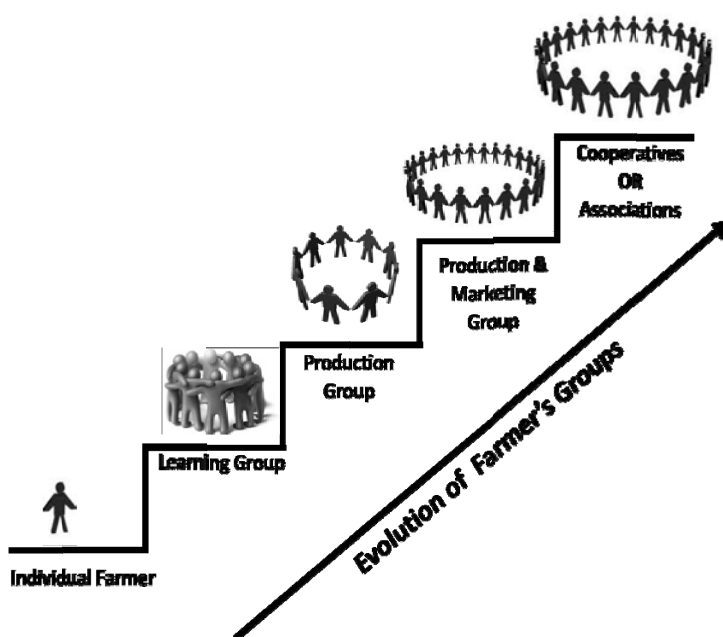


Guidelines for Needs Assessment and Facilitating Group Organization



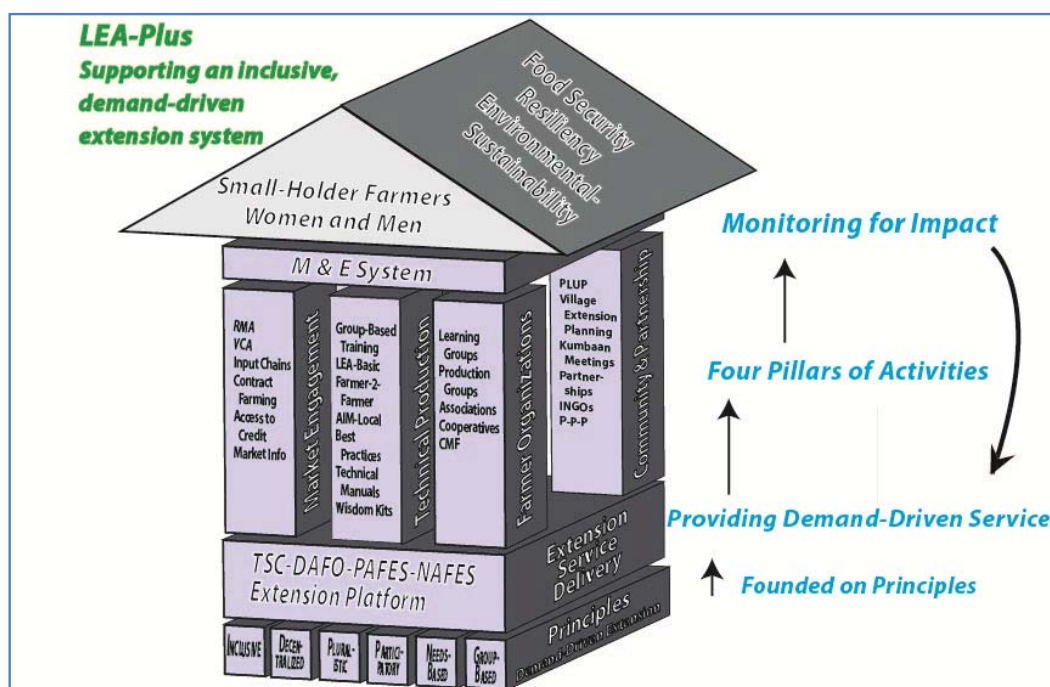
Laos Extension for Agriculture Project (LEAP)

National Agriculture and Forestry Extension Services (NAFES)

July 2011

A. Background

NAFES / MAF is using Lao Extension Approach (LEAP) as one of a means to deliver agriculture extension services to the farmers. Agriculture sector especially in the rural areas of Laos is going through transition from subsistence to commercialization with the rapid changes in market integration domestically as well as within the Region. LEAP is supporting NAFES / MAF with the concept of “Hotspots” for delivery of demand driven extension services. The basic components of the *LEA-Plus* is presented in the *LEA-Plus* house as below.



LEA-Plus continues to be based on the basic principles of LEA basic which is shown as the foundation of *LEA-Plus* house. To identify the needs of farming households and to organize them for delivery of different extension services, these tools are adopted from the LEA basic tools. These revisions and adaptations focus on:

1. Identifying constraints and opportunities of a selected product / topic
2. Assessment of needs of different support services on selected product
3. Facilitate in organizing groups based on the identified needs

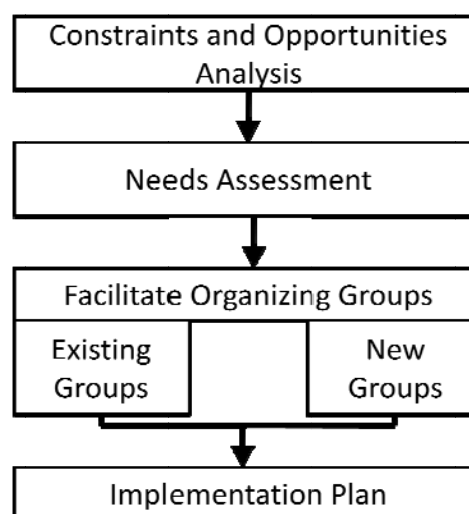
LEA basic and adopted tools for *LEA-Plus* is shown in table below.

	LEA Basic	LEA-Plus	Objectives
1	Village Livelihoods Analysis	Village Livelihoods Analysis Rapid Market Assessment	• Analysis of livelihoods / socio economic in the target village • To analyze the market demand of products (price, demand – supply and quality of product) and

			prioritize production
2	Kum Ban Meeting	Kum Ban Meeting	To launch village extension system and identify potential products for extension services with the Kumban
3	Training Needs Assessment (TNA – KISS)	Constraint and Opportunity Analysis	Identifying constraints as well as opportunities for promoting the products
4	Establishment of Learning Groups	Needs Assessment	Identify needs (trainings and other services) to solve the constraints and build on the opportunities identified
5	Constraint Analysis (and Curriculum Development)	Facilitate group organization	Facilitate to organize in groups (learning, production, marketing etc) based on the specific needs
6	Delivery of Training Services	Delivery of extension services	Deliver extension services including technical production training, linking with markets and inputs, strengthen groups etc
7	SIFT	SIFT	Participatory Monitoring and Evaluation of services delivered
8	FEF, EVES, VES GO	FEF, EVES, VES GO	Farmers exchange with farmers and establishment of village extension service and/or Farmers Organization

Procedures for carrying out most of the above mentioned steps are explained in details in basic tools handbook for agriculture extension. There are specific manuals developed for Village Livelihoods Analysis, Kumban Meeting and RMA. This tool book covers 3 procedures which has been adopted from the LEA Basic tools.

- Constraints and Opportunity Analysis
- Need Assessment
- Facilitate in Organizing Groups / re structuring existing groups



B. Target participants

These tools can be used in a target village with existing groups or in villages where there are no existing groups (organizing new groups). Potential participants for conducting these assessments are

	For new groups	Existing Groups
Participants	All interested members of the community who are interested to part take in agricultural extension activities	Existing group members and members of the community who are interested to join the existing group or be involved with similar activities in the village

1. Constraints and Opportunities Analysis

1.1 Introduction

Constraints and Opportunities Analysis is designed to identify major constraints faced by the community with a specific product / topic as well as analyzing existing opportunities around the product. This is based on the principle that the extension support services should not only focus on solving existing problems, but should also take advantage of opportunities that already exist for further development.

1.2 Implementation in the village

	Activity	Tentative time	Remarks
1	Introduction of the staffs	5 minutes	
2	Explain the reasons of your visit and organizing meeting	15 minutes	
3	Explain the outcomes of Kumban meeting. Facilitate discussion on which product / topic the villagers want to select from the range of topic from Kumban meeting.	30 minutes	Use the charts from the Kumban meeting. The topic selection should be based on the constraints they are facing and existing opportunities for development. No need to do this step if working with existing group which already has a selected topic (product).
4	Form a working group for each topic selected. (Selection of topic may be done by raising their hand or voting). Gender segregated groups should be formed if the women select a specific product. Split into groups and discuss constraints and opportunities for each product. The discussion should focus on broader aspects beyond production e.g. marketing, access to inputs,	40 minutes	Extension staff should facilitate each group discussion and help to put key points together in a flipchat.

	working as groups etc		
5	A participant from the group should present output of discussion (constraint and opportunity analysis) to the group members	10 minutes	
6	Each group members can rank identified constrain and opportunities as per their priorities	20 minutes	Ranking can be done by using different colored pens for men and women, raising hand etc
7	A group member presents identified constraints and analysis with ranking	10 minutes	



Selecting products for extension delivery



Selecting products / Topics

1.3 Format for Constraint and Opportunity Analysis Report

Date: _____

District: _____ Province: _____

Name of the Village: _____

Name of the product: _____

No. of participants: _____ No. of female participants: _____

Constraints	Opportunities
<i>Production</i>	<i>Production</i>
<i>Marketing</i>	<i>Marketing</i>
<i>Working as group</i>	<i>Working as group</i>
<i>Access to input / finance</i>	<i>Access to input / finance</i>
<i>Others</i>	<i>Others</i>

Prioritize constraints by ranking: add ranking number to each point identified

Report prepared by:

Signature:

Name:

Designation:

An example of Constraint and Opportunity Analysis

Date: 17/03/2011

District: Namor

Province: Odoumxay

Name of the Village: Parknamtong

Name of the product: Pig

No. of participants: 8

No. of female participants: 8

Constraints	Opportunities
Production - Vaccines are not readily available on time in village resulting to higher numbers of pig dead - 1 - Lack of equipment for vaccination and vaccines are expensive - Lack of feed mixer for producing feed locally - Lack of fodder seed and breeding stock of pig - 2 Marketing - The price is dependent on the buyers Working as group - Lack of group management techniques - The group doesn't has a production planning - Role and responsibility of the group committee are not clear Access to input / finance - Limited access to finance - 3 - Long process to access finance Others	Production - There are village vets to provide services in the village and all group members can vaccinate by themselves - 1 - DAFO has information where to access vaccine or sometimes they have vaccine in their office Marketing - Large market demand of pig meat in the village and nearby district town - Trader comes to the village to buy pigs Working as group - Group members exchange technique regularly and help each other for vaccination - 3 - The group has regulation agreed by all - The group share a refrigerator for storing vaccine Access to input / finance - Nayobai Bank provides fund / credit to groups in the village - 2 Others

Report prepared by:

Signature: _____

Name: Ms. Siphandone Phetdavone

Designation: DAFO Technical Staff

2. Need Assessment

2.1 Introduction

Needs assessment is a procedure to identify needs with a specific product in a village based on the constraints and opportunities analyzed. The needs may be for solving problems as per the constraint identified or further development initiatives based on the opportunities identified. Needs assessment should be carried out after the constraint and opportunity analysis in the same meeting and with the same working group.

2.2 Implementation in the village

	Activity	Tentative time	Remarks
1	Keep the flipchart with constraint and opportunity analysis where all the participants can see	10 minutes	
2	Facilitate discussion on the need based on constraint and opportunity analyzed within the same group. Discussion should focus on how to solve the constraints, realize the existing opportunities and what the group wants to accomplish.	45 minutes	Role of the facilitator is to keep discussion focused within the topic and identified constraints and opportunities. They should also help to put the key points in flip chart.
3	A participant from the group should present the output of the discussion (needs assessment) to the group members	15 minutes	
4	Each group members can rank identified needs as per their priorities	20 minutes	Ranking can be done by using different colored pens for men and women, raising hand etc
5	A participant from the group presents identified needs with ranking	10 minutes	
6	Ask the participants if they are interested to participate as a group to realize the need and achieve what they have worked out.	20 minutes	The participants who wish to join can be the potential member of the group. With the participants who are interested, plan a participatory discussion to organize them as a group. This should be done on the same day or within a week. This gives the community time to discuss further and to decide if they are really interested to participate.

2.3 Format for Needs Assessment Report

Date: _____

Village: _____ District: _____ Province: _____

Product: _____

What do group want to accomplish?	Indicators of achievement	Ranking
Production		
Marketing		
Working as group		
Access to inputs / finance		
Others		

Report prepared by:

Signature: _____

Name:

Designation:

An example of need assessment

Date: 17/06/2011

Village: Parknamtong District: Namor Province: Oudomxay

Product: Pig

What do group want to accomplish?	Indicators of achievement	Ranking
<i>Production technology</i> • Enhance skill and improve knowledge on vaccination and treatment for pigs • Production of improved feeds for pigs locally	Increase in number of pigs production by at least 50 % and income from selling pigs	• 1 •
<i>Marketing</i> • Improve information with the traders on when pigs are ready to be sold	Increased selling of pigs	• 3
<i>Working as group</i> • Prepare joint group production and activity plan • Improve and clear understanding of roles and responsibilities	Plan for the group is prepared with clear roles and responsibilities	• 4 •
<i>Access to inputs / finance</i> • Timely access to vaccines • Group to jointly manage vaccination equipment for use by the members • Establish fund in the group to buy vaccine • Apply to Nayobi bank for credit of 5M Kip for investment in pig production	The group can vaccinate pigs in time and prevent from disease and dying The group has access to finance for buying piglets	• 2 •
<i>Others</i>		

Report prepared by:

Signature: _____

Name: Ms. Siphandone Phetdavone

Designation: DAFO Technical Staff



Facilitating Constraints and Opportunities Analysis



Facilitating Needs Assessment

3. Facilitate Organizing Groups

3.1 Introduction

This tool is designed to assist in initiating participatory discussion and facilitate organizing farmers groups. The tool consists of a set of probing question for discussion with the interested members and organize them as a group voluntarily with clear objectives and constitution as agreed by all the members.

The role of a facilitator in organizing group is to promote the thoughts and ideas coming from the participants. As a facilitator, you should provide a process which will help the community to discuss their own situation, identify solutions to problems and development initiatives building on opportunities identified and formulate a plan to implement. The facilitators responsibility is also to ensure that there is good communication among the members of the community and that they are satisfied with and committed to the decisions taken.

2.2 Implementation in the village

There are two procedures given depending on if you are facilitating new group or an existing group.

	Activity	Tentative time	Remarks
1	Introduction of all staffs	5 minutes	
2	Explain the objective of the meeting	10 minutes	
3	Facilitate discussion on – Challenges and benefits working as a group	20 minutes	As a facilitator, ask the participant what they think are the challenges and benefits to work as a group and help to take key points in a flipchart (Example in Annex 1). The existing group can provide practical experience and lessons they have learned working together as a group.
4	Facilitate discussion on – characteristics of a successful group	30 minutes	Discuss with the participants on how to organize a successful group taking into account the challenges identified above.
5	Facilitate discussion on setting the objectives of the group	30 minutes	The objective of the group should be clear to all the members and agreed by all the members. Refer to the need assessment flip chart worked out earlier for a specific product / topic the participants want to focus on.
6	Facilitate discussion on setting the constitution of the group and selecting the group committee	60 minutes	All members should agree with the constitutions and members should select the group committee. Members can vote if there are more than two candidates for a specific role. There are two set of checklist depending on if it is

	Activity	Tentative time	Remarks
			organizing a new group or re-structuring an existing group. The constitution of the group sets out what is expected from all the members and what they can expect from the group. A group's constituent is made by the groups and can only be changed by the members. There is no blueprint of a group constitution which should be prepared step by step through discussion and can / should be changed as new issues arise.
7	Facilitate discussion with the group to develop an action plan with specific activities, responsibilities and timeline	30 minutes	
8	A member of the group should present the objective, constitution and action plan of the group and	20 minutes	
9	Agree with a date for the next meeting or activity as per the work plan for delivery of extension services.	15 minutes	

2.4 Checklist of questions for discussion¹

Organizing a new group

- What are the tasks / activities to be carried out by the group to achieve the set objectives?
- Is there a need for work division in the group to achieve the set objectives? Do you need to assign person for specific work?
- What are the responsibilities of each work division?
- What posts are needed and what will be structure of the group committee?
- What criteria should the person have to perform specific task?
- Who should be selected and for how long to carry out specific work?
- What are the general rules for the group members?
- What are the disciplinary actions to be taken against committee and members if they fail to carry out agreed duties?
- What information should be recorded and by whom?

Re-organizing existing group

- What is the objective of the group? Should the objectives of the group revised?
- What are the task divisions and person assigned for each task (structure) in the group? Is there a need to re-organize task division and person assigned?

¹ Also refer to Annex 3 – Things to discuss in setting up a group constitution

- What are the general rules for the member? Are general rules, roles and responsibilities clear to all the members? Is there a need to revise these?
- Does the group want to expand by providing membership to new members who are interested to join the group? Are there any existing members who want to leave the group? Does the group want to be more inclusive with participation of more women, ethnic group etc?
- How can the interested participant join as the new member of the group?



Facilitating organisation of existing pig production group in Namor, Odumxay

+ ສາມາດ ປະກອບ ການ

ລ/ດ	ນາມ ບຸກ	ເວລາ ສັດທັງ/ປ	ສັດ ປະກອບ	ນາມ ສັດທັງ ສະໜັບສະໜູນ
1	ສາມາດ	7/10	ສັດ ປະກອບ	ສັດ
2	ປາກົດ ສັດ	10/01	ສັດ ປະກອບ	ສັດ
3	ສາມາດ ປະກອບ	8/01	ສັດ ປະກອບ	ສັດ ປະກອບ
4	ສາມາດ ປະກອບ	9/01	ສັດ ປະກອບ	ສັດ ປະກອບ

4/10/01 ສັດ ປະກອບ

ສາມາດ ປະກອບ

ສັດ ປະກອບ

Action plan of pig production group, Namor, Odumxay

2.5 Format for action plan of the group

Date: _____

Village: _____ District: _____ Province: _____

Objectives of the group: _____

No of group members: _____ No. of female member: _____

No. of ethnic minority members: _____

<i>Name of group committee</i>	<i>Name of group members</i>

Contact person of the group: _____ Telephone: _____

Action plan of the group

S.N.	Task / Activity	When	Responsibility	Support from DAFO	Remarks

An example of action plan of the group

Date: 17/6/2011

Village: Parkmantong District: Namor Province: Odoumxay

Product: Pig

Objectives of the group: To increase income from pig production, To access credit from the Nayoby bank for pig production

Contact person of the group: Ms. Onsi Telephone: 020 57892154

No of group members: 12 No. of female member: 12

No. of ethnic minority members: 8

<i>Name of group committee</i>	<i>Name of group members</i>
Onsi – Head Sikham – Deputy Salivan – Accountant	Bouly, Khamla, Phosavath, La, Phonethip, Soukh, Noi, Mone, Thavieng

Action plan for the group

S.N.	Task / Activity	When	Responsibility	Support from DAFO
1	Buy equipment for vaccination (syringe)	July 2011	Head of group	Link with Livestock development project to provide syringe
2	Procure swine fever vaccine and vaccinate pigs every six months	End of July 2011	Deputy	Link with PAFO for buying vaccines
3	Training and trial of fodder production	August – October	Members	Provide training and seed for trial
4	Provide credit to 4 new members from Nayobi bank	Sep 2011	Head and Accountant	Paperwork and coordination with Bank
5	Negotiate with bank to postpone the payment (reschedule) for interests as more than 80% of pigs died	October 2011	Head and Accountant	Recommendation letter for rescheduling repayment
6	Improving group management: revisit ToR of committee / members, structure and regulation	Sep 2011	Group members	Facilitate the meeting
7	Repayment of six monthly installment and planning for group	Dec 2011	Group member	Facilitate planning

Annex 1.
Advantages and disadvantages working as group

	Advantages	Disadvantages
Working as group	• The workload can be shared • Resources can be pooled • They have more power, voice and negotiating power • The members can learn from each other • They can save on costs • They can negotiate better prices when buying inputs jointly • They can produce more and satisfy larger orders	• Deciding on things takes longer and doesn't necessarily accommodate everyone's needs • Some members may take advantage of others • It is difficult to work together if there is no trust between the members

Annex 2.
Characteristics of a successful group

Farmers in Laos have also been able to form groups and cooperate together successfully and for a longer time. Such groups exhibit very similar characteristics, as follows:

- They were self-motivated in forming a group (i.e., purpose was self-determined);
- There are clear goals and objectives;
- The leadership is strong and committed: clear thinking, farsighted, community-oriented, democratic, flexible and inclusive of different parts of the community;
- There is transparent decision-making;
- The group is cohesive (member buy-in on decisions);
- The group is disciplined on key aspects (clear rules are enforced);
- There are problem analysis and solving capacities, and the ability to mobilise various resources to achieve goals;
- Ability to resolve internal conflicts;
- Social capital within the group (various kinds of relevant skills and experience, different types of contacts and networks);
- Flexibility of the group to change as the situation changes

Among these characteristics, leadership is one of the most important, as it sets the tone for the whole group and may be the single most important internal factor that leads ultimately to its success.²

² Bouahom B., Keophoxay A., Castella J.C., Douangsavanh L., 2008. "The conditions of success or failure of farmers' groups: A case study in Xam Nuea District, Houa Phan Province." Catch-Up Policy Research Seminar – 22 Dec. 2008, NAFRI, Vientiane, Lao PDR

Annex 3.
Sample of things to discuss in setting up a group constitution

S.N.	Items	Discussion
1	Objectives	What does the group want to achieve? Why do the farmers want to form a group?
2	Membership	General quality for being the member of the group, responsibilities, names
3	Committee	Positions, duties of committee and each position, how long are they selected, selection by all the members
4	General rules of the group	What are the general rules of the group, how do you share benefits e.g. profits,
5	Meetings	Does the group have to organize periodic meetings? Place for meeting, time, no. of members needed to make a decision, minute taker in the meeting
6	Disciplinary action	What to do if duties are not carried out by the committee or members
7	Record Keeping	What should be recorded in the group and who will record
8		
9		

Annex 4
Gradual Evolution of Farmers Groups

