



Establishing the Village Extension System (VES)

Launching extension activities follows a training cycle initially supported through LEAP and the national level Master Trainers. Once introduced, processes are applied throughout the province by provincial and district government staffs in collaboration with projects operating in the area. Specific recurrent steps taken are



I. Livelihood Analysis at each village

The district staffs will conduct a village livelihood analysis to identify problems and opportunities. The livelihood analysis includes a) a basic data collection, b) a problem census, c) a market census, d) a partner census and e) a research census. Assessments will be made through interviews with all village stakeholder groups and a transect walk throughout the village.

II. District planning meeting to identify extension menus for each kumban¹ (cluster)

The district staffs will organise a planning meeting in the district. During the meeting the outcome of the village livelihood analysis are presented. Village representatives together with the provincial and district staffs will identify extension packages or menus for the next seasons for each kumban. The menus will then be developed with potential partners (projects, donors, private sector) operating in the area. They are based on the problems and opportunities identified during the Livelihood Analysis. The development of new menus will increase the choices available to the farmers and provide a framework for improved planning and management of the Government Service.

III. Preparing for launch of the Village Extension System (VES)

District extension staffs follow a step-by-step procedure for training village groups. Capacity building for new district staffs follows the national Lao Extension Approach curriculum. They are trained and coached by provincial trainers, who conduct 4 training sessions. After each session the district extensionist will apply what they have learnt in the selected villages, coached by their trainers.

The step-by-step process uses six tools.

¹ Kumban is the Lao word for a number of villages grouped in one cluster

TOOL 1 Introduction of the Village Extension System

This tool will help DAFO extension workers to explain the VES to village authorities. The tool describes a series of six steps to be carried out during a 90 minute session, including the use of posters and video. This introduction might be held on kumban level, including all village of one kumban where training will be provided in this season.

TOOL 2 Training Needs Assessment – Keep It Short and Simple (TNA-KISS)

This tool is designed to help facilitators conduct a half-day session with all villagers. During this session, farmers analyse their problems, arrange them in priority order and identify the skills needed to overcome them. The villagers select a group of farmers who participate in the learning project. The tool includes a 'TNA Report Form' that is used as a planning document for Learning Projects.



TOOL 3 Constraints Analysis for a Production Process

This tool is used during the TNA-KISS. It describes a one-hour exercise that will help farmers to identify the underlying causes of production problems. The analysis takes account of the different roles played by men and women.

IV. Starting the training process

Now district staffs start the technical training in the village. Similar to the staffs' capacity building, villagers' training is provided on a step-by-step base along the production steps. Each step includes a short theoretical introduction followed by the practical application in the production area. The technical curriculum is based on the specific problems identified by the villagers and takes their literacy status and specific conditions prevailing in the area into account.

TOOL 4 Monitoring Success, Implementation, Failure & Training Needs (SIFT)

SIFT is a participatory assessment exercise carried out with members of a Production Group and Village Authorities. The participants examine progress made towards the objectives that were agreed during the TNA, and decide on action that is needed. SIFT requires between 90 minutes and 2 hours to complete.

TOOL 5 Farmer to Farmer Exchange (FEF)

The FEF helps members of a Production Group to share what they have learned with other farmers. During this half-day activity, the benefits of the Learning Project are analysed,

and farmers make decisions about follow-up activities. The FEF Report is used to record the names of farmers who want to learn more.

TOOL 6 Extend Village Extension System (EVES)

This tool is used at the end of the first cycle of activities in pilot villages. It involves a half-day session attended by all villagers. The initial Learning Project is evaluated, new activities are planned, and VEWs are appointed as a village focal point to facilitate further training and information management within the village. Agreement is also reached on the support that will be provided by DAFO.

V. Kumban Exchange Meetings

Once the VES is fully launched planning and implementation of activities are facilitated through the village stakeholders. Kumban exchange meetings with village representatives, projects, private sector and district staffs will help to coordinate the activities in the villages and the kumban, and allow exchanging lessons learnt. During those meetings kumban-based community activities are agreed. Those activities could include e.g. organising exchange events, establishing a kumban centre, setting up information boards, organising a temporary market place or organising joint input supply.