Third Training in Agricultural Extension for Provincial and District Staff

at Thalat

June 2 to 7, 2003
Third Training in Agricultural Extension for Provincial and District Staff

at Thalat

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1. Summary

Topic: Third training in agricultural extension for provincial and district extension staff

Time: June 2 to 7, 2003

Place: Seminar Centre d’Electricité du Lao, Thalat, Vientiane Province

Objective:
- Improve knowledge and skills of district, provincial and central extension staff in demand driven, villager led extension methodology
- Improve knowledge and skills on how to motivate VEW, initiate well functioning farmer groups and give follow up support to those groups based on adult learning principles
- Enable the provincial and district extension staff to conduct participatory farmer-training-evaluation and based on the outcome define concrete activities to support farmer groups during the coming wet season
- Enable extension staff on each level to facilitate study visits and peer group exchange
- Enable provincial and district staff to determine action plans for training and extension activities on district, provincial and central level for the coming wet season 2003

Content:
- Principles for motivating VEW and initiating well functioning farmer group development
- Organising study and exchange visits
- Participatory evaluation of all extension activities
- Designing of training materials
- Training techniques
- Planning for exchange and further extension activities

Output:
- The participants understood the principles of farmer group and VEW strengthening and are able to support them respectively
- The participants understood the elements of a participatory farmer training evaluation
- The participants improved training skills
- The participants are able to organise and facilitate a study visits
- Every provincial and district team prepared a detailed activity and training plan for June to September 2003
Participants:  **Total 46 (06 female), including**  
17 (4) from NAFES (including the 09 facilitators)  
09 (0) from Luang Prabang Province  
10 (1) from Saravanh Province  
10 (1) from Champasak Province  

Trainer/Facilitators:  Mr. Somxay Sisanonh, Coordinator of CETDU (Overall management and training contents)  
Mr. Chitpasong Chalat, CETDU (coordination and training material)  
Mr. Oudomsak Vilaylak, CETDU (management of participants)  
Mrs. Andrea Schroeter, LEAP (contents and backstopping)  

Co -Facilitator:  Mr. Ketsana Sayasen, CETDU (training documents and material)  
Mrs. Somchit Sengluangsouk, CETDU (logistics)  
Mr. Bounthan Bouthala, CETDU (media)  
Mr. Tidphachan Inthilid, CETDU (minutes, logistic, accounting)  
Mr. Khampeui Chantavong, CETDU (minutes, logistic, accounting)  

Guests:  Dr. Tienne Vannasouk, Deputy Director NAFES  
Mr. Karl Gerner, CTA LEAP  
Mr. Khambhai Saysana, Deputy Administration Unit, NAFES  

Assignments:  
- The district staff will conduct upgrading trainings for groups in technical and management issues according to the needs evaluated with the SIFT tool.  
- The district staff will conduct special trainings for strengthening the VEW, in order to be able to successfully support village development according to his/her duties.  
- Production groups improve their management and performance, based on supplementary training and coaching. Production and productivity is enhanced.  
- Training materials like posters, leaflets, handbooks and handouts are finalised by the provincial teams. The final edition and printing is supported by the central staff.  
- Staff development for all levels in technical issues based on a needs assessment will be organised by the project.  
- Planned activities on village, district and province level will be implemented according to plan. Regularly reports using the agreed forms will be submitted to the LEAP latest 15th of every quarter.  
- All activities will be coached and supported by the project.
2. Acronyms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CETDU</td>
<td>Central Extension Training and Development Unit in NAFES</td>
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<tr>
<td>CPS</td>
<td>Champasak Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DAFO</td>
<td>District Agriculture and Forestry Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>FSEW</td>
<td>Farming System Extension Workers (generalists at district level)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPM</td>
<td>Integrated Pest Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>KISS</td>
<td>Keep It Short and Simple</td>
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<tr>
<td>LEAP</td>
<td>Laos Extension for Agriculture Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LPB</td>
<td>Luang Prabang Province</td>
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<tr>
<td>LWU</td>
<td>Lao Women’s Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAF</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry</td>
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<tr>
<td>MT</td>
<td>Master Trainers</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAFES</td>
<td>National Agriculture and Forestry Extension Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>NLPC</td>
<td>Nong Teng Livestock Promotion Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAFES</td>
<td>Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Extension Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>PAFO</td>
<td>Provincial Agriculture and Forestry Office</td>
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<tr>
<td>SCPC</td>
<td>Soil and Crop Production Center</td>
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<tr>
<td>SIFT</td>
<td>Coaching and monitoring tool (Success, Implementation, Failure, Training needs)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SMS</td>
<td>Subject Matter Specialist (at province level)</td>
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<tr>
<td>SRV</td>
<td>Saravanh Province</td>
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<tr>
<td>TNA</td>
<td>Training Needs Assessment</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOR</td>
<td>Terms of Reference</td>
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<tr>
<td>VEW</td>
<td>Village Extension Worker</td>
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### 3. List of participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Name and Surname</th>
<th>Organization</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Participants from provinces and districts</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Mr. Vanthong Giemboupha</td>
<td>PAFES Luang Prabang Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Mr. Chanpheng Dalavong</td>
<td>PAFES Luang Prabang Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Mr. Thongphout Saysavanh</td>
<td>PAFES Luang Prabang Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mr. Singkham Sisouphan</td>
<td>DAFO Nambak District, LPB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Mr. Sipha Silaphoummavanah</td>
<td>DAFO Nambak District, LPB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Mr. Mayson Phanthachat</td>
<td>DAFO Nambak District, LPB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Mr. Soumoute Sidaphone</td>
<td>DAFO Pak Ou District, LPB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Mr. Amphony Sisamone</td>
<td>DAFO Pak Ou District, LPB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Mr. Ketkeo Phommalangsy</td>
<td>DAFO Pak Ou District, LPB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Mr. Phetdavanh Vongkhamsao</td>
<td>PAFES Champasak Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Mr. Bouonthieng Liengkhamsouk</td>
<td>PAFES Champasak Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Mr. Phosavard Vongphasouk</td>
<td>PAFES Champasak Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Mr. Noupnay Boutsaseng</td>
<td>DAFO Phonethong District, CPS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Mrs. Somkhit Chanthamath</td>
<td>DAFO Phonethong District, CPS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Mr. Phouangphet Souvannamethy</td>
<td>DAFO Phonethong District, CPS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Mr. Bounkong Tarsounsavanh</td>
<td>DAFO Soukhoumma, CPS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Mr. Kidet Khamsone</td>
<td>DAFO Soukhoumma District, CPS</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Mr. Khamsay Ounekeo</td>
<td>DAFO Soukhoumma District, CPS</td>
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<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Mr. Bounsou Sidavong</td>
<td>DAFO Soukhoumma District, CPS</td>
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<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>Mr. Giphachan Posali</td>
<td>PAFES Saravanh Province</td>
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<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>Mr. Daovieng Philakane</td>
<td>PAFES Saravanh Province</td>
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<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>Mr. Samnieng Dahalouge</td>
<td>PAFES Saravanh Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Mrs. Vone Masouvannasone</td>
<td>PAFES Saravanh Province</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Mr. Konglave Vorlaving</td>
<td>DAFO Khongsedone District, SRV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>Mr. Thanousone Southala</td>
<td>DAFO Khongsedone District, SRV</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>Mr. Souphan Chansamoud</td>
<td>DAFO Khongsedone District, SRV</td>
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<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>Mr. Somcak Vongthamma</td>
<td>DAFO Nakhonepheng District, SRV</td>
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<td>28</td>
<td>Mr. Thongkhoun Southala</td>
<td>DAFO Nakhonepheng District, SRV</td>
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<td>29</td>
<td>Mr. Anoupharp Bouchanthalath</td>
<td>DAFO Nakhonepheng District, SRV</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Participants from NAFES</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Mr. Sengthong Phouangkhamwang</td>
<td>Soil &amp; Crop Production Center (SCPC) / IPM</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td>Mr. Saleumsak Hueangsaek</td>
<td>Planning and Cooperation, NAFES</td>
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<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td>Mr. Anousak Kanyavong</td>
<td>Administration NAFES</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td>Mr. Bounhong Angun</td>
<td>Technical NAFES, Lao Viet Project</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>34</td>
<td>Mrs. Somkhonee Lattanavong</td>
<td>NLPC, Fish production unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>35</td>
<td>Mr. Bounseng Phompida</td>
<td>NLPC, Chicken production and statistics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>36</td>
<td>Mrs. Phaithoun Sysombat</td>
<td>NLPC, Chicken production unit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37</td>
<td>Mr. Somlith Yaensulynja</td>
<td>NLPC, Pig production unit</td>
</tr>
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</table>
## 4. Agenda

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<th>Contents</th>
<th>Responsible person</th>
</tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Sunday</td>
<td>Travel to Thalat</td>
<td>Trainer team</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>01.06.2003</td>
<td>After dinner Informal welcome and administrative matters</td>
<td>Mr. Somxay Sisanonh Mr. Karl Gerner Mrs. Andrea Schroeter</td>
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</table>
| 2  | Monday    | *Opening
*Objectives of the training
*Workshop regulations and timetable
  > Training observation
*Review training experiences, group building and performance of VEW | Dr. Tienne Vannasouk Mr. Karl Gerner Mr. Somxay Sisanonh Mr. Oudomsak Vilaylak CPS extension teams Mr. Somxay Sisanonh and Group work |
|    | 02.06.03  | *Financial management SRV                                                 | Mrs. Andrea Schroeter Mr. Tidphachan Inthilid         |
| 3  | Tuesday   | *Review of the previous day and training observation
*Review role and function of extension and extension staff
*Past and future activities for extension staff on all levels | LPB extension teams Mr. Somxay Sisanonh & Trainer team Brainstorming / group work |
|    | 03.06.2003| *Financial management CPS                                                 | Mrs. Andrea Schroeter Mr. Tidphachan Inthilid         |
| 4  | Wednesday | *Review of the previous day and training observation
*Review role, functions and duties of group members
*Principles for strengthening groups
*How to motivate a VEW
*Activity planning for strengthening group development and VEW | SRV extension teams Mr. Somxay Sisanonh & Trainer team Group work |
|    | 04.06.2003| *Financial management LPB                                                 | Mrs. Andrea Schroeter Mr. Tidphachan Inthilid         |
| 5  | Thursday  | *Review of the previous day and training observation
*Review extension efforts, training methods and practical implementation on village level
*Training techniques and practical testing
*Production of training cartoons | Other technical teams of NAFES Mr. Somxay Sisanonh |
|    | 05.06.2003| After dinner *Continue the production of training cartoons                 | Individual and group work                              |
### No | Day | Contents | Responsible person
--- | --- | --- | ---
6 | Friday 06.06.2003 | *Review of the previous day and training observation  
*Design teaching materials and handbooks for villager training for the upcoming season  
*Review monitoring methods and problems solving strategies  
*Evaluation Tool SOFT  
*Principles of organising a study tour / exchange visit  
*Prepare curriculum and session design for further trainings in technical issues, strengthening VEW and group management | Admin & Planning Team NAFES  
Mr. Somxay Sisanonh & Trainer team  
Group work |
| Saturday 07.06.2003 | *Review of the previous day and training observation  
*Organising and implementing a study visit (practical implementation)  
*Design and prepare detailed activity plan for the upcoming season  
*Presentation of activity plan  
*Evaluation of the training  
*Closing ceremony | CETDU  
Role play  
Participants per district/province  
Participants per district/province  
Mr. Somxay Sisanonh  
Dr. Tienne Vannasouk  
Mrs. Andrea Schroeter |
| After dinner | *Continue curriculum development | Group work |
8 | Sunday 08.06.2003 | *Travel back to VTE | Trainer team |
<table>
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<tr>
<th>Time</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>07.00 to 07.30</td>
<td>Breakfast</td>
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</table>
| 08.00 to 10.00 | Review of the previous day  
First training session of the day |
| 10.00 to 10.15 | Coffee break |
| 10.15 to 12.00 | Second training session of the day |
| 12.00 to 13.30 | Lunch break |
| 13.30 to 14.45 | Third training session of the day |
| 14.45 to 15.00 | Coffee break |
| 15.00 to 16.30 | Fourth training session of the day |
| 16.30 to 18.00 | Group meetings on financial issues |
| 18.30 | Dinner |
| from 19.00 | Additional preparation or group work session |
5. Review of results

This third training of provincial and district staff\(^1\) in agricultural extension follows the continuous coaching and strengthening process through the project. This process includes training, supervision in the field and provision of training material in order to enable the extension staff to deliver participatory extension services. After successfully participating in at least one training-coaching-production cycle, the extension staff will be able to achieve fundamental knowledge and will receive a certificate by NAFES, verifying them as trained agricultural extension staff. Able to initiate a sustainable increase in agricultural production they will additionally be capable to transmit knowledge to other provinces and districts.

The first training for provincial and district agriculture extension staff in July 2002 concentrated on transmitting knowledge regarding the objectives of the project, the principles of a demand driven, pluralistic and participatory agricultural extension, the tasks and duties of extension staff on central, provincial and district level and enabled them to work in a team. This first training included the joint development of an activity plan for three months. Based on the respective activity plan the district and provincial teams visited all pilot villages at least once a month. Main activities during this implementation phase have been the introduction of the understanding of the projects objectives, a basic data collection and a simple and easy needs assessment (TNA KISS).

Based on the collected socio economic and agricultural data as well as the identified needs of the pilot villages, during the second training the implementation of villager’s trainings has been prepared: training curricula were developed, technical inputs have been provided and further extension and coaching activities were scheduled. It is important to point out that training doesn’t mean just a one day training in a village, but considers to be a process comprising preparation, technical training, group development, village extension workers (VEW) strengthening, regular coaching, monitoring, study visits and follow up. The villagers are actively involved in all steps. After the finalisation of the documents and materials for the villagers’ trainings in the respective districts, so far 138 trainings\(^2\) in totally 66 pilot villages concerning three different technical issues (chicken, pig, dry season rice) have been conducted.

With the support of a coaching and monitoring tool SIFT, developed by the master trainer team, the training efforts have been monitored. These monitoring data represent the base for this third training. Data and needs on village level are available, groups and VEW are established and technical trainings have been conducted and followed up. The question occurs: how to continue the extension activities based on the evaluation of concrete results. Consequently this third training focused especially on the improvement of knowledge and skills in the field of motivating VEW and initiating well functioning farmer groups. The precondition for this VEW and group strengthening is to enable the extension staff to conduct participatory farmer-training monitoring and

\(^1\) In order to assure the close cooperation between the provinces/districts and the central level a number of additional central extension staff from various units in NAFES have been participating in the training as well.

\(^2\) Villager training conducted: Kongsedone 32, Nakhonepheng 26, Namback 25, Pak Ou 22, Phonethong 20, Soukkhoumma 13.
evaluation. Based on these outcomes concrete activities are defined in order to support farmer groups during the coming wet season. Action plans for additional training, exchange visits and further extension activities on district, provincial and central level are prepared.

This third report on training provincial and district extension staff belongs to a series of training reports, which ensure a documentation of the learning and developing procedures, achieved results and agreed assumptions. Furthermore they will be utilized for the monitoring process of the project and should be used as a base for information exchange between other provinces, districts, national and international organisations working in the field of extension.

The main results of this training can be summarized as follows:

**First Training Day:**
After the official opening, introduction of objectives, timetable and workshop regulations the concentration of the first day was laid on evaluating the extension and training experiences made so far on all levels.

5.1 Workshop regulations and timetable

After all participants agreed on the proposed workshop schedule responsibilities for the daily training management have been set up. The appointed teams are responsible for:
- Observing the time management during the training
- Summarising the content of the previous day
- Supporting an enjoyable atmosphere in the training through supplementary performance, like games, singing or role-plays after the breaks
- Observing number of participants and reporting about participants missing and why
- Viewing the training place and training material
- Observing those participants, which come late. The latest should present an activity to the other participants in order to support a good atmosphere.

5.2 Review training and implementation experiences

As the first training for district and provincial extension staff started in July last year, nearly one year of training and coaching experiences can be reported. In groups of district, provincial and central teams the extension activities implemented so far - mainly the experiences during the last dry season - have been evaluated along the following questions:

1. Which activities have been implemented?
2. What different methods have been used?
3. Problems and constraints during the implementation?
Based on the presentation of the group results the plenary concentrated on the first issue and summarised the following main activities implemented so far for the different levels:

**Institution building implemented on all three levels:**

- Extension teams on central, provincial and district levels - including agreement on general responsibilities - are set up and officially approved
- A coordinator on each level is set up and officially approved
- TOR for every person with agreed responsibilities and duties are set up and all staff started to implement accordingly

**Main activities implemented on CETDU level:**

- Developed curricula for extension training
- Set up raining and teaching aids
- Developed handbooks in extension methodology and technical subjects
- Conducted trainings for provincial and district staff
- Organised regularly meetings with researchers, other Technical units and international organisations
- Collected various literature and started a library
- Performed continuous follow up of all district and provincial activities
- Conducted study tour to Switzerland
- Improved own knowledge and skills (Staff development in English language skills, computer skills, gender, project planning, management, tools and extension methodology)

**Main activities implemented on provincial level:**

- Summarised data collection
- Coached and monitored district in planning and other management activities
- Supported district in preparation of villager training
- Supported the facilitation of group development
- Cooperate with district in preparation of curriculum
- Supported the conduction of training for villagers
- Evaluated and improved training contents

**Main activities implemented on district level:**

- Collected data
  - Basic village and agriculture data
  - Needs assessment (TNA KISS)
- Facilitated the establishment of village groups
- Facilitated the selection of the VEW
- Prepared the curriculum for villager training
- Implemented technical training for villagers and VEW based on their needs
- Followed up the villager training
5.3 Duties and responsibilities of extensionists

5.3.1 Duties and activities of extension staff for the upcoming season
Based on the activities performed so far combined with the evaluated problems and constrains that occurred, the activities for the future were drawn up. Based on the question “What and how should we perform our further extension activities?” all provincial staff developed an action plan for CETDU and the other central master trainers, the two respective district teams developed an action plan for their provincial team and the central extension staff from NAFES developed an action plan for the districts.

**DISTRICTS**

Action plan developed for the districts:
1. Provide and report to provincial and central level about data and training needs collected so far, adjust and evaluate available data and problems.
2. Plan with the villagers for further activities.
3. Prepare training curriculum and training aids, like posters, leaflets and handbooks, which meets the villagers training needs.
4. Conduct training according to villager’s needs and appropriate time. Consider literacy status and general knowledge prevailing in the village.
5. Support and facilitate the establishment of new groups and the improvement of old groups as well as the continuous motivation of the VEW.
6. Follow up and monitor all activities regularly; submit knowledge and information if problems occur.
7. Support and/or facilitate evaluation of a learning project on village level.
8. Organise farmer to farmer exchanges and study visits.
9. Provide information about market, financing possibilities and material supply to the farmers.
10. Support summarising, monitoring and evaluation of all activities on village level.

**Second Training Day:**
Based on the available experiences the duties and responsibilities for the future on district, provincial and central level have been agreed. And based on these duties the concrete steps for further extension activities with a concentration on improving the group performance have been drawn up.

**PROVINCES**

Action plan developed for CPS province
1. Support and cooperate with the district during the planning
2. Support the preparation of curricula for villager training
3. Prepare handbooks, poster and leaflets in order to support an easy implementation of extension activities
4. Join the training, coaching and evaluation on village level and give a feedback
5. Prepare a study tour between different districts
Action plan developed for LPB province
1. Support and cooperate with the district during planning
2. Prepare curriculum, poster and leaflets
3. Coach and monitor all activities
4. Cooperate with district authorities, other departments or private sector
5. Prepare Study tour / exchange visit between districts and farmers
6. Summarise and evaluate data and send to NAFES

Action plan developed for SRV province
1. Prepare a plan for provincial activities, coordinate with district and implement according to plan
2. Support preparation of forms for data collection
3. Coordinate all activities with the district coordinator
4. Facilitate exchange of experiences between the two pilot districts (data flow from one district to the other)
5. Prepare training material: handbooks, posters and leaflets
6. Summarize district activities and evaluate
7. Give a feedback and summarise lessons learnt after each visit
8. Support performance during a village meeting: Contribute to technical contents, always release a statement, show active participation

Even all provinces shall remember the specific need of their districts and act accordingly, a general activity plan for the future can be set up:

Summary of action plan for the provinces
1. Summarize all data of the district
2. Support district in preparation of training curricula, poster, leaflets and handbooks for extension work on village level
3. Facilitate and organize study exchange between districts
4. Support and coach all district activities regularly
5. Coordinate with district authorities, other departments and private sector
6. Join and support evaluation of extension activities
7. Support the district during the implementation in the village

CETDU and other central extension units

Action plan developed for central extension staff:
1. Develop curriculum for generalist extension staff (FSEW) applicable for the whole country
2. Develop handbooks and extension material
3. Support development and print of important technical handbooks, leaflets and other extension material (if provinces and districts are not able to do it)
4. Organise and conduct trainings and meetings in extension methodology according to the needs of the provincial and district extension staff at least 2 times a year and evaluate those activities.
5. Monitor and coach all extension activities regularly (at least once a month)
6. Organise study tour and exchange of experiences in the country or to foreign countries.
7. Facilitate staff development for extension staff on provincial and district level (in Laos or foreign countries)
8. Support availability of necessary budget and material needed in order to implement extension activities on provincial and district levels.
5.3.2 Core duties of extension

The developed TORs comprising duties and responsibilities on the various level, refer to the core duties of extension. Consequently the model of the extension elephant was used to point out those activities and duties required to be performed by an extensionist and those, which have to be avoided.

The Extension Elephant

In order to define the key issues of extension the “extension elephant” was designed by the Swiss Center for Agriculture Extension, relying on inputs and experiences from agriculture services all over the world. The structure implicates that implementation of extension requires a holistic view, separating activities in “must”, “may” and “must avoid” duties:

The authentic duties of extension (“must” activities) are located as the parts of the body of the elephant.

The “may” activities (if nobody else is available to perform these activities) are the things carried on the back and able to be carried by someone else as soon as someone is prevalent.

Finally activities that hamper or restrain extension (“must avoid” activities) are the burden which is pulling back on the elephant – extension should aim at avoiding such activities whenever possible.

Previous intensive discussions about how to use this structure for the Lao context, highlighted even additional duties\(^3\) not yet covered by the international example. The

\[^3\text{For the eyes: the necessary budget and for the ivory teeth: the basic data}\]

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summary of these various outputs and discussions in trainings and workshops resulted
in the Lao Extension Elephant, titled “Roles and responsibilities of extension service in
Lao PDR”.

Considering the fact that the elephant is an important emblem for the Lao society this
model is highly suitable to clarify the extension system in the Lao background.

Furthermore those extension duties have been discussed along various cartoons and
pictures, which again are pointing out important manners an extensionist should follow:

A. Concentrate on important activities
B. Act according to real needs of the farmers
C. Avoid top down
D. Identify clear target
E. Identify clear objective
F. Be flexible
G. Be sensitive
5.4 Group strengthening

5.4.1 What is a group?

A group consists of individuals, but as a whole is more than just the sum of its individual parts. What happens in a group can be seen like a spider’s web: since everybody is somehow linked to the others, one move in the net affects all the others. The vibration that is created by the movements of a single person or of a number of people of the group is called group dynamic. Dynamic means something that never stands still, but is always in motion.

Another important aspect of groups is that members can motivate and support each other in the learning process. The group is therefore not only the place where a group member can learn, but can also let other group members profit from the experiences. This phenomenon of cooperation, communication and exchange is called group pedagogics.

To understand about the group dynamics and group pedagogics is most important for any person dealing with groups. Extension trainers working in and with groups should know about these essentials of group work in order to make their own and their group’s life enjoyable and to help them to reach their intended goal.

5.4.2 Elements of an effective group performance

What does a group need in order to achieve success? Which conditions are favourable for an effective and efficient group performance?
Brainstorming:

Based on this brainstorming, important elements, which lead to a good group performance, can be summarized as follows.

The group members should:

1. conduct joined planning and monitoring
2. agree on duties and responsibilities for every group member
3. implement duties according to the agreement
4. have the same or supplement objectives
5. be motivated to implement according to the objective
6. exchange information in the group regularly and look for additional knowledge outside the group
7. have success during their performance
8. develop a long perspective thinking
9. have knowledge and skills and the motivation to improve those
10. The group should operate independent from others and decisions should be made in a participative and democratic way.
5.4.3 Supporting a group

These important elements for a successful group performance lead to the following questions:

How can an extension worker motivate a group and support the improvement of the group performance? What does this mean for the further work of the district teams as well as the coaching activities of the provincial and central teams? What concrete steps do the extension teams have to perform?

The questions were tackled in five mixed groups with the following outcomes:
A summary of the most important actions to be performed by the district extension teams in order to support an effective and sufficient group performance has been agreed in the plenary:

- Follow up and evaluate all group activities
- Follow up administration and financial management
- Observe group performance during needs assessment
- Improve planning
- Coordinate with village representatives
- Suggest solution to problems occur
- Follow up implementation of the plan
- Observe knowledge and skills of the group members and facilitate upgrading training accordingly

All those activities shall be coached and if needed actively supported by the provincial and central teams.

**Third Training Day:**
On the third day the subject of “Improvement of the group performance” has been continued, with a special focus on the knowledge and skills required by the extension staff in order to be able to evaluate group performance and support the strengthening process.

**5.4.4 Knowledge and skills required for supporting a group**

What does the extension staff need to know in order to be able to evaluate the group performance and strengthen the group?
The extension staff needs to ...

... observe general data continuously:
- Number and formation of group members and responsibilities (changes? why?)
- Inventory list
- Implementation of every duty and responsibility (successes/failures compared to the planning)
- Cash, recording and/or minutes book availability (indicates about the increase of production/income, share among group members, meeting, etc)
- Requests and need of group members (indicates problems and performance of the group leader)

... observe and facilitate the clear definition of duties for a group leader and support his/her implementation:
1. What is important for the group leader while handing over responsibilities and duties:
   - Be clear about responsibilities
   - Hand over full responsibility to the respective selected person
   - Be clear about the work to be done
   - Set up a timeframe and time limit for the activity
   - Be aware of conditions which might interfere the implementation of the work
   - Be aware of the capacity of the responsible persons (select according to availability)
   - Agree on rules and regulations

2. What is important during monitoring the activities:
   - Check and evaluate the plan
   - Check the success/output compared to the agreed plan
     - Concrete number of production achieved
     - Quality of production
     - Time needed
   - Result achieved without or with external support
   - Check method of implementing the activity
   - Give advice, explanation and suggest solutions

...follow-up the implementation of duties of each group member:
- Implement activities according to the specific duties agreed and handed over
- Summarise and present results of the activities
- Collect and present additional data, information, problems, plans and request to support information flow
- Look for additional knowledge
- Implement according to the rules and regulations agreed
- Implement according to national laws and regulations

... be clear about the fields of cooperation with the group:
- During planning
- During identification of problems and suggestion of solution
- During evaluation
- During facilitating experience exchanges
... facilitate the establishment of
- Regulations for implementation
- Statistics (names, social data, agric data, production, success, cash flow, …)
- The necessary budget and budget regulations
- TORs including duties and responsibilities for every group member
- Regularly minutes and collection of all letters and agreements
- A cash book
- A list of available joint material including actual value and regulations for use and maintenance

All those documents should be in the responsibility of the appointed persons, stored in a file in a dry place. Those documents should be made available for all group members at any time needed.

Further training to be conducted
Based on these considerations every district team was asked to think about the future activity plan in the field of strengthening available groups. What fields can be identified, where improvements are urgent needed?

Main training needs are seen in the fields of
- Group development, performance, roles and responsibilities, cash book, statistics on production, sales and
- VEW performance and technical training
- Planning
- Summarising activities
- Monitoring of activities
- Evaluation
- Technical issues
  o rice (seed selection, use of fertilizer, especially time schedule and amount, maintenance)
  o livestock (vaccination and improved raising).

These preliminary ideas were worked into the curriculum development and the preparation of a detailed action plan on the last two days of the training.

Why do people know?
A puzzle comprising two horses and two riders on three pieces of paper have to be arranged so that the two riders are sitting upright on their two horses...

The various groups during their trials.
Lessons learnt from the horse game:

There are many ways people can gain knowledge and skills and the extension staff should be aware that different people might prefer different ways of achieving knowledge.

It became furthermore obvious that it is significant to understand spirit and biological line of the human beings and analyse the group participants according to these categories. The extensionist shall act and treat the participants accordingly.

This exercise leaded us to the next important issue, the different types of participants, which should be recognised by the trainers in order to be able to deliver a good training performance.
Fourth Training Day:
The fourth day tackled the identification of the different personalities among the group members and furthermore how to use this information in order to be able to deliver an appropriate training and extension service. Role-plays supported the improvement of the training techniques.

5.5 Improve training performance

5.5.1 Training participants
In order to become aware that the training contents should be related to the type of participants prevalent and will differ from type to type, the following duty has been set up:
“Imagine you have to organise a training course for the following villager groups, what issue, timeframe, method and material would you choose?”

1. Farmers with the educational level of grad 4 primary school
2. Experienced farmers, 40 to 60 years old, 40 % women and 60 % men
3. Young farmers 80 % women and 20 % men
4. Farmers with the educational level of minimum secondary grade 4.

Along those four different participants groups, the respective teams tried to work out a training plan, which suppose to meet the specific requirements of those groups. The different outputs can be seen in the table below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group</th>
<th>Training topic</th>
<th>Time-frame</th>
<th>Method</th>
<th>Material</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 primary 4</td>
<td>Rice: Use of fertilizer</td>
<td>90 min</td>
<td>*Discussion</td>
<td>*Pictures *Big paper *Whiteboard *Fertilizer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 experienced</td>
<td>Chicken (local breed): Technique of vaccination</td>
<td>180 min: (8.00 to 11.30 with a break)</td>
<td>*Explanation *Lection *Brainstorming *Discussion *Group work (male &amp; female groups) *Use simple wording *Practical testing</td>
<td>*Poster, pictures *Leaflets *Whiteboard and marker *Material for practical application</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on these very rough ideas role-plays have been implemented according to the agreed set ups.

The three trainers of the first, second and third category:

The villager group, including the Elderly, LWU representatives and village authorities:

The experiences of the three groups have been evaluated in the plenary. How did the different level’s trainers, group leaders, participants and observers experience their roles? Have the roles been performed realistic? How were gender and educational differences realised? What is probably different in the real village? As a summary of this discussion it was agreed that a good trainer has to be aware of four main issues in order to perform a successful training.

1. **Be aware of the different types of participants in the group and realise the group dynamic**
   
   There are nine main types of person identified:

   ![Diagram of nine main types of participants](image)
The extension trainer has to be aware about these different types and approach them accordingly. It is important to understand the dynamic of a group.

Different ideologies, different benefits among the group members, different power distribution and restructuring an existing group without a joint agreement of all group members will hamper the process of establishing a group. The work of an extensionist will only lead to successful results, when he/she is aware of those dynamics and facilitates the groups’ performance in order to avoid negative impacts.

Next to the ability to identify different personalities among the participants, the plenary pointed out three more issues, observed as important during the role-plays. The extension worker should

2. be aware about his/her own presentation methodology (especially the own behaviour and attitudes)

3. be able to get things started easily (start with easy questions, have a clear objective, have a straight time management, set up clear guidelines for the communication and create a good, motivating and trustful atmosphere)

4. always summarizing the main inputs, results and assumptions

These three issues have been tackled in more detail during the following days of the training.

During the fourth and last role-play performance the involved participants tried to apply the findings and conclusions of the whole day:

Fifth Training Day:
Improvement of the training performance was the main topic during this fifth day as well. This day was started with the presentation of extension material, especially drafts for cartoons and pictures, which had been prepared during the evening session of the previous day. Favourable behaviour and attitudes in order to become a good trainer have been tackled and tested. Furthermore an additional tool to support the training evaluation was introduced. Finally the participants gained knowledge in how to organise a study tour or exchange visit.

5.5.2 Extension material
Material to support the daily extension work and especially the training inputs is extremely important. Visual or touchable aids support the transmission of knowledge, especially in those areas where people are not used to utilize written material or listen to long oral explanations. In general the extensionist should use different ways and
means of communication related to his/her target people for conveying the knowledge. Communication can use all five senses: hearing, seeing, touching, smelling and tasting. Experiences show that it is much better to combine various means as this will lead to a much higher degree of effectiveness in communication.

Based on the following work task, every participant tried to develop a visual training aid: “Prepare a cartoon, which you can use during your work as an extensionist? Involve one or more of the following elements:

- Exchange knowledge
- One person transmit knowledge to another person
- Knowledge spreads
- Extension is going step-by-step and not overwhelm
- Success is initiated and obvious
- Target of extension should be clear”

All drafts have been presented and collected by the CETDU team. The drafts will be adjusted and improved and will flow into the collection of training material.

5.5.3 Behaviour and attitudes of good extension trainer

The ability to communicate and realise the means of communication is an important factor for every trainer. Like mentioned above communication can be expressed through various means. Whatever human being say, however they behave, whatever they show with their bodies, even if they look away and keep quiet, they express something the communication partner picks up. It therefore has an effect on his/her future behaviour. Consequently it is of high importance for the extension trainer to be aware of how the information is sent and received through the various means of communication. In the following, behaviour and attitudes favourable for a good training performance have been drawn up and discussed:

I. Listening

1. Show interest in the participant’s statements
2. Look into the eyes of the participant
3. Help the speaker formulating competence in formulating thoughts, ideas and opinions
4. Ask questions if things are still unclear

II. Questioning

1. Start with a wake up question which addresses the person directly to raise interest
2. Be clear in your objective (what do you want to ask?)
3. Use simple words
4. Don’t use too long sentences
5. Start with a general question easy to answer, which leads to more specific questions later
III. Monitoring and observing
1. Remember and note down details (who said what and when)
2. Observe different peer groups (elderly, young, village authorities, women, men)
3. Observe well-being of the participants and atmosphere and react respectively (training place, climate; food; other issues which might hamper the participants concentration)
4. Observe interest and understanding of the lection and react respectively

IV. Recording during the training or meeting
1. Summarise the main aspects mentioned by the villagers in a short and comprehensive way
2. Visualise (Use paper, whiteboard, blackboard, etc)
3. Use big letters and drawings (consider educational knowledge prevailing)
4. Summarise issue by issue according to lections performed

V. Speaking
1. Apply a suitable volume (not too loud, not too soft)
2. Use clear pronunciation
3. Use simple understandable words
4. Change voice according to the issue
5. Don’t use cultural inappropriate words
6. Don’t use words which might insult the participants

VI. Behaving
1. Stay in motion, initiate activities – but don’t be confusing
2. Don’t cover the writing or pictures with your body
3. Don’t prioritise or concentrate on only one person or a group of persons
4. Observe own appearance continuously
In order to improve the teaching skills practical testing was performed along the six above-mentioned topics:

5.5.4 Evaluation and project assessment

In order to assure a smooth evaluation of the project an additional tool, the SOFT method, for a rapid project assessment was introduced:

The SOFT method is a simple management instrument for rapid project assessment. It is used for the periodical analysis of activities, projects and programs and it provides suggestions for future planning. It should not be confused with the SWOT method (Strength, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats), which is a method for the assessment of the performance and capacity of institutions, organizations or private entrepreneurs. It should also not be confused with the SIFT (Strength, Implementation, Failure, Training needs), which was set up for monitoring and coaching a training project only. Actually, these three methods complement each other perfectly and could be used as integrated parts of an evaluation.
The SOFT method does not provide solutions but it helps to clarify an actual position or situation. Thereafter, based on the “SOFT-Opportunities” one can determine objectives for a distinct succeeding period. Remember that objectives and their indicators have to be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic/Relevant and Time bound). Criteria to strengthen success and to avoid failures (see respective SOFT-window quarters) should also go into the planning process. The SOFT method is a flexible tool and can be adjusted to the project needs. Doing a SOFT assessment on a periodic basis would lead to an evaluation over time, which could be used to observe the project’s progress.

And this is how the SOFT assessment with the help of the SOFT-window has to be understood: From his/her present position the observer deals with two dimensions: **time** and **quality**. On the time level (horizontal direction) he/she looks into the past (maybe backward to the beginning of a distinct project phase) to evaluate and to learn from experiences made. Conscious of the past s/he addresses to the future to specify the given settings and to develop basic ideas for prospective planning. The quality dimension (vertical direction) simply validates what was good (upper part) in the past and what was not (lower part of the window), what could bear fruit in the future and where unfavorable effects should be expected.

**Figure 2:** The SOFT-Window

To expose the topic, which is to be considered a question should be formulated in a distinct way. Often an answer to a problem is not found because the question was not stated properly. The following formulation would be a good model for appropriate and comprehensive questioning:

"**How do you see the … (since …)?**" <general reasoning and reviewing the past>

and

"**Where do you see opportunities/threats for the …?**" <contemplating the ‘future direction’>

- Cooperation in …
- Effects of the new Project …
- Efficiency of …
- Capacity building efforts of …
- Monitoring system of …

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Example: “How do you see the cooperation between the project and the beneficiaries in the project district since July 2002?” and “Where do you see potentials and obstacles for the actual project phase?”

To describe the issues in the four different quarters of the SOFT Window we use specific formulations:

- **Success** is described in a positive form like: “... good participation ...!”
- **Failure** is expressed negatively like: “... lack of awareness ...!”
- **Opportunities** result in recommendations like: “... should train the technical staff!”
- **Threats** are obstacles, which are almost not to eliminate. They are described like: “... no means of transport available ...!”

These formulations should be properly expressed and documented on a board. At a first stage it is not necessary that all participants agree on each point. The statements are first gathered in a way similar to a “brainstorming”. Later the items are discussed, maybe corrected and perhaps put in a reasonable order.

As SOFT is equivalent to the common reasoning or way of thinking, the mode is easily understood and accepted by the participants of the assessment. The method creates a transparent atmosphere where all team members feel strongly encouraged to participate. The results of a SOFT-assessment provide most often surprising insights into a project’s complex reality. Once written on the board one can underline points, which will be addressed actively. A process of planning and implementing will follow. The opportunities can then be translated into new objectives and activities, and an action plan or operational plan can be established. Special attention should be given to the failures and potential obstacles, how they can be avoided or eliminated.

For a SOFT-assessment you can use all kinds of available materials. Generally a black board and chalk or whiteboard and markers are needed. Pin boards are not always suitable because it happens that the moderator has to adjust poorly expressed formulations following the above suggestions. And also, sometimes participants, especially those with a low educational level, do not like to write down their ideas on cards for the pin board.

### 5.6 Organising a study tour

**Why organise a study tour for farmers**

Trainings for farmers and regularly coaching are main tasks of an extension worker. The trainings can provide basic knowledge on specific topics and regularly coaching improves the application and skills of the farmers. Nevertheless there are more and various extension methods in order to initiate and support a learning and developing process. Such methods are e.g. counsel individuals, form interest groups or organise village meetings, demonstrations, agricultural fairs, campaigns, audio/TV broadcasts, field days, theatres, songs or information days.
One important method is the facilitation of a farmer-to-farmer exchange. Those study tours and excursions provide opportunities for the participants to see and experience production methods and conditions on other farms or in other regions. The learning process is based on a direct exchange of ideas and experiences from people belonging to a similar peer group. Innovations or new techniques spread easier, if success can be experienced on the spot. The direct farmer-to-farmer exchange guarantees that only successful activities are going to be adapted. Social aspects and a complex overview of the diverse components of livelihood are defined to be the main criteria for the success. Furthermore the study visit can initiate networking amongst farmers or farmers’ groups and strengthen group and/or VEW performance.

For arranging and facilitating a successful study visit the extension staff should be aware of the following issues:

Duties of a facilitator during the preparation of a study tour
- Facilitate the selection of an issue, which is important, out of great interest for the participants and linked to other extension activities
- Establish contacts with representatives of the places to be visited
- Set up a plan and time schedule together with the villagers
- Support the arrangement for the necessary budget
- Agree on objectives and expected outputs for the study tour
- Agree on number of participants and select the participants (consider conditions for women’s participation)
- Distribute responsibilities to be done before the visit
- Distribute responsibilities to be performed during the visit (questioning, minutes taking, observing, etc)
- Divide into interest groups which should prepare questions concerning different issues (e.g. marketing, techniques, material supply, production, etc)
- Arrange for necessary documents/permissions as well as transport and accommodation if necessary

Duties of a facilitator during the study tour
- Arrange for appropriate meeting facilities
- Facilitate the introduction of all participants
- Introduce the purpose of the visit
- Observe and summarise questions and answers of the participants
- Follow up if all important issues have been raised
- Raise additional questions if issues are still unclear
- Facilitate visit of production areas
- Open possibilities for informal talks

Duties of a facilitator during wrapping up the study tour
- Support the review of the main issues
- Sum up lessons learnt
- Point out still open questions
- Facilitate closing ceremony, including thanks and possibly handing over a small gift
- Open possibilities for further cooperation between the visiting and visited party
Sixth Training Day:
The sixth and last training day involved a role-play about organising a study visit. Furthermore every team has prepared an activity and training plan, including staff development in technical, management and/or organisational issues needed. Finally the training was evaluated and the NAFES representative performed the closing ceremony.

A role-play about organising a study tour has been set up in order to apply the theoretical knowledge achieved. The participants have been divided in 3 different groups:
- The extension team, which facilitates the study-visit
- The villagers of village A want to learn about production and marketing of ornamental flowers
- The villagers of village B produce ornamental flowers and pot for those flowers. They market their product by themselves.

The role-play was set up quite realistically and brought a lot of fun as well. The role-play involved the following steps:

- Preparation and first contacts
- Dividing responsibilities among participants
- The visitors approaching the village
- Introduction through the extensionists
- Questioning through the visitors
- The answers of the producers
Based on the whole range of information gathered during this training the central, provincial and district teams were able to set up an activity and training plan, with the focus on strengthening groups and VEW performance and conduct upgrading trainings in technical issues. Furthermore own training and development needs on the various levels have been identified.

Every team has presented a drafted plan. The approved version will be send to the project latest end of June 03.
5.7 Evaluation

Finally the training has been evaluated as follows:

A daily evaluation was performed every evening (beside the last day) and comprised the contents, the methods used and the general atmosphere during the specific training day.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Understand contents</th>
<th>Training methods</th>
<th>Atmosphere</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday 2/6/03</td>
<td>+ - + - + - + -</td>
<td>+ - + - + - + -</td>
<td>+ - + - + -</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday</td>
<td>8 26 2</td>
<td>30 5 0</td>
<td>9 20 9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday 3/6/03</td>
<td>17 22 0</td>
<td>27 10 0</td>
<td>8 26 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wednesday 4/6/03</td>
<td>28 10 0</td>
<td>38 2 0</td>
<td>27 9 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The daily evaluation shows an increase in all the three categories. The atmosphere during the training was very good, due to the sound preparation, the appropriate training facilities, the convenient accommodation and the excellent food. Next to these outside factors this third training distinguished itself through a lively and active participation of nearly all participants. Even though the number of participants increased (which was expected to cause problems), intensive discussions and participation of all group members during the various activities were assured.