut already.

Training Agenda

First meeting

Activities		Topic
Discussion	⇨	Forest products Forest structure Forest tending
Conclusion	⇨	Production aim Silvicultural management
Summary		Results of this meetings

Second meeting

Activities	Topic
Summary	Results of the first day
First simulation	Test practicability of management goal (Whole group)
Discussion	Problems; need for changes
Second simulation	(Individually)
Discussion & Conclusion	
Summary & Feedback	
Follow-up work plan	

Example

Tree number	Cut tree	Let tree grow	Can you say why?
31		X	I wait until he is big
32	X		Tree has bad form

Tree number	Cut tree	Let tree grow	Can you say why?
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			

What *products* do you want from your forest?

What *species* can provide these products?

What *harvest diameter* do you need for that product?

***How much* of this product do you need?**
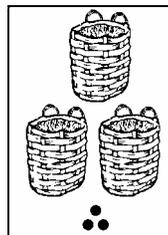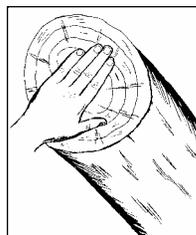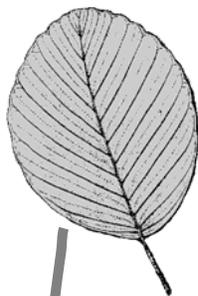
EXAMPLE

How must your forest look like to provide these products?

What can we do in order to achieve this management goal?

- ✓   **Cut diseased or bad formed trees**
- ✓   **Create gaps in the canopy for light for the small trees**
- ✓   **. . .**