

## Lessons learned by the WIN project on livelihoods diversification and enterprise development



Karlyn Eckman  
WIN Project Chief Technical Advisor

February 2005



**FOOD AND AGRICULTURE ORGANIZATION OF THE UNITED NATIONS**

**Livelihood Support Programme (LSP)**

An inter-departmental programme for improving support for enhancing livelihoods  
of the rural poor

# **Lessons Learned by the WIN Project on Livelihoods Diversification and Enterprise Development**

**An overview of WIN LDED-related activities in Cambodia, Nepal and Zambia**

**Karlyn Eckman<sup>1</sup>  
WIN Project Chief Technical Advisor**

**February 2005**

*Front cover photos Top Left: Women farmers, WIN-Zambia, by K. Eckman, June 2002; Top Right: Training of women farmers in WIN-Nepal, by K. Eckman, May 2003; Bottom: Training of farmers in Takeo, WIN-Cambodia, by K. Eckman, February 2003.*

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## **The Livelihood Support Programme**

The Livelihood Support Programme (LSP) evolved from the belief that FAO could have a greater impact on reducing poverty and food insecurity, if its wealth of talent and experience were integrated into a more flexible and demand-responsive team approach.

The LSP works through teams of FAO staff members, who are attracted to specific themes being worked on in a sustainable livelihoods context. These cross-departmental and cross-disciplinary teams act to integrate sustainable livelihoods principles in FAO's work, at headquarters and in the field. These approaches build on experiences within FAO and other development agencies.

The programme is functioning as a testing ground for both team approaches and sustainable livelihoods principles.

More information on the LSP is to be found on the last page of this document.

**E-mail:** [lsp@fao.org](mailto:lsp@fao.org)

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## **The Livelihoods Diversification and Enterprise Development Sub-Programme (LDED)**

The Livelihoods Diversification and Enterprise Development (LDED) sub-programme aims to improve the effectiveness of FAO in addressing the needs and interests of poor people in livelihood diversification programmes and projects. The objectives of LDED are:

- a. To appraise inhibiting and enabling factors, and approaches supporting livelihoods diversification and enterprise development.
- b. To catalyze and facilitate innovative practices for supporting livelihoods diversification.
- c. To increase inter-disciplinarity and learning in FAO and partner agencies for supporting livelihoods diversification and enterprise development.

The LDED will add value to FAO's regular programme and projects with a particular focus on addressing obstacles and promoting opportunities for people. It will capitalize on existing FAO strengths related to LDED in addition to identifying and addressing gaps related to livelihoods diversification and enterprise development.

**Email:** [Doyle.Baker@fao.org](mailto:Doyle.Baker@fao.org)

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

<b>AIDS</b>	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
<b>CTA</b>	Chief Technical Officer
<b>DADO</b>	District Agriculture Development Office (Nepal)
<b>DIO</b>	District Irrigation Office (Nepal)
<b>DLSO</b>	District Livestock Service Office (Nepal)
<b>FAOR</b>	FAO representation office
<b>FFS</b>	Farmer field schools
<b>HIV</b>	Humane Immune Deficiency Syndrome
<b>HLFFDP</b>	Hills Leasehold Forest and Forage Development Project (Nepal)
<b>HMG</b>	His Majesty's Government of Nepal
<b>IDE</b>	International Development Enterprise
<b>IGA</b>	Income generating activity
<b>IHFSAN</b>	Luapula Integrated Household Food Security and Nutrition Project (Zambia)
<b>LDED</b>	Livelihoods Diversification and Enterprise Development
<b>LSP</b>	Livelihood Support Programme
<b>LTU</b>	Lead Technical Unit
<b>LWF</b>	Lutheran World Federation
<b>MACO- TSB</b>	Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives, Technical Services Branch (Zambia)
<b>MLD</b>	Ministry of Local Development (Nepal)
<b>MWVA</b>	Ministry of Women's and Veterans' Affairs
<b>M &amp; E</b>	Monitoring and evaluation
<b>NC</b>	National Coordinator (WIN-Cambodia)
<b>OFWM</b>	On-Farm Water Management Component of the Nepal Irrigation Sector Programme
<b>PAM</b>	Programme Against Malnutrition (Zambian NGO)
<b>PCA</b>	Participatory constraints analysis
<b>PLWA</b>	People living with AIDS
<b>PME</b>	Participatory monitoring and evaluation
<b>PTE</b>	Participatory training and extension
<b>PRA</b>	Participatory rural assessment
<b>RCIW</b>	Rural Community Infrastructure Works of GTZ (Nepal)
<b>RFP</b>	Request for proposals
<b>SIP</b>	Smallholder Irrigation Project (Zambia)
<b>SISTAPE</b>	Structured In-Service Training and Participatory Extension methodology
<b>SIWUP</b>	Small-scale Irrigation and Water Users Project (Zambia)
<b>SL</b>	Sustainable livelihoods
<b>SPFS</b>	Special Programme for Food Security
<b>UNF</b>	United Nations Foundation (WIN's donor)
<b>VAHW</b>	Village-based Animal Health Worker (Nepal)
<b>VDC</b>	Village development committee
<b>WDO</b>	Women's Development Officer (Nepal)
<b>WIN</b>	Empowerment of Women in Irrigation and Water Resources Management for Improved Household Food Security, Nutrition and Health
<b>WUA</b>	Water user association

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## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The pilot WIN project (Empowerment of Women in Irrigation and Water Resources Management for Household Food Security) was an operational research project implemented by FAO from 2000-2003. The project was designed specifically to test a multi-sectoral approach to empowering women in irrigation management, and to address nutrition and health concerns associated with irrigation schemes. Although WIN was not originally foreseen as a livelihoods diversification project, a variety of income-generating activities (IGAs) emerged in Cambodia, Nepal and Zambia. A number of groups were successful in diversifying their livelihoods as a result of WIN's intervention. However, it is still too early to fully assess the long-term viability and sustainability of these activities.

This paper aims to identify some operational lessons learned as well as good practices from the WIN project. The paper reviews the processes which facilitated the emergence of livelihood diversification and enterprise development (LDED) activities, outlining lessons on what did and did not work, with recommendations for the future.

Through an iterative process of participatory appraisal, analysis and planning, a number of IGAs emerged, particularly in Zambia and Nepal. WIN's experience in these two countries demonstrates that people-centered<sup>2</sup> practices, appropriate technical training and decentralized management can create a constructive environment for local action. In such conditions, even the poorest farmers can diversify their production systems and income streams, through initiating their own IGAs.

It is essential that the project team and steering committee are flexible and do not impose their own ideas and methods on local people. Income generating activities appear to thrive best when they have been identified and undertaken through local stakeholder consensus, and are supported by an enabling policy environment. The training activities and funding methods should also be flexible and responsive to changing priorities.

By 2003, participants had become involved in market-oriented agricultural production as a result of WIN's intervention. The groups learned to save their own money as well as opening new land to group production. Their farming systems and crop mix were increasingly diversified, and they had the opportunity to generate income through selling their produce at local markets. As a group, women slowly gained access to and control over resources, although little is known as to the change in women's access as individuals.

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<sup>2</sup> People-centred refers to development interventions which take local people as the starting point in planning, analysis, management and monitoring and evaluation of activities. A people-centred intervention promotes grassroots participation and emphasizes the improvement of access to human, financial, social, physical and financial assets. It highlights the importance of social, economic, institutional and environmental sustainability and encourages the adoption of a multi-disciplinary approach.

### **Some Lessons from WIN**

- The experience in Zambia and Nepal shows that even the poorest and most marginalized groups can benefit from involvement in IGAs. The introduction of new products and the facilitation of women's entry into the marketplace have led to their increased self-confidence. They have begun to generate their own income through the sale of livestock, vegetables, eggs and fodder. However, there is considerable variation between WIN project sites as regards the participants' capacity to enter the market and many of the groups are not yet able to adequately deal with the fluctuating product cycle. There are further differences in the degree to which the participants adopted new technologies. It remains difficult to quantify the new market activity as a result of the project, as there have been limited opportunities to communicate with the participants since the end of the project.
- It is clear that a multi-disciplinary approach, such as WIN, must be demand-driven. Ideas and methodologies which are imposed in a top-down manner tend to lead to conflict and confusion among the stakeholders.
- The WIN experience demonstrates that the longer-term outcomes of LDED activities may not begin to materialize until the second or third year of a project's lifetime. Income-generating activities may still be in the preliminary stages after a couple of years and will continue to need support. The transfer of technical and business skills to the groups takes time.
- Technical projects with a diversification component should seek to fully involve local partners with experience in LDED activities. More could be done to support livelihoods diversification activities if local expertise was identified and tapped.
- There appears to be a need for sensitization and awareness-raising of technical staff in livelihoods diversification issues. Raising awareness among higher-level policy makers and staff responsible for project planning and financing could lead to the creation of a more supportive environment for LDED activities. Furthermore, FAO normative work on diversification must feed into on-going field activities, as well as into the policies of local and national government.
- There needs to be a balance struck between FAO normative work, financial and administrative procedures, and the conditions and realities of the field.
- WIN's experiences highlight the need for a shared vision of livelihoods diversification and enterprise development issues among FAO and its partner agencies. A common strategy, agenda and guidelines to support governments and local people in their LDED activities should be developed. This would require the input of a broad range of stakeholders at multiple levels, and perhaps a series of workshops could be organized to facilitate this process.



## 2. INTRODUCTION

The pilot WIN project was an operational research project implemented by FAO from 2000-2003. WIN was specifically designed to test a multi-disciplinary approach for empowering women in irrigation management, and addressing nutrition and health concerns associated with irrigation schemes. The project directly supported sustainable livelihoods through building the capacity of women and men farmers, diversifying their production systems, improving their access to water resources, and promoting a variety of agriculturally-based small enterprises. It built on the methods and lessons learned in previous projects and actively sought to create synergistic partnerships among various stakeholders.

WIN was not initially conceived of as a livelihoods diversification and enterprise development (LDED) -oriented project. The project document tied WIN operationally to pre-existing projects – the Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS) in Cambodia; On-Farm Water Management (OFWM) in Nepal; and the Small-scale Irrigation and Water Users Project (SIWUP) in Zambia – and some of these projects experienced significant problems with their design and implementation. Furthermore, in some cases they were unwilling to partner with WIN. However, the emergence of income generating activities (IGAs) was foreseen to a degree in the project document. Project Objective 2 notes that WIN should *“Assist poor households in increasing and diversifying agricultural production for auto-consumption and increased farm income, introducing time-saving and income-generating technologies.”*

WIN’s LDED activities emerged through necessity and experimentation by the national teams and local groups. Some were adapted from NGO partners and previous projects, while others emerged from the constraints experienced at a national or local level, and were specific to local conditions.

The IGAs initiated under WIN, including agricultural diversification, market-oriented vegetable production, fish farming, value-added processing, and others, have been promoted by many organizations. WIN added a participatory process to the mix, which led to the emergence of some IGAs, particularly in Nepal and Zambia. In both countries, local groups identified specific activities as a means to diversify their livelihoods, production systems and sources of income. It is too early to confidently assess the longer-term sustainability of these, as most groups have had only one to two years of experience in managing their enterprises.

The WIN experience taught us valuable lessons, in terms of what did and didn’t work. This paper is intended to document and assess WIN’s experience in LDED which applies to other livelihoods diversification initiatives, particularly where the rural poor are vulnerable to stresses, such as chronic food insecurity, HIV-AIDS, migration, household indebtedness, recovery from conflict, and status as an ethnic minority. All the WIN project materials and documentation from the three countries were reviewed in the development of this paper.

### 3. WIN-NEPAL CASE STUDY

#### 3.1 Introduction

A key focus of WIN Nepal was to build the capacity of local groups to manage their own economic diversification activities. To this end, the project began its LDED activities in 2001, with district planning workshops and PRAs. The national and district teams assisted the groups in the planning of their group and/ or community action plans, such that, by the end of 2001, the groups had produced 45 group plans for the following year. Altogether, 75 groups, from different ethnic and marginalized groups, were engaged in a variety of activities. It is anticipated that, in the future, these group plans will be integrated into the Village Development Committee (VDC) planning processes.

WIN has succeeded in reaching the most vulnerable communities in rural Nepal<sup>3</sup>. Membership of the groups has increased local women's confidence, leading to a greater economic awareness and the emergence of a common vision. Their capacity for decision-making and planning has improved, as has their sense of civic duty and the project has helped them to increase their bargaining power in negotiating access to government services.

A national level steering committee was formed which encouraged the decentralization of decision-making processes. The national and district WIN teams (whose members were mainly drawn from line ministries) were trained in project management and gender-sensitive participatory planning. The relationships between staff of different ministries improved, leading to more effective cooperation. Multi-disciplinary WIN teams were established and trained in a wide range of socioeconomic and technical topics, in order to support the developmental initiatives of local groups. Partnerships were identified and developed with various international and local non-government organizations (NGOs), the national line ministries and donors<sup>4</sup>.



*Photo: WIN-Nepal team, K. Eckman, November 2003*

<sup>3</sup> WIN-Nepal, April 2002 *Report on the Informal Mid-Term Review*, Katmandu, FAO

<sup>4</sup> WIN-Nepal April 2002, *ibid.*

## **3.2 Key income generation and diversification activities**

- Community-based seedling nurseries
- Livestock production
- Home-based vegetable production

### Community-based seedling nurseries

Key brainstorming and participatory rural analysis (PRA) sessions involving the WIN district teams and local women's groups led to the establishment of the community nurseries. The nurseries prepared high-value vegetable seedlings for the transfer to household plots. Families, who had been temporarily relocated due to insecurity, were provided with the seedlings as part of a "mini-kit", which included plastic sheets, vegetable seeds, pesticides and other inputs, at a nominal price. Other households in the community were also able to purchase the seedlings, at a higher price. A volunteer technician was trained to supervise the nurseries. Support was provided to the nurseries by the district WIN teams, the Women Development Officer (WDO) and social mobilizers.

Over time some women set up their own nurseries to sell seedlings, which provided them with a new source of income.

### Livestock production

Underlining this activity was a recognition of the central role that livestock play in the livelihoods of the poor, in providing economic and nutritional benefits. It was noted that, in parts of Nepal, one goat can provide a household with sufficient income to pay for their children's clothes and school fees<sup>5</sup>. Poultry and eggs are a further source of income as both can be sold or bartered locally at any time. It is, thus, unsurprising that the communities identified livestock raising as a key diversification and income generating activity.

In Bardia, local women had expressed their interest in livestock raising during field visits by the WIN district team. Further visits, as well as group discussions, then led to the development of the activity. The Hills Leasehold Forest and Forage Development Project (HLFFDP) provided a suitable precedent for the activity.

In Doti, WIN established a partnership with the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) and carried out a PRA with the existing women's groups to determine key activities. As the LWF had already initiated some livestock raising activities, the WIN team supported their continued development.

The district WIN teams distributed pigs and goats to the poorest group members. The intention was that the offspring of these animals would then be given, free, to another member of the group. The process would continue until the entire target group had received an animal.

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<sup>5</sup> Eckman, K. December 2001 *CTA's Mid-Term Note* Rome, FAO

The WIN district teams and district livestock service officers (DLSOs) trained volunteer village animal health workers (VAHWs) in 2002 to provide basic veterinary services at the local level. The VAHWs have since been incorporated into the regular activities of the ministry. WIN also organized livestock skills training on a regional basis, which has led to local people having better access to public services.

Napier grass seedlings were also distributed in order to reduce the time spent by women on collecting fodder for the ruminants. The DLSO trained one woman farmer in nursery development for fodder plants and, by 2003, 7500 plants were transplanted from her nursery to the land of all 70 women farmers. In her first year of operation, the nursery worker earned Rs 5000 (US\$ 67). One caretaker, Bhagawati Khadka\*, said:

*“When the DLSO staff trained us about nursery plants and grass, no one among us could decide about starting a nursery on our own private land. Because we women do not have decision making powers due to not having control over our land. I discussed with my family members about this. At first my mother-in-law, father-in-law and husband prevented me from undertaking the nursery development activity. But I have decided to influence their decision to allow me to use the unfertile part of our land for the model activity. Now when I earned Rs 5000 (US\$67) from the sale, everybody in my family is very happy and encouraging me to continue such activity. Despite preventing me from nursery raising, my in-laws at least supported me in doing all manual work and thus I was able to make developments. You should know that the money is with me only which I have kept in my own name in the government bank at Dipayal. My family members are appreciating my work and so I shall again undertake new activity on my own decision”\**

*\* Lama, undated*

Support for the livestock activities was provided by the WIN district teams, the Women’s Development Officer, local social mobilizers, and the LWF.

#### Home-based vegetable production enterprises

The vegetable production activities built on the partnership between WIN, the International Fund for Agricultural Development’s (IFAD) HLFFD project and GTZ’s<sup>6</sup> Integrated Food Security Project (IFSP). WIN’s teams provided support in small-scale irrigation and training in nutrition, health and vegetable production to minority women’s groups in Bardia, Doti and Kanchanpur, with whom GTZ was already working.

In Bardia, the activities were identified through group discussions and a PRA of the local community, while in Doti, local women suggested the idea during group discussions and PRA activities. In Kanchanpur, a PRA was carried out, and the idea emerged through group discussions with freed Kamayas.

Home-based kitchen gardens were set-up to encourage crop diversification and to increase the nutritional levels of local households. The establishment of the community seedling nurseries facilitated the development of these homegardens. WIN distributed “mini-kits”, including lentil and bean seeds, to the women. Any surpluses of vegetables can be sold, providing these marginalized women with an additional source of income.

<sup>6</sup> GTZ, or Deutsche Gesellschaft für Technische Zusammenarbeit, is the German government agency which promotes international cooperation for sustainable development

At Khari Tole, the women saved on input costs by replacing fertilizer with compost. By August 2002, the groups had begun to sell their produce, with some members earning more than Rs 3000 (US\$ 39) in 2003 through selling at the market in Dipayal. They estimate that they can earn Rs 15.000 (US\$ 197) per year if production is expanded in 2004. Many women have used this extra income to send their children to school<sup>7</sup>.

In Bardia, the landless Jagriti women in the On-Farm Water Management (OFWM)<sup>8</sup> scheme were organized into associations in order to participate in the scheme. In Doti and Kanchanpur, on the other hand, social mobilizers worked with the existing GTZ groups. The groups were supported in these activities by the WIN district teams and GTZ's Rural Community Infrastructure Works (RCIW) project.

Over time, the WIN farmers have become more oriented to market production. This is largely due to the PRA and community planning activities. The groups have made their own investments in small-scale organic production methods, and have the ability to produce a greater range of off-season vegetables. Vegetables are sold locally or in neighboring towns. As a result, the participants can be seen to have exercised control of agricultural inputs and skills, thus increasing their incomes.



*Photo: Woman in the vegetable garden, WIN-Nepal, K. Eckman, November 2003*

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<sup>7</sup> Lama et al, December 2003

<sup>8</sup> OFWM is a component of the Nepal Irrigation Sector Programme

### **3.3 Empowerment and Capacity-Building in Support of LDED Activities**

- Micro-irrigation and the training of women masons
- Asset creation
- Business skills development

#### Micro-irrigation and training of women masons

A technical and economic feasibility analysis of designing and developing small-scale irrigation schemes was undertaken by WIN, in cooperation with International Development Enterprises (IDE), who carried out a cost benefit analysis at three sites in Doti, and one in Kanchanpur. During the district planning workshops in Doti and Kanchanpur, in January 2002, small-scale, low-cost irrigation technology to intensify production was introduced.

At Khari Tole, 70 women from ethnic minority groups were organized and trained by the WIN district team and GTZ – RCIW to provide them with better access to water resources, for drinking and for irrigation. Eleven of these women adapted the technology for their vegetable gardens, purchasing drip systems and micro sprinklers. An existing ferro-cement tank was rehabilitated, using local equipment, at Khari Tole. Local women were trained as masons to enable them to maintain the structure and the sub-tanks.

Increased access to low-cost irrigation technologies helped participants to increase food production and to diversify their farming systems. Vegetables are now produced for home consumption and for sale at the local market. Micro-irrigation has allowed the women to adopt year-round production, which has increased the food security of marginalized groups.

#### Asset creation

Savings and credit became a very popular, and almost fundamental, activity among women's groups, with over forty savings groups and more than Rs 50,000 (US\$657) saved by 2002. The members mobilized group savings for their own personal needs, sometimes also for productive use such as buying goats and chickens for income generating purposes<sup>9</sup>.

#### Business skills development

WIN and RCIW introduced business skills development. Training in basic literacy and numeracy training was followed by information on legal rights, planning skills, marketing strategies and record keeping. However, the groups would require additional support to enable them to expand their newly launched IGAs.

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<sup>9</sup> Lama, August 2002

### **3.4 What worked**

- ☑ Diversified vegetable production increased incomes, improved nutrition and the surplus connected communities to local markets.
- ☑ Livestock production increased women's incomes and improved household nutrition.
- ☑ Diversification into commercial fodder and seedling nurseries increased the availability of good quality planting materials to producers, brought an additional revenue stream, and reduced the risk to households in vulnerable rural areas.

The WIN project used a number of practices, such as PRAs, grassroots mobilization, group development, and others, which are not unique, either to WIN or to livelihoods and enterprise development activities. However, it is clear that had these methods not been used by WIN many of the income generating activities would never have emerged. Below are outlined some of the key factors which led to the emergence of IGAs:

- Targeting marginalized groups allowed them to begin realizing their economic potential and to enter the marketplace. WIN-Nepal deviated from the project document to reach out to those living in irrigation command areas without access to water or other productive resources.
- Iterative participatory rural appraisals (PRAs), facilitated by experienced national consultants, resulted in a comprehensive database and understanding of gender, labor and property relations at the production and marketing levels.
- Community action planning enabled the groups to identify an IGA, which the women had the resources to invest in, and to identify products/ outputs with local market potential.
- Empowerment of groups by social mobilizers led to their increased solidarity and confidence, collective decision-making and sharing of tasks in the group enterprise.
- Capacity building of the groups in literacy and numeracy, business skills, management, record keeping, participatory monitoring and other skills enabled the groups to plan financially and to keep their own records.
- Multi-disciplinary district-level teams of extensionists from several line-agencies provided technical training and backstopping in a variety of areas.
- Asset creation (group savings and expansion of land under cultivation) enabled women to diversify their production strategies and invest in small-scale technologies.
- As a result of their technical training, groups were able to harvest good quality vegetables for sale in local markets.
- Feasibility studies and the experience of WIN's partners helped in assessing the relative cost-effectiveness and financial viability of IGAs, as well as in testing the technologies before they were promoted to the groups.

- Periodic district workshops, focused on building consensus and the capacities of local stakeholders, resulted in transparency, a local sense of ownership of the process, and clarity of roles and responsibilities of the various partners.
- Collaboration with partner agencies enabled strong synergies, built on previous experiences and avoided duplication.
- Building effective support and linkages at the policy level has helped to sustain the LDED efforts and to raise awareness of the impact of policy decisions at the upper levels of government.

### **3.5 What did not work?**

- Off-farm sales remained limited due to low production during the first year the IGAs were operational.
- The increased involvement of women in the management of OFWM irrigation schemes did not take place, and IGAs did not emerge at some of the OFWM sites.
- There is a degree of uncertainty around the long-term future and sustainability of the new IGAs.
- Weak links between the groups and the local government structures

Some of the key factors behind these are outlined below:

- During the project phase, a restructuring of the local government system was being undertaken.
- The Ministry of Local Development was not included on the project steering committee.
- At the beginning, OFWM was unsure about the added-value that could be added by the WIN project.
- Too much attention was paid to technical production aspects during training and too little to post-production, socio-economic and marketing aspects.
- Prevailing socio-economic and gender patterns at the OFWM sites were not effectively transformed.
- There was a lack of technical expertise in LDED/ IGAs at the scheme level.
- WIN's short project timeline threatened on-going support to group capacity building efforts.
- A lack of a bridging phase and the failure to undertake a second phase.
- Strongly participatory initiatives need time to take off as the groups build their capacity, learn new production techniques, and identify markets.
- Weak links and knowledge about markets, coupled with the weak marketing infrastructure in rural areas (public and private)
- Limited technical backstopping capacity in LDED/ IGAs at district and national levels.
- The national teams were unaware of the normative work in LDED at FAO and other organizations.



## **4. WIN-ZAMBIA CASE STUDY**

### **4.1 Introduction**

In Zambia, the project document envisioned an operational partnership between WIN, the small-scale irrigation and water users' project (SIWUP) and the Luapula integrated household food security and nutrition project (IHFSAN). However, both projects ended in WIN's second year. Considerable experience had been gained by the two projects, in particular regarding treadle pumps, marketing, staff training in small-scale irrigation, and the organization of community groups. Activities to support sustainable livelihoods in Zambia had, to some extent, been started through the national government and GTZ, and this influenced the development of the WIN district teams.

The WIN project faced numerous challenges in introducing livelihoods diversification activities, including:

- ➔ A widespread perception of farming as a subsistence, rather than an economic or business, activity.
- ➔ A lack of clear information on marketing opportunities. Information enables farmers to effectively diversify their crop mix and to alter the production cycle in order to avoid flooding the market. This would increase food security and local incomes.
- ➔ Overcoming the culture of free handouts and encouraging farmers to invest their own resources in the project's activities.
- ➔ Women's lack of control over assets and incomes. This was particularly important in southern Zambia where polygamy is common.

By April 2004, the chief technical officer (CTA) and the national project staff recognized that the SIWUP PRA did not contain sufficient information about group dynamics and decision-making, land tenure, gender issues, the division of labor, access to assets and marketing processes, and other key issues in local livelihoods. The team thus reviewed the PRA methodology, basing a revised PRA on natural resource management (NRM) and sustainable livelihoods (SL) principles. The results that emerged highlighted the socio-economic constraints that needed to be overcome in order to improve local livelihoods, including HIV/ AIDS, gender, the division of labor, and property rights. Major investment was needed in group strengthening, management, leadership and motivation, so the WIN project devoted considerable resources to these activities. Livelihoods diversification activities, therefore, were not introduced until the second phase of the project.



*Photo: Choma District WIN team, Zambia, K. Eckman, February 2003*

#### **4.2 LDED activities:**

- Food preparation and preservation
- Seed and plant multiplication
- Vegetable production
- Home-based fish ponds

##### Food preparation and preservation

In the Kafue district planning workshop, it was recognized that while food processing and preparation activities had significant market potential, no one was engaging in them.

From April to November 2002, the programme against malnutrition (PAM) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Cooperatives (MACO) provided training for the local groups in food processing and preparation. The aim of the training was to create a better understanding of what constituted a healthy, balanced diet, with a focus on household nutrition, rather than on processing for sale and income-generation.

A shortage of raw materials meant that the WIN groups were unable to carry out market-oriented processing activities. However, many members of the groups were clearly satisfied with learning these new preparation and processing methods and such training could lead to these farmers initiating their own income-generating activities. Hence, these activities have the potential to increase local incomes as well as food security among vulnerable groups in Zambia.

### Seed and plant multiplication schemes

Under the GTZ projects, seed multiplication and crop diversification had been identified as of interest to the local communities, and such activities had subsequently been initiated. The Choma district WIN team assessed the potential for these activities, carrying out consultative discussions with key local stakeholders.

Initially, WIN consulted PAM staff to discuss collaboration in expanding farmers' seed multiplication and crop diversification activities, which led to PAM staff joining the national WIN steering committee. As PAM had been working in the propagation of sweet potato vines, they were in a position to provide WIN farmers with inputs and training, while the WIN teams focused on farmers' group strengthening. Training was thus undertaken in July and August 2001. Seed multiplication activities were supported by the district subject matter specialist, who maintained contact with a number of agri-businesses at the project sites.

In Choma, the district WIN team initiated a successful seed multiplication scheme, by which farmers were identified and trained to produce high quality seeds for sale to other farmers. This proved to be an important step as southern Zambia was entering a period of severe drought, with seeds not easily available.

### Diversified vegetable production by WIN groups

The Choma district workshop, in September 2001, identified several diversification activities, including value-added crop production and post-harvest technologies, which were of interest to local farmers. Key constraints were preventing farmers from entering local markets, however, including a lack of marketing skills, transport problems, government pricing policies, and technical knowledge. The WIN project, therefore, focused on capacity building of farmers in marketing skills, group leadership and gender sensitization.

The objective of the training was to equip farmers to negotiate reasonable prices from buyers and to develop the skills to set the price of their produce. In carrying out market research, farmers were taught to be good listeners, to understand buyer and consumer preferences, to study competitor's businesses, and to maintain and check records. Costing was also covered, with a focus on calculating direct and indirect costs for determining the sales price. This can help farmers to reduce and control costs, improving future planning and decision-making<sup>10</sup>.

Key measures of success identified by the Choma groups were:

- Post-harvest wastage reduced from 79% to 65% in three months
- Sales improved (increase from 15 to 20 bags of maize per hectare sold in three months)
- Market glutting avoided by introducing three new crops in Gamela in the next year
- Number of market players in Choma increased from 20 to 30 in three months

In Kafue, the interest groups were already trained in vegetable production, market research and price negotiation skills. The main objective was sensitization of

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<sup>10</sup> WIN-Zambia, December 2003 *WIN-Zambia 2003 Annual Report* Lusaka: FAO and MAFF

participants to the availability of market opportunities. The training aimed to enable farmers to identify the vast marketing outlets that exist and to be aware of market conditions in planning their production activities. Savings mobilization was also included in order to encourage farmers to build assets.

Traditionally, marketing in Zambia has been undertaken on an “each for himself”, rather than group, basis. Key constraints facing women have included:

- Transport – as women often have to walk long distances to markets on main roads, with their produce on their heads
- Quantities– these tend to be small, so sourcing markets is problematic
- Social difficulties arise when women leave their homesteads alone, which means that a number of women must be ready at the same time to travel to markets<sup>11</sup>.

As such, women’s empowerment and effective utilization of available markets is limited.



**Photo: Cabbages grown through the WIN project, Zambia, K. Eckman, February 2003**

Farmers must target markets where they can receive the best price for their produce, and some in Chipapa, Chilolo and Choma are already doing this. Women in Siakwafenda report a high demand from middlemen, noting that they can sell everything they transport to market. Naturally, prices vary according to season and abundance.

In spite of the WIN interventions, most income in the target communities continues to come from agricultural production. In all the sites, however, increased vegetable production led to increased incomes. At the 10 ha Chipapa garden, eleven members have, so far, managed to save K350.000 (US\$74). Though difficult to verify, members appear to generate enough income to cover the costs of activities such as land preparation and seed purchase, as well as health and school fees<sup>12</sup>. Furthermore, the WIN interventions may have enabled farmers in the southern province to endure a two-year drought, through teaching them conservation farming techniques and the benefits of diversifying production.

<sup>11</sup> Imbwae, E. *WIN-Zambia PRA, Extension and Gender Report* December 2003:15 (Lusaka: FAO)

<sup>12</sup> WIN-Zambia, *Report of WIN-Zambia National Summative Workshop* November 2003: 6 (Lusaka: FAO)

### Home-based fish ponds for local market production

In Mwense, the WIN team identified local groups who had been involved in the IHFSAN project, and a participatory planning workshop was organized in 2002, which involved key local stakeholders.

The Mwense East farmers' group noted that they had identified weir construction and fish pond development ideas themselves in 1986. A total of twenty farmers were trained by the district team in fish pond pegging and construction. Sixteen 20 x 20 meter ponds were constructed and stocked in 2002 for the specific purpose of income generation. The ponds are hand-dug, and take approximately two weeks to construct. Ponds are constructed at the homestead, and are done on a family (rather than group) basis. Tilapia fingerlings were sold by the Peace Corps to farmers for 100 kwacha (US\$ 0.02) per fingerling (each pond is stocked with 200 fingerlings). By May 2003 eleven of the ponds were completed and stocked, and farmers expected to harvest and sell the fish in approximately six months. They would be transported by bicycle to town markets.

The WIN team also trained and provide key support to the Mwense groups in irrigation, livestock raising and other activities.

## **4.3 Empowerment and Capacity-Building in Support of LDED**

- Facilitating links between farmers and contractor out-grower schemes
- Microfinance activities
- Business skills development

### Facilitating links between farmers and contractor out-grower schemes

The WIN PRA assessed the presence and capacity of the private sector in the project sites, interest and involvement in out-grower schemes, and local interest in growing paprika under rain-fed and integrated production methods, noting that farmers also needed training so as to enable them to better negotiate with commercial maize and vegetable buyers. Contact was then made to link the farmers to private agri-businesses, which led to the initiating of production contracts. The agri-businesses were then able to deal directly with the farmers and to provide inputs and extensions to those interested in growing paprika. Other farmers began to produce winter maize, tomatoes and cowpeas under out-grower contracts.

### Microfinance

The depth of rural poverty in Zambia, particularly among women, is a major constraint to organizing microfinance schemes. Farmers need to be able to access credit<sup>13</sup> in order to adopt new technologies, acquire productive assets and initiate IGAs. Zambia's history of government subsidies for agricultural inputs has led to a culture of dependency, with NGOs and development agencies providing credit and grants to mitigate the sudden withdrawal of the subsidies in the 1990s. However, many farmers have to borrow money to repay loans which leads them further into indebtedness. Thus,

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<sup>13</sup> E. Chilolo, *CTA Field Notes II, 1998 - 1999* (Rome: FAO)

conventional credit schemes must be linked to community-based resource mobilization efforts if they are to be sustainable<sup>14</sup>.

The WIN project document provided for financial support to economic activities through local financial institutions and, in their absence, revolving funds or credit lines.

The WIN Project Document provided for financial support for economic activities to be promoted by the project through local financial institutions or, in their absence, through revolving funds or credit lines. However, no clear distinction was made between commercial loans, grants and subsidized loans or revolving funds, and there was little detail of how micro-finance was to be organized. It was noted that US\$7.000 (approx. K19 million) was to be made available per site, to be repaid to a women's community fund, to provide credit for future beneficiaries. However, it is unrealistic to have such a large sum of money managed by any group without training, long-term experience and a village bank governed by clear rules and regulations<sup>15</sup>.

Experience from IFHSAN and other projects showed that credit tends not to reach the poorest members of the community, instead going to the better-off. The provision and management of rural credit requires phased and long-term support, beginning with the mobilization of local savings. The target group may even need preparation to become grant-worthy. This was precisely the purpose of the micro-enterprise projects under IFHSAN. It was recommended that financial support be redirected to the resource poor, nutritionally vulnerable and food insecure households on a grant basis rather than as credit through the implementation of micro-projects focused on improvement of nutrition and food security, with clear community contributions and a plan for ensuring long term sustainability<sup>16</sup>.

The PRAs had identified lack of financial resources, lack of information on market trends, and lack of technical knowledge about finance as reasons for insufficient investment by farmers in agricultural inputs. Of these, lack of productive resources was noted as the most difficult obstacle for farmers<sup>17</sup>. A brief microfinance consultancy mission<sup>18</sup> noted that training in business, organizational and management skills was needed for the WIN groups, and that small-scale savings would help to jump-start income-generating activities. Discussions were initiated with Micro Bankers Trust to identify means of group savings compatible with existing Zambian infrastructures.

WIN-Zambia examined means of providing treadle pumps on credit to farmers. The national coordinator, George Phiri, identified Kenyan Super Money-Maker Plus treadle pumps as more cost-effective and easier to use by women farmers. In 2002, WIN obtained a small number of Super Money Maker treadle pumps to conduct a feasibility study through the National University of Zambia, and to offer them on a trial basis for farmers wishing to use credit. The study confirmed the economic feasibility of Money Maker pumps over other available pumps.

The district workshops decided, in March 2002, that microfinance was not a priority as farmers had already received training from other sources and the WIN team were

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<sup>14</sup> Rim, Ji-Yeun *Draft Recommendations, WIN-Zambia*, 2002 (Lusaka: FAO)

<sup>15</sup> Callens, K. *Back-to-Office Report, Zambia* 1999 (Rome: FAO)

<sup>16</sup> Callens, 1999, *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Rim, Ji-Yeun, 2002, *ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> Rim, Ji-Yeun, 2002, *ibid.*

already under pressure with on-going production schedules<sup>19</sup>. However, some training of women farmers at Kafue took place in 2003, focusing on identification of marketing opportunities to assist farmers in planning production and marketing strategies for profitable returns. Ninety Super Money Makers were made available on loan to the groups with the hope of creating a revolving fund<sup>20</sup>. These arrangements have been continued through the African Development Bank (ADB) -funded smallholder irrigation project (SIP), which has absorbed many of the WIN project elements.

### Business skills development

The PRAs noted that the capacity of the groups in Gamela and Siafakwenda to manage their IGAs needed strengthening. Training was therefore organized in collaboration with partners, and other NGOs operating in the area were contacted. Then, the type and availability of IGA training materials was assessed<sup>21</sup>. They recognized that capacity building of the groups was at least as important as the technical training provided to farmers by WIN<sup>22</sup>.

The Zambian NGO Women for Change (WfC) was contracted to carry out gender sensitization, and training in leadership/supervisory management. Eventually, WfC conducted leadership training at Chipapa, Funzwe, Siafakwenda, and Gamela, and training assessments were done at new sites in Choma. The main topics were leadership, group decision processes, record keeping, costs of production, marketing, savings, and entrepreneurship. As a result of this management training, the groups gained the confidence to start up IGAs, mainly in diversified crop production. Several groups sunk hand-dug wells and began to produce high-value crops for market, using treadle pump irrigation. Another group extended a canal to produce a variety of seedlings and vegetables for market. New land was brought into production that had not been previously cultivated, and was controlled by the women's group.

## **4.4 What worked?**

The diversification activities undertaken in Zambia emerged as a result of a multi-disciplinary and participative process which included stakeholders at all levels. The project's key focus was on water resources and food security and so income-generating activities were not heavily promoted. Hence, many such activities were still in their formative stages when the project was terminated in December 2003. The sustainability of these activities in the long-term is unknown as yet. However, some good practices which fostered the emergence of IGAs under WIN can be identified:

- Diversified vegetable production increased households incomes, improved nutrition and provided new links to local markets, enabling some households to move beyond subsistence level.
- Fish production increased the availability of protein at household level, and provided participants with a high value product to sell at local markets.

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<sup>19</sup> Bakker, M. *Report of the Kafue District Workshop, March 2002*; April 2002 (Kafue: FAO WIN Project)

<sup>20</sup> WIN-Zambia, *WIN-Zambia 2003 Annual Report*, December 2003 (Lusaka: FAO and MAFF)

<sup>21</sup> Bakker, M. *Handing Over Notes*, April 2001 (Lusaka: FAO)

<sup>22</sup> Imbwae, E. *Personal Communication*, 27.05.2001

- ☑ Multiplication of seed and planning materials ensured that households had access to quality inputs even during serious drought, allowing them to harvest good quality vegetable crops.
- ☑ Food preservation and post-harvest value-added processing contributed to improved nutrition and had potential for sale in local markets.

There are a number of reasons that these methods worked:

- The iterative PRA process, facilitated by experienced staff, yielded a baseline database and understanding of local gender, labor and property relations linked to production systems.
- Community action planning enabled the project to identify an IGA which the women had the capacity to invest in, and to identify crops with market potential.
- Groups were able to plan and budget for the future and to keep basic records as a result of empowerment and strengthening activities in business, marketing, leadership skills and record keeping.
- Technical training in various production elements increased participants' knowledge base and enabled them to try new crops and to harvest good quality vegetables acceptable at local markets.
- The increased ability of groups to create commonly-held assets (modest savings and new land opened up to production) created an opportunity to acquire small-scale irrigation technologies on a group basis, possibly reducing the likelihood of confiscation by their husbands.
- Diversification of production (fish and vegetables) enabled producers to enter the market with new products, attract buyers, and avoid seasonal gluts.
- Community seedling gardens ensured that all households had access to good quality planting materials all year round, reducing risk and building a sense of community inter-dependence.
- The provision of simple micro-credit, enabling farmers to purchase treadle pumps.
- Feasibility study of treadle pump models and an experimental shaduf helped to identify cost-effective and labor-conserving technologies, and to ensure that the pumps were gender appropriate.
- Contacts facilitated with agro-businesses needing raw materials led to guaranteed buyers, and better knowledge of prices and market demands.
- Collaboration with partners brought strong synergies, built on previous community activities and avoided duplication.
- District workshops with all stakeholders fostered a sense of mutual support, clarified respective roles and responsibilities and built an awareness of the utility of joint action planning.
- Farmer exchange visits provided a hands-on introduction for groups to directly visualize the IGAs and production techniques introduced at other sites, and created a sense of friendly competition between WIN groups.
- WIN-Zambia's diversified project steering committee brought considerable real-world business and marketing expertise to project staff .



## **4.5 What didn't work?**

The income-generating activities undertaken through WIN were not all successful, and below is an overview of some of these:

- ☑ Off-farm sales were very limited in the first year of launching the vegetable operations.
- ☑ Control of IGA revenues and technologies (e.g. treadle pumps) was uncertain.
- ☑ The greater involvement of women in the management of SIWUP irrigation schemes did not occur.
- ☑ Preserved and processed foods were mainly consumed at the subsistence level and did not reach the marketplace.
- ☑ The outcome and sustainability of the IGAs are uncertain due to the incipient nature of the groups and their activities.
- ☑ A limited impact in microfinance
- ☑ Poor linkage and integration of local entrepreneurial groups and district teams with decentralized government structures.

There are a number of reasons which can explain the lack of success of these activities:

- WIN-Zambia's focus was primarily on household food security in the context of protracted drought and widespread HIV/ AIDS infection, rather than on LDED.
- There was a lack of LDED/ IGA expertise on the national and district WIN teams.
- The national teams were unaware of the normative work in LDED at FAO and other organizations.
- At the beginning, groups were still learning productive and marketing skills and had little experience.
- A result of prevailing socio-economic conditions, property rights and gender relations.
- Gender sensitization training was attended mainly by women, with few male community members taking part.
- There were severe pre-existing problems with SIWUP design and implementation, as well as a poor reception on the part of SIWUP management given to WIN.
- WIN-Zambia's intent was to target HIV-AIDS affected households, with improved nutrition and "power foods" for PLWA, rather than as an IGA.
- No prior financial analysis or marketing strategy was done.
- WIN's project cycle and timeframe were too short to foster people-centered, participatory activities and precluded further iterative support to producer groups.
- A lack of a bridging phase and a failure to identify funding for further work effectively ended WIN's presence at the project sites.
- The national project coordinator decided that microfinance was not a major focus of WIN-Zambia, except for credit extended to purchase treadle pumps.
- There was no microfinance expertise on the national WIN team.

An Overview of WIN LDED-Related Activities in Cambodia, Nepal and Zambia

- There is an inadequate microfinance infrastructure in Zambia.
- This was not a priority of the steering committee or of the national WIN team.



*Photo: Women farmers in Siakafwenda, Zambia, K. Eckman, February 2003*

## **5. WIN-CAMBODIA CASE STUDY**

### **5.1 Introduction**

In Cambodia, the introduction of diversification activities tended to be undertaken in a top-down manner, which led to weaker LDED outcomes. Although PRAs were undertaken at the beginning of the project, they were oriented to the Structured In-Service Training and Participatory Extension (SISTAPE) methodology and any diversification activities identified tended to have been initiated under the FAO Special Programme for Food Security (SPFS). This effectively represented an extension of the SPFS workplan using the WIN budget.

Between 2000 and 2001, the WIN and SPFS national coordinators identified better-off farmers and offered them one of the LDED activities on the PRA list. They were expected to demonstrate these activities on their land, and were periodically given free in-kind inputs, such as seeds, latrines and fertilizers, by WIN and SPFS. This was the result of the national coordinator's belief that financially stable farmers perform at a higher level. It was expected that the farmers could then be seen as models by visiting missions as well as other farmers, and that they would produce significant results for the progress reports. Poorer farmers were not identified or targeted unless the issue was raised by the chief technical officer (CTA) or other backstopping officers.

Further WIN sites were identified by the national coordinator, between 2002 and 2003, with farmer seasonal planning and PRA activities undertaken. During this time, missions fielded by FAO HQ (microfinance and food processing/ storage) identified two additional diversification activities. These followed the same process as the previous activities.

There is currently no data available to confirm whether any of the LDED activities undertaken through WIN-Cambodia led to increased incomes, value-added production, or sustained growth of micro-enterprises although there are some anecdotal reports which suggest diversification has occurred, primarily through the introduction of vegetables and livestock to the farming system. It would be premature to conclude that these activities have led to a sustained increase in income for a majority of the WIN participants.

### **5.2 LDED activities:**

- Cash crop production (vegetables and fruit trees)
- Livestock production
- Food processing activities

#### Cash crop production (vegetables and fruit trees)

Since the 1990s, the SPFS Farmer Field Schools (FFS) have been promoting crop diversification to supplement traditional rice farming in Cambodia. During the WIN project, the FFS provided technical training for household food production and cash crop production using efficient irrigation schemes. The focus was largely on vegetable gardens, including watermelons, muskmelons, water spinach and long beans.

SPFS and WIN promoted and trained local people in agricultural diversification, reporting significant increases in output. Production data was never made available in English<sup>23</sup>, although, in August 2003, there were anecdotal reports that farmers were producing more on the same land area as a result of the inputs and training. However, the WIN national coordinator noted that government pricing policies were preventing adequate marketing of the increased output<sup>24</sup>. Farmers in Doung Village, Takeo, reported that middlemen came to the village to buy long beans and watermelons, but pricing information was neither recorded nor available<sup>25</sup>. In fact, the May 2000-December 2003 Progress Report states:

“Through an internal review all WIN villages, we observed that, at household level, food security and farmer’s income were improved through establishing homegardens, cash crop growing and animal raising. Rice yield has been increased an average from 1.5t/ha (2001) to 2.2 t/ha in the wet season (2003). Farmers in WIN villages reduced the annual food shortage (rice) from 4-5 months to 1 month. 835 families of WIN villages established home garden to produce a wider variety of vegetables for home consumption and cash incomes. The promotion of vegetables production at home has spread to other farmers in the village of WIN project sites.”

This corresponded to a general economic improvement in Cambodia, which may be due to improved rainfall, economic recovery, price policies and other factors. An accurate assessment of LDED outcomes is not possible due to a lack of specific crop production, marketing, and income data in English. Rouillard<sup>26</sup> noted that references to financial issues are almost non-existent in progress reports. The transition from accompanied development to more business-like approaches remains a challenge for WIN-Cambodia and the SPFS<sup>27</sup>.

### Livestock Production

Technical training in livestock production was a key activity for WIN-Cambodia, undertaken through the FFSs. Between 2000 and 2003, both WIN and SPFS distributed livestock (pigs, poultry, fish, and cattle) to farmers in two ways:

- ➔ As a complimentary input – to motivate selected farmers
- ➔ Through a livestock bank, operated by the two programmes.

In August 2003, the farmers reported an increased income due to more intensive livestock production. This information was verified by the national gender counterpart but could not be triangulated by monitoring data nor could the impact be ascertained.

### Food processing activities

A gap in post-harvest technologies and food processing was identified by the CTA in June 2002. An international mission was sent by the project core team, in November 2002, which assessed the area, making recommendations for diversifying crop

<sup>23</sup> Eckman, K. *CTA Field Notes, Volume 3*: 62

<sup>24</sup> Eckman, K. *CTA Field Notes, Volume 2*: 118 - 120

<sup>25</sup> Eckman, K. *CTA Field Notes, Volume 3*: 64

<sup>26</sup> Rouillard, X. *Technical Report on Rural Finance* 2002: 8 (Rome: FAO)

<sup>27</sup> Rouillard, X. 2002: 10 – 11, *ibid.*

production, improved storage facilities, establishing market linkages, introducing value-added activities and gender orientation of the project<sup>28</sup>. However, the mission noted that the capacity of the WIN-Cambodia national team to implement the recommendations was very limited. Their minimum recommendations were to conduct training in food processing and to prepare a topic-oriented gender action plan.

WIN-Cambodia then set up food processing training centers in Siem Reap and Takeo. Training-of-trainers (TOT) workshops in food processing were run in March 2003, in collaboration with the Ministry of Women's and Veterans' Affairs. Nineteen participants (13 men and 6 women) came from Takeo, Siem Reap and Kampot provinces. The eleven-day training covered theory and practice, preparation of fifteen value-added products, and a brief unit on setting up a small business. The training centers have since encountered problems due to lack of funds for maintenance and continued training<sup>29</sup>.



**Photo: A WIN training workshop, Cambodia, K. Eckman, May 2003**

<sup>28</sup> Tracey-White, J. and Zafisambo Ruphin, A. November 2002 *Report on Findings and Recommendations in Marketing, Food Processing and Storage, WIN-Cambodia* (Rome: FAO)

<sup>29</sup> Mak Soeun, Undated *Personal communication to the author*

### 5.3 Micro-finance and Credit

Prior to the initiation of WIN, the SPFS considered ways to provide credit to farmers and WIN then followed SPFS's lead. In-kind credit was provided to selected farmers, generally through the SPFS-WIN livestock banks. Farmers were expected to give offspring to the district teams for redistribution to other participant farmers. Other inputs were provided free-of-charge, such as food, biogas digesters, latrines, treadle pumps, agricultural chemicals, seeds and others.

In October 2002, an international credit consultant visited Cambodia, with the corresponding mission report<sup>30</sup> noting that revolving funds were established in all WIN-SPFS villages based on in-kind donations from the project to the village. Funds have been used to grant loans to individual villagers to purchase agricultural equipment and, to some extent, can be seen as a capacity building tool. However, bookkeeping and fund management have been weak and the real situation of the funds in many villages is unknown<sup>31</sup>.

WIN's national credit counterpart noted<sup>32</sup>, in 2003, that the national coordinator was focused on revolving funds at the expense of creating local assets, such as savings. By August 2003, there were 67 villages, each with at least 30 farmers involved in various revolving funds and the livestock bank. No data was available as to the gender composition of participants. In some cases, some farmers refused to pay the fund for livestock as others had been given free animals. Furthermore, the national credit counterpart observed that the participants were used to receiving inputs for free from the SPFS<sup>33</sup> and saw no reason to repay loans from the revolving fund<sup>34</sup>.

The sustainability of the WIN and SPFS revolving funds has emerged as a key issue. For instance, SPFS and the WIN project staff manage the funds in lieu of local infrastructure as the technical ministry (MAFF) cannot actually implement credit schemes but can only give information about them to farmers. There is a real need for a fund infrastructure and management plan when WIN and SPFS are no longer operational.

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<sup>30</sup> Rouillard, 2002, *ibid.*

<sup>31</sup> Rouillard, 2002:4, *ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> CTA Field Notes, Volume 3: 66 – 67, *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> Rouillard, 2002: 11, *ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> CTA Field Notes, Volume 3, *ibid.*

## **5.4 Key successes**

In spite of the less people-centered nature of the activities undertaken in Cambodia to identify key diversification activities, the WIN project was successful in adding value to the livelihoods of some of its participants.

- ☑ The diversification of vegetable production took place in many households, with nutritional benefits and surpluses created for markets.
- ☑ Livestock production increased among households, resulting in income from livestock sales
- ☑ Some individuals gained technical knowledge in food processing techniques

This success was due to a number of reasons, which have been outlined below:

- General economic recovery and the absence of conflict enabled farmers to resume production.
- A very intensive training programme oriented toward technical production and irrigation, which increased the farmers' know-how.
- The technical orientation of the national team meant that most project resources were invested in an ambitious SISTAPE programme.
- Technical training provided by WIN-SPFS improved farmers' knowledge of rearing livestock.
- Animals provided by the project as an incentive were sold.
- New training facilities and curricula were made available to district governments and selected farmers.

Another positive factor noted was the gender sensitization for staff and villagers provided by WIN. While gender sensitization did not directly lead to LDED activities being taken up by women, it did serve to raise the awareness of project and government staff regarding the economic and productive roles of women. It was also reported that male villagers came to regard women as important productive actors as a result of the training.

The role of multidisciplinary district teams was key for all activities (including IGAs) introduced through WIN. District-based extensionists were provided with considerable training in agricultural production through the SISTAPE methodology, and their capacities built in providing technical extension support to farmers.

## 5.5 What didn't work?

Although some LDED activities were taken-up through WIN, they were not all successful in achieving improved livelihoods outcomes for the participants.

- Farmers' knowledge of markets, business skills, record keeping and IGA planning were not significantly improved.
- Successful IGAs failed to emerge on a group or individual basis.
- Unclear intra-household allocation of labor and incomes derived from sales.
- Limited level of off-farm sales due to weak market links
- Involvement of women in irrigation management at scheme level was very limited
- Food processing IGAs failed to take off.
- Uncertain outcome and sustainability of all IGAs
- Microfinance provided by SPFS and WIN Cambodia did not appear to build local resources or to create an effective local resource pool.

Some of the key reasons for this lack of success are outlined:

- Training needs assessments were not carried out.
- Major investment in training was based on a standardized production-oriented SISTAPE curriculum.
- SISTAPE training did not address skills needed to foster the emergence of small enterprises.
- Lack of IGA/ LDED expertise at district, provincial and national levels to support farmers.
- The national team was unaware of the normative work in LDED at FAO HQ and other organizations.
- Project staff did not have access to 'how-to' training materials and curricula on LDED.
- Weak entry-point (standardized PRAs and top-down selection of IGAs).
- Top-down targeting.
- Weak analysis of PRA data.
- No business planning was done by stakeholders.
- Insufficient PRA data analysis so that there was a limited understanding of the productive roles and responsibilities (according to age and gender)
- Gender impact assessment was not done.
- No market analysis was done prior to the introduction of LDED activities.
- A lack of support and leadership on the part of the project management
- IGA was imposed in a top-down manner with unclear targeting and lack of follow-up support.



Lessons Learned by the WIN Project on Livelihoods Diversification and Enterprise Development

- The incipient nature of the activities and project termination meant that follow-up support and backstopping were not forthcoming.
- Poor record keeping and accounting practices.
- Weak, centralized management of funds and insufficient government infrastructure.
- Lack of national and district level experience.
- Confusion among participants about repayment of inputs distributed by the project.

## 6. LEARNING FROM THE WIN EXPERIENCE

### 6.1 Findings

The complexity of the WIN design and its four different project objectives resulted in three very different national experiences, as each country team used somewhat different strategies. Only one of the objectives related specifically to livelihoods diversification and its design was weak. Thus, WIN's LDED activities were under-emphasized and poorly supported administratively. It is, therefore, all the more notable that LDED activities did emerge at the local level. This section will explore some of the factors that may have contributed to or hindered the emergence of LDED activities, comparing the experiences in the three countries.

#### 6.1.1 Participation

- a) **Using People-Centered Approaches:** WIN highlights the importance of local people recognizing that change can only come from within their communities. Local people must be seen as real partners at every stage of the development process. Thus, it is clear that WIN's multi-disciplinary approach works well as a *demand-driven process*. Ideas and methodologies imposed by FAO HQ or other staff often result in confusion and resentment among stakeholders.



Photo: Planning in Mufwafwi, Zambia, WIN project, K. Eckman, 2002

WIN established and strengthened local groups, empowering them through a range of training activities. These groups are now effectively carrying out their own local action plans, particularly in Nepal and Zambia. Multi-disciplinary approaches require a great deal of flexibility in training methods and locations. These projects require more time than conventional projects but can have significant positive outcomes as regards local capacities for self-help.

From WIN it is clear that the impacts of diversification activities may not emerge until the second year of the project, and may not become fully apparent until the third or fourth year. It takes time for groups to mature, to learn technical and business methods, to assert control and to have a sense of genuine ownership over their activities. When this occurs, however, the groups become agents for change in their community. Thus, WIN's experience has shown that the duration of future livelihood diversification projects should be between three and four years to ensure long-lasting and positive outcomes.

In Nepal, a key lesson was that these types of projects facilitate communication and sharing. Through this process it is possible to explore all existing local resources – human, social, natural, financial and physical – and to mobilize them to bring the maximum benefit to the community.

- b) Targeting:** An inclusive strategy was observed to have the most positive outcome. WIN-Nepal and WIN-Zambia intentionally targeted the most vulnerable communities and ethnic minorities, including HIV and AIDS-affected households, Dalits, freed Kamayats (laborers released from bondage) and minority Tharn women and girls. The benefits of development are available to these groups only if they are specifically targeted at them.

National staff consulted available data, including VAM data from WHO, in order to better inform the project's activities. District team members with knowledge of "pockets of poverty" and local NGOs were also consulted. The most marginalized of households were best identified with the active participation of the local community, and using locally-derived criteria.

Furthermore, the Zambian and Nepali teams diverged from the project document in order to reach those households within irrigation schemes but lacking access to productive resources or to reach groups not directly associated with irrigation but with critical water needs. In both countries, marginalized women were specifically targeted as economic actors. This allowed previously disenfranchised women to start and manage their own IGAs. While the enterprises are still in their formative stages, further investments in training for business and management skills, as well as in long-term monitoring, are needed.

- c) Iterative PRA methods and Community Action Plans:** Each country used variations of participatory assessment and community action planning methods, including Farmer Field Schools (FFS), seasonal planning, nutritional education, gender sensitization, gender action planning, and community action planning. In the case of Cambodia, the identification of income-generating activities was not done with the active involvement of the local communities in decision-making, planning or management. In contrast, in Nepal and Zambia the methods and tools were adapted.

In these countries, facilitators avoided a “shopping list” approach to PRA and encouraged local stakeholders to reach a consensus about, and to take responsibility for, the next steps. PRA was viewed as a first step in an iterative planning process leading to facilitated problem-solving, consensus-building, action planning and capacity building. PRAs developed differently in each case but broadly followed the sequence illustrated below:



**d) Group Formation and Strengthening:** In Zambia and Nepal, the majority of LDED activities were organized on a group basis. WIN-Nepal worked with existing Water Users Associations (WUAs) in irrigation schemes, but also with marginalized women’s groups without access to irrigation. Likewise, both country teams took a measured, step-by-step approach to group formation and strengthening, working with both old and new groups. They invested a significant

portion of resources in building the capacities of the groups before beginning IGAs.

WIN-Cambodia worked mainly with the SPFS water user associations, but also targeted numerous individual households, often with free input distributions (latrines, biogas digesters, livestock, seeds, fertilizer, etc). Better-off farmers were targeted here and they benefited from these inputs, intended as both demonstration and motivation. However, this strategy was not proven to be effective.

- e) **Social Mobilizers:** The social mobilizers trained by WIN-Nepal have empowered other women to be better organized and to access productive resources through the district-level service providers, and are a useful model for other LDED initiatives. Social mobilizers have been crucial and are the backbone of organizational efforts at the group level<sup>35</sup>. Capacity building of the social mobilizers was first done by the women's development officer (WDO), the WIN district teams, and partnering NGOs.

Social mobilizers have assisted in the formation of thirteen new women's groups in Rupandehi district, and in organizing group meetings among the existing 75 women's groups. They have participated in conveying extension messages, monitoring, and in facilitating group discussions. Some of the discussions have dealt with the improvement of livelihoods and social conditions, including HIV-AIDS, violence against women, legal rights, and other issues. In addition, the mobilizers and WDOs provided literacy and numeracy training to the groups to enhance their ability to calculate prices and expenses.

- f) **Exchange Visits:** All three countries organized exchange visits for the groups to share experiences and production methods, and to motivate new groups into beginning IGAs. These were effective in demonstrating newly introduced practices, and were greatly valued by the participants.

### 6.1.2 Diversification and Enterprise Development

WIN was not originally conceived of as an LDED project, and its operational dependence on pre-existing larger projects has meant that early activities did not have a specific LDED focus. The hybrid project document imposed a number of complexities and rigidities, which were unfavorable to LDED activities. Inter-disciplinary, people-centered projects, such as WIN, are better suited to project designs and documents that encourage flexible interpretation, work plans and budgets.

- a) **LDED Entry-Point:** WIN's entry-point was to be the already existing irrigation or SPFS projects using the SISTAPE methodology. However, SISTAPE had not evolved to accommodate the dimensions of sustainable livelihoods and diversification, although it had incorporated gender issues. Furthermore, the Zambian and Nepali teams faced difficulties in adapting SISTAPE to emerging income-generating activities and to the newly formulated government decentralization processes. There were serious design, management and

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<sup>35</sup> Lama, undated, *ibid.*

implementation problems in OFWM and SIWUP, which hindered the introduction of WIN at these sites. In Zambia and Nepal, WIN eventually found alternative entry-points through partnership with NGOs.

- b) Identification of LDED Activities:** The identification of diversification activities was largely dependant on the strategies and influences of WIN's in-country partners. As has become clear in the previous sections, there were significant variations in the ways in which LDED activities were initiated in the three countries.

In Cambodia, IGAs were primarily an extension of SPFS activities. Although PRAs were carried out, the identification of activities was undertaken by the national project management. Other activities, such as food processing and storage, mushroom production and agro-forestry, were suggested by international consultants, core team members and the CTA. Most were never taken up as there was no perceived need for them, although food processing was introduced at the instigation of the national coordinator.

The LDED activities in Zambia and Nepal emerged through a bottom-up, facilitated problem-solving process at the local level. There were dynamic group discussions and exchanges, with a key role played by the district teams and key NGO partners. As such, the source of IGAs was the local community.

The means of distributing inputs heavily impacted on the sustainability of the activities. In Cambodia, for example, it is clear that the distribution of inputs, such as seeds, livestock, fertilizer and equipment, created disincentives for participants to invest their own time and resources into the IGAs. As one participant noted: "Why should I spend my own time and money to build a latrine, when WIN will build one for me?"

- c) Type of LDED Activity:** In all three countries, the focus was on the diversification of agricultural production, and particularly the introduction of vegetables. This was intended to promote a more diverse diet and, thus, improve nutrition among the local population. A side-effect was that excess produce could be sold for income generation. Livestock was promoted in Nepal and Cambodia, as a means of diversifying the household farming system. In Nepal, livestock had multiple benefits, adding protein to diets, building household productive assets, and teaching marketing skills. In Zambia, WIN promoted fish pond construction and fish farming to diversify diets and to generate income through sales of fish products.

Seed multiplication was also introduced in Zambia and Nepal, with community gardens allowing vulnerable groups to access high quality materials, such as seeds, sweet potato cuttings, and vegetable seedlings. Trained local volunteer technicians tended to the gardens. Furthermore, these gardens were seen as an insurance policy for those households who might temporarily leave their homes during periods of insecurity or drought.

Food preparation and processing, and other value-added activities, were initiated in Cambodia and Zambia. District-based food processing training was undertaken in Cambodia, while in Zambia the focus was on preparing high-energy foods for HIV and AIDS-affected households.

**d) *Determining Feasibility of LDED Activities:*** PRAs and community action planning allowed local groups to identify IGAs and products which they regarded as having local market potential, and in which they were willing to invest resources. However, there were no proper economic feasibility studies carried out on the products, nor were there detailed marketing plans drawn up. This was largely due to a lack of budgetary support and expertise for such activities. In Nepal and Zambia, assessing feasibility was generally a matter of informal discussion between stakeholders and partner NGOs.

In some cases, feasibility studies were carried out on specific technologies. For example:

- University of Zambia – TDAU's study of treadle pumps and the shaduf.
- IDE's study of treadle pumps in Nepal.
- FAO's food processing mission in Cambodia.

Some key gaps in LDED activities included:

- An absence of backstopping support in feasibility, marketing and other business aspects.
- A lack of focus on business management.

Only in the case of Zambia, where the team facilitated contracts between local farmers and agri-businesses, did the WIN project foster linkages with the private sector.

**e) *Identifying Support for Potential LDED Activities:*** In Nepal and Zambia, the teams built on the experience of their partners, GTZ and WfC, in identifying products with a potential in local markets. These organizations also assisted in providing some training. The Zambian steering committee did include business and marketing professionals who provided some advice, however, in all three countries there was inadequate technical support for the activities which emerged. There needs to be a greater emphasis on identifying expertise at local, national, regional and international levels.

At the group level, there was some limited support provided by the project in the form of micro-credit to purchase micro-irrigation equipment, with the groups expected to cover operation and maintenance costs. In Nepal, one volunteer member per group was trained in equipment maintenance and repair to ensure sustainable use of the technology. This was done despite the recommendation of the mid-term evaluation not to use WIN resources for irrigation equipment or maintenance.

### **6.1.3 Multi-disciplinary Approach**

WIN district teams were made up of government extension staff from various line ministries, who worked closely with local partners, and were supported by the WIN national teams. The exact size and composition of the teams depended on government staff appointments. In Nepal and Zambia, effective teams emerged that were able to support, facilitate and backstop the local groups in a variety of activities, with communication across government line ministries at district level greatly improved.

In all cases, the district teams underwent training in participatory methodologies, group facilitation, and gender sensitization. They organized exchange visits, as well as providing technical information and training activities. Over time, the knowledge, confidence, and capacity of the local groups improved, as a result of the support of the district teams.

### **6.1.4 Capacity Building**

In all three countries, WIN organized and implemented comprehensive multi-disciplinary training activities, which varied according to local need and experience<sup>36</sup>.

There were opportunities for professional growth through comprehensive training programs, study tours, exchange visits, dialogues with international consultants, and direct interaction between the three WIN teams. The two international WIN conferences provided a unique opportunity and forum for the teams to exchange ideas and information.

WIN's investments in capacity building at all levels have meant that at least some structure is in place to continue and to sustain LDED activities. Most WIN groups have been able to mobilize resources and build group assets (such as savings and some technologies) which are shared among group members. The group structures that were strengthened through WIN and WIN's partners remain in place, and group activities are still ongoing. Many of these groups and activities, however, are still in the formative stages and need ongoing technical backstopping and further training. Marketing and small business skill development for most groups remains a serious challenge.

- a) Assessing Training Needs:** WIN-Cambodia's experience demonstrated that there was a general lack of understanding of financial planning, management and bookkeeping among the participants. The national team lacked a clear vision as to how to initiate and promote LDED activities and how to support local groups in the effective management of their own IGAs. No training needs assessment was carried out for the SISTAPE and LDED activities undertaken under WIN-Cambodia. Farmers often attended the same training sessions over and over, in order to receive free inputs.

In Nepal and Zambia, however, training needs assessments were carried out, which shaped all training activities to the needs of the different groups. This resulted in the trainees applying their newly-acquired knowledge in practice.

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<sup>36</sup> Details of these activities can be found in the annual WIN progress reports prepared by the national teams, as well as the annual WIN report to UNF



Overall, there were hundreds of training activities carried out by WIN and its partners in the three countries. More details on these activities can be found in the annual progress reports, as well as in the numerous training documents and curricula prepared by the national teams.

**b) *Asset Creation:*** WIN enabled many groups and households to increase their productive assets, including:

- Improved access to capital through group savings.
- In Nepal and Zambia, access to land and irrigation for groups who previously did not have access.
- The building of social capital through the formation and strengthening of effective producer groups.
- Increased capacities to initiate and carry-out a variety of income-generating and diversification activities (particularly in Nepal and Zambia).

Although these gains were modest, they did occur in a variety of economic and cultural settings.

WIN assisted local groups in building productive assets, such as livestock, particularly in Nepal. WIN-Nepal combined limited “gift exchanges” with a clear expectation that these were to benefit the entire community over time, not just the better-off farmers. In contrast, WIN-Cambodia’s emphasis on free inputs acted as a disincentive for farmers to invest their own resources in improving their livelihoods.

**c) *Microfinance:*** The provision of microfinance was foreseen in the WIN project document, but without any details as to what form this might take. Although all three countries did promote some form of microfinance activity, the results tended to be modest at best.

- Livestock banking, whereby animals were given to participants with offspring then passed on to other participants, was undertaken in Cambodia and Nepal.
- In Zambia and Nepal, groups’ savings were promoted as a means to build group assets for investment in future income-generating activities. In both countries, considerable resources were invested in group strengthening, leadership and management, as well as training in small business development skills, record keeping, marketing, and other areas.

Nevertheless, WIN had only limited success in microfinance, largely due to a lack of staff experience in the area. Only WIN-Cambodia had a team member with experience in microfinance.

### **6.1.5 Partnership Building**

All three WIN countries learned the importance of partnerships, especially with NGOs, national institutions, and other organizations already working in the areas where WIN had a limited capacity. In both Zambia and Nepal, the teams developed a good working relationship with multiple agencies. WIN-Nepal developed a productive cost-effective and job-sharing relationship with GTZ, employing its lead consultant on a 50:50 basis with GTZ.

As evidenced by WIN's experience, partnerships with such organizations can lead to greater synergies and to more sustainable outcomes. There was little or no organizational conflict or misunderstanding between the collaborating partners in any of the WIN sites, probably because the coordinating line industries were closely involved in implementation.

Collaborating with other projects also led to strong synergies among partners, particularly as regards gender issues. As yet, these synergies have not led to a strong sense of collaboration in LDED activities.

One drawback of partnership is that it can often be difficult to separate out the impacts of particular interventions when multiple agencies are involved. This was especially true in the case of Cambodia, where WIN and the SPFS operated as one project.

### **6.1.6 Management and Policy Aspects**

- a) **Leadership and Team Building:** As expected, the leadership styles of the WIN coordinators differed. WIN-Cambodia relied upon conventional management structures and centralized planning, while, in Nepal and Zambia, the emphasis was on decentralized grassroots planning and on building local groups' capacity to manage their own activities. Although there were disagreements between team members at the different levels over strategies and actions, a strong sense of ownership and personal commitment to the WIN process emerged. This was particularly noticeable in Zambia and Nepal, where this commitment gave the teams incentives to continue their work at WIN sites, even after the conclusion of the project.

The teams were supported by a visiting, part-time CTA, who encouraged decentralized project management and team building at all levels. The CTA rarely made unilateral decisions, preferring a consultative process. The CTA also functioned as a liaison and facilitator between the national teams and the project core team.

Team building efforts were undertaken by the CTA and the national coordinators in Nepal and Zambia, with the aim of strengthening solidarity and the management capacities of the teams at national and local levels, as well as to enable teams to become more responsive to bottom-up initiatives and communications.

- b) **Innovation by National Teams:** Some of the national teams were more willing to deviate from the project document and to support the ideas emerging from the community. For example, the Zambian team was more innovative in its interpretation of the project document and, as such, experimented with several

potential LDED activities. This led to the promotion of a wider range of activities and technologies than in either of the other countries. The mid-term evaluation, however, found fault with the Zambian team, criticizing their relatively late start, perceived low number of field activities, and certain irrigation technologies. It was later seen, however, that being flexible as regards a pre-determined work plan had led to many positive long-term outcomes. It is likely that there would have been little activity on livelihoods diversification and enterprise development had the teams not been innovative.

- c) National Project Steering Committees:** Nepal and Cambodia both had conventional project steering committees, mainly composed of staff from the technical departments of national agricultural ministries. Both had problems in gaining timely approval from their ministries for the involvement of staff from other ministries. As such, both steering committees were strongly focused on assessing the progress of the SISTAPE training and on other agricultural topics, although this did change with time.

In Nepal, they did eventually succeed in bringing in a diverse mix of representatives from government ministries, which greatly benefited WIN's implementation. The steering committee was supportive of livelihoods diversification activities, offering supplemental government funding for WIN's bridging phase.

WIN-Zambia benefited from a diverse and actively involved steering committee. Represented on the committee were the Ministry of Agriculture, the Ministry of Health, the Zambian Chamber of Small and Medium Businesses (ZCSMB), Women for Change, the Programme Against Malnutrition, and other NGOs. The steering committee was actively involved in the emergence of LDED activities, and provided useful backstopping support to the national and district teams. Committee members made field visits to the sites, interacting with farmers and advising them on their enterprises. ZCSMB and WfC provided guidance to farmers and staff in facilitating contacts with agri-businesses and in organizing training in business skills for women's groups.

As such, the WIN experience demonstrates the advantages of having an inclusive steering committee, rather than limiting membership, as this facilitates information exchange in support of LDED-related activities.

- d) Scaling-up:** The most promising results and experiences emerged in the final year of WIN's implementation. Discussions were initiated as to how to scale-up the WIN approach. Each WIN team and local stakeholders put forward strategies for scaling-up, generally focusing on expansion to new districts where a significant need had already been identified by the national government. Such expansion was to be undertaken through targeting vulnerable groups, facilitated PRAs, community action planning and other such processes. WIN's donor further requested that there be some regional scaling-up, with expansion to neighboring countries with similar food security and capacity building needs.

However, WIN's resources had been exhausted by December 2003, and the project was concluded, primarily as a result of budget constraints. The approach has since been taken up by the Government of Nepal, which has committed

government funds to continuing activities at a local level. In Zambia and Cambodia, elements of the WIN approach have been carried forward in SPFS and SIP.

- e) **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Although monitoring systems were established in all the cases, it proved difficult to monitor the progress of the IGAs<sup>37</sup>. Zambia was perhaps the most successful in building the capacity of the district WIN teams to monitor outcomes and to provide local stakeholders with a means of informing national staff about progress and problems.

Participatory evaluation was a key feedback mechanism. In each of the countries, the WIN M&E system was decentralized, with monitoring plans and indicators prepared during the district stakeholder workshops. However, in all cases, a lack of resources prevented effective monitoring. Insecurity was a further problem in Nepal. As such, monitoring was never ideal, with problems experienced in transport and the sharing of information. Despite this, both Nepal and Zambia managed to conclusively document the PRA results, methodologies used, and project outcomes (both qualitative and quantitative), and to establish monitoring practices with local stakeholders.

WIN carried out a series of self-evaluations at mid-term and termination. These informal activities were invaluable in assessing progress and adapting strategies. However, budgetary limitations at FAO HQ restricted the participation of farmers in some workshops, particularly the Zambian national summative-cum-evaluation workshop.

## 6.2 Good or Promising Practices

The following practices have been identified through a review of the WIN documentation and experiences. These practices were all iterative and were not employed in isolation. It must also be noticed that none of these are exclusive to WIN, and have been widely used in other settings:

### 6.2.1 Participation

Decentralized targeting practices enabled marginalized groups to enter the marketplace as economic actors in their own right. In Nepal and Zambia, the national teams additionally targeted other groups who had not been specified in the project document, including ethnic minorities and poorer households without access to water resources. As such, the national and district staff actively sought to reach the most vulnerable groups, consulting local governments, communities and NGOs in the process. This ensured the participation of the poorest groups in LDED activities.

The iterative PRA process used in Nepal and Zambia was facilitated by experienced staff, provided a broad database, and resulted in a better understanding of gender, labor and property relations in local production systems.

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<sup>37</sup> See the WIN Progress Reports for further details on the project monitoring systems

☑ Community action planning enabled the project and groups to identify IGAs which the women had time to invest in, to form interest groups, and to identify products with market potential. This also led to the building of consensus and development of a sense of local ownership of the process.

☑ Training of social mobilizers to empower local groups led to increased solidarity and confidence, collective decision making and sharing of tasks in the group enterprise. The social mobilizers remain active in their communities even after project termination.

☑ Community seedling nurseries, community gardens and crop diversification schemes ensured that all households in the community had access to good quality planting materials year-round, reducing risk and building a sense of community independence. Such community resources ensured that all households in a community have access to these resources.

### **6.2.2 Diversification and Enterprise Development**

☑ Technical training in various production aspects increased the knowledge base of participants, enabled them to try new crops, and to harvest vegetables of better quality for sale in local markets and to agribusinesses.

☑ The project promoted diversification of production, and enabled producers to enter the market with new products, attract new buyers, and avoid seasonal gluts.

☑ Provision of simple micro-credit enabled farmers in Zambia and Nepal to purchase small-scale irrigation equipment to expand the area under cultivation and to harvest higher-quality produce. This was done on a limited basis, and management of such credit needs to be addressed. Nevertheless, the most marginalized farmers became capable of production for local markets.

☑ Feasibility studies and discussions with knowledgeable partners helped to identify proven cost-effective, labor-conserving technologies, ensure that technologies were gender-appropriate, assess the potential financial viability of some IGAs, and to test technologies before promotion to groups. While feasibility studies were done in only a few instances, they indicated whether a technology would be profitable and labor-saving before it was promoted to the groups.

☑ Contacts facilitated with agribusinesses led to guaranteed buyers, and to better knowledge on the part of farmers of prices and market demands. In some cases, the agribusinesses provided technical support directly to farmers.

### **6.2.3 Multidisciplinary Approach**

☑ Establishment and training of multi-disciplinary teams of district-level extensionists and line-agency staff improved support to local producers. The training meant that groups were able to harvest good quality vegetables acceptable at local markets. The district teams were able to provide information in a wider range of areas. For example, the district health officer was able to demonstrate composting in her home garden, and the district irrigation officer was able to provide male farmers with information about HIV-AIDS prevention. National governments saw the teams as synergistic and cost-effective.

#### **6.2.4 Capacity Building**

☑ Capacity-building of the groups in basic business skills including literacy, numeracy, accounting, leadership, management, record keeping, and other skills enabled the groups to plan financially, budget for the future, and to keep their own basic records.

☑ Asset creation through modest savings and expansion of land under cultivation enabled the WIN groups in Zambia and Nepal to diversify their production strategies and to invest in small-scale technologies. Savings also gave the groups more confidence, creating pride in their joint ability to save, and motivating them to work together.

☑ Exchange visits provided hands-on opportunities for groups to directly view the IGAs and production techniques introduced at other WIN sites, and created a sense of friendly competition between WIN groups.

#### **6.2.5 Partnership Building**

☑ Collaboration with NGO partners brought strong synergies and complementarities, built on previous community activities and avoided duplication. Partnerships were most effective in identifying and working with marginalized groups overlooked by large irrigation projects.

☑ Frequent district-level workshops involving all stakeholders fostered a sense of mutual support; clarified respective expectations, roles and responsibilities; built a sense of local ownership of the IGAs; and created a sense of transparency and accountability.

#### **6.2.6 Management and Policy**

☑ In Zambia, membership of the project steering committee was expanded to include representation from the business community, LDED-oriented NGOs and other specialized organizations. This made professional business and marketing expertise readily available, broadening the focus of the steering committee and enabling business experts to interact directly with farmers and support staff.

☑ Building effective support and linkages at the policy level has helped to sustain LDED efforts and raise awareness at upper levels of government in Nepal. Senior officials have a better sense of the importance of economic and market forces in the agricultural sector, and appreciation for poorer women as effective producers.



*Photo: Women well-diggers in Siyakwenda, WIN-Zambia, K. Eckman, 2003*

## **7. RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSIONS FOR THE SUPPORT OF LDED**

### **7.1 General Recommendations for LDED**

- Whose initiative? People-centered or top-down?

There is a danger in imposing activities from outside as this often prevents the fostering of local ownership. In Nepal and Zambia, where local groups had themselves identified the IGAs, there was a strong sense of ownership. Thus, participatory planning processes are key as they allow the community to develop LDED activities.

- Maintain flexibility in targeting, and specifically target marginalized communities

Even the poorest and most marginalized groups can benefit from LDED activities, as demonstrated in Nepal and Zambia. Poverty should not restrict people's participation in such activities, nor should their status as ethnic minorities.

- Include LDED aspects in PRAs, and review PRA tools for LDED dimensions

This may require the refinement of existing PRA methods, and facilitators may need further training in LDED-related processes and opportunities. Central to the emergence of new these activities are innovation, experimentation and flexibility.

- Build on Precedent

WIN's partnership with existing projects meant that their experiences informed the development of WIN activities. In Nepal, for example, the experience of WIN's partners in LDED processes increased the adoption of income generating activities and related technologies. The problems experienced by WIN partners in Cambodia (SPFS), Zambia (SIWIP) and Nepal (OFWM) taught valuable lessons on what not to do, such as rigidly following a specific methodology (e.g. SISTAPE) without adapting it to local needs, as this can lead to a loss of interest on the part of participants.

- Ensure adequate resources for LDED-oriented PRAs

PRAs are essential for assessing which LDED activities may be appropriate for a particular community. WIN-Cambodia shows us that a properly conducted PRA is vital for establishing the baseline data for measuring change, assessing needs and priorities, and building consensus on next steps. Economizing on PRAs results in the loss or misinterpretation of key data needed for decision-making and M&E.

- The capacity of the project team and local stakeholders to participate in PRA processes must be assessed, and, if necessary, that capacity strengthened. Existing information and data must also be reviewed. However, secondary data cannot replace the data to be gained from carrying out a PRA with the community.
- Use feasibility assessments when appropriate

Local agencies and NGOs already working in LDED initiatives can help in assessing the feasibility of activities. When appropriate, feasibility studies should be organized through local research institutes and NGOs with prior experience.



- Conduct training needs assessments where appropriate

A training needs assessment should be considered wherever major training activities are to be organized in an LDED-oriented project. It should include participants, extensionists and other support staff, and assess the information needs at each level as appropriate.

- Identify national and local expertise in LDED

When local communities have identified IGAs, it is advisable to uncover and collaborate with local expertise in that particular area. At least one national team member should be capable of assessing feasibility and markets, as well as of providing training to district teams and local stakeholders.

- An inventory of LDED expertise (national and international agencies, consultants, chambers of commerce, national universities and research institutes, entrepreneurs, etc.) should be done at the regional and national levels, to identify resources that might be tapped to support various initiatives.

- Document successful initiatives

Successful cases should be documented to capture promising and best practices.

- Review available LDED materials and curricula:

WIN's experience showed that WIN teams in three countries generally lacked access to LDED-oriented training materials and practical "how-to" extension curricula. An inventory should be made of relevant materials and made available to national and district staff. These should be assessed as to which materials could be usefully translated into local languages. Experienced field staff could be contracted to prepare practical "how-to" handbooks on group organization and training.

- Ensure that adequate resources are available for monitoring:

Greater budgetary resources need to be allocated for monitoring. Monitoring data should include relevant price, output, costing and other economic information to assess the profitability of the initiative. Furthermore, local level capacity to undertake M&E should be built. Log frame approaches to evaluation should be avoided because they may be insensitive to the emergence of grassroots actions.

- Design projects for the long term to maximize sustainable outcomes:

There can be pressure to show positive outputs and economic impacts early in the project cycle when the realities in the field are less than ideal. Strongly participatory projects take time to show results, especially if a pilot project is to develop and test new methods. Most small enterprises need a multiple-year timeframe to gain experience and show a profit. Donors and project planners should avoid ambitious estimates of outputs and indicators in project documents, and design flexible LDED project timeframes of at least four years.

## **7.2 Recommendations for FAO**

FAO should articulate a clear vision for planning and implementing LDED initiatives, as an integral part of its sustainable livelihoods programmes and projects. A comprehensive and inclusive dialogue on a vision of livelihoods diversification and enterprise development needs to be undertaken by FAO and its partners. Perhaps, a regional LDED discussion forum could be organized through WIN-Zambia's steering committee members with broad participation from governments, NGOs, local groups and associations, with a similar event in Nepal involving FAO, GTZ, CARE, ILO and others.

A review of WIN's lessons and experiences has helped to highlight some of the gaps in FAO's promotion of LDED activities. It is hoped that this can lead to the articulation of a vision of LDED within FAO. The following actions are recommended as a first step:

- Call attention to and prioritize LDED and sustainable livelihoods as a legitimate project component in order to address the gap between FAO HQ normative work and field practice. It is important that FAO financial officers realize the importance of timing and that the result of inaction or delay can result in loss of momentum, demoralization, reversal of gains made in local initiatives, and credibility problems for FAO with partners and stakeholders. The gap between normative work in LDED at FAO HQ and the field also needs to be addressed.
- Build advocacy for LDED activities

WIN was not conceptualized as an income-generating project. At WIN's inception there was no institutional unit within FAO concerned specifically with LDED represented on the WIN core team to provide conceptual guidance or technical backstopping. Neither was there a strong advocate or focal point to effectively push for any such initiatives.

Projects need to be conceived of differently, so that technical sectors are recognized as only one component. The aim must be for more diversified, reliable livelihood streams and improved food security and nutrition for poorer households.

- Increase technical backstopping to projects with an LDED dimension  
An LDED expert should be included on project core teams. Regional offices should maintain an inventory of these experts within their region.
- Continue to identify promising and best practices, and integrate them into project design

Focus on asset creation, and building capacities in microfinance, credit, post-harvest value added activities, and business skills among participants. Promote small business development and training among groups, particularly women's groups and ethnic minorities.

- Organize various fora, workshops and working groups on LDED

Fora should be organized at FAO HQ, national and international levels to share experiences and information, and to begin a dialogue on the visioning process. The outcome should be a common strategy and agenda to further support the LDED efforts of governments and rural households. This requires broad input from stakeholders at multiple levels.

- Reform internal administrative processes

FAO's internal accounting and administrative procedures can have a negative impact on people-centered project activities and emerging LDED activities. Many constraints occurred due to procedural, administrative or conceptual rigidity within FAO<sup>38</sup>. For example, new LDED activities in Zambia were identified during PRAs that were not in the Annual Work Plan and Budget (AWPB). Funds to support those activities were therefore not approved by FAO finance officers at the national and HQ levels. Demands for justification of the activities were sent from FAO HQ, resulting in long delays and/or inaction.

- Based on WIN's experience, certain institutional reforms should be considered to better enable FAO to support LDED. These include:

- ➔ Increased flexibility in project documents, annual work plans and budgets;
- ➔ Decentralization of financial authorization to the national level.
- ➔ Adequate institutional support and resources for LDED at all levels;
- ➔ More expertise in LDED made available at the regional and national levels;
- ➔ Build in LDED outcome indicators in project monitoring and evaluation frameworks.

- Build LDED expertise at national level

The national WIN teams generally lacked expertise in LDED activities such as food processing, business skills development, and microfinance. The teams in Nepal and Zambia worked closely with NGO partners to address such issues. In Zambia some expertise was included in the national steering committee. WIN-Cambodia benefited from having one part-time national consultant who specialized in microfinance, with various international consulting missions also providing technical backstopping support. However, such missions were costly and tended to overwhelm the national team with many recommendations which were often not taken up.

- Prepare flexible work plans and annual budgets

Annual work plans and budgets should be made less rigid, allowing initiatives identified at grassroots level to emerge and to flourish.

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<sup>38</sup> For further information on this see LSP Working Paper No. 15 "Applying People-Centered Approaches in FAO: Some Practical Lessons" by Baumann, P., Bruno, M. Cleary, D., DuBois, O. and Flores, X. (2004)

- Place a prominent link to LDED on the FAO website

FAO's activities, materials and case studies on LDED should be made widely available via Internet to other organizations and field projects.

- Broaden the mandate and composition of national steering committees

Some projects could benefit from a national level advisory group for the purpose of technically advising and backstopping LDED staff. This suggestion may be more feasible in some countries than others. National expertise in LDED may already be fully tapped, and not able to participate. An alternative model is the broadly-based steering committee formed by WIN-Zambia, with strong representation from NGOs, national universities, small business associations, chambers of commerce and others with professional experience in LDED.

- Policy dimensions

While projects may use decentralized participatory planning methods, the programs of governments and line ministries still take place in a traditional top-down manner. Local coordinating bodies need greater control over situation analysis, planning, resource allocation and M & E functions<sup>39</sup>. The experience of WIN and other people-centered projects may have an important role to play in advocating for institutional reform.

### **7.3 Conclusions**

Most WIN groups have only one to two years of experience with their IGAs, and are still learning to manage their businesses and are gaining experience with each new production cycle. We are still learning about the longer-term outcomes and impacts of the pilot WIN approach and its practices, and do not yet know the longer-term feasibility of the initiatives taken by the groups. However, some preliminary observations and conclusions can be drawn.

#### **1. Did WIN's multi-disciplinary approach foster the emergence of local enterprises?**

Yes, because the enterprises in Nepal and Zambia would not have emerged without WIN's core role in group strengthening and capacity building in IGA and other topics.

#### **2. How did this process occur?**

A tentative conclusion is that a combination of practices and processes led to the more promising outcomes. Each in itself would not likely result in a successful outcome. For example, PRA and community action planning might not lead to a successful IGA. The presence of a well-trained multi-disciplinary team alone would not necessarily result in a cohesive local group managing their own enterprise. Capacity-building or business training in a specific IGA does not mean that a successful enterprise will materialize (as we saw in the Cambodia food processing example). It was the combination and integrated linking of these and other people-centered practices in a holistic process-oriented manner that led to the identification, start-up and operation of new economic enterprises by local people.

Most of the organizational practices used by WIN (PRA, community action planning, PM & E, etc.) are common to many SL projects. Other practices are more specific to LDED

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<sup>39</sup> Callens, K, 2004

initiatives (management training, leadership skills development, accounting, business and marketing training, feasibility assessments, etc.). The effective combining of these created the conditions for the pursuit of LDED activities.

Many participants were able to diversify their livelihoods after WIN's intervention. In Nepal, WIN participants previously earned their livelihoods as indentured laborers, who, when freed from bondage lived in squatter camps with few resources and limited economic capacity. Others lived in irrigation command areas but without access to arable land or irrigation, and consequently worked as agricultural laborers, foraged from forests, or were marginalized subsistence producers. In Zambia, WIN participants were generally subsistence maize farmers in rain fed areas. Many were co-wives in polygamous households with little control over decisions, resources or their own labor.

By 2003, participants were able to add market-oriented vegetables, livestock, fish and other outputs to their production systems. The WIN groups saved money, and put new land into market-oriented production on a group basis, using micro-irrigation technologies. Their farming systems and crop mix became more diversified, and brought the possibility of selling the new outputs at local markets. As a group, women were generally able to control their collective resources, although changing power relationships at the household level have yet to be explored.

WIN introduced a change in local thinking, recognising the contribution of women to the local economy and so raising the confidence of previously marginalised producers. Some income has been gained from the modest levels of sales of animals, vegetables, eggs and fodder. There are significant variations from site to site, and country to country, as regards participants' capacity to enter the market with their produce. There is also variation in the degree to which participants have adopted the technologies introduced. This may be due to the short time period that WIN was operational in the three countries. Because there have been only limited opportunities to communicate with participants since WIN's termination it is difficult to quantify the actual level of activity in the marketplace by WIN participants. We saw that groups in Nepal and Zambia had more motivation and initiative, higher investments of time and local resources, and a clearer sense of ownership of their IGAs than in Cambodia, where the combination and linking of supportive practices was not as evident. Ultimately, it was the leadership style of the national coordinator that determines this iterative linking process, especially when supported by a constructive policy environment and encouragement from the CTA and project core team.

### **3. Do gaps exist in the WIN practices? Did some operational practices hinder the emergence of IGAs?**

Clearly yes! A major gap was the absence of a specific LDED strategy, guidelines or backstopping capacity, both in the project document and in the institutional support available to the teams in the field. A related factor was the lack of LDED expertise among WIN team members at all levels.

Similarly, centralized decision making and top-down project planning also hindered the emergence of local LDED initiatives. WIN-Cambodia does not appear to be as successful in achieving promising LDED outcomes as Nepal and Zambia. Furthermore, centralized budgetary control at HQ essentially undercut decision-making and management by the WIN national coordinators in their efforts to promote LDED and other activities.

The approaches and technologies tested and introduced by WIN have shown promise for broader application. First, WIN's multi-disciplinary district team concept has been tested in various contexts with very good results, especially in Nepal and Zambia. Both national governments have observed that the approach is cost-effective in terms of maximizing human resources, and reduces duplication of effort. Second, the people-centered planning approaches used by the WIN teams have resulted in a variety of local self-help actions. Third, technologies tested and introduced have resulted in diversifying income streams, or improved household food security.

In sum, the experience of WIN in Nepal and Zambia has shown that the iterative use of people-centered practices, and decentralized management can create a more constructive environment for local action. Once enabling conditions have been established, even the poorest farmers will seize the opportunity to diversify their production systems and income streams, and will initiate their own IGAs.

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## Further Information about the LSP

The Livelihood Support Programme (LSP) works through the following sub-programmes:

### **Improving People's Access to Natural Resources**

Access of the poor to natural assets is essential for sustainable poverty reduction. The livelihoods of rural people with limited or no access to natural resources are vulnerable because have difficulty in obtaining food, accumulating assets and recuperating after shocks or misfortunes.

### **Participation, Policy and Local Governance**

Local people, especially the poor, often have weak or indirect influence on policies that affect their livelihoods. Policies that developed at the central level are often not responsive to local needs and may not enable access of the rural poor to needed assets and services.

### **Livelihoods Diversification and Enterprise Development**

Diversification can assist households to insulate themselves from environmental and economic shocks, trends and seasonality – in effect, to be less vulnerable. Livelihoods diversification is complex, and strategies can include enterprise development.

### **Natural Resource Conflict Management**

Resources conflicts are often about access to and control over natural assets that are fundamental to the livelihoods of many poor people. Therefore, the shocks caused by these conflicts can increase the vulnerability of the poor.

### **Institutional Learning**

The institutional learning sub-programme functions as a service provider to the overall programme, by building a training programme that responds to the emerging needs and priorities identified through the work of the other sub-programmes.

### **Capacity Building**

The capacity building sub-programme functions as a service-provider to the overall programme, by building a training programme that responds to the emerging needs and priorities identified through the work of the other sub-programmes.

### **People-centred Approaches in Different Cultural Contexts**

A critical review and comparison of different recent development approaches used in different development contexts is being conducted, drawing on experience at the strategic and field levels in different sectors and regions.

### **Mainstreaming Sustainable Livelihoods Approaches in the Field**

FAO designs resource management projects worth more than US\$1.5 billion per year. Since smallholder agriculture continues to be the main livelihood source for most of the world's poor, if some of these projects could be improved, the potential impact could be substantial.

### **Sustainable Livelihoods Referral and Response Facility**

A Referral and Response Facility has been established to respond to the increasing number of requests from within FAO for assistance in integrating sustainable livelihoods and people-centred approaches into both new and existing programmes and activities.

For further information on the Livelihood Support Programme,  
Contact the programme coordinator:  
E-mail: [LSP@fao.org](mailto:LSP@fao.org)



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Livelihood Support Programme (LSP)

Email: [LSP@fao.org](mailto:LSP@fao.org)

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