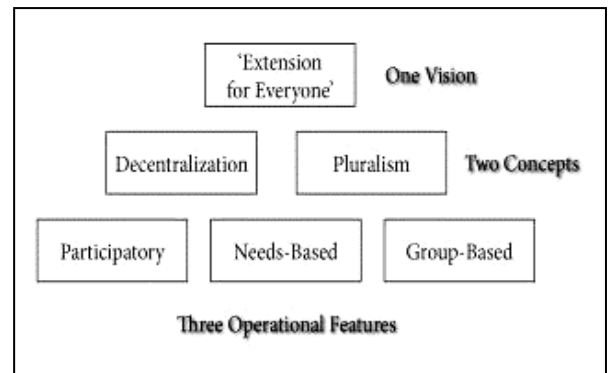


Concept Note: Downward Accountability in the Lao Extension Approach

LEAP is supporting NAFES / MAF in development and dissemination of Lao Extension Approach (LEA). LEA was approved by the MAF as the Lao Government's approach for agriculture extension in 2005 and NAFES has introduced this approach in all the 17 Province of the country. To improve the quality of LEA, NAFES is now promoting "LEA+" which covers more demand driven modules and services as per the emerging needs of the farming communities amid a shifting development sector.

Lao Extension Approach (LEA) is based on six basic principles as shown in the figure.



Committed to these principles, LEAP with NAFES is promoting more inclusive and participatory financial management with its stakeholders by holding 'public audits'. The public audit principles emphasize 'Extension for Everyone': inclusive, participatory and needs-based service delivery. Public audits are a public forum organized with the community / program participants during which group members are informed about both cash & in-kind program transactions, and can verify and evaluate if financial decisions made were transparent, and if income & expenditures of a program were appropriately managed.

Public audits strengthen accountability, both upwards (Donors and Government) and downwards to the target groups and the wider farming community at large. It helps to build trust between the sponsors, implementers and communities receiving services through increased transparency and accountability. Community has increased ownership over the program and is empowered to demand better services.

There are different methodologies more or less comprehensive and at various intervals for practicing public audits. For LEA-related trainings & workshops, Public Audits will be activity focused. The implementers (LEAP, NAFES (CETDU), PAFES or DAFO) will organize a public audit sessions upon the completion of an activity. The public audit sessions should take into account the following:

- 1) Who should participate in public audit?
 - All participants of the program (activity)
 - Village authorities
 - Representatives of mass organization, farmers groups and other directly impacted stakeholders (partners)
- 2) During this public audit session, following topics should be covered:
 - a. **Participation:** Selection of participants
 - Why are **they** selected as program participants?
 - What participant selection process is followed?
 - Discuss if the selection & implementation process was appropriate, participatory & inclusive?
 - b. **Transparency:** Financial expenditures & decision-making
 - Prepare all the expenditure of the program in a flip chart and present
 - Let the participants comment on the financial expenditures and quality of materials used
 - Verify that material expenditures are as per market price.
 - c. **Feedback:** What was the output of the program?
 - What is achieved in the program?
 - Enable and facilitate other feedback from the participants.