

REPORT

ON LESSONS LEARNT WORKSHOP ON IFSPQB, COMMUNE LEVEL LE HOA COMMUNE, TUYEN HOA DISTRICT, QUANG BINH 28/02/2002

I. GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The IFSPQB has been supporting people of Le Hoa commune since 1996. People in the area have been offering with almost all project activities that are in the project components e.g. nutrition, village development planning, agriculture, forestry, off-farm activities... Besides providing materials like new agricultural seeds and commercial tree seedlings, improved breeds, food for work... the Project also has been transferring new technologies, modern techniques; providing the skills in community management, in elaboration of village development plan, in feeding children, child caring... in order to immediately secure food situation, eradicate hunger and alleviate poverty in general. Relying on project supports people in the commune gradually get to know what they should do for improving their living standard on sustainable basis and the food status of household in particular, of village and commune in general has been securing. The transparent and efficient management system from district to village has been contributing much in project implementation success.

However, the implementation of the project activities in the project villages/commune has met a number of constraints, had some shortcomings and showed a few weaknesses. The following are some general weak points during the project implementation in the commune:

- Since the IFSPQB was the first project, which came to the commune, the people in the area felt quite new and unacquainted, that caused some delays and slowness in the progress of project activities.
- Since the IFSPQB's supportive approach was to provide materials and services directly to village without involving CPC's coordination, there occurred difficulties in management of activities/programs.
- Some project staff, during fulfilling their tasks in the local area, did not show their cooperativeness.

II. LESSONS LEARNT IN 7 PROJECT RESULTS

During discussion and evaluation on every activity of each Result, we agree to bring out the following main findings:

Result 1: Improved nutrition knowledge and behavior as well as child care practices are communicated to the target groups.

- ✓ Since a network from district to village was established, the program management has been progressing. The involved district-level staffs regularly supervise field works like weighing child, feeding child in centers... in order to secure the program going in line. The nutrition collaborators work in touch with program calendar.
- ✓ Village management board paid a very important role in the program i.e. they call for village meeting on the program, let nutrition education activity in the periodic village meeting, desire mothers with child to gather in the center in time.

- ✓ In training the trainer and nutrition collaborators discussed frankly, explained in details that helped collaborators understand deeply the main program's purpose - to facilitate mothers and family members the nutrition knowledge. Gradually people follow the introduced nutrition knowledge instead of the backward traditional customs.
- ✗ Many nutrition collaborators lack have organizational and communication skills. That causes the nutrition education activity not achieve the effectiveness.
- ✗ The training and education topic was repeatedly the same, causing boring feeling in mothers.
- ✗ Mothers in particular and women in general were not able enough to receive introduced knowledge in mature.
- ✗ Because village management board members were not invited to participate in the training, they did not know well how to contribute all their efforts in helping collaborators at work.
- ✗ Seeds for nutrition garden were provided in inappropriate time with low quality.
- Villagers, village and commune need know what source provides seeds and seedlings in order to conveniently and actively contact with for purchase in the future.
- Training and education topics ought to be changed regularly to avoid bored ness of mothers.
- Men and fathers also desire the training for helping their partners.
- Any outside supports, especially materials, should be directly handed over to the nutrition center. It will bear responsibility.
- There should be a program on creating local nutritious food sources, which then are able to sustain the program.

Result 2: Advisory campaigns, which are implemented by partner organizations for the use of effective family planning methods, are supported.

- ✓ The project-support program was integrated with other donor's and Government program, so the activity reaches to various area of the commune.
- ✓ "No third child" clubs are well operating and attracted more and more mothers.
- ✗ The commune and village did not know that this program was supported by IFSPQB because the services were provided by district family planning center and it was not explained or informed clearly. This matter caused difficult evaluation on the program for the IFSPQB.
- ✗ The traditional thought of people limits their effort on proceeding the modern knowledge and methods.
- The communication means like paintings, video, speakers... are needed to lead the program to every individual.
- There should be more training courses for teenagers.
- Villagers themselves together with helps of Governmental related organizations and Donors have to look for a most suitable way, which must be locally suited, getting out of the high-birth-rate situation in the commune.

Result 3: Village self-help capacity are strengthened (VDP)

- ✓ People know how to make a plan with their self-help and how to elaborate a village development plan in sense of feasibility.
- ✓ Not only villagers, village management board (VMB) members but also communal staff feel more confidential in proposing needed activities.

- ✓ Through the program, the commune gathers more exact and real data and figures from villages, from which the communal collective plan is well made then accompanies the VDPs to district level.
- ✗ At the first round of the program in 2001, the direction and coordination from district to commune and village were not conformed.
- ✗ Village head changes in fairly short term, so VDP management is not totally in line.
- ✗ The collaboration of higher-level division was not effective enough to meet the people's needs expressed in VDP.
- Communal and village staff need be trained the VDP knowledge annually and the commune requires a full time staff on VDP.
- VDP-trained-persons need to be trained the VDP M&E instructions in order to monitor and evaluate the VDP implementation progressively and closely.

Result 4: Partner organizations and target groups are supported in the development, application and dissemination of more productive farming systems.

- ✓ Close and effective collaboration between district professionals and project staff ensured the technology transfer successfully.
- ✓ Many training courses on agriculture, IPM, animal husbandry, cash crops, and fruit trees... were provided for a large number of key farmers who then disseminate the knowledge among community according to approach "farmer to farmer training". This project approach led villagers to exploring more self-help capacity in agricultural production development.
- ✓ A firm network of agriculture and vet Key Extension Farmers (KEF) progressively assures a sustainable agriculture development.
- ✓ Seeds and breeds were provided closely to selected farmers. That encourages the higher responsibility of farmers for the program.
- ✗ KEFs in some villages are either not able to learn well nor not dedicated in dissemination of their knowledge to community.
- ✗ No supportive allowance for KEFs' performance is also one of matters influencing the fulfillment of the approach "farmer to farmer training".
- ✗ Quality of seeds and different breeds were good except the sows, which have low quality compared to others.
- CPC and village should be allowed to select potential trainees, who must have enthusiasm and dedication of working for community.
- Governmental related divisions should make use of KEFs by involving them in annual work plan and managing them as official workers.
- Monitoring and verifying works should be more regularly done not only at district and commune level but also at village level.
- Other programs or projects if any should apply this support approach.

Result 5: Development and application of sustainable forest land use systems are supported.

- ✓ District PC directed, supervised and approved the forestland allocation in time. Commune PC nominated able staff to implement the program. Villagers themselves wrote application letter for receiving forestland voluntarily.
- ✓ Villagers received forestland on the site so they got to know the reality of their forest possession.
- ✓ The participatory forestland allocation met the villagers' demand and suited the Governmental policy "local democracy".

- ✓ Training courses, meeting and workshops, which were held in time and prepared carefully, accelerated the process faster.
- ✗ Hired technical expertise is too far that the nursery makers could not reach when they need the consultation.
- ✗ Time for making agro-forest slope-cultivation model was inappropriate (particularly for forest trees).
- ✗ Land use planning for rubber plantation and forest protection was still unclear, that created constraints during the forestland allocation progress.
- ✗ Practical exercises on nursery production was not carefully done.
- Nursery and slope land cultivation approaches met the villagers' demand but it should be managed by individual household not by group.
- Other future program/projects should go on supporting the program in order to make use of current achievements and finishing the pending activities.
- Involve the forest yard office and DARD (division for agriculture and rural development) in technical provision services.

Result 6: The creation of non-agricultural income opportunities is supported.

- ✓ The support approach "provide a fishing stick better than offering a ring of fishes" in every off-farm income generating activities i.e. bee keeping, mushroom production, hat making... is appropriate.
- ✓ Materials, which were provided for trainees, were rather small but they are bringing big achievements.
- ✗ Except bee keeping, other off-farm activities required much investment at first step so it seems to be not feasible for people in the area.
- ✗ The trainees, who were supposed to disseminate learnt knowledge for community, did not fulfill their assignments.
- ✗ Trained tailors have gone to the South to make money for their own, not working in their village (serving the need of village people in any cases) as supposed.
- ✗ There was no support for post-training investment of trainees (CEFE), so majority of them was not able to operate any businesses.
- CEFE training for Le Hoa commune is not needed.
- More training courses on bee keeping and mushroom production are desired.

Result 7: The rural infrastructure and its maintenance are improved.

- ✓ All proposals on infrastructure improvement or building were democratically discussed and agreed.
- ✓ Food for work approach is highly appropriate.
- ✓ Time for proceeding the food for work program was reasonable.
- ✗ Small pipes and culverts on roads were not reinforced or built, so the upgraded roads did not work well in the rainy season as they should be.
- ✗ The site investigation and design of both culverts and pipes on road are beyond the village and commune's capability. Those also cost money while there is no fund for disbursement.
- District competent agencies shall seek for the most suitable solution about the investigation and design in order to help village/commune to faster obtain the complementary infrastructure improvement.
- People in the area will continuously fulfill maintenance works but larger repairs are required the technical and involving agencies.

III. ADDITIONAL RECOMMENDATIONS

After revising all the lessons learnt mentioned above, the participants would like to add some more recommendations about project management system as below:

- Project village head should have the additional work allowance.
- There should be a financial amount called management fee for the project commune execution committee and for project village management board.
- Other program or projects if any should support a financial amount for scheme investigation and design.
- The lowest unit for donor support should be administrative village, not a group of administrative villages to avoid some conflicts during implementation.

If allowed to select 5 from 7 above Results for any future project's components the participants choose:

- 👍 Village development planning
- 👍 Agriculture
- 👍 Forestry
- 👍 Off-farm activities
- 👍 Infrastructure

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