

# Extension Approaches for Scaling Out Livestock Production in Northern Lao PDR (EASLP)

Final Project Newsletter No. 7  
May 2011

Welcome to the final EASLP newsletter!

## Summary of activities since July 2010

**Website:** In recent months we have continued to update our project website to include guidelines and case studies in Lao and English, digital stories in Lao, Hmong, Khamu and Akha. Reports and publications are mostly in English.

**Digital story production:** Additional digital stories have been developed by the team at NAFES covering goat, pig, cattle and buffalo diseases, poor farmer case studies, and visual versions of how to work with ethnic groups and poor farmers, run cross visits and make farmer case studies.

**Digital Story farmer feedback:** Farmers who have viewed digital stories were interviewed to get feedback.

**Capacity Building Techniques Analysis:** A multi-criteria analysis of capacity building methods for Lao extension staff was completed by Anne Stelling and the report uploaded to our website. This report is a useful resource for decision makers planning capacity building programmes and activities.

**Kumban Staff Training:** Boualy Sendara and Viengxay Photakoun have delivered training to 65 livestock extension staff who work closely with farmers at Technical Extension Centres, KUMBAN, District and Provincial levels. The training aimed to improve their extension skills and knowledge, especially in the areas of working with ethnic groups and women farmers.

**Sharing extension research with ACIAR Pakistan project:** Jo Millar attended a meeting of a dairy project based in Pakistan to share our learning in extension research. They found many similarities in the extension issues faced in Laos and Pakistan, and the project was able to use EASLP research to plan their extension strategy.

**Final Project meeting:** was held on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2011 with 25 participants from NAFES, NAFRI, DLF, LDP, PAFES and ACIAR.

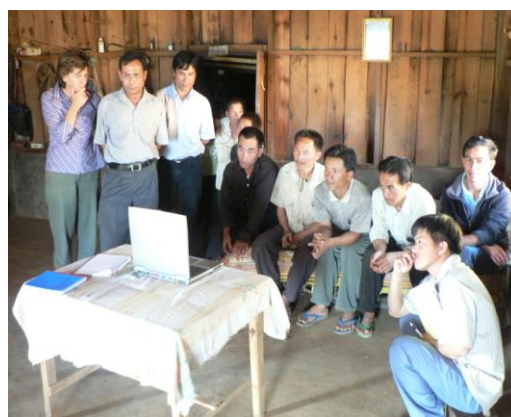
## EASLP Website and Library

[http://www.csu.edu.au/research/ilws/International/EASLP/index\\_easlp.htm](http://www.csu.edu.au/research/ilws/International/EASLP/index_easlp.htm)

With the finalization of the project we are pleased to be leaving a complete archive in our website. The site will continue to provide easy access to the extension tools we have developed over the life of the project, including publications, digital stories and presentations.

The site gives an overview of the project and details activities undertaken in the areas of farmer-to-farmer learning, staff capacity building, working with Lao ethnic groups, making digital stories for extension, extension training and mentoring, and building effective partnerships. An EASLP Library section gives instant access to all of the project newsletters, journal articles and conference papers, as well as the guidelines we have developed, digital stories in a range of languages, and powerpoint presentations. These can all be downloaded.

Recent uploads to the website include pig feeding and poultry raising digital stories, farmer case studies in Lao language, and the Multi-Criteria Analysis of capacity building methods report.



EASLP in action: Project leaders gauge Hmong farmers reactions to digital stories, 2010

Remaining digital stories will be available by end of May 2011



## Digital story production

In addition to the stories listed in our last newsletter, the project team have produced five new digital stories for CD or DVD. These include instructions on:

- How to work with Hmong farmers
- How to work with Akha farmers
- How to work with Khamu farmers
- How to run cross visits
- How to make case studies

New digital stories have also been produced on animal diseases including:

- Goats (eczema)
- Cattle and buffalo (liver fluke, HS, toxicaria, FMD)
- Pigs (classical swine fever, e swine fever, tapeworms, rotavirus in piglets)

*These stories are available on CD, and will be uploaded to the website in May. Please contact Boualy Sengdara at NAFES if you would like copies of the CDs or to book training in producing digital stories. Ph 020 2423862*

## Digital Story Farmer Feedback

Farmers were shown digital stories on cattle fattening, pig fattening, goat raising, chicken raising and pasture growing, and asked for their feedback on the both the content and format of the stories.

Having previously only seen posters of the techniques contained in the stories, they commented on how clearly they could understand the methods when shown through a digital story. They felt they would now be confident to try these techniques themselves.

Farmers were impressed at seeing real stories of farmers who have benefitted from livestock production, especially cattle fattening and pig fattening using stylo. Ethnic group farmers appreciated hearing their own language, and women most enjoyed the stories featuring women farmers. They suggested however that voice-overs should also be done by women, and that they would like to see the featured farmers wearing their ethnic group clothing.

## Scaling out Digital Stories

Following training by EASLP in 2010, the ACIAR Livestock Movements project has produced digital stories for livestock traders in Laos and Cambodia. Dr Kate Blaszk, Malcolm Anderson,



Socheat Sieng and Dr James Kerr developed the digital stories and educational resources to assist with livestock disease control in both countries.

Luzia Rast, Poukham Sipatheuth and Peter Windsor, of the ACIAR Large Ruminant Nutrition project ran digital story training for project staff. They are producing DVD's for cattle farmers on cattle diseases and nutrition.

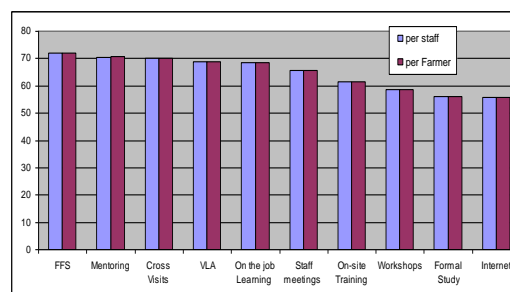
## Multi-criteria analysis of Capacity Building methods

An analysis of extension staff capacity building techniques has been completed using Benefit-Cost Analysis and Multi-criteria Analysis methods.

This involved calculating the cost of each capacity building technique for one staff member over a 4 year program, as well as the outcomes generated by the staff member's use of that technique. Criteria for judging outcomes were categorised as Economic, Staff Capacity Building, Institutional, Farmer Capacity Building and Environmental. These categories included such elements as income generated, benefit to Lao agriculture, use of energy and resources, the effect on farmer learning, the effect on the DAFO, and of course the effect on the staff member in terms of extension skills and knowledge.

The capacity building techniques studied were on-the-job learning, on-site training, mentoring, staff workshops, cross visits and study tours, formal study, using the Internet, Farmer Field Schools, and Village Learning Activities. These methods were recommended through Viengxay Photakoun's 2009 study into capacity building methods for Lao livestock extension staff.

The analysis rated Farmer Field Schools (FFS), mentoring and farmer cross visits as the three most valuable techniques overall. Village Learning Activities, on-the-job learning and staff meetings were the next most valuable. Rankings of all of the techniques are shown in the chart below;



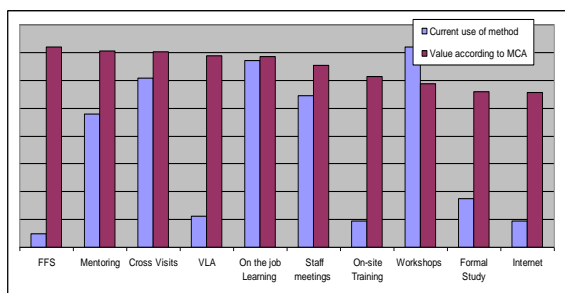
Relative Index rankings of CB techniques

When the techniques were examined from the perspective of each criteria category, the analysis

showed different rankings of the techniques depending on the perspective. For example Mentoring clearly led the Staff Capacity Building rankings, while Staff Meetings led the Institutional rankings. Cross Visits, VLA and FFS scored equally highest in the Farmer Capacity Building criteria. Cross Visits and FFS also ranked highest in the Economic criteria. These results confirm Photakoun's 2009 recommendations of including a range of techniques in a capacity building program, in order to maximise the benefits across all affected elements within Lao agriculture.

Costs for this study were calculated as Net Present Value (NPV); the net cost of each technique over the life of the capacity building programme (4 years). The NPV for each farmer reached by the extension staff is lowest for staff meetings (no cost), on-site training and Internet access for staff (each US\$3 per farmer). Mentoring is the third lowest at \$7.55 per farmer, with an increase to \$13 and \$14 per farmer for Workshops and Cross Visits respectively. Significantly higher are Formal Study (\$26), Farmer Field Schools and Village Learning Activities (each \$31), and on-the-job learning (\$34).

Comparison of these results with the patterns of current use of CB techniques by DAFO managers showed that some of the most valuable techniques are not being used to their potential. Facilitating FFS and VLA should be part of staff development and farmer learning as farmers progress to more advanced farming systems.



**Pattern comparison showing current use and rankings of CB techniques**

Overall, the analysis recommends a staff capacity development program consisting of:

- Monthly staff meetings,
- Visiting farmers at least 15 days each month,
- Facilitating a Farmer Field School group using Village Learning Activities once a month
- Being mentored by local mentors at least 8 days each year,
- Being mentored by national mentors at least 9 days each year,

- Organising and attending a farmer cross visit every year,
- Attending two staff workshops per year,
- Having Internet access available in the office, with skills and time to use it,
- Having the opportunity for formal study and specialist training, both in Laos and internationally.

In order to make this program possible, broader recommendations are that:

1. More emphasis and training be given on delivering intensive farmer learning courses and activities such as Farmer Field Schools, particularly for livestock production.
2. More attention is given to the development and mentoring of each individual staff member in a kumban and district.
3. DAFO heads take on more responsibility in ensuring the progress of each staff member through regular and timely capacity building activities, including negotiating the appropriate level of training when staff are employed by NGO projects.
4. Capacity building activities become an everyday part of extension work, through regular contact with farmers, regular scheduled activities and learning opportunities appropriate to individual staff member's abilities.
5. NAFES set up a national, regional and district mentor network so staff can access mentors of their choice.
6. NAFES set up an extension scholarship fund for further study.

## Extension Training

Between September 2010 and March 2011, extension training courses were held in Luangprabang, LuangNamtha, Bokeo and Houaphan provinces.

Sixty five extension staff working in Technical Extension Centres and Village Clusters in four Northern provinces participated. They were mostly young people: volunteer, contract and government staff. Fifty six were Lao Loum, five Khamu and four Hmong ethnic staff. Fifty eight men and seven women attended.

The training introduced Technical Centres and explained the roles of the LEA and the EASLP project, and covered topics such as Sustainable Rural Development, planting forages, cattle fattening, extension ideas for working with Hmong, Khamu and Akha people, how to make cases studies, developing Digital Stories, Farmer



to Farmer Learning and ideas on how to overcome poverty.

Evaluation of the training courses indicated that participants had improved their knowledge and felt better able to work with farmers as a result. They found the input on working with different ethnic groups and women particularly useful, and requested further training and follow-up. New staff found the opportunity to share ideas and extension approaches with more experienced staff most valuable, and all felt they had benefitted by developing a closer working relationship.

A field trip was organised for Huaphan staff in December 2010 to learn about goat production and reflect on their experience and learning. Luang NamTha kumban staff also visited field sites in March 2011 to consolidate their learning on livestock management and extension.



Extension staff discuss the role of Technical Centres during EASLP training

### Sharing extension research with Pakistan dairy project

Dr Joanne Millar was invited to share EASLP research on extension with a Pakistan dairy project funded by ACIAR and managed by CSU. The project has faced similar challenges to livestock extension in Laos namely; a high turnover of young, inexperienced extension staff; over-emphasis on workshop training at the expense of mentoring on the job and building facilitation skills; and lack of engagement of district managers.

In order to design effective extension programs, Dr Millar emphasised the importance of firstly gaining a thorough understanding of 1) government and NGO extension capacity; 2) farm family goals and values, 3) where and how the new technology fits with family and community values as well as the farming system and 4) farmer learning in terms of how they like to learn.

Examples from Laos and Indonesia were presented on how to adapt extension approaches in different environments and how to design a capacity building program for staff.

Discussions centered on how to motivate staff, how to engage women, how to evaluate extension activities and farmer progress using case studies and the importance of capturing reasons for non-adoption as well as adoption in the long term. The Pakistan project then planned a strategy for training and developing a new batch of extension officers based on EASLP advice.

### Final Project Meeting

The final project meeting was held on 17<sup>th</sup> January 2011 at NAFES in Vientiane with 25 participants from NAFES, NAFRI, DLF, LDP, PAFES and ACIAR. Dr Joanne Millar gave an overview of the project aims, methods, results and impacts since 2007.

Anne Stelling presented the MCA findings which generated discussion on the merits of mentoring-who, how often and costs. The need to have competent staff to facilitate farmer field schools and village learning activities was also emphasised. Plenty of feedback was received on the newest digital stories making further revisions necessary. It was suggested that NAFES establish an editorial team to review video and digital stories for extension. The lessons learnt from EASLP and recommendations to NAFES were presented.

### Recent Publications

Stelling, A and Millar, J, (2010), Multi-Criteria Analysis of Capacity Building Methods for Lao Extension staff, NAFES

Stelling, A., Millar J., Sengdala B, Keuthphannavong, H. Theppanid, N and Vannaphoun, S. (2010) Farmer to Farmer Learning & Adoption of Livestock Production. A report on the flow on effects of Farmer Cross Visits in 2007 and 2008

Millar, J. and Sengdala, B. The role of livestock in changing upland livelihoods in Lao PDR. *Journal of Mekong Societies*, May 2011.





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