



## **Basic Skills in Participatory Extension Planning Human Resource Development Unit**

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| <b>1. COURSE OBJECTIVES</b> .....  | <b>4</b>  |
| <b>DAY I</b> .....   | <b>6</b>  |
| <b>2. OPENING SESSION</b> .....  | <b>7</b>  |
| 2.1 FEARS AND EXPECTATIONS.....  | 8         |
| 2.2 GROUND RULES .....   | 8         |
| 2.3 SCHEDULE.....  | 8         |
| 2.4 OUTPUT OF THE TRAINING .....   | 8         |
| 2.5 METHODOLOGY .....  | 8         |
| <b>3. INTRODUCTION TO EXTENSION</b> .....                                | <b>10</b> |
| 3.1 WHAT IS EXTENSION? .....   | 11        |
| 3.2 AGRICULTURAL KNOWLEDGE INFORMATION SYSTEM (AKIS) .....               | 11        |
| 3.3 WHAT IS THE PURPOSE OF EXTENSION?.....                               | 12        |
| 3.4 FARMERS' DECISION-MAKING PROCESS.....                                | 12        |
| <b>4. BASIC COMMUNICATION SKILLS</b> .....                               | <b>14</b> |
| 4.1 WHAT IS COMMUNICATION? .....   | 15        |
| 4.2 IMPORTANCE OF BODY LANGUAGE COMPARED WITH VERBAL COMMUNICATION ..... | 15        |
| 4.3 THE EMPTY ROOM ROLE PLAY.....  | 16        |
| 4.4 THE NAUGHTY STUDENT ROLE PLAY.....                                   | 17        |
| 4.5 THE INFLUENCE OF CULTURE ON VERBAL AND NON-VERBAL COMMUNICATION..... | 18        |
| 4.6 ACTIVE LISTENING .....   | 19        |
| 4.7 PROBING .....  | 20        |
| 4.8 FORMULATING OPEN QUESTIONS GROUP WORK .....                          | 21        |
| 4.9 'WHY' ROLE PLAY.....   | 22        |
| 4.10 LIVESTOCK INFORMAL DIALOGUE ROLE PLAY .....                         | 23        |
| 4.11 FORMULATING PROBING QUESTIONS GROUP WORK.....                       | 25        |
| 4.12 SOME USEFUL DISCUSSION TECHNIQUES.....                              | 26        |
| <b>DAY II</b> .....  | <b>27</b> |
| REVIEW OF THE PREVIOUS DAY .....   | 28        |
| <b>5. FINDING OUT PROBLEMS AND ROOT CAUSES</b> .....                     | <b>29</b> |
| 5.1 ATTITUDE OF THE FARMER.....  | 30        |
| 5.2 PUTTING THE FARMER AT EASE.....                                      | 30        |
| 5.3 STRUCTURING DISCUSSIONS.....   | 31        |
| 5.4 ROLE PLAY PRACTISING FINDING OUT PROBLEMS AND ROOT CAUSES.....       | 32        |
| <b>6. FINDING OUT PROBLEMS AND ROOT CAUSES WITH FARMERS</b> .....        | <b>33</b> |
| 6.1 EVALUATION OF THE DISCUSSIONS.....                                   | 34        |
| <b>DAY III</b> .....   | <b>35</b> |
| <b>7. MAKING A PROBLEM TREE IN THE TRAINING ROOM</b> .....               | <b>36</b> |
| 7.1 POTATO SECTOR PROBLEM TREE GROUP WORK.....                           | 40        |
| 7.2 PROBLEMS SUGGESTED BY EXTENSION WORKERS.....                         | 42        |
| 7.3 PRIORITISING PROBLEMS .....  | 42        |
| 7.4 IDENTIFYING PROBLEMS ROLE PLAY .....                                 | 42        |
| 7.5 IDENTIFYING PROBLEMS GROUP WORK.....                                 | 44        |
| 7.6 PROBLEM-CAUSE-PROBLEM GROUP WORK.....                                | 46        |

|               |   |           |
|---------------|---|-----------|
| 7.7           | PROBLEM TREE FOR MAIZE PRODUCTION IN ZEBOK VALLEY, BADAKSHAN..... | 47        |
| 7.8           | GROUP WORK.....   | 50        |
| <b>8.</b>     | <b>MAKING A PROBLEM TREE WITH FARMERS .....</b>                   | <b>53</b> |
| <b>DAY IV</b> | <b>.....</b>  | <b>55</b> |
| <b>9.</b>     | <b>MAKING AN EXTENSION PLAN.....</b>                              | <b>56</b> |
| 9.1           | COMPLETING THE EXTENSION PLAN .....                               | 57        |
| 9.2           | EXTENSION PLAN.....   | 58        |
| 9.3           | EXTENSION PLAN ROLE PLAY/GROUP WORK.....                          | 60        |
| 9.4           | COMMON MISTAKES MADE DURING INFORMAL DIALOGUES .....              | 60        |

## **1. COURSE OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of the training course are:

**participants are able to define what extension means**

**participants have improved communication skills**

**participants are able to apply the basic skills of problem tree analysis**

**participants are able to apply the basic skills of participatory extension planning**

## WORKING SCHEDULE

| DAY   | TIME      | PROGRAMME ITEM                             | TIME    |
|-------|-----------|--|---------|
| Day 1 | Morning   | Opening Session                            | 40 min  |
|       |           | Introduction to Extension                  | 80 min  |
|       | Afternoon | Basic Communication Skills                 | 45 min  |
|       |           | Informal Dialogues                         | 90 min  |
| Day 2 | Morning   | Informal Dialogues in the Selected Village | 180 min |
|       | Afternoon | Evaluation of the Informal Dialogues       | 30 min  |
|       |           | Making a Problem Tree in the Training Room | 150 min |
| Day 3 | Morning   | Problem tree with farmers                  | 180 min |
|       | Afternoon | Feedback on Problem Tree                   | 120 min |
| Day 4 | Morning   | Making an Extension Plan                   | 45 min  |

# DAY I

## **2. OPENING SESSION**

### **Objectives**

**the training course is opened;**  
**the participants know each other;**  
**the objectives of the training are clear;**

### **Methods**

- Verbal explanation;
- Group discussion.

### **Time needed**

60 minutes.

Introduction to let everybody get to know each other – game

## **2.1 Fears and Expectations**

Briefly outline the trainees' expectations and fears on different coloured cards. Pin the cards on the board and reflect on the key fears and expectations highlighted by the participants and explain those who are present must not feel that their communication skills are weak. But they are the people who are most aware and who want to improve their lifestyle and work style by learning better communication

## **2.2 Ground Rules**

Ask the participants to state what is allowed and what is not. Get consensus and write them on a flip chart. The rules should be followed by all.

## **2.3 Schedule**

Show the trainees the Workshop Schedule. Point out the topics to be covered. Be sure to emphasise the need to be on time for all sessions and to observe the ground rules

## **2.4 Output of the Training**

Tell the trainees that the objective of the training is to improve communication skills, to learn problem tree analysis skills and to produce an extension plan using problem tree analysis techniques.

## **2.5 Methodology**

We will prepare the problem tree analysis and then the extension plan using a participatory method which has six steps:

### **Six Steps for Preparing a Participatory Extension Plan**

|               |   |
|---------------|---|
| <b>Step 1</b> | <b>Identify problems and opportunities for farmers, through informal dialogue</b>   |
| <b>Step 2</b> | <b>Make a problem tree analysis with farmers on a selected sector of farming system</b>   |
| <b>Step 3</b> | <b>Select with farmers the problems which the extension service can address</b>   |
| <b>Step 4</b> | <b>Decide on the content of the extension messages, identify the target groups, and select the most appropriate extension methods</b> |
| <b>Step 5</b> | <b>Make an extension plan</b>   |
| <b>Step 6</b> | <b>Finalise the plan with the farmers.</b>  |



- In the first step, farmers can express freely their individual problems.
- In the second, all problems in a selected sector of the agricultural system are listed logically into a problem tree.
- In the third step, the farmers select their priorities for extension.
- In the next step, the Extension Workers take the lead. Combining the information from the farmers and their own expertise, they identify the content of the extension message, the target group and the extension methods.
- Based on this, they make a plan
- Finally the plan is discussed with the farmers and adjusted if necessary.

In our training, we will follow the 6 steps mentioned above. The technique of making a problem tree is applied twice. The first time, it is done with the participants in the training room and a second time with the farmers in the field.

### 3. INTRODUCTION TO EXTENSION

#### Objectives

Participants have a common understanding of the role of extension in agricultural development;

#### Methods

- brainstorming

#### Time needed

45 minutes.

### 3.1 What is Extension?

Brainstorm the trainees on a definition for 'extension'. Write their suggestions on a flip chart.

Many people have made definitions of what extension is. One of them reads:

**'Extension involves the focussed use of communication to help people to form opinions and make good decisions'**

Ask the trainees to explain what this means in their own words. Ask them if they agree with this definition.

Ensure that 'focussed' is understood to mean that the communication is on carefully selected subjects or issues.

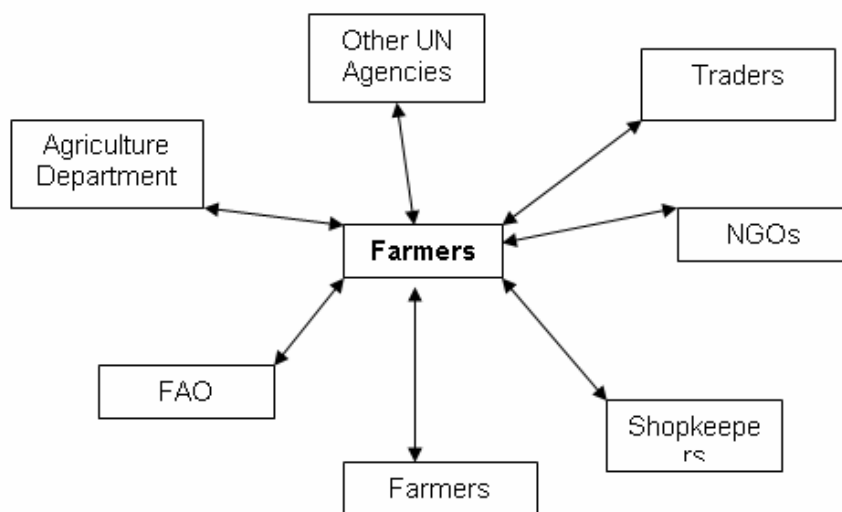
If their definitions are all concerned with transfer of technology or information from extension workers to farmers then point out to them that extension, according to DACAAR, is to do with the exchange of information.

### 3.2 Agricultural Knowledge Information System (AKIS)

It says above that extension is primarily concerned with supporting people to exchange information. Let us identify who these people are. Brainstorm the trainees on who are all the parties involved in the agricultural sector. Draw a diagram for the trainees putting the farmer in the centre of the chart and linking all other stakeholders with arrows going both ways in order to emphasise that there is an exchange of information not a transfer of information.

Farmers are the most important target group, but policy makers, researchers, traders and other parties are also part of the agriculture sector. We can call this network of stakeholders the Agricultural Knowledge Information System or AKIS.

#### Agricultural Knowledge Information System



### 3.3 What is the Purpose of Extension?

Brainstorm the trainees on what is the immediate purpose of agricultural extension. Write their suggestions on a flip chart.

**The principal purpose of agricultural extension is to stimulate the exchange of knowledge, skills and information between all parties involved in the agricultural sector in a certain area or region.**

If the trainees have given suggestions which emphasise the transfer of information or farmers then remind them again that extension is concerned with the exchange of information. The exchange of knowledge, skills and information between members of the AKIS helps farmers to make good decisions because they are provided with good information.

Remind the trainees that the exchange of information, knowledge and skills between AKIS members to a certain extent, already goes on everyday. The general role of extension is therefore to increase and improve this exchange and to be a strong player in the AKIS system.

Chart 1

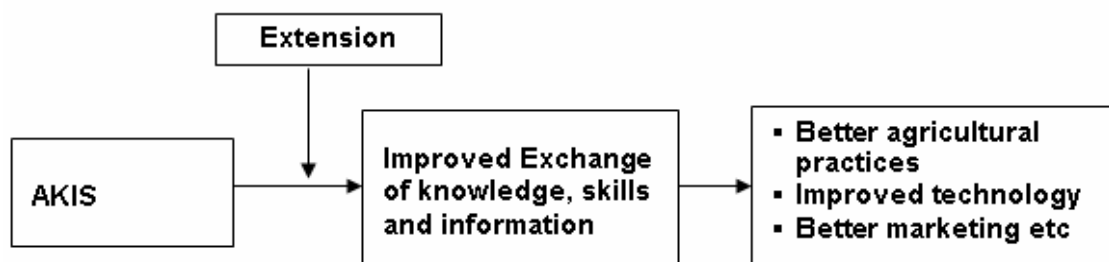


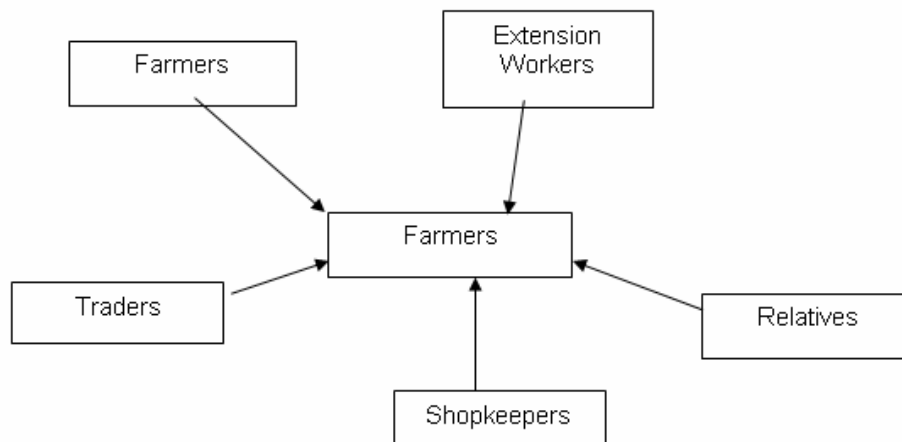
Chart 2

|                             |   |
|-----------------------------|---|
| <b>Goal</b>                 | Sustainable return of refugees  |
| <b>Purpose</b>              | Increased production  |
| <b>Immediate Objectives</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Better agriculture practices</li> <li>• Improved technology</li> <li>• Better marketing etc</li> </ul> |
| <b>Activities</b>           | Extension Activities  |

### 3.4 Farmers' Decision-Making Process

Brainstorm the trainees on who influences a farmer's decisions with regard to agriculture eg. which crops to plant, when to plant, when to harvest, when to fertilise etc.

## The People who Influence Farmers' Agriculture-Related Decision-making



Ask the trainees who they think influences farmers most.

Usually it is other farmers who influence farmers most. Ask the trainees whether this is a good thing or not.

The influence of other farmers works positively and negatively; positively it means that if you can persuade one farmer to try a new practice then it will be easier to persuade others, negatively it means that farmers do not like to do things different from all the other farmers around them.

It is also true that farmers are influenced by all other stakeholders in the AKIS system.

Explain to the trainees that if farmers' decisions are so influenced by people other than the extension worker then in order to improve the farmers' decisions it makes sense to focus on all the stakeholders in the AKIS and not to think that the extension worker alone will influence the farmer to adopt new practices. To improve an agricultural system it is far better to improve the information and the process of exchanging information in the whole AKIS system rather than just concentrating on one area of information exchange.

Ask the trainees to give examples of what work they are already doing on each of the linkages they have given in the AKIS system (farmer to farmer, farmer to FAO, farmer to local Agriculture Departments etc).

Emphasise to the trainees again that the extension system should be the strengthening of information exchange between the stakeholders in the AKIS system and should not be seen as the transfer of new technology to farmers

#### **4. BASIC COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

##### **Objective**

**Participants are aware of the importance of non-verbal communication;**

**Participants know the importance of active listening;**

**Participants have improved skills in dialogue**

**Participants know how to avoid leading questions.**

##### **Method**

- lecture
- role playing
- group work

##### **Time needed**

4 hours

## 4.1 What is Communication?

### Do the Empty Room Role Play.

As long as two people are aware of each other's presence, they communicate, in other words they interact with one another and, in doing so, they convey messages to each other.

Ask the trainees what messages two people might be conveying to each other even if they are not doing or saying anything:

- I am not interested in you
- You look so important that I am afraid to talk to you
- I am so comfortable and used to you that I do not need to speak to communicate with you (as for example when two friends are sitting together reading the newspaper or watching something).

## 4.2 Importance of Body Language compared with Verbal Communication

We can say therefore that communication can be either verbal (i.e. words are spoken or written) or non-verbal. Make sure the trainees understand this.

### Do the Naughty Student Role Play.

Explain to the trainees that non-verbal communication is often just as important as verbal communication.

Ask the trainees which they think is more important; verbal or non-verbal communication?

In fact it probably depends on the situation which is more important but there is no doubt that often non-verbal communication is very important.

It is generally believed that verbal communication is mostly concerned with the **information content** of communication. Non-verbal communication says more about the **relationship** between the sender and the receiver.

Non-verbal communication is usually called **body language**.

### **4.3 The Empty Room Role Play**

One person is sitting alone in a room. Another person comes in, walk across the room in an arrogant manner without greeting or looking at the first person, and sits down.

As soon as the second person comes into the room, the first person jumps up in a frightened manner, puts his head down, stares at his feet and generally looks very nervous. He does not speak.

The Role Play Ends

As the trainees whether they think any communication took place between the two people in the room?

- Was the communication verbal?
- What kind of communication was it?



#### **4.4 The Naughty Student Role Play**

A student is sitting on the floor doing his work.

The teacher comes in; the student jumps up, greets the teacher and starts looking nervous. The teacher looks at the student for about 5 seconds making the student even more nervous. The teacher tells the student that someone has broken a window. The student immediately starts to protest his innocence whilst at the same time demonstrating much evidence in his body language that in fact he feels very guilty.

He twists his hands together, moves his feet around, hangs his head, talks too fast, only glances very quickly at the teacher before lowering his eyes again.

The Role Play ends.

- Ask the trainees whether they think the student broke the window?
- Ask the trainees how they know this if he has said that he did not do it?

#### **4.5 The Influence of Culture on Verbal and Non-Verbal Communication**

Ask the trainees whether verbal and non-verbal communication are influenced by culture? Ask for examples. Which is more influenced by culture? Ask for examples. It is generally believed that non-verbal communication is related more to culture than verbal communication.

Ask the trainees for some examples of the areas of non-verbal communication which are significantly influenced by culture:

- greetings,
- clothing,
- the space people usually put between each other when sitting or talking together
- hand gestures etc

Ask the trainees whether in the traditional Afghan greeting system, verbal or non-verbal communication is more important. When Afghans greet each other they tend not to put too much importance on the verbal communication but a lot of importance on the physical moves which both persons make. Ask the trainees what relevance this has for Extension Workers.

Ask the trainees whether this is just a matter of people from different countries having different cultures. There are significant differences within Afghanistan between the cultures of urban and rural people and also between tribes, Provinces, Districts and even villages.

Ask the trainees whether these differences are important to extension workers? All those working with communities should be careful to find out what the local culture is and to respect it. Ask the trainees to tell you some aspects of the local culture in which they are working which they have had to follow.

## 4.6 Active Listening

Ask trainees what do they think is the most important part of good communication? The most important issue in good communication is good listening.

**The skill of good dialogue is to be interested not interesting**

Ask trainees what they think this means.

It means that it is more important to be a good listener than a good speaker.

### **Bad Listening Habits**

Ask the trainees to list the things that some people do instead of listening carefully:

- After listening for a short time, sometimes people think that they understand the main points and let their minds wander to other matters
- Becoming upset or angry at certain words or phrases and stopping listening
- Quickly feeling that what we hear is boring or does not make sense
- People can always think faster than someone else can talk and so often the mind wanders whilst other people are talking - Daydreaming
- If we do not immediately understand what we are listening to, stopping listening rather than asking for explanations
- If we hear something, which seems to challenge some of our favourite ideas, rejecting it and everything else that is said after that.
- Finishing other people's sentences for them
- Interrupting people

### **Good Listening Habits.**

- Listen carefully when others are talking.
- Stress the importance of silence. Ask the participants to try to wait at least 3 seconds between the time a farmer stops talking before asking a new question.
- Let people know you are listening by occasionally saying 'yes, I see' etc
- Use good body language such as: maintaining eye contact, turning the face towards the speaker

Good Listening is called Active Listening. Ask the trainees if active listening is important for good extension work.

### **Asking Questions**

Asking good questions is a skill and an art which is most important to extension workers. There are basically three major types of question.

Ask the trainees if they can think of the major types of question.

#### **Direct Questions**

Direct questions ask for straightforward facts e.g., how many cows do you have? what was the yield of your maize field last year ?

### **Leading Questions**

In leading questions the person asking the questions tries to get the discussion partner to agree with the questioner's point of view eg. 'Don't you think this plot needs weeding?', 'Shouldn't you be using more fertiliser?', 'Wouldn't it be better if you pruned these trees?'

### **Open Questions**

Open questions do not direct the response of the discussion partner but instead allow free expression.

Ask the trainees for many examples of the three types of questions until you are sure they understand.

- Do the Formulating Open Questions Group Work.

### **4.7 Probing**

The purpose of this training is to learn how to make an analysis of root causes of problems with farmers (problem tree analysis). In order to get the information from the farmers about root causes we have to find out a lot of information from farmers and we do this, using open questions. This process of using open questions to find out root causes is called **Probing**.

Probing means getting deeper and deeper into the reasons for things by guiding the discussion partner to explain his point of view. There are many ways of probing but in general we can say that probing is done by asking: Why, How, Where and Who.

- Do the 'Why' role play
- Do the Livestock Informal Dialogue role-play with the trainees
- Do the 'Formulating Probing Questions Assignment' group work

#### 4.8 Formulating Open Questions Group Work

Explain to the trainees that here are four short dialogues between farmers and Extension Workers. Each time the farmer says something; this Extension Worker asks him a leading question instead of an open question. Ask the trainees to suggest the open questions which the Extension Worker should have asked the farmer. When the groups have finished, ask the groups to present their suggested open questions; give each group a chance to speak.

|                  | <b>Dialogue between Farmer and Extension Worker</b>                        | <b>Suggested Open Questions (for the trainer only)</b> |
|------------------|--|--|
| Farmer           | I think this crop here is very good.                                       |  |
| Extension Worker | I suppose you think this crop is good because of the number of maize cobs? | Why do you think this crop is good?                    |
| Farmer           | I think this variety is alright for this area.                             |  |
| Extension Worker | Don't you think the plants are too short?                                  | What do you like about this variety?                   |
| Farmer           | I prefer this variety.   |  |
| Extension Worker | You prefer this because of the colour, right?                              | Why do you prefer this one?                            |
| Farmer           | The yield of this variety is very good.                                    |  |
| Extension Worker | By yield, you must mean it has more pods per plant. Isn't that right?      | Could you please explain what you mean by yield?       |

#### 4.9 'Why' Role Play

Explain to the trainees that this is a short dialogue between a farmer and extension worker.

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| Farmer           | The corn crop is never very good here.                |
| Extension Worker | Why is that?  |
| Farmer           | Well, we always plant late.                           |
| Extension Worker | Why is that?  |
| Farmer           | Because we have to mend the intakes.                  |
| Extension Worker | Why do you have to do that ?                          |
| Farmer           | Because the spring floods break them down every year. |

Ask the trainees the following questions:

Did the extension worker ask any leading questions (No).

Was he probing (Yes)

Was he successful if finding out a significant cause of poor maize yield in the area (yes)

What is the major cause of low maize yield in the area (labour shortage or late planting the trainer should accept either).

#### 4.10 Livestock Informal Dialogue Role Play

Two people should carry out the following role play.

| Speaker          | Question   | Type of Question (for Trainer only)  |
|------------------|--|--|
| Extension Worker | How many cows do you have?   | Direct Question  |
| Farmer           | Two; one cow and one calf  |  |
| Extension Worker | How much milk does your cow produce?   | Direct Question  |
| Farmer           | 2 seers per day  |  |
| Extension Worker | That is not much is it?  | Leading question because it leads the farmer to think the yield of his cow is not good.  |
| Farmer           | No, it is very low.  |  |
| Extension Worker | Which breed is your cow?   | Leading question because the Extension Worker immediately has assumed and leads the farmer to assume that the low milk production is due to the breed. |
| Farmer           | Local breed  |  |
| Extension Worker | We have just met another farmer with a crossbreed cow; which breed would you prefer? | Leading question – leading the farmer to assume that the situation will be improved by introducing a new breed.  |
| Farmer           | A crossbreed   |  |
| Extension Worker | If there were to be an artificial insemination station here, would you use it?       | Leading Question   |
| Farmer           | Yes, of course.  |  |

Show the trainees the dialogue written on a flip chart (with a blank column for Type of Question’).

Ask the trainees to analyse the type of questions which the Extension Worker asked.

The first two questions are direct questions. The combination of the second, third and fourth forms a kind of leading question because it is the extension worker who leads the farmer into the analysis that the low yield of the cow is caused by its breed.

**Now do the second role play.**

|                  |   |   |
|------------------|---|---|
| Extension Worker | How many cows do you have?                              | Direct Question   |
| Farmer           | Two; one cow and one calf                               |   |
| Extension Worker | How much milk does your cow produce?                    | Direct Question   |
| Farmer           | 2 seers per day.  |   |
| Extension Worker | Do any other cows round here produce more than that?    | Probing question to find the farmers' opinion of the level of milk production from his cow. |
| Farmer           | Yes, my neighbour's cow always produces more than that. |   |
| Extension Worker | Why is that do you think?                               | Probing question to find out 'why'  |
| Farmer           | He feeds his cow alfalfa all year round.                |   |
| Extension Worker | Why don't you do the same?                              | Probing question still asking 'why'   |
| Farmer           | He is very rich and I have little land.                 |   |

Put the second dialogue up on a flip chart and ask the trainees to analyse the second set of questions from the Extension Worker.

Ask the trainees to comment on the different information which the first and second Extension Workers gained from the same farmer.



#### 4.11 Formulating Probing Questions Group Work

Explain to the trainees that this is a series of seven short dialogues between the extension worker and the farmer. In each case the farmer makes a comment on the crop or variety and the Extension Worker should think of some probing or open questions to ask the farmer so as to find out more about the farmer's opinion, beliefs or experience.

The suggested probing questions in brackets are for the trainer only.

When the groups have finished, ask the groups to present their suggested open questions; give each group a chance to speak]

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| Extension Worker | What do you think about this crop?  |
| Farmer           | The plants are well developed, full of leaves and have many pods  |
| Extension Worker | [Do you prefer lots of leaves and pods? Why is that?]<br>[Why do you think this crop is so well developed?] |

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| Extension Worker | What do you like about this crop?  |
| Farmer           | You see, it's really leafy; I mean well developed or bushy, and so it will produce more; the leaves aren't too big or too small. |
| Extension Worker | [Why is the size of leaf important?]<br>[Why do you think this crop is well developed?]  |

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| Extension Worker | How do you decide which plants are the best?  |
| Farmer           | What I always look at is the number of seeds the pods have, and this plant has pods with 4-5 seeds in each. |
| Extension Worker | [Why is the number of seeds important?]   |

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| Extension Worker | What do you prefer about this variety?  |
| Farmer           | The thickness of the grain, because then it goes further in filling the sack.                         |
| Extension Worker | [What else do you like about this variety?]<br>[Is there anything you don't like about this variety?] |

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| Extension Worker | Why do you grow this variety?  |
| Farmer           | I like to grow this variety for selling it, as the price is good; of course, I always keep a little for the house. |
| Extension Worker | [Why do you keep some for the house?]<br>[Why do you think this variety gets a good price?]                        |

|                  |  |
|------------------|--|
| Extension Worker | Will you grow this variety next year?  |
| Farmer           | I think so, it's colour is good, like the other variety, which everyone asks for. It's the most popular one. |
| Extension Worker | [Why do you like the colour?]<br>[Why is this variety so popular?]   |

|                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| Extension Worker | What do you think about this crop?  |
| Farmer           | Well, what should I say ..... Uh, look, I think the plants are a little diseased.   |
| Extension Worker | [How can you tell it is diseased?]<br>[What do you think causes this disease?]<br>[What do you usually do when the crop gets this disease?] |

#### 4.12 Some Useful Discussion Techniques

Often discussions with farmers are difficult because there are many issues which the farmer wants to bring up and so it is difficult to find the root causes of each problem. Then the extension worker has to try and keep to one subject at a time. Here are some techniques for keeping discussion with farmers going along the subject that the Extension Worker is interested in.

| Discussion Technique  | Examples  |
|---|---|
| Restating what the farmer has just said (the mirror technique)  | So it is drought resistant .....  |
| Repeat a remark that has just been made, in the form of a question. By doing this, the Extension Worker invites the farmer to give more details.  | So it is drought resistant?   |
| Go back and repeat a comment made earlier. This can help to steer the farmer's flow of comments in a direction you think important  | Earlier you said this variety was drought resistant .....   |
| Summarise in your own words what you understand the farmer has said and ask whether your summary is correct.  | ..... have I understood you correctly?  |
| Be prepared to admit when you have not understood   | I am not sure I understand you correctly; I think you said .....  |
| Asking farmers to compare two situations is also useful.  | Farmer: There are a lot of pests.<br>Extension Worker: Are there more this year than last year?                               |
| The balanced question finding out the farmer's opinion about a specific issue, while also making clear that we are not being judgmental.  | I saw some fields with crops planted on ridges and some others where this was not the case. Which do you think works better?' |
| Challenging a farmer can also be a useful technique. When farmers complain a lot, they can be asked what they themselves have done to solve the problems - or are they waiting for outsiders to perform miracles? | So have any of you done anything to solve this problem?   |
| Proper observations can help to identify problems and opportunities of which the farmer is not aware.   |   |

Ask the trainees do they have any more examples.

# DAY II

## Review of the Previous Day

Ask trainees the following questions in order to assess how much they have understood of the previous day's training.

1. Give an example of a situation where non-verbal communication is more important than verbal communication?
2. Describe what is meant by active listening?
3. Give an example of an open question, a direct question and a leading question.

In order to ensure that participants have understood about open questions, ask all participants in turn to give an example of an open question in response to one of the following statements from farmers.

| Farmer's Statement  | Open Question (For the Trainer only)  |
|---|---|
| I prefer this variety   | <i>Why do you like this variety?</i>  |
| I plant my potatoes on both sides of the row                          | <i>Why do you do that? Do all the farmers in the village do that? Have you always done that?</i>                |
| I always plant alfalfa in my plum orchard between the fruit trees     |   |
| I think this variety is drought resistant                             | <i>What makes you think it is drought resistant? Do you prefer a drought resistant variety?</i>                 |
| The stalk is too long on these  | <i>Why do you prefer a shorter stalk?</i>   |
| The yield of potatoes is always poor here                             | <i>Why is the potato yield always poor here?</i>  |
| There are always a lot of pests and diseases at this time of the year | <i>Why are there a lot of pests and diseases at this time of the year? What do you do about it?</i>             |
| I often plant my wheat very late                                      | <i>Why do you plant your wheat late? What problems does late planting of wheat cause you?</i>                   |
| I use only urea on this crop  | <i>Why do you use only urea?</i>  |
| I irrigate this crop every ten days                                   | <i>Why do you irrigate every ten days? Is the result good?</i>  |
| You see the cob is just the right size                                | <i>Why do you prefer this size of cob?</i>  |
| Compared to other results in this village the yield is good           | <i>Why do you think the result is better?</i>   |
| This variety is early maturing  | <i>Do you prefer early maturing variety?</i>  |
| Everybody always sells their crop to the trader before harvesting     | <i>Why do people sell their crop to the trader before harvesting?</i>   |
| It is very expensive to take the crop to market                       | <i>Why is it expensive to take the crop to market?</i>  |
| I rotate my crop to increase soil fertility                           | <i>Which varieties do you use for rotation? Have you always done this? Do other farmers rotate their crops?</i> |
| The land has been eroded  | <i>What has caused the erosion?</i>   |
| The Kochi herds are destroying the crops                              | <i>What are you going to do about the Kochi herds destroying the crops? Does this always happen?</i>            |
| There is no water for irrigation, as the water table has dropped      | <i>Why has the water table dropped? Does this happen every year?</i>  |

## 5. FINDING OUT PROBLEMS AND ROOT CAUSES

### Objective

**Participants know how to apply basic communication skills to informal dialogues with farmers**

**Participants are familiar with discussion techniques**

### Method

- Brainstorming
- Role Play

### Time needed

2 hours

Explain to the trainees that before doing problem tree analysis with farmers it is always necessary first to collect information using informal dialogues. We will therefore be meeting farmers to do this.

We will now discuss how to apply all we have learned about: body language, communication, asking questions, active listening etc to discussions with farmers.

### **5.1 Attitude of the Farmer**

Farmers know a lot about their own situation; they know very well what are their problems however there are a number of reasons why it is difficult for another person to get this information from the farmer. Brainstorm the trainees on what influences the farmer's attitude to extension workers and makes it difficult to get the real picture.

- The farmer thinks first about what he might get from the extension worker (fertiliser, seed, tractors etc)
- suspicion: what does this person want of me? This problem is less when the extension worker and the farmer are well known to each other as in the IAD project areas
- boredom with another set of questions
- a feeling of being socially inferior to the visitors
- courtesy: the farmer tries to tell the extension worker what he thinks the extension worker wants to hear. This is a very important point because it means that the extension worker must be extremely careful how he carries out his discussion so as not to lead the farmer.
- Although the farmer knows what are his problems he is not used to explaining them to another person
- Although the farmer knows his own problems he is not used to analysing his situation in terms of root causes

All of the above means that the extension worker has to:

- be extremely careful not to lead the farmer
- keep probing until he is sure that he has reached the real problems and real causes

### **5.2 Putting the Farmer at Ease**

To be successful, we should first use verbal and non-verbal communication to put the farmer at ease and to show that we respect him as a person and as an expert.

Ask the trainees which non-verbal communication skills can be used to put a farmer at ease during a dialogue? Write the answers on flip charts.

Here are some examples of how to put farmers at ease:

- In general, it is important to greet the farmer properly; stand close to the farmer and sit down together (at least make sure you are on the same level as the farmer physically when you sit down i.e. you do not sit on a chair when the farmer sits on the floor);
- discuss things which can be observed. It is good to use information from observations to show your interest in the farming system.
- Introduce yourself properly and always explain the purpose of your visit; who are you, why are you there and what will you do with the information you get.
- use open, probing questions

Use all the recommendations of active listening:

- direct your body and face towards the farmer and lean forward;
- maintain eye contact and smile every now and then;
- use a few seconds silence to get more information from the farmer; usually, people continue their explanations spontaneously after a silence of 3-5 seconds.
- Stimulate the farmer to talk freely by listening carefully: nodding; to show your agreement with his statements; saying things such as 'yes, yes' or 'nice', etc.;

Ask the trainees to list the five most important **not** do when communicating with farmers.

The following are some suggestions:

- Do not raise expectations
- Do not become impatient
- Do not be judgmental about what the farmer says, even if you do not agree with the farmer. The aim is not to argue with farmers about what is 'right' or 'wrong', but to find out what farmers think.
- Do not interrupt the farmer when he is speaking
- Do not ask leading questions

### 5.3 Structuring Discussions

Unfortunately, even when using best communication skills, directly asking people what are their biggest problems is often not very effective since it leads to lists of things that the farmers think they can get from the agency. It is better therefore to structure a discussion in such a way that the farmers' problems are identified without directly asking. One good way to do this is to follow this process:

|   |   |
|---|---|
| First do an Introduction  | Explain who you are, why you have come and what for.  |
| Then ask about changes in the farming system                          | Ask about possible changes in the farming system, this gives the farmers the opportunity to lead the dialogue in the direction of the issues which are important to him. Ask the farmers to compare present farming system with that of 3, 5, 10 or 30 years ago (depending on the age of the farmers and your particular interests).<br>The next question can be: and what do you expect the situation to be in 3, 5 or 10 years from now? |
| Then ask about problems the farmers are experiencing                  | The answer to the question about changes in the farming system will usually lead to this question: what are the most important problems now?<br>If it is not appropriate to ask about problems – ask about the current situation.   |
| Lastly ask about opportunities for improvements which the farmers see | Depending on the farmers' response, the last question is: what do they see as the best solution to these problems? have you (or other farmers) tried to implement that solution?  |

- Do the Role Play Practising Finding out Problems and Root Causes

#### **5.4 Role Play Practising Finding Out Problems and Root Causes**

Form the trainees into groups of four to six people. Ask two or three people in each group to role play as farmers and one or two to role play as extension workers. The objective of the discussion is for the extension workers to find out from the farmers using open and probing questions, what the farmers see as their major problems with agriculture or which particular sectors of agriculture. The farmers should take care not to agree too readily to what the extension workers suggest. The extension workers should take care not to ask leading questions.

Once the groups have sorted out who is the extension worker and who are the farmers then each group should role play in front of the other trainees. After the role play the rest of the trainees should comment on the role play done.

Keep role playing until you are sure that most of the trainees have understood what is required of them.

The trainer should take special note of 'Common Mistakes made during Informal Dialogues' and point out these mistakes to the trainees if they make them.



## 6. FINDING OUT PROBLEMS AND ROOT CAUSES WITH FARMERS

### Objective

**Apply the communication skills learned**

**Participants understand which problems are most important to the farmers.**

### Method

In teams of 2 or 3, the participants apply the skills learned, with at least two farmers. One does the interview while the other takes notes and observes; later these roles are reversed. Monitors observe each team in turn.

### Time Needed

60 minutes

Before the teams discuss with farmers, remind the trainees of the major points:

- giving a proper introduction (with the purpose of the dialogue),
- covering changes
- covering problems
- covering solutions

### **6.1 Evaluation of the Discussions**

The monitors should report in general on what they saw, list the problems in detail but without naming individuals. Ask the trainees for their own comments on their performance.

Do not spend too much time on this evaluation. Participants have the tendency to want to discuss too much on the content of the dialogues with the farmers. Point out that this will be discussed later and concentrate now on the methodology of the discussions.

# DAY III

## 7. MAKING A PROBLEM TREE IN THE TRAINING ROOM

### Objectives

the procedure for making a problem tree is understood;

### Method

- Brainstorming
- Role Play
- Group Work

### Time Needed

4 hours

Explain to the trainees that now you are going to discuss how to make a problem tree. First it will be done in the training room and then later with the farmers.

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| Step 1 | The first step is to write down all the problems which are associated with the sector of the farming system under discussion.  |
| Step 2 | The second step is to select the most important problem; this is called the <b>Starter Problem</b> . This should be fixed on the board.  |
| Step 3 | The next step is to identify the problems which cause the <b>Starter Problem</b> . Fix all the problems causing the Starter Problem in the correct order under the Starter Problem.  |
| Step 4 | When Step 3 is completed, the next step is to identify whether any problems are caused by the Starter Problem. If there are any problems caused by the Starter Problem then these should be pinned above the Starter Problem; they are new <b>Starter Problems</b> . |
| Step 5 | The process should be repeated until all the cards are on the tree   |

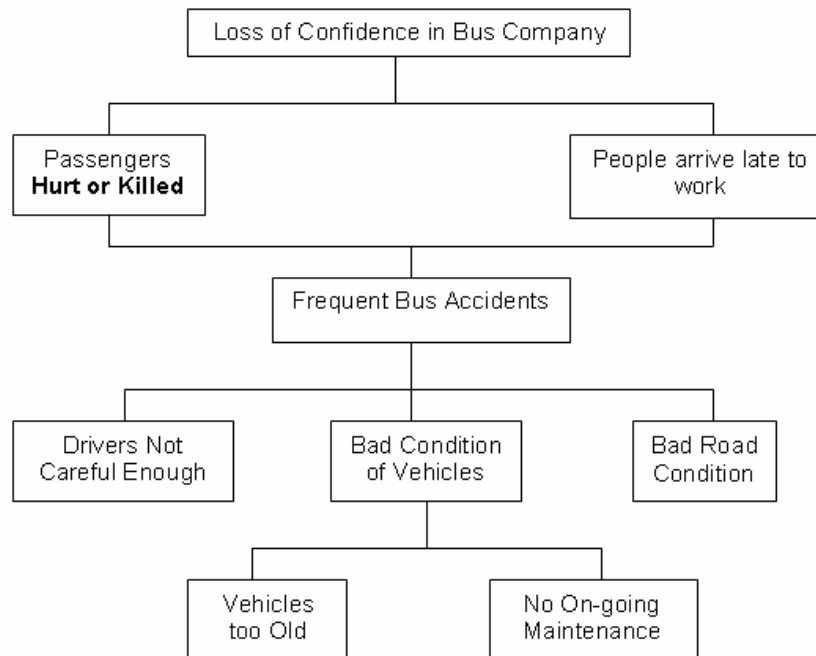
The final result is what is called a problem tree; it is something that displays the cause/effect relationships of the problems in that sector of the farming system. It includes all problems known by the participants and structures them in such a way that the more complex problems are broken down into simpler problems.

Tell the trainees that they are now going to construct a problem tree so that they know how to do it with farmers. For this they are first going to use some prepared cards about a bus company.

Since for this exercise the problems are already written down, pin all the cards up on a board so that the trainees can see them. Do not put them in any kind of order. Ask the trainees to tell you what is the second step. The second step is to select the most important problem. The trainer should tell the trainees that the Starter Problem has already been selected for them ('Frequent Bus Accidents'). Pin the starter problem in the middle of another (larger) board.

Ask the trainees what is the next step. The next step is to select the problems which cause the starter problem. Pin the cards up as suggested as the trainees – try not to assist them. They will eventually arrive at the following problem tree. If they want to add more cards this should be allowed within reason.

## Bus Company Problem Tree



Ask the trainees the following questions:

1. Are the cause-effect relationships clear? (Yes, every card below a card/problem is part of the root cause of that card/problem, every card above a card/problem is part of the effect of that card)
2. What are the roots causes of the bus company's problems? (The root causes are probably 'Bad Road Conditions', 'No On-going Maintenance', 'Vehicles too old', 'Drivers not careful enough'.

Ask the trainees whether they think that addressing the problems of this bus company at the level of 'Passengers Wounded and Killed' (eg. putting medical kits on the buses or training drivers in first aid) would solve their problems? Ask the same question regarding 'Passengers Late for Work' (maybe the bus company might try making the buses on time by posting monitors on the roads).

In fact the only way to solve the problems of this bus company is to:

- Train the drivers
- Buy some new vehicles
- Improve the vehicle maintenance system
- Pressure the government to improve the roads

These are the root causes of the problems of the bus company.

- Do the Potato Sector Problem Tree Group Work.

### **Problems or the lack of solutions?**

Tell the trainees that now they have learned how to put problems in a logical sequence showing cause and effect. So far we have made problems trees using problems that have already been identified. Now they have to learn how to identify problems.

Identifying what is a problem and correctly presenting problems is not easy. The major difficulty is to make sure that the problem has been understood correctly.

Explain to the trainees that farmers often present problems in a very simplified way that hides the real problem.

Go back to the Potato Sector Problem Tree. Ask the trainees what would have happened to the tree if instead of Low Soil Fertility we had put Lack of Fertiliser. Move the cards to demonstrate. If we had used Lack of Fertiliser at the top of the tree we would have missed the whole section on crop rotation.

One way to know that a problem which the farmer has given requires more probing is if the problem includes the solution. Look again at Lack of Fertiliser and Poor Soil Fertility. Lack of Fertiliser includes the solution to the problem (of poor soil fertility).

So if a farmer gives a problem which includes the solution, before putting it in the problem tree you should probe further until you are sure you have properly identified the problem.

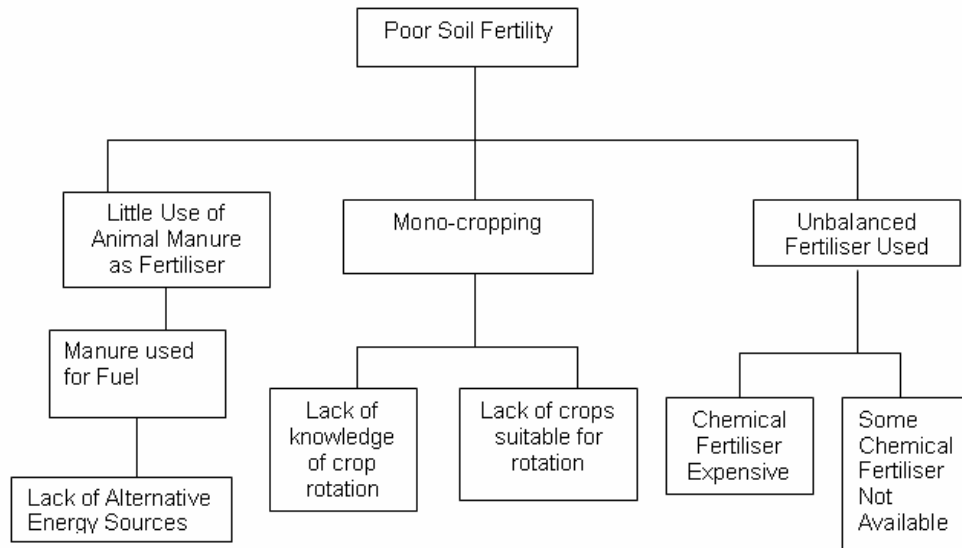
## 7.1 Potato Sector Problem Tree Group Work

Give each group a set of the following cards with a pin board:

- Poor Soil Fertility
- Low Yield
- Little Use of Animal Manure as Fertiliser
- Manure used as fuel
- Lack of Alternative Energy Sources
- Poor Crop Rotation
- Lack of knowledge about crop rotation
- Lack of crops suitable for crop rotation
- Unbalanced Fertiliser Used
- Chemical Fertiliser expensive

Some chemical fertiliser hard to find in the market

Ask each group to make a problem tree with the cards they have been given.



The section on animal manure can also be put within the fertiliser section.

Ask each group to present their problem tree.



Ask the trainees what they should write if the farmer says to them:

| Farmers' Statement          | Better Way to View the Problem   |
|-----------------------------|--|
| Lack of improved wheat seed | Use of low yielding wheat seed<br>Use of wheat seed susceptible to diseases and pests  |
| Lack of tractors            | Poor Land Preparation<br>Shortage of Labour<br>Shortage of draught power   |
| Lack of herbicide           | Weeds competing with crops<br>Shortage of Labour<br>Use of mixed seed<br>No crop rotation  |
| Lack of Pesticide           | Use of wheat seed susceptible to diseases and pests<br>Lack of knowledge of pest control<br>Poor quality of pesticide on the market<br>Pesticide expensive |

Explain to the trainees that in fact they should not accept what the farmer says too easily. As we said before he is not used to analysing his situation, he may present his problems to you in a way that hides the root causes rather than makes them clear. The extension worker must check and probe all statements made to him by the farmer.

Give the following farmer's statements to the trainees and ask them what probing questions they should ask to check and probe the farmer's statement.

| Farmer's Statement                    | Questions the Extension Worker might ask to check and probe the farmer's statement   |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Crop yields are too low               | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What is the crop yield in a good year?</li> <li>▪ How much was it when your father and grandfather were farming?</li> <li>▪ Do any other farmers that you know of get better yield than this?</li> </ul>                |
| There is not enough irrigation water  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ How much land can you irrigate in a normal year?</li> <li>▪ Is this more or less than in your father or grandfather's time?</li> </ul>  |
| There are too many pests and diseases | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ What pests and diseases were there this year?</li> <li>▪ What was there last year?</li> <li>▪ Were there more pests and diseases in your father and grandfather's time?</li> <li>▪ Why do you think that is?</li> </ul> |

- Do the Identifying Problems Role Play.
- Give the trainees the Identifying Problems Group Work to do.
- Give the trainees the Problem-Cause-Problem Group Work to do.

## 7.2 Problems Suggested by Extension Workers

Explain to the trainees that although they are generally not allowed to lead the farmers to make the suggestions which come from the Extension Worker, there are some situations where the Extension Worker can make a suggestion to the farmer.

Ask the trainees under which circumstances extension workers should make suggestions?

Extension workers can make their own suggestions concerning:

- problems regarding soil and moisture conservation (eg. 'loss of ground cover', 'reduced groundwater', 'over-grazing' etc).
- technology which the farmer may not know about (eg. 'Lack of alternative energy sources').

This does not mean that extension workers can make suggestions about: date of planting, seed rate, etc.

## 7.3 Prioritising Problems

Another important issue for Extension Workers to remember is prioritisation. An organisation such as DACAAR running a long-term programme such as IAD must be very careful how much resources are invested in one area. It is very easy to start trying to solve too many problems all together and investing a lot of resources. The problem is very large and we have to demonstrate that the programme can be used to cover large areas of Afghanistan and not just small areas.

## 7.4 Identifying Problems Role Play

Two people should play farmers and two extension workers (one extension worker is asking the questions and the other is noting down the problems as they are identified). All should be sitting down comfortably drinking tea.

|                    |  | Notes for the Trainer   |
|--------------------|--|---|
| Farmer X           | One problem is that the wheat variety we use is low yielding                             | Problem which can be noted as 'Low yielding Wheat Variety Used'.  |
| Extension Worker A |  | <i>The Extension Worker writes down in his notebook</i>   |
| Farmer Y           | We also have a big problem with lack of fertiliser                                       | 'Lack of Fertiliser' is not likely to be the whole problem and the Extension Worker should therefore probe further in order to find the real problem. |
| Extension Worker B | Do you need fertiliser for all your crops?   |   |
| Farmer Y           | Well, we need fertiliser for the wheat and the potatoes                                  |   |
| Extension Worker B | Why is that?   |   |
| Farmer X           | You see, we grow wheat and potatoes on the same land every year and the soil gets tired. | Problem: 'Little crop rotation'   |
| Extension Worker A |  | <i>The Extension Worker writes down in his notebook</i>   |
| Extension Worker B | Have you tried to solve this problem?  |   |

|                    |   |  |
|--------------------|---|--|
| Farmer X           | Yes, some of us tried rotating crops but we don't really know which crops to try and we cannot afford to take risks with our food crop. | Two Problems: 'Lack of knowledge of crop rotation' and 'Lack of Appropriate crops for rotation'. |
| Extension Worker A |   | <i>The Extension Worker writes down in his notebook</i>  |

Put the dialogue up on the flip chart (leave out the actions of Extension Worker A) and go through each of the farmers' sentences asking the trainees to identify the problems.

Ask the trainees why 'Lack of Fertiliser' was not accepted by the Extension Workers as a problem.

## 7.5 Identifying Problems Group Work

Explain to the groups that these are statements which farmers made to Extension Workers during discussions where the extension worker was trying to identify problems to put in a problem tree.

Against each statement the groups should comment on whether the statement indicates a problem which can go in the problem tree or whether the problem requires more probing. Some statements may just be statements and not problems at all.

Where the groups feel more probing is needed they should suggest the probing questions to be asked.

| Farmer's Statement   | Notes for Trainer  |
|--|--|
| "We are broadcasting our wheat, rather than using seeders."                          | Does not seem to be a problem since it describes the farmer's practice not a problem.<br>[Why do you broadcast the seed?]  |
| We need more irrigation water.   | Needs more probing.<br>[Do you have more or less water nowadays than previously?]<br>[What limits your irrigation water?]  |
| "I apply over 200 kg of nitrogen with average yields of only two tonnes per season." | Possible problem, large amounts of applied fertiliser are not significantly increasing yields. It requires more probing.<br>[Are other farmers getting more yield from their crops?]<br>[Do you only use nitrogen?]<br>[Do all farmers use this amount of nitrogen?]<br>[Why?] |
| Our animals suffer from a lot of pests and diseases                                  | A problem which can be put straight into the problem tree. More problems may be identified by probing further.<br>[Why do you think your animals suffer from so many pests and diseases]<br>[When do the pests bother the animals most?]                                       |
| Our problem is lack of tractors.   | Needs more probing.<br>[Why do you need more tractors?]<br>[Do any farmers around here have tractors?]<br>[What are the tractors used for?]  |
| "Nearly half the seeds we planted have failed to germinate."                         | A problem that can be put straight into the problem tree. More problems can be identified by probing.<br>[Why do you think the seed did not germinate?]  |
| We have only one problem and that is lack of fertiliser                              | Needs more probing.<br>[Do farmers use any fertiliser her?]<br>[On what crops do they use the fertiliser?]<br>[Do you use more or less fertiliser now than you did previously?]  |
| "We do not have proper tools to do a good job of weeding."                           | Needs probing.<br>[Do weeds cause a problem in your crops?]<br>[Are there many weeds?]   |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| “Zinc deficiency limits the yields of maize here.”  | A problem which can be put straight into the problem tree.  |
| Our trees are always attacked by insects  | A problem which can be put straight into the problem tree. More problems can be identified by probing.<br>[Why do you think your trees are attacked by insects?]<br>[Are there more insects these days than in previous years?] |
| “We may increase our incomes if maize is inter-cropped with some beans.”                      | This is a statement not a problem   |
| “The major rains are followed by a minor rainy season, but I plant very little at that time.” | Needs probing.<br>[Why do you plant very little at that time?]  |
| Our main problem is lack of pesticide.  | Needs probing.<br>[Why do you need pesticide?]<br>[What do you do now to control the pests?]<br>[Why do you not buy pesticide?]   |
| “We always plant late because of low availability of tractors.”                               | Needs probing.<br>[Does planting late cause a problem to the crop?]   |

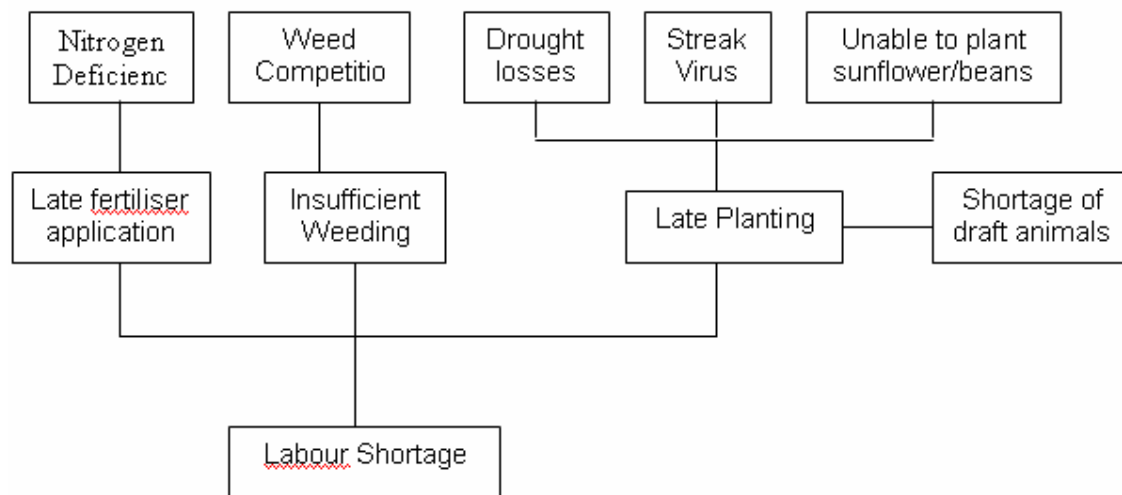
## 7.6 Problem-Cause-Problem Group Work

Ask each group to identify the problems from the case study which can be put into the problem tree. Groups should write the problems on cards, select a Starter Problem and make the problem tree.

| <b>Maize Production in Zebok Valley, Badakhshan</b> |  |
|---|--|
| 1.  | Maize is the principal crop, occupying about 75% of the cultivated area.   |
| 2.  | There is a good market for maize and adequate access roads to those markets  |
| 3.  | Farmers plant relatively large areas of maize, generally 5-10 ha.  |
| 4.  | There is enough land to enable farmers to use a field for several years and then leave it fallow while they shift to another piece of land.  |
| 5.  | Planting takes place between May and June.   |
| 6.  | Farmers must wait for the first rains before planting. They use ox-ploughs and plant following the plough. The planting may continue for two months or more because of shortage of labour and draft animals.   |
| 7.  | About half the farmers have their own oxen, while the other have to borrow or rent draft animals.  |
| 8.  | Fertiliser is applied to the maize, but it is often applied late because of labour shortages at planting time. This affects the efficiency of the fertiliser. There is evidence of nitrogen deficiency in the crop.  |
| 9.  | Weeding is begun after planting has been completed. The crop is usually weeded only once and there is evidence of weed competition.  |
| 10.   | The principal insect in maize is stem borer. Farmers apply insecticide when the problem is particularly serious.   |
| 11.   | The principal disease problem is streak virus which is transmitted by leafhoppers and affects later-planted maize.   |
| 12.   | Rainfall is uncertain during the cropping season; there is particular risk of late-season drought. Other crops in addition to maize, such as sunflower and beans, are usually planted after the maize planting is completed. Farmers often do not have enough time to plant as much of these other crops as they would wish. |

Each group should present their problem tree.

## 7.7 Problem Tree for Maize Production in Zebok Valley, Badakhshan.



The trainees may try to include problems such as:

- low yield
- need for crop rotation etc

Explain to the trainees that these are problems which have not been suggested by the farmers and therefore cannot be entered in the problem tree. The trainees are not allowed to assume that the farmer has these problems.

Remind the trainees that their main task at all times is to listen to farmers and in this way to strengthen communication between different sectors of the AKIS. The job of extension workers is not to be technologists and to decide on behalf of the farmers what are the farmers' problems.

For this reason we have to prioritise how many agricultural problems can be addressed at the one time. The first priority is of course the problems selected by the farmer, in future years when we have worked on the farmers' priorities we may be able to address the technical problems presented by the agronomists and extension workers.

Ask the trainees whether a problem should be included if the farmers do not agree that it is a problem. If the farmers do not agree that an issue is a problem than it should not be included. If the issue is something which the extension worker knows should be included (such as soil and moisture conservation) then more motivation and awareness raising must be done at a later date in the hope that at some point the farmers will be willing to include it in the problem tree.

Ask the trainees whether it is necessary to know whether a suggestion has come from the farmers or from the extension workers. Since we are interested in the opinions of the farmers rather than the opinions of the extension worker it should be clear in the problem tree whether the suggestion came from the farmers or from the Extension Worker. Ask the trainees why we should know which suggestions came from the farmers and which from the extension worker.

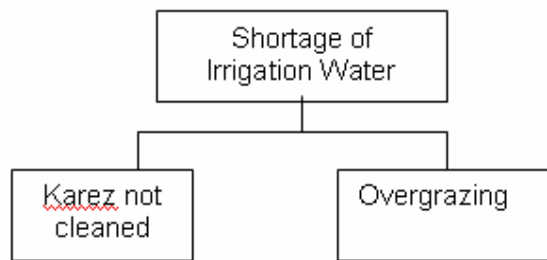
- it gives some indication of how aware the farmers are of the root causes of their problems.
- it indicates how much participation there has been in preparing the problem tree
- it indicates the farmers' own priority
- it will remind us that it will be more difficult to convince farmers to address the problems suggested by the extension worker since the farmers did not consider these problems as important.

### **Breaking down Problems**

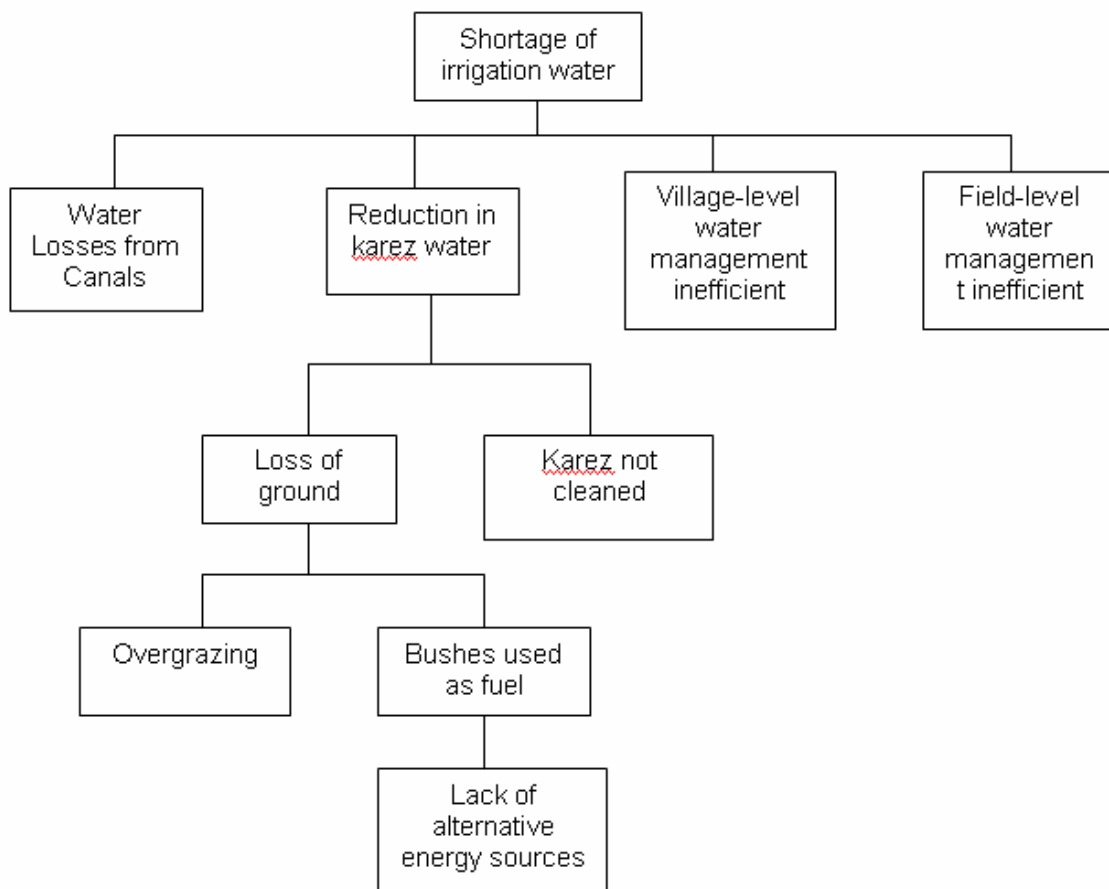
Explain to the trainees that it is very important to breakdown the problems into many parts. If they do not then it becomes difficult to identify solutions. Show the trainees the problem tree which lacks detail. Ask them whether they think any steps have been left out. Try to identify the missing steps with them. Show them the second problem tree with all the steps put in. Ask them what are the problems if steps are left out. If steps are left out then possibilities for solutions are missed. For example: preventing water losses from canals, range management, water management at field and village level etc.



### Problem Tree with Significant Lack of Detail



### Problem Tree with Full Detail



- Do the Problem Tree Analysis Group Work/Role Play

## 7.8 Group Work

### Problem Tree Analysis Group Work/Role Play

Give three groups more problem tree analysis to do. Ask them to role play problem tree analysis with two group members being the Extension Workers and the others as farmers. The groups should use the information collected during informal dialogues with farmers to make problem trees. Both farmers and extension workers can if they think it necessary, suggest more problems and ask probing questions whilst making the problem tree.

#### Notes for the Trainer

See Problem Tree Analysis for Wheat Crop (1) as an example of problem tree prepared by an inexperienced group. The weaknesses in this tree are:

1. More detail needed. For example 'Shortage of Labour', 'No Use of Animal Manure' etc. These problems could have been further analysed.
2. No crop rotation would be better written as 'Mono-cropping'.
3. The Extension Worker should have made more effort to include soil and moisture conservation issues under 'Water Shortage' such as 'Loss of ground cover' etc.

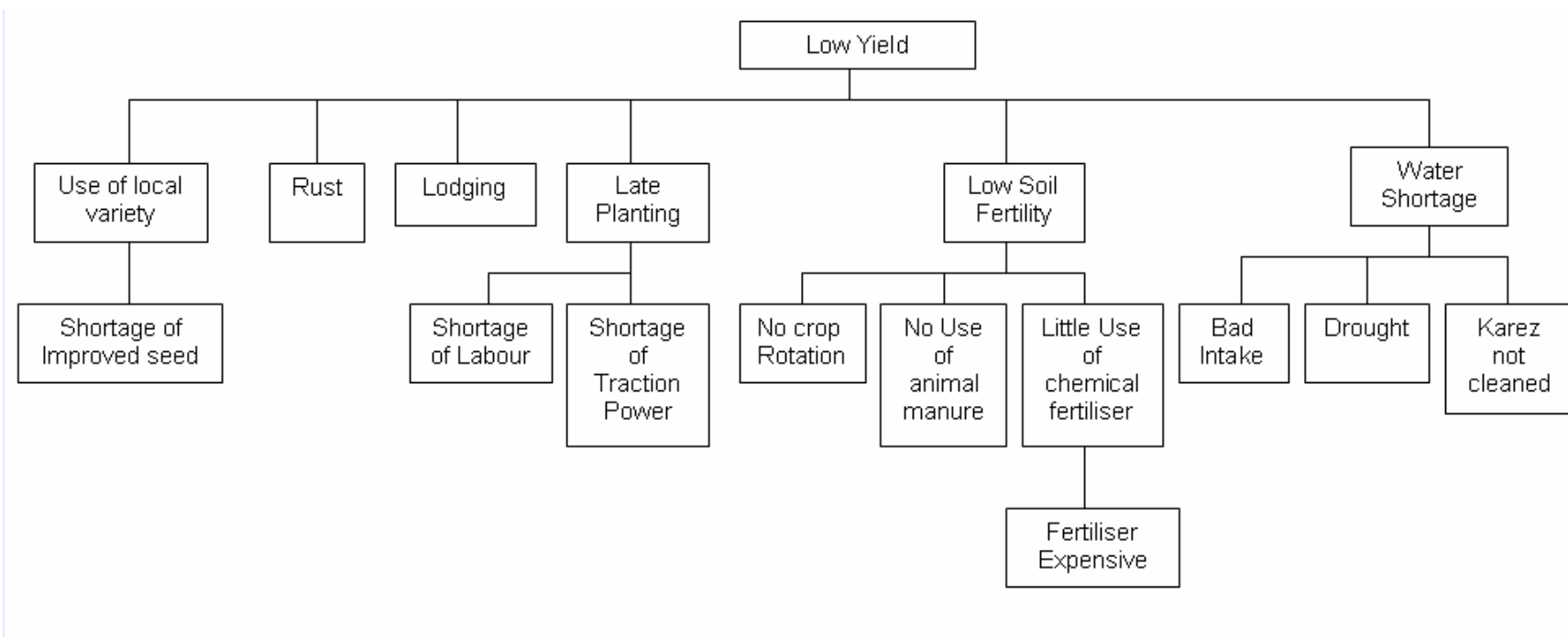
#### Problem tree Analysis –Wheat Crop (2)

1. This problem tree is lacking most of the detail needed

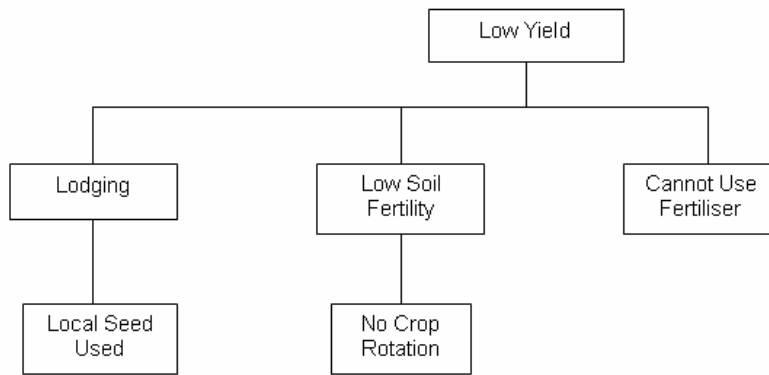
#### Problem Tree Analysis – Potato Crop

2. 'Crop Failure' is not clear – does it mean that the crops fail or does it mean the yield is occasionally low or does it mean that yields are regularly low.
3. Some detail is missing; for example: 'Using animal manure for fuel', 'Water Losses in Irrigation System' etc This makes it difficult to make the plan. Only Labour Shortage has been fully analysed.
4. Lack of knowledge on planting is also not clear – either there was not sufficient probing or the problem tree has not been properly completed

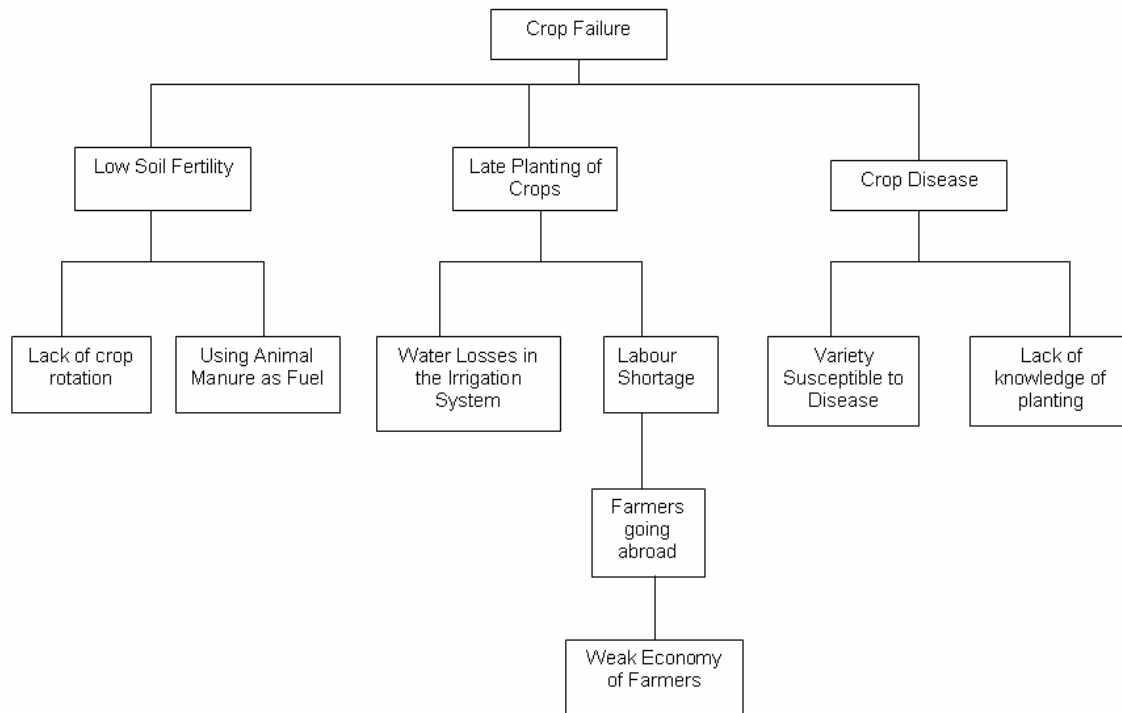
### Problem Tree Analysis of Wheat Crop (1)



### Problem Tree Analysis – Wheat Crop (2)



### Problem Tree Analysis - Potato Crop



## 8. MAKING A PROBLEM TREE WITH FARMERS

### Objectives

**A problem tree is made with farmers;**

**Problems and opportunities in the farming system are identified;**

**Farmers have selected problems which are important to them and which can be solved, at least in part, by extension.**

### Method

- Practical exercise;
- Observation of the discussion leader by some participants.

### Time needed

2 hours.

This time, the Agronomist or the Extension Worker should be the discussion leader. Observe his non-verbal communication as well as the procedure followed. Try not to interfere during the construction of the problem tree. The main objective of the problem tree is to get a complete overview of all problems in the system so that farmers can select the priorities for extension. The exact logic of the tree is not so important; if some cards are hung in the wrong place, there is no need to interfere. Only in a case where you think that some important problems are being forgotten can you suggest to the Agronomist to ask the farmers about these before they go on to identify the priorities for extension.

Select 3 priorities at most. More than this number cannot be planned during this week (usually only 2 can be addressed in the training) and it is good that farmers really limit themselves to priorities and not simply expect the extension service to work on everything.

The Agronomist should make very clear that the priorities are not simply the biggest problems but those problems where extension can contribute to a solution. This means that he should start the meeting with a clear description of the tasks and means available to the extension services. In this way, farmers will have realistic expectations. It is important to stress that we are looking for what we should do tomorrow, or in the course of this year, or next year, and not what should be done in five years' time.

Negotiations may sometimes begin between the Extension Workers and the farmers about which problem should receive priority. In principle, it is up to the farmers to decide, but if they want the extension service to work on a problem for which the Extension Workers can see no solution, then the Extension Workers should say so immediately and not wait until later in the training room. In such a case, the first thing to do is to ask the farmers to indicate exactly how they think the Extension Workers can contribute to the solution of the problem. If they cannot do so, it is better to drop it as a priority.

This may be disappointing for the farmers, but it is also a good opportunity to give a clear explanation about the possibilities and limitations of the extension service. It must be stressed that it is better to work together on clear, practical plans for smaller problems than to raise expectations which are unrealistic. Farmers can usually appreciate such reasoning.

When the exercise is finished the participants and the trainer should reflect on the success of the exercise. The monitors should give their comments.

# DAY IV

## 9. MAKING AN EXTENSION PLAN

### Objectives

**Participants know how to develop an extension plan from the problem tree**

### Method

Brainstorming  
Group Work

### Time needed

2 hours



The priorities selected for extension are usually rather complex problems, such as 'poor soil fertility'. In the problem tree, such problems are broken down into more simple problems or root causes for which it is possible to find solutions.

The extension plan can be made by the extension workers and then discussed with the farmers or can be prepared with the farmers. To prepare the plan, go through each problem, starting at the lowest level, deciding with the farmers whether the problem can be solved through extension.

Give all the trainees a copy of the Extension Plan format without the filled example. Put a copy of the Extension Plan format on the board and fill it in with the trainees as given in the example using the potato problem tree from earlier.

## **9.1 Completing the Extension Plan**

### **Subject**

The subject is usually the problem at the top of the problem tree (eg. Low Soil Fertility). Remind the trainees to put the date that the plan was done.

### **Column 1 - Problem**

First the extension workers decide with the farmers which problems can be solved. The problems which are going to be addressed should be copied into this column.

### **Column 2 - Solution**

In this column write a general description of how you intend to solve the problem given in column 1.

### **Column 3 - DACAAR/Farmer**

Note here who identified the problem for the problem tree – DACAAR staff or the farmers.

### **Column 4 - Target Group**

Ask the trainees who might be the target group. Usually it will be farmers but it could be: traders, women (Alingar), children (for livestock) etc.

### **Column 5 - Extension method**

In this column the full details of how the process will be carried out should be written. As given in the example all steps should be given.

### **Column 6 - Time Schedule**

Decide what will be done now, next year, do not go further than five years. Try to be as specific as possible so that you end up with a detailed plan.

### **Column 7 - Expected Result/Indicator**

Try to set realistic indicators using accurate information on the current situation eg. Percentage of farmers using fertiliser will increase from 15% in 2000 to 25% in 2001.

### **Column 8 - Other AKIS Members**

Usually others will not be involved; however FAO or the local Agriculture Dept for example may need to be involved.

### **Column 9 - Comment**

Any more information needed, or explanations.

When you have finished explaining the Extension Plan format, do the Extension Plan group work.

## 9.2 Extension Plan

Subject: Soil Fertility (Potatoes) Prepared: March 2005

| Problem       | Solution      | Farmer/<br>DACAAR | Target<br>Group | Extension<br>Method  | Time<br>Schedule    | Expected<br>Result/<br>Indicator                                     | Other AKIS<br>Members<br>Involved | Comment   |
|---------------|---------------|-------------------|-----------------|--|---------------------|--|-----------------------------------|---|
| 1             | 2             | 3                 | 4               | 5  | 6                   | 7  | 8                                 | 9   |
| Mono-cropping | Crop Rotation | DACAAR            | Farmers         | VO meeting for motivation and planning   | March/April 2005    | Detailed plan completed with VO                                      | -                                 | Crop rotation should not be pursued if farmers are not interested   |
|               |               |                   |                 | Farmer training or discussion groups on crop rotation                          | March/April 2005    | Farmers show interest and understanding of benefits of crop rotation | -                                 | Training should include some discussion of principles of soil fertility.                                  |
|               |               |                   |                 | Selection of new crops for rotation at VO meeting                              | March/April 2005    | At least 2 new crops suggested by farmers                            | FAO                               | Options for suitable crops should be discussed with farmers allowing them to select which ones they want. |
|               |               |                   |                 | Demonstration/trial for 1 year of adaptability of new crop                     | April -Oct 2005     | At least one crop approved by farmers                                | -                                 |   |
|               |               |                   |                 | OFT – value of new crop compared with potato and improvement in soil fertility | April '06 – Oct '08 | Increase of 10% per year of farmers rotating potato crop.            | -                                 | Baseline data needed in order to measure this.  |

|  |  |         |                       |  |                             |  |      |   |
|--|--|---------|-----------------------|--|-----------------------------|--|------|---|
| Fertiliser Expensive                                   | Assist farmers to afford fertiliser          | Farmers | Farmers               | VO meeting/ discussion how to use microfinance | May 2005                    | 10% increase per year in number of farmers able to afford fertiliser for at least one crop | None | In order to set the indicator more information is needed on how farmers buy fertiliser now. |
| Some types of chemical fertiliser not easily available | Increase availability of chemical fertiliser | DACAAR  | Traders / shopkeepers | Visits and motivation to traders               | April '05 should be started | At least one trader will bring in quality fertiliser independently by 2006                 | FAO  |   |

### **9.3 Extension Plan Role Play/Group Work**

Form groups and ask them to make extension plans from the problem trees developed from the discussions with the farmers.

When the extension plans are finished ask each group to present

### **9.4 Common mistakes made during informal dialogues**

The trainer should take note of the following common mistakes made by Extension Workers when carrying out informal dialogues. Observe carefully whether trainees are making these mistakes so that useful comments can be made during evaluation.

#### **Starting Too Quickly**

Sometimes people start too quickly and ask questions straight from the beginning. This means that farmers are embarrassed and the team and the interviewee(s) feel uneasy. It is better to talk informally with the farmers first, to put them at ease.

#### **Poor Introduction**

Sometimes people give an unclear introduction. The farmer is told that the team has come to try to understand his problems. However, what the team will do after it has gained this information may remain unclear, but this point is the most important one for the farmer. He may well be worried about what your next move will be. A clear explanation should also include a statement that you have not come for tax purposes, etc.

#### **Too Many Direct Questions**

Sometimes the team starts to ask for too much data from the farmer. This is a fundamental mistake which reduces the farmer to the provider of data while the team are the 'experts' who will tell him which problems he has after they have analysed his data.

The argument used by many participants to counter this idea is that they want to ask the farmer for basic data and then ask what his problems are. By that time, however, the farmer has often lost interest.

It is better to ask straightaway what he sees as desirable changes in the farming system, his biggest problems, etc., and then 'probe' further from there. In doing so, you follow the logic of the farmer while at the same time you are able to collect the relevant data. If he complains about low milk yields, for example, you can then ask him how much milk his cows produce. This method prevents you from collecting all kinds of irrelevant data. You can talk much more briefly with farmers, and they are much more in control of the dialogue. Different farmers will have different problems, and after talking with several you will have your data set complete - at least for the issues which the farmers consider relevant.

#### **Poor Probing**

Many Extension Workers simply accept the problems as mentioned by the farmers without trying to find out more about the underlying causes. This is partly because they lack analytical skills and partly because many of them unconsciously think that the ignorance of the farmer is the cause of the problem.

#### **Lack of Prioritisation**

Sometimes Extension Workers list too many problems without providing any priority. For example, farmers complain that seeds, fertiliser, irrigation water, pesticides, equipment, etc., are all too expensive. This might be his way of expressing his problem, but eventually we have to ask him which of these is the most expensive and which the least expensive. A

possible question would be: 'if you had some money to invest, in which of the above items would you invest it?' This forces the farmer to identify the most attractive option, and this gives an indication about the extension messages to which he might be sensitive;

### **Not Enough Detail**

Often the formulation of the problems is too vague. The problems of the farmer are stated in general terms. He might say, for example, that his biggest problem is the lack of seeds (maybe he said that if he had some money to invest he would buy good seeds). Our question then should be: 'for which crop?' and after that 'for which variety?' Additional questions could be: how much extra yield does he expect from these seeds? how many other farmers would agree with him in this respect, etc. The same thing could apply to pesticides (for which pests, on which crops, etc.), fertilisers, etc.;

### **Leading Questions**

This means leading the farmers toward certain problems and related solutions. This can be caused not only by asking leading questions but also by the order in which the questions are asked.

### **Failure to Identify the Farmers' own Solution**

Unconsciously, the Extension Worker takes the responsibility of assisting the farmer in solving the problem - but has the farmer tried to solve it himself?

These mistakes are often combined, thus reinforcing each other.

**DACAAR** (Danish Committee for Aid to Afghan Refugees) is a development non-governmental organization which works towards sustainable livelihoods for rural Afghans including the lasting return of refugees and internally displaced people.

DACAAR works at village level in close cooperation with the local population in order to enable them to meet basic needs and secure improved livelihoods. At the national level, DACAAR is also actively involved in nation building with the Government of Afghanistan.

DACAAR was established in 1984 specifically to provide support and relief to Afghan refugees in Pakistan. Since 1989, DACAAR has furthermore worked in Afghanistan, concentrating on rehabilitation and development work.

More information about DACAAR and its two major programmes – the Water and Sanitation Programme (WSP) and the Rural Development Programme (RDP) – is available at [www.dacaar.org](http://www.dacaar.org)