

I. INTRODUCTION

Background

In order to prepare for the final steps and handover of the project to the local government, the Project Management Board of IFSP has initiated, in addition to a number of subject-specific surveys, a series of bottom-up workshops (from village to commune, to district level) to draw lessons learnt on general issues from project operations. This present document summarizes the major findings of 15 village workshops Minh Hoa and Tuyen Hoa districts, and is based on more detailed reports for every village.¹

Overall Remarks

It is widely acknowledged by all workshop participants that the IFSP has contributed significantly to the improvement of livelihood for the communities in Tuyen Hoa Minh Hoa districts. The main contributions of the IFSP include:

- ☞ Improved nutrition status and better control over population growth, with an overall good impact on poverty alleviation.
- ☞ Introduced a participatory bottom-up style planning through the VDP approach. Additionally, IFSP has built adequate capacity for local partners and the community in implementing poverty alleviation activities.
- ☞ Established a sustainable technology transfer system by the grassroots extension network.
- ☞ Allocated forestland to farmers and promoted reforestation activities.
- ☞ Introduced new income generation activities from off-farm sources such as bee-keeping, cone hat making, rattan handicraft, sewing and mushroom production. Additionally, CEFE techniques were introduced to some advanced farmers.
- ☞ Improved the rural infrastructure system, particularly irrigation and rural transport, creating a new face to rural areas. Additionally, the new infrastructure systems contributed greatly to the improvement of farm productivity and efficiency.

According to the workshop participants, the factors contributing to the achievements of IFSP include:

- ☞ The principle “*people know, people discuss, people execute, and people verify*” was applied well in IFSP activities. Villagers fully participated in all activities of the project.
- ☞ Local leaders strongly support and cooperate with IFSP in all activities. All project components were done in collaboration with local partners.
- ☞ Self-help attitudes of villagers were promoted. Most activities of IFSP were done with significant contributions of villagers.

Participants of the series of village workshops also pointed out some areas of suggested improvements for IFSP components. Here, the major comments included:

¹ *These village reports also contain specific information, such as how many Shindy bulls, Mong Cai sows, etc. were provided. These details are not summarized here.*

- ☺ Some IFSP activities focused more on quantity rather than quality. Some villages complained that new roads constructed were damaged seriously during rainy season because lack of drainage culverts. Additionally, some villages complained about limited skills of Key Extension Farmers (KEF) and VDP facilitators, who were trained with IFSP support.
- ☹ Villagers did not have a chance to participate in all project steps, especially in monitoring and supervision. Some comments complained about poor quality of inputs provided by IFSP such as seed, seedlings and breed of vegetables, animal husbandry.

Apart from the above two concerns, other minor comments about suggested improvements for different project components can be seen in detail in Section II.

Workshop participants also proposed some recommendations for future activities. In general, most recommendations focus on improving weaknesses of the projects identified during the workshops. Again, specific recommendations such as building a culvert for one village and building a kindergarten for another village were skipped because, for sure, these are included in VDP results for 2002, where many activities should be supported by local government or other projects.

II. LESSONS LEARNT FROM PROJECT RESULTS²

Result 1: Nutrition

Lessons Learnt	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☺ Created knowledge and good practice for parents and child-caring people on nutrition rehabilitation techniques. ☺ Nutrition education, using diverse communication formats such as brochures and videos was most important for the successes in nutrition rehabilitation. ☺ Demonstration models on nutrition gardens have promoted villagers cultivate and use vegetables for daily meals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Continue to instruct people at parental age and the youth on nutrition knowledge and skills. ☞ Continue to improve prenatal care in order to prevent malnutrition during pregnancy ☞ Continue to instruct farmers to prepare nutritious meals from cheap and locally available materials.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☹ Some of the poorest farmers cannot afford the cost of nutritious meals for their children, as instructed during demonstrations. ☹ The quality of vegetable gardens in some villages is still rather poor. 	

² *Thumb-up signs represent good lessons and thumb-down signs represent poor lessons.*

Result 2: Family Planning

Lessons Learnt	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Information programs on family planning were implemented successfully by village family planning collaborators in diverse formats such as public speaking, poets and folk songs. ☞ Established and maintained regularly activities of “no third child” clubs. ☞ Partnership between IFSP and related agencies in the district, commune and village levels in propaganda on family planning contributed greatly to the successes of this component. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ More information with visual aids, such as pictures and videos are needed. ☞ Sufficient financial support to those, who were sterilized, to encourage the participation of other people in this activity. ☞ Free removal service should be provided at commune health centre for those who have troubles with IUD. ☞ Conduct more information sessions on reproductive health and family planning for teenagers.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Many families still prefer to have boys rather than girls. ☞ Limited financial support was given to those applying family planning methods. ☞ Intra-uterine Device (IUD), the most common family planning method, created health troubles for some women. 	

Result 3: Self-help Promotion

Lessons Learnt	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ VDPs were elaborated with the participation of villagers. Thus, the need of local people was integrated into the village plans. ☞ Capacity for villagers and local staff in planning has been significantly improved. ☞ The participation of villagers and related district agencies has made the planning process faster and more efficient. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Train M&E skills for village, commune and district officials ☞ Update and refresh training on VDP for commune staff and village heads should be organized ☞ Involve all villagers, who were trained on VDP with IFSP support in the planning process ☞ VDP should focus on high priority issues of the village to increase the chance of being approved. ☞ Orientation plans of the district government should be introduced to villagers before VDP process.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Newly elected village heads (VHs) were not trained on VDP whilst some former VHs trained by IFSP did not have an active role in the VDP process ☞ The facilitation skills of some commune and village leaders is not appropriate. ☞ No training on monitoring and evaluation has yet been conducted. ☞ Many activities in VDP were not approved and supported by higher authorities for lack of funds. 	

Result 4: Agriculture

Lessons Learnt	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Cultivation skills of many farmers were improved by learning through demonstration models as well as instruction of VHs in village meetings. ☞ New Hybrid Varieties (HYVs) were introduced, increasing crop and animal productivity. ☞ New cash crops, such as pepper, have increased incomes. ☞ Revolving funds for veterinary drugs are very efficient in improving disease control in animal husbandry. ☞ The network of KEFs has created a significant impact on the improvement of agricultural production. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Establish revolving fund for crop protection chemicals, based on the experience of veterinary drug revolving funds. ☞ Commune government and Agricultural Extension Center (AEC) should continue to manage the KEF network after project is over. ☞ Select households with proper capacity to ensure the success of demonstration models ☞ Support the establishment of more veterinary shops to other villages. ☞ Continue know-how transfer and training to improve skills in various fields of agriculture.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Skills of many KEFs (both cropping and VET) are not yet adequate ☞ Grafting skills were not transferred properly to farmers. Thus, they had difficulty in reproducing good varieties of perennial crops. ☞ Some demonstration models did not produce satisfactory results (i.e. chicken). ☞ Shindy bulls do not meet the need of some villages; they are slow at ploughing and require good feed. 	

Result 5: Forestry

Lessons Learnt	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 👍 Forestland allocation was done successfully in collaboration with Cadastral Department. 👍 Farmers were trained in reforestation techniques. 👍 Nurseries were established to provide seedlings for farmers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Continue to produce seedlings of native species. ☞ Introduce species with a high economic value, suitable to local environment, into the forestry program. ☞ Assist farmers to protect planted forest.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 👎 Some nurseries did not produce good seedlings. 👎 Farmers were not equipped with sufficient knowledge and skills on social forestry, especially forest planning. 👎 Boundaries among forestland plots were not clearly demarcated during allocation process, making it difficult for farmers to exploit their land, and increasing the potential of conflicts among households. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Establish village regulations on forestry. ☞ Train farmers in forest planning techniques. ☞ Identify boundaries among forestland plots clearly during the allocation process. ☞ Continue to instruct farmers with agro-forestry techniques.

Result 6: Off-farm Income

Lessons Learnt	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 👍 New income generation activities such as bee-keeping, mushroom cultivation, sewing and cone hat making were introduced, helping many households to improve their income. 👍 Advanced farmers were introduced to CEFE techniques to prepare for business-oriented farming. Few people have established new businesses and gained initial successes. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Support the implementation of new off-farm activities such as construction materials and handicraft. ☞ Assist farmers with information on market and train basic marketing skills.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 👎 Access to market information is still difficult. 👎 The efficiency of some off-farm activities such as CEFE training, is not clear. Very few people are able to apply successfully these skills in practice. 	

Result 7: Infrastructure

Lessons Learnt	Recommendations
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ The Food-for-Work (FfW) has contributed to up-grading rural infrastructure and has helped to overcome food shortages. ☞ With support from the IFSP and contributions of the local people, a new face for the rural area with better rural transport and irrigation systems was established. ☞ Participatory management and maintenance systems were established in many villages to maintain the infrastructure works. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ Focus on quality rather than quantity of infrastructure works. Roads should be completed with culverts and bridges. ☞ Pay more attention to comments of farmers during designing and construction of infrastructure. ☞ Fasten approval process of infrastructure work.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ☞ The quality of some infrastructure works is not sufficient. Some roads have deteriorated rapidly due to a lack of drainage culverts. ☞ The approval process, sometimes, takes too long, making unnecessary delay for infrastructure work. ☞ Villagers did not get involved much in the monitoring and supervision of infrastructure activities during the implementation process. 	