

Agricultural Information Management Working Group “Information and Communication Survey”

Minutes

Tuesday, 26th September, 2006
Information Management Division, NAFRI

Participant:

- NAFES/LEAP: Chitpasong, Thitpachanh, Chaluen, Leena, Khampheuy, Andrew, Andrea, Juliane, Phout
- NAFRI/LSUAFRP: Bandith, Khankham, Micheal, Khantamaly, Monchai.
- FOA: Dr. Silinthone and 16 students

Schedule of the meeting:

Time	Agenda point	Who
9:00	Introduction and overview <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome and objectives • Overview of what AIM WG expects to achieve 	Bandith Michael and Phout
9:00 – 12:00	Presentation by students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Presentation 1: inventory of information resources at NAFRI and NAFES (by Khamla) • Presentation 2: Impact of extension in local knowledge system (by group of students) • Presentation 3: Results of the information and communication survey in Phonsay and Namong 	Students
12:00 – 1:00	Lunch	
1:00- 2:45	Presentation 3: Results of the information and communication survey in Phonsay and Namong (continue)	Students
3:00 – 4:30	Discuss on problem and opportunity for information and communication in Central down to the field level. Agree on the next step.	Phout

Presentation

Presentation 1: Information management in central level

By: Khamla

- The survey was carried out during May to July using a survey form which developed by AIM sub-working group. The forms were sent to about 50 Stakeholders (one form per one organization or division or project) who involved in agriculture and forestry and rural development. However only 37 forms returned due these following reasons: a. it was difficult to talk to the head of the organization, b. it takes a long time to fill the form, c. many organization/projects do not have information in the central level but having information in operation sites (provincial level), d. technician who have the information are in the fields.
- The survey covered all projects and divisions/centers of NAFES and NAFRI, all technical department of MAF, STEA (DOE) and some international organizations: SNV, VFI, CIDSE, CUSO, WWF Laos, PROFIL, PADETC, CARE International laos, APHEDA and QUAKER.
- The survey shows that there are 4 categories of information available at the central level: Techniques, methodologies, marketing and policies/regulation. Most of each organization do not produce only a single type of information

- Proportions between the 4 categories are: Techniques (45%), Methodologies (35%), Policies (13%) and Marketing (7%)
- Information production are funded by international donors but jointly produced by the government institutes and donors.
- There are some information are in ongoing process such as rules on establishing village revolving funds (Namnguem Basin Development Project), Wild lives law (DOF), Sustainable Production Forest Management Planning (SUFORD), Orange gardening (HHRC), Market Assessment and Development (SNV)...
- The survey assessed that most of materials produced by NAFRI and NAFES are useful - very useful. About 50% of respondents do not know about the NAFRI website while about 25% only know about the NAFES website.
- Activities to improve NAFRI-NAFES linkages are: a. develop website (64%), conduct a discussion on the hot topic (63%) and c. establish a write shop to develop a join materials.
- Activities to improve communication and information dissemination between NAFRI-NAFES to Province and district level are: a. provide a regular list of materials and technologies (63%), b. use radio, c. use TV (53%) and d. conduct information markets/fairs (53%)
- Activities to improve information sharing among provinces are: a. Regular exchange or study tours (59%), b. Establishment of library or information resource area (43%), c. regular meetings at province level (43%)

Presentation 2: Impact of extension in the local knowledge system

By: Noupnone and Khamphong

- The study carried during May to July, 2006, in 4 sites: 2 Upland and 2 Lowland districts. In Khoun district where the extension has been launching for over a year, 6 villages are selected, 72 households (high, mid and low class) are interviewed.
- In conclusion, the extension make a positive impact in the local knowledge system: a. there are more information sources than before, b. there are more knowledge shares (learning process, exchange and consultation) among villagers within the village and between villages. In technical prospective, farmers adopt new techniques and combine with their local techniques which can improve their production (higher yield)
- Information sources before extension are: elderly, village head, local tradition doctor, temple and media from out side while after extension there are new information sources: Village Extension Workers and Production Groups with in the village and other villages.
- Locally people (all types) feel to consult with elderly the most, elderly is one of the sub-committee in the Village Authority. Elderly provide information on tradition, culture, and production techniques; moreover the Elderly play important roles on consultancy as well as communication and gathering people.
- With the new system where Village Extension Workers play the most important roles on Agriculture knowledge shares, the Elderly roles are decreased but they still being highly respected from villagers and still provide consultation on other issued relating education, tradition and culture
- The Mid and higher class of farmers access to information out side through TV, Radio and writing materials, while the poor can only access to information outside through face-to-face and some media such as the radio.
- Ethnic minority can not speak central Lao language which makes it more difficult for them to access information through regular media.
- Woman plays very limited leading roles in the village level, less direct access to information from village authority but rather receive information from man (husband). Woman feel more comfortable to communicate with woman and similar to the poor, many women are illiterate especially the ethnic women which limited access to information outside in kinds of writing materials.
- Positive farmers (success farmers) have potential to become an effective VEW but consider model farms for marginalized group is also needed.

- Most of information shares among farmers are in the form of face-to-face and informal discussion.
- Some new techniques do not fit to farmers reality
- Most of the extensionists define failure of extension activities when members of the production group can not increase productivity and adopt to the new techniques. It happened in Khoun district where farmers quit the learning project because they can not apply what they have learnt.
- Better economy farmers play a role as middle person (trader) who buys products from the middle class and the poor in the village. They are also the one who provide market price and market demand.
- Smaller market place for example: market in village or village cluster level provides more opportunity for the poor to sell their products in higher price as well as access to more market information.
- The most influenced group of people are the Elderly, Temple, Village Head, and the rich while the most important group in extension are the Elderly, VEW, PG and the Women. Youth are considered as the least influence and the least important in extension.
- Why extension is not launching effectively: a. techniques are not appropriate, b. farmers do not see the important of learning and share, c. lack of coordination between village authority and the VEW/PG.
- To create ownership farmers must set their own objective of establishing the production group.

Presentation 3: Information and communication in local level

By: Viengxay, Phonexay, Vilayvanth, Phonemany

- Village level
 - Infrastructure (roads, electricity, telephone) are the main factor for information access and communication for example, Namo district, Oudomxay province access to more information than Phonxay district, Luangprabang province according the road and telephone differences.
 - Farmers needs information relating **techniques** and **marketing** (price and demand)
 - Farmers communicate through face-to-face
 - Information sources: peers, relatives, traders, media (TV, radio, books, poster, pictures...), District staffs, projects.
 - Knowledge generation are through demonstration, training, study visit, exchange meeting
 - Information and communication mechanism: booklets, study visit, demonstration, radio, village meeting, information demonstration, picture, CD/TV, training, sharing through peers and relatives.
- District level
 - Information sources: peers, PAFO, newsletters, books, magazines, TV, radio, traders, study tour, farmers.
 - Information needs: Methodologies (how to motivate farmers, group management, gender, village fund establishing and management, training manual), techniques (poster, pictures, manual). Information must be understandable (have picture, clear instruction and have local language)
 - Information is accessed through face-to-face, telephone, documents from the government, training and study tour.

- Traders
 - Information sources: peers within the village and outside, companies, processing holders, slaughter house, trade office.
 - Traders provide information to farmers such as prices, quality requirement, market demands.
- Others
 - Extensionists and farmers interactions: extensionists provide training/information, collect statistic and feedback from farmers, conduct exchange meeting and study tour, provide technical services, provide seeds/breeds. How: extensionist work closely with farmers and farmers should contact extensionist to request for services.
 - Most of farmers access to radio, we should use this mean for information transfer
 - Should have ethnic extensionist in order to work with ethnic minority
 - Should improve news board in the village office
 - Woman should involve more in the study tour, especially ethnic women

Discussion

- **General**
 - In all level, information producer produce information individually with out sharing, the information is distributed to the field through their own channel using their own funds.
 - There is weak information share and weak communication in horizontal line (village-village, district-district, province-province and among the central level)
 - Information inventory and directory are considered important in all level
 - There are not many experts in information communication (provide information, connect to other sources)
 - Funds are very limited for information and communication development
- Problem of information and communication in *central level* especially between NAFRI and NAFES
 - Limited information shares (especially the soft copies)
 - There are overlapping of producing the same information
 - Interaction between NAFRI and NAFES is not enough, NAFRI would like to get more feedback from the field
 - Information producers do not meet the need of end users and they still do not know what information needed
 - Most of information produced by projects (donor and the Government) which funded by external donor
 - The Government doesn't have funds to support information productions
 - There are more on information dissemination rather than information service
 - Dissemination cost from central directly to provinces and district is high
- Problem of information and communication in *province level*
 - Do not know what information available in the central level (information inventory)
 - Do not know who to contact for information in the central level (information directory)
 - Do not have ability and funds to translate information to their local situation; meaning can not produce information for all social groups, to their local ecological condition and their social economy.
 - Information and communication system in the province level is weak; meaning the dissemination channel and communication mechanism are not work systematically.

- **Opportunity**

- While the funds and human resources are limited, R&E information center might be in the same building
- Develop a information service in all level (village cluster, district, province and central level) in kinds of information service center or hot line service
- NAFES and NAFRI should join together to develop the Information Service Center of Village Development Cluster (ISCVDC); as today, this concept is not clear weather about the issues of who will be in chart and manage, where the funds come from, ownership, what information to put in (agriculture and forestry, health, education?), who are the user, what services provided and by whom...
- NAFES and NAFRI should help to build capacity for provincial staff (Subject Matter Specialist in PAFO) about information and communication in order to enable information production and better communication in the province level. There are 3 ways to move forward: a. better information production and dissemination, b. better communication and c. a+b.
- To develop the Information Service Center, there are some constraint as followings: a. organizational structure (which organization in chart, where do the staff come from), b. HR ability (no expertise on information management and communication), c. no stable source of funding and d. information is still fragmented.
- NAFRI and NAFES should continue communicate to avoid producing same information
- NAFRI and NAFES should improve the information inventory (central level) that came out of the student study and help the province to produce information inventory. Moreover, the list of SMS in provincial and central level are considered important; NAFRI and NAFES should work more on the directory.

- **What is next?**

Meet together in Tuesday, 3rd Oct, 2006 at NAFRI for: a. discusses further about the opportunity for NAFRI and NAFES to better improve information production/dissemination and communication and b. to prepare a next AIM meeting in the October (agree on the objective, content and date).