

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE COMPLETION REPORT¹

Division: SEAE

TA No., Country, and Name TA 4406-LAO: Capacity Building for Smallholder Livestock Systems			Amount Approved \$550,000	
			Revised Amount Not applicable	
Executing Agency Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF)		Source of Funding Poverty Reduction Cooperation Fund (PRF)	Amount Undisbursed \$3,060.81	Amount Utilized \$546,939.19
TA Approval Date 11/10/2004	TA Signing Date 04/01/2005	Fielding of First Consultant(s) 08/11/2005	TA Completion Date Original 31/12/2006	Actual 30/06/2008
			Account Closing Date Original 31/12/2006	Actual 20/02/2009

Description

Livestock production, by ethnic minorities using traditional rearing and management techniques, is an indispensable part of upland livelihood systems in the northern provinces of the Lao People's Democratic Republic (Lao PDR). Livestock are traditionally viewed as markers of wealth and status, and as insurance against family emergencies. Small livestock are reared by women mainly for household subsistence, while larger livestock are handled by men with considerable help from women. The entire traditional system of livestock production is a low-input and low-output system with low investments in feeding, breeding, and management and low returns.

Recent developments in and around Lao PDR, including improved communications with the rest of the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS), have improved the prospects for trade and marketing in commodities, including livestock and livestock products. As livelihood opportunities for the ethnic minorities in the GMS have narrowed, following government-imposed controls on shifting cultivation and forest use, livestock production has gained in importance. But advantage of the new market opportunities will require changes in smallholder attitudes and livestock rearing and management practices. The Government has recognized this in its strategic vision for agriculture (1999) and its socioeconomic development plan. The TA was designed in this wider context, to increase agricultural productivity and reduce poverty by making livestock raising more productive and profitable.

Expected Impact, Outcome, and Output

The TA was highly relevant in its design. It improved the livelihoods and incomes of poor farming families through better agriculture services and greater livestock productivity. It also strengthened the capacity of field officers to help poor farmers adapt and adopt technical and management options for improving smallholder livestock systems. The TA (i) upgraded the capacity of the national, provincial, and district offices of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (MAF), particularly the number of trained and experienced field staff, through field applications of participatory methods; (ii) expanded and improved participatory approaches to reach and involve poor farmers and women, especially among the ethnic minorities, in dealing with livestock production issues; and (iii) improved understanding of traditional livestock-raising practices, which may be useful in extending promising technical and management options to other areas.

Delivery of Inputs and Conduct of Activities

The TA was well formulated. The terms of reference were responsive to the needs of the TA. The consultant, Centro Internacional de Agricultura Tropical (CIAT), met the objectives quite satisfactorily. The consultants created a firm foundation of tested techniques and methods of community mobilization, as well as trained staff resources, for Loan 2259-LAO: Northern Region Sustainable Livelihoods through Livestock

¹ In preparing any country program or strategy, financing any project, or by making any designation of or reference to a particular territory or geographic area in this document, the Asian Development Bank does not intend to make any judgments as to the legal or other status of any territory or area.

Development to build on.

The review missions were adequate and addressed the needs of the TA. Some changes were made during TA implementation, to include the following: (i) increase in the number of districts covered; (ii) increase in the number of staff trained; (iii) conduct of a cross-learning visit to Viet Nam; (iv) conduct of additional workshops to prepare technical notes, assess staff capacity and impact, and discuss lessons learned from the TA for the MAF, the Department of Livestock and Fisheries, and Loan 2259-LAO; and (v) variation in some consulting inputs, as did some equipment provided to district staff undergoing training.

Evaluation of Outputs and Achievement of Outcome

Project activities were implemented efficiently in relation to the inputs used. The reports and training materials prepared were fully satisfactory. The training and mentoring provided in the field created a body of very capable staff, who supported the implementation of the loan project, Loan 2259-LAO, and mentored new staff in new district, which is an indication of the continuity and success of the training methods and content. The TA helped to improve the role and functioning of the district agriculture and forestry extension offices and led to the implementation of the Lao extension approach whose aim is to establish an extension system that is decentralized, participatory, and sustainable in the livestock subsector in northern Lao PDR. The inputs led to the achievement of expected outputs such as the capacity building of the Department of Livestock and Forestry. In the five project provinces covered, the project coordinators have become change agents in the loan project. Twenty-nine district staff from these provinces were trained by 23 mentor staff. New technology packages were implemented and lessons learned at all stages were documented for use in the loan project.

Overall Assessment and Rating

The project is rated highly successful as the project outcome and outputs were achieved efficiently and effectively.

Major Lessons

The implementation of the TA showed that project design and funding must be flexible enough to accommodate an expansion in area and in the number of staff trainees, in response to government requests. Training manuals must also be prepared in time for use in the ensuing loan project.

Recommendations and Follow-Up Actions

The ensuing loan project could use the training methods and contents, approaches, and technology packages tested during the TA implementation as entry points into village livestock systems. Activities should be expanded gradually, and should concentrate at the start on consolidating the gains made in districts and villages already covered. The training manuals prepared by the TA should immediately be made available to Loan 2259-LAO: Northern Region Sustainable Livelihoods through Livestock Development for use in training.