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Social and Community Dimensions to ACIAR Projects

ACIAR Training Manual

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An Overview: Social and community dimensions of agriculture, fisheries and forestry

For thousands of years throughout the world, people have influenced the environment in which they lived. As the world's population and consumption of resources continues to increase, so does the impact of people on the environment. The way farmland, forests (natural and plantations) and water (rivers, lakes, estuaries and oceans) are managed is invariably people-centred – people and the environment are inextricably linked.

There are several critical phenomena occurring internationally that make it important to have an understanding of the key concepts and ideas about the social and community dimensions of agriculture, fisheries and forestry. This understanding is particularly relevant to projects funded by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) that have an ultimate goal of improving the livelihoods of poor rural communities.

Some key issues relevant to the social and community dimension of rural research projects include:

- **Development**, whether technological or economic, does not necessarily affect every one equally, nor in the same way. For example, increased crop yields may advantage farmers who can harvest larger yields (eg. have access to machinery), better systems of storage and transport, and have access to competitive markets. Farmers lacking these characteristics (eg. poorer farmers) may face diminishing prospects as buyers favour larger growers with lower transaction costs. Because of the variable impacts of development, different people, communities, organisations and governments can apply different criteria to determine what is 'successful' rural development.
- **Increasing community diversity**, such as a large group of people with increasingly different values, interests and needs, can lead to contention over ways of managing and using rural resources. As the definition of what comprises a 'community' vary (eg. shared location, values or interests), it can be difficult to identify a single community with shared issues, experiences, values and aspirations. Differences over who manages and uses rural resources can lead to tension, and sometimes conflict, within communities, between communities and within countries (eg. rural compared to urban communities), and even between countries. The underlying tension can relate to questions about decision-making processes, ownership of resources, perceptions of 'rights' and fairness, and how costs and benefits are calculated and shared.
- Implications for families – particularly rural villagers – when inextricably linked in the **cash-economy**. By being drawn into the cash-economy, people have changed the way they farm, fish and use forests. The need for cash can sometimes be oppressive with many people forced into managing rural resources in an exploitive or opportunistic manner to generate cash to meet short-term financial commitments – sometimes leading to inequitable distribution of benefits between people and companies/organisations, and unsustainable development.
- Aspects of **modern life** are altering traditional social structures, values and decision-making processes within communities. For example, increased mobility (eg. as people move away from families for employment, or families moving into new areas to access farmlands), changing priorities of governments, new commercial opportunities, and the influence of media from dominant cultures are all challenging traditional lifestyles.
- While increasing **community participation** in rural development is popular rhetoric, there is often great differences in opinion about with whom, when and how this should best be achieved – leading to misunderstanding, failure to meet aspirations and sometimes, violent conflict between people involved in participatory processes.

Reflection

How relevant are the issues discussed above to your ACIAR project?

Project Design

Project sequence

Most research and development projects follow a process that links ideas, resources and activities to achieve a desired outcome. Projects usually have a sequence of steps, like links in a chain, that need to occur in a sequence for the project to be effective. The sequence of individual steps of a project should be designed to be logical – termed the project logic. The project logic describes the main components of a project, in an order that is most likely to be effective and achieve the project's goal [refer to Figure 1: Project logic].



Project context

When designing a project, it is important to ask... is our project achievable or feasible? It can be unrealistic for a relatively short project, say of 3 years duration, to be able to solve profound challenges facing rural communities.

It can be more realistic for projects to build on a foundation of knowledge or effort created by previous projects or other initiatives when tackling challenging issues. Also, after the current project has concluded, another project or initiative may begin – building on what you have achieved. If these projects are related, then there can be a cycle of continual improvement.

Also, it is rare for a research and development project not to be influenced by the changing context in which it exists. For example, while a research project can have clearly defined goals and objectives, and the necessary inputs for an effective 3-year project, for example the climatic conditions can vary, governments can change policies, and farmers needs may alter during the project period – perhaps requiring changes to the original project plan. We should regularly ask ... is our project appropriate and relevant to the current context?

Project cycle

It can be helpful to think of a project as cyclic in its operation, with most projects having a social dimension (people-related aspect) to all stages. A simple version of the project cycle is illustrated below, with some social aspects of each stage identified [refer to Figure 2: Project cycle].

Vision



Planning

(discuss general ideas with a wide range of stakeholders to identify their concerns and interests)



Goal and objectives (developed with and supported by key stakeholders)



Inputs (adequate financial resources, ideas and skills, physical and moral support)



Actions (activities conducted with stakeholders, perhaps as participatory action research)



Outputs (people adequately trained, new crops established)



Outcomes (cohesive and resilient community, more families with improved livelihoods, viable from enterprises)

Ongoing Reflection

While it is important to monitor and evaluate key stages of the project, project participants should regularly reflect on their experiences to ensure the project is performing at its optimum. Small and timely adjustments to projects when it is being conducted may improve its effectiveness, rather than waiting until the project is in its final stage before undertaking an in-depth evaluation and implementing changes.

Reflection

Using the 'project cycle' diagram presented above, can you identify the stage(s) of your project that present the greatest challenge to your project being successful?

Reference

Woodhill, J. and Robins, L. (1998) Participatory evaluation for Landcare and catchment groups: A guide for facilitators. Greening Australia Ltd. Canberra, Australia.

Stakeholder Analysis

Stakeholder is a term used to describe a person, community or organisation that is (or potentially) affected by an activity, event or policy – people who have a stake in the outcome. People will not always be affected by an activity equally, nor in the same way. For example, some people may receive immediate benefits while others may experience costs in the long-term.

Undertaking a stakeholder analysis can be valuable for identifying the key people or groups who may be most affected by a research and development project. It can also be valuable for prioritising which people or group you need to work with most, and how your project can be of benefit to them – essential planning for a project with a limited budget and time. The effects of a project may be beneficial for some people, yet cause negative impacts for others.

A stakeholder analysis usually:

- groups people on the basis of how they will be affected by a project;
- analyses the nature of the project impacts;
- identifies the benefits of the project for each group; and
- explores how the project might minimise any negative consequences.

The following matrix is designed to assist you to undertake a stakeholder analysis for your project. Complete the following matrix for your project:

People/group (list in order of importance for your project)	What are the main issues experienced by these people?	What are the positive impacts of the project on their livelihoods?	What are the negative impacts of the project on their livelihoods?	How can the project reduce/avoid these negative impacts?	What action does the project need to take?

Community Participation; why, who, how and when?

First of all - some definitions

Stakeholder- anyone who is affected by, or has an interest in an area or issue

Community- people sharing the same area, interests or issue.

Participation- being involved.

Engagement- a form of participation, more than consulting

Why engage with stakeholders and communities?

Community participation is a process which can improve communication, interaction and joint decision making between different stakeholders. These days, participation is seen as a 'right' for community to be involved in decisions and actions which affect them. However, the type of participation will need to be selected carefully, as not every type will always be appropriate due to lack of community willingness to be involved, a highly volatile environment, lack of skills to facilitate participation or conflict due to different expectations.

Generally, participation is appropriate if the issue;

- Is significant to the community
- Will have an impact on them
- Is about future planning or social change
- Involves making decisions with them

Some of the suggested benefits of engaging stakeholders are;

- Encourages ownership of the process and outcomes
- Improves joint understanding of community and agency needs
- Improves relationships with stakeholders
- Improves credibility of agencies and staff
- Uses community knowledge and experience
- Builds capacity and understanding within communities and project/donors
- Results in better decisions
- Results in better outcomes

What motivates people to get involved?

However, we can't assume that people will want to be involved in decision making or programs. What motivates them to participate?

TO GAIN OR NOT TO LOSE

- A say in decisions
- Obtain access to resources
- Greater security over current resources
- Their voice in decisions
- Access to resources
- Current rights or privileges

Principles of community participation

A distinction needs to be made between 'instrumental' participation (as a tool for a specific end) or 'transformative' participation (as a mechanism for social change). An example of instrumental participation would be forming an advisory group to help an organisation plan a research project or develop a management plan for an area. Examples of transformative participation would be assisting a community to run their own health centre, or farmers starting a marketing cooperative to sell their products.

Regardless of the aim of participation, the following principles still apply;

- It takes time
- Can be complex and unpredictable
- Needs broad representation
- Needs a shared understanding of expectations, responsibilities and outcomes
- Needs to be an objective, fair and open process
- Needs good program design
- May need specialised techniques and training
- Needs to be tailored to suit each situation
- Needs adequate resources (staff, funds, equipment)
- Needs to address requirements of specific groups (eg disabled, remote, ethnic groups, women and children etc)
- Recognise diversity of values and opinions
- Needs to provide opportunities for joint input and learning

How to engage with stakeholders and communities (have a strategy or plan!)

In order to apply the principles above, we need to be clear about why we are engaging, who we are involving (and whether they want to be involved!) and how we will involve them, it is worth developing a participation strategy or plan.

The following points need to be considered when developing a participation strategy;

1. Have a clear stated purpose (eg. answer why are we engaging?)
2. Identify stakeholders who want be involved or informed
3. Provide opportunities for participation at many levels (tailor to the circumstances)
4. Address needs of specific groups (eg. disabled, remote, indigenous, women, corporate)
5. Use a variety of media
6. Make data and information available to all involved
7. Allow enough time for meaningful participation/emphasise joint learning.

8. Maintain communication flow
9. Evaluate stakeholder satisfaction and outcomes

Inevitably there will be constraints, conflicts and weaknesses that will need to be addressed. Some of these might be;

- Time or financial limitations
- Lack of representation
- Interest groups dominating or opposing views
- Weak information base
- Need for staff training and skills
- Getting bogged down

Types of community participation

There are many different processes for community participation, which vary according to complexity of an issue, risks and investments at stake, time available and levels of interest in an issue, technology development, policy or plan. It is important that the right form of participation is chosen for the circumstance, preferably in association with community members or representatives (see Table 1 below)

Typology	Characteristics of each type
Passive participation	People participate by being told what is going to happen/happened. The information being shared belongs only to the external organization.
Participation in information giving	People participate by answering questions posed by extractive researchers using techniques such as questionnaires. The findings are not shared or checked for accuracy, no influence from participants.
Participation by consultation	People participate by being consulted and external agents listen to views. The agents define both the problems and solutions, and may modify these in the light of the people's responses.
Participation for material incentives	People participate by providing resources, e.g. labour, cash or material incentives. Farmers are not involved in the experimentation or the process of learning, no stake in prolonging activities when the incentives end.
Functional participation	People participate by forming groups to meet pre-determined objectives related to the project that can involve external organizations, the involvement is generally after the major planning decision have been made.
Interactive participation	People participate in joint analysis, which leads to actions, new groups or strengthening existing ones. Tends to involve interdisciplinary methods and make use of structured learning processes. The groups take control over local decisions and people have a stake in maintaining structures and practices.
Self-mobilization	People participate by taking initiatives independent of external organizations to change systems. They develop the contacts with external agents for resources and advice they need and retain control on how the resources are used.

Reflection

How relevant are the issues outlined above to your ACIAR research project?

Articles and other resources

Aslin, H.J and Brown, V. A. (2004) Towards whole of community engagement: A practical toolkit. Murray Darling Basin Commission, Canberra Australia www.mdbc.gov.au

Buchy, M. and Race, D. (2001) The twists and turns of community participation in natural resource management in Australia: What is missing? *Journal of Environmental Planning and Management*, 44 (3), pp. 293-304

Horne, P.M. and Stur, W. W. (2003). Developing agricultural solutions with smallholder farmers. How to get started with participatory approaches. ACIAR Monograph No. 99. ACIAR, Canberra, Australia. www.aciar.gov.au

Pretty, J. (1995) *Regenerating Agriculture: Policies and practice for sustainability and self reliance*. Earthscan Publications, UK.

Useful websites include:

International Institute for Environment and Development www.iied.org

Where does my project fit?

Instructions

Think about the strengths and weaknesses of different approaches to community participation. Discuss with your project team which approaches you have used in your project.

Place your project along the continuum of participatory approaches according to the project as a whole, or for different stages and target audiences.

Reflections

What did I learn from doing this activity?

Could I use this technique with staff or community groups in my project and if so, in what situation/s?

Methods and tools for participation

Definitions

Method- general approach used to engage stakeholders (eg public meeting, workshop)

Tool- specific activity used with a chosen method to identify issues, solve problems or make decisions (eg brainstorming, matrix ranking, mindmapping, SWOT analysis etc)

Choosing which method to use

Before deciding on the general methods or specific tools to use for engaging community groups, organisations or individuals, it is important to clarify who the stakeholders are (Activity #2), a rationale for

participation (Training note #3) and develop a strategy or program.

Methods and tools need to be tailored to stakeholders, stage in the project cycle, project objectives and anticipated outcomes (Activity #4). They may also be refined or altered due to constraints with resources, time, skills, language or cultural barriers.

The following methods are generally accepted as being useful for the particular function or objective shown.

	Inform	Identify issues	Solve problems	Plan	Feed-back	Evaluate	Resolve conflict
Method							
Public meetings	X	X			X		
Information centres	X						
Presentations	X	X					
Displays/posters	X						
Radio/TV	X						
Newspapers/letters	X				X		
Brochures	X						
Call for submissions	X	X					
Informal small group meetings	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Mail surveys	X	X			X	X	
Interviews (phone or face to face)		X			X	X	
Focus group interview		X			X	X	
Workshops		X	X	X	X	X	X
Field trips							
Demonstration sites	X	X			X	X	
Advisory committees		X	X	X	X	X	
Task force		X	X	X	X	X	X
Employment of community worker		X	X	x	X	X	X

Source: (Conacher and Conacher, 2000)

Tools for Community Participation

The following tools can be used to achieve the same objectives when holding workshops, training events or meetings.

Tool	Identify and explore issues	Analyse information	Make decisions and plan
Participatory Rural Appraisal	X		
Brainstorming	X		
Rich pictures	X		
Visioning	X		
Problem diagnosis	X		
Questionnaires	X		
Suggestion boxes	X		
Mindmapping	X	X	
Cause and effect mapping	X	X	
Historical or seasonal analysis	X	X	
Transect walks and village mapping	X	X	
Semi-structured interviewing	X	X	
Flow diagrams		X	
SWOT analysis		X	
Venn diagrams		X	
Tabulation and graphing		X	
Matrix analysis		X	X
Card technique		X	X
Computer modelling		X	X
Nominal group technique			X
Action plans			X

Source: (Woodhill and Robins 1998; Horne and Stur 2003)

Reflection:

How relevant are the issues outlined above to your ACIAR research project?

Articles and other resources

Aslin, H.J and Brown, V. A. (2004) Towards whole of community engagement: A practical toolkit. Murray Darling Basin Commission, Canberra Australia

Conacher, A and Conacher, J. (2000) Methods of public participation. In Environmental Planning and Management in Australia. Oxford University Press, Melbourne, Australia.

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Pretty, J., Gujit, I., Thompson, J. and Scoones, I. (1995) Participatory Learning and Action: A Trainers Guide. International Institute for Environment and Development, London, UK.

Woodhill, J. and Robins, L. (1998) Participatory Evaluation for Landcare and Catchment Groups: A guide for facilitators. Greening Australia Ltd, Canberra, Australia.

Websites:

International Institute for Environment and Development www.iied.org

International Development Institute, University of Sussex, UK www.ids.ac.uk

Effectiveness of methods and tools for community participation

Instructions

Working in your project teams, list the methods and tools you have used so far in your project and note why you chose that method or tool.

Nominate someone from your project team to describe one effective method and one less effective method.

Group discussion to reach some consensus on when and how to use certain methods for different situations. Pin each method on project cycle.

Reflections

What did I learn from doing this activity?

Could I use this technique with staff or community groups in my project and if so, in what situation/s?

Understanding Extension, Adoption and Learning

Changes in approaches to extension

Over the last century there has been an ongoing evolution of approaches to agricultural research and extension in both developing and developed nations. In Asia, the role and development of extension services varies from country to country but has been largely influenced by four major periods;

Colonial agriculture (1900 to 1940s): Experimental research stations established by colonialists focussed on export crops. Technical advice provided to plantation managers and large landowners. Assistance to smallholder farmers was rare.

Diverse, top-down extension (1940s to 1960s): After independence, production targets were set and extension services became commodity-based. Donor supported schemes established to meet the needs of smallholder farmers. Extension was seen as a way of transferring technologies from researchers to farmers (TOT).

Unified top-down extension (1970s to 1980s): The World Bank introduced the Training and Visit system. Organisations were merged into a single national service to promote adoption of 'Green Revolution' technologies.

Diverse, bottom-up extension (1990s to now): The Training & Visit system collapsed when funding ceased due to lack of community empowerment with the approach. A growing concern for sustainability and equity resulted in participatory approaches being developed.

Extension can be used for different purposes and situations, from straight technical advice to more complex educational and community development needs, as shown in the diagram below

Factors influencing the adoption process

Farmer decision making can be interpreted as part of an individual's efforts to accomplish personal and family goals. In this context, agricultural practices will be adopted if they are consistent with the achievement of those goals, including financial security or wealth accumulation; personal satisfaction or excellence; environmental protection; and social acceptance.

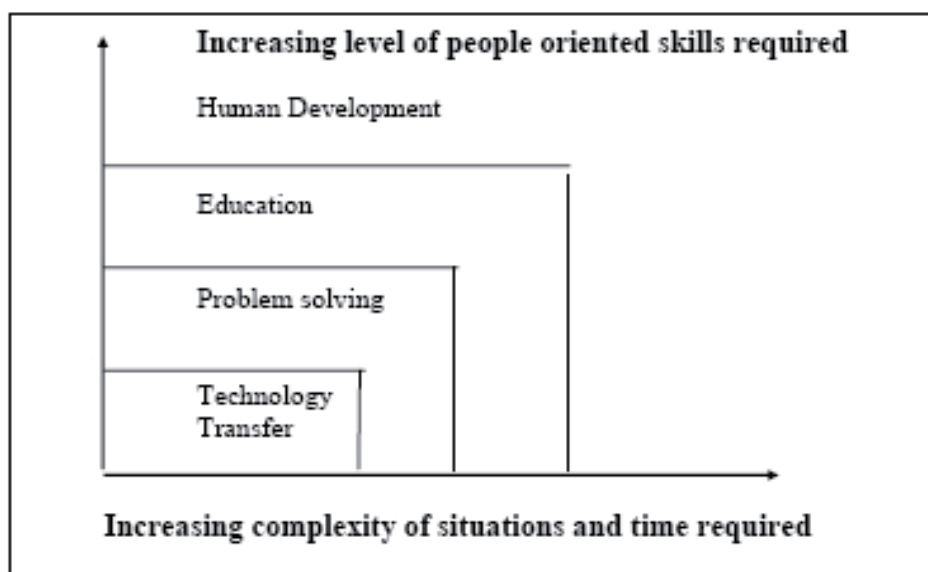
Research into farmer adoption suggests that the following factors affect the uptake of new technologies or practices (Pannell et al. 2006). They include;

1. Personal characteristics of landholder and their immediate family

Goals and values; Knowledge and skills; Length of experience in the area as a farmer; Stage of life; Personality- risk taker/introvert/ extrovert; Income and financial security; Likelihood of family succession; Level of education and Extent of personal networks.

2. Social context of landholder

Prevailing social norms within the community; Information flows through networks; Education/ training opportunities; Strength of local organisations; Level of trust in extension agents and prevailing market conditions.



3. Nature of the practice

The recommended practice has to fit with landholder goals and be socially acceptable; Provide a relative advantage to the landholder compared to traditional practices (ie low cost, high benefit, low risk); Be compatible with existing practices and farm systems, Be simple to manage and relatively easy to trial.

The adoption and learning process

Adoption of a technology or practice is an ongoing dynamic learning process. The process of trialling, learning from the experience, reflecting and making decisions on whether to adapt or continue the practice, can take several years. For some farmers, they will want to watch others do the trialling to see what happens before committing themselves. So the whole process of gaining awareness, deciding to trial, adapting, learning and evaluating can take several years (sometimes more than 10 years!!).

Farmers learn best from experience and sharing information with peers (Millar and Curtis, 1997). Farmer to farmer learning has proven to be the most effective pathway to adoption. However, farmer exchange is not always possible due to remoteness or individual preferences for learning (ie some people prefer to learn one to one) (Millar et al. 2005).

The key messages for researchers and extension staff are:

- Adoption can be an unrealistic goal if you are working with a short time frame. Have realistic goals. Allow small steps to build confidence and provide support.
- The decision to trial is not the same as adoption (farmer may stop after trialling).
- Motivations vary between and with individuals and are often complex and difficult to understand. But you should try to understand.
- There are usually good reasons for non-adoption. Examine what you are “selling” and check to see if it will help your farmers achieve their goals.

Reflection

How relevant are the issues outlined above to your ACIAR research project?

- A mix of approaches is usually necessary. Cater for different goals and values.
- Focus on what you can change: the practice; your approaches; landholder awareness, knowledge, skills and confidence in the practice. Give recognition for all efforts, big and small. Be inclusive.

Articles and other resources

Cary, J. Webb, T and Barr, N. (2002) Understanding landholders' capacity to change to sustainable practices. Insights about practice adoption and social capacity for change. Bureau of Rural Sciences. Canberra, Australia.

Chambers, R. (1997). Whose reality counts? Putting the first last. Intermediate Technology Publications: London.

Chambers, R., Pacey, A., & Thrupp, L.A. (eds.) (1989).

Farmer first: Farmer participation in agricultural research. Intermediate Technology Publications: London.

Millar, J. & Curtis, A. (1997). Moving farmer knowledge beyond the farm gate: An Australian study of farmer knowledge in group learning. European Journal of Agricultural Education and Extension. 4(2), pp. 133-142.

Millar J, Photakoun V, and Connell J (2005) 'Scaling out impacts: A study of three methods for introducing forage technologies to villages in Lao PDR'. ACIAR Working Paper No. 58, ACIAR Canberra.

Pannell, DJ., Marshall, GR, Barr, N., Curtis, A., Vanclay F. and Wilkinson, R. (2006) Understanding and promoting adoption of conservation technologies by rural landholders. Australian Journal of Experimental Agriculture. 46, pp. 1407-1424

Scoones, I and Thompson, J. eds. (1994) Beyond Farmer First. Rural people's knowledge, agricultural research and extension practice. Intermediate Technology Publications, London, UK.

Van Beek, P. & Coutts, J. (1992). Extension in a knowledge systems framework. Discussion notes No. 2. QDPI Systems Study Group: Brisbane.

Useful websites include:

Centre for Rural and Regional Innovation- Queensland. www.crriq.edu.au

Australasia Pacific Extension Network (APEN) www.apen.org.au

Who is trialling or adopting and who is not?

Instructions

Working in your project teams, identify the characteristics of those farmers or villagers who are involved in trialling or adopting the technology being promoted and those who are not. Discuss and record the reasons why.

Present this information to the whole group. (perhaps by using words, pictures, roleplay, songs or any other medium you can think of!)

Reflection

What did I learn from doing this activity?

Could I use this technique with staff or community groups in my project and if so, in what situation/s?

Scaling out strategies - theory and practice

What is scaling out?

In the early stages of participatory research with farmers, small scale expansion of useful technologies often occurs. This is driven by the desire of farmers and extension workers to move from small plots or trials to 'significant' areas which can support increases in enterprise productivity and result in livelihood benefits. However, in subsequent years, expansion to larger areas, to more farmers and to more districts (known as scaling out) is only driven by the clear demonstration of tangible, achievable and substantial impacts. Many research and development projects assume that expansion of impacts and innovation diffusion will somehow occur naturally. This does not always happen. Scaling out requires planning, resources and facilitation!! Scaling out can be defined as:

'the process of working with farmers to enable beneficial technologies to be adapted across a wide range of people and farming systems to improve their livelihoods.'

Once farmers are empowered to experiment and innovate, how can research and extension staff facilitate integration of technologies within and across farming systems? What are the drivers to scaling out? How do local staff learn to go beyond working with individual farmers to working effectively with farmer groups? How can they stimulate ongoing sharing of local farmer knowledge and experience? How do they use both local and scientific knowledge to help farmers solve immediate and long term problems? How can significant impacts (both expected and unexpected) be captured and used as extension or learning tools?

If and when to scale out?

How do we know if the technology has potential to be scaled out and when or where it can be scaled out? First of all, you need to have some measure and documentation of how local farmers have used and benefited from the technology (see Training note #7). To assess if the technology is widely applicable, you need examples of local successes across a range of environments, ages, ethnic groups, farming systems, etc. (ie. proven technologies and case studies).

Then you need to know if there are enough drivers such as significant problems that need solving, market demand for the product, or opportunities to diversify and spread risk. Once you have confidence that the technology will spread and enough examples to use as extension tools, then the role of extension comes into play. Staff who understand farmer needs in different environments and stages in farmer learning are required to facilitate information exchange. Staff need to be experienced, motivated and able to mentor new staff.

Scaling out also needs adequate resources and institutional commitment including involvement of project partners who can introduce the technology into new areas. Sometimes, a beneficial technology will 'walk' by itself due to farmer diffusion of information and ideas through their networks. Does this mean the job is done? In some cases, yes, if farmers are getting the correct advice and support from other farmers to generate benefits. However, sometimes the advice and follow up is inadequate and failures occur, creating disillusionment and scaling 'back' of technology use over time.

How and where to scale out

Scaling out can occur at different geographic or demographic levels according to the resources and skills available. The **rate of scaling out** can also vary with opportunities to **accelerate** the expansion of impacts in some situations. Strategies for scaling up will vary according to land and labour availability, site suitability, level of farmer awareness or interest in the technologies, pool of existing farmer knowledge and experience, group development and level of technical or extension support.

A useful way to approach scaling up is to ask the following questions (what, who, how) in relation to a specific context.

1. What drivers and opportunities are there?
2. What inputs will be needed?
3. What are the potential barriers or constraints?
4. Who will drive the scaling up process?
5. What methods are appropriate for each stage?

A case study- scaling out of forage and livestock production in Lao PDR

The Forage and Livestock Systems Project worked in 5 districts of 2 provinces (Luang Prabang and Xieng Khouang) from 2000 to 2005. By 2005 they had achieved significant impacts in 51 villages, but wanted to reach more farmers and scale out to 104 villages. It was determined that they could scale out in three ways;

1. Introduce proven technologies and their potential impacts to 53 new villages.
2. Encourage and enable more farmers within existing FLSP villages to take advantage of the technologies being used by other farmers.
3. Introduce the technology to other development projects (eg NGO/Govt).

However before embarking on any of these pathways, FLSP had to be able to clearly demonstrate that potential impacts were real, achievable and substantial. District extension staff developed case studies of successful farmers with support from provincial and national staff from NAFES and NAFRI. At the same time they began conducting cross visits and champion farmer visits as a way of enabling new farmers to see and discuss forage and livestock production with experienced farmers. As more cases of impacts started to emerge and the number of experienced or 'champion' farmers grew, they were able to develop a greater range of relevant case studies to use in village meetings and field days. Adoption in new villages was faster than old villages as a result. Introducing forages to other projects was less successful due to lack of follow up and appropriate extension. Further adoption was slower within existing FLSP villages due to major constraints faced by some farmers or lack of interest.

Reflection

How relevant are the issues outlined above to your ACIAR research project?

Articles and other resources

Connell J, Millar J, Photakoun V, and Pathammavong O. (2004) Strategies for enabling scaling up: technology innovation and agro-enterprise development. Paper presented at the NAFRI workshop on Poverty Reduction and Shifting Cultivation Stabilisation in the Uplands of Lao PDR: Technologies, approaches and methods for improving rural livelihoods. January 27-30, 2004 at Luang Prabang, Lao PDR.

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Millar J, Photakoun V, and Connell J (2005) Scaling out impacts: A study of three methods for introducing forage technologies to villages in Lao PDR. ACIAR Working Paper No. 58, ACIAR Canberra.

Pachio D, and Fujisaka S (eds) (2004) Scaling up and out: Achieving widespread impact through agricultural research. CIAT Publication 340, Cali, Colombia.

Snapp, S and Heong, K.L (2003). Scaling up and out. In Pound, B., Snapp, S., McDougall, C. and Braun, A.(eds) *Managing natural resources for sustainable livelihoods: Utilising science and participation*. Earthscan/IDRC, Canada.

Useful websites include:

International Centre for Tropical Agriculture www.ciat.org

International Development Research Centre, Canada www.idrc.ca

Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research www.aciar.gov.au

Scaling out of beneficial technologies

Instructions

Working in your project teams, use the table below to assess whether your project has potential or is ready to scale out. Report back to main group with your scores for discussion.

Criteria	Ranking (1= insufficient, 5= highly sufficient)
Technology has been tested in the field by farmers	
Technology has been adapted and integrated by farmers	
Technology has generated impacts on production	
Technology has generated impacts on livelihoods	
Impacts have been documented across a range of locations	
Farmers are showing interest from nearby districts	
Staff have good technical knowledge	
Staff have good extension skills	
Staff are able to mentor	
Organisations are committed	
Resources are available	
Resources are sustainable to support targets or goals set	
Other	

Note: It is not intended that the scores for each criterion be aggregated, as each criterion reflects an independent variable that should all be achieved if scaling out is to be most effective.

Reflection

What did I learn from doing this activity?

Could I use this technique with staff or community groups in my project and if so, in what situation/s?

Evaluation of social and community dimensions

An overview of evaluation

Put simply, evaluation is about assessing performance and judging the impacts. Evaluation usually refers to the comprehensive assessment of a project's performance and impacts, while monitoring usually refers to the regular gathering of data against project targets. Monitoring often collects information about a project's activities and outputs, while evaluation also takes into account the impact or outcome of a project – the effects caused by a project's activities and outputs.

Evaluation of a project can be undertaken for several reasons, including to:

- provide an accountable report to funding agencies and project partners,
- learn about the project's effectiveness (did it achieve its objectives?, can it be refined?), demonstrate the value of a project,
- generate new knowledge that can be applied elsewhere, and
- engage partners so they learn more about the project (sometimes termed 'participatory monitoring and evaluation', discussed below).

Projects can be evaluated at any stage of the project cycle, although the questions asked may be different. A well-designed evaluation process of a project is a valuable investment, yet the process should be realistic in the amount of time and other costs. As a guide, some evaluation specialists suggest 5-10% of a project's total budget should be dedicated to monitoring and evaluation (this proportion may be higher if the project is particularly innovative, challenging or complex).

Project cycle - a framework for evaluating a project

The approach to evaluation may vary according to the different stages or aspects of a project (refer to Figure 1: A four-step model for monitoring and evaluation, Woodhill & Robins 1998). The project cycle, explained in Training note #2 'Project design', also offers a framework for evaluating a project. Assessing the inputs of a project can be just as meaningful as assessing the activities or outputs – don't wait until the end of a project before undertaking an evaluation.

Some questions to ask at the 'planning' and 'input' stages of a project might include:

- how were stakeholders involved in the planning of a project?
- is the project's logic appropriate (given the issues raised by stakeholders and what other groups or organisations are doing)?
- are the objectives of the project realistic given the inputs?
- does the project team have the necessary skills and support to achieve the project's objectives?

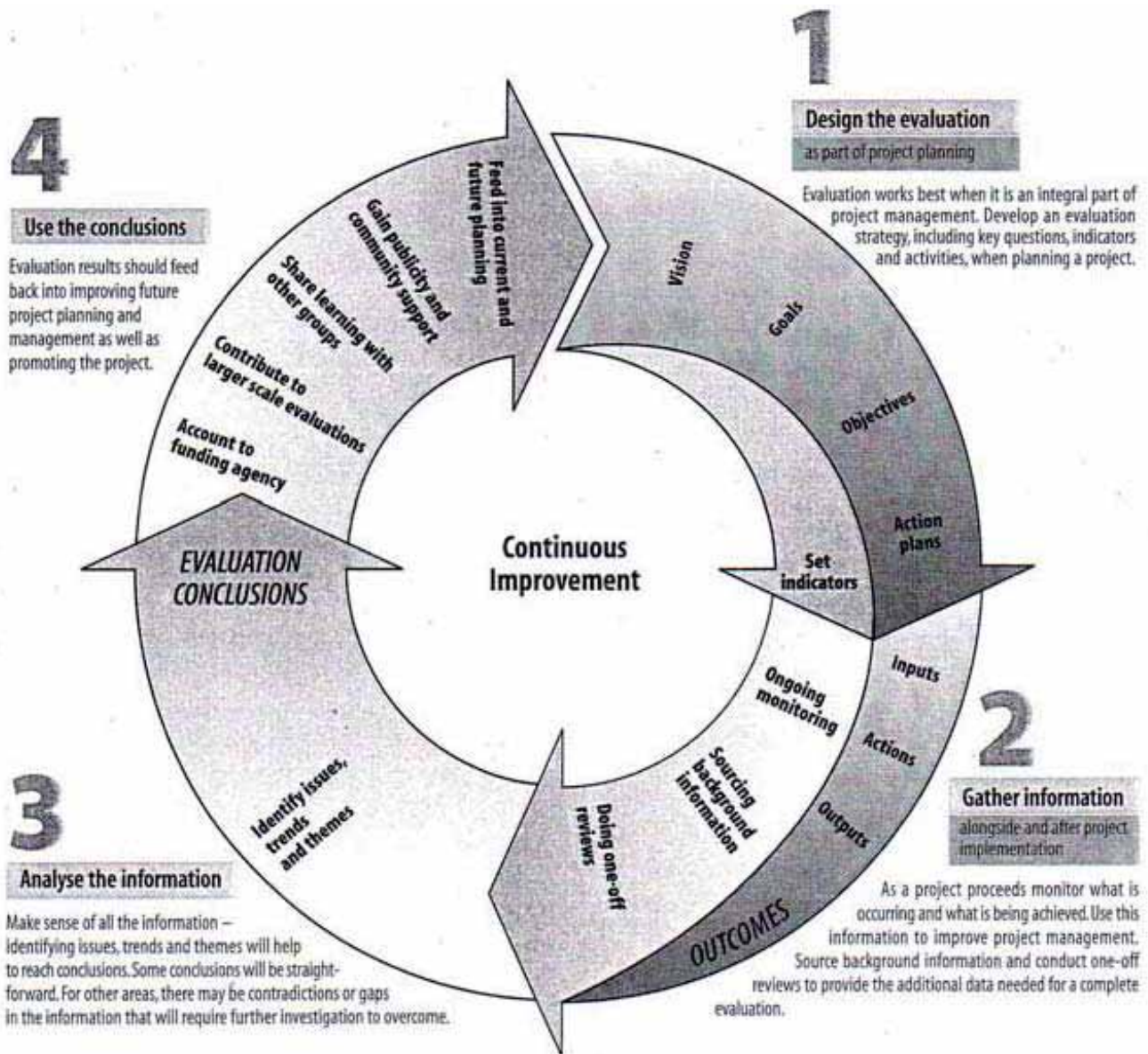
Other questions will be relevant at the 'activity', 'output' and 'outcome' stages, such as:

- how are stakeholders involved in the project's activities?
- how useful are the project's outputs for stakeholders?
- how successful do stakeholders believe the project is/was?
- how have stakeholders changed due to the project?
- how has the project's results influenced the policies or programs of major organisations?

Indicators of social and community dimensions

The outcomes of research and development projects can be long-term, diffuse, and mixed with the outcomes of parallel projects – making it difficult to accurately assess the success of a single project. To overcome this, evaluation needs to focus on the stages and aspects of a project that it can assess, which then inform a discussion about the likelihood that observable outcomes are caused by, or attributable to, the project being assessed.

Indicators are descriptions of how a stage of a project can be assessed, with different indicators likely for 'inputs', 'activities', 'outputs' and 'outcomes'. As a guide, each stage of a project should have between 2 and 4 indicators. If more than 4 indicators are used for a single stage of a project, then indicators may need to be more carefully defined to avoid excessive data collection. Remember, a large amount of data collection does not mean the evaluation will be more informative than that based on a simple, well-defined method of data collection, yet it is likely to be more expensive.



Some indicators of the social and community dimension of a project include:

- Extent stakeholders are involved in the project,
- Level of participation by stakeholders in planning, activities and decision-making forums,
- Extent a cooperative network has formed amongst different stakeholders,
- Level of stakeholder satisfaction with project,
- Extent stakeholders view the project's research as credible and useful,
- Extent stakeholders have used the results of the project,
- Nature and extent of improvement in stakeholders' livelihoods due to the project,
- Extent stakeholders' livelihoods are more resilient.

Participatory monitoring and evaluation

Apart from a core project team, other people (eg. key stakeholders) may want to be involved in monitoring and evaluating a project. Some reasons include because they:

- like to know the results of their effort,
- appreciate having their experiences and opinions on project performance considered,
- value learning how to do things better, and
- feel empowered when they can critically analyse their own work, rather than relying on outside specialist evaluators for an assessment.

Participatory monitoring and evaluation of a project by community-based groups can differ to the monitoring and evaluation undertaken by specialist evaluators – neither necessarily more valid than the other. It is important to remember that there can be different ways to evaluate a single project, with an informative evaluation designed to meet the evaluation's purpose and questions. For example, a funding agency may ask different questions of a project (eg. did it contribute to the organisation's goals?, was it cost-efficient?) than the community-based participants in the same project (eg. has it improved our farms? did it increase our household income?). Also, different information may need to be collected to answer different questions of a project.

Refer to Training note #3 'Community participation' when designing strategies and process for involving people in participatory monitoring and evaluation of projects.

Reflection

What questions do you need to answer to obtain a strong understanding of your project's performance and outcomes?

Why and how would you involve different stakeholders in the evaluation of your project?

References

Woodhill, J. and Robins, L. (1998) Participatory evaluation for Landcare and catchment groups: A guide for facilitators. Greening Australia Ltd. Canberra, Australia.
Abbot, J. and Guijt, I. (1998) Changing views on change: Participatory approaches to monitoring the environment. SARL Discussion Paper No. 2, International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED). London, UK.
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Social impact assessment: A framework for assessing social outcomes

An overview of social impact assessment

Social impact assessment (SIA) analyses how particular activities, events or policies affect people's way of life, their culture and their community. SIA may draw on economic assessments, but emphasises the non-monetary effects of an intervention. SIA uses a range of social science disciplines to explore the outcomes of current events and policies, and anticipate the consequences of proposed actions compared to a "no change" scenario. Amongst other things, SIA examines the unequal distribution of benefits and costs; change in power structures; implications for family life, (eg. health and education); and effects on community cohesion and local organisations. SIA provides policy makers and program managers with a process for identifying and working through issues with stakeholders, and developing pathways to natural resource management and enterprise development where the likely outcomes are understood.

Public engagement is a fundamental part of SIA. While there are likely to be benefits from engagement through an SIA in terms of providing a sound information base, articulating values, identifying alternatives and clarifying trade-offs, and enhancing agency credibility and reducing conflict, these outcomes cannot be assumed. Effective public engagement can be a costly process (in terms of staff time & associated financial expenses) and if poorly implemented, has risks in terms of failing to meet public expectations of the purpose of the process and/or outcomes.

Investment in SIA is likely to be justified where a proposed action/policy;

- will have direct and important impacts on people's way of life or future options;
- is likely to be highly contentious;
- is surrounded by uncertainty about the likely outcomes/impacts;
- there is available expertise to lead the SIA process; and
- there is sufficient time available for the SIA process to occur.

SIA can also have limitations, such as when analysts are restricted to predicting the likely impacts of a proposed action/policy by drawing on the outcomes of similar events in the past, or in other locations with different social contexts. Also, the results of a SIA can be contested when the process is compromised in terms of the time and extent of public engagement, analysis is made using incorrect or inadequate data, or a poor selection analytical methods is used.

Investment in SIA may have opportunity costs if the SIA means there are fewer resources available (both financial and people) to undertake other social research, or managing the community reactions to the implementation of the proposed action/policy. For example, many projects have insufficient baseline information on the key social drivers (ie. the underlying forces that influence people's behaviour and values) to make informed decisions about how to engage different stakeholders, select from the range of policy options, or evaluate program outcomes.

Components of a Social Impact Assessment

SIA typically involves a number of steps, including:

1. Engaging the key people and groups:
Identify affected individuals and groups (stakeholders) and develop a process for engagement.
2. Review proposed action/policy:
Analyse the logic/rationale of the proposed action/policy and its intended development, implementation and outcomes, and also describe possible alternate actions/policies.
3. Profiling the social context:
Describe the baseline social environment of where the action/policy will be directed (eg. number of people, age cohorts, source of income, changes in population).
4. Scoping impacts:
Identify all potential positive and negative impacts, including consideration of people/communities who are likely to be “winners” and “losers” from the proposed action/policy; and the extent and rate of change that will be beyond that which might otherwise occur.
5. Evaluating impacts:
Determine the probability of occurrence of impacts, assess distributional impacts across individuals and groups, determine priority of issues to stakeholders and suggest how individuals and groups are likely to respond.
6. Identifying alternatives, and mitigation and enhancement strategies:
Canvas any feasible alternate actions/policies, and develop strategies to reduce undesirable impacts and enhance the benefits of the proposed action/policy.
7. Monitoring:
Develop a monitoring program that will identify any deviations from the intended outcomes of the proposed action/policy, and the likely impacts of such deviations

Reflection

If you were to design a new ACIAR project, how could you use the SIA process described above (eg. who would you involve, how would you conduct the process, what resources would you need for the SAI process)?

References

Vanclay, F. and Bronstein, D.A. (eds) (1995) Environmental and Social Impact Assessment. John Wiley and Sons. Chichester, UK.

Enhancing ACIAR Projects

Reflection

What changes would you like to make to your project to enhance the positive social and community outcomes?

What changes do you feel are possible to make (likely to be made) to your project?

If your project was beginning in 2008, what changes would you make to the project (eg. in its design, activities, outputs, evaluation process) to enhance the positive social and community outcomes?
